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Questioning the World

Greek Patristic and Byzantine
Question-and-Answer Literature

edited by
Bram DEMULDER
Peter VAN DEUN



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VLADIMIR CVETKOVIĆ

RE-INTERPRETING TRADITION:
MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR
ON CREATION IN *AMBIGUA AD IOANNEM**

Maximus the Confessor's *Ambigua ad Ioannem* represents a composition of 66 elucidations on ambiguous passages from the works of Gregory Nazianzen. The collection was written between 628 and 630 and dedicated to a certain John, whose identity is still under scholarly scrutiny.¹ Although *Ambigua*, as a collection of various *scholia*, is mainly an exegetical work it may be to some extent subsumed under the popular Byzantine literary genre of *erotapokriseis* or question-and-answer literature, since the recipient of the work had selected different passages from Gregory and asked Maximus to ponder over their meaning. One of Maximus' intentions in writing this work is the dismissal of Gregory's alleged Origenistic or heterodox leaning (as in *Ambiguum* 7)² and the justification of Gregory's virtual infallibility and of his designation the 'Theologian' (as in *Ambiguum* 21).³ Moreover, Maximus displays his immense capacity to synthesize divergent theological traditions and to present them as parts of one coherent theological system.

The aim of this paper is to show how by utilizing different Christian and philosophical doctrines Maximus developed his original teaching on creation. In doing this, I will first look at the historical importance of the question of creation for Christians

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¹ Jankowiak & Booth 2015, p. 25–26, 28–29.

² Cvetković 2016, p. 750.

³ Louth 1996, p. 22.