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ST MAXIMUS
THE CONFESSOR



Melchisedec Törönen

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford ox2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
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Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

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First published 2007

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Törönen, Melchisedec.

Union and distinction in the thought of St. Maximus
the Confessor / Melchisedec Törönen.

p. cm. — (Oxford early Christian studies)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-0-19-929611-8 (alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-19-929611-1 (alk. paper)

1. Maximus, Confessor, Saint, ca. 580-662. I. Title.
BR1720.M365T67 2007

230'.14092—dc22

2006029628

Typeset by SPi Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India.

Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
Biddles Ltd., King's Lynn, Norfolk

ISBN 0-19-929611-1 978-0-19-929611-8

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

To
Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov
(1896–1993)

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to the Monastery of St John the Baptist (Tolleshunt Knights, UK), Arts and Humanities Research Board, Ustinov College and The Department of Theology of the University Durham, Aretha and Caecilia Pärt, and Lauri and Helena Törönen, for their financial, moral, and academic support, which made the writing of this book possible.

I am greatly indebted to Professor Andrew Louth, who as my supervisor at Durham University guided the work through the perilous paths of doctoral research and whose continuing encouragement has enabled this publication to see the light of day. Acknowledgements are also due to Andreas Andreopoulos, Augustine Casiday, Adam Cooper, Markos Galounis, Grant Goble, Sergei Hovorun, Antoine Lévy, Mihail Neamtu, Michael Rhodes, Gary Thorne, and Andrew Unsworth.

Dr Richard Price and Dr Catherine Osborne, as well as the reader for this volume at the Oxford University Press, have given me much valuable advice and I thank them for that.

Acknowledgements are also due to Paulist Press for allowing me to quote excerpts from *St Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life. The Four Centuries on Charity*, Ancient Christian Writers 21, by Polycarp Sherwood, 1955, Paulist Press, Inc., New York/Mahwah, NJ; to Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group) for allowing me to quote from Andrew Louth's book *Maximus the Confessor* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); and to Museum Vander Kelen-Mertens, Leuven-Belgium, for giving permission to reproduce Dirk Bouts' 'Melchisedec meets Abraham' from his typological triptych 'Last Supper' as the frontispiece for this volume.

Finally, like Saint Maximus himself, I must acknowledge my debt to a 'certain great elder' who in many ways, directly or indirectly, has been behind this project. It is to him I wish to dedicate this work.

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The Works of St Maximus

- Ambig.* *Ambiguorum liber* (*Ambig. Thom.* 1–5) CCSG 48, 3–34; (*Ambig. Ioh.* 6–71) PG 91, 1061–417
- Anim.* *Opusculum de anima*, PG 91, 353–61
- Ascet.* *Liber asceticus*, CCSG 40
- Cap. x* *Capita x* [= *Diversa capita* I, 16–25], PG 90, 1185–9
- Cap. xv* *Capita xv* [= *Diversa capita* I, 1–15], PG 90, 1177–85
- Cap. theol.* *Capitum theologorum et oeconomicorum duae centuriae*, PG 90, 1084–173
- Carit.* *Capita de caritate quattuor centuriae*, PG 90, 960–1073
- Disp. Biz.* *Disputatio Bizyae cum Theodosio*, CCSG 39, 73–151
- Ep.* *Epistulae* (1–45), PG 91, 361–650
- Ep. Anast.* *Epistula ad Anastasium monachum*, CCSG 39, 161–3
- Ep. sec. Th.* *Epistula secunda ad Thomam*, CCSG 48, 37–49
- Exp. Ps. 59* *Expositio in Psalmum lix*, CCSG 23, 3–22
- Myst.* *Mystagogia*, Soteropoulos 1993² [= PG 91, 657–717]
- Opusc.* *Opuscula theologica et polemica* (1–27), PG 91, 9–285
- Or. dom.* *Expositio orationis dominicae*, CCSG 23, 27–73
- Pyrr.* *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 288–353
- Qu. dub.* *Quaestiones et dubia*, CCSG 10
- Qu. Thal.* *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, CCSG 7 and 22
- Qu. Theop.* *Quaestiones ad Theopemptum*, PG 90, 1393–1400
- Rel. mot.* *Relatio motionis*, CCSG 39, 13–51

Abbreviations

ABAW.PH	<i>Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Abteilung, Neue Folge (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1929 ff.)</i>
ACO	<i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum (Straßburg–Leipzig–Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, series prima 1914 ff., series secunda 1984 ff.)</i>
ACW	<i>Ancient Christian Writers: The Fathers of the Church in Translation (New York: Paulist Press, 1946 ff.)</i>
After Chalcedon	<i>C. Laga, J.A Munitiz, and L. van Rompay (eds.), After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History Offered to Professor Albert van Roey for his Seventieth Birthday (Leeuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1985)</i>
AHDL	<i>Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge Aristotle Transformed Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and their Influence, ed. R. Sorabji (London: Duckworth, 1990)</i>
BZ	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
CAG	<i>Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca (Berlin: Busse, 1891–1903)</i>
CCCM	<i>Corpus Christianorum, cont. mediaevalis (Turnhout: Brepols)</i>
CCSG	<i>Corpus Christianorum, ser. graeca (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977 ff.)</i>
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum, ser. latina (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953 ff.)</i>
ChH	<i>Church History</i>
CM	<i>Classica et Mediaevalia</i>

<i>Companion</i>	<i>A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages</i> , ed. J. J. E. Gracia and T. B. Noone (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003)
CPG	<i>Clavis patrum graecorum</i> , vol iii ed. M. Geerard and supplementation ed. M. Geerard and J. Noret (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979 and 1998)
CSCO	<i>Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium</i> (Louvain: L. Durbecq)
<i>Doctrina patrum</i>	<i>Doctrina patrum de incarnatione verbi: Ein griechisches Florilegium aus der Wende des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts</i> , first edited by Franz Diekamp in 1907, 2nd and rev. edn. by B. Phanourgakis and E. Chrysos (Münster: Aschendorff, 1981)
ECS	<i>Early Christian Studies</i>
ÉOr	<i>Échos d'Orient</i>
GCS	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</i> (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1897 ff.)
GNO	<i>Gregorii Nysseni Opera</i> , ed. Werner Jaeger (Leiden: E. J. Brill)
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JÖB	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JThS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
Loeb	<i>The Loeb Classical Library</i> (Cambridge, Mass., 1912 ff.)
MO	<i>Le Messenger Orthodoxe</i>
MTh	<i>Modern Theology</i>
OCA	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i> (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1935 ff.)
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
OCT	<i>Oxford Classical Texts</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press)

ODCC	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church</i> , ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997 ³)
OLP	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica</i>
PBR	<i>Patristic and Byzantine Review</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia cursus completus, series graeca</i> (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857–1904)
<i>Philohistôr</i>	<i>Philohistôr: Miscellanea in honorem Caroli Laga septuagenarii</i> , ed. A. Schoors and P. van Deun (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1994)
PL	<i>Patrologia cursus completus, series latina</i> (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1844–64)
PTS	<i>Patristische Texte und Studien</i> (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1964 ff.)
RAM	<i>Revue d'ascétique et de mystique</i>
RD	<i>Recherches et débats</i>
RDCCIF	<i>Recherches et débats du Centre Catholique des Intellectuels Français</i>
REB	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
REG	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
RMP _h	<i>Rheinisches Museum für Philologie</i>
RSP _h Th	<i>Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques</i>
RSR	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
RThAM	<i>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale</i>
RTL	<i>Revue théologique de Louvain</i>
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1941 ff.)
ScE	<i>Science et Esprit</i> , Montréal
SE	<i>Sacris erudiri</i>
SP	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
SVThQ	<i>Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>

- Symposium* *Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur. Fribourg, 2–5 septembre 1980, ed. F. Heinzer and Ch. von Schönborn (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1982)*
- TU* *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte altchristlichen Literatur (Leipzig–Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1882 ff.)*
- VCh* *Vigiliae Christianae*

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Introduction

The present study explores the different ways in which St Maximus the Confessor (580–662) works out a theology of simultaneous union and distinction. The logic of union and distinction pervades all the major areas of Maximus' thought and it is the purpose of this book to present his synthesis in the light of this logic. The fundamental idea, which I shall here call the principle of simultaneous union and distinction, could be summarized in the following way: things united remain distinct and without confusion in an inseparable union. This is the starting point for our investigation. Not every pattern or idea in Maximus' thought matches exactly with it (and I have tried to avoid pushing things too far) but it does express the kind of architecture of his thought that can be traced in all the major areas of his theology. If it is borne in mind, in particular when reading some of the more technical chapters that follow, the actual coherence of the mosaic that Maximus' theology as a whole constitutes will become apparent.

While the principle of union and distinction remains the central theme of this study, I have avoided presenting it as having a single centre of gravity in Maximus' theology. And this because Maximus' theology is, as I said, a mosaic. It is a whole, yes—it was, after all, produced by one person—but it is a theology, or perhaps I should say, simply, theology (without the article), which was produced in a variety of contexts; contexts each of which gives a different twist to the theme. The principle of union and distinction finds, as it were, different 'embodiments' in all the various contexts. That it proves a useful weapon in the polemic against Severian Monophysitism does not make it less important for a rebuttal of Origenism; or again, the fact that Maximus makes use of this logic in his polemical writings by no means implies that it has emerged from such engagement only, and that it could thereby not play a role in, for instance, his exegetical treatises.

Most Maximian scholars since the Second World War have taken it for granted that the centre of gravity of Maximus' theology as a whole, with its characteristic emphasis on a 'union without confusion', lies in exploring the deeper mysteries, so to speak, of the Chalcedonian

Definition¹—Hans Urs von Balthasar and Lars Thunberg having set up the signposts. This ‘mystification’ of Chalcedon is something which Maximus himself, I think, would have found a little strange, but it also, as I hope this study will show, places the emphasis of Maximus’ theology in the wrong place. It is like taking a photograph of a landscape while focusing on a nearby signpost: important as the signpost is, it blurs the view of the landscape. Something similar happens here. If I were to put it simply: the Chalcedonian Definition is not the unique great fountainhead of theology and inspiration for Maximus as it has too often been thought to be. It is clear, of course, that Maximus in his Christology follows post-Chalcedonian theologians such as Leontius of Byzantium and Justinian, but it is far less evident that his cosmology, for instance, is one inspired by the Chalcedonian Definition; even if some distant echoes might be heard in some areas. Chalcedon is important for Maximus no doubt (though, let it be mentioned, he never quotes verbatim the Definition itself) but it is only a part, rather than the source, of a far wider and older tradition. It is, as it were, an ‘eddy on the surface of a vast river that flows on majestically, irresistibly, around, beneath, and to either side of it’ (to borrow a metaphor from Huxley), and one should be careful not to let this one single eddy dominate over the whole. ‘The existence of the entire river as well as of the eddy’² is required to have a truthful picture.

This pan-Chalcedonianism, as one might call it, was introduced into the Maximian scholarship by von Balthasar in his monumental work the *Cosmic Liturgy*³ where he, in an introductory chapter (I: 3b) under the subheading ‘Christ and the Synthesis’,⁴ sets the path towards an all-encompassing Chalcedonian synthesis thus:

¹ ἀσυγχύτως, which is one of the four adverbs in the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon 451 describing the way in which the two natures in Christ are united, is usually translated as ‘without confusion’.

² The two quotations are from Aldous Huxley, *Music in the Night, and Other Essays including ‘Vulgarity in Literature’* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1949), 14.

³ *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, translation and foreword by B. E. Daley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003). This is a translation of the second and revised German edition of 1961: *Kosmische Liturgie: Das Weltbild Maximus’ des Bekenner* (Einsiedeln, Trier: Johannes Verlag, 2nd and rev. edn. 1961, 1988³). The work was originally published in 1941. For the first edition I have consulted the French translation: *Liturgie cosmique: Maxime le Confesseur*, trans. L. Lhaumet and H.-A. Prentout (Paris: Aubier, 1947).

⁴ This can be found in the second and revised edition only (*Cosmic Liturgy*, 65–73). Instead, in the first edition (so at least in its French translation) there is an epigraph

Only in this context does the remarkable, even unique historical role of this thinker become apparent. The time had come to set forth antiquity's conception of the universe in a final, conclusive synthesis. . . . And why should not that decisive christological formulation, seen in its deepest implications, also serve as the right model for the world? That, at least, is how Maximus understood it. No one could have done this before Chalcedon, and it took a further two centuries before the implications of Chalcedon had been fully thought through.⁵

A little later von Balthasar quotes two long paragraphs from the *Mystagogia*⁶ both of which do contain the idea of an unconfused union but which, frankly, can hardly have anything to do with Chalcedon. Von Balthasar nevertheless concludes: 'These texts are enough to give us a notion of the way in which the Christological formula [of Chalcedon] expands, for Maximus, into a fundamental law of metaphysics.'⁷ This rather blunt statement would have required a little more detailed explanation. It is as if this terminology had never existed before Chalcedon, or outside its Christological penumbra, and as if Maximus could not have drawn on other sources for this terminology (which is the more likely option), and as if Chalcedon and a single line of its Definition remained the only originator of this kind of thinking and the sole source of inspiration that could provide a metaphysical principle for Maximus' synthesis. All this is too clear-cut, somehow crude and polished at the same time; and however positively one may think of Chalcedon, one can only agree with Brian E. Daley who in the foreword to the English translation of the *Cosmic Liturgy* reveals something of the agenda von Balthasar had in mind when writing his oeuvre:

In 1941 and even in 1961⁸ von Balthasar's concern was to find in the Catholic dogmatic tradition—in patristic thought, but also in the Thomist tradition, as seen through the lenses of Joseph Maréchal and Erich Przywara—an intelligent and convincing answer to the seductive call of German idealism to let the concrete reality of creation dissolve into being nothing more than the phenomena experienced by the thinking human subject. Even in his reading

at the very beginning of the book (*Liturgie cosmique*, 5) which states in block capitals: 'ΑΣΥΓΧΥΤΩΣ' (Council of Chalcedon). See also *Cosmic Liturgy*, 126, 161, 207, and 275.

⁵ Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 65–6.

⁶ (a) Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 68–69: *Myst.* 1 (Soteropoulos), 150: 6–52: 10 [= PG 91, 664D–665C]; (b) Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 70: *Myst.* 7 (Soteropoulos), 186: 14–23 [= PG 91, 685AB].

⁷ Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 70.

⁸ See n. 3.