

Filip Ivanović¹

*Department of Archaeology and Religious Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, University of Trondheim – Norway
Centre for the Study of Antiquity and Christianity,
Faculty of Theology, University of Aarhus – Denmark*

MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR ON FREEDOM

Abstract: *One of the main preoccupations of Maximus the Confessor was his participation in the famous monothelite controversy that posed the problem of one or two wills in Christ. The Confessor defended the Orthodox position of two wills, human and divine, but he also negated that Christ possessed gnostic will. This article explores Maximus' position on freedom, by examining main terms such as will, gnome, free choice, self-determination, etc.*

Key words: *Christ, deification, free choice, gnostic will, Maximus the Confessor, natural will, self-determination*

I The gnostic will and the processes of will in Christ

In Maximus' writings before 640, the term $\epsilon\mu\delta\iota\lambda\eta$ did not have the meaning of the disposition of will that characterizes the individual, who can tend towards good or evil, but there is still no difference between gnostic will and natural will. This distinction will be elaborated by Maximus, in a specific manner, during the monothelite controversy. However, we find its application in the course of confutation of Nestorian and Severian doctrine.

In the *Opusculum 14*, Maximus encloses the Nestorian idea of union in the concept of union by relation, distinguishing it from that of natural, or hypostatic, union. The notion of $\epsilon\mu\delta\iota\lambda\eta$ is connected with the first form of union: "Union of relation ($\text{Swetij } \text{† } \text{ōmysir}$) is the one that brings back diverse dispositions of will ($\epsilon\mu\delta\iota\lambda\eta$) in only one will. Difference of will ($\text{Swetij } \text{† } \text{diavoqç}$) is the movement that divides the will from the dispositions of will."² The gnostic will, in particular, is said to be "a free impulse of thought and a movement towards one side or another".³ Maximus distinguishes the will as such, in relation to the unity of nature, from $\epsilon\mu\delta\iota\lambda\eta$ which should be seen, on the contrary, in relation to the difference or rupture inside of one and the same nature. The unification by relation refers to the difference within one and the same nature and it is "a friendly disposition ($\text{viki } \text{† } \text{sumdiçhesir}$) or a concordance and a common inclination in accord with wills".⁴ The difference by relation is, on the other hand, an alteration of different judgement and will or a disposition of rupture.⁵ The $\epsilon\mu\delta\iota\lambda\eta$ is configured, therefore, as a disposition of the will that is inherent not to nature, but to person.⁶

¹ filwycat@yahoo.com

² PG 91, 152C; Cfr. PG 91, 192BD. (Quotations are given in my own translation.)

³ PG 91, 153B.

⁴ PG 91, 152C.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Cfr. Luigi Manca, *Il primato della volontà in Agostino e Massimo il Confessore*, Roma, 2002, 182.

In *Opusculum 1* Maximus asks himself if the will, as understood by monothelites, is or is not a faculty of nature. If it should be considered as such, answers Maximus, then one would reach a conclusion that the nature of Christ is different from both the nature of the Father and of his mother.

“In this case Christ would be different by nature from both his divine Father and his most pure mother. Since a natural will characterizes a nature, then those who say this suggest that Christ is one nature. Therefore, if there is such nature of Christ, then he is not truly God by nature, nor is he man by nature, since by nature Christ is clearly not the Father, nor is he his mother by nature. But if Christ is God by nature, as he is Christ by nature, then who says this is polytheist, since he confesses one nature of Father of God, who is not Christ by nature, and other nature of Christ, since Christ is also God. And so, the end of such absurd idea can only be an attitude condemned as polytheism.”⁷

In other words, if the Incarnation would result in a synthetic nature – not divine nor human, but specific only of Christ – then the Son would no longer be of the same nature as the Father, and he would also lose his human nature; thus, he would not be able to redeem us. Such a conception, according to which “the number of wills determines also the number of willing beings”, necessarily implies Arianism or Sabellianism; i.e., a separation by nature of divine persons, or their dissolution in the unity of divine nature.⁸

If Christ could not have one natural will only, one of the alternatives Maximus suggests as a hypothesis is that the will of Christ would coincide with free choice ($\kappa\mu\div\iota\gamma$). If the will of Christ is to choose freely (what they call “gnomic will”), then it would be completely in accord with the nature, having the mode of employing various directions of action in its power, which is always in constant accord with the rational principle of the nature. Therefore, according to them, he would not be impassive but instead would be self-disciplined with regard to passions and would become progressively good in all that is good by nature.⁹ However, this solution is also inadmissible, since his $\kappa\mu\div\iota\gamma$, exercised in accord with nature, will lead him in such manner, when he encounters alternative directions of action to choose what is better in preference to what is worse. Otherwise, it could only be contrary to the nature, and therefore would replace in him the mode of employment (of the will) which corrupts the rational principle of nature.¹⁰

Following the monothelite conception, one would arrive at the conclusion that the rational principle proper to human nature would exist in Christ only thanks to the right employment of his will; therefore, Christ would not be entirely human. One consequence of this attitude is to consider gnomic will as hypostatic. Those who want to preserve free choice in Christ by referring the will to hypostasis, render him incapable of movement both in accord with the nature and contrary to it. This means that Christ is different from the Father and Holy Spirit:

“Because speaking of one will that chooses in Christ, they anyway suggest a hypostasis susceptible to moving in the sense of nature or against it; such is, in fact, as I said previously, the choice. And if it is a characteristic of the hypostasis

⁷ PG 91, 28B.

⁸ PG 91, 289D.

⁹ PG 91, 28D.

¹⁰ PG 91, 28D-29A.

of Christ, they define it, according to this will, as of different advice and notice with respect to the Father and Holy Spirit. So, that what is considered particular in the Son by hypostasis is by no means common according to the hypostasis to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, concerning the free choice of humanity in Christ, the Fathers appealed to the appetitive essential potency of the (human) nature and that means the natural will, or that our free choice existed in incarnated God by appropriation.”¹¹

Maximus excludes that in Christ there is $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$, since that would mean the freedom of doing evil, as in every other human being. The free choice of Christ moves in a manner that corresponds to the deified state of humanity, in a manner worthy of his unification with $\text{K} \downarrow \text{cor}$:

“The human nature of Christ is not, as in us, moved by a $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$ which goes through council and judgement on the decision between the opposites, so he cannot be considered as mutable by nature because of his free choice, since he received a non-vacillating being simultaneous to his union with God $\text{K} \downarrow \text{cor}$. Further he had that stable movement proper to the natural appetite of the faculty of the will, or, to say it more correctly, had an immobile rest in himself because of the purest assumption and deification by God $\text{K} \downarrow \text{cor}$.”¹²

This part indicates that Maximus conceives the choice of the humanity of Christ in terms parallel to those of the free choice in saints on heaven. Christ does not possess a gnostic will, as humans do, since in him the will and all natural faculties are in the eschatological state; i.e., deified.¹³ Therefore, gnostic will is a constitutive part of the human existence in time. However, this does not mean that it is a part of the human existence *outside* time, since Maximus affirms that in the eschaton humanity will have the same deified state that Christ possessed during his earthly existence. In this sense, to negate the gnostic will in Christ does not reflect a lack of interest in Christ as a particular human being, but rather it confirms the conviction that Christ anticipates, through his earthly existence, in what – as Maximus believed – will be the destiny of all the saints.¹⁴

In his first writings, Maximus did attribute $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$ to Christ. There the term still possesses, more or less, the meaning of natural will. Then, in the epoch of the monothelite controversy, when he reached a greater clarity and completeness of his doctrine, Maximus negates that Christ could possess a $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$, since the incarnated Word could be attributed with uncertainty and ambiguity. Considering this change of position in Maximus regarding the gnostic will in Christ, Lars Thunberg affirms that this does not mean a fundamentally different place of gnome in the theological anthropology of the Confessor. On the contrary, we have here a different interest for the generic character of Christ's humanity: Maximus' “later denial of a $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$ in Christ was probably due to the fact that he regarded the incarnate Christ not only as one human being among many but as Man, representative of all humanity”.¹⁵

¹¹ PG 91, 29BC.

¹² PG 91, 32AB.

¹³ Bernardo De Angelis, *Natura, persona, libertà: L'antropologia di Massimo il Confessore*, Roma, 2002, 117.

¹⁴ Ian McFarland, *Naturally and By Grace: Maximus the Confessor on the Operation of the Will*, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 58:4, 2005, 419.

¹⁵ Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund, 1965, 229.

Going back to the words of Maximus' himself, we find an interesting passage in the *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*:

“By affirming a $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$ in Christ, they come to define him a simple man, structured like us with regards to deliberation, limited by ignorance, by uncertainty and by the presence of opposites, since one deliberates about uncertain things, and not about something that is deprived of uncertainty. (...) to the humanity of the Lord (...) cannot be attributed a $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$. In fact, because of his very being, i.e., because of his existence in divine mode, he possessed by nature the appropriation of good and aversion to evil.”¹⁶

The $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$, which always represents the aspect of individuality and difference, has the character of ambiguity, which is solely a consequence of the fall. The term is, therefore, connected not only to the natural faculty but to its mode of use. It is not identified simply with the natural principle, but with the acting of the natural principle in its search and in its condition of uncertainty. That is why the gnostic will should be excluded regarding Christ, because if there was a gnostic will in him,¹⁷ it could be concluded that:

“he was double-minded and double-willed, and fighting against himself, so to speak, in the discord of his thoughts, and therefore double-personed. For [the Fathers] knew that it was only this difference of gnostic will that introduced into our lives sin and our separation from God. For evil consists in nothing else than this difference of our gnostic will from the divine will.”¹⁸

In the *Disputatio cum Pyrrho* we find other reasons for the negation of the gnostic will in Christ:

“It is not possible to say that this will is gnostic, since, how is it possible that a will proceeds from a will? So, those who say that there is a gnostic will in Christ (...) teach that he was a mere man, that he deliberated in a manner proper to us, who suffered ignorance, doubt and opposition, since one can deliberate only on something that is in doubt, and not on something that is free of doubt. We have, by nature, an appetite for what is good in a particular way, and this is realized through search and council. Because of this, therefore, the gnostic will is ascribed to us, since it is a mode of employment of will, and not its principle of nature: otherwise, the nature itself would change innumerable times.”¹⁹

Gnostic will therefore enters in the ambit of the $\text{tq} \downarrow \text{por}$ and, since it is a mode of employment of the will and since the will is a process that includes diverse psychological elements, it is then linked to the hypostasis. Gnostic will is therefore inseparably connected to free choice. But because it is a mode of employment of the will, it is also a mode of employment of free choice and not simply its synonym.

Willing is a natural desire since it perfectly corresponds to the nature of rationality; but in the fallen creature, nature lost its limpidity. It became opaque, and, not

¹⁶ PG 91, 308D-309A.

¹⁷ Cfr. Bernardo De Angelis, *op. cit.*, 118-119.

¹⁸ PG 91, 56B.

¹⁹ PG 91, 308C.

having before itself the motif of its happiness, which is God, it became attracted by other goods outside the trajectory proper to its natural impulse. Maximus links the state of confusion, proper to the fallen man, to the activity of reflecting, choosing and deciding, and he clearly distinguishes the exercise of this willing (κίνησις) from willing as a pure, natural impulse. The gnostic willing, however, is only possible for the historical man who is subject to the state of ignorance. To a simple and perfect reality which is the natural will corresponds, in strident contrast, the other, complicated and frustrating, willing which is gnostic willing.

Defending the gnostic will as a mode of willing, Maximus poses the question in a context that is not only trinitarian and Christological, but also philosophical:

“The will and the mode of willing are not the same, just as the capacity of seeing and the mode of perception are not the same. The will, as the sight, is of nature, and exists in all things that are of same nature or species. But the mode of willing, as the mode of perception – in other words, willing to walk or willing not to walk, and seeing to the right, or to the left or down, or the contemplation of the concupiscence or of the rational principles in beings – is a mode of use of the will and the perception, and as such it exists in the person that uses it, and distinguishes it from the others.”²⁰

The fact that Maximus attributes to Christ only the natural will and not the gnostic one could provoke the impression that Christ's will is not a free will. But this impression comes from the identification of the free will with the gnostic will. In his objection to Pyrrhus, Maximus says: “If you say that the will is natural, and if that what is natural is determined, and if you say that wills in Christ are natural, then you actually eliminate in him every voluntary movement”.²¹ Pyrrhus' position, therefore, would imply that God Himself is necessitated in His work of creation, a position that is linked to the Origenist problem of God's compulsion to create.

The asceticism is the removal of what is contrary to the nature. Virtues are in fact natural, but not everyone practices what is natural in the same way. The removal of what is contrary to the nature happens in accordance to the attitude of the person; i.e., in accordance with the hypostasis. Well-being, in final analysis, depends on the persons and on their gnostic will. Christ has no gnostic will because his hypostasis is divine, so he has a natural will that is in perfect accord with his hypostatic divine κίνησις. So, on the basis of the distinction between nature and person, Maximus maintains the natural will, which includes psychological processes. Therefore, there is a natural will (divine and human), and there is also a mode of willing, which belongs to the person. So it seems that the will is a faculty of the nature, a pure potentiality, while the effect of exercise of freedom is directed by the person. In that way, Maximus does not identify the exercise of the will with freedom, which, as such, is not a faculty. It may be said that the nature is not determined or constricted, since it disposes with all its potentialities and exercises its faculties. Not only in Christ, but in human beings too, the will is always exercised in a way that is established on the level of person. The nature is the basis upon which one acts, and possible acts are those that enter the ambit of the faculty of the nature. But the mode and, therefore also the direction of acts, is given by the person. And it cannot be said either that free choice is identified with what we usually understand as freedom. Free choice is the choice that is

²⁰ PG 91, 292D-293A.

²¹ PG 91, 293B.

accomplished as a consequence of natural faculties (as condition) and of mode (which gives direction to it). It is the direct, informed act of nature by the person.²²

The closest notion to the one of freedom, among those that enter the ambit of the sphere of the will, is the one of $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$, although it also conserves some psychological aspects. It is possible to say that the $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$ is the attitude, the mode of manifestation in the acts, which derives from the conjunction of the hypostatic (spiritual) plan with the natural (psychic) one.

To sum up the discussion on the existence of the gnostic will in Christ, Maximus excludes $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$ from Christ on account of its connection with ignorance and sinfulness, which imply that they belong to a human fallen person, and therefore are also to be excluded from Christ. Maximus always points to the fact that Christ had a sinless, non-deliberative, and oriented-to-the-good human will, which was modelled, moved, and actualized in particular acts of human willing by the divine person of the Logos in obedience to the Father.²³

II Will and choice

Maximus distinguishes a natural activity, rational but not immediate, and a reflex activity, which is rooted in the former but not identified with it.²⁴ The reflex activity is properly “the mode of use” of the will possessed by man in the actual condition, in which he is to decide and choose between different possibilities offered to him in situations that are not always clear. Maximus brings his attention to the ethical-religious quality of choices and indicates the criterion that should always guide man with respect to his proper nature and in conformity with the natural goal.²⁵ In fact, the human being often turns away from life according to nature because of the error “that is implied in the soul through sensation”²⁶; i.e., for the desire of an ostensible good.

However, whether turning himself towards real good or not, the human being is driven to choose in conformity with his previous choices, which are stratified in a disposition, in a *habitus*²⁷, the $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$. Maximus indicates this will that chooses is also a “way of life” and is identified with a certain qualification of the will ($\bullet \text{poiÉ h kgsir}$), and that is why its results are “oriented in relation to a good which is real, or is considered as such”.²⁸ Maximus declares that between $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$ and choice (pqalqesir) there is a relation as the one between *habitus* and act.²⁹ The $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$ is not, therefore, a faculty distinct from will; rather, it is a mode of its realization. That is why it does not belong to the nature but to the person, and it is developed inasmuch as the actual conditions of human existence bear a continuous activity of discernment, judgement and choice.

The $\text{cm} \div \text{lg}$ is therefore also the expression of the limits in which the free will of the human being is actuated, and the human being is submitted to a continuous and burdened risk of error, and guided by all the anterior choices. As such, it is not the perfect

²² Bernardo De Angelis, *op. cit.*, 122.

²³ Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford, 2004, 161.

²⁴ PG 91, 13B; PG 91, 21D-24A.

²⁵ PG 91, 309B.

²⁶ PG 91, 309C.

²⁷ PG 91, 17C.

²⁸ PG 91, 308C.

²⁹ PG 91, 17C.

mode of existence of the will, which has to be, according to Maximus, the mode of existence of Christ's human will – not just without sin, but absolutely impeccable. Here comes to light the *raison d'être* of the Maximian distinction between the nature of the will and its mode of existence. What was not assumed was not saved, declares the Confessor, making use of the formula of the Nazianzen; human will, as the constitutive element of the nature, was therefore assumed by Logos. However, what was not admitted – nor could it be admitted – was the mode of existence of the human person. The divine person does not admit ignorance, perplexity, deliberation, choice. In short, it has not and it cannot have the $\epsilon\mu\div\iota\gamma$.³⁰ Christ's human will, in virtue of the union, is outside of any choice. It became totally appropriated of good and alienated of evil, and thus it became perfectly actuated according to the nature; and Maximus highlights the naturalness of such mode of existence: the will tends, in fact, naturally towards the good, and deviations from this goal are bound to the mode of use that it finds in us. In Christ, therefore, the human will is not only assumed; but in him, and only in him, it should be added, thanks to the divine mode of existence, it becomes perfectly actuated. Christ is the living model of every human being; he is the perfect human being, where there is no difference between nature and mode of existence. In every other human being, the nature never finds a mode of existence that is inflexibly rooted in the good, as nature *per se* requires, at least in the actual life.³¹

In this context the affirmation of Maximus can be comprehended in that virtues are natural, not acquired, and that if all people lived according to nature, there would be just one virtue revealed, just as the nature is one.³² In fact, a way of life inspired as much as possible by only natural exigencies, linear and maximally simplified, is the form closest to the divine model that the human existence could attain.

The will that chooses appears clearly as a defective mode of existence of the will – even it is through this that the human being accomplishes his part in the ascent to God and existentially appropriates his free will, making it perfect in the effective volition of good. It is a mode of existence which, since it is defective, it is not maintained in the eternal life. When every motif of doubt and uncertainty fails and the truth manifests itself without veils, then there will be no more choice, and there will be no need to judge through choice.

What will fail is “the actual law that governs the nature”, and “only the intellectual desire (*q̅e#̅ir*) of those who desire so according to nature will be active”.³³ The human being will come out of the condition of mutability, which now renders him capable of qualifying himself in modes diametrically opposite, depending on whether he respects the virtues and conforms himself to the law of nature that governs his faculties, or whether he abuses them and exploits them in an inappropriate way by submitting himself, against nature, to the dominion of passions.³⁴ All this movement, which also leads – albeit through error – to the fruition of good, will cease. The activity of willing will be gathered in the “mystical fruition of what is desirable according to nature”.³⁵ The mystical fruition in which, says Maximus, the satiety (*w̅j̅q̅or*) of the desire coincides with its tension to the infinity. The eternal life is described as a decrease by intensification of the participation, and a direct communion with the loved proportioned to the desire itself.³⁶

³⁰ Cfr. Demetrios Bathrellos, *op. cit.*, 155-162.

³¹ Alberto Siclari, *Volontà e scelta in Massimo il Confessore e in Gregorio di Nissa*, Parma, 1984, 10.

³² PG 91, 309B.

³³ PG 91, 24BC.

³⁴ PG 91, 24AB.

³⁵ PG 91, 24C.

³⁶ PG 91, 21CD; Cfr. Bernardo De Angelis, *op. cit.*, 110-113.

Such proportion between desire and participation allows us to distinguish, in the blessed, the uniqueness of the will with regard to the nature from its differences with regards to the mode of movement, and to specify in what manner it is possible to speak of a single will that unifies the blessed with God and among themselves.³⁷ But above all, these considerations clarify how the movement of the will is not overwhelmed by the apparition of the truth but is just freed of every possible error and of actual limitations. The movement remains, but as a natural tension towards good that does not recognize an end, since good itself has no end. It is its new mode of existence, which is conformed to the divine reality now manifested.³⁸

Human will is defined as “autonomously free movement”: there are three forms of life (vegetative, sensitive, rational), to which specific movements correspond; the rational life corresponds to the autonomously free movement, which becomes identified, starting with Diadochos of Photiki, with the natural will.

“For the vegetative life the proper motion is that related to nutrition, growth and procreation; characteristic for the sensitive life is the movement according to impulse; for the rational life is, then, peculiar the autonomously free movement (...) If then, according to nature, the proper movement for rational being is autonomously free, then every rational being is, by nature, also volitional. Blessed Diadochos of Photiki declared, in fact, that the will is the autonomous freedom. But if every rational being is by nature volitional, and God the Word became truly animated flesh in a way which conformed to the logos and to the reason, then on the basis of that by which he was man, substantially he was properly endowed with will. If it is so, then the so called natural will does not hurt the ears of the pious, but rather of heretics.”³⁹

All that moves, according to Maximus, moves because it has an end to which it tends by nature. Freedom for Maximus consists in self-determination of the volitional movement, not in its changeability, which is a contingent defect. The human being is the cause of himself only thanks to Him who created him. The human being appropriates himself and self-determines himself only as an image⁴⁰, imitating the divine fixity and immutability: “... if the human being was created to the image of the blessed and super-essential Divinity and the divine Being is by nature autonomously free, the human being too, being really His image, is by nature autonomously free”.⁴¹

There is no movement if there is no goal. For its movements the will is defined as “a natural potency that pursues its own goal”⁴², and only by reaching it can it be called accomplished. The *telos* comes to coincide with the *scopus*. The end (goal) of the will coincides with its principle. And since the human nature, of which the will is an expression, is not *causa sui* (self-causing)⁴³, but has its origin in God, then God will be the natural end of its motion. In fact, it is in the total adjustment to the divine will that the human will attains

³⁷ PG 91, 24C-28A.

³⁸ Alberto Siclari, *op. cit.*, 12; Bernardo De Angelis, *op. cit.*, 110-113.

³⁹ PG 91, 301BC.

⁴⁰ Cfr. Maria Luisa Gatti, *Massimo il Confessore: Saggio di bibliografia ragionata e contributi per una ricostruzione scientifica del suo pensiero metafisico e religioso*, Milano, 1987, 376-377.

⁴¹ PG 91, 304C.

⁴² PG 91, 1072B.

⁴³ Ibid.

its proper function. The inimitable model is always Christ, who turned to the Father and said: “Not as I want, but as you want”.⁴⁴ The human will on the ontological plan is not united with the divine only through hypostatic union, but also through the moral order of freedom. Christ's humanity is, from a dynamic point of view, perfectly valorized in its historical reality. The concordance of the human will with the divine one is realized through the earthly life of Jesus, through his perfect obedience to the Father, and to death, and in death. In Gethsemane, the symphony of the two wills is manifested on an interpersonal plan, i.e., through the relationship of the Son to the Father – a relationship lived in a human way, according to the free will. Obedience marks, precisely, that fully human attitude of the Son towards the Father, in order of the freedom.⁴⁵

This attitude, observes Maximus, does not comprehend “elimination of freedom (‘*αἰσῆσις τοῦ ἀποφασίσματος*’), but its fixation according to nature, for which it is rendered solid and immutable, that is to say, this comprehends the simplification, “the retracting of the will that chooses (*ἡ ἐκλογὴ τοῦ βούληται*)”, so that from where the being comes, from there also we wish to be moved”.⁴⁶

Therefore, the perfection of the human will consists in its complete adjustment to the divine will and in the desire of such adjustment, but the perfection of the will coincides with the perfection of freedom. The elimination of *ἐκλογὴ* frees the human being from subjection to limits of choices and renders him similar to God. Since freedom as autocausality is proper only to God, the human being can be the cause of himself solely through Him, who is his principle (and who, exactly because of this, is also his end). Identifying himself through will with his own cause, the human being becomes entirely free, because he wants what God wants him to want, and his willing becomes one with the creative and salvific will of God.⁴⁷

All this clarifies why, in the freedom to choose between good and evil, Maximus finds latent in every choice the possibility of error, and there is no expression of the essence of freedom. In the actual human being the *αἰσῆσις* is self-appropriation: his freedom consists in accepting and appropriating of what he is by nature. But he is not himself except in God, who is his principle and his accomplishment – not his extrinsic end, but his intimate perfection. Only by moving towards God does the human being appropriate himself and willing exclusively according to what God wants. In loving this identification, he brings such an operation to an end: he is himself and wants to be what he is.⁴⁸

In synthesis, freedom, which for Maximus essentially consists in self-determination, is given to the human being only by participation. The human being does not have the proper good in himself; he is not an end to himself, since he is not *causa sui*. Only God, precisely because He is what He wants, can want what He is and be an end to Himself. The good of the human being, his end, is God Himself. Only in the measure in which the human being attains Him does he also become an end to himself; that is to say, he can want what he, by participation, is. And he can also be what he wants: since he exists

⁴⁴ PG 91, 1076B.

⁴⁵ François-Marie L  thel, *La pri  re de J  sus a Geth  mani dans la controverse monoth  lite*, in: F. Heinzer e Chr. Sch  nborn (eds.) *Maximus Confessor. Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 2-5. septembre 1980*, Fribourg, 1982, 213-214.

⁴⁶ PG 91, 1076B.

⁴⁷ The highest example of this is, for every human being, the willing of Christ: he did what we should do and what many saints did after him. Christ handed over his human will to the will of God, and as human being he allowed his own human will to be moved and modelled by the divine will of the Father, which is identical with his own divine will. (Cfr. Demetrios Bathrellos, *op. cit.*, 171.)

⁴⁸ Alberto Siclari, *op. cit.*, 13-14.

by divine will, inasmuch as his will corresponds to the divine will, then he is also what he wants to be. Outside of such adjustment, there is nothing but disorder, defect, nothingness.⁴⁹

In Maximus' reflection there are two ideas operating, which specify each other: the idea of freedom as self-position and self-possession, and the idea of will as tension to God – a specification of the thesis that every movement has its own natural end. The point of junction is constituted by the idea that the human being, although being free, cannot be, since he is not *causa sui*, immediately an end to himself.

The first consequence that derives from these principles is that freedom in the absolute sense is recognized only to God. Human freedom is a participated freedom. The human being is not able to create himself; he is, however, by nature, able to appropriate himself, to recognize, accept and make his own what he is by nature: the image of God and therefore in need of God. The faculty of human being's self-appropriation is the work of God, who is the principle, end and means of every human realization; but the movement of self-appropriation is free, by the nature itself of this faculty. Such freedom of his can be expressed also in its own negation: an act free in its principle, but which disappears; a movement that has no real end; an attempt towards nothing; and, therefore, negation of the movement, which by definition has always an end.⁵⁰ The guilt of Adam, as all guilt, is seen precisely as a distortion of the movement of the will. Distorted from its natural end, it tends to resolve in its own disappearance, since it is deprived of a proper *raison d'être*.⁵¹

Following its objective, the human willing acquires on the other hand such an intensity that, in the end, once it has reached its goal – the union with the divine will – it becomes an effective participation in the divine operations. On the account of this identification, Maximus gives two examples which do not have a figurative value: Christ, who says “not what I want, but what you want” (Mark 14:36), and Paul who says “and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).⁵² The perfection of willing – an activity according to nature – is therefore actuated, as it results from these examples, with the deposition of every personalistic determination; so it coincides with God's will itself; with the will of God in whom knowing, willing and creating are the same thing, and who associates the creature that wants like Him to His own creative and salvific activity, effectively making it *causa sui*.

The sinner, on the other hand, cannot actuate himself properly, not even as a human being. He seems to be a kind of lost possibility. He lacks)keuheq!a, freedom from passions and sin, thanks to which he would be restored to the simplicity of nature, whose motions are always in accord with the divine willing. And thus he vanishes in the tension towards the ostensible goods, in a meaningless love of himself (vikaut!a). The)keuheq!a coincides therefore with the use, according to nature of human faculties, with that simplification of the spirit in which the gift of deification is actuated.

This does not mean that in the adjustment to the divine willing, a creature loses its own nature in order to assume that of God. A transformation of that kind does not happen in Christ, who remains, in the unity of the hypostasis, a true human being in addition to being true God, and the same goes for the blessed. It means only that the activity of the creature attains its perfection in existential recognition of owing everything to God, and of

⁴⁹ Cfr. Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, London-New York, 1996, 60-61.

⁵⁰ Alberto, Siclari, *op. cit.*, 16.

⁵¹ Cfr. Artemije Radosavljević, *Antropologija Sv. Maksima Ispovednika*, Luča, XXI-XXII, 2004-2005, 376-377.

⁵² PG 91, 1076B.

being, in its positive content, nothing but a gift and a presence of God. Therefore the perfection is also “enduring of God”: Logos gives experience of Himself while being recognized by those who became worthy of Him. In a reality which is, by nature, gift of God and need of God, the supreme activity coincides with the supreme passivity with regards to God.⁵³ The human being is passive since he, as a creature, receives everything he is; he is also passive because in the experience of God he “endures” – he becomes invaded. And between these two kinds of passivity there is no solution of continuity, precisely because the “natural” human being is entirely, in his positivity, a gift of God; his activities are derived and as such they are also passions.

The freedom of the human being is, on the other hand, harvested and exalted in this passivity. It distinguishes him by eternity from God as another mode – which is recognized and accepted as such – of the existence of the divine. And it is based on this distinction that Maximus can reject the risk of pantheism. In the eternal life the will of the blessed and the will of God coincide, but they are participants; this divine will is participated, and they endure besides operating, while the divine will properly and solely operates. The identity resides in what is wanted, the salvation of all, and not in the nature of willing, for which the divine will (which is creative and salvific) is different from the human will (which is created and saved and which, on the other hand, wants, as God, the salvation).⁵⁴ The movement of the human being is called an endurance, Maximus writes, because “every being that comes from God, and exists because of God, is subjected to motion, since it is not the movement itself and potency itself (...), according to the principle posed in it in the creation by the cause which constituted everything”.⁵⁵

There is therefore in the human being, as a creature, a constitutive passivity: he is a derived – not primary – being. But that does not prevent his derived nature from being essentially active. The motion itself, Maximus adds, is passivity since it derives from God; but it is activity, since it is a characterizing expression of the created nature.⁵⁶

III Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that with the dogma of creation *ex nihilo*, the “principle” of Greek ontology, the principle of the world, became transferred from the stable continuum of causes and consequences to the “uncertain” sphere of freedom.⁵⁷ Only with His will, and not with His nature, God connects with His creation. The principle of the world is the beginning of a free relationship – a relationship of love between the world and its cause. If we refer here to Maximus, then we see that this fact is clarified in two points: 1) God knows all His creatures as His own will⁵⁸, and 2) from a social perspective on the human being, we do not deal with the “*ἡμετέριον*” but with the “*θεοῦ*”.⁵⁹

Therefore, God does not communicate with the world as with an objectively given reality, because the world is not given to God but is created by Him. He does not know rational beings as rational, and sensible as sensible, but knows all beings as His own will.

⁵³ PG 91, 1296D.

⁵⁴ PG 91, 26A-28A.

⁵⁵ PG 91, 352AB.

⁵⁶ Ibid; Cfr. Alberto Siclari, *op. cit.*, 17-19.

⁵⁷ PG 91, 1085B.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ PG 91, 1076BC.

And His will is that rational beings always exist in communion with Him – a communion that was realized by His son. God knows the world in the way in which He wants it to be in His eschatological empire. And the only response to the question “why?” is this: because God wants it so.⁶⁰ This, for the Fathers, means that God operates by giving hypostasis to the world, not because he submitted to some necessity but because He did it freely and out of love. Consequently, the world is not a product of necessity, but of freedom. For humanity, only freedom represents the door that leads to the uncreated.⁶¹

Rational beings, Maximus writes, are by their nature mobile, so they move towards an end, employing their free will, with the scope to reach the well-being connected to the natural movement, to which it gives the moral qualification. This movement is also linked to the imitation of God, which represents a synergy between freedom and grace: “Spirit does not produce the involuntary free will, but it transforms it and deifies it, when this is desired by the will”.⁶²

The sin of Adam was a disaster of human freedom that chose “against nature”, which was possible “in conformity with the free will”. Maximus always insists on the idea that nature itself was not introduced into the sin, and therefore clearly contrasts $\nu^* \sigma\iota\rho$ with $\kappa\mu\div\lambda\gamma$. The consequence of the sin is the contamination of the natural will that can be brought to the Good only with the help of $\kappa\mu\div\lambda\gamma$. Man has therefore acquired the gnostic will, which not only chooses between good and evil but also hesitates and suffers, because its decisions are clouded by ignorance and imagination.

The free will is, as we have seen, essentially linked to the hypostatic existence. The sin, therefore, can be only a personal act, which does not contaminate the nature itself. On the contrary, it leads man's created hypostasis to abuse the nature, thus erasing the true link between hypostasis and nature and turning man away from his authentic freedom.

This explains also the possibility of the Logos to fully acquire the human nature, but not the sin. The sin belongs to the sphere of the $\kappa\mu\div\lambda\gamma$ and not to the nature.⁶³ Christ truly possessed the natural human will, but since the subject of the will, the hypostasis, of his human nature was Logos itself, he could not in any way have the gnostic will, which is the only source of sin.

That is why the spiritual life of Christians essentially puts in first place the gradual transformation, in every human hypostasis, of the gnostic will into the divine and angelic $\kappa\mu\div\lambda\gamma$. Our deification – i.e., participation in the divine nature – is incongruous with the internal conflict introduced in the nature through $\kappa\mu\div\lambda\gamma$. Since the true $\kappa\jmath\text{cor}$ of our nature is immutable, then it is its $\tau\eta\jmath\text{por}$, damaged by the free will already since Adam's sin, that should be reborn in Christ.

The mystery of salvation belongs to those who choose it freely, and it is upon the human being that it depends if his being will be logical (in conformity with $\kappa\jmath\text{cor}$) or paralogical. This is why Maximus writes: “Man *is* in God by caring ($\delta\iota\acute{\epsilon}\ \pi\alpha\sigma\omega\nu$, r) for the logos of his own being ($\tau\omicron(\ \epsilon\text{-}\mu\alpha\iota\ \kappa\jmath\text{com})$ ”.⁶⁴ Thus the natural will does not impose itself to the human being as a necessity – he can always choose, and his choice is the most concrete consequence of the aforementioned care.

⁶⁰ Cfr. Vladan Perishich, *Can We Speak About Patristic Theory of Ideas?*, in: K. Boudouris (ed.), *Philosophy and Orthodoxy*, Athens, 1992, 156.

⁶¹ Maksim Vasiljević, . *e/r 0peɣ1atij r2. e/r t, r joimym!ar3 4iÉ sul1okt 5qgcoqlou to(. eokjcou ja6 4a#!lou to(181okocgtt stfm 9mmoia t, r joimym!ar*, Philotheos, 5, 2005, 244-245.

⁶² PG 91, 893B.

⁶³ PG 91, 192A.

⁶⁴ PG 91, 1084B.

The ultimate and central scope of Maximus' system is the deification of the human being. In this, the will of the human being is subordinated to the divine will, and in deification the whole human will's activity is concentrated on a free acceptance and "endurance" of this deification to take place. The purpose of human self-determination is to lead one to this transforming relationship with God, and therefore this "voluntary outpassing" is not the annihilation of the human will but the only true fulfilment of it.⁶⁵ Relating the deification with the idea of freedom, we will conclude by quoting Florovsky: "Everything will be deified and God will be 'all in all'. But this will not be done with force. The deification itself has to be accepted and adopted freely and with love... Saint Maximus derived this conclusion from an exact Christological doctrine on two wills and two energies".⁶⁶

Bibliography

Maximi Confessoris Opera, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca* (PG), Paris, 1860, vols. 90-91.

Bathrellos, Demetrios, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford, 2004.

De Angelis, Bernardo, *Natura, persona, libertà: L'antropologia di Massimo il Confessore*, Roma, 2002.

Florovsky, Georges, *Византийские Отцы V-VIII веков*, Paris, 1933.

Gatti, Maria Luisa, *Massimo il Confessore: Saggio di bibliografia ragionata e contributi per una ricostruzione scientifica del suo pensiero metafisico e religioso*, Milano, 1987.

Léthel, François-Marie, *La prière de Jésus a Gethsémani dans la controverse monothélite*, in: F. Heinzer e Chr. Schönborn (eds.) *Maximus Confessor. Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 2-5. septembre 1980*, Fribourg, 1982, 207-214.

Louth, Andrew, *Maximus the Confessor*, London-New York, 1996.

Manca, Luigi, *Il primato della volontà in Agostino e Massimo il Confessore*, Roma, 2002.

McFarland, Ian, *Naturally and By Grace: Maximus the Confessor on the Operation of the Will*, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 58:4, 2005, 410-433.

Perishich, Vladan, *Can We Speak About Patristic Theory of Ideas?*, in: K. Boudouris (ed.), *Philosophy and Orthodoxy*, Athens, 1992, 147-160.

Radosavljević, Artemije, *Antropologija Sv. Maksima Ispovednika*, Luča, XXI-XXII, 2004-2005, 372-380.

Siclari, Alberto, *Volontà e scelta in Massimo il Confessore e in Gregorio di Nissa*, Parma, 1984.

⁶⁵ Lars Thunberg, *op. cit.*, 243.

⁶⁶ Georges Florovsky, *Византийские Отцы V-VIII веков*, Paris, 1933, 227.

Thunberg, Lars, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund, 1965.

Vasiljević, Maksim, . *e/r Opeq1atijj r 2. e/r t, r joimym!ar3 4iÉ su/1ok† 5qgcoq!ou to(. eokjcou ja6 4a#!lou to(78lokocgt† st†m 9mmoia t, r joimym!ar*, Philotheos, 5, 2005, 240-247.

Филип Ивановић

МАКСИМ ИСПОВЈЕДНИК О СЛОБОДИ

Једна од главних преокупација Максима Исповједника било је његово учешће у монотелитском спору, који је поставио проблем једне или двије воље у Христу. Исповједник је бранио православно учење о двије воље, људској и Божанској, али је такође негирао постојање гномичке воље у Христу. Испитивање проблема воље довело је Максима до блиско везаног питања слободе човјекове, те односа његове слободне воље и воље Божије. У том контексту, слобода у апсолутном смислу приписује се искључиво Богу, док човјек, будући да је створен и да није *causa sui*, не може бити апсолутно слободан. Како је он створен по лику Божијем, тако је његова природа неискварена, али је, као посљедица пада, његов начин постојања искварен. Стога је његов задатак да усклади начин постојања с природом, те да своју гномичку вољу постепено уподоби с Божанском вољом. Овај чланак испитује питање слободе кроз истраживање кључних појмова Максимове мисли о овом проблему, као што су природна воља, гномичка воља, слободни избор, самоодређење итд.

Кључне ријечи: гномичка воља, Максим Исповједник, обожење, природна воља, самоодређење, слобода, Христос.

