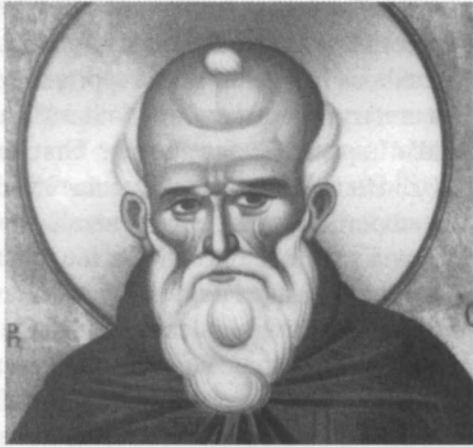


**On the 21<sup>st</sup> of January, the holy Church commemorates  
our venerable Father MAXIMOS the Confessor.<sup>1</sup>**

Maximos, our holy father, a Constantinopolitan, was born in 580 to a prosperous and pious Orthodox family of noble lineage. His baptismal name was Moschos.<sup>2</sup> From an early age, Maximos displayed good conduct and a pure disposition. He was provided with an education in philosophy, rhetoric, and grammar. Possessed of a sharp mind and diligent character, he learned his lessons quickly. In short, he was prepared for a career at the Imperial Court.



*Saint Maximos the Confessor*

The young Maximos successfully completed his curriculum, excelling in expounding upon the philosophical and theological foundations of Orthodox spirituality. He pursued what was good and useful, leaving behind what was injurious and useless to the soul. His soul was smitten with divine love. He only wished to please God. He was humble-

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<sup>1</sup> The Life of this saint was recorded in Greek by Saint Symeon the Metaphrastes, whose manuscript begins, "Herakleios held the scepter of the Roman...." The text is extant in the Athonite monasteries of the Great Lavra, Iveron, and in other places. The text was revised and edited for incorporation into the *Neon Paradeison*. At the aforementioned monasteries, there is extant a sermon of Saint Maximos, which begins, "All those who wish to conduct their lives according to God...."

The Life herein is taken from *The Great Synaxaristes* (in Greek), and *Maximos the Confessor* (in Greek), compiled by Hieromonk Efthymios and synodia from the Kellion of Saint George at Kerasia, Mount Athos (1997). The text is extant in *P.G.* 90:109-129, which includes Saint Maximos' explanation in the senate and before the *sakellarios*; in *P.G.* 90:131-133, which regards the Monk Anastasios, Saint Maximos' disciple; and, in *P.G.* 90:135-172, which includes the dialogue between Saint Maximos and Bishop Theodosios. For further English readings on biographical data of Saint Maximos, see Father Christopher Birchall's *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*.

The translation of Saint Maximos' relics is commemorated by the holy Church on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August. The right hand of Saint Maximus is venerated today at the Monastery of Saint Paul on Mount Athos. See also the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, when Saint Maximos and his disciples (Anastasios, Anastasios, Theodore, and Efprepios), together with Saint Martin, are commemorated by the holy Church.

<sup>2</sup> Moschos, from two Greek synonyms, means "calf or young bull" or "musk."

mined and moderate. He was not puffed up due to his family's nobility. He was not proud on account of his own wisdom and virtue.

By the time Maximos reached his early thirties, he achieved a respected name in the senate for his competence in government matters. Herakleios had heard good reports of Maximos and therefore retained him as a secretary, entrusting him with official palace documents. He became head of the Imperial Chancellery or First Secretary to Emperor Herakleios (610-640).<sup>3</sup> He would often take counsel with Maximos, on various matters. Now the emperor was an able general, who was married twice: first to Fabia-Evdokia and then Martina. He fought the Slavs, Avars, and Persians. In 627, Herakleios invaded Persia, overthrew Chosroes II, and recovered the true Cross which had been captured by the Persians. Immediately following the recovery of the relic of the true Cross, after an eighteen-year war with the Persians, the atmosphere at the Byzantine court was zealous.

Maximos also lived and flourished under Herakleios' successors: Herakleios Constantine III (641),<sup>4</sup> Heraklonas (641),<sup>5</sup> and Constans II Pogonatos (641-668).<sup>6</sup> The patriarchs of Constantinople during that time

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<sup>3</sup> Herakleios was the son of the exarch of Carthage and Epiphania. He fought the Slavs and Avars. In 636, the Arabs invaded Syria and crushed the Byzantines at Yarmuk. Herakleios commanded the army in person, but was unable to resolve religious disputes. Monoenergism seemed to him to be only a middle way between the Chalcedonians and Monophysites. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, s.v. "Herakleios."

<sup>4</sup> Herakleios Constantine was the son of Herakleios and Fabia-Evdokia. Upon the death of his father, he inherited the throne with his half-brother Heraklonas. His stepmother, Martina, opposed him. He died in 641.

<sup>5</sup> Heraklonas or Herakleios II was the son of Martina and Herakleios I. Heraklonas was co-ruler with his half-brother Herakleios Constantine. Upon the death of Herakleios I, Heraklonas ascended the throne, but his mother ruled *de facto*. She attempted to remove Herakleios Constantine. Her chief adviser was Patriarch Pyrrhos. She upheld a Monothelite policy. Opposition from the senate and troops in Asia Minor brought about the surrender of her son. Heraklonas had his nose slit, an impediment to taking up the scepter. He then left with his mother and brothers for exile in Rhodes. *Oxford*, s.v. "Heraklonas."

<sup>6</sup> Constans II Pogonatos was the son of Herakleios Constantine and Gregoria. He became sole emperor after Heraklonas and Martina were deposed. He was continually occupied with the empire's external enemies: Arabs, Slavs, and Lombards. His religious policy was an attempt to put an end to the Christological arguments. His *Typos* angered the western bishops, which brought about the trials of both Pope Martin and Saint Maximos. He was murdered and then buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. *Oxford*, s.v. "Constans II."

included Sergios I (610-638),<sup>7</sup> Pyrrhos (638-641),<sup>8</sup> Paul II (641-653),<sup>9</sup> Pyrrhos (second term, 654), and Peter (654-666).

In 638, the imperial power was again attempting to direct the dogma of the Orthodox Church for its political advantage. Prior to this, there were three religious movements in an attempt to find a solution to the problem of the God-Man relationship in Jesus Christ. All were compromises and heretical: Monophysite, Monoenergism, and the eventual refinement, Monothelitism. Imperial involvement in the Church lay in the need for stability in the realm. There was significant turmoil among the various Churches of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople. Emperor Herakleios had strived to reorganize and ready his empire for a counter-offensive against the Persians, by issuing administrative and military reforms. He had grave concerns about the loyalty of the Monophysites in the Middle East province. He suspected that they might turn to the Persians or to the Arabs. Thus a dogmatic formula acceptable to the Monophysites was invented by Patriarch Sergios, who chose to obey the imperium rather than Church tradition.

Thus, while Maximos was in the imperial service of Emperor Herakleios, the heresy of Monothelitism, first defended by Patriarch Kyros of Alexandria (631-642)<sup>10</sup> and then Patriarch Sergios of Constantinople (610-638), seems to have drawn Emperor Herakleios into its nets.<sup>11</sup> From 626

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<sup>7</sup> Patriarch Sergios I had crowned Herakleios and attempted to dissuade him from marrying Martina, the emperor's niece, deeming it incestuous. When several of their children were retarded, it was deemed a divine judgment. He approved the use of church treasures for the Persian expedition. Sergios was later condemned at the Synod of 680 for Monothelitism. *Oxford*, s.v. "Sergios I."

<sup>8</sup> Patriarch Pyrrhos supported Monothelitism and confirmed the *Ekthesis*, which brought him formidable adversaries in Stephen of Dor in Palestine, Maximos the Confessor, and Pope John IV (640-642). The conflict was further intensified with the arrival in the exarchate of Africa of Monothelite refugees from Egypt. With the death of Herakleios and the banishment of Martina, the emperor's second wife whom he supported, he departed for Carthage. He returned to Constantinople and resumed a second patriarchate which lasted only a few months. He was condemned at the Synod of 680. *Oxford*, s.v. "Pyrrhos."

<sup>9</sup> Paul II was a Monothelite who supported Constans II. Paul could not achieve a compromise with anti-Monothelite Popes Theodore I (642-649) and Martin I.

<sup>10</sup> Kyros, Patriarch of Alexandria, former Bishop of Phasis in Kolchis, was an initiator of Monoenergism, through which he reached an accord with some Monophysites, despite resistance from Sophronios, future Patriarch of Jerusalem.

<sup>11</sup> The *Great Synaxaristes* (in Greek) reports that Herakleios was misled by Patriarch Athanasios (594-630) of the Jacobites, followers of Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578), who

(continued...)

until 633, Saint Sophronios, Maximos' spiritual father, who was located in a monastery near Carthage, guided his studies on the Chalcedonian doctrine, the confirmed Orthodox confession in the Synod of 451 which upheld two natures, distinct and unmingled, within the person of Christ. Saint Maximos, within three years of his appointment in the imperial service, began to have fears that he might be led astray. In order to better understand the diverse parties and beliefs at that time, we include a brief history.

### Historical Background

In the seventh century, two theological movements dominated talks in political and Church circles: Monotheletism and Monoenergism. Monotheletism, from the Greek words meaning "one will," was bequeathed the problems inherent in Monoenergism "one energy." This novel phrase "a single will (*thelima*)" in Christ was proposed by Patriarch Sergios I and developed by his supporters Patriarch Makarios of Antioch (656-680/681) and Patriarch Pyrrhos. Sergios tried to enlarge a theological compromise to promote unity in the empire. Together with Kyros of Phasis, the future Patriarch of Alexandria, and Theodore of Pharan, he developed the formula of Monoenergism in 633. It was later altered into the concept of one will in Christ (Monotheletism). His alliance with Pope Honorius I (625-638) and the idea of one will in Christ formed the foundation of the *Ekthesis*. Herakleios viewed Monotheletism as a means of compromise and unity between Chalcedonians and Monophysites.<sup>12</sup> Prior to these movements, the Fourth Œcumenical Synod, held in the Church of Saint Ephemias of Chalcedon in 451, defined Christ's two natures as inviolably united without confusion, division, separation, or change, in one person or hypostasis.

With a view to unifying his subjects, in 638, Herakleios proclaimed the *Ekthesis* or exposition of the Faith. It was a document penned by Patriarch Sergios, who clearly attempted to end disputes concerning Monoenergism, by forbidding any discussion of the energy in the person of Christ. The formula asserted by those who thought as Sergios was that the two natures of Christ

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<sup>11</sup>(...continued)

were Syrian Monophysites. Jacob Baradaeus had been a disciple of Monophysite Bishop Severos (d. 538) of Antioch. When Herakleios was in Vereia (Berroia) of Syria (present day Aleppo of Syria), Athanasios, with twelve of his bishops, went to meet the emperor.

<sup>12</sup>The Monophysites, from the Greek words meaning "one nature," had two responses with regard to the divine and human nature. The followers of Eftyches accepted a doctrine of the union of natures, whereas the moderates, as Severos of Antioch, construed the *physis* (nature) as close to the concept of *prosopon* (person) or hypostasis and saw in Christ a new *physis*, possessing both perfect divine and human qualities. Oxford, s.v. "Monophysites."

were joined by a single will (free will). The formula of "one will" had been proposed by Pope Honorius in a letter to Sergios. The *Ekthesis* was accepted by local councils in Constantinople (638 and 639). Saint Maximos, the major opponent to one will in Jesus, elaborated upon the concept of a variety of wills: the natural will, a property of nature, desires good; free will (*proairesis*) involves a choice and therefore presupposes the possibility of error or sin; finally, *voulesis* is imaginative desire (*phantastike orexis*).<sup>13</sup> Christ, having two natures, had to have two natural wills. Herakleios soon perceived that his attempt to reconcile the parties was futile. The compromise was rejected by the Chalcedonians, headed by Saint Sophronios I of Jerusalem (634-638). Staunch Monophysites also rejected the *Ekthesis*. It would be in 648 that Constans II would withdraw the *Ekthesis* and replace it with the *Typos*. Later, the *Ekthesis* was condemned at the Third Synod of Constantinople in 680.

Monoenergism, from the Greek words meaning "one energy," assumed that Christ had a single energy attributed to His individual hypostasis. This idea had been implied in Monophysitism, which presumed that one nature presumed a single activity. Patriarch Kyros of Alexandria, in 633, attempted to reconcile the parties on the basis of the formula "the single Christ and Son operating as God and man in the single theandric activity."<sup>14</sup> Sophronios, future Patriarch of Jerusalem, resisted the formula. When he became Patriarch of Jerusalem (634-638), he single-handedly protested, in his enthronement speech and synodical epistle, the doctrine of Monoenergism or the Monothelite heresy to the Patriarch Kyros and Patriarch Sergios. During his discussions with Patriarch Sergios I of Constantinople, they came to a compromise: Both phrases "single activity" and "two activities" were prohibited. Instead, one had to speak of "the single Son acting upon both divine and human things." Pope Honorius approved of the compromise. Sophronios soon brought up discussions against it. However, since the *Ekthesis* of Herakleios in 638 banned the *energeia* formulas, the debate devolved upon the problem of the single will or Monothelism.<sup>15</sup>

The *Typos*, an imperial edict of Constans II, was drafted in order to mollify opposition to the *Ekthesis* and end debate over Monothelism. It was Patriarch Paul who persuaded Constans II to sign the *Typos*. Monothelism was not directly condemned in the *Typos*, but the text of the *Ekthesis* was ordered removed from Hagia Sophia. The *Typos* did not define official dogma. It forbade discussion of Christ's wills and energies. It commanded

<sup>13</sup> P.G. 91:13B.

<sup>14</sup> Mansi 11:565D.

<sup>15</sup> Oxford, s.v. "Monoenergism."

acceptance of Scripture and the doctrinal definitions of the five œcumenical synods.

### **The Saint's Renunciation and Writings**

Maximos took courage in the words of the psalmist: "For better is one day in Thy courts than thousands elsewhere. I have chosen rather to be an outcast in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of sinners [Ps. 83:10, 11]." He, therefore, resigned his post and repaired to the Monastery of the Theotokos at Scutari,<sup>16</sup> across the Bosporos, that he might fulfill his love for quietude and prayer. He received the monastic tonsure and the name Maximos, and became thoroughly engaged in the ascetical life. He overcame the tyranny of the passions by daily meditation on the holy Scriptures and study of the writings of the holy fathers. Clad in but a hair shirt, he mortified his flesh with hardships, vigils, and all-night prayers. He was held in high regard among the brotherhood of that monastery, surpassing all the brethren in ascetic struggles. After a few years, when the superior of the monastery reposed, a vote was taken. Father Maximos was then asked to take up the office of hegumen. The ever-memorable one wished to avoid that rank and the governance of the brethren. He deemed it a most heavy burden. Out of love, he accepted the office. He now no longer had the care of his own soul's salvation but also that of others, which role he took seriously in the knowledge that he would answer for his charges before Christ. All now looked upon Father Maximos as their rule and standard. The divine man knew this and ceased not in every time and place teaching his disciples by deed and words. At times he was gentle and at times he was stern, depending on the time and situation, that he might instruct in that which was needful and profitable. The holy man spent twelve years at the Theotokos Monastery. His many ascetical contests, and practise of silence and contemplative prayer, trained him to meet future great trials. The man of God also meditated upon the great mystery of our Lord's dispensation regarding man's salvation and divinization, and the recapitulation<sup>17</sup> of all things in the Christ [Eph. 1:10].

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<sup>16</sup> Chrysopolis in Bithynia (Scutari, modern Üsküdar) is a harbor on the eastern shore of the Bosporos, and a suburb of Chalcedon.

<sup>17</sup> Saint Maximos the Confessor: "The human race, having the power to naturally unite every division at the mid-point of every extreme, was last introduced into the world of beings as a sort of natural link,...in itself bringing into one all things that are segregated in nature,...so as to unite everything in a comprehensive unity in God—as Cause. Humanity has its own division (i.e., into female and male), but in its dispassionate relationship with divine virtue, there is no division....Thus did the incarnate Jesus cancel the difference between male and female and the partitioning of nature.... 'There is neither male and female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus [Gal.

(continued...)

Maximos had come to be known as "Maximos the Wise" not only among fellow monastics, but also with the diplomats and government officials with whom he had served. He would now prepare to defend the apostolic Faith through God-inspired words. In both the east and west, he is acknowledged as the most significant theologian of his times. He expounded and acted upon the traditions handed down to him, that is, Mysteries, divine offices, Scriptures, synods, saints, and writings of the fathers.

### **Saint Maximos in Kyzikos**

In the year 624, Father Maximos began preaching about the hypostasis of Jesus Christ, the Logos of God. He had a constant disciple, Father Anastasios, who would accompany him even to martyrdom. Now on account of the Monothelite heresy, Father Maximos left Scutari and dwelt in the small Monastery of Saint George at Kyzikos.<sup>18</sup> In that sacred precinct, he produced many spiritual works. The most influential of his early writings were *The Ascetic Life*, a catechetical piece on the two great commandments,<sup>19</sup> and *The Four Centuries of Love*, consisting of practical discourses on the Christian life and prayer, and the practise of the virtues. Father Maximos taught that the virtues are natural. By nature we have an appetite simply for what is good. Nature impels us to desire and move toward obtaining these virtues. They exist in all men because of the identical nature of men, but we do not all practice what is natural to us to an equal degree. With regard to asceticism, he comments that it was devised in order to ward off deception, which establishes itself through sensory perception. When deception is completely expelled, the soul immediately exhibits the splendor of its natural

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<sup>17</sup>(...continued)

3:28]. '...With our complete nature, He united it all, having demonstrated the convergence of the entire creation into one, in Himself, according to His own most sovereign and complete Rationale (*Logos*), which is entirely undivided and unsevered. And He first united us in Himself by the removal of the difference between male and female; and, in place of men and women, He properly and truly exhibited just human beings—entirely transfigured to become like Him and bearing His integral and completely authentic image (icon)... Thus did He divinely recapitulate everything in Himself, having shown the entire creation to exist as one.... Now the whole creation can reveal itself as having one and the same wholly undifferentiated rationale (*logos*), based on its Creator." [P. G. 91:1305B-1309D.]

<sup>18</sup> Kyzikos, present-day Balkiz near Erdek, a city on the southern coast of the Sea of Marmara.

<sup>19</sup> "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself [Mk. 12:30, 31]."

virtue.<sup>20</sup> Father Maximos perceived the Scriptures as foretelling man's purpose, since it was God Who said, "Let us make man according to our image and likeness.... And God made man, according to the image of God He made him, male and female He made them. And God blessed them.... And God saw all the things that he had made, and, behold, they were very good [Gen. 1:26, 27, 28, 31]." Saint Maximos said that we are taught to speak to ourselves of the grace of adoption. In his commentary on the Lord's Prayer, *Our Father*, he writes that "we are also taught to speak to ourselves of the grace of adoption, since we are by grace worthy to call Father the One Who is our Creator by nature. Thus by respecting the designation of our Begetter in grace, we are eager to set on our life the features of the One Who gave us life. We sanctify His name on earth in taking after Him as Father, in showing ourselves by our actions to be His children."<sup>21</sup>

While dwelling at Kyzikos, Father Maximos began to expound upon the union between God and man through the person of Jesus Christ, the Logos of God. Moved by His infinite love for mankind, the Logos condescended to unite Himself to our nature, which had been separated from God and divided against itself by means of self-centered love. "Christ took hold of the seed of Abraham. In all things it behooved Him to be made like His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, in order to be made an expiation for the sins of the people. For having Himself been tempted in that which He suffered, He is able to help those who are tempted [Heb. 2:16-18]. 'Now His divine power has 'freely given to us all the things for life and piety, through the full knowledge of Him Who called us by glory and virtue, by which He hath freely given to us the very great and precious promises, that through these ye might become partakers of the divine nature [2 Pe. 1:3, 4].' God made us so that we might become 'partakers of the divine nature' and sharers in His eternity, and so that we might come to be like Him [1 Jn. 3:2] through divinization by grace. It is through divinization that all things are reconstituted and achieve their permanence; and it is for its sake that what is not is brought into being and given existence."<sup>22</sup>

In his work, entitled *Four Centuries of Love*, our holy Father Maximos makes clear in the first letter, "First Century," that a Christian trains in love (agape): "Love is a good disposition of the soul by which one prefers no creature to the knowledge of God. It is impossible to attain to a

<sup>20</sup> See "The First Opusculum (ca. 645-646): A Dogmatic Tome to Marinos the Priest," *The Theological and Polemical Works*; and *Disputation with Pyrrhos*, Nos. 85 and 95.

<sup>21</sup> Saint Maximus, *Selected Writings: A Commentary on the Our Father*, § 4, p. 106.

<sup>22</sup> Saint Maximos the Confessor, *First Century on Various Texts*, ¶ 42, *The Philokalia, the Complete Text*, Vol. II:173.

lasting possession of such love if one has any attachment to earthly things." Saint Maximos encourages us, writing: "Love is begotten of detachment, detachment from hope in God, hope from patient endurance and long-suffering; and these from general self-mastery; self-mastery from fear of God; and fear of God from faith in the Lord."<sup>23</sup> In the "Second Century," he instructs us that "pure prayer is from one who truly loves God and so prays entirely without distraction."<sup>24</sup> In the "Third Century," Saint Maximos reminds one of the Christ-like response to passions, for example, resentment, by saying: "If thou dost harbor resentment against anyone, pray for him and thou wilt prevent the passion from being aroused; for by means of prayer thou wilt separate thy grief from the thought of the wrong he has done thee. When thou hast become loving and compassionate toward him, thou wilt wipe the passion completely from thy soul. If someone regards thee with resentment, be pleasant to him, be humble and agreeable in his company; and thou wilt deliver him from his passion."<sup>25</sup>

In the "Fourth Century," he wrote: "The one who loves Christ thoroughly imitates Him as much as he can. Thus Christ did not cease to do good to men. Treated ungratefully and blasphemed, He was patient; beaten and put to death by them, He endured, not thinking ill of anyone at all. These three are the works of love of neighbor, in the absence of which a person who says he loves Christ or possesses His kingdom deceives himself."<sup>26</sup>

As an important sign that we are beginning to free ourselves from self-love, we practise loving our enemies. "Why did the Lord give you the command to love your enemies, to bless those who curse you, to do well to those who hate you, and to continue praying for those who persecute you [Mt. 5:44]? To free you from hatred, grief, anger, and resentment, and to make you worthy of the supreme gift of perfect love. But you cannot attain such love if you do not imitate God and love all men equally. For God loves all men equally and wills that all men be saved and to come to a full knowledge of the truth [1 Tim. 2:4]."<sup>27</sup>

God, in His divine providence, began preparing Saint Maximos as a confessor first through his ascetic labors and compassionate works as a writer. As his baptized name, Maximos, implies "greatest," so were the depths and effects of his expositions on the transforming power of contemplation of divine love—the purpose for which man was created. His later works included

<sup>23</sup> "The First Century," *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, ¶¶ 1, 2.

<sup>24</sup> "The Second Century," ¶ 1.

<sup>25</sup> "The Third Century," ¶ 90.

<sup>26</sup> "The Fourth Century," ¶ 55.

<sup>27</sup> "The First Century," ¶ 61.

*Questions to Thalassios, Books of Difficulties* (commentaries on difficult passages in the holy fathers, especially from Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint Dionysios the Areopagite), *Mystagogia* (Eucharist as the cosmic Liturgy leading the entire universe to perfection in Christ, the God-Man "Theanthropos"), and *Centuries on Theology* and the *Incarnate Dispensation*. For Saint Maximos, as for all the holy fathers, many heretical ideas were confounded by the Scriptures. Basing his treatises on holy tradition, Saint Maximos would often refute heresies (Apollinarian, Nestorian) by enlisting the help of Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint Irenaeos. He stated in his defense of the God-Man Christ: "For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His divinity is also saved. If only half of Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him Who was begotten, and so be saved as a whole."<sup>28</sup>

Saint Maximos would continue to clarify throughout his life that a man-made or composite Christ was not of God nor to be found in the Scriptures. "The incarnation," he wrote, "is the ineffable and incomprehensible hypostatic union of the divine and humanity. This is the great and hidden mystery. This is the blessed destiny for which all things have been constituted....It is the cause of all things and caused by none of them. With this purpose in view, God brought into being the substances of all things. This is the primary object of the prescience and for thoughts according to which all things made by God are recapitulated in Him [Eph. 1:10]. This mystery encloses all the ages, showing forth the infinite great counsel of God that surpasses infinity and preexists the ages eternally....For Christ and in the mystery of Christ, all the ages and all things in them received their being and purpose. The union of the limitation and limitlessness, of measure and measurelessness, of finiteness and infinity, of the Creator and creation, of stillness and motion was deliberated prior to the ages. And in the last days, this union was revealed in Christ, in itself giving fulfillment to the foreknowledge of God."<sup>29</sup>

On account of Christ's two natures, fully human and fully divine, He could neither sin nor choose something in error as being good, because in His divinity He knows what is truly good. "I hold," Saint Maximos wrote, "that, according to nature, the humanity of the Savior is no different from our own, but it is the same in essence without any differences, because He took it from our nature by the ineffable assumption from the undefiled virginal blood of

<sup>28</sup> Saint Gregory the Theologian, "Epistle 101: To Kledonios the Priest Against Apollinarios."

<sup>29</sup> *To Thalassios*, P.G. 90:620, 621.

the most holy Theotokos. United to this blood, as to a seed, the Logos became flesh, without ceasing to be God by essence. He was thus made perfect Man, sin only excepted. We, however, often rebel against and oppose God by means of the faculty of will, which in our case inclines both to the one side and to the other; but He, being by nature free from all sins, as being not a mere man but enhominized God, has nothing in Him that opposes God. He has rather preserved our nature undefiled and completely pure. It is as He Himself said, 'The ruler of this world is coming, and hath nothing in Me [Jn. 14:30]'; that is to say, nothing of the things whereby we demonstrate the opposition of our will to God, thus distorting our own nature.... To confirm the truth of this enhominization, He became, and voluntarily did, all things for our sake, not repudiating our essence or any of the natural and innocent things that belong to it. Rather, He divinized it with all its characteristics, entirely permeating it through the union and becoming one with it without confusion by means of the one unique hypostasis, rendering it totally capable of acting in a divine way. Therefore, the humanity that is proper to Him differs from that which is ours, not in the rational principle of its nature, but in the new mode of its genesis. For it is the same as ours by essence but it is not the same in its seedless generation. It is not the nature of a mere man, but the human nature of God the Logos Who was enhominized for our sake. In the same way, His human will was a genuinely natural will just like ours. But it was molded in a divine manner which transcends us."<sup>30</sup>

Father Maximos frequently agrees in his treatises with the writings of Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint Dionysios the Areopagite,<sup>31</sup> concerning natures, wills, and the establishment of the rationale for our existence. No other Church father before him had treated the subject so deeply regarding the doctrine of the incarnation and human freedom and of its union with God in Christ. It only remained for Saint John of Damascus to present it later in a more accessible manner.

#### **Saint Maximos in Carthage (646)**

Father Maximos desired to depart from among the heretics who had established themselves in Constantinople. He wished to live among those who firmly preserved the Orthodox Faith. As a youth, he had considered living in Jerusalem, but with the Saracen invasion of Palestine, he was compelled to alter his course for Old Rome. As he grieved in spirit and wept incessantly for the state of the Church, he heard that the Monothelite heresy had been completely rejected in the west. He was resolved to depart, despite the fact that the brethren of his monastery were sorrowed by those tidings. Father

<sup>30</sup> *Theological and Polemical Works* 4, P.G. 91:57D-60D; see *Free Choice*, 170.

<sup>31</sup> Saint Dionysios, P.G. 3:716A, 716C, 732CD.

Maximos counseled them sufficiently and strengthened them in true piety. The brethren did not wish to appear disobedient, so they did not attempt to thwart him; for both they and he perceived his departure was God's will.

As Father Maximos traveled toward his goal, he stayed in the north African region of Carthage, finding opportunities to confirm the Orthodox bishops there in the Faith and to avoid heresy by all means. To some who were far away, Father Maximos sent letters. He taught all with love and clarity of thought. He urged the faithful to shun the words and writings of the heretics, who laid subtle linguistic snares. He also advised the faithful not to succumb to promised perquisites by the government as a reward for compliance. While still producing many of his most spiritually profitable works (634-645), Saint Maximos entered the dogmatic struggle in support of his spiritual father, Saint Sophronios of Jerusalem.

Patriarch Pyrrhos, a favorite of Herakleios, had been hegumen of the monastery of Chrysopolis before he mounted the throne of Constantinople. He supported the Monothelite program of Sergios and confirmed the *Ekthesis*. With the death of Sergios, Pyrrhos became Patriarch of Constantinople in 638. Then with the death of Herakleios in 640, he was succeeded by Herakleios Constantine, the son of his first wife Fabia-Evdokia. But then Constantine died of poisoning by his stepmother Martina, who would have her own son Heraklonas rule. Pyrrhos elevated her son to the throne. After six months, those opposed to mother and son cut off Heraklonas' nose and slit Martina's tongue, which were deemed impediments to the scepter. They were then exiled to Rhodes. Then Constans II, the son of Herakleios Constantine and grandson of Herakleios, popularly known as Pogonatos for his thick beard, ascended the throne. Pyrrhos as a result was most unpopular with the people on account of his support of Martina and Heraklonas. Consequently, when her party lost, he laid his episcopal attire on the altar of Hagia Sophia and left for Carthage, without having been canonically deposed. When the Monothelite Patriarch Paul II could not achieve a compromise with Popes Theodore I (642-649) and Martin I, the exarch of Carthage, named Gregory, contrived to use this conflict to gain the support of Pyrrhos. Gregory organized a disputation between Pyrrhos and Maximos.<sup>32</sup> Father Maximos, basing his proofs on Scripture and the holy fathers, decisively demonstrated that as Jesus has two natures, so there must also be two wills and energies (operations), though indivisible in the one person.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> P.G. 91:287-354.

<sup>33</sup> *Gnomie* is nothing else than an act of willing in a particular way, in relation to some real or assumed good, that is, a gnomie use of will implies that the willer can err as

(continued...)

The discussion then turned to Jesus in Gethsemane, when he prayed and said, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; however, not as I will, but as Thou wilt [Mt. 26:39]." In Saint Maximos' disputation with Pyrrhos, he explained this passage: "Since the God of all hath Himself become Man without change, it follows that the same One not only willed appropriately as God in His divinity, but also willed appropriately as man in His humanity. For the things that exist came to be out of nothing, and have therefore a power that impels them to hold fast to existence, and not to non-existence, which power is simultaneously an inclination towards that which naturally maintains them in existence, and a drawing back from things destructive to their existence. Consequently, the super-essential Logos, by virtue of His humanity, had of His humanity this self-preserving power which clings to existence. And in fact, He exhibited both aspects of this power, willing the inclination and the drawing back on account of His human energy. He exhibited the inclination to cling to existence in the natural and innocent use He made of a great many things, and the drawing back at the time of the Passion, when He drew back from the voluntary death. The Church confesses that along with His human and created nature, there existed also in Him those principles inserted creatively in that nature by Him, without which that nature could not exist.... Fear is proper to nature when it is a force that clings to existence by drawing back from what is harmful, but it is contrary to nature when it is an irrational dread. The Lord did not have that type of fear that is contrary to nature.... Rather, He assumed, as good, that which is proper to nature and which expresses that power, inherent in our nature. Those natural things of the will are present in Him, but not exactly in the same manner as

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<sup>33</sup>(...continued)

regards what is good, ultimately choosing what appears or is assumed to be good, rather than solely what really is good.... Thus, those who say that there is *gnomie* in Christ, as this inquiry is demonstrating, are maintaining that He is a mere man, deliberating in a manner like unto us, having ignorance, doubt, and opposition, since one only deliberates about something that is doubtful, not concerning what is free of doubt, that is, perfectly or certainly known. By nature we have an appetite simply for what by nature is good, but we gain experience of the goal in a particular way, through inquiry and counsel. Because of this, then, the gnostic will is fitly ascribed to us, being a mode of employment (of the will), and not a principle of nature, otherwise nature itself would change many times (with the change of its principles). But the humanity of Christ did not simply subsist in a manner similar to us, but divinely, for He Who appeared in the flesh for our sakes is God. *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, Nos. 85-95.

they are in us. Thus, He truly was afraid, but not as we are, but in a mode surpassing us."<sup>34</sup>

Saint Maximos also discussed how each nature, divine and human, demonstrated its proper energy, by means of the miracles from the Gospels. "These—the resuscitation of the child, or the restoration of sight to the blind, or the blessing of the loaves of bread, or the cleansing of the leper—were effected by means of an omnipotent word and decree, and also corporeally by the sense of touch, as was proper to each nature, so that He might demonstrate that the flesh was life-giving flesh in that it was truly His own, and not that of any other, in its unmixed union with Him. The divine energy was made known in His deeds in both of these—I mean the command and the touch—and did not in any way impair the natural, passable, human energy of the flesh proper to us.... For the stretching out of the hand, the touch, the grasping, the mingling of spit and clay, the breaking of bread, and simply, anything which is brought to pass by the hand or any other part or limb of the body, proves the existence of the natural energy of Christ's humanity. Accordingly, He Who is by nature God Himself was active also as man, naturally working divine things, so that through both He might be believed to be both perfect God and perfect Man—sin only excepted—both being subject to true demonstration."<sup>35</sup>

At the symposium, African bishops were also in attendance. Father Maximos so successfully defended the Faith against the ex-patriarch and monoenergistic Pyrrhos, that Pyrrhos not only repented of heresy and

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<sup>34</sup> Saint Maximos, *The Disputation with Pyrrhus*, ¶¶ 33, 35, pp. 16-18.

Elsewhere Saint Maximos writes: "What do you suppose the prayer indicates? Dread or courage? The highest agreement of His human will with the divine will or its utmost separation from it?... The sentence, 'However, not as I will, but as Thou wilt [Mt. 26:39],' excludes all opposition, and demonstrates the union of the human will of the Savior with the divine will of the Father, since the whole Logos has united Himself essentially to the entirety of human nature, and has divinized it in its entirety by uniting Himself essentially to it.... Since He had become what we are for our sakes, He spoke these words in a manner fitting to His humanity, to God the Father, because He, Who was by nature God, had as man a faculty of will wholly in accord with the Father's will. Wherefore, according to both natures from which, in which, and of which His hypostasis was constituted, He was made known as desiring and effecting our salvation: On the one hand, as consenting to it with the Father and the Spirit; on the other hand, the human as becoming obedient unto death, to the Father, even the death of the Cross, Himself bringing to pass the great mystery of the æconomy towards us by means of the flesh." See *Theological and Polemical Works*, 6, P.G. 91:65B-D, in *Free Choice*, 172.

<sup>35</sup> *The Disputation with Pyrrhus*, ¶ 187, p. 64.

confessed Orthodoxy but he also composed a book confessing the Orthodox Faith and the synods. Pyrrhos offered to go to Rome that he might place his written anathema against Monothelitism on the tomb of the apostles. Pyrrhos' confession of the true Faith, however, was temporary. When the Emperor Constans II sent for Pyrrhos, as a "dog returned to his vomit [2 Pe. 2:22]," Pyrrhos recanted his confession of Orthodoxy and became worthy of the anathema which the holy fathers subsequently laid upon him and his fellow Monothelites. Pope Theodore I responded to the apostasy of Pyrrhos by excommunicating him immediately and condemning Paul II, his successor to the throne of Constantinople.

Following the excommunication of two Constantinopolitan patriarchs, imperial reaction in the person of Constans II was swift and lethal. The emperor feared that an open breach with Rome could destabilize the political situation in the empire, especially after the invasion of Egypt by the Arabs. Thus, Constans II published the *Typos* in 648, forbidding all Christians, on pain of severe punishment, to discuss two natures and two wills in Christ. This vile document ushered in the persecution of Christians, especially the monks and friends of Father Maximos.

#### **Saint Maximos in Rome (648)**

Thereupon, Saint Maximos went to join Pope Martin I in Rome. Upon reaching land, he walked to Rome, undergoing much hardship. Constans II wanted Pope Martin to approve of the *Typos*, but he refused saying, "If the entire world should embrace the new heresy, I would not. I will never renounce the doctrines of the Gospels and the apostles, nor the traditions of the holy fathers, even if I am threatened with execution." Saint Maximos had found papal support for the defense of Orthodoxy during these Christological and imperial crises. Neither the late Pope Severus of Rome (d. 640) nor his successor Pope John IV (d. 642) had accepted the imperial *Ekthesis*. The latter pope had even anathematized it. However, it was Father Maximos' friend, Pope Martin I, who would suffer imperial persecution for defiantly convening a council on the advice of Saint Maximos. Martin had previously served as papal *apokrisiarios* (legate or delegate) in Constantinople and all along had supported Father Maximos. When he was elected pope, Martin did not receive confirmation from Emperor Constans II.

In October of 649, at the Lateran Basilica, Pope Martin convened a synod, during which sessions both the *Ekthesis* and *Typos* were condemned as heretical pieces of work. Present at this council were Saint Maximos, Bishop Stephen of Dor of Palestine, and thirty-six Greek abbots and monastics. Reaction to the document was strongest in the west. The text is preserved in the acts of the Lateran Council. In spite of the presence of the exarch Olympios, that council denounced the *Typos*, excommunicated

Patriarch Paul, and issued a letter to Constans which blamed the patriarch for endorsing Monotheletism. The synod's Latin acts bear the signatures of one hundred and six bishops who condemned the *Ekthesis* and *Typos*. Hence, the doctrine of Chalcedon was reaffirmed. Though personal condemnation of Emperors Herakleios or Constans did not take place, their heretical decrees were formally condemned and many heretics anathematized. Constans considered opposition to the *Typos* as treasonous. This charge would be prominent in the trials of both Pope Martin and Maximos the Confessor.

Though the *Typos* forbade any further discussion, Saint Maximos defied the royal edict and energetically continued the fight against Monotheletism. Constans accused Maximos of treason, since Maximos supported Pope Martin I. Imperial response to papal resistance was harsh. Saint Maximos and those who stood with the Lateran Council were persecuted. They were also charged as traitors and heretics who blasphemed the Mother of God.

In 653, exarch Theodore Kalliopas entered Rome with an army. He was instructed to force the pope to submit to the imperial will or seize him and bring him back to the capital. Upon his arrival in Rome, Theodore publically accused Pope Martin of being a traitor and a heretic. Without even listening to his defense, Theodore pronounced Martin guilty of all charges. Although the blessed and innocent Martin denied these crimes, he was then secretly arrested. Even though Pope Martin was in poor health at this time, he was carried away to Constantinople, suffering much ill treatment along the way. Within that same year, Pope Martin was made to stand before the Byzantine senate, where he was condemned as a traitor. He attempted to discuss the *Typos* but was not permitted to do so. In his defense at the odious tribunal in Constantinople, presided over by the Monothelite Patriarch Peter, the pope again refuted the malicious slanders of treason and heresy, saying, "I have never made any agreement with the Saracens to invade the Roman Empire and to make war against the emperor. I have sent alms only to the Orthodox who live in poverty and destitution among the Saracens. I have kept the Faith handed down by the holy fathers. And if anyone does not confess and venerate the most pure Mother of God, let him be accursed in this present age and in the age to come. It is not we who are incorrectly observing the Faith entrusted to us by the holy apostles and fathers, but those who think otherwise." Pope Martin was deposed and stripped of his episcopal vestments. He was then sentenced to death. Instead he was taken and exiled to Cherson in the Crimea. While he was in those parts, he died of starvation in Cherson. He reposed in the year 655. He is commemorated by the holy Church on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September.

**Saint Maximos in Constantinople Before the Senate (653)**

As for our holy father, Saint Maximos, and his faithful disciples Anastasios and another Anastasios, the one being the pope's *apokrisiarios*, they were all arrested shortly before Pope Martin. Anastasios the *apokrisiarios* would later provide us with the details of the many trials of Saint Maximos. The emperor knew who had been influential in supporting the pope's calling of the Lateran Council. In 653, he ordered the arrest of Father Maximos and his two disciples. The holy man was transferred by sea to Constantinople. Upon his arrival, he was brutally treated. He was without shoes or clothing. He was bound with fetters and dragged through the streets by two imperial officials and ten palace guards. This was done to set him forth for public mockery and humiliation. The holy man was about seventy years of age.

In June of 654, our holy father was locked in a dark dungeon. He was alone and kept separated from his disciples. They were finally reunited at the royal palace, just before their interrogation before the senate and a large gathering of the public. Father Maximos was suffering from bodily weakness, as a result of ill treatment in isolation. He was still in chains and rags when his first trial commenced. The emperor chose not to preside. Instead, one of the dignitaries, the *sakellarios*<sup>36</sup> (treasurer) was entrusted with the interrogation of the prisoner.

The treasurer began the interrogation by addressing Father Maximos with much anger and passion, "From what thou hast previously perpetrated, it has become clear to everyone that thou hatest the emperor and his realm. Thou hast favored the Arab conquest of Egypt and Africa. Thou hast betrayed to the Saracens not only Alexandria, Pentapolis, and Tripoli, but also all of Egypt and Africa." Saint Maximos calmly replied, "And where is there proof of these things? What have I, a monk, to do with the conquest or defense of lands and cities? Furthermore, why should I, a Christian, aid the Saracens? My only desire is the bestowal of God's blessing on our Christian cities."

Without recognizing the idiocy of their charge, the treasurer continued with fresh falsehoods. They accused Father Maximos of belittling the emperor, by saying that Maximos declared the western emperors more worthy of honor. Our blessed, humble, and devout monk answered, "I thank God that

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<sup>36</sup> *Sakellarios* was the title of both an administrative and ecclesiastical official, the functions of which varied with the times. Herakleios set his *sakellarios*, Theodore, at the head of an army. Constans II had his *sakellarios* conduct the examination of Saint Maximos. Patriarch Nikephoros (806-815) called the officers of that post "treasurers of the imperial funds." The functions were not always financial, but by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> C. the office had acquired fiscal duties. *Oxford*, s.v. "Sakellarios."

He has allowed me to fall into thy hands. I, moreover, hope that by enduring

these afflictions, my voluntary transgressions might be purged. Regarding thy

last charge, I should like to know, didst thou hear me condemning the

emperor, or did others tell thee what I said? The saint received this answer:

"We heard it from others, who heard it from thy very lips."

After several more slanderous statements were introduced into the session, which were hearsay and without written evidence, the saint demanded

that those who heard him speak against the emperor be brought forward to testify. But the saint would not permit his accusers. When Father Maximos was distressed that the witnesses for the state were deceased, he asked, "Well then, why was I not questioned while they yet lived? Think how much trouble thou wouldst have been spared! But now thou must produce evidence and witnesses! The truth is that I have committed no crime and my accusers have no fear of God. Who searches out the hearts of men. May I cease to be reckoned among the Christians if I have committed any of the despicable deeds which thou hast attributed to me?"

Through the Emperor's treasurer a danger threatened him, he was not about to give place to the defendant. A false witness, named Gregory, was summoned. He then testified, "While in Rome, I heard Father Maximos' disciple, Anastasios, declare that he and his teacher held that Emperor Constans II claimed priestly authority." Father Maximos answered the allegation, saying, "This man was in Rome with us at the same time; but we discussed with him Monotheletism. He pressed us to accept the *Typos* document, but we refused, mindful of Christ's judgment. God is my witness that neither I nor my disciple have ever charged the emperor with assuming the role of priest. What I did say, not to Father Anastasios but to Gregory himself, was that to expound upon dogmas of the Faith is not the work of emperors, but ministers of the altar. Ministers both anoint and lay hands on the emperor, stand before the altar, and perform the Mystery of the Eucharist and other divine Mysteries. I spoke these words then, and I stand by them now. Gregory remembers these words of mine. Should he deny them, then he must think there is some advantage for him. In any event, this is the truth as I have spoken it. Judge me as thou wilt." The prosecutors, hoping to base their verdict on the testimony of the false witnesses, were unclear how to proceed. They dismissed Father Maximos from the proceedings.

Afterward, they summoned Father Maximos again. They charged him with being a follower of Origen's teachings. This accusation was refuted when he proclaimed that Origen and his followers were cut off from communion with Christ and the Church.

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Though the frustrated treasurer's anger mastered him, he was not about to give place to the defendant. A false witness, named Gregory, was summoned. He then testified, "While in Rome, I heard Father Maximos' disciple, Anastasios, declare that he and his teacher held that Emperor Constans II claimed priestly authority." Father Maximos answered the allegation, saying, "This man was in Rome with us at the same time; but we discussed with him Monotheletism. He pressed us to accept the *Typos* document, but we refused, mindful of Christ's judgment. God is my witness that neither I nor my disciple have ever charged the emperor with assuming the role of priest. What I did say, not to Father Anastasios but to Gregory himself, was that to expound upon dogmas of the Faith is not the work of emperors, but ministers of the altar. Ministers both anoint and lay hands on the emperor, stand before the altar, and perform the Mystery of the Eucharist and other divine Mysteries. I spoke these words then, and I stand by them now. Gregory remembers these words of mine. Should he deny them, then he must think there is some advantage for him. In any event, this is the truth as I have spoken it. Judge me as thou wilt." The prosecutors, hoping to base their verdict on the testimony of the false witnesses, were unclear how to proceed. They dismissed Father Maximos from the proceedings.

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the patriarchate of Constantinople. After the saint answered them, they privately acknowledged that there was no one who could best Maximos in argumentation. The imperial representatives threatened that unless he should submit to imperial authority and accept the imperial *Typos* and the Monothelitist belief as stated therein, he would be publically humiliated, anathematized, and put to death. With meekness, Father Maximos humbly said, "May God's will be done in me, unto the glory of His holy name."

Unable to convict the confessor on the basis of false witnesses, the saint's enemies attempted to prevail over the truth by violence. They brought in for questioning Anastasios, the disciple of Maximos. They employed harsh language and threats against him, so that he would testify that his elder, Father Maximos, had only prevailed over fallen Patriarch Pyrrhos by means of torture. Anastasios was intimidated by neither beatings to his head, face, and neck nor threats of death. He relied on his faith in God and his discipleship of thirty-seven years under Hegumen Maximos. He categorically refused to confirm the slanderous charges against his elder.

#### **Saint Maximos Receives Patriarchal Representatives in Prison**

Visitors then went to see the saint in prison. They claimed that they had been dispatched by the patriarch. These perverse interrogators demanded that Maximos explain why he had separated himself from communion, not only with the Patriarch of Constantinople but also the patriarchates of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. They said to Father Maximos that "all these churches and the provinces under them are in concord. If thou wouldest belong to the catholic Church, thou must enter into communion with us at once, lest thou shouldest forge a new and strange pathway and fall into unexpected disaster." Our blessed confessor replied, "On what basis have all the churches entered into communion? If it is on a foundation of truth, as that professed by blessed Peter, I do not wish to be separated from them."

The representatives answered, "We confess both operations in Christ by reason of His distinct natures, and one operation because the two natures are united in one person." Saint Maximos then said, "You say that you confess two operations. If you say that the two operations have become a single operation in consequence of the unity of natures in one person, this means that you recognize a third operation, beside those two, which is fused or Theanthropic, at once divine and human." The messenger said, "No, we recognize only two operations, but speak of one by reason of their being united." The humble Confessor Maximos then demonstrated the futility of the emperor's position and said, "You are devising an ill-founded faith for yourselves. For you assert that God can exist without being. If you fuse the two operations into one, by reason of the union of natures in one person, and then divide by two this unity of operation by reason of the natures being

different, there shall be neither unity nor duality of operations. For duality is excluded by the union, and union is excluded by the division. These contrivances make that in which the operations dwell completely ineffectual. The union of God and man in Christ is rendered ineffectual, or rather altogether the union is abolished, since each nature does not manifest activities proper to it. An essence that is not manifested in its own operation has no being. So God would not have being according to your formulation. This is why I will never agree with your interpretations. It is contrary to everything I have learned from the holy fathers and the canons. With regard to my temporal fate, do with me as you please: you have power over my body."

The visitors could not gainsay Father Maximos. They went to the patriarch and reported all that had transpired. In 653, on the Sunday following the conclusion of the first trial of the saint and his two disciples, the officials of the Church met with the emperor. They selected a place of exile for Father Maximos, as the punishment befitting one whom they deemed a traitor and blasphemer. Just as in days of old with Pilate and the Jews, the state and religious leaders consulted each other to eliminate those who would resist.

#### **Saint Maximos in Bizye (653)<sup>37</sup>**

For Saint Maximos, they chose Bizye,<sup>38</sup> a town in Thrace, as his place of exile. His disciple, Anastasios, was banished to a bleak and barbarian place, Perveris (Pervera), on the border of the empire. The other Anastasios, the former *apokrisiarios* of Rome and author of the biography of Maximos, was sent to the Thracian city of Mesembria<sup>39</sup> on the western shores of the Black Sea. The banished fathers were not permitted visitors. Thus, they were alone, naked and hungry, having only God's help. They exhorted all Christians, crying aloud, "Pray that the Lord God might perfect His mercy with our lowliness, and that He might teach us that those who sail along with Him experience a savage sea, like a ship which is driven about by winds and waves but stands firm and unshakeable."

In exile, Saint Maximos persisted as a censure and embarrassment to both the emperor and the patriarch. Before Father Maximos was exiled, Patriarch Paul died. Pyrrhos was then appointed patriarch; but, after four months, he also died (654). Peter, the Monothelite, then ascended the throne of Constantinople.

<sup>37</sup> For this section see *P.G.* 90:135 ff., which is also found in the pamphlet of Hieromonk Efthymios' Μαξίμου τοῦ Ὁμολογητοῦ (*Maximos the Confessor*), Athonite Kellion of Saint George, pp. 24-33, §§ A'-E', I'-II', ΙΕΤ'-ΙΗ', ΚΓ'.

<sup>38</sup> Bizye (41°48'N 27°49'E) is in present-day Turkey.

<sup>39</sup> Mesembria (42°39'N 27°43'E, Nesebur) is in present-day Bulgaria.

A considerable amount of time passed. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, in the year 656, there were sent to the fortress at Bizye three men of high rank: Bishop Theodosios of Caesarea in Bithynia, on behalf of Patriarch Peter of Constantinople; and Paul and Theodosios of consular rank, on behalf of Emperor Constans II. They were dispatched to ascertain if Father Maximos had altered his opinion. They were commissioned to find out if he were now willing to accept Monothelism and the *Typos*, that he might be in communion with the see of Constantinople. They went and Bishop Theodosios inquired, "How art thou faring, milord abba?" The faithful slave of God replied, "Exactly as God knew I would before the ages. He foreordained the circumstances of my life, which life is guarded by providence." Bishop Theodosios remarked, "What art thou saying? That God foreknows and foreordains the acts of each of us before the ages?" Father Maximos answered, "Since He certainly foreknew, He also foreordained."<sup>40</sup> Theodosios asked, "What dost thou mean by 'He foreknew, He foreordained'?" Father Maximos answered, "God's foreknowledge pertains to our thoughts, words, and deeds that are within our power. But foreordaining pertains to those things, not in our power, which befall us." Theodosios continued and said, "And what is and what is not in our power?" Father Maximos replied, "Despota, thou knowest these things. Dost thou inquire that thou mightest try thy slave?" Theodosios then said, "In truth, I know not. I desire to understand what things are in our power and what are not. I should like to know how one pertains to God's foreknowing and the other to His foreordaining."

Father Maximos then took up his request and gave this response: "Our virtuous and bad deeds depend on our own will. But chastisements and disasters which come upon us, as well as their opposites, are beyond our

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<sup>40</sup> "For whom He foreknew (οὗς προέγνω), He also foreordained (καὶ προώρισεν) to be conformable to the image of His Son [Rom. 8:29]." Saint Symeon the New Theologian: "God knows all things beforehand, both past and present at once, and everything which is going to happen in the future up to the end of the world. He sees them as already present, because in and through Him all things hold together [Col. 1:17]. . . . It is not God's foreknowledge of those who, by their free choice and zeal, will prevail which is the cause of their victory, just as, again, it is not His knowing beforehand who will fall and be vanquished which is responsible for their defeat. . . . All those who have believed in Christ are foreknown and foreordained, and become conformed to the image of the Son of God. And all of them, as foreordained, are called; and, as called, they are also justified; and, as justified, they are glorified. Because, while those perish who, after being baptized and believing in Christ, and becoming conformed to the image of the Son of God, do not keep themselves in this state, all who abide in it are saved." See "The Church and the Last Things," *On the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses*, Vol. 1, Second Discourse, 86-89.

power. We are not empowered to be in health or sickness, though we do contribute to those conditions which are likely to lead to one or the other state. In like manner, we cannot determine whether we shall attain the kingdom of the heavens or be cast into the Gehenna of the fire, though keeping God's commandments is cause for our attaining the kingdom, and not observing them is cause for our being cast into the Gehenna of the fire."

Theodosios then asked, "Why dost thou afflict thyself with this exile and incarceration?" Father Maximos answered, "I pray God that, castigating me by means of these sufferings, He may forgive my transgressions." Theodosios then interjected, "Do not afflictions come that one may be tried and his manner of life may be made manifest among men?" Father Maximos said, "The saints are tried so that their secret virtues may be made manifest to all. Job was tempted to reveal his perseverance and patience, while Joseph was put to the test that his chastity and temperance might shine forth. If God permits the saints to suffer in this life, it is because He would have us vanquish the devil, the ancient serpent. The patience of the saints was a consequence of their trials."<sup>41</sup>

At this point, Theodosios remarked, "Thou speakest well. I should very much like to converse with thee always on such matters. But I and my traveling companions, the honored consuls here, have come a very long distance to discuss with thee another matter. We have a proposal to offer thee. We hope that thou wilt consent and bring joy to the whole world." Father Maximos asked, "What is it, despota? Who am I that I should usher in joy to the world? Speak on." Theodosios then said, "It is the express wish of both the emperor and patriarch that thou shouldst explain why thou hast cut thyself off from communion with the see of Constantinople."

Father Maximos then explained, "Thou knowest the novelties introduced by Patriarch Kyros of Alexandria twenty-one years ago. He published the *Nine Chapters*,<sup>42</sup> which the patriarchate of Constantinople approved. There have also been other documents which have proposed

<sup>41</sup> Saint Maximos, from his *Commentary on the Our Father*: "The evil one mischievously uses other types of temptations, voluntary and involuntary, the first by sowing and greatly provoking the soul with bodily pleasures and scheming first to take away the desire of divine love. Then he cunningly works on the other type, hoping to corrupt our nature by pain so as to constrain the soul, struck down by the weakness of sufferings, to set in motion the attitudes of hatred of the Creator. We pray to avoid voluntary temptation, so that we will not turn aside our desire from divine love. As far as involuntary temptation is concerned, let us endure it nobly as coming with God's consent, so that we may show that we prefer the Creator of nature to nature itself." Saint Maximus, *Selected Writings: Our Father*, § 6, Classics, pp. 118, 119.

<sup>42</sup> The *Nine Chapters* introduced Monoenergism.

innovation and perverted the definitions of the synods. I include the *Ekthesis* and the *Typos*. The novelties found therein were devised by the primates of the Church of Constantinople: Sergios, Pyrrhos, and Paul. These documents and the circumstances surrounding them are known to all the churches. As long as the scandal of heresy persists in the Church of Constantinople and her bishops are miscreants, I will not enter into communion with her. It would be a transgression. There, I have given you my reasons. Let the offenses and stumbling blocks brought in by these men into the Church be removed; and let those who introduced them be deposed. The Lord spoke through the prophet and said, 'Make a way for My people; and cast the stones out of the way [Is. 62:10].' Then shall the path of salvation be cleared. Then shall you walk the smooth path of the Gospel purged of all heresy. When I see the Church of Constantinople as she was formerly, then shall I enter into communion with her. I shall not need any urging on the part of men. But as long as the scandal of heresy persists in her and her bishops are heretics, there is no argument, no deed, no persecution, which can ever persuade me to enter into communion with her."

Bishop Theodosios then asked, "But what mistaken profession is in our confession that thou shouldest shun communion with us?" Father Maximos then expounded on the meaning of a quaternity instead of a trinity, saying, "It is confessed by you that the Savior's divinity and humanity have one energy (μίαν ἐνέργειαν, operation). But the holy fathers teach that each distinct nature had its own distinct energy. You are then confessing the Holy Trinity not as a trinity but as a quaternity. By positing one operation of the Savior's divinity and humanity, you are saying that the Logos assumed, not our flesh and that of the pure Virgin Theotokos, but flesh having the qualities of the divine nature. You have implied that His flesh has ceased to be completely akin to human nature and that a new essence was formed, of one essence with the Logos to the same extent that the Logos is of one essence with the Father and the Spirit. Thus, you have invented a quaternity, because you deny that Christ had a true human nature. Thus, you allege that the nature formed in the incarnation was actually coessential with that of the pre-eternal Logos, as the Logos is coessential with the Father and the Spirit.

"Again, by denying the two energies and declaring that Christ's divinity and humanity share a single will, you deprive and belittle His independent actions in doing good as God and man. If nature should lack its proper and intrinsic operation, it is incapable of doing anything at all. Then if each nature in Christ does not have its own energy, then even if one of the natures should wish to do good, it cannot, since its ability to act had been

taken away. Indeed, without the ability to act and without the operation proper to its nature, nothing can work or do anything.

"You recognize the incarnation of the Christ and acknowledge His two natures. And though you have made His flesh beginningless according to its will, yet you also admit that, according to its nature, His flesh was created in time. In other words, you say that the flesh is without beginning, just as Divinity can have no beginning. But according to the nature of flesh, it was fashioned in time. This is not only senseless but godless. You are not simply saying that there is one will in Christ, but you call it divine. But a divine will, as Divinity Itself, has neither beginning nor end. Moreover, you also take away from Christ the Lord all the properties and manifestations by which His divinity and humanity are known.

"In the *Ekthesis* and the *Typos*, you demand that there should be no discussion regarding one will or two wills in Christ. You demand that there should be no talk of His operations or His natures. And yet, you have abolished the notion of a single will and operation by insisting on their duality, that is, you acknowledge that this will is twofold by your very admission that the human will is subject to the divine. Therefore, you contradict the truth that there are two wills and operations; for you have fused them into one."

These words and many more words were uttered by Father Maximos, according to Father Anastasios, his disciple and biographer. After the way that Father Maximos explained that a quaternity had been created by the Monothelites, Bishop Theodosios and the patricians began to realize their error. But then Theodosios quickly checked himself and said, "Accept the emperor's *Typos* not as a confession of the dogma of the Faith, but as his personal expression and means of quelling controversy. Be mindful of the fact that what was written by Emperor Constans II was not issued as a law, but simply his written decision of the Faith."

Father Maximos then said, "If the *Typos* is neither a law nor the prescribed dogma, establishing the unity of will and operation of our Lord, then why have you exiled me to a land of barbarians and pagans who know not God. Why have I been exiled to Bizya? Why have my two fellow laborers been banished, one to Perveris and the other to Mesembria?" After giving no answer, Father Maximos reminded them of the Lateran Council, saying, "A synod was convened in Rome by Pope Martin. The Monothelites were condemned." Theodosios then said, "But that synod had no significance. It had not been summoned by the emperor's decree. It is his imperial summons which bestows authority to a synod."

Father Maximos looked at Bishop Theodosios and remarked, "If that were true, then the Orthodox Faith should have come to an end long ago. If

the only synods to be confirmed were those initiated by an imperial summons, well then, where would be the Orthodox Faith? Consider those synods which were summoned by royal decrees against the coessentiality (*homooousios*) of the Son of God and God the Father. Recall the first one held in Tyre, the second in Antioch, the third in Seleukeia, the fourth in Constantinople under Evdioxios the Arian, the fifth in Nike of Thrace, and the sixth in Sirmium. Then there was the seventh council under Dioscoros, who presided, which took place in Ephesus. I remind thee that all of these were convened by an imperial summons, but came to be rejected and anathematized on account of their godless decrees. If thou believest that a synod is valid solely if the imperium convenes it, then on what basis dost thou accept the synod which condemned and anathematized Paul of Samosata? As thou knowest, that synod was presided over by Gregory the Wonder-worker. Its decrees were confirmed by Pope Dionysius of Rome and Dionysios of Alexandria. I remind thee that no emperor convened that synod, yet its resolutions are irrefutable. The Orthodox Church recognizes those synods which profess true dogmas. Despota of course is already aware that the canons require that local councils meet twice yearly in every Christian land for the defense of the Faith and the administration of the Church. However, the Church canons mention nothing about imperial decrees convening synods.

“The apostle says, ‘God set for Himself some in the Church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers [1 Cor. 12:28]’; this is for the building up of the Church and the faithful. In the Gospel, we hear those words, spoken by Christ Who said, ‘Now what I say to you, I say to all [Mk. 13:37]. . . . The one who receiveth you receiveth Me, and the one who receiveth Me receiveth the One Who sent Me forth [Mt. 10:40].’ And, ‘The one who rejecteth you rejecteth Me, and the one who rejecteth Me rejecteth the One Who sent Me forth [Lk. 10:16].’ Let us examine one other thing. God sent forth apostles, prophets, and teachers for the setting aright of the faithful. The devil has dispatched false apostles, false prophets, and false teachers to war against the Church. Only heretics find a place in the formulations of these false apostles, false prophets, and false teachers, whose thoughts and words pervert others. If we examine the innovations of our time, we enter into the meaning of the apostle who said that ‘this is that spirit of the antichrist, which ye have heard that it is coming, and now already it is in the world [1 Jn. 4:3].’ It is evident that novelties and alien dogmas have been introduced into the Church. This being so, we ought to heed David who says, ‘Blessed are they that search out His testimonies; with their whole heart shall they seek after Him [Ps. 118:2].’ Together with this searching to find God, we need to pray these words: ‘Give me understanding, and I will search out Thy law, and I will keep it with my whole heart [Ps. 118:34].’ This discovery leads to

knowledge of the law; and desire for knowledge persuades those who are worthy to guard it in their hearts to perform the commandments of God. 'Wonderful are Thy testimonies; therefore hath my soul searched them out [Ps. 118:129].' The Lord Himself directs His apostles and us, saying, 'Keep on searching the Scriptures, for in them ye think to have eternal life; and these are they which testify concerning Me [Jn. 5:39].' The chief of the apostles, Peter, exhorts us saying, 'Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched out, who prophesied concerning the grace toward you [1 Pe. 1:10].' The divine Paul says, 'But even if our Gospel is being veiled, it is hidden in those perishing, in whom the God<sup>43</sup> of this age blinded the minds of the unbelieving, so that the illumination of the Gospel of the glory of the Christ, Who is the image of God, should not dawn on them [2 Cor. 4:3].' Let us not immerse our minds, as do the Jews, in just the naked words. They pursue solely the letter of the law. They have fallen outside of the truth. They have a veil over their hearts, lest they should give thought to the true Spirit hidden in the words; 'for the letter killeth, but the Spirit maketh alive [2 Cor. 3:6].' Therefore, despota, do thou be informed about me: I shall not become as the Jews. We ought not, therefore, to invent novelties and use formulas ungrounded in Scripture and the words of the Fathers. Find me any father who enters into the meaning of what thou hast spoken and those of like mind."

Bishop Theodosios then said, "What, then? We ought not to impute one energy in Christ?" Father Maximos answered, "According to the Scriptures and the holy fathers, it is as we believe: Christ has two natures. Thus we believe and confess that He has two natural wills and energies, appropriate to each." Theodosios said, "Verily, abba, we profess His natures and energies in a different manner; that is to say divine and human, even the will of His divinity and the will of his manhood, since His soul was not without a will. But we simply do not say that He possesses two wills, lest we should create a conflict in Him." Father Maximos said, "What art thou saying? That two natures present a conflict on account of there being two?" Theodosios said, "No." Father Maximos continued, "Well then?" Theodosios said, "Absolutely, the fathers do speak of wills and energies, but they wished to avoid division." Father Maximos said, "Thou sayest one thing and meanest another." Theodosios said, "I know what I mean, but I will not say two." Father Maximos took up the book containing the minutes of the holy apostolic synod. He then pointed out to Theodosios a particular section and said, "The

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<sup>43</sup> 2 Cor. 4:3 "the God of this age," according to Saint John Chrysostom [Homily 8, *P.G.* 61:493 (col. 455)] and Blessed Theophylact [*P.G.* 124:263A (col. 840)], is the God of all.

holy fathers, in this section, unreservedly speak of the two wills and energies of our Savior and God Jesus Christ." Consul Theodosios then took hold of the book and began reading the minutes of the fathers' words.

At length, the bishop and the patricians could not gainsay Father Maximos. They sat in silence for a long while, pondering the holy man's explanations and examples. They finally were moved to contrition, hung their heads, and wept. After a while they rose up. They bowed to Father Maximos, who returned their gesture with a bow. Bishop Theodosios then said, "As the fathers confess, so do I." Theodosios then immediately put in writing his affirmation of the two natures, and two wills, and two energies of Jesus Christ." He then urged Father Maximos, saying, "Commune with us and let there be union." Father Maximos replied, "I do not dare to receive thy document concerning such a matter. I am but a simple monk. But if God has given compunction to thy heart, so that thou hast received the words of the holy fathers, thou shouldest dispatch, as the canons demand, this written confession to the Pope of Rome, the emperor, and the patriarch. For I cannot commune unless these events come to pass. I urge thee to speak to the emperor and patriarch, that they too may follow thine example." Bishop Theodosios gave his word to speak to them.

As further confirmation of their conversion, the three visitors kissed the holy Gospels, the honorable cross, and icons of Christ God the Savior and our Lady Theotokos. They then discussed for some time other edifying subjects. After they exchanged a kiss of peace in the Lord, Father Maximos bade them farewell. Consul Theodosios then said, "Behold, I have done everything; but will the emperor be persuaded?" Father Maximos said to him, "Thou must speak to him by all means, if thou desirest to be an imitator of God Who by His extreme humility brought about our salvation." Consul Theodosios then said, "I hope that God keeps in my memory all these words that passed between us, that I might recite them to the emperor and persuade him." Then they embraced one another. Bishop Theodosios and the two consuls departed in peace. The bishop then left Father Maximos with an old cassock.

In his dealings with heretics, Father Maximos wrote: "What is more pleasing to the faithful than to see the scattered children of God gathered again as one? Neither do I exhort you to place harshness above the love of men. May I not be so mad! I beseech you to do and to carry out good to all men with care and assiduity, becoming all things to all men, as the need of each is shown to you. I want and pray you to be wholly harsh and implacable with the heretics only in regard to cooperating with them or in any way whatever supporting their deranged belief. For I reckon it hatred toward man

and a departure from divine love to lend support to error, so that those previously seized by it might be even more greatly corrupted."<sup>44</sup>

**Saint Maximos in Constantinople for a Second Examination (654)<sup>45</sup>**

Now Bishop Theodosios and the two patricians returned to Emperor Constans, who became infuriated at their report. The three men feared imperial wrath and disfavor, so they reverted to Monotheletism. Constans then commanded the Patrician Paul to go to Bizye and transfer Father Maximos to Constantinople. Father Maximos was to be treated humanely and assigned a cell in the Monastery of Saint Theodore, near the emperor's palace, in the suburbs of the capital. Paul carried out this transfer on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September.

The following day, the patricians Epiphanios and Troilos were also dispatched to see the saint. Therefore, the patricians, with Bishop Theodosios, and a company of soldiers and servants, returned to Bizye and met with Father Maximos. They traveled with much grandeur. Meanwhile, Father Maximos had been waiting and hoping that Bishop Theodosios had succeeded in changing the beliefs of the emperor.

It was not long before Father Maximos perceived that Bishop Theodosios preferred his earthly king to the heavenly King and His Church. They convened in the catechism chamber of that monastery's church. The emperor's men sat down. They persuaded Father Maximos to also take a seat. Then the patrician Troilos opened the discussion by saying, "The emperor, the God-appointed master of the inhabited world, has commissioned us to proclaim the royal pleasure. But first, tell us, wilt thou obey the emperor's will?" Father Maximos replied, "Milord, first I will hear what his majesty wishes and then I shall respond. For how can I offer a reply to that which I know not yet?" Troilos, however, persisted and said, "We shall not apprise thee of the imperial will unless thou shouldest first announce that thou wilt submit to the emperor." Perceiving their sharp insistence and malice in their countenance, Father Maximos answered them, saying, "Since you are unwilling to inform me, your slave, what is pleasing to our master, the emperor, and what he wishes of me, I therefore state before God and His angels that if the emperor should command me to perform something of temporal and transitory significance, and such a command is not opposed to God or detrimental to the salvation of my soul, I would gladly fulfill the command." Troilos, leaping up from his seat, made as if to leave and said, "It is obvious that this fellow has no intention of fulfilling the royal will."

<sup>44</sup> P.G. 91:465C.

<sup>45</sup> For this section, see also Hieromonk Efthymios' *Maximos the Confessor* (in Greek), pp. 33-37, §§ KΔ'-Λ'.

In the meantime, a clamor arose among those present and the crowd of onlookers who had gathered. A great noise and commotion arose. Bishop Theodosios then intervened and said to Troilos, "Declare unto Father Maximos what is the will of Emperor Constans, and let us hear his reply. How can we possibly justify our departure without having spoken a word to Father Maximos about what would please the emperor? It would be nonsensical." The patrician Epiphanius then declared, "Hear his majesty's words: 'May the Lord grant thee compunction, so that thou wouldest accept our *Typos* and enter into communion with us! The schismatics in both the east and west are causing disturbances on account of thee. They have become apostates from the Faith. They refuse communion with us. Be assured that we shall receive thee with love at Chalke, escort thee to the Great Church (Hagia Sophia) with great honor and glory, and place thee beside us where royalty sits. Together we shall communicate the Mysteries. We shall then proclaim thee as our father. There shall then be joy not only throughout our Christ-loving city, but throughout all Christendom. It is our firm belief that shouldst thou be persuaded to enter into communion with the Church of Constantinople, then all those who, by thine example, have cut themselves off from communion with us shall be reunited. We are certain of these things. Thou mayest depend on what has been promised thee.'"

Father Maximos' eyes welled up with tears. He then sighed and looked upon Bishop Theodosios, saying, "Despota, we all await the fearful day of judgment. Hast thou forgotten what thou didst promise when thou didst lay thy hand upon the Gospel, the life-giving cross, and holy icons of our Savior and God and the Ever-virgin Mother and Panagia (all-holy one)?" Bishop Theodosios, ashamed, lowered his countenance and answered with a broken voice, saying, "There was nothing I could do to guide the emperor to change his mind. The most devout emperor had already reached the conclusion that with thee as the guide of the schismatics throughout the east and west, they have risen up against us. They ever increase in number and incite disturbances, cutting off communion with us. If thou wilt accept our *Typos* and enter into communion with us, all who have cut us off because of thy teaching shall come to be united with us." Father Maximos then asked, "But why didst thou and thy companions place your hands on the Gospel, if you were not resolved to fulfill that which you vowed? Truly, all the hosts of the heavens could not persuade me to do what you have proposed. How would I answer—I do not say God—my conscience, if I were to reject the true Faith for the sake of empty glory and the praise of men, which are of no worth?"

The emperor's men then jumped to their feet. In a rage, they lunged at Father Maximos, raining down blows and insults. They dragged him about

the floor with the hairs of his head. They kicked and trampled upon the aged elder. From head to toe, he suffered wounds and bruises. Without a doubt, such an assault would have led to Father Maximos' death had not Bishop Theodosios intervened. When they finally desisted, they covered the holy man with so much of their malodorous spittle that his clothes were soaked. Bishop Theodosios then chided them, saying, "You ought not to have done so. We were only required to hear his answer and report it to the emperor. The canons do not sanction such abuse. Matters subject to Church canons are judged differently." It was only with difficulty that Bishop Theodosios persuaded them to take their seats again. They hearkened to the bishop but hurled crude insults at Father Maximos.

The patrician Epiphanius could not master his resentment toward the holy man. He spoke angrily to the saint, saying, "Speak to us, thou wicked dog: why dost thou reckon the emperor and the Constantinopolitans as heretics? We are more Christian than thou art, and more Orthodox too." Epiphanius then collected himself somewhat and continued, saying, "See here, we do acknowledge in our Lord Jesus a divine will, a human will, and a noetic soul. It is intrinsic in every rational being to have the power to will and the capacity to energize. We also recognize that the Lord has the power of willing according to His divinity and His humanity. We do not deny that He has two wills and two energies." Father Maximos then said, "If you believe as the Church of God teaches, then why are you compelling me to accept the *Typos*, which utterly does away with that which thou hast just spoken?" Epiphanius answered, "The purpose of the *Typos* is to provide a form of expression to that which is not entirely comprehensible. This shall protect the people from falling into error as a consequence of what they little understand, due to the subtlety of expression used in theological speech. As a result, this shall also prevent controversies from erupting."

Father Maximos wished to correct their suggestion that the *Typos* was merely a general instruction on theological matters difficult to comprehend, so as to end controversy and unite the Church. The zealous confessor countered Epiphanius, saying, "On the contrary, the *Typos* is opposed to a correct confession of the Faith, as defined at the Synod of Chalcedon, which Faith sanctifies every person. The *Typos*, in fact, by suppressing the proper confession of the Faith, has denied the Faith." Epiphanius then interjected, "But I am telling thee that the *Typos* does not deny the two wills of Christ. It simply orders that one not speak of the two wills, for the sake of preserving peace in the Church." Father Maximos said, "Suppression of the Faith is a denial of it. The Holy Spirit has spoken through the Prophet David, saying, 'There are no tongues nor words in which their voices are not heard [Ps. 18:3].' Thereupon, if a word is not spoken, it is no word at all."

Troilos said in retort, "Believe what thou wilt in thine own heart. No one cares nor forbids thee to do so, only do not foment disturbances." Father Maximos corrected his suggestion, saying, "Salvation does not depend alone on faith of the heart. Harken to the words of the Lord: 'Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father Who is in the heavens [Mt. 10:33].' The holy apostle also exhorts us, writing: 'For with the heart one believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth one confesseth unto salvation [Rom. 10:10].' If God, and the prophets and apostles, command that the great mystery of the Faith, which brings salvation to the world, should be preached, then our salvation and that of others is being hindered when the proclamation of the Faith is prohibited."

Epiphanius, irritated at these words, then reverted to another subject, asking, "Didst thou put thy signature to the *libellus*, that is, the defamatory resolutions set forth in the synod held at Rome?" Father Maximos answered, "Yes, I did sign." Epiphanius then asked, "How didst thou dare to sign and anathematize those who confess the Faith in a sound manner, even as the catholic Church teaches?" Without waiting for an answer, Epiphanius threatened Father Maximos, saying, "Verily, we shall drag thee through the streets and bind thee in the forum. We shall give free access to actors, mimics, harlots, and the rabble that they might administer to thee a thrashing and spit in thy face." Father Maximos said, "Let it be as thou sayest, if we should anathematize those who acknowledge two natures and two corresponding wills and energies in Christ the Lord, Who in His divine nature is true God, and in His human nature, true man. But milord, I urge thee to read the minutes of the Lateran Council held in Rome. All those who signed have anathematized those who, like Arius and Apollinarios, acknowledge one will and one energy in the Lord. They pronounced against those who do not confess that our Lord Jesus has a distinct energy and will for each of the two natures by which He wrought our salvation."

Those who were present then complained, "If we should let him speak on, we shall have no opportunity to eat or drink. Let us go in to supper. Afterward, we can tell the emperor and patriarch what we have heard from his lips. The wretch has evidently sold himself to Satan." They all arose and went forth to eat and drink. It was then the eve of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. The vigil was about to commence. After they supped, they left the suburbs and went into the city. The visitors were all very angry at the results of their encounter with Father Maximos.

The following day, the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, consul Theodosios went to see Father Maximos alone. He undertook this commission at the emperor's behest. He entered the holy man's cell, confiscated all of the elder's books, and said, "Since thou didst not wish honor and put it far from thee, then thou

shalt be vouchsafed of that which thou dost deserve, even the same sentence as thy disciples; for the one is found in Mesymbria and the other in Perveris. We shall, however, convey them from their places of exile that we might make a determination in their cases."

**Saint Maximos in Selymbria (September of 654)<sup>46</sup>**

Soldiers seized Father Maximos and led him away. They first brought him to Selymbria<sup>47</sup> of Thrace, on the north shore of the Sea of Marmara, west of Constantinople. Father Maximos spent two days in that city, during which time a Selymbrian recruit started a vile rumor in the army camp that Father Maximos had blasphemed the Theotokos. It was bruited about into the ears of the Selymbrians. The military governor, moved by God to treat the prisoner humanely, was sympathetic toward Father Maximos. The military governor invited the leading clergymen of Selymbria to assemble and examine Father Maximos, for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not the rumor were true. As the clergy and monks approached Father Maximos, our holy father rose up and made a prostration before them. They then bowed themselves in return. Afterward they all sat down. Then a venerable elder from among those who came, with a meek and respectful tone, addressed Father Maximos and said, "Father, certain individuals have erred concerning thy sanctity. They were scandalized by a rumor that thou hast denied our Lady, the all-holy Virgin, by not addressing her as Theotokos. I, therefore, adjure thee, by the coessential and life-creating Holy Trinity, to dispel from their hearts this absurd report by stating the truth. We should not wish to think of thee unjustly." Father Maximos then made a full prostration to them. He then rose up and lifted his hands toward heaven. With tears in his eyes, he solemnly declared: "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the coessential and supra-essential (ὁπερὸύσιος, beyond all being) Trinity, and of all the heavenly hosts, the choir of the apostles and prophets, the immense multitudes of martyrs and righteous souls who have reposed in the Faith." Some of those who assembled, then began weeping. Father Maximos paused and said, "Whosoever does not confess our Lady, the all-hymned one, the most holy and immaculate Virgin, who is the most honorable of rational beings, to be the true Birthgiver of God 'Who hath made heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is therein [Ps. 145:6],' let such a one be anathema, now and ever and unto the ages of ages."

Upon hearing such a solemn affirmation, the monks and clergy wept. They blessed Father Maximos and said to him, "May God empower thee, O

<sup>46</sup> For this section, see also Hieromonk Efthymios' *Maximos the Confessor* (in Greek), pp. 37, 38, § AA'.

<sup>47</sup> Selymbria (41°05'N 28°15'E) was at the end of the Via Egnatia.

father, and vouchsafe thee to worthily complete thy course without stumbling." Now many soldiers had stood by that they might hear some edifying exhortations. Some of the military governor's officers observed their men listening carefully. The soldiers next began censuring the government for banishing Father Maximos. Thereupon, the officers quickly gave the order that Father Maximos was to be removed from their midst and the camp. The holy man was then made to march two miles farther in the direction of Perveris, as that place is called by the natives, where he was to continue his exile. The clergy and monks standing by, out of love for Father Maximos, accompanied him on the road. When the time came to depart, they embraced the saint with tear-filled eyes. After they mounted Father Maximos on a beast of burden, they returned to Selymbria. The saint was taken, under guard, to Perveris where he was imprisoned.<sup>48</sup>

#### **Saint Maximos in Perveris (654)**

Father Maximos, with his disciple Anastasios, spent five years in Perveris. Emperor Constans II finally recalled Father Maximos and his two disciples to Constantinople. They reached the city by ship, arriving as the sun was setting. When the ship docked, the prisoners were placed in the custody of two captains of the guard and ten soldiers.

#### **Saint Maximos in Constantinople for a Third Examination (659)<sup>49</sup>**

Father Maximos and his disciples disembarked half-naked and without anything on their feet. The confessors were incarcerated in separate cells. Several days later, the prisoners were taken to Constans' palace. Both of the saint's disciples were left outside and under guard, while Father Maximos was escorted into the senate, which was in session. The senators were present but not the emperor. The elder was then presented to the seated nobles. The first to address the holy man was the *sakellarios*. His voice betrayed his anger when he asked, "Art thou a Christian?" Without pride, but in great humility toward our God and Savior, Saint Maximos replied, "By the grace of Christ the God of all, I am a Christian." The treasurer replied, "That is not true!" The slave of God calmly responded, "Thou sayest that I am not, but God says that I am and will remain a Christian." The imperial representative maliciously continued, "But how, if thou art a Christian, canst thou hate the emperor?" The saint disarmed the interrogator's advance with this reproof: "And how can this be evident? For hatred is a hidden disposition of the soul, just as love is." The treasurer then said, "But from thy deeds it has become

<sup>48</sup> The account rendered by Father Anastasios the *apokrisiarios* ends here. The subsequent text is based on what is found in *P.G.* 90 and 91.

<sup>49</sup> For this section see *P.G.* 90:109 ff., which is also found in Hieromonk Efthymios' *Maximos the Confessor* (in Greek), pp. 11-16, §§ A'-E'.

known that thou art an enemy of his majesty and the realm. Thou hast betrayed Egypt and Alexandria and Pentapolis and Tripoli and all of Africa to the Saracens!" Father Maximos asked, "Where is there proof of this charge?"

Father Maximos was also maligned as a critic of Herakleios I and his family. The allegation maintained that Father Maximos claimed that God was not pleased to give the royal family the rule of the empire. The treasurer then produced his witness, a man named John. He had been secretary to Peter, former general of Numidia.<sup>50</sup> The treasurer then had his witness give testimony against Father Maximos. The *sakellarios* John then began: "Twenty-two years ago, the grandfather of our Emperor Constans II, that is, Herakleios I, ordered the general, the blessed Peter, to lead his army into Egypt against the Saracens. I remember that Peter had complete confidence in Father Maximos, whom he deemed as a servant of God. Peter wrote Father Maximos and requested his advice regarding the campaign. Father Maximos answered, 'It is not God-pleasing that thou shouldest fight for Herakleios and his heirs.'" John claimed that this statement was put in writing. Father Maximos answered, "If thou art telling the truth, then thou must surely be able to produce this correspondence. Let the correspondence be brought forth in evidence; and I shall be subject to the punishments prescribed in the law." The ignominious John answered, "I do not have in my possession any letters, nor have I ever seen any pertaining to this case. But I do know that everyone in the camp spoke of these things to each other at the time." Father Maximos then said, "If the whole camp talked about this exchange, why art thou the only one to libel me? Hast thou ever laid eyes on me?" The treasurer answered, "Never." "I, too," said Father Maximos, "have never laid eyes on thee prior to this."

The unjust nature of the proceedings therefore was exposed. The man of God then turned toward the senate and addressed the members saying, "Judge for yourselves if it is just to have such accusers or witnesses brought forward. 'For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye measure, it shall be measured in turn to you [Mt. 7:2].' Thus speaks the God of all."

The prosecution did not rest. It brought in its next witness, one Sergios Magudas, who stated: "Ten years ago, Abbot Thomas of Rome related to me that Pope Theodore had dispatched him to Gregory, the patrician, exarch of Carthage, who had rebelled against the Rhomaioi. The pope commissioned Abbot Thomas to assure Gregory that he should not fear

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<sup>50</sup> Numidia was a province situated to the west and south of Africa Proconsularis, that is, the region about Carthage.

to attack the empire, because God's servant, Father Maximos, had seen a dream. Father Maximos had seen a multitude of angels in the heavens. Some were positioned in the east, crying aloud, 'Constantine<sup>51</sup> Augustus, thou shalt conquer!' Some were standing in the west, crying aloud, 'Gregory Augustus,<sup>52</sup> thou shalt conquer!' Father Maximos declared that the voices of the angels in the west were louder and stronger than those in the east." After Magudas spoke, the treasurer, acting as prosecutor, made a comment to Father Maximos and said, "And I suppose now that God has brought thee to this city to be burned alive."

Father Maximos replied, "I give thanks to God Who is cleansing my sins, both voluntary and involuntary. But 'Woe to the world because of the stumbling blocks! For it must be that the stumbling blocks come, yet woe to that man by whom the stumbling block cometh [Mt. 18:7]!' It is shameful to speak disparagingly of someone unjustly, as thou hast. It is no less shameful to leave unpunished those who speak such things merely to please men. All of these charges should have been brought forth when the exarch Gregory was alive. Then the patrician and general, Peter of Numidia, Abbot Thomas, and the holy Pope Theodore could have been summoned or sent their affidavits. Were they here, I should ask the exarch Peter, 'Tell me, milord, didst thou write me, as thy secretary claims, or did I write thee?' I should then have inquired of the blessed pope, 'Master, had I ever disclosed one of my dreams to thee?' Even if the pope were to say that I had related to him such a dream, the guilt would lie with the one who encouraged the rebellion, which I did not. Moreover, a dream is not a matter of will. Certainly one cannot be punished by law for something he dreamed. The law punishes those deeds which depend upon a man's free will."

Troilos the patrician then said to the elder, "Abba, art thou playing? Dost thou know where thou art?" Father Maximos said, "I am not playing; rather, I am mourning that my life has come to this point here that I should be in peril from such fantastic allegations." The patrician Epiphaneios then said, "God knows and is not mocked if this is not the truth." The secretary became angry and said to Father Maximos, "Simply put, thou art saying, art thou not, that everyone else is lying, but only thou art speaking the truth?" Tears filled the eyes of the slave of God as he said, "Thou hast authority, permitted by God, to grant me life or to put me to death. However know this:

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<sup>51</sup> Constantine is Constans II.

<sup>52</sup> Gregory, exarch of Carthage, and relative of Herakleios supported the anti-Monothelite position of Saint Maximos. In later 646, Gregory rebelled against Constans II. In Africa, support for Pope Theodore and Father Maximos was strong. Gregory was defeated by the Arabs. He died in 647.

if these allegations should be true, then Satan would be God by nature; but since that is not so—of course it is not!—neither are the allegations true. May I be right opposite the Christians and the supra-essential God, Maker, Creator, Producer, Foreknower, Judge, and Savior of all, if ever I recounted such a dream, or heard another narrate it.”

The prosecution continued introducing other false accusations, which Father Maximos refuted wisely and humbly. In every instance, he was able to demonstrate his innocence. The prosecution pressed the allegation that Father Maximos and his disciples censured the emperor while the three men were in Rome. Theodore, a false witness, was brought forward. He was the son of John Kandidatos, who also bore the second name of Hila, who was then the brother-in-law of Lord Platon the patrician. This Theodore claimed that he met with Father Maximos in Rome. “In a discussion,” said Theodore, “which took place between us in Rome, the subject of his majesty arose. Father Maximos began mocking the emperor to make his majesty look ridiculous. What I mean is that he was telling offensive jokes that injured the royal person.” The slave of God responded to this charge, saying, “Not ever have we had such a conversation. We spoke together only once, in the company of the most reverend elder and Lord Theoharistos, the brother of the exarch, regarding a church officer, at which time thou didst urge me to write some letters on his behalf. If thou shouldest find me uttering a falsehood, let me be punished.”

Next they brought in Gregory, the son of Photinos, who stated: “I went to the cell of Abba Maximos in Rome. Abba Anastasios, his disciple said to me that ‘the emperor plays even the priest; may he never be accounted worthy to be a priest.’” The slave of God answered this straightway, saying, “Milord Gregory, dost thou fear God? For such a conversation was never held by either me or my disciple.” Father Maximos then bowed to the senators and said, “Exhibit patience toward thy slave, and I shall tell thee all that was spoken between us. Then you might judge me with all the facts.”

Father Maximos then commenced, “Milord Gregory, when he came to Rome, paid me, your slave, the honor of visiting me in my cell. As soon as I caught sight of him, I made a prostration, as I am wont to do. I then greeted and embraced him. We then sat down and I asked him, ‘What is the reason for this visit from my master, the emperor?’ He said to me, ‘Our good and God-supported master desires to bring peace to the Churches of God. He has issued a decree to the God-honored pope that there be unity with Constantinople on the basis of the *Typos*.’ I said, ‘I know that it is impossible. The Romans are not about to prefer the unclean voices of heretics to the illuminating teaching of the holy fathers. They are not going to extinguish the light and exchange it for darkness. For there will be nothing left for us to ascribe veneration.’ He then said to me that ‘the *Typos* was not advanced to

be a document on divine teaching, but a means to maintain silence on such teaching that we might regulate peace.' I then said, 'Does the sacred Scripture write of maintaining such silence? Did not God speak through David, saying, "There are no tongues nor words in which their voices are not heard [Ps. 18:3]?" But if the word of God is neither spoken or heard, then it is no longer in our midst.'

"He then said, 'Do not put me in a difficult position. I ascribe to the holy Symbol of the Faith, the Creed.' I then said, 'And how is it possible that thou shouldest ascribe to the holy Symbol, while accepting the *Typos*?' He said, 'What harm is there in accepting the *Typos* and pronouncing the Creed?' I answered, 'It is patently clear that the *Typos* eradicates the Creed.' He exclaimed, 'For the Lord's sake, how is that so?' I explained, 'Recite the Creed to me, and learn how it confutes the Creed. I tell thee, recite it now!' He then began, 'I believe in one God, Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.' Then I interrupted and said, 'Pause here for a moment. See how the Faith of the fathers of Nicaea is destroyed. For He would not be Creator if He were in want of natural will and energy. For it certainly was by His will that He made heaven and the earth, even as David says in the Spirit: "All that the Lord hath willed He hath done, in heaven and on the earth, in the seas and in all the abysses [Ps. 134:6]." If now, for the sake of regulating peace, the saving Faith is ill-conceived, this is complete separation from God and not union. For tomorrow, the ill-famed Jews shall say, "Let us arrange a peace amongst us and let us unite. We shall remove circumcision and you shall take away Baptism; only let us no longer have any strife in our midst."'

"Similarly, the Arians made this offer to the great Constantine, writing: "Let us do away with the terms *homoousion* (same essence) and *heteroousion* (different essence), and let our Churches unite." This proposal was not accepted by our God-bearing fathers. They preferred death to remaining silent and setting aside the supra-essential divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Though Constantine may have been well-disposed, as some have recorded in history, for the political advantage to be achieved by consenting to such a union, yet neither he nor any one of the emperors may act as an intermediary and compel the God-bearing fathers to compromise with heretics regarding such issues. The Church fathers continue professing the pure and true dogma, pronouncing categorically that discussions and determination of the saving doctrines belong to the priests.'

"Milord Gregory then said to me, 'What then? Is not every Christian emperor a priest?' I said, 'He is not. He stands not in the sanctuary. And after the consecration of the bread, he does not elevate it and say, "Holy things for the holy." Neither does he baptize, nor anoint with Chrism, nor ordain, nor

consecrate temples. He does not take upon himself the symbols of the priesthood, the omophorion and the Gospel, but the diadem of the kingdom and the red cloak.'

"But why should we speak of so many things?" Father Maximos then said to the senators. "At the sacred Anaphora<sup>53</sup> in the Liturgy, above the holy Table, the high priest and deacons and all the priestly ranks, commemorate the emperors and lay people. After the consecration, in secret prayers, there takes place the commemoration of the dead and the living: 'Remember those who have fallen asleep in faith, Constantine,<sup>54</sup> and the rest.'<sup>55</sup> Upon hearing this, one named Menas cried out in the chamber, "Speaking such things tears apart the Church." Father Maximos denied that the words of sacred Scriptures and the holy fathers tear apart the Church.

The holy man was then questioned about Origen. He was accused of misleading all with the dogmas of Origen. The slave of God answered in the presence of all, "Anathema to Origen and to his dogmas, and to all those of like mind." The saint, therefore, was able to overturn every charge.

The guards then brought in Father Anastasios, the elder's disciple. The interrogators laid snares for him that he might incriminate his teacher. It was soon evident to the prosecution that the witness would not speak falsely or implicate his teacher. Maddened by Father Anastasios' responses, they began beating him with their fists. The prisoner was then taken away. Both fathers were then returned to their cells.

#### **Saint Maximos is Visited by the Envoys Troilos and Sergios Efkrates<sup>56</sup>**

The following evening, the patrician Troilos and the steward of the imperial table, Sergios Efkrates, came to visit the venerable Maximos in his cell. They brought food with them, so as to offer something to the holy man.

<sup>53</sup> The Anaphora is that portion of the Liturgy in which the eucharistic elements are offered as an oblation.

<sup>54</sup> According to Stratos, Herakleios Constantine (d. 641), son of Herakleios I and Fabia-Evdokia, was called Constantine II. Constantine III, whom Stratos maintains is Constans II, was crowned co-emperor as Constantine III in 641 by his uncle Heraklonas.

<sup>55</sup> After the consecration, the clergy prays for "those who in faith have gone to rest before us—forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics, and for every righteous spirit in faith made perfect." Then we hear aloud, to the Theotokos, "Especially our all-holy...." Afterward, the priest says, "Remember all those who have fallen asleep in the hope of resurrection."...Then the priest remembers the departed. After that commemoration, he says, "And grant them rest...."

<sup>56</sup> For this section, see also Hieromonk Efthymios' *Maximos the Confessor* (in Greek), pp. 16-19, §§ ΣΤ-ΙΑ'.

They then asked him, "Milord abba, do tell us the conversation thou hadst in Africa and Rome with Pyrrhos. With what proofs hadst thou persuaded him to recant his own dogma and accept thine?" Father Maximos answered, "Were I to have the book in which I recorded the details of our discussions and arguments, I should be delighted to tell you. But my books and tablets were removed from my possession, leaving me to rely on what I can remember." The elder then recounted as much as he was able, closing with these words: "I have no dogmas of my own. I only hold to those common to the catholic Church. Not a single word in my confession of the Faith may be designated as my own invention."

Troilos and Sergios then posed another question: "Then we are to understand that thou wilt not enter into communion with the throne of Constantinople." Father Maximos replied, "I will not commune." They inquired further, asking, "For what reason wilt thou not commune with the patriarchate?" Father Maximos answered them with a serious countenance, saying with a sigh, "On the one hand, there is nothing more onerous than the reproach of one's conscience; but, on the other hand, there is nothing more desirable than the approval of one's conscience." They pressed the holy man to give them an answer for his lack of communion with them. Father Maximos then explained: "I cannot enter into communion with the throne of Constantinople, because the leaders of that patriarchate have rejected the resolutions of the four œcumenical synods. Instead, as their rule, they have accepted the Alexandrian *Nine Chapters*. Thereafter, they accepted the *Ekthesis* of Patriarch Sergios and then the *Typos*, which rejects everything that was proclaimed in the *Ekthesis*, thereby excommunicating themselves many times over. Together with having excommunicated themselves, they have been deposed and deprived of the priesthood at the Lateran Council held in Rome. What Mysteries can such persons perform? What spirit comes upon what they celebrate or those ordained by them?" The saints' visitors then asked, "Then thou alone wilt be saved, while everyone else perishes?"

Father Maximos said, "When Nebuchadnezzar made a golden image in the province of Babylon, he summoned all those in authority to come to the dedication of the image [Dan. 3:1, 2]. The holy Three Children condemned no one. They did not concern themselves with the practises of others, but looked only to their own business, lest they should fall away from true piety. When Daniel was cast into the lions' den, he did not condemn those who prayed not to God that they might obey the decree of Darius [Dan. 6:12 ff.]. Instead, he concentrated on his own duty. He preferred to die than to sin against his conscience and transgress God's law. God forbid that I should judge or condemn anyone or that I should claim that I alone shall be saved!

I should much prefer to die than betray the Faith in any way or go against my conscience."

Troilos and Sergios presented a new development, saying, "But what wilt thou do when Rome unites with us? Thou shouldest know that only yesterday two papal legates arrived in the capital. Tomorrow, the Lord's day, they shall partake of the Mysteries with the patriarch. Thou wilt be accused of perverting Rome. After thou didst depart Rome, the Romans came to an agreement with us." Saint Maximos replied, "Even if those legates should commune tomorrow, they did not bring with them any preliminary judgment from the throne of Rome. They bear no epistle to the patriarch. Even if they should partake tomorrow, I am not persuaded that the Romans shall unite with you, unless they do not confess that our Lord and God has two natures, each with its corresponding will and energy." They then asked, "And what if the Romans should come to terms with us? What wilt thou do?" Father Maximos answered, "Were the universe to enter into communion with the patriarch, I should never commune with him. Take heed of the words of the Holy Spirit through the apostle: 'Even if we, or an angel from out of heaven, should preach a gospel to you besides what Gospel we preached to you, let such a one be anathema [Gal. 1:8].'"

The envoys then asked, "Is it truly needful to confess two wills and operations in Christ?" Father Maximos replied, "It is absolutely needful, if we are to remain Orthodox in doctrine. Every nature has its corresponding action. By the operation is the nature known to exist. If the nature is not revealed in the operations, how are we able to know that Christ is true God and true man by nature?" The envoys conceded this and said, "We understand what thou art saying and know it to be the truth. But we must not oppose the emperor. He issued the *Typos* for the purpose of bringing peace to the Church, not in order to deny any of Christ's attributes. The emperor only commanded that there should no longer be any discussion of the properties of Christ, lest controversies should be engendered by it. It is for the sake of maintaining peace that he has promulgated this document."

Tears filled the venerable's man's eyes. He prostrated himself on the floor and cried aloud, "Though I do not wish to grieve our dutiful emperor who is a good man, yet I fear God's judgment by keeping silence about those things which God commands us to confess. The apostle says, 'God set for Himself some in the Church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers [1 Cor. 12:28].' It is clear that God speaks through them. All of Scripture, the writings of the Church teachers, and the synodal decrees teach that Jesus Christ, our incarnate God, has power to will and to act according to both His divinity and His humanity. He lacks in no property pertaining to divinity or

to humanity, except sin.<sup>57</sup> It follows then that He is perfect in both natures, having no deficiency in anything proper to either of them. It is evident, therefore, that should one not confess that Christ has all the innate properties of each nature, such a one distorts the mystery of Christ's incarnation." Saint Maximos spoke these words and many more. The envoys marvelled at the wisdom of Father Maximos. They understood that it would be futile to refute the irrefutable.

Nevertheless, Sergios Efkrates, said, "Only thou, O father, hast caused consternation. On account of thee, there are many who refuse communion with the Church of Constantinople." Father Maximos countered this statement, saying, "Who is able to prove that I have ordered anyone not to have communion with the Constantinopolitan Church?" Sergios answered, "Since thou hast refused communion with us, therefore others will not commune with us."

Troilos then asked Father Maximos, "Dost thou deem it a good thing that the *Typos* of our pious emperor has been anathematized and despised throughout the west?" Father Maximos said, "May God grant forgiveness to those who recommended that the emperor issue the *Typos*." Sergios then asked, "And who were they?" Father Maximos answered, "The primates of the churches urged Emperor Constans. The nobles gave their assent, thereby putting all the responsibility for their impiety on our ruler, who is a stranger to all heresy. I should advise his majesty to follow his grandfather, Heraклеios, of blessed memory. When Heraклеios learned that many holy fathers refused the *Ekthesis* on account of the heresy it promoted, he dispatched letters to the churches disclaiming all responsibility for the document. He explained that the *Ekthesis* was not his invention, but that of Patriarch

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<sup>57</sup> Saint Maximos: "Sin is a certain incorrect use of nature by the mode of the incorrect use of the motion proper to nature. But sin is not a rational principle or power proper to nature, because it is contrary to that rational principle and law of nature.... The will of the Savior's humanity, even though natural, was nevertheless not 'naked,' as is that natural will proper to us, but was divinized to the uttermost, that is, made to subsist in the most divine manner, as it was the human will of a divine, omniscient person, and in a manner beyond our power by dint of the union, to which its sinlessness may also be correctly ascribed. But our will is 'naked' and, because of its capacity for alteration, by no means sinless. Not that nature alters, but that natural motion is capable of being turned to different courses (diverted).... So it is clear then that sin is an error from the choice elected out of many alternatives, that is, multiple 'goods' from which to choose, but this in no way changes the nature into an irrational essence nor diverts it from its innate existence, which is rational." See "The Twentieth Opusculum (by 640): The Dogmatic Tome to Marinos the Priest," *Theological and Polemical Works*.

Sergios. If our lord Constans should elect to imitate Herakleios in this matter, he would be exonerated." Troilos and Sergios pondered a long while on the venerable man's suggestion, and then said, "Father, it would be troublesome, nay, rather not feasible, to follow such a course of action." The subject, therefore, was then changed. Troilos and Sergios Efkrates then departed on cordial terms with the holy man.

#### **Saint Maximos and His Disciples are Interrogated at the Royal Palace<sup>58</sup>**

A week later, on a Saturday, Father Maximos and his two disciples, both named Anastasios, were summoned to the royal palace for further questioning. Father Anastasios, the former legate of the Church of Rome, was left outside. The other Father Anastasios, whom the saint knew longer, was brought in and presented to the senate and two patriarchs, Peter of Constantinople and Makarios of Antioch. Father Maximos' enemies began hurling slanderous charges against the elder. While Father Maximos was being falsely accused, those present desired to have Father Anastasios cooperate with them and corroborate the charges. Father Anastasios refused to collaborate with them against his elder. He, therefore, bravely stood against the patriarchs and the senate. Two of the prosecutors, Constantinos and Menas, led the inquisition. Father Anastasios then declared before all, "You have brought in Constantinos. And have you introduced him as the secretary of the palace? He is neither a presbyter nor a monk; rather he is the supervisor of persons of the theater. The Africans and Romans know which women he maintains." When Constantios was thus discovered, some said that the women attached to him were his sisters, while others said that the women traveling with him came that they might commune with the Church of Constantinople. Constantios was then exposed for his shameless gain of money and sordid pleasures. After he was discredited, questioning resumed regarding the *Typos*.

The dignitaries then asked Father Anastasios, "Hast thou anathematized the *Typos*?" Father Anastasios answered, "Indeed, I not only have anathematized it, but also have written a *libellus*, a little book, denouncing it." His questioners then asked, "Dost thou acknowledge that thou hast done badly by this?" Father Anastasios replied, "May God forbid that I should deem it an error to have upheld the ecclesiastical canons!" With God helping him, Father Anastasios answered his interrogators wisely. The dignitaries, however, were frustrated and drove him out.

Father Maximos was then brought into the chamber. Patrician Troilos addressed the venerable elder, saying, "Tell the truth, abba, and the Master Christ shall be merciful with thee. Thou art about to be legally examined in

<sup>58</sup> For this section, see also Hieromonk Efthymios' *Maximos the Confessor* (in Greek), pp. 19-22, §§ IB'-IA'.

accordance with the laws of this realm. If even one of the charges is proven, thou wilt be sentenced to death." Father Maximos gave answer and said, "I have already spoken, and again I say, that all I have affirmed is the truth. As it is not possible for Satan to become God, so it is not possible to prove even one of your accusations against me. Since Satan is not God, but an apostate, so the accusations against me are untrue and cannot become true. In spite of that, you would have it as you wish. Since it is God Whom I revere, I am not wrong."

Troilos opened his questioning as follows: "Didst thou not anathematize the *Typos*?" Father Maximos answered, "Ofttimes, I have affirmed this." Troilos then pursued this line of questioning further, asking, "If thou hast anathematized the *Typos*, thou hast anathematized the emperor." Such was the logical consequence to the mind of Troilos. But Father Maximos objected and said, "I have not anathematized the emperor. I have anathematized the document which is alien to the Orthodox Faith of the Church." Troilos then queried, "Where was the *Typos* anathematized by thee?" Father Maximos answered, "It was anathematized at the local council in the Church of the Savior and Theotokos at Rome."

The prefect, who was presiding over the interrogation, then interjected, "Wilt thou or wilt thou not enter into communion with the Church of Constantinople?" Father Maximos replied, "I will not enter into communion with your Church." The eparch then demanded, "Why?" Father Maximos answered, "Because your Church has rejected the rulings of the Orthodox synods." The prefect then asked, "If that is the case, then why is it that the fathers of those synods have retained our Church in their diptychs?"<sup>59</sup> Father Maximos asked, "What is the profit in commemorating them, when you throw out their doctrines?" The prefect then asked, "Tell me, canst thou prove that our Church has renounced the dogmas of the holy synods?" Father Maximos replied, "I can demonstrate it very easily, if thou shouldest command it and give me leave."

As all fell silent in the chamber, the secretary then interposed this question: "Why lovest thou the Romans, and hatest the Greeks?" Father Maximos replied, "Our God commands us not to hate anyone. I love the Romans since they hold the same Faith (ὁμοπίστους) as I; and I love the Greeks because we speak the same language (ὁμογλώσσους)." The treasurer then inquired of Father Maximos, "How old art thou?" The elder answered, "Seventy-five." The treasurer then asked, "And thy disciple, how long has he been with thee?" Father Maximos answered, "Thirty-seven years."

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<sup>59</sup> The diptychs are a two-leaved tablet listing the names of Orthodox dead and living commemorated in eucharistic services.

Then suddenly, one of the clergymen present shouted aloud, "May God render to thee what thou didst bring upon blessed Pyrrhos!" Father Maximos did not answer that derisive comment. The interrogation continued, though neither patriarch spoke a word during the proceedings.

Demosthenes, who appointed himself to be the saint's adversary, injected his mistaken assertions about the Lateran Council held in Rome, saying, "That was not a true council, because he who convened it, namely Martin, was deposed." Father Maximos, the slave of God, corrected Demosthenes—for the ecclesiastical sanctions against Pope Martin, who confessed the Orthodox Faith, were to be deemed invalid—and said, "Pope Martin was not deposed, but persecuted. What synod or canonical act deposed him? If he were canonically deposed, where is the official judgment according to the sacred canons? After all, his predecessor, the holy Pope Theodore, excommunicated Patriarch Pyrrhos and condemned Monotheletism." When Troilos heard this, he merely said, "Thou knowest not what thou art saying, abba; that which happened, has happened."

The interrogation then was completed. A summation of the proceedings was then given. The senators sent out Maximos, while they deliberated upon his case. The decision was made that it would be too humane to allow him to return to exile. They were resolved to hand him over to cruel punishments and torture. Father Maximos and Father Anastasios were therefore given into the custody of the city prefect.

### **Saint Maximos in the Praetorium and Before the Prefect**

In that doleful place, the iniquitous torturer had the holy elder stripped naked and flogged with sharp, ox-hide thongs. The heartless tormentors were not put to shame by Maximos' advanced age and emaciated body, wasted by ascetic labors and lengthy imprisonment. The prefect's executioners left the holy man's body bloodied and torn, and the floor reddened with his blood. Not one single part of his body was left unwounded. The prefect then administered the same brutal punishment to both of Father Maximos' disciples. While this was taking place, a herald kept repeating: "Those who disobey the imperial decrees and those who persist in their insubordination, are justly liable to such punishments." The prisoners were then dragged to their cells. They were nearly half-dead.

### **The Martyrs Suffer Mutilations<sup>60</sup>**

The following day, at dawn, Father Maximos, together with Father Anastasios—the disciple who had been with him longest—were brought before the prefect's tribunal. The holy man, hardly breathing and covered with blood

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<sup>60</sup> For this section, see also Hieromonk Efthymios' *Maximos the Confessor* (in Greek), pp. 38, 39, § ΑΓ'.

and ghastly wounds, was a sight that should have inspired compassion if not horror, but which incited the malignant prefect and his minions to devise new punishments. The prefect decided that the penalty for blasphemy was removal of the tongue. The venerable Maximos' tongue was torn out from the very root. In this way, the heretics thought to render the elder silent. Father Anastasios also suffered the same. Both holy men were then cast into prison. The Physician of bodies, Christ, Who of old "perfected praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings [Ps. 8:2; Mt. 21:16]" and bestowed speech upon the dumb,<sup>61</sup> also then granted speech to His faithful slaves, Fathers Maximos and Anastasios. Though tongueless, they miraculously received the ability to speak



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more clearly than when they had tongues. The heretics were roundly ashamed by this wonderworking. In their anger and malice, the heretics took a knife and plunged it through the elder's right wrist, which stroke severed the hand. The heretics then cast to floor that hand which wrote divinely inspired wisdom. They justified this amputation as fitting for one whose hand penned blasphemies. They also said that it was traditional punishment for those who had spoken and written against the emperor. Then they went to Father Anastasios, stabbed his right hand in the same manner, and severed it. As for the other Anastasios, the former legate, he did not suffer these gruesome mutilations. Since his right hand had once been employed as the imperial notary, they decided he could keep that member.

The lurid crimes perpetrated against the prisoners did not end with dismemberment. The prefect contrived further sufferings. Father Maximos and Father Anastasios were removed from the praetorium. They were dragged and maltreated through the marketplace and all twelve quarters (*tmeemata*) of the city. Their amputated tongues and hands were displayed to clamoring crowds.

<sup>61</sup> See Mt. 15:30, 31; Mk. 7:37.

### **Saints Maximos, Anastasios, and Anastasios in Their Final Exile**

That Sunday, the emperor was persuaded to banish the prisoners. The prefect's men then prepared to take the three prisoners to separate places of exile. The prisoners were unshod and nearly naked. They received neither medical treatment, nor food, nor drink, nor covering. Who can describe the hardships, sufferings, pain, and hemorrhaging? Our Father Maximos was unable to sit in an upright position on either a horse or in a carriage. The jarring of a moving wagon for the elder was excruciating. The soldiers, thereupon, wove a basket of switches, making for the elder a bed of sorts. The holy man was placed within the basket. With great difficulty, he was conveyed far away to the place of his banishment, the Schemarion fortress in Lazika, by the southeast shore of the Black Sea.<sup>62</sup> This would be his final earthly separation from his disciples. The younger Anastasios was taken to Thrace, to a desolate fortress. He underwent such cruel treatment and suffering while being transported, that he reposed after a few days in his place of exile. The other Anastasios, the former *apokrisiarios*, was banished to the land of the Albanians. He was also made to endure many torments for twenty years until he departed to his much-desired Lord. Anastasios the *apokrisiarios* had written the lengthy biography of his Elder Maximos, describing his labors and sufferings.

### **Saint Maximos in the Fortress at Schemarion**

The thrice-blessed Maximos lived another three years in the fortress at Schemarion, confined to a dungeon. With only one hand, the ailing elder was compelled to care for his own needs. He bore with many hardships, afflictions, and ill treatment to the end. Father Maximos withstood all for the sake of the person of Christ and His body, the holy Orthodox Church.

### **The Repose and Grave of Saint Maximos**

Before the venerable elder completed the course of his earthly sojourn, the Lord comforted His much-suffering servant with a divine visitation. The Master summoned Maximos to the heavenly Jerusalem, by revealing to him the day and hour of his repose. This ushered in great joy for the martyr and confessor, who then gladly surrendered his soul into the hands of Christ God, Whom he had loved from his youth and for Whom he had suffered so greatly. The heavenly man and earthly angel, Saint Maximos,

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<sup>62</sup> Schemarion or Schiomaris (Tsikhe-Muris), near present-day Tsageri in Georgia. The Laz fortress was near the frontier with Alania, which was in the western Caucasus, not far from the Black Sea. Schemarion was situated near two Byzantine trading centers, Sotirioupolis and Sebastopolis. The Alans guarded the Darial pass in the middle of the Caucasus range, through which caravans on the silk route passed from China to Constantinople.

reposed in Lazika on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of January, in the year 662, at the age of eighty-two.<sup>63</sup>

### **Saint Maximos and His Tomb**

After the interment of the relics of Saint Maximos in Schemarion, there appeared every night three lamps over his tomb. They miraculously burned and illuminated the entire place. This wondrous phenomenon confirmed for many how much boldness the venerable Maximos found before the Master Christ, to Whom is due all glory, honor, and veneration, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

### **Epilogue**

Within twenty years of the repose of Saint Maximos, the Sixth Ecumenical Synod was convened in Constantinople. The sessions took place between the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, in the year 680, to the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, in the year 681, during the reign of Constantine Pogonatos, in the Troullos (Trullo). The fathers who attended numbered one hundred and seventy, according to Photios, Nikephoros, and Neilos. Others count three hundred and eighty-nine members. George of Constantinople distinguished himself at this synod, as well as the Presbyters Theodore and Sergios, and Deacon John, who acted as exarchs of Agatho of Rome. Monk Peter represented the Archbishop of Alexandria, and Presbyter George represented the Archbishop of Jerusalem. There were also present three bishops representing the westerners. The synod condemned the following bishops for heresy: Pope Honorius of Rome; Patriarchs Sergios, Pyrrhos, Paul, and Peter of Constantinople; Patriarch Kyros of Alexandria; Patriarch Makarios of Antioch; Bishops Theodore of Pharan and Apergios of Perga; Priest Polychronios of Antioch; Hegumen Stephen of Antioch; and many others who were in error.

This synod dogmatized that our Lord Jesus Christ, though but one hypostasis, after His incarnation, possessed two natural wills and two natural energies, just as He also possessed two natures—that is to say, a divine will and energy and a human will and energy, both of them being at the same time indivisible and inconvertible. “In Christ there are two natural wills and two natural energies—indivisible, inconvertible, inseparable, unconfused.” For neither the divinity nor the humanity, the two natures of Christ, remained without a will and an energy after the union. For if the peculiarities of the natures should be refuted, which are the will and the energy, the natures themselves should inevitably be refuted too, along therewith. For every nature consists of and is identical with its natural peculiarities, and without these it

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<sup>63</sup> As a point of interest, in 668, Constans II, while in Syracuse of Sicily, was murdered while bathing. It is unclear whether he was struck in the head by a servant or stabbed by conspirators.

could not become existent. Accordingly, this synod dogmatized, in brief, that "in the hypostasis of the God-Man Logos, each form acted in communion with that of the other one, which it had had as its own." This means, in other words, that the Logos wrought that which was the function of the Logos, whereas the body performed that which was the function of the body—just as the Fourth (Ecumenical) Synod had dogmatized, that is to say, previously by means of Pope Leo's letter. Now these two wills "are not contrary the one to the other, ... but His human will follows and that not as resisting and reluctant, but rather as subject to His divine and omnipotent will. ... For as His flesh is called and is the flesh of God the Logos, so also the natural will of His flesh is called and is the proper will of God the Logos." The bishops concluded, "Therefore, we confess two wills and two energies, concurring most fitly in Him for the salvation of the human race." The decisions of the synod were embodied in an imperial edict hung up in the atrium of Hagia Sophia. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December, in the year 681, the decisions were promulgated to all the bishops of the empire. Since Pope Agatho had already reposed, his successor, Leo II, approved the definition of the synod and had it translated into Latin and sent for subscription to the bishops of the west.

The earlier opponents of Monothetism—Saints Maximos the Confessor, Pope Martin I, and Sophronios of Jerusalem—were thus vindicated. Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one single hypostasis with a divine will and energy and a human will and energy, united without confusion. The incarnate Logos has joined two natural wills and two natural energies, a circumincession (*perichoresis*), but has preserved the characteristics of each nature. Thus, our humanity has been divinized in its totality. To complete the synod's work and to issue disciplinary canons, the Trullo Synod again convened in 691-692. The holy Church commemorates the Sixth (Ecumenical) Synod on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September.

**On the 21<sup>st</sup> of January, the holy Church commemorates  
the holy Martyr NEOPHYTOS.<sup>64</sup>**

Neophytos, the wondrous ascetic and martyr, was truly a heavenly "new plant," which is the interpretation of his name in the Greek language, and an evergreen tree that blossomed forth during the years of the profane

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<sup>64</sup> The Life of this saint was recorded in Greek by Saint Symeon the Metaphrastes, whose manuscript begins, "The notables of the city...." The text is extant in the Athonite Monastery of Iveron and in other places. Another manuscript of the saint's martyrdom is preserved at the Great Lavra and begins, "Not only many but...." This latter text was rendered in simpler Greek by Agapios the Cretan, who published it in his *Neon Paradeison*; it was then incorporated into *The Great Synaxaristes* (in Greek).

Emperors Diocletian and Maximian (290). Hailing from Nicaea, he was the scion of wealthy and pious parents of noble birth. His father was called Theodore and his mother Florentia. The two of them were virtuous Christians and zealots of the Faith. Neophytos emulated his parents' good example. As a result, from his early youth, moral excellence and virtue characterized his way of life. It indicated beforehand the interior state in which he would attain perfection. He loathed proud thoughts and boasting. For this reason he did not wish to keep company with vainglorious and silly companions, but only with those who were humble-minded. Such persons generally were often poor in this world's wealth. Neophytos was moved to compassion for them and oftentimes distributed bread given to him by his parents for his own sustenance. Therefore, the thrice-blessed youth on many occasions went hungry. Such was the conduct of the enlightened and divine Neophytos from an early age.



*Saint Neophytos*

"How can I," asks the biographer, "recount his hidden and inexplicable life, which was truly marvellous?" Even in the first bloom of his youth, he wrought a wonder like unto that of Moses [Ex. 17:6]. On one occasion, the goodly Neophytos was in the company of other children. He was then only nine years of age in the flesh, but an old man in understanding. Neophytos uttered a prayer at the door of the church and struck a rock with one finger. Straightway—O Thy boundless power, Logos!—as though a spring were sealed and then opened, a vast supply of water and milk poured forth. Later, great crowds were able to partake and quench their thirst. The drink from that rock was extraordinary. The children satisfied both their souls and bodies, so that they ate and drank nothing else. As for the humble-minded Neophytos, wise beyond his years, he in no wise became vainglorious on account of this mysterious and exceptional wonder. Neither did he ask of his companions any wage or money for that excellent draft. He did, however, ask that they not report what had taken place.

Howsoever carefully the blessed youth attempted to conceal this virtue and excellence, so much more did the Lord make him known in every place and reveal what was hidden and unknown. Now his mother Florentia beheld a mysterious dream, which revealed the virtue of the child and his uncommon achievements. His mother was in such a state of wonder regarding her child that she was at a loss how to understand what she beheld and what it might portend. Was it real, or was it an apparition or a phantom? She therefore

entreated the Lord with tears, uttering such words as these: "Master and God, Who knows all things before they come to pass and Who foreordains what comes to be, reveal the vision to me that I might comprehend its meaning, so as to know the future progress of my child." So spoke Florentia; and the all-good God, Who works wonders and extraordinary signs so as to affirm the truth of our belief and entices us to what is to our benefit, hearkened to her prayer. For she had beheld a dove, verily having wings but gold on the broad of its back. She had also observed that it entered into Neophytos' chamber and flew around the bed and then sat upon it. Florentia was amazed at what she witnessed and was sure that such a dove was not some irrational creature, but instead a divine visitation and heavenly promise. She then received an explanation when she spoke to the dove as though it were innately rational: "For what reason hast thou perched upon the bed of the lad?" The dove replied—O the miracle!—in a human voice, saying, "The Holy Spirit sent me to hover over the bed of Neophytos, so that I should cast out every assault of the enemy and preserve his bedding pure and blameless."

As Florentia clearly heard this divine voice, an ineffable light descended, so that she could not bear it. It was as if a great bolt of lightning had struck her. She had become so stirred at the sights and sounds about her that she fell to the ground and expired. "I think," writes the biographer, "that she beheld a vision of angels. Their intense light and sublime majesty were too much for her to endure and understand." Thus, she remained without breathing and speaking. She was discovered by the neighbors, who determined that she had expired. Since they could not know what was about to take place, they carried on with the customary preparations for burial. Now Neophytos in no wise grieved for the death of his mother, but rather was happy and would not leave them to inter her. He insisted that they cease grieving, and said, "Leave her until my father should come." Then a man, a friend of Theodore, named Leivadios, who was a leader of the senate, sent a message to Theodore of the sudden and unexpected death of his wife. Theodore had been in a field. When he heard the mournful news, he ran toward the city. He was in great distress and anguish, as copious tears streamed down his face. As he was on the road, he was met by Leivadios, who attempted to console him lest he should become embittered. When Neophytos caught sight of his father approaching their home, he went forth and said, "Cease sorrowing, father, that mother has finished her course. For even though she appears to be dead to those present, yet I am able with divine help to raise her up." Neophytos then returned to the house. He took the hand of his dead mother and said, "Rise up, O mother, forasmuch as the Lord has willed it, thou hast slept enough."

O the exceptional wonderworking! How wonderful and awesome was the appearance of our Savior Jesus Christ Who brought death to nought and brought to light life and incorruption through the Gospel [2 Tim. 1:10]. Before the divine took on flesh, Hades was terrifying to us, and death was not to be evaded. But after the death of the immortal One, death was put to death, and Hades was despoiled of those held captive. Thus, the soul of Florentia, upon hearing the command of Neophytos, returned speedily to her body. She awakened as one from sleep and recounted her vision to Theodore. When she began speaking of the dove, all present then beheld that very dove above the bed of Neophytos, commanding him to depart as once did the Patriarch Abraham. He was bade to leave all earthly things and kinfolk and go after the true land and everlasting life. Now this voice the bystanders also heard, but only the pious, those acquainted with divine operations, believed the words. Neophytos thereupon bade them farewell and kissed them sweetly. These supernatural occurrences became the talk of the blind and mindless idolaters, some of whom, that is, those who thought more deeply and were noble-minded, converted from their ancestral impiety and came to believe in the Christ and receive Baptism.

The highly exceptional Neophytos took to heart all that had transpired, and also heard of the conversions. He believed it was God's will that he had conceived the desire to go to Olympos, which is a mountain near Nicaea. It is a wilderness place, inspiring awe and wonder, and is the home to earthly angels and the most holy of men. Now Neophytos was only a ten-year-old lad when he left the city to go to Olympos. At that time, the dove also accompanied the youth and guided him on the road, until he arrived at the mount. After he made a tour of nearly all the cells of the fathers and received from each one counsel to his soul's benefit, Neophytos ascended a lofty height, a rock projecting into the air, which had a hollow in its side, something like a cave. The dove entered first and then Neophytos. Once inside, the holy youth encountered a fearsome lion, which was sufficient to strike terror in an army camp and cause all to scatter in fear and trembling. The saint, however, in no wise cowered; but rather, he took hold of the beast by its mane and said, "Thou hast dwelt herein long enough. Give to me thy den and find another habitation; for thus it is commanded by the Holy Spirit." Then that wild beast—lo, the miracle!—as though it were a rational and cognitive man, rose up on its hind legs and kissed the chest of the youth, turning its head with much gentleness. After the animal licked Neophytos' feet, it swept the ground carefully. The creature then bowed its head in a gesture that seemed to say, "Pardon me," and then it departed to fulfill the saint's command.

Neophytos lived there for one year, sustained on heavenly bread and supported by a divine spirit, for every day a holy angel came and brought him a fixed ration. At the close of one year, the angel, together with the food, gave the saint a book in which were written the following words: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth, thus I command thee, Neophytos, and enjoin: the number of thy parents' years approaches the end. Therefore leave the mountain and go to thy homeland for the maintenance of thine elderly parents. After thou hast given them burial, return again to Me, thy heavenly Father." The blessed youth read what was written in the book and understood that he was being commanded to descend the mount, to do which was as bitter as leaving Paradise. At first, in his thoughts, he hesitated to comply and did not know whether to go or remain. He then thought better of it, after he pondered on the perils wrought by disobedience. He deemed it unseemly to disobey the divine command, so he descended the mountain, hoping in the Lord's providence that all would come about according to His holy will. Neophytos then entered into Nicaea. He went to his parents to whom he ministered in accordance with the divine ordinance. He in no wise relaxed his ascetic conduct of life, nor did he leave off his remembrance of God. Even as Saint Paul wrote, Neophytos could say with him, "I have been crucified with Christ; and I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live in faith [Gal. 2:20]." As it was foretold to him, he buried his parents. He then set about distributing the estate to the poor. Neophytos then returned to the mountain and resumed his former life, which was equal to that of the angels. Thus we have now spoken a little about the accomplishments of Neophytos in his youth and his ascetic contests. Now let us speak of his toilsome life and martyric bouts, for which he received a rich reward and became the recipient of a double crown, that is to say, of asceticism and the martyric contest.

At that time, Diocletian and Maximian, the antichrist emperors, were reigning. They posted to the province of Bithynian one harsh and inhuman governor, named Maximos. Even his appearance was ferocious, and his way of thinking more beastly than that of the beasts. The tortures he inflicted upon the Christians were savage and merciless. He sent little children to be burned to death or cut up into small pieces or to be drowned at sea. In his evil and perverse mind, he was seeking new ways and means, together with unspeakable machines and appliances of punishment, to put to death the soul before the body. By these means, that most vile man was able to vanquish some by the employment of the harshest tortures imaginable and bring them to offer incense to the senseless idols. Such persons preferred—alas!—temporal life and everlasting torments than an everlasting kingdom and life; for which preference the profane Maximos honored them with the rewards of corrupt-

ible wealth and soon withering glory. But there were others who readily gave over their flesh to diverse torments and ten thousand punishments. These all-wise contestants chose to disdain transitory prosperity that they might enjoy the everlasting good things.

An angel from on high then came to Neophytos. He relayed his commission from God, which was a command that Neophytos enter far-famed Nicaea to participate in a soul-saving martyrdom. Neophytos hastened eagerly, taking the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit [Eph. 6:17]. Then suddenly, as lightning, he leaped into the theater and was as radiant as the sun. All who beheld him were astonished at the unexpected sight of this dazzling and beardless youth. The tyrant interpreted his presence as a desire to sacrifice to the idols. But afterward, when he heard Neophytos censuring the ignorance and vanity of idol worship, and preaching Christ as true God, the wretched Maximos was infuriated and threatened to chastize Neophytos harshly if he did not quickly offer sacrifice. The wise Neophytos laughed and said, "Is not thine own perdition enough, O Maximos? Must thou, O ignorant one, constrain with violence even the wise to participate in thy deception?" The tyrant's anger waxed so hot that he forgot to take pleasure in the festal events planned that day in the theater. Putting aside the day's program, he ordered that Neophytos be stripped naked and suspended from a rope. He then bade his executioners to scrape and flay the Christian's flesh and to administer a pitiless thrashing.

These orders were carried out. Behold the profound perseverance of the martyr! He received five hundred blows from rods. He was taken down and subjected to further scraping and carving of his bodily members. Then the executioners applied vinegar and salt to his wounds, so as to usher in bitter pain. The saint kept praying to Christ to enlighten these Greek pagans, that they might come to piety and thirst for their salvation. As for himself, the saint did not leave off teaching them. He continued preaching and saying, "Men, brothers, neglect not your salvation. But come to know that there is one true God Who made man, whom He made anew with His taking on of flesh. Do not therefore be venerating the wicked demons who are leading you into everlasting punishment, but leave the darkness and the guileful and vain demons and come forth to the light. Do not fear Maximos, neither his craftiness nor beastliness. Cower not before the various torments, for the Master Christ shall stand by you and empower you. He shall lighten the pains of the punishments and prepare for us everlasting blessedness."

These and many more counsels were uttered by the saint. For the sake of brevity, we cannot impart all that he said, but we will say that he urged those godless men to come to repentance. He exhorted them not to offer sacrifice to the lifeless images or the demons that dwell in them. He spoke

of the incarnation and redemption. As for the unfit governor, it was observed that his rage increased against the lover of Christ. The tyrant therefore ordered worse torments. Whatever flesh remained from the previous torture was to be scraped with iron claws. This detestable mutilation was carried out, leaving exposed the bones on each side of the martyr. Now some of the Greek pagans, observing this extreme maiming, approached and thought to offer their sympathy, saying, "Take pity on thy youth, O Neophytos, and offer sacrifice to the gods that thou mayest be delivered from these fearsome tortures." The saint, rather than suffering from his bodily wounds, was more pained over their soul-injuring counsel. He thereupon wished to show he had overcome the punishment and eagerly sought martyrdom, and began saying, "I have sacrificed my flesh to God, and I also wish to offer a sacrifice of praise. I desire to render my prayers to the Most High Who became incarnate for the sake of His many tender mercies and Who was crucified of His own will that He should bring to nought and utterly destroy the abominations of the idols before which you, as those without sense, fall down and worship. As the almighty One, He has put an end to your repugnant and profane sacrifices."

The words of the martyr inflamed the tyrant to the extent that he bade his men to exchange the iron claws for cutting instruments, which were able to cut through bone, not only the martyr's ribs, but his hands and feet also. Thus the torturers were able to render damage and dismember all bodily members, leaving nothing uninjured. The heinous atrocities that were performed left the martyr a most pitiable sight. The mindless tyrant, however, still attempted to pervert the martyr's resolve by flattery and promises of honors and gifts without number. The saint, not heeding Maximos' words in the least, gave forth the appropriate answer, saying, "I am ready to undergo, and happily, tens of thousands of deaths for the sake of Christ. I therefore tell thee not to entertain any hope that I might deny piety for temporal pleasure and enjoyment or out of fear of punishments, even if they were more harsh than what has already been done." The tyrant, as a result, gave up in despair. He was saddened and depressed because he was unable to vanquish, with so many methods of torture, one beardless boy.

The governor kept going over in his mind what he might execute next. It then came into his mind to inform the emperors regarding this case, so that they too might also wonder at this monstrous report. He therefore submitted a description of all events and sought their guidance on how to proceed. The emperors, upon receiving Maximos' account of the proceedings, wrote back that the prisoner should be cast into a fiery furnace. The ferocious Maximos did not wish to put the martyr to a quick death, but rather ordered that there be a great celebration and that costly, sweet smelling spices be offered to the gods. Thus, great amounts of incense were brought to the

place of sacrifice. Maximos thought that perhaps the saint might change his mind and venerate the idols. The sacrifice was to take place at the pillar of Hercules, a gymnasium filled with statues of the emperors. The abominable altar was decorated according to pagan taste when the martyr was brought forth. Maximos incited the young martyr to sacrifice before the image of Hercules, so that Neophytos might be endowed with strength. The martyr answered this ludicrous suggestion, saying, "I revere and pay homage to only one trihypostatic God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—to Whom I solely offer sacrifice, not with oxen and bulls and birds. 'A sacrifice unto God is a broken spirit; a heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise [Ps. 50:17].' I offer to my God my entire self, that is, all my heart, soul, mind, and strength [Mk. 12:30]. As for your Hercules, I deem you deceived and unhappy, because you worship a dead and insensate idol." The tyrant finally perceived the immovable stance of the saint, so he ordered the firing of a great and terrifying furnace. The amount of wood thrown within could not be estimated. This stoking was followed by the saint being cast inside. The portal of the furnace was carefully shut off. It was decided that Neophytos would be left therein for three days so that his bones would also be consumed.

On the third day, the impious were thinking that the martyr had been burned to ashes. They believed that the furnace had been extinguished, so they prepared to open its door. As this was done, straightway, there leaped out from the furnace mighty flames which burned all those standing about. The saint—O heavenly might! O divine wonderworking!—emerged from the fiery furnace healthy and uninjured. Not even one hair of his head or a thread of his garment had been singed. To the censure of the lawless, the martyr was chanting in a loud voice to the almighty God Who works wonders. The tyrant, put to shame as one impotent and weak, then ventured to contrive another form of death.

Therefore, he who was more mindless than the wild beasts, ordered animals from the wild to be brought forward. Those animals were left five days without being fed anything. After this was done, the first creature set loose upon the martyr was a fierce bear. At first it moved toward the saint, but then as it drew closer it began licking the martyr's feet. By the grace of God, the bear was made to forget its hunger and ferocity and behaved as a tame lamb. The tyrant then had a leopard released into the area. In the same manner as the bear, it behaved gently as though it possessed a rational nature, and kissed the martyr's feet. Even after this attempt failed, the tyrant loosed a ferocious lion against the saint. But this was the very lion which had deferred to the divine Neophytos and left its den.

As the lion came up to the saint, the creature recognized him and began ardently kissing his body. He shook his tail, and then was seen leaping

about, showing obvious signs of joy at the discovery of an acquaintance and friend. The saint then bade the lion to return to its old habitat, but without injuring any man on the way. Thus the creature endowed with an irrational nature changed its wildness into rational understanding. As for the mindless and most profane Maximos, since he could succeed in no punishment against the martyr, he became more irrational than the wild animals. He commanded his soldiers to pierce the martyr's body all over with spits until he should surrender his spirit. When this was done and Maximos observed that Neophytos, although filled with tormenting spits, still stood upright and fearless, he became so filled with wrath that he took hold of a spear and rushed against the holy Neophytos, penetrating his heart. In this manner then, the adamantine man completed his martyrdom. He offered himself as an acceptable sacrifice, winning a double crown after struggling with the hardships attendant with asceticism and enduring the unspeakable tortures of the tyrant, including the bonds, iron instruments, mangling, wounds, fire, flayings, wild beasts, and spear. He went forth bearing crowns to the Lord, to Whom is due glory, honor, and veneration to the endless ages. Amen.

**On the 21<sup>st</sup> of January, the holy Church commemorates  
our venerable Father ZOSIMUS, Bishop of Syracuse,  
who reposed in peace.**



*Saint Zosimus*

Zosimus, our venerable father, hailed from the island of Sicily. He was the son of godly and faithful parents, who were self-supporting landowners and performed good works. They had a property near the Monastery of Saint Lucy the Virgin, who is commemorated by the holy Church on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December. After they gave birth to Zosimus and he was weaned from his mother's milk, the parents dedicated the boy to that very monastery located in Syracuse and to the service of Saint Lucia (Lucy) located in Syracuse. The reason for this dedication was the fulfillment of a vow which the parents made before their child's birth. Together with their son, they also donated to the monastery that property mentioned earlier. Thus, from an early age, about seven years old, Zosimus was reared at Santa Lucia's by the abbot himself, Faustus, who brought up the lad in the instruction and fear of the Lord, teaching him diligently the canons and traditions of the Church. Since the lad was quick of mind and applied himself diligently to his lessons and studies, in but a little while he achieved all that was morally excellent and virtuous. In all that he undertook, he demonstrated

patience and perseverance. He was also humble-minded and meek, being enriched by obedience and purity.

Since the venerable one achieved such an excellent conduct of life, he was charged with the care of the relics of their patroness, Saint Lucia. He therefore was assigned as *prosmonarios* to attend to the pilgrims who came to the church and venerated the relics. He was still a youth when given this charge. During the time of this commission, he kept bringing to remembrance his parents and was desirous to behold them. Vanquished by his yearning, he went to see them. The parents, however, quickly escorted him back and reprimanded him, saying, "There, child, thou art obliged to remain, in the place where thou wast dedicated." They finally arrived at the monastery, and the seriousness of his lapse was impressed upon him. That night, Saint Lucia came forth from her reliquary and frightened Zosimus. She was just about to administer a severe spanking when there appeared another woman, glorious to behold and clad in imperial purple. It was she, perhaps the Lady Theotokos, who shielded him. Though Saint Lucia had just begun the punishment, she desisted, somewhat embarrassed, before the great Lady. Saint Lucia then commanded him not to leave the monastery again for such a reason. He promised to guard her relics, and verily he did, as he settled down to a life of prayer, contemplation, and work.

The blessed Zosimus also gives an account of a certain woman, the daughter of a house of noble lineage, whose mind and purpose were bent toward shamelessness and uncleanness. As a result, she had received a beating by her husband. She then went to the Monastery of Santa Lucia in order to spread abroad her affliction, claiming she was a woman much tried under the wrath of her husband and required medical treatment. Then, when night fell, Saint Lucia cried out, making a sound that pierced the ears of a sleeping Zosimus. He heard the saint say, "Cast out that rank smell from the monastery." He then saw Saint Lucia pointing with her finger. Zosimus, although very frightened, went and spoke to that woman's handmaidens, saying, "Rouse thy mistress quickly and take her, together with her bedding, outside." The handmaidens approached their mistress and began trembling, for they could see that she had expired.

At length, the abbot of the Monastery of Santa Lucia was translated to the Lord. Consequently, there arose great uncertainty regarding the choice of a successor. The fathers of that brotherhood, as one body, went to Bishop John of Syracuse with the intention of having him make the appointment for them of another worthy abbot. They left behind Zosimus to guard the monastery and shrine, and to answer the door. The bishop gazed upon them and asked, "But is there another brother in the monastery?" They answered, "There is none other except one whom we left to attend to the monastery."