The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy

edited by Mikonja Knežević

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Contents

The Transformation of Neoplatonic Philosophical Notions of Procession (proodos) and Conversion (epistrophe) in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor

Vladimir Cvetković

I. Introduction

Since S. L. Epiphanovich's claim, in his classical study *Преподобный Максим Исповедник и византийское богословие* published in 1915, that the purpose of the Incarnation is the original plan of the Great Council (Isaiah 9:6),[1] and not a response to the fall of Adam,[2] there is hardly any serious scholar of Maximus who did not stress this feature of the Confessor's thought. There is a long list of both eastern (Justin Popović,[3] Dumitru Staniloae,[4] Georges Florovsky,[5] Artemije Radosavljević,[6] Vasilios Karayi-

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1. For the idea of the Great Council in Maximus see A. Jevtić, "Veliki Savet Božiji kod Svetog Maksima Ispovednika (The Great Council of God According to St Maximus the Confessor)", in: *Sveti Maksim Ispovednik. Život i izbor iz dela*, Vrnjci: Bratstvo Svetog Simeona Mirotočivog, Trebinje: Manastir Tvrdoš, Los Anđeles: Eparhija Zapadnoamerička 2012, 320–349.
2. С. Л. Епифанович, *Преподобный Максим Исповедник и византийское богословие,* Москва: Мартис 1996, 87–88.
3. Prepodobni otac Justin (Popović), *Pravoslavna filosofija istine*, tom 2, *Sabrana dela Oca Justina Novog*, knjiga 18, Beograd: Zadužbina Sveti Jovan Zlatousti Svetog Justina Novog i Manastir Ćelije kod Valjeva ²2004 (1ˢᵗ edition 1935), 9.
4. D. Stăniloae, *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvrșirii*, vol. 3, Bucharest 1948, 496.
5. G. Florovsky, " 'Cur Deus Homo?' The Motive of the Incarnation", in: *Evharisterion. Festal Volume of the 45 Anniversary of Prof. Hamilcar Alivisatos*, Athens 1957, 70–79. Reprinted in Chapter VI, "Dimensions of Redemption" of the *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky. Vol. III: Creation and Redemption*, Nordland Publishing Company: Belmont, Mass. 1976, 163–170: 168.
6. Hieromonk Artemije (Radosavljević), *Τὸ Μυστήριον τῆς Σωτηρίας κατὰ τὸν Ἅγιον Μάξιμον τὸν Ὁμολογητήν*, dissertation, Athens 1975, 180–196. The text is also available in

annis,[7] Atanasije Jevtić[8]) and western (Hans Urs von Balthasar,[9] Polycarp Sherwood,[10] Irénée-Henri Dalmais,[11] Lars Thunberg[12]) theologians, who embraced the position that Christ's Incarnation is neither a corrective of the original Divine plan and nor a response to the human fall.

The Incarnation of Logos is central to Maximus' thought and it should be treated accordingly. If Maximus' cosmology is Christocentric as Torstein Tollefsen claims in the title of his recent study,[13] then the Neoplatonic conceptual framework employed by Maximus should underline the role of Christ in the divine design. However, if the whole divine design, from creation to deification, is pursued on the principles of the Neoplatonic concepts of remaining–procession–return, then the Incarnation of Logos seems to be something auxiliary. The Neoplatonic or Proclean remaining refers to the state of the preexistence of the creation in the form of *logoi*, as divine wills and thoughts about the future world. The procession (πρόοδος) may be further identified with the creation of both, universals and particulars. Finally, the conversion seen as the return of the creatures to their source would refer to the future state of deified creation.[14] This scheme can hardly pertain to the purpose of Incarnation as something more than a corrective of the Adam's fall.

The aim of this paper is to explore the way in which St Maximus the Confessor adapted the Neoplatonic philosophical concepts of "procession"

English translation at the following web-address: http://www.synodinresistance.org/pdfs/2009/03/26/20090326aGiatiEnsB7%20Folder/20090326aGiatiEnsB7.pdf. See also his "Le problème du 'présupposé' ou du 'non-présupposé' de l'Incarnation de Dieu le Verbe", in: F. Heinzer, C. Schönborn, éd., *Maximus Confessor. Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 2–5 septembre 1980*, Paradosis 27, Fribourg (Suisse) 1982, 193–206.

7. V. Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur. Essence et énergies de Dieu*, Théologie historique 93, Paris : Beauchesne 1993, 485.
8. A. Jevtić, art. cit., 320–349.
9. H.-U. von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie. Das Weltbild Maximus des Bekenners*, Einsiedeln: Verlag 1961, 270. See also H.-U. von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy. The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2003, 134.
10. P. Sherwood, "Introduction to St Maximus the Confessor", in: *The Ascetic Life. The Fourth Centuries on Charity*, New York: Newman Press 1955, 71–72; 232–3, n. 292.
11. I.-H. Dalmais, "Texte choisi. Le mystère du Christ (Question à Thalassius 60)", *Connaissance des Pères de l'Église* 17 (1985) 19–21.
12. L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of St Maximus the Confessor*, Chicago and La Salle, IL.: Open Court 1995, 456.
13. T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford: OUP 2008.
14. T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*, doctoral thesis, Oslo 2000, 271.

(πρόοδος) and "conversion" (ἐπιστροφή), in order to articulate the central theme of his thought, namely the Incarnation of God in human form.

In his portrayal of the unity between God and the creation in terms of the relationship between Logos and *logoi*, Maximus employs the revised form of the Neoplatonic dialectical pair of procession and reversion (πρόοδος–ἐπιστροφή):

> Because the One goes forth out of goodness into individual being, creating and preserving them, the One is many. Moreover the many are directed toward the One and are providentially guided in that direction.[15]

To put it differently Maximus claims that the one Logos are many *logoi* on the basis of the creative and preservative procession (ποιητική καί συνεκτική πρόοδος), while many *logoi* are the Logos due to the converting and hand-leading transference and providence (ἐπιστρεπτική καί χειραγωγική ἀναφορά τε καί πρόνοια).

II. Creative and Preservative procession
   (*ποιητικὴ καὶ συνεκτικὴ πρόοδος*)

The procession, according Maximus, consists of two elements: one creative and another preservative (ποιητική καί συνεκτική πρόοδος).[16] The creative procession can be identified with the creation of the world in accordance with the divine wills about created beings. Maximus explains the divine creative power in the following words:

> Because he held together in himself the *logoi* before they come to be, by his gracious will he created all things visible and invisible out of nothing. *By his Word and by his Wisdom* he made all things and is making all things, universals as well as particulars.[17]

It is possible to distinguish here two kinds of *logoi* or divine wills about the world, the *logoi* of universals and *logoi* of individuals. There is also a difference between what God has already created and what He is creating.

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15. *Ambigua ad Joannem* (= *Amb.*) 7, PG 91, 1081C: κατὰ μὲν τὴν ἀγαθοπρεπῆ εἰς τὰ ὄντα τοῦ ἑνὸς ποιητικὴν τε καὶ συνεκτικὴν πρόοδον πολλοὶ ὁ εἷς, κατὰ δὲ τὴν εἰς τὸν ἕνα τῶν πολλῶν ἐπιστρεπτικὴν τε καὶ χειραγωγικὴν ἀναφορᾶν τε καὶ πρόνοιαν. The English translation in: P. M. Blowers, R. L. Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ. Selected Writings from St Maximus the Confessor*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 2003, 57.

16. *Amb.* 7, 1081C.

17. *Amb.* 7, 1080A; Blowers & Willken, 55.

The structure of the *logoi* may be graphically presented as arranged in the Porphyrian tree beginning from the most general *logoi* of being and nature and subsequent *logoi* of highest genus (γενικώτατον γένος), intermediate *genera* (γενικώτερα γένη), species (εἴδη), and specific species (εἰδικώτατα εἴδη),[18] to the *logoi* of individuals (ἄτομα) and accidents (συμβεβηκότα). All the *logoi* are undivided by their participations in the higher *logos* of being: the accidents are undivided due to the unity in substance, the individuals due to the unity in specific species, specific species due to the unity in species, species due to the unity in intermediate *genera*, intermediate *genera* due to the unity in the highest *genus,* and the highest *genus* in the most general *logos* of being. The most general *logos* of being is also undivided from the Logos of God, because it has its cause and the source in him.

The *logos* of each particular being maintains the beings undivided in the general order but it also maintains the beings so as to remain unconfused, one with another. Maximus elaborates this fixedness of every being in the general order in its own *logos* of being in *Ambiguum* 15:

> [Things] are motionless in their nature, their capabilities, and their effects; in their place in the general order of things; in their stability of being, they never leave their peculiar natural place, never turning into other things or confusing themselves.[19]

The natural logos of every being is defined and circumscribed not only by the *logoi* of essence, nature or species but also by the *logoi* of relationship, mixture**,** position, power, activity, passion, quantity and quality that preserve the particular being unconfused with the other beings.[20]

In the process of creative procession God predetermines every being by its *logos*. The term predetermination should be taken in a loose sense, because the level of resemblance of the created beings with their *logoi* depends either on the character of the *logoi* or on the inclination of created

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18. *Amb.* 10, 1177C. The English translation in: A. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, London: Routledge 1996, 138.

19. *Amb.* 15, 1217AB: Ἀκινήτως δὲ κινεῖσθαί τε καὶ φέρεσθαι τὰ ὁρώμενα εἴρηται τῷ διδασκάλῳ τῷ μὲν λόγῳ, ᾧ γέγονε ταῦτα, κατὰ τε φύσιν καὶ δύναμιν καὶ ἐνέργειαν, τάξιν τε καὶ διαμονὴν ἀμεταστάτως ἔχειν, καὶ μὴ ἐξίστασθαι καθ᾽ ὁτιοῦν τῆς φυσικῆς ἰδιότητος καὶ μεταβάλλειν εἰς ἄλλο καὶ φύρεσθαι. The English translation of this passage is from H.-U von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 154.

20. *Amb.* 15, 1228AC. See also on this point J.-Cl. Larchet, "La conception maximienne des énergies divines et des logoi et la théorie platonicienne des Idées", *Philotheos* 4 (2004) 276–283, especially 281.

beings. The level of binding authority of *logoi* is again within divine power. Maximus claims that the particular beings are immutable by their *logos* of nature, while they are movable in their properties and accidents.[21] Therefore, the *logoi* of the universals such as the most general *logoi* of being and nature and subsequent *logoi* of highest genus (γενικώτατον γένος), intermediate genera (γενικώτερα γένη), species (εἴδη), and probably specific species (εἰδικώτατα εἴδη),[22] as well as the *logoi* of time and the *logoi* of providence and judgment determine the immutability of created nature and the inclination of the particular being cannot affect the established order. The binding authority of the *logoi* of individual rational beings is weak, not because the Creator was not able to impose his power over the particulars, but mainly because he has left the freedom to them to attentively (διὰ προσοχῆς) fulfill the purpose for which they were created. The freedom is given to the rational beings that are angels and humans, while the sensible creation merely defined by the general *logoi* or genera and species is changeable on the level of properties and accidents due to their participations in the different *logoi* such as *logoi* of mixture, position, quantity and quality.

Maximus explains the difference between what God has already created and what he is still creating in the following way:

> The *logoi* of all things known by God before their creation are securely fixed in God. They are in him who is truth of all things. Yet all this things, things present and things to come, have not been brought into being contemporaneously with their being known by God; rather each was created in appropriate way according to its *logos* at the proper time according the wisdom of the maker, and each acquired the concrete actual existence in itself.[23]

Due to the different place of each individual being in the course of time God is constantly repeating his creative act. The creative processions happen in accordance with the original divine design, which is in fact a very refined structure of the *logoi* of beings. The difference between the original creative act and every subsequent creative act of the divine power is in the creation of universals and individuals. While God was originally creating according to *logoi* of universals and to those *logoi* of individuals whose proper time

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21. *Amb.* 15, 1217B.
22. *Amb.* 10, 1177C.
23. *Amb.* 7, 1081A; Blowers & Wilken 56–57.

was then, he is subsequently creating not any more universals but concrete beings in accordance with their individual *logos* and the *logoi* of time and position.

Maximus' understanding of the preservative procession is best presented in a passage from his *Mystagogia* 1:

> For God who made and brought into existence all things by his infinite power contains, gathers, and limits them and in his Providence binds both intelligible and sensible beings to himself and to one another. Maintaining himself as cause, beginning and end all beings which are by nature distant from one another, he makes them converge towards each other by the singular force of their relationship to him as origin. Through this force he leads all beings to a common and unconfused identity of movement and existence...[24]

God preserves created beings by containing, gathering and limiting them, as well as leading them to a common and unconfused identity of movement and existence. While the created beings are contended, gathered and limited by their *logoi*, the movement of the being is "a way of establishing itself as a particular and distinguishing itself from every other nature" as Balthasar rightly pointed out.[25] Every created being is endowed with movement, which is intrinsic to the nature of being. However, every movement is directed toward an end and we can define every movement in accordance with the goal of the movement. Maximus claims that God endows us with movement at the beginning, but he also endows us with the mode in which we should move toward him as an end.[26] Interpreted in accordance with the previous passage from *Mystagogia* that God in his preservative role maintains himself as cause, beginning and end of all beings, it means that there are only two proper directions of movement for rational beings. One direction of the rational beings is to move forward toward God as the end

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24. *Mystagogia* (= *Myst.*) 1, 2; in: Ch. Boudignon, ed., *Maximi Confessoris Mystagogia*, Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 69, Turnhout: Brepols 2011, 10–11, 132–139: Ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ Θεὸς πάντα τῇ ἀπείρῳ δυνάμει ποιήσας καὶ εἰς τὸ εἶναι παραγαγὼν συνέχει καὶ συνάγει καὶ περιγράφει, καὶ ἀλλήλοις καὶ ἑαυτῷ προνοητικῶς ἐνδιασφίγγει τά τε νοητὰ καὶ τὰ αἰσθητά, καὶ περὶ ἑαυτὸν ὡς αἰτίαν καὶ ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος πάντα περικρατῶν τὰ κατὰ τὴν φύσιν ἀλλήλων διεστηκότα, κατὰ μίαν τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν ὡς ἀρχὴν σχέσεως δύναμιν ἀλλήλοις συννενευκότα ποιεῖ, καθ' ἣν εἰς ταυτότητα κινήσεώς τε καὶ ὑπάρξεως ἀδιάφθορον καὶ ἀσύγχυτον ἄγει τὰ πάντα. For the English translation see G. C. Berthold, ed., *Maximus the Confessor, Selected Writings*, London: SPCK 1985, 186.
25. H.-U. von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 155.
26. *Amb.* 7, 1073C.

(τέλος) of movement, while the other is the movement toward their own be-ginning and cause. According to Maximus whatever direction the rational being takes it will reach God because "the end of movement of those who are moved is 'eternal well-being' itself [God], just as its beginning is being itself which is the giver of being as well as well being."[27] However, Maximus classifies movements according to nature and to will. The movement toward the proper end is the movement according to nature and it is performed by mind out of love; the movement toward the beginning and cause of beings is movement in accordance to will that is performed by reason (*logos*) for the purpose of gaining knowledge.[28] Maximus acknowledges the abilities of reason to know God by claiming that even if the rational being moves toward its beginning, it does not flow away from God, but it reaches God as its proper beginning and cause.[29] Maximus describes the movement in accordance to nature as ecstasy over what is loved that intensifies movement of being until it is embraced wholly by the object of its love and desire.[30] The movement driven by a creature's desire and will to understand its own purpose and the source of existence is a proper movement only if a) there is no end toward which it can be moved and b) it is moved in no other way than toward its beginning.[31] This explains to a certain degree that the movement of mind as natural movement and the movement of reason as movement of will are not alternative one to another, but rather complementary, because they both end in the Logos of God.

The movement of reason or will, as different from natural movement, is not directed out of the rational being, but it remains within the borders of the definition imposed by its own *logos*. By striving to understand its own *logos*, the human being experiences certain delimitations, because it[32] initiates processes of establishing its existence not only on its particular *logos*, but also on the higher *logoi* of species and genera. By attaining the most general *logos* of being, the human being realizes that its beginning is nowhere else than in the Logos of God. Therefore, Maximus states that the

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27. *Amb.* 7, 1073C.
28. *Amb.* 7, 1073C.
29. *Amb.* 7, 1080C.
30. *Amb.* 7, 1073D.
31. *Amb.* 7, 1080C; Blowers & Wilken, 56.
32. My usage of the third person singular pronoun "it" for the "human being," is actually in compliance with Maximus' theology. Maximus himself uses pronoun τό in order to stress that a human person after transcending sexual differentiation is neither "he" nor "she;" *Amb.* 41, 1304D. See A. Louth, 155, 211, n. 8.

human being should not move toward any other end than its beginning.[33] However, by ascending the hierarchical structure of *logoi* that ends in attaining union with the Logos of God, the rational being does not enter in the highest union with God. Maximus points out that the *logos* of being and the mode of existence of each rational being acquire their purpose only in the light of the Incarnation of the Logos:

> As earlier, neither by the mode [of existence], nor by the logos of essence nor by the hypostasis, according to which all the beings are considered in general, the nature had found the unity of God, now it is hypostatically one with God through the ineffable union, while by maintaining unchanged its proper logos, which is different from the divine essence, it has a union based on hypostatical unity and difference. So by the logos of being, in which it became and in which it is, it continues to be itself properly and without diminishing, and also, by the logos of how it is, it takes hold of its divine foundation, without inclining toward anything else that it may know or may be attracted to. Thus, the Logos has accomplished a more paradoxical communion with human nature from the earlier one, by essentially uniting this nature with Him in one hypostasis.[34]

Not only the movement of rational being toward its cause, but also the natural movement toward God as its goal is understandable only through the Incarnation. By natural movement the rational being *moves out of itself* (this is the literal meaning of *exstasis*) and it enters the union with its objects of love, which is God. This movement is natural, because it constitutes the ontological structure of human being, which bears the icon and likeness of God. Maximus' claim that "God and the human being are paradigms one of another" and "that as much as God is humanized to human being through

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33. *Amb.* 7, 1080C. Blowers & Wilken, 56.
34. *Amb.* 36, 1289CD: Πρότερον μὲν γὰρ κατ᾽ οὐδὲν τρόπον ἢ λόγον οὐσίας ἢ ὑποστάσεως, τῶν ἐν οἷς τὰ ὄντα πάντα καθολικῶς θεωρεῖται, τὸ ἕν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἡ φύσις εἰλήφει, νῦν δὲ τὸ καθ᾽ ὑπόστασιν ἕν πρὸς αὐτὸν διὰ τῆς ἀφράστου ἐνώσεως ἔλαβε, τὸν οἰκεῖον δηλαδὴ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ἀναλλοιώτως πρὸς τὴν θείαν οὐσίαν διάφορον διαφυλάττουσαν λόγον, πρὸς ἣν ἔχει διὰ τῆς ἐνώσεως τὸ καθ᾽ ὑπόστασιν ἕν καὶ διάφορον, ἵνα τῷ μὲν τοῦ εἶναι λόγῳ, καθ᾽ ὃν γεγένηται καὶ ἔστι, διαμένοι τὸ ἑαυτῆς ὂν κυρίως ἔχουσα κατὰ πάντα τρόπον ἀμείωτον, τῷ δὲ τοῦ πῶς εἶναι λόγῳ τὸ ὑφεστάναι θεϊκῶς λαβοῦσα τῆς περὶ τι ἄλλο κινήσεως τὴν ῥοπὴν παντελῶς μήτε γινώσκῃ, μήτε προσίηται. Ταύτῃ γοῦν πολὺ τῆς προτέρας παραδοξοτέραν τὴν πρὸς τὴν φύσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὁ λόγος ἐποιήσατο κοινωνίαν, αὐτὴν τὴν φύσιν οὐσιωδῶς ἑαυτῷ καθ᾽ ὑπόστασιν ἐνώσας.

love for humankind, so much is the human being able to be deified to God through love,"[35] actually explains that the human being is created to establish its own existence not on itself, but on God. Therefore, the Incarnation of God is prerequisite for establishing humanity as deified:

> He who, by the sheer inclination of his will, established the beginning of all creation, seen and unseen, before all the ages and before that beginning of created beings, had an ineffably good plan for those creatures. The plan was for him to mingle, without change on his part, with human nature by true hypostatic union, to unite human nature to himself while remaining immutable, so that he might become a man, as he alone knew how, and so that he might deify humanity in union with himself.[36]

The union established between divine and human nature by the Incarnation of Logos is a union much higher than the union that the human being had with God in paradise. Moreover, the second union has been already established in the person of Christ and it should be accomplished by the whole humanity. Therefore, the goal of humanity is not given by creation, but rather by the Logos' incarnation, because the hypostatic union between the two natures in Christ models the nature of the future union between God and human being.

III. Incarnation of Logos as creative and preservative procession

As we have seen above the Incarnation of Logos can be perceived both as creative and preservative procession (ποιητικὴ καὶ συνεκτικὴ πρόοδος).[37] However, it is difficult to distinguish between the preservative and creative elements in Christ's procession, because sometimes he preserved what he did not create in order to glorify human nature, and sometimes he recreated what became so characteristic of creation. Generally speaking, the preserving procession consists in Christ's preservation of the human nature in its original state, but since Christ paradoxically took the nature, which he

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35. *Amb.* 10, 1113B; A. Louth, 98.

36. *Quaestiones ad Thalassium (= Ad Thal.)* 22, in: C. Laga, C. Steel, eds., *Maximi Confessoris Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 7, Turnhout: Brepols 1980, 137; Blowers & Wilken, 115.

37. *Amb.* 7, 1081C.

did not create, the nature of fallen Adam,[38] this is not the nature he wanted to preserve intact. Similarly, the creative procession reveals Christ's creative activity in endowing the human nature with something new, which it has lacked previously, but which was a part of the ontological structure of humanity. In order to improve human nature Christ had to preserve it first by returning it to its original state. The preservation of human nature means its restoration to the previous state of incorruptibility. However, this restoration into previous state happened by various methods, some of them applicable to the original plan, and some of them not. For example, Christ is conceived without intercourse[39] and born by a virgin without corruption.[40] By alluding to Gregory the Theologian's *Sermon* 39.13 Maximus describes the preservation of the ontological structure of humanity as "instituting nature afresh."[41] The "new" way of human generation rather pertains to the preservation of human nature, than to its recreation, because it does not change the *logoi* of nature, but only the modes (*tropoi*) of its existence.

According to Maximus, by being born in sinless way, Christ avoids the sin itself, but not the liability to passions:

> Taking on the original condition of Adam as he was in the very beginning, he was sinless but not incorruptible, and he assumed, from the procreative process introduced into human nature as a consequence of sin, only the liability to passions, not the sin itself.[42]

Therefore, Christ assumed the corrupted and mortal nature of Adam, but he did not assume the sin that is associated with it. Thus, by being liable to passions he was able to heal the consequences of sin, without being sinful. For Maximus, Christ broke the link between liability to passions and unnatural passions. He defeated the passions connected to pleasure while being tempted in the desert, and the passions connected to pain, by experiencing

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38. *Ad Thal.* 54, CCSG 7, 459.
39. *Amb.* 10, 1141D; A. Louth, 115.
40. *Amb.* 41, 1313C; A. Louth, 160.
41. *Opuscula Theologica et Polemica* (= *Opusc.*) 3, PG 91, 48C; *Amb.* 5, 1049B–1052B; *Amb.* 31, 1273D–1276D; *Amb.* 41, 1313CD. See also A. Louth, 50–53.
42. *Ad Thal.* 21, CCSG 7; 129: ἐκ μὲν τῆς κατὰ τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ Ἀδὰμ πρώτης συστάσεως λαβὼν εἶχε δίχα τῆς ἀφθαρσίας τὸ ἀναμάρτητον, ἐκ δὲ τῆς ὕστερον διὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐπεισαχθείσης τῇ φύσει γεννήσεως μόνον εἴληφε δίχα τῆς ἁμαρτίας τὸ παθητόν; Blowers & Wilken, 111.

death on the cross.[43] Therefore, Christ's triumphant victory over evil passion is connected with his death on the cross, because when his soul departed the evil powers could not find anything sinful in the passibility proper to human nature.[44] Christ restored all original human powers by saving the image of God in the human being, by making human flesh immortal and by cleaning the human nature from evil.[45] The victory on the cross is the climax in the process of procession,[46] but it is also the beginning of the process of proper conversion, because by freeing human nature from the evil he instituted the possibility for immortality of the human flesh.

IV. Converting and Hand-leading Transference
(ἐπιστρεπτικὴ καὶ χειραγωγικὴ ἀναφορά)

The process of the converting transference (ἐπιστρεπτικὴ ἀναφορά) begins with the decision made by the rational being to move toward its cause and beginning or its proper end. In both cases the final destination of this movement will be God. While by returning to its cause and beginning the rational being will find the purpose of its existence or its own *logos*, by moving toward its proper end or the final union with God, apart from knowing the purpose of its creation, the rational being will also know the way how to fulfill this purpose. By his incarnation, the redemptive work of the preservation of human nature in its original state and the deification of human nature, Christ has shown the way, which every human being should take in order to become deified. Therefore, the process of conversion of creation toward God has already started in Christ, who has reoriented humanity toward God. Christ has reoriented humanity toward God, because previously Adam had oriented human nature toward creation expecting to

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43. *Ad Thal.* 21, CCSG 7; 131.
44. *Ad Thal.* 21, CCSG 7; 131.
45. *Ad Thal.* 54, CCSG 7; 459: ἵνα καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα σώσῃ καὶ τὴν σάρκα ἀθανατίσῃ καί, τὸν ἐνηχηθέντα τῇ φύσει λόγον τοῦ ὄφεως παντελῶς ἐξαφανίσας, ὡς ἐξ ἀρχῆς καθαρὰν κακίας πάλιν παραστήσῃ τὴν φύσιν.
46. The symbolical significance of the cross is often underlined in the Orthodox iconography by the iconographer's replacement of biblically more accurate form of the inscription nailed on the cross above Christ's head "Jesus the Nazarean, King of the Jews" with the form "The Jesus the Nazarean, King of Glory." The iconographer releases himself from the historical necessity, not only by showing that the theological significance of the cross lies in the resurrection, but also that the human nature is already restored to its glory at the cross.

find in nature the purpose of his being and the proper end of his movement. Christ not only converted (ἐπιστροφήν) human nature toward God, but he also led it step by step until he finally offered it to the Father. Therefore Maximus instead of using the Neoplatonic term (ἐπιστροφή), opts for more precise terms such as "the converting and hand-leading transference or offering" (ἐπιστρεπτικὴ καὶ χειραγωγικὴ ἀναφορά). In order to achieve this final union with God, preconceived before the ages, every human being should follow Christ's path.

> For whoever does not violate the *logos* of his own existence that preexisted in God *is* in God through diligence; and he *moves* in God according to the *logos* of his well-being that pre-existed in God when he lives virtuously; and he *lives* in God according to the *logos* of his eternal being that pre-existed in God. On the one hand, insofar as he is already irrevocably one with himself in his disposition, he is free of unruly passions. But in the future age when graced with divinization, he will affectionately love and cleave to the *logoi* already mentioned that pre-existed in God, or rather, he will love God himself, in whom the *logoi* of beautiful things are securely grounded. In this way he becomes a "portion of God," insofar as he exists through the *logos* of his being which is in God and insofar as he is good through the *logos* of his well-being which is in God; and insofar as he is God through the *logos* of his eternal being which is in God, he prizes the *logoi* and acts according to them. Through them he places himself wholly in God alone, wholly imprinting and forming God alone in himself, so that by grace he himself "is God and is called God." By his gracious condescension God became man and is called man for the sake of man and by exchanging his condition for ours revealed the power that elevates man to God through his love for God and brings God down to man because of his love for man. By this blessed inversion, man is made God by divinization and God is made man by hominization. For the Word of God and God wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of his embodiment.[47]

Maximus identifies a few steps on the human being's path to achieve the final union with God. The first step for every human being is to acknowledge its *logos* of being and not to go against it. The next step consists in a virtuous life and it represents acting in accordance with the *logoi* of well being that preexist in God for every human being. The final step of every human

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47. *Amb.* 7, 1084BD; Blowers & Wilken, 59–60.

being is the realization of its *logos* of eternal being or achieving eternal life. All three steps of the human progression toward the final union with God resemble the whole divine design with the Incarnation of the Logos as the central point.

The process of the descent of the Divine into human beings that is considered as the procession has not begun with the Incarnation, but it has begun with the creation and it reached its peak in the Incarnation. Similarly, the process of the deification of human nature that can be identified with the conversion did not end when Christ, with his redeemed (= preserved) human nature, became seated "at right side of the Father." The process of conversion should be the process of the deification of whole human kind and it has not yet come to an end. Therefore Maximus claims that God divided the whole history into two periods, one intended for God to become human, and another intended for humanity to become divine.[48] The event that divides, but also unites these two periods, by giving meaning to the whole history at the same time, is the Incarnation of Logos in the person of Jesus Christ and His salvific work that culminated in his Crucifixion, death and Resurrection. For Maximus these historical events symbolize the ontological structure of the entire creation:

> The one who knows the mystery of the cross and the tomb knows the principles of these creatures. And the one who has been initiated into the ineffable power of the Resurrection knows the purpose for which God originally made all things.[49]

Maximus actually states that the mystery of the cross hides the *logoi* of the sensible nature, while the mystery of the tomb hides the *logoi* of intelligible nature. The cross signifies the separation of everything perceived by senses and the tomb represents the withdrawal of mind from everything conceived by mind. Only by a total denial of everything perceived by senses and mind can the soul recognize the *logoi* of creation, which are beyond everything created. As the Resurrection links the cross and the tomb by explaining their purpose, the final unity of the Logos and *logoi* as preconceived by God from eternity explains the coexistence of the sensible nature together with the intelligible nature. Maximus' parallel between the cross, the tomb and the Resurrection and the *logoi* of sensible nature, *logoi* of intelligible nature and the providence regarding the final union between the

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48. *Ad Thal.* 22, CCSG 7; 137; Blowers & Wilken, 115.
49. *Capita Theologica et Oeconomica* (= *Cap. Gnost.*) I, 66, PG 90, 1108; G. C. Berthold, 140.

Logos and the *logoi* demonstrates that Christ's conversion is also the conversion of the entire creation toward the final union with God.

Although Christ's Resurrection is the summit of the historical *Triduum* – Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday, as well as the highest of the three stages of the Christian life, ascetic struggle, natural contemplation, and mystical theology[50] – Maximus stresses that the resurrection is a *reformation* of nature that surpasses creation in paradise, generally, due to the unchangeability of all, and specifically, due to the inexpressible deification of the saints by grace.[51]

Moreover, Maximus distinguishes between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of all or to be precise between Christ's salvific deeds and their appropriation by all:

> It is also said that the first Sunday (= Pascha) is the symbol of the future physical resurrection and incorruptibility, while the second Sunday (= Antipascha) conveys the icon of the future deification by grace. If, therefore attaining of the goods is preferred than the moral purification from the evils, and possessing the perfection of true knowledge than healthy and virtuous inclination, and regeneration by the deification and grace than the incorruptibility of nature, of which the first Sunday conveys the type, and the second Sunday is symbol, then the teacher [Gregory the Theologian], guided by the Spirit, rightly called the Sunday of renewal higher than the sublime one.[52]

It is valuable to notice another terminological invention employed by Maximus. He does not use the term ἐπιστροφή but he replaces it with the more precise term ἀντιστροφή. While the term "conversion" (ἐπιστροφή) describes just the process of the human being's return to God, the process of "reversion" (ἀντιστροφή) refers to the process of God's hominization

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50. *Cap. Gnost.* I, 55. Cf. also A. Louth, "Ecclesiology of St Maximos the Confessor", *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 4, 2 (2004) 109–120: 114.

51. *Ad Thal.* 54, CCSG 7, 475: Ἡ ἀνάστασις ἀνάπλασίς ἐστι τῆς φύσεως, πλεονεκτοῦσα τὴν τῆς φύσεως ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ διάπλασιν· γενικῶς μέν, τῇ καθ' ὅλου τῶν ὅλων ἀτρεψίᾳ· ἰδικῶς δέ, τῇ κατὰ χάριν ἀρρήτῳ θεώσει τῶν ἁγίων.

52. *Amb.* 63 PG 91, 1388–1389B: Καὶ αὖθις τὴν μὲν πρώτην Κυριακήν τῆς μελλούσης φυσικῆς ἀναστάσεως καὶ ἀφθαρσίας εἶναι σύμβολον, τὴν δὲ δευτέραν τῆς κατὰ χάριν μελλούσης θεώσεως φέρειν εἰκόνα. Εἰ τοίνυν τῆς μὲν καθαρευούσης κακῶν ἕξεως ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀπόλαυσίς ἐστι τιμιωτέρα, τῆς δὲ κατ' ἀρετὴν ὑγιοῦς προαιρέσεως ἕξις τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἀληθῆ γνῶσιν τελειότητος, καὶ τῆς φυσικῆς ἀφθαρσίας ἡ ἐν χάριτι πρὸς τὸν Θεόν κατὰ τὴν θέωσιν μεταποίησις, ὧν ἡ μὲν πρώτη Κυριακή φέρει τύπον, ἡ δὲ δευτέρα τυγχάνει σύμβολον, εἰκότως ὑψηλῆς ὑψηλοτέραν ἀγόμενος πνεύματι, τὴν καινὴν ὁ διδάσκαλος ἔφη Κυριακήν. The same text occurs in *Amb.* 10, PG 91, 1176A.

as well as to that of the human being's deification. The term "reversion" (ἀντιστροφή) deals also with the final result of these corresponding processes.

The "reversion" (ἀντιστροφή) is not only a term that expresses the reciprocity or correspondence between two periods, one from the creation of the world to Christ's death on the cross, and another from Christ's Resurrection to the final deification of all creation, but it also describes the final result of these two processes. As the final result of the process of the hominization of God was the hypostatic union between divine and human nature in Jesus Christ, thus the final result of the process of the deification of human being should be also the hypostatic union between divine and human nature in every human being. Here it is important to stress that the process of deification is the common work of God and the human being, like the process of the Incarnation of Logos was the common work of God and human beings, or in the last instance the work of the Holy Spirit and Mary, the Mother of God. In both, the Incarnation of Logos and the deification of humanity, God takes a leading or hand-leading (χειραγωγική) role.

> For He accepted to be unchangeably created in the form like us and through his immeasurable love for humankind to become type and symbol of Himself, and from Himself symbolically to represent Himself, and through the manifestation of Himself to lead to Himself in His complete and secret hiddenness the whole creation.[53]

The human being is led by God to the final union with him and on this course it "becomes God, being made God by God."[54] Maximus describes this process of deification as the transference (ἀναφορᾷ) of all created beings in the union with God, in which beings become united without confusion (ἀσυγχύτως) among themselves and with God.[55] Maximus prefers more the term "transference" (ἀναφορᾷ) than the term "conversion," for at least two reasons. Firstly, the "transference" (ἀναφορά) or the whole phrase "converting and hand-leading transference" (ἐπιστρεπτικὴ καὶ χειραγωγικὴ ἀναφορά) refers not to one, but rather to two agents in this process. It

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53. *Amb.* 10, 1165D: Εἴδει γὰρ αὐτὸν καθ᾿ ἡμᾶς ἀτρέπτως κτισθῆναι δι᾿ ἄμετρον φιλανθρωπίαν καταδεξάμενον ἑαυτοῦ γενέσθαι τύπον καὶ σύμβολον, καὶ παραδεῖξαι ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ συμβολικῶς ἑαυτόν, καὶ δι᾿ ἑαυτοῦ φαινομένου πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἀφανῶς πάντη κρυπτόμενον χειραγωγῆσαι τὴν ἅπασαν κτίσιν καὶ τῆς ἀφανοῦς...; A. Louth, 132. The idea of God as χειραγωγός can be also found in Dionysios the Areopagite. See *De divinibus nominibus* 3, 11, PG 3, 694D.
54. *Amb,* 7, 1084A: [...] ὅν γίνεται Θεός, ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸ Θεός εἶναι λαμβάνων [...].
55. *Amb,* 7, 1077C: [...] τῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν τῶν πάντων ἀναφορᾷ δι᾿ ἑαυτὸν ἀσυγχύτως ὑπάρχοντα.

is obvious that the conversion takes place in the created rational beings (humans and angels), but the guidance of the transference belongs to God. Secondly, the term ἀναφορά apart from "transference" means "offering" and in this context is exclusively employed in the liturgy. This term again refers to certain cooperation between God and rational beings, because if there is offering it should be also a reception of this offering. Thus, rational beings offer themselves and the whole of creation back to God who receives them and bestows deification upon them.

In conclusion, Maximus randomly employs the Neoplatonic philosophical notions of "procession" and "conversion," but even then it is obvious that these terms are used in a strictly Christian context and with different meanings. In many cases the adaptation of the Neoplatonic notions was followed by the invention of additional terms or synonyms meant to capture the complexity of the Christian message. Maximus supplements the Neoplatonic notion of procession with the attributes "creative" and "preservative" in order to underline the permanence of the divine presence in the world. By replacing the term "conversion" with the term "reversion," Maximus shows how the incarnated God concluded the process of procession and initiated the process of conversion. Finally, Maximus expresses the process of the return in terms of offering (ἀναφορά) clearly showing that God and creation equally contribute to this process. These are the major transformations that these Neoplatonic terms underwent on the ontological level in the work of St. Maximus the Confessor.