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CONSECRATE THE WORLD TO GOD: MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR ON THE
“SECULAR” AND VATICAN II’S THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY.

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McNulty Graduate School

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Anthony V. Marco

May 2021

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Anthony V. Marco

2021

CONSECRATE THE WORLD TO GOD:
MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR ON THE “SECULAR” AND
VATICAN II’S THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY

By

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Approved March 12, 2021

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ABSTRACT

CONSECRATE THE WORLD TO GOD: MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR ON THE “SECULAR” AND VATICAN II’S THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY

By

Anthony Marco

May 2021

Dissertation supervised by Radu Bordeianu

Post-Conciliar ecclesiological reflection in the United States has been largely critical of *Lumen Gentium*’s description of the laity. The criticism is focused around two concepts used to differentiate the lay state from clergy and religious: that the lay vocation takes place principally among the life and work of the world, having a “secular character” and that the activity of the laity, as a participation in the priesthood of Christ, is the consecration the world itself to God. According to this critique, these concepts are problematic because they juxtapose the task of the laity in the world with the task of the clergy who are the sole proprietors of the sacred. This is compounded by 20th Century theologies of grace. Acknowledging a human task of mediation (consecration of the world) would be the equivalent to arguing that the world was not already filled with the grace of God. Together these issues set up a series of unacceptable dichotic pairs:

the separate activity of laity/clergy implies a division between secular/sacred and ultimately of God and the world.

I assert that Maximus the Confessor's theological vision is a corrective to the views expressed in post-Vatican II literature. Maximian thought resolves the aporia introduced by these dichotomies not because it refutes specific premises, but because it approaches the problem of God and the world from a different standpoint altogether. I argue that within Maximus' theological worldview, the goodness of creation is entrusted to humanity for consecration. The offering of creation to God arises from creation's own goodness, based within the maximian concept of the *logoi*. It is this priestly act that unites humanity with creation and constitutes their shared deifying communion. The maximian lens also serves to deepen and enrich Lumen Gentium's description of the laity and is a basis for further exploration of the lay vocation.

DEDICATION

*To my beloved wife Sara and our children Michael, Maria and Gianna; with whom I am blessed
to consecrate the life we share to God.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I consider it a blessing to be able to name the great cloud of witnesses who have made this project possible. First, I would like to thank my dissertation director Fr. Radu Bordeianu. His constant encouragement, advice, and pastoral care made my time at Duquesne an experience of grace. I would like to thank my readers, Dr. Maureen O'Brien and Dr. Daniel Scheid. Your feedback on the argument and encouragement to further pursue this topic is the greatest compliment I could have asked for. To the members of my cohort, Eileen Nawara, Gwendolen Jackson, Eric Lafferty, Edward Muge, and Jeelson Stephan: thank you for your companionship and lasting friendship, it has been a pleasure to walk with you these past four years!

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INTRODUCTION

From 2008 to 2017 I had the honor of serving Catholic students at the University of Central Florida as a campus minister. During that time, I was constantly inspired by the students' eagerness to grow in their faith through prayer, study, service, and outreach to one another. The success of the ministry hinged upon the dedication made by the students who had accepted positions of service and leadership. The generous response of these students often led them to discover new gifts. Gifts that they were more than happy to share with their faith community.

As one would expect, an overarching concern of these young men and women was discerning their own vocation. There was always a palpable thirst for a firm identity of who they were and who they were called to be. Many of my most cherished experiences from this time were moments when students shared their lives with me and allowed me to be a witness to their walk with God as they made decisions for life after college.

Many times, their aspirations were formed by their experience within the campus ministry community. They had tasted the fulfillment that comes from earnest self-giving. Some translated their experience into work as missionaries in a variety of contexts while others decided to pursue full-time ministry or a celibate vocation. The majority of students would discern to lead lives that did not revolve around work in or for the Church. They would go on to have careers in their field of study, entering competitive environments of corporations, academic research, and raise families.

Conversations with these men and women after they had become alumni centered around how to become involved in the parish they were moving to or how to best use their gifts to form

a community if they were to find themselves in a place where they were not finding spiritual nourishment. We would speak about how they could continue to foster their gifts in their new environment, everything from looking for a role in their new church to sharing their faith through personal evangelization. Despite efforts to highlight God's presence in their daily realities, there was a tangible difficulty for them to see how they could serve God in these new circumstances as they had during their time on campus.

On occasion, a young man or woman would decide to leave their new careers behind to pursue a lifestyle with an explicit missionary calling - to positions of service or a lifelong vocation. Whether this was the genuine discernment of a vocational calling or a longing to recapture enthusiasm they once had is beyond my ability to say. What is certain is that there was a disconnect between the life lived within the community and their experience of faith as a person working in a non-ecclesial profession. Their stories demonstrate for me how difficult it is to communicate the spiritual and theological worth of activities that are not explicitly connected to ministerial work in the Church.

At the center of this experience is the question of the relevance of the Church to everyday life and activity.

A Pre-Conciliar Dilemma

My experience reflects a personal discovery of the ambiguities surrounding the life of the laity described by Jacques Maritain in his 1965 note to Pope Paul VI on “The Spiritual Mission of the Laity”:

I sometimes ask myself if ... under the pressure of circumstances and practical needs, this question of the role of the laity in the life of the Mystical Body has not been developed in too empirical a manner from too partial a point of view without having been sufficiently

thought through for itself and in all its fullness ... What we need is a study of the whole question, in all its ramifications in which consideration is given not only to that form of witnessing and that spiritual mission (apostolic mission) which are peculiar to laymen, but also to those modalities peculiar to their interior life, to their spiritual trials, to their prayer (liturgical as well as private), and to their progress toward union with God and the perfection of charity, which is evidently what must come before all else ... we have never been able to escape from the perspective of a participation in the apostolate proper to the clergy, a perspective which has been broadened more and more (as if it were ultimately capable of encompassing the laity in its entirety) all the while retaining from the same specific perspective and continuing to see everything from the same original point of view.¹

While Maritain's insights are couched in the language of pre-conciliar ecclesiology, they remain an accurate representation of the tension that has persistently vexed theologies of the laity and are just as relevant as they were over fifty years ago. Fleshing out the theology behind the layperson's place in the Church and their relationship to the apostolic mission was a task that demanded the attention of the theological luminaries that would shape the Second Vatican Council. Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, Gerard Philips, and Yves Congar were among the prominent *periti* who offered guidance to the council Fathers on the issue of the laity leading up to and throughout the conciliar proceedings. The discussion was colored by the pontificates of Pius XI, Pius XII and Paul VI with their expansive vision for lay activity incarnated in groups like Catholic Action. The increase of lay activity in and on behalf of the Church along with

¹Jacques Maritain, "The Spiritual Mission of the Laity," *Communio* 14, no. 2 (1987).

renewed interest in ecclesiology made the laity a crucial topic for the coming council. At issue were fundamental questions: What is the nature and theological status of the laity? Could the laity be said to have a mission distinct from the apostolate of the clergy? Or is their Christian activity merely an extension of the extant apostolic mission of the hierarchy?

The prominence of lay issues was a major reason for the jettisoning of the council's original schema for the Church's constitution. The outline inherited from the unfinished business of the First Vatican Council and was based upon late 19th Century concerns. Gerard Philips who chronicled the development of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, notes that the fathers collectively realized a serious need for a declaration on the laity.² Demonstrative of the views that would influence such a declaration was the insightful elocution of Cardinal Suenens who declared that in her ecclesiology the Church must shift from "Ecclesia ad intra to the ecclesia ad extra."³

Over the course of the document's development the topic of the laity only grew in importance. Whereas the laity was not a heading mentioned in the schema that Vatican II inherited from Vatican I, it rose in the early proposals to being one of twelve chapters and eventually was judged to be a central issue. The final document concerned itself with the laity as a part of the whole of the Church in chapter two and dedicated all of chapter four to a deeper discussion of the role of the laity in the Church and the world. As we shall see, the task undertaken by the conciliar fathers was an attempt to demonstrate "a new understanding for the actual life of the overwhelming majority of Christians."⁴ But for many the expression of the

² Gérard Philips, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1967), 105.

³ Cardinal Suenens quoted in Philips, "History of the Constitution," 107.

⁴ Philips, "History of the Constitution," 121.

council demarcates a point of departure.

Argument of the Dissertation

The ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council is an attempt to present the Church's life and mission as a shared task of clergy, religious, and laity alike. This emphasis can be discerned through the statements and structure of *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II's Constitution on the Church. The document highlights the laity in particular, attempting for the first time in a conciliar document to outline the task and life of the lay faithful. *LG* describes the laity in a twofold manner. First, a negative definition by which the laity are distinguished as not being the ordained clergy or members of religious orders; second by the description of the lay vocation as taking place principally among the life and work of the world. This "secular character" was complemented with a demonstration of how the laity share in the threefold office of Christ as priest, prophet, and king. Of these descriptions the best developed was the priestly action of the laity who in their daily lives are called to make offerings through Christ, "consecrating the world itself to God."⁵

Post-conciliar ecclesiological reflection in the United States of America was largely critical of this description of the laity. While the council clearly intended to express a Church unified in mission and action, many authors questioned whether the texts of the council guaranteed this equality. The epicenter of this criticism was the continued use of the negative definition of the laity as non-clergy. Compounding the issue, the laity were described almost exclusively in an extra-ecclesial fashion. The description offered in *LG* characterized the lay vocation as taking place within the world. The laity are concerned with secular work, juxtaposed

⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, vol. 2, Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964), 32. From this point abbreviated as *LG*.

with the clerical work of the hierarchy who work in the realm of the sacred within and for the Church. The post-conciliar literature was critical of a sacred/secular distinction and cautioned against reinstating an ecclesiology that defined clergy as the sole active ministers and reduced the laity to passive receptivity.

To solve this apparent contradiction between the intention of the conciliar fathers and the text born from the fruit of the proceedings many theologians outlined what they perceived to be the intended trajectory of conciliar thought. This trajectory favored further development of the laity's role within the Church as a reaction to the council's emphasis on secularity. A turn toward intra-ecclesial workings and ministry, the discussion of action in the world was left by the wayside. Some authors prescribed doing away with the concepts of the secular and sacred altogether, with the unintended consequence of reducing much of the conversation to internal church affairs. Extra-ecclesial human activity was rarely discussed.

In my analysis of the post-conciliar texts, I will argue that we can discern the formulation of two distinct but oft associated dichotic pairs. First, the couplet of laity/clergy, which discerns an inequality within the Church's mission and activity. The distinction of laity and clergy is often downplayed or argued against since it is perceived to perpetuate a laity who remains passive as unequal participants in the Church's life and mission. In place of this, emphasis is placed upon the common dignity derived from Christian baptism. Intra-ecclesial organization is described in terms of relationships within the community rather than being based upon a special status of the clergy. This concern for equality often highlights ministerial activity as a shared reality among all Christians.

A second dichotic pair is causally connected to the first: if clerical action takes place in a sacred sphere and the laity act within a secular sphere there must be a strong delineation between

the realm of the sacred and the secular. The delineation between secular and sacred is interpreted as a real separation between spheres of activity and ultimately has implications for the relationship between the world and God. Often the second dichotomy is nested within the first as the clergy are seen to be actively handing on grace through their ministry while the laity are portrayed as passive recipients. Such a model is seen to perpetuate the understanding that there is a two-caste system within the Church with the clergy always being above the laity who rely on the clergy for access to the sacred, including God.

Underlying this second dichotomy is a critique of the concept of mediation as it is expressed in the texts of the council. If, as the Council affirms, the world has been created by God as good, then the consecration of the world to God seems tautological. This criticism is aimed both at the clergy's role as sacramental ministers as well as the laity's bespoke task of world consecration. In post-conciliar literature the apparent contradiction forms the basis of the argument that language regarding a Christian mission to the world leads to the perception that the world itself is separated from God. Acknowledging a human task of mediation would be the equivalent to arguing that the world was not already filled with the grace of God. These criticisms effectively mute any theological possibility of lay consecration of the world to God because of fundamental presuppositions about God's relationship to the world.

I assert that Maximus the Confessor's theological vision is a corrective to the views expressed in various post-Vatican II literature. I will endeavor to showcase the Confessor's theology of creation and human vocation, rather than a point-by-point comparison with contemporary theologies. I believe that maximian thought resolves the aporia introduced by these dichotomies not because it refutes specific premises, but because it approaches the problem of God and the world from a different standpoint altogether. I will argue that within Maximus'

theological worldview, the goodness of creation is entrusted to humanity for consecration. The offering of creation to God arises from creation's own goodness, based within the maximian concept of the logoi. It is this priestly act that unites humanity with creation and constitutes their shared deifying communion.

There are four key characteristics within Maximus' conceptual framework that stand in service of this line of argumentation: mystical apophaticism, Chalcedonism, freedom, and Maximus' vision for the liturgical unity of humanity and the cosmos. These concepts are woven into the seam of the Confessor's thought and interact in a way that forms a cohesive unity. Maximus' distinction between God and creation is rooted in the apophatic acknowledgement of God as incomprehensibly Other. The Chalcedonian adverbs used to define the hypostatic union are applied to this cosmological distinction and grant clarity to Maximus' view of how God and creation can exist communally yet without division, without change, without separation and without confusion. These qualifiers preserve freedom within communion. They allow for a free exchange between the participants of that communion since they do not admit one dialogic partner to be assimilated into the other. This free exchange reaches its consummation in the collective offering of the cosmos back to God. The whole of Maximus' cosmological and anthropological thought can be viewed in relation to these four pillars.

Maximus' cosmology describes a creation that is inherently good and filled with God's presence. The Confessor's view is most clearly stated in his response to Origen's claim that the world is a result of sin perpetrated by spiritual beings. The exchange allows Maximus to present his cosmology in depth. Neither movement nor creation are a result of any sort of corruption but are parts of God's original plan. The Confessor emphasizes the goodness of creation and explains that creation *ex nihilo* is nothing less than a free, loving act of God. Due to the nature of

creation, as Maximus presents it, there is a real and inviolable ontological distance between God and contingent beings. This distinction is not problematic for Maximus who, taking cues from Gregory of Nyssa, sees it as the setting for perpetual ontological movement toward participation in God. This movement is facilitated by the embedded wills of God in all created things, the logoi. The logoi participate in the one Logos as their origin and as the means of their eschatological fulfillment. God's will for each individual being, their individuated logos, includes an eschatological invitation built into the very nature of that being. The logoi remain permanently embedded within creation. It is up to the freedom of created beings to respond to them and facilitate their return, thus orienting them back toward God. The concept of the logoi, for Maximus, is qualified by the Chalcedonian mode of communion. As already mentioned, this preserves beings in their individuality and avoids assimilation. Maximus describes a communion that is without change, without division, without separation, and without confusion that allows for the free movement of created beings back to God as their origin and eschatological fulfillment.

The whole cosmological vision as encompassed in this maximian doctrine of the logoi is indispensable for understanding Maximus' view of the human person and the central role of humanity within creation. The vocation of all human persons is to offer creation back to God through humanity's deification and the deification of the entire creation, the conversion of the logoi. This is not a task that humanity can carry out alone. Drawing on the Christological tradition of his time, Maximus holds that humanity must participate in the new theandric energy made possible by the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Christ. The mutual communion and participation of the human and the divine allows humanity to cross the ontological distance without violating the status of God as apophatically Other. This union

draws together all that is properly human. Within his schema, Maximus affirms the goodness of the human body and human freedom describing their crucial role in the process of deification. The communion of logoi is not limited to what is present within humanity. Through the conversion of the logoi embedded in creation by Christ, and in Christ's humanity, all of creation is offered back to God. On account of the framework Maximus develops based upon the logoi, Maximus depicts the unity of a single person, the whole of the Church, and all of creation as a Eucharistic sacrifice of praise to God.

We can characterize the relationship between God and creation as the eucharistic exchange of gifts.⁶ This dialogic reciprocity takes place as the corporate unity of creation and humanity, but it can also be understood on the individual level. It is in this framework that we are enabled to present Maximus in a manner that is applicable to the ecclesial vocation of individual lay persons. Logoi are presented as a free gift of God embedded within creation to which the human person responds freely. An affirmative response to the logoi, in other words, a free choice to return them as a gift to God is the act constitutive of a "micro-dialogue" between God and that individual within the framework of a logoi-laden creation precisely as the means of that dialogue.

I contend that this theology as a whole brings us to key insights that are applicable to the current state of the theology of the laity on a number of grounds. First, Maximus shares a concern for unity within the Church — and beyond the Church, the whole cosmos — as equal participants in the praise of God. Second, the definition of the logoi and the understanding of human mediation as a dialogic reciprocity between God and creation demonstrates that for

⁶ The summation of Maximus' theology as a Eucharistic Ontology is masterfully presented by Loudovikos in Nikolaos Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*, trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010).

Maximus the difference between God and the world is not one of separation based on mutually exclusive realities but, rather, one of a distinction permitting communion without confusion. With these insights in hand, I will address the dichotic concerns of the literature responding to Vatican II in a way that not only de-problematizes them but repropose them as distinctions constitutive of the divine/human communion.

Using Maximus' framework to answer the post-conciliar criticism has ramifications for our interpretation of the conciliar documents. Returning to the description of the laity offered in *Lumen Gentium* I will argue that viewing the priesthood of the laity through the maximian lens expands upon the definition in ways that are helpful for understanding the laity as a concrete vocation. The Confessor's insights into the participative nature of theandric dialogical reciprocity grant the tasks of the laity within the world eternal significance while striking the proper theological tension between human and divine action. I argue that their daily self-offering holds creation in communion with God as dialogic participants that can be experienced now in a proleptic manner but await their final ratification in the eschaton.

Method

This project will adopt a synoptic method with the intention of developing a lens based on the philosophical/theological system developed by Maximus the Confessor to address questions that have arisen from contemporary ecclesiological discussions about the role of the laity. There will be a historical component in regard to both of the topics being presented. First, I will trace the discussion of the secular character from Vatican II to the current state of the question. I will note the concerns that arise over the course of this analysis in order to provide points for dialogue with Maximus' thought. The second historical element will be the retrieval

of Maximus' thought, relying on primary texts and prominent maximian scholars to produce insights beneficial for theological conversations outside of historical theology.

This task is a comparative one insofar as it seeks to juxtapose notions of secularity and consecration from the discussion of 20th and 21st century theologies of the laity with those developed by Maximus within his seventh century Byzantine milieu. The goal of this project is a synthesis that augments the contemporary discussion with the hope of reconciling the concepts of the goodness of creation with the human activity of consecrating the world to God.

Chapter Summaries

In the first chapter I will trace the state of the question of the theology of the laity from Vatican II to the present. I will analyze *Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicum Actuositatem*, and *Gaudium et Spes* with the intention of drawing out their understanding of lay activity in the world. I will discuss *Lumen Gentium*'s description of the laity and the exercise of the lay priesthood as the consecration of the world to God. I will seek to contextualize this description by taking account of the different ways the council describes the world and secular activity. Properly understanding the way the conciliar documents use the lay priesthood and the world is crucial because these issues are often problematized in the post-conciliar literature. The remainder of chapter one will be spent considering responses to the council, in turn. I will analyze the work of Leonard Doohan, Thomas O'Meara, Aurelie Hagstrom, Pope John Paul II, Richard Gaillardetz, Paul Lakeland, and Edward Hahnenberg. In this analysis I will summarize the contribution made by each author to the discussion on the laity. I will pay particular attention to how each author interprets the concepts of the world and the exercise of mediation or a lay priesthood within the world. Over the course of this analysis I will demonstrate how each author

contributes or responds to the formulation of the dichotic pairs of laity/clergy, secular/sacred, and world/God. These dichotomies become the foundation for the critique of the conciliar description of the laity, functionally short-circuiting any understanding of the laity as Christians with a priestly role.

In chapter two, I will describe Maximus' cosmology in depth. Without a firm grasp on how the Confessor understands the world, his thought on mediation and the human relationship with God is incomprehensible. At the core of his view is the conviction that the world is good while at the same time being other than God. Maximus clarified this thought in response to Origen's proposal that the world was created as a punishment for the sins of pre-incarnate beings. With Origen as his foil, the Confessor outlines his vision for a world that participates in God, is free, good, and brimming with eschatological promise that it will one day share in divine activity. Far from a simple rejoinder to a competing argument, Maximus' cosmology is based in the monastic apophatic tradition and the definitions of the Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.). The Confessor's cosmological tapestry coalesces in the notion of the *logoi*, the divine wills of God embedded in creation and indissolubly bound to the good nature of each created being. It is by these *logoi* and the possibility of their eschatological fulfillment that God seeks to fulfill the desire to be embodied within creation.

With Maximus' cosmology in hand, chapter three will focus on the vocation of humanity and the human task of mediation. Behind Maximus' anthropology is the claim that all humanity is drawn up into the communion of God and humanity found in the person of Jesus Christ. Maximus demonstrates how Christ fulfills the human vocation in himself and opens the way for all of humanity to participate in the same task of offering the whole of creation to God through a change in its mode, or *tropos*. The Confessor's concept of deification as the progression from

being, to well-being, to ever-well-being is key. The process is one that promotes unity through participation and not assimilation. This includes the preservation of particularity within deification. I will highlight specifically how the human body and freedom factor into Maximus' vision for deification. The free communion of persons that includes all of creation is an apt description for divinization. This dynamic takes place corporately within creation and liturgical worship. The same can be said of individual beings. We will explore the expression of this dynamic in its smallest scope through Loudovikos' synthesis of Maximus as Eucharistic dialogic reciprocity.

In the fourth chapter, I hope to achieve a creative synthesis between Maximus and Vatican II's theology of the laity. I will begin by applying Maximus' worldview to the aforementioned dichotomies and using Maximus as a foil for the views of post-conciliar literature. The focus of this discussion will be whether Maximus can provide fitting answers to the aporia raised by the dichotomies of laity/clergy, secular/sacred, world/God and how his view impacts ecclesiology and the notion of mediation. Much of this will concern recognizing distinctions in place of mutually exclusive division. One area that we will give substantial attention is the concept of hierarchy in the work of Maximus and the influence and interpretation of Dionysius the Areopagite. The second half of the chapter revisits the documents of the Second Vatican Council and places them in dialogue with Maximus' formulation of Christian life as a dialogic encounter with God. It is my belief that the Confessor's thought enriches the Second Vatican Council beyond traversing the bespoke dichotomies. Viewing the priesthood of the laity through a maximian lens leads to a number of conclusions about the manner of communion, the redemption of creation, eschatology, and proleptic participation in these realities.

CHAPTER ONE

THE THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY IN VATICAN II AND ITS RECEPTION

This chapter will attempt to retrieve the Second Vatican Council's theology of the laity then trace its reception through the post-conciliar period into the 21st Century. There are two objectives driving this analysis. First it will establish the state of the question of the theology of the laity. This entails a survey of representative theologies of the laity within which we will highlight key issues: their descriptions of the laity and the roles that they assign to the laity. An issue interwoven throughout the discussion of the laity is their relationship to the role of the clergy. The ubiquity of this lay/clergy distinction makes it a central point to follow in the development of these theologies.

The second objective is to observe how the concepts of world and consecration relate to each theological expression of the laity. The way a theology approaches the world often dictates whether it is fitting to include the world in a dynamic of offering or consecration. As we will see below, a theology's description of the world is frequently tied to themes such as the relationship of God and the world, the secular, the sacred, nature, grace, and mediation. After tracing the contours of each author's thought our analysis will highlight their view of the world, consecration, and mediation.

I. The Laity in the Documents of Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council's teaching on the laity can be found in three key documents: *Lumen Gentium (LG)*, *Apostolic Actuositatum (AA)*, and *Gaudium et Spes (GS)*. *AA* and *GS* are

built upon the foundation laid by *LG* within the respective contexts of ministry and interaction with the world. *LG* serves as the primary locus for our understanding of Vatican II's teaching on the laity. The Constitution on the Church thoroughly discusses the laity in an ecclesiological context and provides the clearest reflection of the laity's relationship to the world. Subsequently, *AA* will help us see how the council envisions the laity in ministerial roles while *GS* will assist us in seeing the laity's concrete relationship to the world as well as describe the council's attitude toward the secular.

The council as a whole and these texts specifically occupy a turning point in Catholic thought about the laity. They are the fruit of a century's long conversation on the role of the laity in the Church that began with the rise of lay activity in movements such as Catholic Action. Rahner, Congar, Schillebeeckx, and Philips were among the notable *periti* who had already published extensively about the laity before the calling of the council.¹ The role of the laity within the Church occupied prominent place in the thought of these major influencers of the council. These authors echoed the lay movement's desire for involvement in the mission of the Church and speculated upon a role for the laity that broke with theological assessments of the laity as passive. The conciliar teaching found its nascent formulation in this conversation and the prominent place the laity received in the documents granted this newfound understanding legitimacy and permanence.

¹ For a sampling of the conversation that led to the shift in language at Vatican II see Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1965). Karl Rahner, "The Lay Apostolate," *Cross Currents* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1957). Karl Rahner, *Christian in the Market Place* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1966). Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Layman in the Church," in *Vatican II: The Theological Dimension*, ed. Anthony D. Lee (Washington: Thomist Press, 1963). Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Definition of the Christian Layman* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970). Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Laity and the Life of the Councils*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003). Gérard Philips, *The Role of the Laity in the Church*, (Chicago: Fides Publishers Association, 1956).

As we shall see, in its formulation of the role of the laity in the Church, *Lumen Gentium* acknowledges that the clergy and laity have an equal share in the Church's life and mission. The revolutionary nature of this statement alone can be appreciated if we contrast it with the thought of Pope Pius X who, in the 1906 encyclical, *Vehementer Nos*, expressed an ecclesiological vision that would be later contradicted by the council: "...the Church is by essence an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the pastors and the flock... the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock to follow the pastors."²

The sharp departure from the ecclesiological vision expressed within 19th Century magisterial statements underscores the need to contextualize Vatican II's texts. To this end, our analysis of the documents will be supplemented with insights from the *relatos* that informed the writing of the documents. This will help us understand the mind of the council fathers, especially when it comes to the relationship between the laity and clergy as well as their attitude toward the world as it is expressed in the totality of creation and "secular" realities.

A. The Structure of *Lumen Gentium* and the Unity of the Church

One of the overarching goals of the council fathers was to create a sense of equality among all members of the Church. This was realized in two ways: the structure of the document itself and the description of each position within the Church. *Lumen Gentium* describes the whole Church together before moving on to discussing specific roles. Every member of the Church holds a common identity in the sacramental witness of the Church: each is a member of the "People of God," the document's dominant image of the Church which includes all of its

² "Vehementer Nos: Encyclical of Pope Pius X on the French Law of Separation," accessed December 9, 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11021906_vehementer-nos.html.

members as the faithful.³ The document is intentionally structured to emphasize an indivisible unity among the members of the Church. It is only once this unity as the “People of God” is established that *LG* moves on to address particular callings within the Church.⁴

The groups that make up the People of God are here meant to offer distinctions within the unity of the Church which acts as a whole: “All natural and functional differences are absorbed into the same grace of redemption, love and hope, and the exercise of authority is only permissible in the service of the universal calling of the new chosen people.”⁵ The desire of unity was also a rejection of an unequal ecclesial society. The fathers wanted to avoid “the danger of a separation between rulers and subordinates” by expressing the mission and life of the Church in a way that emphasized solidarity in Christ and only allowed distinctions that expressed complementarity, bringing about a deeper unity.⁶

The three groups named in *LG* are the ordained, the laity, and religious. The order of these sections seeks to promote unity and correct preconceptions. The placement of the sections on the ordained and vowed religious can serve as a demonstration. The hierarchy is only discussed after the relationship between Christ and the whole People of God has been thoroughly defined. The first paragraph defines the role of the hierarchy not as governance but as service.⁷ This ensures that we understand the hierarchy’s role as servants of the Church and guards against clericalism, the understanding that clergy are in themselves the only true members of the Church. The section on the consecrated life follows the chapter on the Universal Call to Holiness. This

³ *LG*, 9.

⁴ Philips, “History of the Constitution,” 119.

⁵ Philips, “History of the Constitution,” 119.

⁶ Philips, “History of the Constitution,” 119.

⁷ *LG*, 18.

demonstrates that this high calling is not reserved for religious life alone. Vowed religious are committed to particular expressions of holiness to which the whole People of God is called.

This structure highlights the communion within distinction that the council fathers desired. It is notable that the chapter on the laity does not have a similar complementary theme. However, there may still be some logic in the placement of the chapter: if the chapter of the laity came before the chapter on the hierarchy and subsequently the chapter on religious it could have been interpreted as a move from non-specificity to particular calling. Placing the laity in line with treatments of the hierarchy and religious life ensures that it is understood as an equal but distinct calling and role in the Church's life.

B. The Secular Character of the Laity

Chapter four of the constitution is exclusively devoted to the laity. This is novel for a number of reasons. The council fathers worked to express a unique description of the laity, offering a statement about their theological situation that went beyond membership in the Church.⁸ Previously, the laity may have been given mention in ecclesiological descriptions but only in relation to the Church as a whole, they were “the faithful.” *LG* describes all Christians as “faithful” within which the laity take up a distinct role.

Lumen Gentium 31 contains the clearest description of the laity's role in the Church. First, there is a negative definition that distinguishes the laity from other groups: the laity are all the faithful who are neither ordained nor religious.⁹ This in itself creates a fine distinction. Previously, non-ordained members of religious orders would have been part of this definition. If religious had been included in the lay group the definition would be a simple dichotomy: the

⁸ Philips, "History of the Constitution," 119-20.

⁹ *LG*, 31.

laity are simply those who have not received the sacrament of Holy Orders. The defining character of each group is here related to the role that each plays in light of one another and the Body of Christ as a whole. This being the case, the positive definition of the laity begins with what is held in common by all members of the Church: through baptism the laity share in the threefold office of priest, prophet, and king, a share in the ministry of Christ. The laity's share in those offices is notable and novel. The offices of priest, prophet and king had previously reserved for the role of the ordained, specifically the bishop. According to Gerard Philips, recognizing that these offices are universal guarantees that "any form of clericalism is rooted out from the start."¹⁰ The laity bear these offices in their own expression of the Church's mission to the world.

The secular nature of the laity is named as their distinctive character. The document is careful not to create an exclusive realm for lay activity: the whole church has contact with the world and is therefore a *sense secular*. Members of the clergy may have secular professions but their identity is bound to their role as sacred ministers. Professed religious encounter the secular but as a part of their call to testify to the world. What sets the laity apart is not that they have a permanent relationship to the world but that as a norm their identity and mission is to "seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God."¹¹ There are two complementary functions of the laity in their role: they work to bring about God's reign through their own work and give testimony through their life in the theological virtues. These two tasks are woven together so as not to grant priority of one over the other. The secular activity of the laity cannot be reduced to a form of work deprived of

¹⁰ Philips, "History of the Constitution," 131.

¹¹ *LG*, 31.

witness. Conversely it cannot seek to offer testimony without working for the right order of secular affairs.

The secular character is not a means for limiting lay activity but reveals the theological import of human activity that lies beyond the scope of traditional ecclesial action. Much of what is described in the mission of the laity has to do with activities beyond explicit action in, for, or on behalf of the Church. The vast majority of the People of God consists of lay persons who do not identify as ministers, teachers, or professional volunteers at work in the Church. In their description of the secular character, the fathers desired to give “a realistic description of the life of the layman (sic) who is called to give testimony to Christ and to radiate his spirit everywhere, especially in his home.”¹² Hence, the “temporal affairs” and their ordering to the plan of God are not limited to occupations but encompass the whole life of the layperson, their family life, relaxation, and hardships.¹³

The life of the laity is framed with pneumatological imagery: the implication that the laity are the instrument of the Spirit. The laity are not simply “in the world,” called by God, they are “led by the Spirit.” Their collective action within the world works as a leaven. The leaven image can be interpreted pneumatologically. Yeast, folded into dough makes the dough rise and expand by releasing air into it. The process creates a multitude of tiny air pockets that stretch the dough. In this light, the laity breathe God’s Spirit into the ordinary affairs of life that would be impossible without the interpenetration of their whole selves with these realities.

¹² Philips, “History of the Constitution,” 130.

¹³ *LG*, 34.

C. Laity and Clergy: Distinct Groups with Shared Tasks

The inclusions of daily realities in the list of lay activity demonstrates that the lay task emphasizes the particularity of their circumstances over the uniqueness of the activity. They hold many of these activities in common with the other groups that make up the Church but engage them in their own particularity. *Gaudium et Spes* states clearly: “secular duties and activities belong properly although not exclusively to laymen.”¹⁴ Admitting anything less would imply that clergy and religious somehow do not have “daily occupations” or partake in “physical and mental relaxation.” In an expansion of the leaven image, the laity are not doing something different than the other members of the faithful, they are breathing the Spirit into their specific part of the dough in a way that only they can.¹⁵

While the discussion of mutually exclusive realms of activity for laity and clergy dominates the post-conciliar literature, attempts to find a sharp distinction within the text itself ultimately fail. The closest the documents come to this is within the description of Christ’s redemptive work in *Apostolicum Actuositatem*. Therein, the fathers distinguish between the spiritual and temporal orders to underscore their ultimate destiny: to be unified in the singular plan of God.¹⁶ The distinctions are meant to be held in an overarching unity of activity. This unity was the intention of the document’s authors, who battled the temptations to adopt an approach that would result in “extreme positions” of totally breaking down the distinction of the

¹⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, vol. 2, Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1965), 40. From this point abbreviated as *GS*.

¹⁵ *LG*, 34.

¹⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, vol. 2, Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1965), 5. From this point abbreviated as *AA*.

clergy and the laity or separating them so much that they would become totally disconnected from one another.¹⁷

This being so, the ecclesiology of Vatican II does not bar the laity from being active in internal church affairs but encourages their involvement. Just as *LG* acknowledges that clergy act within the world, so *AA* describes lay activity within the Church. The laity, to differing degrees that depend on practical circumstances, can share in the inner workings of the Church including catechesis and the management of Church affairs.¹⁸ It is only by pooling the resources of the clergy and laity that the mission of the Church is realized. This involvement of the laity in the internal life of Church and the activity of the clergy in the secular world do not cancel out their distinct identities. These exceptions weaken claims to mutually exclusive spheres of the sacral and secular. In short, the descriptions of the clergy, laity, and religious are not draconian norms to be enforced. They describe the normal way by which the Church works as a body toward the same mission. The result is a fulness of work and witness accomplished in the Spirit: “Thus in their diversity all bear witness to the wonderful unity in the Body of Christ. This very diversity of graces, ministries and works gathers the children of God into one, because ‘all these things are the work of one and the same Spirit’.”¹⁹

D. Lay Priesthood and the World

The laity’s contribution to this shared task, the secular character of the laity, is most clearly expressed in two prominent themes: the exercise of the priesthood of the laity and their relationship with the world. The laity, having a share in the threefold office of Christ make

¹⁷ Ferdinand Klostermann, "Chapter IV. The Laity," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 251.

¹⁸ *AA*, 18.

¹⁹ *LG*, 32.

manifest Christ's priesthood in their own way. Their priestly function is one that gathers their work and experiences, offering them as "spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of men."²⁰ This is not an encouragement toward an individualistic mindset of the laity, as though their offering remains hidden in the obscurity of private living. The laity's role is liturgical: they unite these realities to the "offering of the Lord's body, they are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, as those everywhere who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God."

The definition of the lay priesthood is both pneumatological and christological. The pneumatological permeates the description given in *LG* 34: the priesthood of the laity is "vivified in the Spirit," "anointed by the Holy Spirit," the laity "bear fruits of the Spirit," their activities "carried out in the Spirit" all become "spiritual sacrifices."²¹ Christ is likewise active in the laity, willing to "continue his witness and service" in them, sharing "His life and His mission," the laity are "dedicated to Christ," their sacrifices made "through Jesus Christ" and reach the pinnacle of their expression untied with "the offering of the Lord's body" at the Eucharistic table.²² The Christological and pneumatological imagery does not represent a confluence of theological register, an issue that we will return to later in the chapter. The perichoretic account of the lay priesthood is pleromatic. The theological impetus for lay activity comes from the fulness of the divine unity. This definition does not allow for a conflict between Christic and pneumatologic elements but rather expresses their unity.

The words that the council uses for these actions are cultic. The laity offer, adore, and consecrate.²³ The council places the liturgical and the daily activities of the faithful into a

²⁰ *LG*, 34.

²¹ *LG*, 34.

²² *LG*, 34.

²³ *LG*, 34.

profound dialogue with one another. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* confirms this from its liturgy-centric perspective. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy demonstrates the centrality of the celebration of the Eucharist for lay life. It is there that they make their own offering “not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they learn to offer themselves; through Christ the mediator.”²⁴ Earlier in the same document, the liturgy, “most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist,” is described as the place “through which the work of redemption is accomplished.”²⁵ Keeping in mind the council’s use of the term “faithful” to connote every member of the Church, we can conclude that the lay action and offering make up a crucial element of the one sacrifice offered by the Church which gathers all into a redemptive act, an expression of life, made manifest to others.²⁶

The common sharing in the redemptive act is a participation in the priesthood of Christ. The laity exercise this priesthood by virtue of their baptism in which they were “plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ.”²⁷ Being caught up in the redemptive work of Christ himself and in the spirit of adoption that brings about sharing in the life of the Father and Son, the faithful become “true adorers whom the Father seeks.”²⁸ The participation in the mystery helps uncover the active mode of this adoration which is itself a participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice. *SC* contextualizes and affirms the teaching of *LG* that the laity exercise their priesthood as “those everywhere who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God.”²⁹

²⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, vol. 2, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963), 48. From here abbreviated as *SC*.

²⁵ *SC*, 2.

²⁶ *SC*, 2.

²⁷ *SC*, 6.

²⁸ *SC*, 6.

²⁹ *LG*, 34.

The priesthood of the laity demonstrates an *exitus/reditus* structure. Their action in the world is a procession and the gathering and coming together as an offering is itself a return. This same dynamic is present in the council's description of the liturgy which "is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows."³⁰ Lay men and women go out into the world and make Christ and the Church present in places that none else are able, bringing the same life and mission that invigorates the body to those they encounter.³¹ They also gather the world up through their daily living, making of it an offering constitutive of the Eucharistic sacrifice.³² This outward and inward movement of the laity and the secular character that distinguishes lay life imply a mission to the world. What does the council say about the world?

E. Vatican II on the World

LG in particular refers to the primary realm of lay activity using three words: the world, the secular, and temporal. The "temporal" can refer to resources, ostensibly commodities and monies necessary for carrying on the Church's mission.³³ The laity are said to order "temporal affairs" to God's plan, which is closely related to social realities, including professions.³⁴ "Temporal service" is also used to describe charitable works of serving the sick and poor.³⁵

Similarly, "secular" is used as a qualification for human activity that is not directly linked to religious activity. The term describes training, business, professions, occupations, and activity. While these activities do not occur within an overtly religious sphere and are

³⁰ *SC*, 10.

³¹ *LG*, 33.

³² *LG*, 34.

³³ *LG*, 13.

³⁴ *LG*, 31.

³⁵ *LG*, 41.

distinguished from the sacred activity undertaken by the Church they cannot be separated from the sacred: “even in secular business there is no human activity which can be withdrawn from God's dominion.”³⁶ Both temporal and secular seem to be dealing with human activity - they are characterized by human interactions and give rise to human experience that can be subsequently offered as a spiritual sacrifice.

The term “world” (*mundi*) is used with a diverse range of meaning. Following is a study of these usages from the conciliar documents directly relevant to this project. We shall consider the council’s overall attitude to the world after having catalogued the various ways of addressing it.

The world as setting. As a backdrop for human action, the world can be seen as a location in which humanity lives and works. This is often accompanied by setting the Church apart from the world. The world is a sphere in which the Christian faithful live but without belonging to.³⁷ It is from the world understood as a setting, a sphere of action, that lay action can be described as having a secular character. The witness of the Church is said to be “before the world.”³⁸

The bespoke characteristic of “other” projected upon the world by the Church might lead us to conclude that the council fathers maintained a negative evaluation of the world as a whole. Particularly, passages from *LG* contain phrases such as “persecutions of the world”³⁹ and names “the world-rulers of this darkness.”⁴⁰ Indeed the same document states that the world is in need of revelation that comes from God through the actions of the Church.⁴¹ These terms do not apply

³⁶ *LG*, 36.

³⁷ *GS* 2, *SC* 9, *LG* 13.

³⁸ *AA*, 11.

³⁹ *LG*, 8.

⁴⁰ *LG*, 35.

⁴¹ *LG*, 8.

to the world as a sphere of activity or to the natural world as such but to human actors within the world. Those who commit persecution or rule the world in a way that rejects the light cast upon the world by God through the Church. *LG* does not reject the world but calls the faithful not to be attached to it because of its contingent nature. The Church as a whole and the laity in their concrete interactions does not seek out the goods of the world for their own sake nor come to terms with the world because the world is “passing away.”⁴²

The world as humanity opposed to the Church. In a second way of understanding the council’s use of the term, the world is not only the setting for human action but is itself the subject of the Church’s mission. There is a desire that the “whole world” might enter into a relationship with Christ.⁴³ The world is addressed in a way that draws attention to the occupants of the world over the understanding of the world as a place. The Church works that the “entire world may become the People of God...”⁴⁴ As with the world-rulers mentioned above, “world” is used as a euphemism for sinful occupants in need of redemption.⁴⁵

The world as the subject of God’s plan. The world is addressed in a way that does not label it as a background for human activity or as an indirect way of addressing its occupants. Many passages bring this usage into clarity. The People of God are urged to “love God the Father as well as the world and men in Him.”⁴⁶ This shows intentional use of the world as distinct from humanity. In like passages, the world is addressed as a subject of God’s plan.⁴⁷ This includes mentions of the natural world as such, created by God in his goodness.⁴⁸ It is in

⁴² *LG*, 42.

⁴³ *AA*, 2.

⁴⁴ *LG* 17.

⁴⁵ *LG*, 35.

⁴⁶ *AA*, 29.

⁴⁷ *AA*, 7.

⁴⁸ *LG*, 2.

this sense of the world that the laity act within it and offer it up for consecration.⁴⁹ The world is a participant in the drama of salvation that shares in the liminal nature characteristic of that drama. *GS* emphasizes the goodness of the world while yearning for its redemption: “that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker's love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ.”⁵⁰ There is still something to be accomplished in the process of this redemption as the world can still be sanctified and has yet to undergo its final transformation.⁵¹

This highlights the eschatological destiny of the world. Though the council acknowledges the passing nature of the world, the ultimate end of the world is its redemption. This is in the sense of the world understood as distinct from its occupants. The world itself is not a temporary setting to be abandoned. It will be created anew by Christ: “He Himself intends to raise up the whole world again in Christ and to make it a new creation, initially on earth and completely on the last day.”⁵² The whole of creation has a lasting place in God’s plan and is to be valued. Its final destiny to be “permeated by the spirit of Christ.”⁵³ This consummation is accomplished by God Himself. The world will undergo “renovation” at the Eschaton.⁵⁴

There is a reciprocal relationship between the goodness of the world, the goodness of humanity and humanity’s activity within the world which includes its consecration. *GS* joins the eschatological destiny of the world to human life and makes the goodness of the world one of the reasons for humanity’s dignity:

⁴⁹ *LG*, 34.

⁵⁰ *GS*, 2.

⁵¹ *AA*, 16 and *LG*, 32.

⁵² *LG* 6, *AA* 5.

⁵³ *LG* 36.

⁵⁴ *LG* 48.

Though made of body and soul, man is one. Through his bodily composition he gathers to himself the elements of the material world; thus they reach their crown through him, and through him raise their voice in free praise of the Creator. For this reason, man is not allowed to despise his bodily life, rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and honorable since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day.⁵⁵

Here the goodness of the world as expressed in Vatican II informs the consecration of the world of *LG* 34. The world that God has created and redeemed as good finds its culmination not on its independent goodness but by the gathering up into human action and its recapitulation as praise to the Creator. Reciprocally, the task itself elevates humanity's activity which cannot be confused with a gnostic world/matter rejection. On the contrary, *GS* links human dignity to the goodness of creation of which humanity is composed and acts within.

The veracity of Vatican II's positive valuation of the world as good, created, natural order is confirmed by key contributors to *LG*. We can discern that the above passage takes many cues from Congar who brought the goodness of the created order to the forefront of his thought about lay action in the world. For Congar, the world does not simply serve as a backdrop of humanity's salvation but is itself transformed and renewed.⁵⁶ Against any dualist schema, Congar declares that "final salvation will be achieved by a wonderful refloating of our earthly vessel rather than by a transfer of survivors to another ship wholly built by God."⁵⁷ God is already accomplishing this work in the world but remains only "transiently, precariously,

⁵⁵ *GS* 14.

⁵⁶ Congar, "Lay People," 92.

⁵⁷ Congar, "Lay People," 92.

fragmentarily, and generally unperceived.”⁵⁸ Gerard Philips shares the same attitude and in his recounting of the formation of the document describes the goodness of creation, permeated by grace as the raw material that the laity offer up in their sacrifice.⁵⁹ Ordinary life is consecrated as a participation in this dynamic of divine transformation.

F. Conclusion – Vatican II

The major theme of unity steers Vatican II’s ecclesiology. The structure and content of the Constitution on the Church demonstrates a renewal of that unity that is expressed by three distinct yet complementary groups. By virtue of their baptism, all share in the mission of the Church. The recognition of distinction is not intended, therefore, to result in divisions between states of life or a picture of the Church consisting of higher or lower “classes.”

As sharers in the one mission of the Church to the world, the laity are called by the council to embrace a distinctive role within the temporal realities of the world. This does not forbid the laity to be part of internal Church affairs but as a matter of distinction names the secular professions as the normal location in which lay life is lived.

Lay activity in the world gains profound theological significance when we consider the exercise of baptismal priesthood as a participation in eschatological world renewal. The consecration of their daily realities interpenetrates their own journey in which they gather up creation and make of it an offering. The consecration of the world does not here negate the goodness of the world but gathers it up into the Eucharistic offering instituted by Christ.

⁵⁸ Congar, "Lay People," 92.

⁵⁹ Philips, "History of the Constitution," 120.

II. Post-Conciliar Theologies

The development of post-conciliar theologies of the laity can be framed in the register of reception. Views on the laity's role change based upon how the fourth chapter of *LG* is interpreted. The view of the magisterium and theological schools aligned with it accepted the language of the secular character as the definitive mission for the laity. This can be clearly seen in the works of Pope John Paul II. The positive reception holds that theological reflection on the lay state should start with the terms set by this document and remain firmly within the categories expressed therein.

A parallel school of lay theology developed which view the council as a new starting point for reflection on the lay state. This form of reception differs from the first in that the teaching of *LG* is not seen as a limit but the provider of momentum for a new trajectory. I will call this school the “developmental” school of lay theology because it sees the texts of Vatican II as a crucial yet provisional point of development. For this school, *Lumen Gentium* is a step away from the subservient understanding of the laity that had pervaded the Church in the past. As a trajectory, the connotation taken up by the developmental school is that there is something yet to be grasped about the lay state. *LG* paved the way for a journey that could not have been completed during the time of the council. Further exploration was not only possible, it is required if this new trajectory is to arrive at a fruitful destination. Based upon the understanding that *LG* did not provide the last word on the matter of the laity, developmental thinkers engaged the text of *LG* with an evaluatory lens. Some concepts, such as the equality of all the faithful derived from baptism, would be underscored and further developed. Others would be criticized or jettisoned altogether.

The secular character of the laity became the prominent subject of such criticism. Even though it was the central facet of the document's role for the laity, those who sought to further develop an ecclesiology focused on the laity discarded the language due to its assumption of a mutually exclusive dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. This view was underwritten by developments within 20th Century theologies of grace which would reject such a dichotomy.

In the following, I will outline the discussion on the laity from the 1980s to the 21st century literature on the laity. The development of thought on the laity is less a discussion and more of an expression of two parallel schools that formed as a result of the aforementioned modes of reception. While the magisterial school remains constant in its insistence upon the lay/clergy distinction and the upholding of ecclesial structures, the developmental school begins by questioning the usefulness of the lay/clergy distinction. At first the laity/clergy distinction is associated with the sacred/secular dichotomy in a passing manner. Near the turn of the 21st century, the developmental school became insistent that the secular/sacred and God/world dichotomies were central reasons for rejecting the lay/clergy distinction. These texts demonstrate an incompatibility of the goodness of the world with the concept of consecration/mediation which connects the latter to the lay/clergy dichotomy.

A. Leonard Doohan

In his 1984 monograph *The Lay Centered Church*, Leonard Doohan describes an ecclesiological vision that frames the very identity of the Church in the key of mission. He regards the conciliar teachings on the laity as a starting point for reflection on the lay vocation. Vatican II did not offer a "finished theological evaluation of the layperson's life and ministry"

but brought to the surface a new way of approaching ecclesiology.⁶⁰ Doohan claims that the conciliar documents bear this process out. He compares the definitions written in 1962 with those of 1964, calling the former a “negative and clerical definition of the laity” and the latter an “ecclesial vision of the layperson.”⁶¹ Seeking to further explore this new understanding, Doohan places baptism at the center of his ecclesiological reflection. From this shared initiation into the Christian community Doohan derives a shared mission: every baptized Christian has a mandate for ministry. Doohan’s reflection on the baptismal call is an invitation for the whole Church to rediscover the universal call to ministry.

At the outset of his work, Doohan embarks on a detailed analysis of different ecclesiological approaches. He evaluates six models that attempt to describe the role of the laity which span the development of thought on the laity from before Vatican II to works contemporary to his writing. Doohan’s account of these theologies does not simply catalogue each view but includes his own evaluations of their strengths and weaknesses. A brief consideration of these six models will serve as a bridge spanning the twenty years between the conciliar documents and the time of Doohan’s writing.

First, Doohan reviews the concept of the work of the laity as “Instrumental Ministry.” The laity participate in the mission of the Church as the instrument of the clerical hierarchy. The laity acts as instruments of the clergy whether the work concerns internal works of the Church, assisting in tasks that are properly the work of the clergy, as well as when they participate in the outward facing work of the Church within the world. The concept of “instrument” is borrowed from Aristotelean philosophy. The laity work but only in participation with and at the behest of the clergy. At the basis of this ecclesiological model is the assumption that the Church’s mission

⁶⁰ Leonard Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church: Theology and Spirituality*, (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1984), 4.

⁶¹ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 82.

is the mission of the hierarchy and that the most the laity can do is share in this work as an instrument.⁶²

Doohan recognizes the ability of this ecclesiology to express the unity of the Church and describes the interplay between the clergy and laity as a “dynamic interrelationship ... [that] brings the liturgical, sacramental, transformational, and sanctifying essence of the Church to the world.”⁶³ His criticism of this approach is framed by a quote from Gerard Philips, one of the architects of Vatican II’s description of the laity, in which the Belgian priest wonders in the guise of a hypothetical protestant whether “in the presence of such authority there remains any liberty for the harassed and stifled Catholic.”⁶⁴

The critique of this position gained momentum during and after the council. Doohan relates the reservations of both Schillebeeckx and Congar. In his own words, Doohan rejects this position since it “can easily lead to clericalization and power positions ... and to a lack of initiative and personal responsibility among the laity.”⁶⁵ An instrumental approach was “the best approach for its time.” The post-conciliar Church would require something different.

Doohan notes that the second ecclesiology he evaluates is based upon a positive view of the world. The theology of the “Ecclesial Presence to the World” is itself a “new approach to the theology of the laity,” one which was supported by many of the theologians who heavily influenced the council, including Congar, Rahner, and Schillebeeckx. The thrust of this view is that the laity “are seen as the bridge between the world Church and the world, the Church’s

⁶² While Doohan presents this model in a tone that would have us assume that it is antiquated, a thorough review of the development of theologies of the laity leading up to Vatican II reveals that it represents an important step in that development from the laity being depicted as a passive, receptive flock to an active participant in ministry. This development was represented in the wide array of lay activity constituted by such movements as Catholic Action.

⁶³ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 7.

⁶⁴ Philips quoted in Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 7.

⁶⁵ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 7-8.

presence in the world.”⁶⁶ Doohan praises the rejection of a Christian spirituality that glorifies a flight from the world.⁶⁷ The action of the laity is world-affirming and serves as an expression of the laity in their mundane, daily tasks.

Despite his praise, Doohan thinks that this view expresses a fundamentally errant theological distinction. By portraying the lay person as “worldly,” proponents of the ecclesial presence view assumes the “superficial distinction between ‘priest/sacred’ and ‘lay/temporal’.”⁶⁸ Doohan rejects this false sacred/secular dichotomy on the grounds that there are no mutually exclusive and distinct spheres for action of the laity and clergy.

Doohan includes in this criticism the kernel of his own thesis: “the laity are not a bridge between the Church and the world; the laity are Church.”⁶⁹ Here we can discern Doohan’s deep concern that there be no divisions within the body of Christian believers based upon a sacred/secular distinction. Doohan’s desire is for a universal description of the faithful. He rejects the ecclesial presence model that would necessitate a lay/clergy distinction in favor of a theology that includes all the baptized.

Doohan distinguishes between this ecclesial presence model and a second position that can be derived from the conciliar documents: Theology of World Transformation. Doohan suggests that conciliar periti are not the principal authors of this view but “lay people, who, once committed to the life-style implied in [the ecclesial presence model], realized that one is not truly present to the world without attempting to transform the world.”⁷⁰ These lay people are “for the world.”⁷¹ Those who are active within the world see that the world is not how God intended it to

⁶⁶ *The Lay-Centered Church*, 9.

⁶⁷ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 11.

⁶⁸ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 12.

⁶⁹ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 12.

⁷⁰ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 13.

⁷¹ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 13.

be and thus set out to transform it. In accord with the view that Congar expressed in *Lay People in the Church*, this ecclesiology acknowledges that the world is not only the context of salvation but itself needs to be redeemed. Quoting *LG* 34, Doohan explains that “in this theology, laypersons are agents in the consecration of the universe to God. They are committed to the world, use it with detachment, heal it of sin, animate it with Christ’s spirit, transform it into what it is capable of being, dominate it, and consecrate the world to God in Christ.”⁷² The project of world consecration brings about both individual and collective action reflected in a concern for social justice and political involvement.

Despite his positive description of world transformation, Doohan ultimately rejects this theology. He lauds the approach as “strong and satisfying,” affirming something of a secular character. This view describes action that is “specific of lay life.”⁷³ The critique that Doohan offers does not come from the theological reasoning of this position but is based on practical grounds. He claims that this way of conceiving the world is so different from a common understanding of how the life of the laity has been previously described that it would make it too difficult for the laity to understand their role. He worries that there is a risk that they may lose faith and become too invested in secular affairs. Finally, he offers a caution that those involved in world-transforming ministry should “keep clearly in mind the distinction between our work and God’s” - lest the faith be forgotten and a new form of Pelagianism develop.⁷⁴

The final three models represent post-conciliar developments that reframe the discussion of the laity through a variety of emphases: one on community rather than the hierarchy (Ecclesial Restructuring), a concentration on the particularity of each individual lay call (the Self-

⁷² Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 14.

⁷³ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 15.

⁷⁴ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 16.

Discovery of the Laity), and the abandoning of a specific lay “role” within the Church (Laity as Integrally Church). Each of these views progressively shifts the discussion from Church structure to the life of the lay person.

The first shift, in Ecclesial Restructuring is based upon the whole Church as the People of God and the common call to mission but maintains a focus that is decisively intra-ecclesial. This view focuses on the laity not in the midst of what the council would have called their “secular” activities but instead how they contribute to the ministry of the Church. Doohan notes that this view poses a danger in that it “has a touch of narcissism” and would be difficult to develop in a way that included those who do not do consciously participate in ministry.⁷⁵

The Self-Discovery of the Laity is far more flexible than Ecclesial Restructuring since it describes a wider scope of human activity. This approach is more a spirituality than a theology, carrying with it an invitation for reflection on the myriad of situations lay persons find themselves in. The fuel for this reflection is a laity who have embraced their own particular life and mission. These are often situational, eliciting responses to specific needs. Doohan makes it clear that this approach is one that is on the way to producing deeper understandings of the life of the Church but is not yet fully developed. Similar to his critique of ministries that attempt world transformation, Doohan cautions that embracing such particularity may lead to a loss of a sense that these actors belong to a structured Church. Focusing too directly on particular situations may lead to a “psychological opting out of structured Church.”⁷⁶

The critique of the Self-Discovery model reveals one of Doohan’s key concerns: he wants to protect against the laity being somehow separate from the life of the Church as it was

⁷⁵ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 20.

⁷⁶ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 23.

expressed in the Instrumental Ministry model wherein the laity only had a share in the Church's ministry - and to a point the Church's life - as an extension of hierarchic activity.

Doohan's own position makes the separation impossible. He rejects the notion that the laity have a role within the Church that could somehow be delineated and distinguish them from the whole. The final view that Doohan considers in his overview of ecclesiologies is his own: the Laity as Integrally Church. In essence, Doohan proposes a breaking down of any intra-ecclesial distinction, "convinced that the term laity is now theologically dead."⁷⁷ This is because for Doohan there is no quest for the lay identity, the laity are Church.

Doohan declares lay theology dead for three reasons: first, the term laity, as it was originally derived from *laos*, meaning people has lost its original intent of describing the people of God. Cordoning off a select membership of the Church that has a role to be active in the world "emphasizes the distinction between sacred and profane."⁷⁸ The result of this distinction communicates a separation between these spheres and leads to an image of God that is only indirectly accessible. Due to these problems, Doohan concludes that a lay/clergy distinction only serves to oppress the laity.

Reimagining the Church without this distinction ensures that every member has an equal share in the Church's life and mission. Doohan's continued use of the term "laity" to describe non-ordained members of the Church serves to underline his point. He uses the term in a way that is all-encompassing. The mission of the laity is the mission of the Church. Doohan identifies the laity with the Church: "There is no particular vocation for the laity in the Church, no need of a quest for lay identity. Being Church in its fullness is the spirituality for the laity."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 23.

⁷⁸ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 23.

⁷⁹ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 22.

The breaking down of distinction yields a universality of mission: The Church's mission is one. The mission embraces a total ecclesiology that Doohan presents as a mission in the heart of the world: "to be Church means to live as a community in the world for the service of the world. It means to live as a member of the Church at the heart of the world, and also as a member of the world community at the heart of the Church."⁸⁰ At its most basic level for Doohan: the Church is a sacrament of unity.

Doohan's project is aimed at one overarching goal: to shore up the Church's identity as a non-divisible unity which results in an equal value of the ministry of the Church's members. In a sense, Doohan reframes all of Christian activity as ministry. He distinguishes between work that is done for "ecclesial community's own internal needs" calling this work both important but secondary.⁸¹ He is far more concerned with the ministry of the Church to the world. This is the mission of all of the baptized, a ministry without distinction, a mission that is done in Christ's name in and for the world. Yet every member of the Church participates in the ministry of the Church *ad intra* and *ad extra* as a matter of "right and responsibility."⁸²

The lay/clergy distinction resists the ecclesial unity that drives Doohan's thesis so it must be done away with. Any positive formulations for either would be a rejection of a total ecclesiology. Bracketing this division, the theological position Doohan presents, *prima facie*, seems no different than some of the views he evaluates at the outset of his work. The Church presents Christ to the world in the mode of sacramental presence and witness in a way that is very similar to both the Ecclesial Presence in the World and the Transformation of the World models. The difference lies in Doohan's difficulty in expressing the connection between the life

⁸⁰ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 24.

⁸¹ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 81.

⁸² Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 87.

of the Church in sacrament and prayer and the Church's action in the world. He replaces the idea of connection with identity. The members of the Church serve as the ministers to the world by their life as worshippers as well as actors within the world. When he does speak of dedicated action in the world, he cautions repeatedly against two extremes: an assumption that the work done by the Church in the world is done by humans alone as well as the danger that actors in the world may become too individualistic and forget their place in the larger Church community.⁸³

Similarly, there is no detailed discussion about the Church's liturgical life as such, simply that the whole Church has a sharing in it. Doohan here omits the discussion about the underlying concepts that gave rise the clergy/laity distinction in the first place. Doohan does not reject the Church's sacramental life but proposes that there is an inordinate emphasis on the ordained priesthood without a properly developed view of the priesthood of all the baptized.⁸⁴ This underscores the issue that was at the center of Doohan's focus: equality within the Church and the universal sharing in her mission. The nuances of this and its theological impact would be worked out by subsequent authors.

B. Thomas O'Meara

In *Theology of Ministry*, first published in 1983, Thomas O'Meara seeks both to clarify the term ministry and to cement its place at the center of the life of the Church. O'Meara revised the book in 1999 with an emphasis on the centrality of the parish for contemporary ecclesiologies. The impetus for writing this work and the subsequent revision is the post-conciliar experience of the Church. O'Meara seeks to provide a theological explanation of the growing number of laity engaged in ministry. Like Doohan, O'Meara does not view the Second

⁸³ See Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 16.

⁸⁴ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 57.

Vatican Council as a definitive statement of ecclesial realities but sees it as a foundation to build upon, “a ‘tradition-event.’”⁸⁵

O’Meara’s thesis is that ministry makes up the central “facet of baptized life.”⁸⁶ Through the course of the work, he unpacks a specific definition of ministry in place of ever-increasing use of the term, protecting it from becoming “confused, sterile, even duplicitous” by its universal adoption and overuse.⁸⁷ Ministry is specific activity to which each Christian is called but does not encompass all of human activity.⁸⁸ There is a note of particularity in O’Meara’s description: the call to ministry happens at certain times in life and is a call that originates in the Spirit.

O’Meara is so concerned with defining and applying ministry because it forms the heart of his ecclesiological vision. The Church exists for ministry and the organization of the Church is based on the expression of ministry within the contemporary social context. O’Meara describes the Church as a social reality and as such, the Church must “live out the dynamic of their people, ... [or] die.”⁸⁹ Ministries are an expression of social reality for O’Meara. There can be no theoretical office without a ministry carried out in praxis. The naming of an office detached from such an expression, O’Meara decries as nominalism.⁹⁰ Among the manifestations of nominalism in the Church the key example for O’Meara is the lay/clergy distinction: “an arbitrary designation of some ministries and ordinations as given by divine institution and as worthy of sacramental liturgy.”⁹¹ Outlining historical developments as well as prominent pre-conciliar ecclesiologies, O’Meara presents a convincing case that the balance of power expressed

⁸⁵ Thomas O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 15.

⁸⁶ Thomas O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (Paulist Press, 1983), 3.

⁸⁷ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 83, 144.

⁸⁸ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 83, 4.

⁸⁹ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 83, 11.

⁹⁰ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 83, 145.

⁹¹ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 83, 192.

in the exclusivity of governance and practice of ministry by the clergy has resulted in a laity who have resigned themselves to a passive reception and inaction.

In the course of his historical analysis, O'Meara reflects upon a model of ministry centered on the hierarchy. He traces this understanding to the Parisian school which during the middle ages adopted the teachings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.⁹² The thought of a sixth-century Syrian monk "held a singular position" due to the belief that it was really the writings of Denys, converted by Paul in the book of Acts.⁹³ This hierarchical way of thinking is at the root of the active clergy and passive laity. In the neo-platonic schema, the clergy formed a triad that had the responsibility of passing on the ability to become divinized through a process of purification, illumination, and unification. These powers were conferred from one rank of hierarch to the next until they reached the passive monk, laity, and catechumens.⁹⁴ This ensured that the role of ministerial mediation rested solely within the activity of the clergy. Noting O'Meara's understanding of Pseudo-Dionysius is pertinent due to the temporal proximity and theological influence he had on Maximus' work. It is also important to note that O'Meara represents a specifically Neo-Scholastic interpretation of Dionysius and the concept of hierarchy. I believe that this is a misinterpretation of the Areopagite's work and argue for an opposing view in chapter 4.

O'Meara traces the influence of this hierarchical mode through Aquinas and a continual "ministerial reduction" that focused on the power of the clergy to communicate these realities through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.⁹⁵ The apex of this understanding, O'Meara

⁹² O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 105.

⁹³ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 105.

⁹⁴ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 106.

⁹⁵ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 107.

marks as “sacerdotalization” or “Christification.” These terms acknowledged the clergy as the sole sharer in the ministry of Christ.⁹⁶ Coupled with the social framework inherited from a feudal understanding of the class rank, the clergy became not only those who were entrusted with mysteries that sanctify but superiors, *ex officio* to the laity.

O’Meara’s analysis of the historical relationship between clergy and laity as class differences and subsequent call to dissolve the distinction is marked by the conclusion that the lay-clergy relationship will always result in inequality. During a synopsis of the historical development of the terms clergy and laity, O’Meara notes that “class distinctions come in pairs. While the clergy became an elevated, sacral state, the laity became a passive group.”⁹⁷ He treats this disparity as a matter of necessity despite softening the logic by stating that “dualism usually means that one pair has an inferior position.”⁹⁸ O’Meara does not entertain a re-imaging of the clergy-lay relationship without this imbalance.

The term “lay” has changed from connoting the member of a wider people to distinguishing one who is in the lowest place. “Layperson” is a phenomenologically pejorative term: it can only be defined in a negative comparison to the bishop, priest, and deacon. In place of layperson, O’Meara’s ecclesiological register embraces pneumatologically gifted charisms, sacramental in their own right.

O’Meara’s own definition of ministry develops out of his reception of the definitions of Vatican II. He critiques the council’s use of the term ministry, claiming that it is too imprecise. One such shortcoming is a focus on witness. Witnessing does not fall under his definition of ministry, especially the “sign ministry” of those that witness in the course of their ordinary

⁹⁶ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 117.

⁹⁷ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 177.

⁹⁸ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 178.

lives.⁹⁹ O'Meara admits that this witnessing certainly takes its cue from the sort of lay apostolate encouraged by Vatican II though it is not specific enough. He labels the call of *LG* 31 for the laity to bring the Gospel into their own particular, exclusive circumstances a "metaphorical vision."¹⁰⁰

O'Meara links this vaguery to the passivity of the laity in activities that are internal to the Church, especially the liturgical roles surrounding the sacraments and preaching. He claims a strong connection between ministry in one's own life and active liturgical participation. Liturgical roles that minister to the Church community cannot be compartmentalized from their outward expression in the world. O'Meara cites this in a negative fashion, as a hindrance to further developing the laity in the Church: "The theologies of the laity in this century failed in their attempt to give the laity a place in the community precisely because they joined a liturgical role that was passive or routine to a vaguely defined role of witnessing in the world."¹⁰¹ He judges Vatican II's stance on the laity to be passive on both counts.

The church's mistaken focus on ordinations and offices gives rise to nominalism. Instead, ministries come from pneumatological gifts, charisms. "Christian ministry is the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to witness to, serve and realize the kingdom of God."¹⁰² As the basis for Christian initiation and the fundamental encounter with the Spirit, baptism is the only qualification for the exercise of charismatic gifts in ministry. The common source of these gifts does not make every baptized Christian a minister all of the time. Nor does O'Meara's rejection of the lay-clergy distinction mean that he sees no strata within

⁹⁹ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 83, 139.

¹⁰⁰ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 131.

¹⁰¹ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 143.

¹⁰² O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 83, 143.

ministry. O'Meara provides a ministerial schema that retains certain community leaders at its core. Those who express leadership as a matter of action and exercise of charism correspond to the role of bishop and priest.¹⁰³ His ecclesial structure is not one of sharp distinction as with the lay-clergy model but is based upon concentric circles. These encompass all Christians who are called during certain times in life to participate in public ministry. Closest to the center are the trained, professional ministers. Furthest from the center, then, are those who engage only in sign ministry. The metric at work is how much of the life of the Christian is dedicated to ministry. This model is beneficial in that it recognizes in every Christian life the capacity to exercise the charisms they have received.

There is an underlying emphasis on activity over passivity in O'Meara's work. We encountered this already as O'Meara diagnoses the serious shortcomings of previous ecclesial models as restricting the laity to a passive role. The same concern for activity colors his discussion of contemplative religious. Though he affords the contemplative life "its own identity and value," ministry is secondary to this form of life.¹⁰⁴ Contemplatives participate in ministry but only inasmuch as they take direct ministerial action to visitors, preach, or minister internally to one another. The outwardly passive life of contemplatives raises an issue that O'Meara does not address. Would it be fair to assume cloistered religious would not have liturgical roles by his estimation? That O'Meara sidelines not only lay but religious passivity makes sense when we consider the ecclesiological model that he is seeking to upend. He summarizes his reasons for rejecting passivity succinctly:

¹⁰³ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 182.

¹⁰⁴ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 188.

When we look at neo-scholastic textbooks up to Vatican II and their picture of the church, we find a neatly drawn Aristotelian ecclesiology. In that theology, the form, the cause, and the goal of the church are all the same: the hierarchy of bishops and church administrators. People, even presbyters and deacons, are only the material cause, the passive stuff to which a super-natural ministry comes. When we recall how passive the material element is in Aristotelian philosophy, we appreciate how marginalized in the ecclesiology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are baptism, charism, and Christian person.¹⁰⁵

O'Meara's intention is to reevaluate this Aristotelean model based upon recent developments in the Church and show how this post conciliar ecclesiology can be linked to a theology of ministry compatible with the witness of the New Testament.¹⁰⁶ He desires an engaged, active Church in which a diversity of ministries flow from the charisms given to each individual by the Spirit. As we have seen, his reflections are not simply a matter of defining ministry as such, they reach out to every facet of Christian life, liturgy, preaching witness, and service. O'Meara's theology of ministry has wide sweeping ecclesiological impact. In phrasing the Church's overall success or failure as the success or failure of ministry, O'Meara has implicitly defined the whole Church's life and mission as ministry. Forms of Christian living "have their own value" but O'Meara does not elaborate upon what this value is or how non-ministerial activity fits into his broader schema.

It is apparent that O'Meara seeks to develop the ecclesiological vision of Vatican II in a new direction. This includes a negative assessment of the council's statements about the secular role of the laity. His rejection of this description is due in part to disagreeing with negative

¹⁰⁵ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 200.

¹⁰⁶ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 25.

definitions of the laity, discussed above. How does he evaluate the call for the laity to consecrate the world to God? While O'Meara does not address the content of *LG 34* directly, we can anticipate his reception of this description by analyzing his thought on mediation and priesthood. There is a conscious reduction of sacral language within O'Meara's work. He distances himself from the structures that glorify priestly action and uses the term priesthood to describe a dominating caste far more than to describe a priesthood shared by all believers. When he discusses the universal priesthood he does not address individual actions but the Church in aggregate. He briefly mentions that as a whole, baptized Christians carry out their activities with a "priestly attitude' of sacrificial service."¹⁰⁷ The one priesthood of Christ is unique and "there remains nothing more, objectively, to be enacted for the human race."¹⁰⁸ The consecration of the world at the center of the secular character of the laity is not included in these reflections. In keeping with his rhetorical tone O'Meara sets priestly language in opposition to his definition of ministry: "Ministry approaches the reign of God not as high priest or banker but as servant."¹⁰⁹ O'Meara prefers to speak of Christian action, especially ministry, in the key of service. The goal of this service is an individual turning of every person to a relationship with God so that they might become what God intends them to be.¹¹⁰

O'Meara does not address *LG 34* and the subject of world transformation, instead he writes about ministry to the world. Ministry happens at the service of the world. This begs the question: how does O'Meara use the term "world?" In the discussion on Vatican II's view of the world we considered three basic approaches to this: the world as a setting or backdrop of a drama that principally concerns God and humanity, the world as humanity in opposition to God's plan,

¹⁰⁷ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 58.

¹⁰⁸ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 41.

¹⁰⁹ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 227.

¹¹⁰ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 228.

and the world as a subject of God's plan. O'Meara clearly sees the world as the setting for the Church's life and mission.

The world as a setting adds complexity to the Church's mission: O'Meara uses "the world" to denote a diversity of cultural encounters, across both time and space, which elicits a need for a diversity in ministry. The world encompasses the social realities that the Church must respond to and is itself the mission ground of the Church. We can see the the world as setting and not the subject of God's plan in the way O'Meara formulates the mission of the Church. This mission is to propose the Gospel to all of the men and women of the world so that they are able to respond "to the presence of the Gospel and the Spirit."¹¹¹

We can learn about O'Meara's view of the world by analyzing what he opposes. He denounces the Baroque, pre-Conciliar attitude "that the fallen world could receive only so much redemption, and that all not under orders or vows remained in a secular sphere capable not of ministry but of a vague witness."¹¹² For O'Meara, there is no "secular sphere" that is able to remain untouched by grace. O'Meara cites Karl Rahner's theology of grace, which has inaugurated "a world marked by circles of God's gift of eschatological life."¹¹³ The world itself is an expression of realized eschatology and contrasts with the idea of a world in need of redemption. The world is not to be addressed as sinful, consigning the kingdom of God to the privacy of churches and personal spirituality. The mission is a public mission to humanity. It serves to heal both intrapersonal guilt for sin and the injustices and tragedies that affect the wider community. These injustices flow "not only from natural or social causes but from sin."¹¹⁴ Evils present in the world are not part of the Father's plan and the Christian mission is to challenge

¹¹¹ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 146.

¹¹² O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 31.

¹¹³ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 2.

¹¹⁴ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 147.

them in the world. This is an evangelical call to the world that carries as much import as ministering to the Church community, “Each church should be as intent upon witness in the world as upon its own inner life.”¹¹⁵

The world, in O’Meara’s estimation is not the subject of some future divine or human action. The call to ministry is not a call to bring about a yet to be accomplished salvation but an expression of an already realized salvation for the world. The Church is the fundamental sacrament of grace that leads the world to this realization. There is then no need for a slow, secretive infiltration of the secular order by Christians to transform the world.¹¹⁶ O’Meara gives four reasons to reject an infiltration of the sacral into the secular: the task becomes very individualistic, focusing on the soul of the individual at work, “it implied that grace was absent from the world,” it would have been a lay infiltration into science and politics, and “it divided grace from nature, handing over soul and sacrament to priests but world and history to laity.”¹¹⁷ Though O’Meara writes in terms of “infiltration” we can easily see parallels between this dynamic and the consecration of the world described in *LG*.

Of O’Meara’s reasons for rejecting “world infiltration” as a task for the laity address his view of the world, two are of critical import for our discussion. These are intimately connected, addressing the presence of grace in the world and the means by which that grace is made present. Each is rooted in a distinction that would be ultimately rejected by the 20th century theologies of grace: that there is a possibility of separating God’s grace out from creation. A need for infiltration into the world to bring grace implies that there is a lack of grace. O’Meara sees the

¹¹⁵ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 148.

¹¹⁶ O’Meara sees the description of this infiltration, expressed as it is in the texts of Vatican II, as a clerical attempt to bring control back into matters beyond their reach after the modern secularization of the world “Without direct control over society, church leaders encouraged the laity, formed by doctrine, sacraments, and spiritual discipline, to transform the secular order-but slowly, implicitly, and from within.” O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 189.

¹¹⁷ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 189.

world as encompassed in “circles of grace.” The most potent and apparent of these is the Church itself. Beyond the Church, O’Meara encourages openness toward the redeemed world and the presence of grace as it is expressed in other religious traditions. The second point is the working out of this separation in the sphere of ministry. The pre-conciliar sacramental economies that O’Meara discussed are prime examples: the clergy are the sole proprietors of graced reality, which they introduce into the wholly secularized world. Pointing toward individual sacraments as the vehicles of this grace in place of embracing the whole Church as sacrament would cement the role of the ordained as officiants of the sacred to the not-sacred. O’Meara’s depiction of the world as graced is intimately connected with his argument against the lay-clergy distinction. O’Meara sees the whole Church as a “basic equality in grace.”¹¹⁸

O’Meara’s theology of ministry begins as a theological reflection upon the rising phenomenon of ministry in the church and expands to a total ecclesiology¹¹⁹. From his thought we can derive three points pertinent to our discussion that will significantly impact those that come after him: first, he has a deep concern for valuing the active ministry of all the baptized. O’Meara stresses this point throughout the whole course of his work. He does so in a way that devalues witnessing in anything but the most overt way. This necessitates the deletion of the lay-clergy distinction drawn throughout much of church history. Second, he does not see world consecration or transformation as a fundamental role of the Church in the world. He de-emphasizes Vatican II’s universal priesthood language and does not think that an infiltration in the world adequately describes ministry. Finally, he is the first of our thinkers to root his thought in the relationship between nature and grace. O’Meara views the world as graced, holding a

¹¹⁸ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 237.

¹¹⁹ I use this term in the sense coined by Congar: only by understanding the role of laity in its fulness does O’Meara think we can come into an understanding of ecclesiology as a whole. See Congar *Lay-People in the Church*, XVII.

positive view of the world. There is tension in his position since the world is both in need of the saving mission of the church and is already encompassed in a circle of grace.

C. The Magisterial School Response

The growing number of lay ministers and the critical tenor of the development school are two keys to understanding the view of the laity expressed by the magisterium and their theological allies. Since these authors accepted the description of the laity found in the Vatican II documents as authoritative and definitive, their own writings are largely apologetic. Pope John Paul II and theologian Aurelie Hagstrom are prevalent voices within this school. John Paul II's approach is to clarify practices based upon the conciliar view and to offer exhortation for the laity in their secular work. Hagstrom is concerned with demonstrating the consistency of magisterial statements about the laity along with identifying why the secular character had been largely abandoned by post-conciliar ecclesiologists. As a defense of conciliar teaching, neither John Paul II nor Hagstrom make statements that elaborate on the nature of world consecration or the God/world relationship beyond what is already expressed in the conciliar documents. Their work adds rhetorical texture to the magisterial position and sets the stage for the conversation surrounding the laity that takes place at the turn of the 20th Century.

Pope John Paul II

Promulgated in 1988, Pope John Paul II's Post-synodal document *Christifidelis Laici* (CL) reiterated the description offered by Vatican II and responded to the increased role of the laity in ecclesial ministry. As a Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, CL was written shortly after the Synod on the Laity that occurred in 1987. Many of the concerns of the synodal fathers

are mirrored in the document with one notable exception. At the head of the propositions, representative of the fruits of their meetings, the bishops requested that there be a definitive and universal papal declaration on the vocation of the laity.¹²⁰ This implies that the synodal fathers did not view the teaching on the laity represented in the conciliar documents as a definitive statement. John Paul II did not fulfill this request. Instead, *CL* is a representation of the teachings of *LG* through the late Pope's own ecclesiological lens along with cautions regarding the confluence of laity and clergy.

Aurelie Hagstrom argues that *CL* fulfills its role as a Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: it is the purpose of the document to urge, exhort, advise, and encourage, not to solve points of theology. It would be inappropriate for the Pope to use the exhortation as an opportunity to develop the dogmatic understanding of the laity or to offer some new dogmatic definition.¹²¹ Against the expectations of the Synod fathers, Hagstrom asserts that to fulfill its role *CL* simply had to affirm and expand upon the themes presented in the concluding propositions.

Despite the lack of new teaching, *CL* should not be confused with mere repetition. John Paul II reframes *LG*'s description of the laity not as a role but as a dynamic. The laity's place in the world is the condition for the exercise of their secular character.¹²² The world is not simply a framework for lay action but is itself the subject of lay work. The lay task is to transform since the world is "a reality destined to find in Jesus Christ the fullness of its meaning."¹²³ The laity can only fulfill this mission if they are in the world, a point that is clearly emphasized.

¹²⁰ 28 Propositio 1; Enchiridion Vaticanum 10, Bologna: Centro Editoriale Dehoniano 1989 p1438 cited in Aurelie A. Hagstrom, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1994), 144.

¹²¹ Hagstrom, *Mission of the Laity*, 160.

¹²² Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici: The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1989), 15. From here abbreviated as *CL*.

¹²³ *CL* 15.

Receiving baptism does not take Christians from the world or invite them to abandon it. Citing Paul the Apostle, John Paul II encourages the lay faithful to fulfill their vocation “in whatever state each was called.”¹²⁴ Lay life in the world is not an accident of societal circumstance but “a theological and ecclesiological reality.”¹²⁵

The dynamic that the laity participates in contributes to the unity and the diversity that is needed if the Church is to be a fully functional body. John Paul II calls the Church an “‘organic’ communion ... the complementarity of each part must be joined together and every unique contribution recognized as done on behalf of the body. (CL 20) This complementarity is enabled by the “unmistakable character” that marks each of the states of life lived in the Church which must be “seen in relation to the other and placed at each other’s service.” (CL 55)

John Paul II’s ecclesiological view emphasizes distinction for complementarity. A confusion of roles and a breaking down of distinctions would be detrimental to his project. This leads the Pope to address lay activity within ministerial roles, a concern that was shared by the synodal fathers. At the center of the cautions and correctives in *CL* are two points (1) The laity’s role within the world is a necessary one. (2) Confusion over the proper roles, especially the role of minister in the Church, threatens the complementarity and effectiveness of each state of life.

The Pope distinguishes between the exercise of liturgical, evangelistic, and catechetical roles that are proper to all of the baptized and a creeping trend to expand the responsibilities of the laity within intra-ecclesial affairs. The latter may so occupy the laity that they forget their mission toward the world. In place of this, the Pope advocates for Gospel-oriented lives in the midst of the world as a witness to the transcendent.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ *CL* 15 citing 1 Cor 7:24.

¹²⁵ *CL* 15.

¹²⁶ *CL* 23.

This is not only a matter of dereliction of duty. Many concerns shared by John Paul II and the synodal fathers revolve around the definition and actions taken by “ministers.” During this period, there was a fervent discussion about the extent to which lay persons could be called ministers.¹²⁷ John Paul II adopts a narrow and specifically sacramental definition of minister. The term cannot be used to describe someone based upon their activity but is instead a matter of sacramental ordination.¹²⁸ This rules out the identification of any of the laity as ministers. In support of this point, the Pope recalls the difference between the priesthood shared by all the faithful and the ministerial priesthood which is “different, not simply in degree but in essence.”¹²⁹

This strict definition of minister is based upon the complementary ecclesiology that John Paul II has laid out. Though *CL* includes passages that could be interpreted as stifling the expansion of lay involvement in the Church, many of the correctives made are in service of the distinctions expressed in this ecclesiology. The concern for the overuse of laity in the liturgy, for instance, does not offer additional restrictions on lay activity. On the contrary, the document cites the founding of a commission to reevaluate the lay role above and beyond those already offered in the exercise of instituted acolytes and readers.¹³⁰

The passages that are the most corrective are tightly focused on roles and identity. Caution against the “clericalization” of the laity and the building up of an “ecclesial structure of parallel service” is reactionary in that it upholds the distinction between laity and clergy against a praxis seeking to do away with the distinction. This caution is where the reactionary nature of

¹²⁷ See above discussion on Doohan and O’Meara.

¹²⁸ *CL* 23.

¹²⁹ *CL* 22.

¹³⁰ *CL* 23.

the document ends. The brief mention of the trends, noted by the synodal fathers, are overshadowed by the application of the lay call to various areas of life. Within the context of the broader theological conversation about the laity, *CL* is a simple reaffirmation and application of the teachings found in *LG*. *CL* does not offer a definitive theological treatise on the laity. The text reiterates the ecclesiology of a clergy/laity distinction which John Paul II frames within the conceptual category of a reciprocal complementarity.

Aurelie Hagstrom

In her 1994 book, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity*, Aurelie Hagstrom offers a theological defense of the magisterium's ecclesiastical schema. She outlines the preconciliar, conciliar, and post-conciliar conversation regarding the laity's theological definition and mission with the aim of demonstrating the consistency of the magisterial view that the laity are to be characterized by the secularity and the task of world consecration. Hagstrom's critical thrust is that the post-conciliar theological conversation has focused on the work of the laity within the Church to a fault. Her corrective revolves around the thomistic principle *agere sequitur esse* ("doing follows being"), resulting in her claim that the ontological character of the laity and their place in the Church should distinguish their action. This character, received at baptism, determines the life and work of the laity. Hagstrom engages with a comprehensive collection of magisterial texts to support her analysis. Notably, these include the different drafts of the Vatican II texts that address the laity, the synodal proceedings of the 1987 Synod on the Laity, and a comparison of the 1917 Code of Canon Law with the revised code of 1983.

Hagstrom's historical survey of the preconciliar discussion demonstrates the dramatic change that took place within the Church's ecclesiological consciousness before the council.

The result of this development was a new ecclesiology that directly related the laity to the mission of the Church, which she contrasted to former theological understanding of the laity as a mere appendage of the clergy.¹³¹

For Hagstrom, the development reaches its pinnacle in Vatican II. The vocation and mission of the laity is expressed clearly in the conciliar documents and this is borne out by the consistency of that teaching in canon law as well as the post-conciliar magisterium. Congruent with this stance, she is highly critical of the post conciliar developmental school. According to Hagstrom, there are three problematic tendencies within the current ecclesiological conversation, each logically connected to the others. First is a rejection of anything sacramental or hierarchical in favor of the charismatic. This “pneumatological approach” highlights the call of baptism without addressing how that call is complemented by the exercise of holy orders.¹³² There is a dividing line drawn between the charismatic, which is considered good, and the hierarchical structure of the Church which is seen to be in conflict with the spirit of Vatican II. The result is a perspective that always casts the hierarchy in an authoritative light, creating an environment that stifles ministry.

This results in her second concern, that the ecclesiological conversation addresses a fractured Church caught in a power struggle among its members. She criticizes views that see the Church as “a battlefield for rights.”¹³³ The focus of this battle tends to be a fascination with intra-ecclesial roles for the laity. This pits the clergy against the laity, the former always out to defend their own interests to the detriment of the latter. Preoccupation with expanding lay activity within the Church leads to the third tendency: a deemphasis of the secular vocation and

¹³¹ Hagstrom, *Mission of the Laity*, 38.

¹³² Hagstrom, *Mission of the Laity*, 183.

¹³³ Hagstrom, *Mission of the Laity*, 2.

mission.¹³⁴ The growth in lay rights within the Church results in the tragically ironic abandonment of the mission to the world.

Hagstrom sees a common thread between these three tendencies: there is preoccupation of what the laity can do over who the laity are. She proposes the thomistic principle of *agere sequitur esse* as a corrective to authors who do not ground the mission of the laity in their ecclesiological identity.¹³⁵ Among the authors Hagstrom addresses are Congar, who has reevaluated his approach toward the laity in the time following the council, O'Meara, Robert Kinast, and Richard McBrien. These thinkers have identified the experience of the laity following Vatican II as one of ministry and are attempting to reinterpret the lay state in light of this experience.¹³⁶

Hagstrom responds to her contemporaries by reiterating the magisterial teaching through the lens of her chosen thomistic dictum. She does not bar the laity from participating in the life of ecclesial ministry but sets limits based upon her ecclesiological perspective. Beginning with who the laity are means interpreting their role through the secular character as stated in *LG*. The being of the laity includes the secular dimension which should be allowed to color the intra-ecclesial activity that the laity carry out.¹³⁷ This secularity makes what the laity offer in service of the Church different than the office carried out by the ordained minister. This renders the two roles distinct, based upon their identity rather than their ability.

¹³⁴ Hagstrom, *Mission of the Laity*, 3.

¹³⁵ Hagstrom, *Mission of the Laity*, 5.

¹³⁶ Hagstrom, *Mission of the Laity*, 82.

¹³⁷ Hagstrom, *Mission of the Laity*, 97.

D. Richard Gaillardetz

Richard Gaillardetz is a prominent North American theologian whose work focuses chiefly around ecclesiology and magisterial authority. In his article “Re-Thinking the Lay/Clergy Distinction” he expresses reservations about the 1997 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s statement “Certain Questions Regarding Collaboration of the Lay Faithful in Ministry of Priests.”¹³⁸ Gaillardetz seeks to demonstrate that the document is the magisterium’s attempt to walk back progress made since the Council and to provide his own way forward. He views “Collaboration” as a reaffirmation of the text of the conciliar documents which do not fully express the intent of the council. Like Doohan and O’Meara, Gaillardetz holds that the Vatican II documents were the first step in a developmental process. The conciliar fathers were engaged in the herculean task of proposing a new way of understanding the Church’s life and mission and could not predict the situations in which the council would be implemented.¹³⁹

Gaillardetz claims that “Collaboration” is incongruent with the ministerial realities present within the Church.¹⁴⁰ The time since the council has seen an increase in the number of laity involved in ministerial roles. This increase is not simply one of quantity of ministers but an expansion of the ministerial roles available to lay men and women. Gaillardetz considers lay opportunities that would have been unthinkable in the time before the council. For instance, a lay woman who has been formally educated for her role of service and now engages her community as a full-time minister. Such examples, as well as the existence of the permanent diaconate blur the line of the lay/clergy distinction.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Richard Gaillardetz, "Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction," *Irish Theological Quarterly*, no. 64 (1999): 1.

¹³⁹ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 7-8.

¹⁴⁰ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 2.

¹⁴¹ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 4.

“Collaboration” approaches the teachings of Vatican II with two crucial presuppositions: that the laity are defined by their secular character and that the fullness of ministry resides in the clergy. In response to the secular character, Gaillardetz reasons that it would necessitate the existence of a sphere of action that is “purely lay.”¹⁴² Regarding ministry, Gaillardetz takes issue with the “fullness of ministry” being reserved for the ordained who by nature of that ordination receive the *sacra potestas* required for that ministry. He unpacks ministry into distinct tasks of *munera* (the sharing in the threefold ministry of Christ by all the baptized), *officia* (the result of the deputation by the Church), and *servitium* (“in which the Church carries out the work of Christ within her and the world”). Each of these make up an aspect of the fullness of ministry. Gaillardetz seeks to demonstrate that both the secular character and the reservation of the fullness of ministry to the clergy flow from a common font: a clear delineation between the sacred and the temporal.¹⁴³

Conceptualizing the sacred and temporal as distinct spheres of activity has led many to misinterpret the conciliar texts and results in a contrastive theology that is only capable of identifying the laity in comparison to the ordained. Gaillardetz does not recognize any positive theology of the laity in the documents despite a popular claim that there is one “based on their unique vocation to consecrate the world to Christ.”¹⁴⁴ For Gaillardetz, this description is merely contrastive since it is still based upon “hierarchological premises.”¹⁴⁵ Language that reinforces the lay/clergy distinction within the conciliar documents betrays the intentions of the council fathers, making the conciliar teaching ambiguous and confusing.¹⁴⁶ In place of the hierarchical

¹⁴² Gaillardetz, “Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 5. “Purely lay” is not present within the *Instruction* but was a phrase used in an explanatory note that accompanied the instruction’s publication.

¹⁴³ Gaillardetz, “Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 2.

¹⁴⁴ Gaillardetz, “Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 8.

¹⁴⁵ Gaillardetz, “Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 10.

¹⁴⁶ Gaillardetz, “Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 11.

interpretation, Gaillardetz claims that the laity and clergy should always be seen within the larger context of the “common matrix” found in *LG* and its use of *christifidelis*.¹⁴⁷ Gaillardetz concludes that the intention of the fathers was not to establish a contrastive definition but to move “strongly in the direction of simply identifying *laicus* as the normal situation of the practicing Christian who seeks in their daily life to bring all of history to its fulfillment in Christ.”¹⁴⁸ He brings this universal definition into contrast with one described by Schillebeeckx in which the baptized received their worth “only from the standpoint of the status of the clergy.”¹⁴⁹

Taking a second cue from Schillebeeckx, Gaillardetz looks to the New Testament for an essential definition of ministry. An essential distinction between clergy and laity cannot be identified in the biblical text. Scripture and early church documents paint a picture of a charismatic community which included ordained ministers. The primary biblical role of these ministers was community leadership.¹⁵⁰

For Gaillardetz, identifying clergy as community leaders resolves the tension introduced by the language of the council. This should be the primary way of understanding the unique role of the clergy who act *in persona Christi capitis*.¹⁵¹ In the past, the ordained’s cultic role in the celebration of the sacraments, specifically the Eucharist, was the predominant function by which the clergy’s role was recognized. The former model was based on an unacceptable inequality between the laity and clergy. Vatican II had moved beyond this model; Gaillardetz cites the strong conciliar language that the common priesthood is not inferior to the ordained

¹⁴⁷ Gaillardetz, “Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 10-11.

¹⁴⁸ Gaillardetz, “Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 18.

¹⁴⁹ See Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 157.

¹⁵⁰ Gaillardetz, “Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 33.

¹⁵¹ Gaillardetz, “Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 23.

priesthood.¹⁵² The council's affirmation that the two priesthoods differ in "essence" should be understood as a concession to bishops who desired to protect the role of the ordained.¹⁵³

Gaillardetz purports that the universal and ordained priesthoods are not essentially different, but the clergy still have a unique role in which they act *in persona Christi capitis*. The role of the clergy should not be defined by a cultic sacramental act of consecration but by their active role in bringing unity to the community.¹⁵⁴ The role of the apostolic office according to Gaillardetz's description is twofold: it is to preserve the apostolic faith in the community and to preserve the union among those communities.¹⁵⁵

The identification of the clergy's role as community leader respects the diversity of ministries in the church while affirming a unique role for the ordained. It represents for Gaillardetz an attempt to integrate the Christological approach to ecclesiology, which stresses ordination and hierarchy with a pneumatological approach that sees the church as a collection of the baptized who exercise a diverse set of charisms in equality of dignity.¹⁵⁶

Gaillardetz's project is fueled by his concern for the equality of ministry. Unique to his approach is his desire to maintain the distinction made between the clergy and the laity. The identification of the unique role of the ordained with an apostolic one that preserves the faith and unity of the church does not lead to the same difference in essence named by the council. In effect, Gaillardetz's ecclesiological view affirms a real difference in the exercise of the role of the clergy while preserving an overall unity within the *christifidelis*.

¹⁵² Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 22.

¹⁵³ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 21.

¹⁵⁴ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 36.

¹⁵⁵ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 37.

¹⁵⁶ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 34.

A second theme is that of the identification of sacred and temporal spheres of action. This is an auxiliary argument that Gaillardetz uses to support his case. Gaillardetz warns against assuming a delineation between sacred and temporal realities. Avoiding this language proves difficult because it is present in the council documents. The defining feature that distinguished the clergy from the laity in the conciliar text is the exercise of *sacra potestas* received at ordination. As we have seen, this is contrasted with the actions of the laity who are concerned primarily with the temporal sphere. For Gaillardetz, this does not set up a distinction but mutually exclusive spheres of action.¹⁵⁷

Gaillardetz reframes the discussion in such a way that there is only one united arena of activity. The Church and not the ordained is the principle of sacramental life, making the sacral as much the concern of the laity as the clergy.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, the ordained do not forfeit their responsibility toward the temporal by receiving the new relationship to the community that Gaillardetz describes as their unique role.¹⁵⁹ The results of this shift are clear. Gaillardetz deemphasizes an identity of the laity as a distinct group who consecrate the world and cautions against a too strong identification of the laity at work in the temporal order. Conversely, the loosening of this distinction has an effect on how Gaillardetz sees sacramental action. Since any empowerment is a result of a relationship formed in the community, he does not see any reason why the empowerment must be limited to the recipients of ordination. This, he notes, would require a study on the relationship between sacramental and non-sacramental grace.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 5.

¹⁵⁸ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 39.

¹⁵⁹ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 12.

¹⁶⁰ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 36n59.

E. Edward Hahnenberg

Edward Hahnenberg's contribution to lay theology comes in the form of two monographs with differing emphases, namely his 2003 work *Ministries: A Relational Approach* followed by *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call* in 2010. These works demonstrate a shift in approach toward the laity, the former explains the conversation on the laity with reference to ministerial action while the latter has a broader scope which includes elements that are not directly related to intentional ministry.

In *Ministries*, Hahnenberg's central concern is providing an ecclesologically sound description of the emergence of lay ecclesial ministry.¹⁶¹ He argues in line with the development school that continued use of the lay-clergy distinction only harms the Church's understanding of ministry. In place of what he calls the "dividing line" that reserves some things for clergy and others for the laity, he argues for a concentric circle model based upon relationship.¹⁶²

The dividing line model is always detrimental to developing a theology of the laity. Whether one adopts a distinction between the activity of the ordained priesthood or the secular character of the laity as a point of departure does not matter. A sharp distinction between lay and clergy always brings about the same result. One group performs active ministry, leaving "the other largely inactive."¹⁶³ The fruit of this approach is a "host of dichotomies" that spring up as corollaries: "Christ vs. Spirit, institution vs. communion, ordination vs. baptism."¹⁶⁴ The same can be said for beginning with the understanding that laity act in the world. An approach that

¹⁶¹ Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2003), 11.

¹⁶² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 10.

¹⁶³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 22.

¹⁶⁴ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 22.

takes the secular character as its starting point only “frustrates a comprehensive theology of ministry.”¹⁶⁵

Hahnenberg notes that the Second Vatican council supports both sides of this issue. The secular character of the laity as expressed in *LG* limits the council’s vision of how the laity can act within the Church while *Gaudium et Spes*’s very title as the “Pastoral Constitution of the Church *in* the Modern World” [emphasis added] does away with dualistic roles.¹⁶⁶ Moving beyond these dichotomies is important for Hahnenberg. He writes that the characterization as “secular” can lead to an understanding that the voice and work of the laity are separate from the Church.¹⁶⁷ The conciliar intention was to affirm the goodness of the lay state, the laity’s full membership in the Church and the godly work done in the secular world and their family lives. Hahnenberg charges that the magisterial statements, however, have interpreted the council in a way that hardens the distinction between laity and clergy, backtracking on the softening done by the council.¹⁶⁸ This includes John Paul II’s *CL*, which, while stressing the laity’s role in the transformation of the world, is more concerned with protecting the special place of the hierarchy in the church.¹⁶⁹

In place of the dividing line, Hahnenberg posits the use of concentric circles. These circles express the relationship that ministers have to their community.¹⁷⁰ The Trinity is both Hahnenberg’s theological locus for reflection and the lens through which he understands the idea of relation.¹⁷¹ Trinitarian reflection gives Hahnenberg the opportunity to reconcile the Christ vs.

¹⁶⁵ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 37.

¹⁶⁶ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 23 and 35.

¹⁶⁷ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 23.

¹⁶⁸ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 23.

¹⁶⁹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 18.

¹⁷⁰ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 38.

¹⁷¹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 39.

Spirit dichotomy. Ministry should not be thought of in terms of a Dionysian hierarchical mediation, the result of the exercise of a *sacra potestas*.¹⁷² This Christocentric approach deemphasized the role of the Spirit and the charisms accessible to all the baptized.¹⁷³ The charismatic framework recognizes the Holy Spirit at work in the community. The giving of these gifts is not seen as an extrinsic or occasional act of God but is the constant action of the Holy Spirit which permeates the whole world.¹⁷⁴ Just as there is no contradiction implied by speaking of the missions of the Word and of the Spirit within Trinitarian theology, the ministry of Christ does not contradict charismatic activity.¹⁷⁵

This relational approach reinterprets ordained ministry. The ministry of the priest cannot be comprehended without the ecclesial community. For Hahnenberg, the priest does not represent Christ in a way that places him “over and above” the community.¹⁷⁶ The very concept of ordination, the ordering of the priest as minister, is ordered toward the relationship the priest has with the community.¹⁷⁷

Ordination is the recognition of a new relationship and an ecclesial repositioning of the priest as the leader of a community. Relationship dictates the place and activity of every member of the Church. While there might be different levels of involvement and commitment, each baptized person falls somewhere on Hahnenberg’s concentric circle schema. These relationships result in a diverse set of roles and types of ministry that he describes in a concentric circle of initiations into ministry.¹⁷⁸ Hahnenberg still places the clergy at the center of the circle, though this corresponds with their role as community leaders from which their special liturgical

¹⁷² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 46.

¹⁷³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 64.

¹⁷⁴ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 71.

¹⁷⁵ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 39.

¹⁷⁶ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 55.

¹⁷⁷ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 156-7.

¹⁷⁸ See chart on Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 204.

function is derived. The different ministries progress from this center until they reach the outside circle, depicting the “General Christian Ministry” that results from baptism.

The opposite ends of this schema, clergy at the center with a generalized group of the “baptized” at the periphery, seem derivative of the dividing line model that Hahnenberg wants to avoid. The two circular layers in between two extremes are novel to his approach. First there is the diaconate and official installation and second there are “Occasional Public Ministries” that are initiated by a Commissioning Blessing.¹⁷⁹

These second and third circles demonstrate the focus of Hahnenberg’s thesis. By allowing for the formal, liturgical recognition of the ministry that arises charismatically in the community, he does away with the strict line of delineation of the previous model. Just as the priestly and episcopal ordinations change the relationship of one who could be identified in the outermost circle, so the training and installation of a minister should be recognized as a change in relationship within liturgy, acknowledged as official ministry. “The ultimate goal is to affirm the diversity and distinction among ministerial roles.”¹⁸⁰

Hahnenberg discusses the priesthood of the laity only as a stop along the way to his conclusion that all the baptized have a place in ministry. His analysis includes the theological development of the laity as a priesthood with equal share in the priesthood of Christ as explored by the liturgical movements of the 20th Century.¹⁸¹ In this period the laity were given an active role in the liturgy in place of their passive one. Hahnenberg sees the roles of the liturgical assembly as manifestations of the participants’ place in the community. This means the non-ordained have a corresponding active ministerial role outside of the liturgy by virtue of their

¹⁷⁹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 204.

¹⁸⁰ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 205.

¹⁸¹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 167.

baptismal priesthood. Precisely what this role is or how it is to be carried out in praxis is not addressed in *Ministries*. By omitting this, Hahnenberg does not offer an alternative to the description of secular laity in *LG*. He notes that the council is right to recognize the goodness of family and ordinary life lived by the laity but generally regards the “secular character” as a limit on ministry.¹⁸²

In *Awakening Vocation*, Hahnenberg’s focus shifts to the life of individual Christians and their response to God’s calling. Viewed synoptically with Hahnenberg’s previous work, *Awakening* is a broadening of Hahnenberg’s reflection. The 2010 work is most concerned with Christians who would have been placed on the outermost circle in *Ministries*. This is coupled with a shift in register: In place of seeing Christian activity in relation to ministry, Hahnenberg discusses the Christian life as a response to God’s call. The resounding message of *Awakening* is that vocational calls are not limited to religious or clergy. Every human person is invited to respond to God’s call, all have an invitation in the form of vocation.¹⁸³

The first half of the work is a historical study on theologies of vocation. Hahnenberg traces arguments that guide him between two extremes. He wants to avoid approaching vocation as something that is utterly supernatural, something that requires a special revelation. He also wants to guard against the over secularization of vocation understood as faithfulness to one’s job or trade.¹⁸⁴ These poles developed as the result of two different emphases. The former supernatural-mystical understanding of vocation Hahnenberg links to a dualistic nature-grace relationship.¹⁸⁵ The secularized view of vocation developed from the Protestant attempt at

¹⁸² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 23.

¹⁸³ Edward P. Hahnenberg, "Awakening vocation : a Theology of Christian Call," (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2010), XIV.

¹⁸⁴ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 3.

¹⁸⁵ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, XIII.

valorizing the secular. This second approach became unmoored from its theological origins and evolved in a way that one's calling did not refer back to God as its source.¹⁸⁶ Each of the above derive from a nature/grace dichotomy. The first valued grace over nature, the second nature over grace. Hahnenberg's approach seeks to affirm both "as deeply intertwined realities in the vocational dynamic."¹⁸⁷

Karl Rahner's theology of grace provides Hahnenberg with the lens for his vocational reflection. It also grants him the solution to the nature/grace dichotomies and refutes "modern Catholic theology of vocation."¹⁸⁸ Grace is understood to be not a reality that is super-added to the created world but imbedded within creation itself: "God's pervasive presence in the world."¹⁸⁹ The pervasiveness of grace means that it is not limited to the church, official revelation, or mystical illumination.¹⁹⁰

Hahnenberg understands the vocational call as a unity of nature and grace, of creation and redemption.¹⁹¹ God's self-communication is described as a unique offer to every human person in the form of a call, a vocation.¹⁹² The offer is made to human persons in their particularity and invites a response in freedom. Free response distinguishes between the offer God makes and the fulfillment in every human life.¹⁹³ The reality of grace is not a fated one but takes the form an offer.

The presentation of nature and grace as the unified vehicle of God's self-communication, here placed in terms of the individual vocational call, frames sin in a wholistic context. God's

¹⁸⁶ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 4.

¹⁸⁷ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 124.

¹⁸⁸ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, XII.

¹⁸⁹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, XII.

¹⁹⁰ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 90.

¹⁹¹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 124.

¹⁹² Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 140.

¹⁹³ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 154.

offer is not something extrinsic from the person so a rejection of this offer is a type of self-rejection. The graced call is one that comes from within creation and to a certain extent from within the person. Hahnenberg describes the rejection of God's call through sin as "a rejection of reality, a kind of self-destruction."¹⁹⁴ Conversely, the acceptance of God's call, a response in freedom that signals the reception of God's self-communication is an entering into friendship with God. God's offer is a plan that is both written into each human life and provides that life with meaning.¹⁹⁵

Hahnenberg pivots from considerations about the individual calling to the calling of the Christian people as a whole. While he does not couch the discussion in the vocabulary of laity or the secular, it is chapter six of *Awakening* wherein Hahnenberg considers the praxis of the ideals he has discussed. He links two thinkers that give the final chapters of his work their trajectory: Johann Baptist Metz and Ignacio Ellacuria. Metz is a student of Rahner who interprets the historical reality of human suffering in a way that does not accept an atemporal distancing. To do so would tempt us to ignore the call of the suffering for justice. He posits that the voice of the suffering is an authoritative voice of Christians since they represent the crucified in our midst.¹⁹⁶

Ellacuria, similarly concerned with suffering, was killed for his political activity in 1999 while ministering and teaching in his native El Salvador.¹⁹⁷ Theologically, Ellacuria's project was to ground liberation theology in the transcendent. To this end, he interpreted the cry for help of the poor and suffering as the call of God's action in history. The response to this call plays out as a response to God in history: "salvation history is salvation in history."¹⁹⁸ A student of

¹⁹⁴ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 156.

¹⁹⁵ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 122.

¹⁹⁶ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 199.

¹⁹⁷ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 201-2.

¹⁹⁸ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 202.

Rahner, Ellacuria wanted to protect against a dualism that separates God from the world while at the same time not reducing the transcendent to the historical. Hahnenberg relates that Ellacuria's emphasis was protecting against the former more than the latter and in doing so he was after an explanation of the God-world relationship that demonstrated God's action in history while accepting human freedom.¹⁹⁹ Ellacuria adds the work of Xavier Zubiri to his interpretation of Rahner and produces a lens that sees the transcendent God as always present within historical reality. Theology does not remind humanity that they must reconnect to something outside of history, but that the transcendent is already intrinsic to the events of history. In a potent biblical example, Ellacuria asks who brought "the people out of Egypt: Yahweh or Moses?"²⁰⁰ The deeds done in Exodus are identified as God's deeds, even the ones that necessitated the exercise of human freedom. Ellacuria saw this as the resolution to the same problem tackled by de Lubac and Rahner but for the Salvadoran salvation history represents "grace" and salvation in history "nature."²⁰¹ The result is a view of the Christian call as one that follows the cry of the suffering into history not asking what Jesus would do but doing what Jesus did with all of its socio-political connotations.²⁰²

The suffering of the other is a call outward. Hahnenberg unites this principle to Rahner's invitation to a theology of openness and the theologian's reflections on the Spiritual Exercises. The result is an open-ended assent to the call without grasping the end to which that call would lead.²⁰³ God's call does not affix an identity on the baptized from afar but is what constitutes their identity from the outset.²⁰⁴ The *klesis* Hahnenberg describes has two elements: to be

¹⁹⁹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 204.

²⁰⁰ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 206.

²⁰¹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 207.

²⁰² Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 210.

²⁰³ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 224.

²⁰⁴ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 230.

ourselves and to accept the challenge of the call. The challenge is first and foremost love of neighbor, the response to the suffering of the world.²⁰⁵

F. Paul Lakeland

Paul Lakeland's *The Liberation of the Laity* is both a thorough treatment of the development of lay theology and the consummation of the development school. The first half is comprised of a comprehensive survey of the history of lay theology through the Second Vatican Council to the time of Lakeland's writing. Among the theological trends that Lakeland highlights are the contest between modernism and scholasticism and the reinterpretation of the thomistic account of grace offered by de Lubac in his *Surnaturel*. These themes foreshadow Lakeland's own views. The first corresponds to his stance on theological development while the second signals his rejection of language that hints at a secular/sacred dichotomy.

As a pastoral council rather than a dogmatic council, Lakeland sees the work of Vatican II as a continuing effort to bring to completion Paul VI's desire to let fresh air into the Church.²⁰⁶ As a whole, he considers the council to be "an unfinished project whose final outcome remains uncertain."²⁰⁷ This has significant bearing on how he approaches the conciliar documents. Considering the theological and political tensions which produced them, he does not think that the pastoral vision that resulted is well developed.

Lakeland posits that the ambiguity of the roles outlined by the conciliar documents could be interpreted in two ways depending on the reader's predisposition. Conservative thinkers would see a clear demarcation between clergy who act in the church and laity who act in the

²⁰⁵ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 233.

²⁰⁶ Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 107.

²⁰⁷ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 112.

world. Liberal-minded interpreters could see the same texts as an invitation to a new ecclesiological vision in which the laity and clergy are “co-responsible for the life and ministry of the church.”²⁰⁸ According to Lakeland, the former are embracing what Gutierrez calls a “distinction of planes” that drives a wedge between what happens in the world and what happens in the church, a corollary of the secular/sacred separation while the latter would not identify such a distinction.²⁰⁹

For Lakeland, the documents of Vatican II present a description of lay action, dominated by an examination of the lay apostolate, rather than a theological definition of the laity as such.²¹⁰ This betrays the clergy-centric approach that the council embraced. Instead of asking who the clergy are in relation to the laity, the council asked who the laity are in relation to the clergy and how much we can say the laity work in and on behalf of the church.²¹¹

A notable departure from the theme of lay apostolic work is *LG*’s description of the lay priesthood. Lakeland emphasizes that the notion of lay priesthood communicated therein has nothing to do with lay ministry. The priesthood of the laity is distinct from the ordained priesthood. The sacramental functions are different: the clergy presiding over the eucharistic assembly and the laity being a priesthood held in common and not the result of a vocational calling. Putting this difference aside, Lakeland hones in on their common conceptual framework which is determinative of their activity: both priesthoods are acts of mediation. The priest is the intermediary between God and the laity in their activity whose task it is to “[ferry] back and forth between God and the world.”²¹²

²⁰⁸ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 110.

²⁰⁹ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 110.

²¹⁰ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 108.

²¹¹ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 108-9.

²¹² Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 91.

These priesthoods act among and are an expression of the distinctive planes of the secular and sacred, between God and the world. Priestly action, the need for intermediary activity, would affirm the difference between the sacred and the secular. In defining priestly action in this way - with the emphasis of the consecrator as a mediator between two separated realities - Lakeland has set the stage for his own argument against the concept of mediation in his chapter on secularity:

Talking about ‘the secular’ from a religious standpoint means considering the world, dependent on God for its existence and suffused with divine presence through Christ and the Spirit, but not in such a way that the presence of God changes or suspends the natural laws of the universe.²¹³

He differentiates this understanding of secularity from other approaches that contrast the secular with the sacred, inherently excluding God from the secular. Three dualisms can be linked: the sacred/secular, God/world, and church/world. Accepting one of these dichotomies easily gives way to the rest and the creation of truly separate realms of reality. Lakeland connects the breakdown of these dualisms to de Lubac’s explication of the relationship between nature and grace.²¹⁴ As with the debates against the scholastics, the end result is a single reality with nothing superimposed by God.

Lakeland proposes a vision of the world that acknowledges two fundamental principles. Catholic theology is both creationist and incarnational. Creationist is not here used in the sense of an evolution/creation debate but to connote that the world as created by God is good. For

²¹³ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 149.

²¹⁴ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 151.

Lakeland this makes the world “the enfleshment of God in earthly reality.”²¹⁵ Against the sacred/secular distinction which threatens this understanding, Lakeland writes that the world is not a mere symbol of God’s love, it is God’s love.

The second principle, incarnation, is decoupled from its traditional soteriological framework. Lakeland does not think that incarnation is a “ruse to subvert the deplorable effects of human freedom gone awry,” it is a demonstration of human freedom.²¹⁶ Herein lies the center of Lakeland’s thesis: the exercise of human freedom, human autonomy is to be lived out within the limits of the world. All human activity, regardless of whether that human is religious or not, contributes to a single task: “to make the world a more and more truly human reality.”²¹⁷

This is a radical affirmation of the secular. God’s actions in revelation serve to affirm and promote the goodness of the world as such. Human activity images God’s activity by imitating God’s “no-strings-attached” love for the world. For Lakeland the love of the secular and the exercise of human freedom is characterized by unconditionality.

Lakeland formulates secular unconditionality, the total acceptance of secular reality as such, from his readings of post-conciliar theologies. He founded his views upon consensus that begins with de Lubac and includes Chenu, Congar, Daniélou, and Rahner. These theologians represent a paradigm shift away from the above-mentioned dichotomies. There is no longer nature and grace but a nature that is already graced. This changes the tone of the Christian conversation in many ways: there is no godless reality in need of special divine action, the desire for God is already imprinted within the inhabitants of the world in a natural manner, and the natural order need not obey any special rules in order to fulfill its intention within the order of

²¹⁵ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 150.

²¹⁶ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 150.

²¹⁷ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 150.

grace. In place of a divine project with a *modus operandi* that extends from outside of creation, salvation history is instead a struggle toward “the humanization of the world.”²¹⁸

This is not a project of perfection for the world but of the transformation of human lives. Lakeland describes a secular world, a natural order that is complete, “sufficient if not self-sufficient.”²¹⁹ The self-sufficient nature of the secular even applies to the search for the meaning of the world. Lakeland describes the secular world as a mystery. This is not a mystery that can be solved by looking at how the various parts interact, an understanding of the details, but a mystery of contemplating the whole. Though the Christian story proposes the world’s meaning founded in its nature as gift even this makes the world about something else.

To say, for example, that secular reality can only really be understood in a transcendent frame of reference is inevitably to reduce secularity, to compromise its graced character in the name of something supposedly more fundamental. The history of Christian spirituality is replete with examples of this world-hating attitude.²²⁰

The challenge for ecclesiologies, particularly a theology of the laity is to affirm this radical unconditionality, the self-sufficiency and ultimately self-referential character of the world while at the same time allowing for the act of faith. Lakeland precludes any understanding that would interpret the problem from the standpoint of revelation. Normally treated as a “message from another planet” the traditional understanding of revelation as God’s secret message is supplanted by the acceptance of God’s constant presence and activity within human history, the apex and

²¹⁸ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 151.

²¹⁹ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 152.

²²⁰ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 154.

perfection of revelation being not the message of Jesus' life but the encounter with the human being Jesus.²²¹ With the exercise of human freedom as the ultimate task of the human person he engages in less an ecclesiology and more of an anthropology. The secular project in which both believer and non-believer share is to affirm "the goodness of the human and the natural world."²²² Though the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus affirmed the goodness of the world the goodness of the world is not dependent on these events.

God's activity is reinterpreted in light of the unconditionality of the secular. At the most basic level, God is understood as the grounding of secular reality. Salvation and redemption become categories of the secular dynamic of struggle and liberation. These categories are not to be applied as an epilogue to the present reality but within the human struggle for freedom from structural and personal sin. Lakeland states clearly the premise that undergirds his other theological claims: "God does not have a plan for the world that goes beyond the unconditional freedom of the human as God created it. The secularity of the world is the divine plan."²²³ Christianity has distracted itself with metaphysical and otherworldly concerns. This unhealthy preoccupation leaves Christianity with dualistic obsessions that are not part of the worldview characteristic of Jesus or the early church. Secularity is affirmed by the God described in the Jewish theological vision which understands the unfolding of historical events as the sole stage of divine activity.²²⁴ Lakeland tersely rejects any understanding of God as an entity above or one that subsumes creation. The metaphysical God envisioned by such philosophical and theological systems is "the enemy of human freedom" and "delimits human possibility."²²⁵

²²¹ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 154-5.

²²² Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 156.

²²³ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 173.

²²⁴ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 173-4. See also Lakeland, 154-155.

²²⁵ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 169.

The role of the church is to support the secular project. As the pivotal revelational events of the life of Jesus and the action of God in history is interpreted as a display of God's commitment to human freedom, so the mission of the church is to work toward the same goal of unhindered freedom. Lakeland circumscribes the mission of the church around the focal point of human freedom. The prophetic role of the church promotes the responsible undertaking of the secular project which must always be pursued in light of the human character which is its goal.²²⁶ This implies that the diversity of action characteristic of human freedom be respected and that violation of those freedoms not be tolerated. The church is subject to these criteria and must respect the unconditionality of the secular. This means that in no way can any religious symbol be imposed thus interpreting "the world in terms of some other, more fundamental reality."²²⁷ In place of religious symbols and theological categories is a general affirmation as mission: "The church is that part of secular reality that is convinced that it is affirmed in the free unconditionality of the secular."²²⁸

Lakeland's secular project extends to the worship offered by the church which is directly linked to the affirmation of secular reality. The act of faith is an acknowledgement of God's gift of the world. Worship is placed in service of the humanization of the world. The faithful gather to be reminded of God's affirmation of the world and strengthened for the furtherance of the task of humanization. This worship cannot be self-referential and is only valuable if it results in engagement with the world.

With worship leading out into the secular, the laity are the primary executors of the church's mission. This cannot be understood in an intra-ecclesial or instrumental sense. The

²²⁶ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 158.

²²⁷ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 166.

²²⁸ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 174.

promotion of freedom and world affirmation happens as the free action of adult Christians within the world. The Christian narrative keeps the laity grounded in the goodness of the secular with the Church behind them as a support and source of strength for secular action. This support is intended to help the laity make the many difficult decisions that they face daily, enabling them to act in a consistently pro-human way. The mission is carried out by the “countless millions” of laypeople who exercise their freedom wholly independent of magisterial oversight.²²⁹ This life is most clearly manifest in projects of justice, human solidarity, preferring the human over realities that threaten to devalue humanity.²³⁰

Lakeland’s project is a paradigm shift. Where many post-conciliar attempts at developing a theology of the laity found difficulty in providing satisfactory accounts of lay action in the world without referring them to intra-ecclesial realities, the unconditionality of the secular frames every ecclesial action as a support for the secular. The secular which was consigned to the periphery of the conversation in favor of the discussion of lay apostolic work at Vatican II is placed at the center. The two pillars of Lakeland’s thought are the goodness of the world - created good and inherently imbued by God’s grace and the right exercise of human freedom. These form the foundation from which Lakeland’s conclusion of the church as a community at the service of the unconditionality of the secular is formed.

The radical affirmation of the secular is both a continuation and a correction of the conciliar project as it is expressed in the documents of Vatican II. It is a continuation insofar as Lakeland has found creative ways to express the importance and centrality of the secular. His work shares in the affirmation of the world found within the council’s desire to emphasize the work of the laity in a world that was created good by God. Lakeland believes the texts

²²⁹ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 246.

²³⁰ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 248.

themselves are confused in their reaffirmation of a traditionally held secular/sacred distinction. He decries notions of revelation, an emphasis on the spiritual, or the idea that there is anything over and above creation as incompatible with unconditional secularity. In fact, these would be the source of a conditional secularity that would only be understood in reference to an outside reality, namely the metaphysical God.

We can conclude that the correction Lakeland would offer to conciliar teaching on the laity would strip it of the inside/outside referent indicative of a secular/sacred distinction. His thought forbids the use of priestly language as he has defined it. For Lakeland priesthood serves only as the courier between the two realms. Whether we are speaking of the ordained priesthood or the common priesthood of all believers, they would equally function as representatives ferrying back and forth either God to the world or the world to God.

The exercise of such a priesthood would necessitate a conditionality of the world. For Lakeland this heralds a return of the theological position that devalues anything related to the secular. Ostensibly this was a major misstep of Vatican II and the chief reason why the fathers were unable to clearly affirm the secular. Vatican II does not only uphold the teaching that the ordained introduce something sacred into the world, something inaccessible without sacramental action, the central expression of lay action in the world is framed within the practice of lay priesthood. In direct contrast to Lakeland's view of unconditionality, the task of laypeople as described by Vatican II is the consecration of the world to God. They are to refer all elements of the secular order to God through spiritual sacrifice. The task of the laity outlined in *LG* is incompatible with Lakeland's view. The world, sufficient unto itself, is in no need of consecrating. As created good it needs no exterior reference to a larger framework. There is no

further plan for the secular order that requires lay action to bring in the sacred. As Lakeland writes: “The secularity of the world is the divine plan.”²³¹

G. Conclusion – Post-Conciliar Lay Theologies

In summary, we can recognize several points of tension that arise between the magisterial and development schools. These points are most lucidly stated in the literature that arose as a critique to the secular description of lay life. Though these critiques do not coalesce into a homogenous view they share certain characteristics which pose serious issues for the ecclesiology as outlined in the Vatican II documents themselves and have particular repercussions for the description of the laity as “secular” or for attempting to describe the laity as a distinct state within the Church whatsoever.

These concerns are rooted in dichotomies that are ostensibly causally connected. The first of these dichotomies is ecclesiological, the second is ontological, addressing God and the world. The ecclesiological dichotomy appears under the guise of many contrastive pairs: clergy/laity, institution/charism, an ecclesiology that flows from Christology versus one that arises from pneumatology. Each expresses the same basic dichotomy between what is administered or held by the few versus what is held in common by all. The consensus of the development school is that this dichotomy, enshrined within magisterial documents leads to the elevation of the former terms over the latter: the clergy over the laity, the institutional over the charismatic, the Christological over the pneumatological.

Far from disarming the dichotomies, the common thread within these authors is the affirmation of the second term in place of the first. For Hahnenberg this meant placing a new

²³¹ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 173.

emphasis on the ignored role of the Spirit and the exercise of the charisms within the Church by all the baptized. Likewise, Doohan recognizes the baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit, as the sacrament of Christian ministry. In their thought, the Christ/Spirit Lay/Clergy dichotomies amalgamate into an active/passive bifurcation in which the clergy minister in an active manner to a laity who can only passively receive. The consensus is that this is not only harmful to the trajectory of an ever-increasing role of the laity in the activity of the Church, it is contradictory to that same council's claims to have recognized the laity as equal sharers in the Church's life and mission.

The solutions proposed by these authors are varied. A common outcome of these proposals is that the distinction between laity and clergy is weakened if not done away with altogether. There seems to be no task that is distinctly lay. Positing an exclusive clerical task, rooted in the *sacra potestas*, perpetuates the disparity. Doohan uses the strongest language here: "the term laity is now theologically dead."²³² In its place, Doohan proposes the recognition of a universal call to ministry. Hahnenberg rejects the same categories as a dividing line model to be replaced with a Trinitarian based model of mutual relationship. O'Meara decries any attempt to distinguish between lay and clerical ministry as "nominalism." Gaillardetz, while not calling for the complete dissolution of these categories sees the continued use of ecclesiologies that employ a "contrastive model" as a contradiction of the trajectory set by Vatican II.

We can characterize this common thread as a concern for an ecclesiology of equality. This does not mean that each author advocates for an erasure of the distinction between ecclesial states as such. Hahnenberg and Gaillardetz, for instance, both value the unifying ministry of the clergy, particularly bishops. What they are calling for is an equal valuation of all Christian

²³² Doohan, "The Lay-Centered Church," 23.

activity, sometimes described as vocation, sometimes ministry, that would unmistakably value the life and work of all Christians equally.

Many of the authors analyzed in this chapter draw a strong correlation between ecclesial inequality and separation within the Church and dichotomies that envision the cosmos as a distinction between the secular and the sacred, nature and grace, the world and God. To save us from conflating it with the lay/clergy dichotomy with which it is so often associated it is important to distinguish between the two. The lay/clergy and its corollaries are distinctly ecclesiological in nature while this second pair is theological, anthropological, and cosmological.

The connection between these dichotomies is clearly recognizable in Gaillardetz who sees the secular character of the laity as requiring two wholly independent spheres of activity. To describe the activity of the laity and clergy in the way that the council does, there must be a sphere reserved exclusively to lay activity as well as a sphere that is reserved for the activity of the clergy. The laity, in this schema, are consigned to labor in a secular way in an ambiguous “secular” while the clergy handle a strictly defined realm of the sacred. The description of the latter is coupled with the reception of ordination, the exercise of a *sacra potestas* and the participation within the ecclesial hierarchy.

The root of this division between secular and sacred is identified as the reliance on a Dionysian understanding of mediation. Hahnenberg and O’Meara name the Areopagite specifically, while others decry the notion of mediation in general. In their description of this hierarchy, the active role of those who have the *sacra potestas* is the sole means for receiving the divine. The world, and the laity who act in this world, would be totally cut off from the divine without the mediated presence facilitated by the clergy. This conversation is easily transposed into the key of grace and nature, wherein God’s grace is only available through the

ordained ministers of the Church while the laity toil in a natural world, bereft of the help of God that is necessary for them to receive salvation.

Among the authors of the development school there is a shared understanding that the very concept of mediation assumes a deficient world. The conveyance of some reality be it grace, the sacred, or the action of the Church itself into the world implies that the world does not already have an equal share in the reality of God. This is tantamount to saying that the world itself is not good. Lakeland's recognition of the secular, the world, as sufficient without reference to the transcendent is the collapsing of this dichotomy in a logical manner. We are left with a dilemma: either the world is deficient and in need of some further action, which reaffirms the dichotomy or creation is good and the concepts of mediation and consecration are ill applied to the secular. I will argue that reflecting upon these issues through a maximian lens will provide us with a third way. The concept of mediation and creation will serve as our point of departure for the dialogue between Maximus and these contemporary views. As we will see, the Confessor conceives of mediation in a manner that is consistent with a creation that has not only been created good but, in his formulation, already participates in God.

CHAPTER 2

MAXIMIAN COSMOLOGY

Saint Maximus the Confessor received his title and notoriety from the public defense of dyotheletism and dyoergism: the teaching that in the person of Jesus Christ there are two wills and energies or operations, respectively. At the height of the Monothelite controversy, Maximus was silenced by the Byzantine Empire. In 662, his tongue was cut out of his mouth to keep him from speaking, his right hand was cut off to keep him from writing. The Byzantine monk was cast into exile along the eastern side of the Black Sea and would die in that same year. Maximus is revered as a confessor by Orthodox and Catholics alike, his outspoken opposition to the emperor was vindicated at the Third Council of Constantinople (680-681). Though Maximus is most known for his contribution to the Christological controversy, this event chronicles but the final chapter of a life spent in ascetic reflection and spiritual teaching. The Confessor weaves a theological tapestry illustrating how the cosmos, humanity, and the Logos of God are intricately connected. The fruit of maximian thought is a rich theology that affirms both the ontological distance between God and creation as well as creation's participation in God. The Confessor's thought on the human vocation can be summarized as the eucharistic offering of creation back to God. For Maximus, holding the ontological distance between God and creation and the participation of created beings with God in tension acts as a prerequisite for a free communion of God and humanity with creation as their dialogic medium.

I. Analysis of *Ambigua* 7

An extended analysis of Maximus' *Ambigua* 7 will serve as a beachhead for our exploration of the Confessor's cosmological vision. This passage, in which Maximus refutes an Origenist interpretation of Gregory of Nazianzus, is perhaps one of the most written about part of the Confessor's work and for good reason.¹

First, it contains a complex yet clear argument that encapsulates the basics of his cosmology. Second, it acts as a key to maximian terminology. Many of the concepts that characterize the Confessor's thought are employed in his overarching argument against Origenism. We can observe how these concepts interact with one another, demonstrating the consistency of Maximus' thought. This includes the process of deification as being, well-being, eternal well-being,² the logos and the logoi,³ preservation of the person⁴ and a nascent defense of dyotheletism.⁵ The crux of the Confessor's argument reveals his attitude toward creation. Maximus defends the created order against charges that it is somehow the result of corruption or not originally intended by God.

This chapter will use the structure of Maximus' argument in *Ambigua* 7 as the scaffolding for a thematic exploration of the Confessor's thought. We will consider the Origenist position and its consequences for creation, before exploring Maximus' response which will be broken up into three sections. The first section will address the nature of created beings in which the

¹ Studies that explore Maximus' engagement with Origenism or use it as a basis for the systemization of the Confessor's thought include Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Studia Anselmiana, Philosophica, Theologica, 36 (Rome: Orbis, 1955). Torstein T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Sotiris Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose: A Contemporary Reading of Maximus the Confessor's Theory of Time* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2018); Joseph Farrell, *Free Choice in St. Maximus the Confessor* (South Canon: St. Tikhon's Seminary, 1989).

² *Ambigua* 7 PG 91:1073C. All translations of *Ambigua* text from Maximus (Nicholas) Constas, ed., *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua of Maximus the Confessor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

³ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1077C.

⁴ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1076B.

⁵ *Amb* 7 PG91:1076A.

Confessor differentiates created reality from God so as to characterize the former as always in motion until it rests in the latter. The second will provide an account for how Maximus understands Gregory's statement that we are a "portion of God" while maintaining the distinction between created being and God which includes the key maximian concept of the *logoi*. The third is a response to the Origenist notion of a preexistent satiety that replaces it with an endless striving toward God that is the eschatological consummation of creation.⁶ While the general structure will follow Maximus' argument, we will introduce interconnected ideas together in order to demonstrate the consistency of the Confessor's thought.

A. The Countersign of Origenism

The classic portrait of Maximus' theological position as a monolith of anti-Origenism is beginning to erode.⁷ In place of this, a nuanced understanding of the Confessor's work is emerging in which Maximus' engagement with Origenism is multifaceted.⁸ We can think of Maximus' analysis of Origen in two modes: As the former image suggests, it is apparent that he wrote in order to refute the claims of contemporary expressions of Origenism and to preserve prominent theological works, Gregory of Nyssa, for instance, from radically Origenist interpretations. This task makes up a majority of the *Ambigua*. The second aspect of Maximus' Origenist quest is novel: Maximus was interested in separating the wheat from the chaff - to

⁶ These sections are delineated in Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 78. He recognizes in them a correspondence to Maximus' description of deification progressing from being (*Amb* 7 PG 91:1077C-1081C) to well-being (*Amb* 7 PG 91:1081D-1085A) and eternal-well-being (*Amb* 7 PG 91:1085c-1089D).

⁷ The most outspoken proponent of this view is Polycarp Sherwood who argued against a claim made by Balthasar that Maximus underwent an Origenist crisis early in his life. Sherwood's argument was so convincing that Balthasar revised this view for the second edition of *Kosmische Liturgie*, Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 67.

⁸ Even what is meant by "Origenism" is in need of further nuance. Blowers points out that there was no united school of Origenism in Maximus' day, Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 67.

preserve the ascetic and theological wisdom which grew up alongside erroneous theological ideas. Maximus shows keen discernment by distinguishing between the theological vision of creation and anthropology present in Origenist works and the ascetic spiritual tradition that he would have incorporated into monastic life.

An analysis of Maximus' works on asceticism show that they are heavily influenced by Evagrius Pontikos, a disciple of Origen's ascetic vision who became prominent in the monastic world of the fourth century. Evagrius' influence on Maximus' work is unquestionable. Many of the Confessor's ascetic works are adaptations and corrections of the Origenist spiritual tradition of Evagrius.⁹ This is true of the Confessor's largest collection of ascetic teaching, the *Liber Asceticus* as well as the *Capita de Caritate*, which Maximos Constas notes "is a determined rewriting of nearly one hundred passages from Evagrius Pontikos."¹⁰ In this vein, we can say that Maximus is an "Origenist" in the sense that he develops this spiritual teaching in his own way.

Despite this shift, the cosmology of Origenist school is the most prominent foil for Maximus' thought. The Confessor's desire to protect the writings of the Fathers from being coopted into supporting views contradictory to Chalcedonian Christianity provides the stage upon which the drama of maximian cosmology unfolds. Maximus' writings are largely concerned with the interpretation of difficult passages and it is within these explanations that his own thought is exemplified. This mode of clarifying, distinguishing, and solving aporia is brought to bear on Origenist interpretations of Gregory in the *Ambigua ad Iohannem*. It is within this context that the Confessor undoes the cosmology of radical Origenism and at the same time

⁹ Demetrios Harper, *The Analogy of Love: St Maximus the Confessor and the Foundations of Ethics* (Yonkers, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2019), 237.

¹⁰ Constas, ed., *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua of Maximos the Confessor*, VIII.

develops his own. While we can be certain that Maximus' task was a refutation of the Origenism's worst characteristics, the development of Maximus' own thought is so tied to Origen's that Pascal Mueller-Jourdan writes "we can recognize the metaphysics of Origenism as the prime matter of Maximus' cosmic liturgy."¹¹

The bespoke difficulty of *Ambigua* 7 arises from a misinterpretation of an oration from Gregory Nazianzus' *On Love of the Poor*. At issue are two specific phrases that lend themselves to an interpretation that devalues creation, namely: "we who are a portion of God that has flowed down from above" and "this very weakness that has been yoked to us might be an education concerning our dignity."¹² Maximus seeks to defend Gregory from a facile interpretation "derived largely from the doctrine of the Greeks."¹³ It is noteworthy that Maximus does not name Origen or his contemporaries.¹⁴ Maximus provides a summary of the view early in the passage: There are some who interpret the "portion of God" to mean that humanity was once connatural with God. God only created the world as a response to the flowing down of rational beings: the result of movement which lead to the dispersal of rational beings. Bodies, as creation, were not originally intended but were given "as a punishment for their former sins."¹⁵ The dynamic is one in which there was an original unity of rational beings enjoying God. These

¹¹ Pascal Mueller-Jordan, "The Foundation of Origenist Metaphysics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Paul Allen and Brownen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 149.

¹² *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069A.

¹³ *Amb* 7, PG 91:1069A.

¹⁴ Sherwood notes that the only place where Origen's name is mentioned in Maximus' work is a condemnation of the Alexandrian in *Relatio motionis* Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 72. Blowers posits that the specific Origenists in question are difficult to identify because they are "recusant Origenist monks" Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 110.

¹⁵ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069A.

beings became bored with God, despite the definition of God as the “ultimately desirable” and “the Beautiful”¹⁶ and proceeded from stasis to movement, causing the creation of the world.¹⁷

Maximus accuses these interpreters of assuming a triad of fixity-motion-generation.¹⁸ To better understand Maximus’ response to this misinterpretation of Gregory, it will benefit us to explore the Origenist ideas embedded within the narrative. Though there are no direct citations of Origen in this section, that the view stems from the Origenist school stands uncontested.¹⁹ These ideas are readily observed in Origen’s *On First Principles* which ties creation to moral evil. Origen’s account of creation is a cosmic theodicy.²⁰ Diversity of being and movement are counted among the results of a primordial sin precipitated by the devil’s rebellion. This sin results in the creation of the cosmos, ostensibly the spiritual as well as the physical. Individual differences, including disadvantages in states of life, can all be traced to the extent to which the person took part in this sin. Even birth defects and disabilities are counted within the scope of this first punishment. Origen is intent on preserving the unity and goodness of God in the face of a cosmos rampant with examples of division and sufferings. His solution links choice and moral evil directly to this downfall and describes them as God’s just punishments but does so in a way that requires a choice to be made before the beginning of motion or God’s act of creation.

This description of creation makes Maximus’ account seem all the more charitable. It places creation as a result of sins within the same continuum as those angelic beings that became

¹⁶ *Amb 7*, PG 91:1069C.

¹⁷ *Amb 7*, PG 91:1089C.

¹⁸ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 111.

¹⁹ Sherwood does not find any direct quotations or paraphrases of Origen in *Amb 7* Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 89. He proposes that at the time of the writing of these passages, Maximus’ familiarity with Origen’s thought came from exposure to secondary sources prevalent during the seventh century with the most likely influences being the edicts of Justinian but also Theodore of Scythopolis, Leontius of Byzantium, and Cyril of Scythopolis. See Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 71-88.

²⁰ Origen, *First Principles*, 1:8:1 cited in Farrell, *Free Choice in St. Maximus*, 60.

demons. Even the angels are created as a result of complicit rebellion. This does not simply result in a creation that is not originally intended by God but eclipses the goodness of any act done by God within creation. Farrell notes that Origen's view is problematic in that it taints God's actions *ad extra*.²¹ God's reaching into creation via revelation or a uniting of the divine with created reality via the Incarnation would always reflect something other than the original divine plan.

The Origenist view presents a countersign to Maximus' view of the cosmos since it has its beginnings in the freedom of preexistent rational beings and is the result of disobedience. As the Confessor curtly points out, those who adopt this position would be "indebted to evil."²² The reason for creation, revelation, Incarnation is the disobedience of the many as they, to make use of the misapplication of Gregory's words, "flow down" from above.²³ Maximus' response will lead to the eschatological affirmation of creation in the sense that creation will endure in the eschaton, not its identification with punishment. His view can be contrasted directly with Origen's. Embodiment is not a reproof or the creation or a training ground to correct disobedience. Creation is an irreplaceable part of the divine plan. For the Confessor, the ultimate end of creation facilitates God's intention who "wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of His embodiment."²⁴

B. Creation, Motion, Stasis

²¹ Farrell, *Free Choice in St. Maximus*, 60.

²² *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069D.

²³ *Amb* 7, PG 91:1068D.

²⁴ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1084D.

Maximus denies the cosmological order of the Origenist argument. He turns the triadic cascade of stasis-motion-creation on its head, formulating his own triad: creation-motion-stasis.²⁵ Maximus does not offer a competing pre-creation narrative; he makes his argument based upon the nature of created things. In this first section of his response, Maximus deals directly with creation and motion and defines them in relation to stasis, their end.

Maximus immediately relates creation (*genesis*) to motion (*kinesis*): “everything that has received its being *ex nihilo* is in motion (since all things are necessarily carried along toward some cause)...”²⁶ Motion does not exist in beings prior to their creation. He makes it clear that creation (*genesis*) always precedes motion (*kinesis*).²⁷ Motion is not listless but has an end in its goal. The crux of Maximus’ argument is that movement seeks an end, stasis. This includes an eschatological element: “that which can arrest motion of whatever is moved in relation to it has not yet appeared.”²⁸ Maximus pits his cosmology directly against the Origenist claim of original unity in a *henad*. For the *henad*, there would have been an original unity, a connaturality with the natural end or as Maximus terms God “the Beautiful” (*to Kalo*). In his own schema, created objects move toward God even though God has not yet “appeared.” Maximus’ rhetoric is unforgiving. The Origenist position leads to one of two conclusions: a) an infinite cycle of insatiability: if rational beings rejected satisfaction once, they will do so again²⁹ or b) the one around which the *henad* was gathered must not be the end goal because these beings sought out an alternative, they were not satisfied by God.³⁰

²⁵ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 111.

²⁶ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069B.

²⁷ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1072A.

²⁸ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069B.

²⁹ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069C.

³⁰ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069D.

Either possibility links the existence of motion and creation to moral evil. The connection of evil to motion is just as problematic for Maximus as claiming that disobedience is the cause for creation. Again, for Maximus, motion is always seeking its reason for being, its end, the Beautiful. If evil is the cause of motion then it is also the cause of “the most precious of all possessions, I mean love.”³¹ Motion is spurred on by love “through which all things created by God are naturally gathered up in God, permanently and without change or deviation.”³² To claim that evil is the root cause of love is untenable for Maximus. The gathering up of every created being forms the superstructure for his cosmological thought and we shall see how he grounds this dynamic, not as a punishment for obedience, but in accord with God’s original intent for creation.

Inanimate objects are not devoid of this motion, having their own place within the divine plan. Each created being has motion, created for a proper end that is not included within themselves. Their motion is a striving toward that end.³³ God alone is self-caused, existing for his own sake, having no end outside of himself.³⁴ This being so, God is not subject to the motion of creation but is the source and end of motion. The impetus behind this movement is twofold. First, there is a natural power by which beings tend toward God as the final end and goal. Second, created beings move toward God as a result of their own activity.³⁵ Maximus does not limit this activity to intellectual creatures but highlights that creatures express their activity in the exercise of their volition. It is through free assent that these creatures affirm their movement toward God. Their choice “intensifies and greatly accelerates [their own] motion.”³⁶ This is

³¹ *Amb 7 PG 91:1072A.*

³² *Amb 7 PG 91:1072A.*

³³ *Amb 7 PG 91:1072B.*

³⁴ *Amb 7 PG 91:1072C.*

³⁵ *Amb 7 PG 91:1073A-B.*

³⁶ *Amb 7 PG 91:1073C.*

realized through a dynamic of recognizing the Beautiful and becoming convinced that it is an object that should be loved. The experience of ecstatic love drives the intellectual being ever on until it is possessed wholly by the beloved.³⁷

The result is an eschatological transformation. Maximus explains that those intellectual beings who strive toward God as their end will undergo a change in which they seek to be identified solely in God. The qualities they manifest are not their own but are the qualities of the one who permeates them.³⁸ This should not be confused with absorption or annihilation. Maximus is quick to point out that the intellectual being retains two key elements. First, handing over of the will does not entail the destruction of self-determination. What is surrendered is the ability to make choices that are opposed to God.³⁹ Secondly, Maximus describes the eschatological enjoyment of God in a way that preserves personal identity. Though Maximus does refer to the creature's preference to be known by the qualities of God the intellectual creature's identity remains distinct. Maximus borrows an image from 1 Cor 13:12: even within God we shall "know even as we are known."⁴⁰ Key to understanding the preservation of identity of intellectual and other created beings is Maximus' insistence on the infinite difference between the created and uncreated.⁴¹ This allows him to compare the deified with a star being eclipsed by the greater light of the sun that surround and penetrates it without annulling the real difference between them.⁴²

C. Ex Nihilo

³⁷ *Amb 7 PG 91:1073C-D.*

³⁸ *Amb 7 PG 91:1076A*

³⁹ *Amb 7 PG 91:1076B*

⁴⁰ *Amb 7 PG 91:1077B*

⁴¹ *Amb 7 PG 91:1077A*

⁴² *Amb 7 PG 91:1077A*

The affirmation that all creation – visible and invisible – has been created by God *ex nihilo* is the opening salvo of the Confessor’s response to Origen. This mode of creation is the basis upon which he lays his argument for the *genesis-kinesis-stasis* schema.⁴³ God freely intends to create beings that are necessarily in motion. This creation does not take place as a result of preexistence or downward motion but is brought into existence by God out of nothing. Creation *ex nihilo* can serve as a thoroughfare by which we can reach many aspects of the Confessor’s cosmology. From this doctrine arises three crucial components of Maximus’ theological view: 1) the tension of a creation that is ontologically distinct from God and yet can become God through participation. 2) Maximus’ apophaticism, the language we can use to describe the relationship of created to uncreated realities. 3) how the Confessor’s view defines creation as a free act of creation in love.

Creation *ex nihilo* is a twofold rejection of the Origenist stance: God does not create from anything preexistent, rational or otherwise, and God creates freely, not out of a contingency which arose from disobedience. The assertion that God would have created either from a preexistent substance or due to the result of a pre-temporal fall would be to consign the creative act to a matter of necessity. In the Origenist account, creation is a sort of training ground that is necessary to lead beings back to the *henad*. It is a response to that situation and no longer an act done in total freedom. Mitralaxis explains that maximian cosmology, in agreement with the patristic tradition, is not borne out of necessity but due to the act of a personal uncreated creator.⁴⁴ God, due to his transcendence, is always free. For the Confessor, freedom characterizes God, not as part of God’s nature but as a demonstration of God’s existence beyond

⁴³ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069B

⁴⁴ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 65.

our conception of Him.⁴⁵ Maximus rejects that God is any way bound by necessity. To claim limits upon divine freedom would be “utter blasphemy.”⁴⁶

Having been brought about by a free act, creation receives its characteristic contingency. God’s choice, in Mitralaxis’ words, “transcends predeterminations and necessities.”⁴⁷ This underscores the utter gratuity of the created order. God could have created something vastly different but chose to create particular beings in this way from among an infinitude of possibility. Bereft of necessity, God could have chosen not to create anything at all. Creation in freedom is nothing more than an exercise of God’s creative will. God creates what he desires, how he desires, when he desires.⁴⁸ As we shall see when we explore Maximus’ anthropology in the next chapter, the nature of creation as free has ramifications for the nature of the freedom found in rational beings. The God who creates without necessity imbues that same freedom into rational beings who in turn are invited to exercise their own personal freedom. This is contrary to the Origenist position which makes the creation of the world a matter of necessity and distorts freedom into unsatiety that can only be cured through a submission to the theological dynamism that will ultimately return it to God.⁴⁹

In his analysis of the fourth section of Maximus’ *Centuries on Love*, Tollefsen explores God’s freedom in relation to creation *ex nihilo*. The analysis begins from a point of continuity: the doctrine as it was expressed at Nicaea and Constantinople holds influence on Maximus’ writing. Tollefsen demonstrates how Maximus’ view affirms the doctrine but moves beyond the

⁴⁵ George C. Berthold, "The Cappadocian Roots of Maximus the Confessor," in *Maximus Confessor: actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur* (1982), 53.

⁴⁶ D Pyrrh PG 91:293C

⁴⁷ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 66.

⁴⁸ Torstein T. Tollefsen, "Christocentric Cosmology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Paul Allen and Brownen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 309.

⁴⁹ Aidan Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel: Maximus the Confessor in Modern Scholarship* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 132.

conciliar teaching and is conversant with the wider Christian tradition on the topic. The Confessor raises and answers many questions in the process.⁵⁰ Maximus discusses God's "inscrutable wisdom" in creating the cosmos when he did and not before or after.⁵¹ This statement first assumes that creation itself has a beginning, a position that could not be taken for granted in the ancient world.⁵² For Maximus, creation is not eternal with God because no limited thing can exist infinitely.⁵³ This logically begs the question Maximus considers in a selection of his *De Caritate*: why has God chosen to create when he did as opposed to some other time?

Engaging this question is not simply an exercise in idle theological speculation. It gives Maximus the opportunity to pass on important distinctions about God's relationship to creation and humanity's ability to know God. Crucial to comprehending the discussion is that this question has no reference to the time within creation itself. The question addresses "when" God created in reference to the eternity that exists in God and itself may be an attack on the non-eternity of creation. Looking closely at the logic in the question as Maximus presents it. (1) God's eternal goodness includes his identity as creator God (2) God is always good then (3) why did God create "recently" or as Tollefsen writes: why didn't God create "infinitely sooner?"⁵⁴

Maximus finds the question as it stands unanswerable. Asking why God did not create sooner is nonsensical because there is no time before creation.⁵⁵ The question is useful in that it gives the Confessor an opportunity to reflect on the validity of the question. While it is

⁵⁰ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 40f.

⁵¹ *De Char* 4.3, cited in Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 44.

⁵² Aristotle does not see a reason why the world could not be eternal, a position that held influence long after Maximus. Aquinas, heavily influenced by Aristotle, saw no reason that creation would not be eternal from philosophy but believed creation had a beginning based upon the account in Genesis, See Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* 1.43.2. Maximus' own position is influenced by and consistent with Athanasius Basil of Caesarea. See Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 43.

⁵³ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 46.

⁵⁴ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 44.

⁵⁵ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 45.

impossible to have a “when” before creation, asking “why” God created when he did can be meaningful if we understand “why” in the proper sense. Maximus does not answer the question as it is posed but reaches into the sense of the question to make his distinction. God creates in accord with the “inscrutable wisdom of the infinite essence” which in and of itself is ungraspable by the human intellect.⁵⁶ Contemplating the divine essence grants an opportunity to wonder at God’s creative activity but does not answer the proposition.⁵⁷

This reflection draws an apophatic boundary around what questions Maximus is willing to consider. Questions that pertain to God’s inner life, about God in and of himself remain hidden. The divine essence is impenetrable. For Maximus, asking the reason behind God’s choice to create when he did falls within this category. These questions are distinct from those that can be asked about God using data observed from within creation. This second type pertains to God *ad extra*, the effects of God’s action within creation.⁵⁸ Regarding the current example from *De Caritate* 4, humanity can conceive of how God created — the statement that God creates *ex nihilo* is an answer to this very question — or to look for the reasons “why” God created embedded within the created reality. This second way of interpreting the “why” of the question differs from the first in that it has for its subject God’s action in creation, present in nature or revelation, not inquiring within the divine essence itself. Maximus’ utilization of negative theology is of primary importance for understanding his doctrine of creation. Before exploring the ontological distance between God and creation, which for Maximus is a necessary condition for his dynamic cosmology, we need to understand the source and structure of his engagement with apophaticism.

⁵⁶ *De char* 4.3

⁵⁷ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 45.

⁵⁸ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 45.

D. Mysticism / Apophaticism

The limits the Confessor is willing to set to his theological inquiry are not a simple matter of logical necessity, nor are they unquestioned conformity to what has been handed on to him. Maximus certainly inherits the categories of apophaticism used by both Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory Nazianzus but his conviction that the Divine Essence is utterly beyond the human capacity to fathom is primarily grounded within his own mystical experience. The cosmology of Maximus cannot be separated from his lifelong spiritual pursuit of the ascetic life. The Confessor writes as one with intimate experience with the realities he is communicating, not dealing in secondhand statements of authority. Maximus has experienced both the presence and absence of God.⁵⁹ He holds up the ascetic life, the life of virtue as the means of encounter with God who is at once present to the one who lives that life and absent to the one who is not.⁶⁰ He writes about a mystical condition of knowledge that proceeds from this way of life in which the experience of God is a “simple and direct meaning of the Lord without images.”⁶¹ This is the door to Maximus’ engagement with the apophatic tradition. It is a denial of the sensible and intellectual and an acceptance of a vision that exceeds the capacity of human intellect.⁶²

The mystical experience of an intimate alterity of God underwrites the whole maximian corpus but finds potent expression in his reflection on the transfiguration.⁶³ This in itself can be seen as an adaptive response to Origenism since the Alexandrian utilizes the transfiguration as a

⁵⁹ *Capita Theologica et Oeconomica* – hereafter *Th. Oec.* 2.57 all translations from George C. Berthold, ed., *Maximus Confessor Selected Writings*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

⁶⁰ *Th Oec* 2.58

⁶¹ *Th Oec* 2.59

⁶² Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 28.

⁶³ See *Amb* 10 PG 91:1165B-1168A.

primary *locus* for his mystical thought as opposed to Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory of Nyssa who give pride of place to Moses' experience at Mount Sinai.⁶⁴ Maximus sees in the event of the transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor a figure of the "two general modes of theology."⁶⁵ The Confessor outlines these modes using a comparative rhetoric. The apophatic and cataphatic are presented in a complementary manner. "The first is simple and uncaused, and verily affirms the Divine solely through a complete denial, properly honoring divine transcendence by absolute silence. The second is composite, and magnificently describes the Divine by means of positive affirmations based on its effects."⁶⁶ The threshold of God *ad intra* and *ad extra* noted in this discussion is further elaborated here but without denigrating the cataphatic. Each provide "symbols appropriate for us."⁶⁷ In respect for the impenetrable mystery of God, Maximus calls our experience of God's transcendence a "symbol" just as he does the symbols that address sense perception. It is through these symbols that we believe in what is "beyond the senses" but stop short of subjecting these unseen realities to the intellect because doing so would be irreverent.⁶⁸ That which is denied through the *via negativa* is simultaneously affirmed through what is available to the senses. The "likeness of the knowledge of God" is available through these positive symbols but only in a rough way, knowing God "from His creations, as their cause."⁶⁹

This concurrent mystical affirmation/negation continues throughout the remainder of Maximus' exposition. The Lord, present at the transfiguration manifests this dynamic in complementary pairs: created in human form/without undergoing any change, being present as a symbol of Himself to lead all of creation to Himself/though He is hidden and totally beyond all

⁶⁴ Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 79.

⁶⁵ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1165B.

⁶⁶ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1165B.

⁶⁷ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1065B.

⁶⁸ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1065C.

⁶⁹ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1165C.

manifestation, He provides in a human-loving fashion through visible divine action/what are signs of visible infinity.⁷⁰

Maximus exegetes Christ's appearance at the transfiguration in this manner. The apostles experience both modes of theology in the Lord's presence. In His face, made luminous in the transfiguration, they experience God who is ineffable and unable to be circumscribed by human thought. He specifies that beholding the face of the Lord, beholding the Godhead, leaves no impression around which a concept can be formed.⁷¹

The garments of Lord shine by the same light present in the face and are a symbol of cataphatic theology. Garments as a created reality, are not the Lord himself but manifest his magnificence as it is found within visible creation.⁷² This corresponds to the effects of God's activity through which we can perceive Him in a positive manner, though not clearly due to the immense light of revelation. These symbols and the theological modes they represent are complementary. The brightness of the garments is inseparable from the luminosity of the Lord's face. Both make up the fulness of revelation, the apophatic shining within the cataphatic, not cancelling it out. The gathering of these modes into a complementary whole gives Maximus' mystical theology a distinctly creation-affirming character. Creation is not sloughed off as a hindrance to the ever-invisible experience of God but is revelatory in its own right in a manner proper to its participation in God.⁷³

⁷⁰ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1065D-1068A.

⁷¹ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1068A

⁷² *Amb* 10 PG 91:1168B

⁷³ Blowers sees Jean-Luc Marion and his theory of saturation as a maximian influence via the French philosopher's exposure to von Balthasar. While recognizing the inability for the human intellect to grasp the divine which saturates it, Marion is still willing to affirm humanity's ability to receive revelation and enter into a relationship with God that is not hindered by but depends upon the same ontological difference between God and creation that we will discuss below. The contrast to Marion's reception of Maximus' apophaticism is Jacques Derrida whose view of the transcendence is an impenetrable *differance* that can only lead to an ineffable silence. See Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 125-6. and Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 235. Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess Studies of*

It is helpful to compare Maximus' approach to mysticism with that of Dionysius. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite is a pioneer of Christian mystical theology. There is in the work of this anonymous author a unity between the hierarchical, sacramental, liturgical and mystical to the extent that his *Ecclesial Hierarchy* can be seen as a reflection of the *Celestial Hierarchy*. Emphasis on the unity of these complex realities is inherited by Maximus. Blowers tells us that Maximus' integration of Dionysius into his own work gives it an ecclesial and sacramental orientation.⁷⁴

There are many witnesses to the direct influence that Dionysius has on Maximus' thought. Chief among them is Maximus' aim in his *Mystagogia* to discuss the Divine Synaxis in a way that honors the teachings of the "blessed elder" by addressing only the things that he did not already cover.⁷⁵ The high praise offered by Maximus is reflected by the Confessor's adaption of many Dionysian phrases for his own use. Many of the concepts central to Maximus' thought were coined in works by the Areopagite. Dionysius is the source of "theandric energy," Maximus' favorite term for the new activity formed by the unity of divine and human action.⁷⁶ The description of the process of deification as the triad being-well being-eternal well being is an addition to the dyad of being-well-being, formulated by the Areopagite.⁷⁷ Even the term *logoi*, key to Maximus' understanding of the divine/world relationship is adapted from Dionysius.

Saturated Phenomena, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002). and Jacques Derrida, "In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of 'Negative Theology'," in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, ed. John D. Caputo and Michael Scanlon (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).

⁷⁴ Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 39.

⁷⁵ *Mystagogia* CCSG 6-7 PG 91:660D. All citations of *Myst* from Jonathan J. Armstrong, ed., *Maximus the Confessor: On the Ecclesiastical Mystagogy* (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2019). The identity of the "Blessed Elder" is of some dispute, while the text in question seems to refer directly to what has already been covered in the *Ecclesial Hierarchy* the term "blessed elder" is the same that Maximus uses when describing an anonymous teacher that has had as equal an influence over the Confessor as Pseudo-Dionysius. Historians speculate that his teacher may be Sophronius of Jerusalem. See Armstrong's introduction to his translation *Mystagogia*, 25-26.

⁷⁶ Amb 5, PG 91:1057C.

⁷⁷ Ysabel De Andia, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor," in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Paul Allen and Brownen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 181.

Specifically, Maximus adopts Dionysius' definition of the logoi as "divine wills." This way of preserving the unity of the one logos expressed in and to the many manifestations of logoi has become synonymous with the Confessor's thought, a concept we will discuss shortly.

The Confessor embraces the Areopagite's mystical language as a foundation for his ontology. The ontological distance expressed by apophaticism forbids confusing God with creation. As Balthasar explains: "Dionysius pointed to the indissoluble autonomy of the finite world, as a whole and in its individual members in relation to the infinite reality of God."⁷⁸

The Confessor appropriates much Dionysian language and method in his mystical theology yet there are crucial differences. Maximus pulls the categories of apophatic and cataphatic modes from Dionysius as well as the theological distinction of God *ad intra* (sometimes known as the theological) from the *ad extra* (also called the economic) which corresponds to Dionysius' categories of God as cause and God as supernatural cause.⁷⁹

Ysabel de Andia juxtaposes Maximus' development with the Areopagite's showing how the Confessor reframed his predecessor's thought in a distinctly Christological key.⁸⁰ Dionysius' point of departure is an apophatic "ascending of the negations" that approaches the darkness of God by freeing the mind of sensible realities and ends "beyond affirmation and negation."⁸¹ Maximus' approach is characterized by the *kenosis* of the second person of the Trinity. Instead of a philosophical ascent, the Confessor's mystical theology takes its cue from the theological descent. Affirmations are made possible by witnessing this divine activity as revelation.⁸² This unfolds into emphases of imagery that characterize each approach. Dionysius, in keeping with a

⁷⁸ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 49.

⁷⁹ Andia, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor," 185.

⁸⁰ See Andia, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor," 184-6.

⁸¹ Andia, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor," 185.

⁸² Andia, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor," 185.

negation of the created in search for the uncreated, sees the mystical journey as “a mystique of darkness.”⁸³ The Areopagite combines the dark cloud of Exodus 20:21 with the unapproachable light of 1 Tim 6:16 in a depiction of the unknowable God. To this, Maximus adds the imagery of the transfiguration, the light of the Lord’s face and garments.⁸⁴ Unknowing is complemented by the mysterious knowledge of the Lord in revelation and activity in creation.⁸⁵ This result is the difference between Dionysius who pursues an ecstatic state that “leaves ‘everything and itself’” behind versus the maximian christological synthesis.⁸⁶

For Maximus, cataphatic statements do not remove the veil of mystery from God. Cooper summarizes this paradoxically: “God reveals himself by hiding himself, and in hiding himself, makes himself known.”⁸⁷ Even Holy Scripture cannot be taken as the plain truth about God, it participates in this dramatic revealing/concealing. Maximus uses the image of garments, this time showing how they cover the flesh of the Word. He describes the words of Holy Scripture as “garments” - while the Word is clothed and certainly present in them, they also cover the Word, concealing the flesh of the Word.⁸⁸ The same can be said of God’s revelation in nature. What is created in nature and according to the Word is an expression of that same Word but the very visible nature of creation means it conceals what is invisible.⁸⁹ Cataphatic attributes and names of God serve to clothe the naked flesh of the Word so that humanity can communicate about Him and worship Him. Maximus warns against rejecting the use of these garments to

⁸³ Andia, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor," 186.

⁸⁴ Maximus inherits the apophaticism of light from Gregory Nazianzus, the exposition of his mystical theology from *Amb* 10 discussed above is derived from Gregory *Oration* 21.2 in which Gregory utilizes mystical imagery of cloud, veil, and purest light.

⁸⁵ Andia, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor," 186.

⁸⁶ Andia, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor," 186.

⁸⁷ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 31.

⁸⁸ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1129C.

⁸⁹ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1129C.

clothe the Word since without them we would have no way of describing the invisible. In a sense, not concealing the Word with human language makes us “murderers of the Word.”⁹⁰ Such are the Greeks for Maximus, who refuse to acknowledge anything beyond what is visible and become worshippers of the visible nature before them.⁹¹ The purpose of language, symbols, and images is always to point beyond itself. Just as the garment clothes the flesh, empty garments are of no use. Making affirmations about God always points beyond those affirmations, always conceals more than they reveal. These attributes are not simply of human invention. Through His own self-revelation, culminating in the Incarnation, God has given reason for addressing Him in a positive way. Maximus writes “the Word ... came to us through a body, and likewise grew thick in syllables and letters.”⁹² The thickening of the Word that is the product of Divine activity does not change the revelatory dynamic. What is seen and conceived still belongs to God *ad extra*. We agree with Cooper’s evaluation of the topic that though these affirmations are crucial for Maximus, their nature as concealers of the Word means that they do not come anywhere close to circumscribing the reality of God. Whatever can be said of God “is in fact more accurately denied him.”⁹³

We can see how Maximus uses negations to produce theological affirmation in his *Centuries on Theology and Economy*. Opening passages of the first “century” find the Confessor describing what God is not by comparing Him with created realities such as time, movement, and essence.⁹⁴ The unknowable God, elusive to human knowledge can only be naturally acknowledged by witnessing “the principles in beings.”⁹⁵ The use of these negations to compare

⁹⁰ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1129C.

⁹¹ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1129C

⁹² *Amb* 10 PG 91:1129D

⁹³ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 19.

⁹⁴ See *Cap Gnos* 1.1-1.8

⁹⁵ *Cap Gnos* 1.9

created reality with God is a mode of affirmation itself but not an affirmation of God as such: it is the affirmation of an ontological distance between God and creation.

E. Ontological Distance

Maximus' mystically inspired apophaticism leads us to a God who can only be spoken of in his manifestations within creation but never fully understood since He Himself is not contained within creation. The maximian distinction between God and creation is not simply a linguistic or descriptive one but comes from ontological distance and difference. The difference we find in Maximus has a certain similarity to what von Balthasar links Maximus' view with Dionysius. Dionysius held that there was an "indissoluble autonomy of the finite world, as a whole and in its individual members, in relation to the infinite reality of God."⁹⁶ The formulation of ontological distance contains the validation of a characteristically Western belief about "space and freedom."⁹⁷ From the outset we should take care to temper this notion that allows for space and freedom with the Orthodox understanding of participation, anticipating discussion of the logoi. Maximus and Dionysius' shared apophatic vision affirms an ontological distinction and difference between God and creation, but they do not do so in a way that bars participation in the Divine. Loudovikos explains that in the Orthodox context apophaticism, descriptive or otherwise, does not end with "a sterile gnosiological abstinence."⁹⁸ It denotes a spiritual position in which the sum of the cosmos is never equal to God but allows for a "dialogical participation in

⁹⁶ Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 49.

⁹⁷ Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 49. As is characteristic of von Balthasar, this view was of course juxtaposed with a wholly Eastern one to form the result of a synthesis - the Swiss theologian's key for understanding Maximus' work. Though he is correct in showing that Dionysius' view forms the theme of ontological distance, it is perhaps too sharp a distinction to read Dionysius as representative of Western perspective. Brian Daley, who translated and edited *Cosmic Liturgy* includes a substantial editorial note on the issue. See note 29, Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 49.

⁹⁸ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 235.

divine actuality.”⁹⁹ We will return to the description of this dialogic dynamic in the next chapter. It is the affirmation of this difference, the recognition that God is permanently and eternally the Other, that simultaneously ensures that the created is never absorbed into the Divine while facilitating an ever-deepening participation of the created with God.

The ontological distance between God and creation facilitates motion. Blowers describes the distance as functioning as both space and horizon.¹⁰⁰ As a space it allows movement toward or away from God. As a horizon it beckons the created toward deification without “ever being fully traversed.”¹⁰¹ The difference between God and the creation that God made *ex nihilo* stands as an “epistemic fault line,” which for Maximus is “non-negotiable.”¹⁰² We recall that prerequisite distinction is made by Maximus at the outset of *Ambigua* 7 which will go on to describe created beings as participating in God. This distinction and definition of ontological distance guarantees that God and creation remain unconfused and is of primary importance because of the intimacy that Maximus demonstrates between God and creation. Recall that creation *ex nihilo* is used by Maximus in *Ambigua* 7 as a justification for his stance on motion since for the Confessor “everything that has received its being is in motion.”¹⁰³ The Confessor describes God as immovable because the Divine occupies a sort of super-position “since it fills all things.”¹⁰⁴ Ontological distance simultaneously retains space for movement and affirms God’s filling of that space. This both qualifies and introduces tension into Maximus’ exposition on motion. God is both ultimately Other than the creation and yet fills all that exists. The Confessor’s insistence on this difference holds the tension in place without allowing it to resolve

⁹⁹ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 235.

¹⁰⁰ Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 127.

¹⁰¹ Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 127.

¹⁰² Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 126.

¹⁰³ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069B.

¹⁰⁴ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069B.

into pantheism. The pantheist position has already been rejected by Maximus. The Origenist interpretation of Gregory's statement that we are "portions of God flowing down from above" would not have been problematic for the Confessor had he held a pantheistic view. Tracing Maximus' argument about the moment of creation revealed that he was unwilling to consider the co-eternity of creation with God because it would imply "metaphysical 'simultaneity.'"¹⁰⁵ God cannot be univocally identified with his creation. It is only God's creative will that can bridge the difference, the primordial abyss, that is between him and the creation which he wishes to bring into an unconfused union with the divine nature.¹⁰⁶

Further highlighting this tension is Maximus' appropriation of the Dionysian concept that creation is both *ex nihilo* and *ex Deo*.¹⁰⁷ In Maximus' words: "We believe that He Himself, by virtue of His infinite transcendence, is ineffable and incomprehensible, and exists beyond all creation ... We also believe that this same One is manifested and multiplied in all the things that have their origin in Him in a manner appropriate to the being of each, as befits His goodness."¹⁰⁸ These two statements can only be synoptically affirmed with the understanding of God's ontological difference. For Maximus, God's being does not supplant created being. The two are not in dichotic competition for the "space" we are discussing. If Maximus says that creation is *ex Deo*, he does so in a way that should not be mistaken for a diffusion of God's being into created beings as though the One is now the many. Instead, as creator and cause of being, God cannot be thought of as one being among many. God abides outside of Maximus' ontological schema altogether. Characteristic of his theologically apophatic style when speaking of God in

¹⁰⁵ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 49.

¹⁰⁶ Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 122.

¹⁰⁷ Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 125.

¹⁰⁸ *Amb 7 PG 91:1080A-B*.

reference to ontology, the Confessor says that it is fitting to call the superbeing of God “nonbeing.”¹⁰⁹ The affirmation of God necessitates the negation of created being writ large. In a passage from his *Ecclesial Mystagogy*, Maximus writes that it is more proper to acknowledge that God “transcends being” but does so in a way that places God “by nature in the same class as absolutely nothing of the things that are.”¹¹⁰ Mitralaxis cautions us against thinking that Maximus is engaging in mere rhetoric here.¹¹¹ This radical negation, the breaking of ontology by attempting to circumscribe God is instead a respectful use of language that cannot hope to be made to describe the mode of existence of the Divine which is always outside of creation as its source and end.¹¹²

F. Movement (*Kinesis*)

The ontological distance that distinguishes creation from the Creator is demonstrative of the maximian philosophy of movement. By nature, created beings move while God Himself is immovable.¹¹³ Motion is not the result of corruption or moral evil but is presented by Maximus as an ontological property of created being.¹¹⁴ Movement is what inherently distinguishes the created from God.¹¹⁵ The Confessor says this univocally of all created beings, including “inanimate beings and merely objects of sense perception.”¹¹⁶ Recalling Maximus’ reversal of the Origenist triad of satiety-motion-generation into generation-motion-satiety, God’s creation *ex*

¹⁰⁹ *Myst* CCSG 9,109; PG 91:664A.

¹¹⁰ *Myst* CCSG9, 109-112 PG 91:664A.

¹¹¹ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 45.

¹¹² Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 45.

¹¹³ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069B.

¹¹⁴ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 110.

¹¹⁵ Dionysios Skliris, "The Ontological Implications of Maximus the Confessor's Eschatology," *Studia Patristica* 89 (2017), 26.

¹¹⁶ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1072B.

nihilo precedes motion. Beings are then originally intended by virtue of their creation for motion.¹¹⁷

That all creation is ever in motion and that it is a God-intended ontological property of being raises some questions: Does motion ever draw creation away from God? Do created beings lose the ontological property of motion once they reach their *telos* in God? In order to address these issues, Dionysius Skliris distinguishes between three sorts of movement (*kinesis*) within the work of the Confessor: metaphysical, diastematic, and perpetual movement.¹¹⁸ The metaphysical sense is used as the middle term in Maximus' response to Origenism. This movement connotes a being in the process of becoming. It has as a *telos* its finalization which brings about metaphysical completion. God is both the preconceived end (*telos*) and objective (*skopos*) of all created things "yet itself exists out of nothing."¹¹⁹ According to Skliris, what differentiates Maximus from the metaphysics of the Greek tradition, particularly Aristotle, is that there exists a "great chasm between the movement and the end."¹²⁰ This is not to say that natural maturation does not move beings toward this goal yet it never does so in a way that causes them to attain their *telos*. Due to the ontological difference, metaphysical movement can never arrive at its final consummation. That is, it can never reach total fulfillment without receiving something from "beyond nature." Yet this is precisely what has been offered through the

¹¹⁷ Mitralaxis succinctly summarizes the benefits of this view: "(a) birth and origination also mean the setting-in-motion, the beginning of motion, (b) the whole of existence and life, as well as each particular existence, is characterized by motion from the moment it exists up to its definitive end, and (c) everything moves towards an end, the motion of everything aspires towards its end and repose." Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 111.

¹¹⁸ Skliris, "Maximus the Confessor's Eschatology," 23-28.

¹¹⁹ *Ad Thal* 60 PG 90:625C.

¹²⁰ Skliris, "Maximus the Confessor's Eschatology," 23. Portaru recognizes "a formal resemblance between Aristotle and Maximus thought. In his opinion, Maximus' concept of motion is influenced by Plotinus. Marius Portaru, "Classical Philosophical Influences: Aristotle and Platonism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Paul Allen and Brownen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 139. Harper sees this differently: Maximus' view of movement stands in direct opposition to neoplatonic views that would assume that motion denotes a lesser state for being or an origin within evil. Harper, *The Analogy of Love*, 103.

hypostatic union. The uniting of the created with the uncreated facilitates the movement of created beings into participation with the Divine. The incorporation of ontological distance that can only be traversed by an incorporation of the created in the hypostatic union represents for Skliris the maximian development of a Christian Aristotelianism.¹²¹

The second, diastematic movement, primarily means spatial movement over distance, is a “passage from one place to another.”¹²² This sort of movement also describes temporal changes that are not part of metaphysical becoming such as a change in attributes or accident. Diastematic movement always happens within time, it can accompany metaphysical movement but should not be confused with it. The key difference is that metaphysical movement is always movement toward a being’s *telos*. Irrational movement, movement that is in opposition to the final end of created being is always only diastematic movement.¹²³ Movement (*kinesis*) for Maximus can be used to describe both the progress made toward union with God in time (both metaphysical and diastematic) but collapses into mere spatial movement (diastematic) if beings move in opposition to this end.

The Confessor’s final use of movement concerns the eschatological drive of humanity for God. Termed “perpetual” or “eternal” movement, this sort of motion occurs within the human psyche as an inner drive for God.¹²⁴ Since this movement is internal to the human person, it is not diastematic, there is no spatial quality to it. The perpetual motion causes bodily movement, following this desire for God, but is itself not concerned with space or the physical. This eschatological movement is however metaphysical in that it guides humanity toward the final

¹²¹ Skliris, "Maximus the Confessor’s Eschatology," 24.

¹²² Skliris, "Maximus the Confessor’s Eschatology," 24.

¹²³ Skliris, "Maximus the Confessor’s Eschatology," 24.

¹²⁴ Skliris, "Maximus the Confessor’s Eschatology," 25.

end: repose in God.¹²⁵ Eschatological movement does not simply lead to and have its fulfillment in the eschaton. This sort of movement continues even as it is fulfilled. We can contrast this with diastematic and metaphysical movement which cease when fulfilled.¹²⁶ It is this sort of movement that Maximus has in mind when he uses his aporetic term “ever-moving-repose.” This term describes God’s movement in which the created is ultimately to participate.¹²⁷

It is important to note that the motion which finds its rest only in God is not limited to rational creatures but includes all that is created. No matter what part of creation, the end, rest in God is described in the same terms. This is why we can say, properly speaking, that the rest that has its ultimate goal in God is not only a facet of Maximus’ anthropology, or angelology, but is a distinct part of his cosmology. The argument of *Ambigua 7* does not differentiate between created beings and rational beings in its foundational descriptions of motions.¹²⁸ The logic of the argument uses the status of rational beings as created beings to conclude that rational beings must also be in motion toward some goal.¹²⁹ It is at this point that the Confessor introduces the idea of a will within rational beings, who seek “a voluntary end in well-being.”¹³⁰ Maximus’ argument about motion is then not solely limited to the discussion of rational beings. The above distinctions between metaphysical and diastematic movement proves to be important here. Metaphysical movement has not been limited to rational creatures. We can conclude that

¹²⁵ Skliris, "Maximus the Confessor's Eschatology," 25.

¹²⁶ Skliris, "Maximus the Confessor's Eschatology," 26.

¹²⁷ *Ad Thal* II 53,130-4 cited in Skliris, "Maximus the Confessor's Eschatology," 26.

¹²⁸ See *Amb 7* PG 91:1069B-1072C. Constans notes in his translation that motion in this regard is not physical motion but pertains to a “logical relationship” between spiritual entities and their cause. We can only assume here that he would agree with Skliris’ distinction between this metaphysical movement and mere diastematic movement. See *Amb 7* note 3, Constans, 478. It may seem counterintuitive to assign a spiritual element to non-rational beings or to include inanimate objects within the set of beings that desire to move toward their own end yet this is precisely what Maximus does. See also Harper, *The Analogy of Love*, 97. for how Maximus’ description of movement encompasses all created things of which rational beings are included as a subset.

¹²⁹ *Amb 7* PG 91:1073C.

¹³⁰ *Amb 7* PG 91:1073C.

non-rational, the non-intellectual, beings within creation tend toward God which is their own *telos*. The motion of these non-intellectual beings is not meaningless. The goal that God intends for the whole of creation is rest in Him. The movement toward rest in God is not, however, a natural progression in the sense of a *fait accompli*. The movement of all creation does not end in God out of necessity and may fall short of its potential, into mere diastamatic movement. Due to the ontological difference between the created and uncreated, participation in the hypostatic union is the only means by which creation can reach this finalization.

The impetus behind all metaphysical movement for Maximus as he describes it in *Ambigua* 7 is desire. As the Beautiful (*Kalon*), God, is the proper end to this desire. This is a key point in the Confessor's argument against Origen since it delineates God as that in which movement would cease, resulting in satiety. "For whatever is not good and desirable in itself, and that does not attract all motion to itself, strictly speaking cannot be the Beautiful."¹³¹ God is loved for his own sake and is the only one that can grant the end that can satisfy the longing of which all movement is expressive.

This being so, Maximus does not claim that this desire is ever satiated. In what Blowers phrases as an "eternal appetitive movement" we see that the perpetual, eschatological movement is fueled by an unquenchable desire for God that remains even at the point of participation in God.¹³² The existence of such a desire rejects the notion of Origenist satiety altogether. If there was ever a point at which desire was totally fulfilled there would be a risk that the being would, like Origen's *henad*, become bored with God. In place of this is a desire that can only be satisfied by God yet never reaches final consummation. In Maximus' own words, God is "by

¹³¹ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1069D.

¹³² Paul M. Blowers, "Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of 'Perpetual Progress'," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 154.

nature infinite and infinitely attractive, and who rather increases the appetites of those who enjoy Him owing to their participation in that which had no limit.”¹³³ There is an apparent contradiction here: even though God is the object that is desired yet never reached, Maximus adopts a schema of creation-motion-satiety (rest/fixity). If the desire is never satisfied, how can the Confessor claim that the triad is ever complete?

Blowers argues convincingly that Maximus forms his thought around eschatological perpetual progress as an adaption of Gregory of Nyssa’s *epektasis*, that humanity strains toward the infinity of God.¹³⁴ While diastematic movement would cease, in a sense, even the metaphysical movement is folded into the infinite dynamic of participation. The being at rest in God would never cease participating in God and due to God’s infinite nature would continue in the process of becoming for all eternity. Gregory of Nyssa’s formulation of perpetual progress arises while the Cappadocian is describing those who participate in God through virtue. This invitation to infinite growth is laid out in syllogistic form: “Since, then, those who know what is good by nature desire participation in it, and since this good has no limit, the participant’s desire itself necessarily has no stopping place but stretches out with the limitless.”¹³⁵ Blowers finds evidence of this view not only in Maximus’ cosmology, as represented in *Amb* 7, but also in his explanations of the virtues, mystical theology and ultimately his view of deification.¹³⁶

Here we can see the cohesion of the Confessor’s thought. Maximus does not use perpetual progress as a rhetorical device or a piece of mere data to refute a view that he does not agree with. Perpetual progress is deeply embedded within his thought. It is not only consistent with but relies as a matter of necessity on the topics discussed above. Ontological distance,

¹³³ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1089B.

¹³⁴ Blowers, "The Concept of Perpetual Progress," 152f.

¹³⁵ Gregory of Nyssa: *The Life of Moses*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 31.

¹³⁶ Blowers, "The Concept of Perpetual Progress," 155.

perpetual progress, apophatic theology, and Maximus' description of motion and the creation of the cosmos *ex nihilo* do not simply interface in a way that they are non-contradictory. The ideas flow together as though they were viewing the same reality with different emphases. Maximus' initial response to Origenism rests upon each of these topics presented together as a whole and is an edifice that does not stand if any one of them is removed. We have explored these topics in this order based upon the Confessor's own argument in *Amb 7*. This order highlights the important distinction between creator and the created while affirming the goodness of both creation and the movement of creation. Creation and movement are not the result of corruption but were in God's original plan. It is at this point in *Amb 7* that Maximus discusses God's intention and the means by which God will bring about creation's participation in the Divine.

II. Logos/Logoi

Maximus introduces the Logos and the logoi (λογoi) within his discussion of Gregory's aporetic statement that we are "a portion of God that has flowed down from above." As a continuation of his argument against Origenism, the Confessor contextualizes the logoi within the cosmological structure we outlined in the previous section. The priority of ontological distance adds nuance and limits to the sort of participation Maximus is willing to consider, a dynamic in which the logoi play a crucial role. From the outset we should note that the words logos and logoi hold manifold yet conceptually harmonious meanings. Conostas explains the difficulty of translating logos "which can occur half a dozen times in one sentence with nearly as many meanings."¹³⁷ Far from leading to confusion, the multivalence of the term shows the pleremic character of Maximus' vision and demonstrates why the term itself is so useful.

¹³⁷ Conostas, ed., *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua of Maximos the Confessor*, XXV.

The ubiquity of these terms is evident at the outset of this section and connects creation *ex nihilo* to this stage of Maximus' argument. With an allusion to the Book of Wisdom, the Confessor states that God's free act of creation is performed with "reason" (*logos*) and wisdom (*sophia*).¹³⁸ Already his use of the *logoi* is multifaceted: they are ideas within the mind of God by which he creates, they allow for a distinction between the one and the many, accounting for the "differences of created things" and ensure that individuals are not confused with one another and remain unconfused (*asugchutos*) with God.¹³⁹

God creates in accordance with his *logoi* which correspond to a macro level (there is a *logos* of angels and a *logos* of humanity) as well as an individual level, addressing each particular being.¹⁴⁰ Maximus reminds the reader of God's transcendence, the ontological distance that reminds us that the Divine is not to be identified with creatures but is also the paradoxical means by which God can be manifest in all creatures: "this same One is manifested and multiplied in all the things that have their origin in Him."¹⁴¹ God "recapitulates" all that is and holds it in being and it is by virtue of the origin of their being that "they participate in God in a manner appropriate and proportionate to each."¹⁴² It is on account of the preexistent *logoi*, universal and particular, that each individual being can be called "a portion of God."¹⁴³

This being so, the *logoi* do not provide a fatalistic dictation for creaturely action. While particular beings are created according to their *logoi*, the creatures' movements post-creation must also be "according to its *logos*" for it to come to be in God.¹⁴⁴ Particular *logoi* can be conceived as the origin and trajectory on which God places beings. There is a divine intention

¹³⁸ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1077C.

¹³⁹ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1077C.

¹⁴⁰ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1080A.

¹⁴¹ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1080B.

¹⁴² *Amb* 7 PG 91:1080B.

¹⁴³ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1080B.

¹⁴⁴ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1080C.

for the movement of beings that coexists with a freedom that allows the logoi to be impacted by the response of individual creatures. This freedom makes it possible to oppose the logoi. The path of opposition does not lead to participation in God. The Confessor describes a dynamic in which created beings resist their logoi and move “irrationally, swept away toward nonbeing.”¹⁴⁵ Participation is brought about by the logoi as cause, guide, and means by which created being is brought into unity with God.¹⁴⁶ Though the logoi, in a sense, propel creatures, they are never moved themselves, remaining fixed within God.¹⁴⁷ They precede the beings that are created by God “at the appropriate moment in time.”¹⁴⁸ The logoi also define the limits of each created thing.¹⁴⁹

Maximus defines one limit, consistent with the discussion of the previous section, to the participation in God facilitated by the logoi. He draws the line of this participation at the limits of negative theology, God *ad intra*.¹⁵⁰ In this mode the Logos is utterly distinct from everything created “since He is beyond all being.”¹⁵¹ The Confessor is willing to “set aside” this mode in order to contemplate how created beings participate in God in which “the one Logos is many logoi and the many are One.”¹⁵² In as far as created beings exist according to their logoi (as their origin and move in them toward their end in God) they participate in God and it can be said that the One sustains them and that in them “the One is many.”¹⁵³

¹⁴⁵ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1084D.

¹⁴⁶ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1080C.

¹⁴⁷ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1081A.

¹⁴⁸ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1081A.

¹⁴⁹ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1081B.

¹⁵⁰ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1081B.

¹⁵¹ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1081B.

¹⁵² *Amb* 7 PG 91:1081B.

¹⁵³ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1081B-C.

Thus far we have encountered Maximus' formulation of the logoi based upon his use of the term in *Amb* 7. The Confessor provides a definition for the logoi adapted from Dionysius: they are "'predeterminations' and 'divine will.'" ¹⁵⁴ The identification of logoi with the will or "wills" of God that inform all of creation stress God's unbound freedom and self-investment in creation. This usage describes God's own involvement within the dynamic of creation, cosmos, and return. God embeds divine wills into creation as intended paths and as a means for union and participation in his own divinity. In keeping with the multivalent meaning of *logos/logoi*, Maximus' definition of the logoi as divine wills presents a firm root for our understanding but in itself is not exhaustive of his use of the term.

Maximus writes about the logoi so frequently that studying the concept highlights different aspects of the teaching depending on context and emphasis. ¹⁵⁵ Riou calls them the "personal destiny of every created thing." Sherwood emphasizes their existence in God from all eternity and their unitive character. Likewise, Thunberg notes that God's will is expressed in the logoi and that following the logoi brings harmony between particular beings. ¹⁵⁶ Von Balthasar sees logoi as a preexistent "sketch" or "outline," God's "plan for the world." Writing from a Balthasarian inspired theo-dramatic perspective, Blowers describes them as the "the Logos' 'script' in the cosmic drama of his self-revelation." ¹⁵⁷ Florovsky emphasizes divine activity, the logoi are connections expressed as "actions or "energies" which originate in "divine thoughts and desires." He also calls them "paradigms." ¹⁵⁸ Cottoi traces Maximus' use of logoi as "inner

¹⁵⁴ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1085A.

¹⁵⁵ Loudovikos outlines a thorough overview of the prominent strands of logoi study, a summary of which we present here, see Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 54-56.

¹⁵⁶ Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 79.

¹⁵⁷ Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 113.

¹⁵⁸ Florovsky, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Sixth to Eighth Century* (Belmont: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), 223

principles” cosmologically and as “spiritual essences” in the context of the ascetic life.¹⁵⁹ Croce notes logoi present within the biblical narrative, which give it form and meaning.¹⁶⁰ Loudovikos writes that the logoi are responsible for “the beginning, middle, and end of things” they guide “the entire existential course of a particular entity” in every context, eschatological, ecclesial, eucharistic, or otherwise.¹⁶¹ Meyendorff emphasizes the ontological aspect of the logoi that simultaneously mark a creature’s participation in God and existence in being: “Separated from its logos, a creature is but non-being, *me-on*.” Participation in God is required for even natural movement.¹⁶²

These descriptions of the logoi hang together in a way that bespeak a kaleidoscopic view. It is impossible to contain such a complex term by using a single snapshot.¹⁶³ The continuation of our analysis will consider the logoi as they pertain to three key areas of Maximus’ thought: his ontology, Christology, and theology of deification. To follow Maximus’ thought accurately, we should note that even these frames of reference mark out distinctions but overlap since they cannot be separated from one another. Following the overarching theme of this chapter, we begin with the ontological/cosmological point of reference.

A. Logoi vs. (Neo) Platonism

It is due to their role as facilitating participation in God that the logoi grant the very existence of beings in a particular manner and of the universe in general.¹⁶⁴ This, coupled with

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Cattoi, “Liturgy as Cosmic Transformation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Paul Allen and Brownen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 420 & 29.

¹⁶⁰ Vittorio Croce, *Tradizione e ricerca, Il metodo teologico di san Massimo il Confessore, Studia Patristica Mediolanensia* 2 (Milan: Vita E Pensiero, 1974), 39. cited in Nichols, 37.

¹⁶¹ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 57.

¹⁶² John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington: Corpus, 1969), 102.

¹⁶³ The above survey of descriptions is in no way intended to exhaust the view of the authors mentioned, each of the above cited works expand upon these descriptions, adding suitable layers of nuance.

¹⁶⁴ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 102-3.

the Confessor's use of the logoi as a solution to the philosophical problem of the One and the many can be mistaken for the Neoplatonic position. Neoplatonism would interpret the logoi as emanations of the One Logos. This emanation would communicate God's own being through the logoi. The logoi are not channels, as it were, of the divine essence into creation. Believing so would be to mistakenly apply the doctrine of the logoi to what lies beyond being, to God *ad intra*. Maximus forbade precisely this view in *Amb* 7. Instead of sharing in God's essence, created beings participate in God through God's own personal divine activity, which are the logoi.¹⁶⁵ The logoi exist in God from all eternity as God's own wills and are inseparable from God, whereas Platonic ideals are themselves eternal, distinct from God, and have their own motive force.¹⁶⁶ Platonic ideas are dissimilar to the logoi since they have autonomy and exert necessity over God, an unthinkable limitation of the divine freedom.¹⁶⁷ Confusing the logoi with Platonic ideas would be just as detrimental to the freedom of created beings. Mitralaxis describes a crucial difference between understanding the logoi as created wills versus defining them as divine ideas.¹⁶⁸ If the logoi were a sort of God-originate form or ideal, they would necessarily constrain creaturely freedom. Expressing the logoi as wills grounds existence in freedom rather than necessity.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, Bradshaw observes how the logoi are not conceived of as "exhaustive predeterminations of the entire course of a creature's existence."¹⁷⁰ The logoi of rational beings can be likened to an "invitation" the response to which is left up to that being's volition. In the distinction between ideas and wills, we encounter a foretaste of the logoi's role as both the guarantor of and means for humanity's dialogic relationship with God.

¹⁶⁵ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 58.

¹⁶⁶ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 60.

¹⁶⁷ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 61.

¹⁶⁸ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 81.

¹⁶⁹ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 81.

¹⁷⁰ David Bradshaw, "St. Maximus on Time, Eternity, and Divine Knowledge.," *Studia Patristica* 89 (2017): 85.

The emphasis on freedom proves to be the deciding factor which differentiates Maximus' cosmological vision from his neo-Platonic contemporaries and brings the logoi center stage. Tollefsen expands upon this crucial point and sketches an argument that, while respecting the transcendence of the divine essence, connects it to creation in a way that demonstrates the diffusion of goodness within creation as a free act of God. Tollefsen begins with common ground: he posits that God's internal activity is both necessary and sufficient for creation and that creation is contingent, having no effect on the divine essence itself.¹⁷¹ For both Christian and Neo-Platonist, God could be conceived as one who wills to be "diffusive of good" without implying any change in divinity.¹⁷² Creation could be mistaken for a side-effect of the existence of this diffusion of goodness and it is on this point that the two schools differ. Tollefsen asserts that the difference lies in God's attention to creation. God does not simply allow creation to happen but is the sole attentive participant in bringing about creation, "something other than Himself."¹⁷³

This argument assumes that we can intimate something about God's inner life from the creative result of divine activity. We must recognize a distinction between God's self-contemplation as one who diffuses good (one who creates) and the active willing of that creation, a separate volition of God. This second point would be unacceptable to the Neoplatonist understanding of emanation.¹⁷⁴ Creation would not be necessary because of God's self-knowledge but would be known as a possibility of that knowledge. This adds a level of contingency that Tollefsen derives from Maximus' description of the logoi in *Amb* 7.¹⁷⁵ The

¹⁷¹ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 60.

¹⁷² Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 60.

¹⁷³ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 60.

¹⁷⁴ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 61.

¹⁷⁵ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 61.

logoi are depicted as God's knowledge of creatures but not the actualization of those creatures: the very possibility of those creatures to be created and what they might ultimately become. The dominant picture of the maximian God as freely acting divinity in place of logical necessity emerges here. The logoi have a double function of being God's knowledge of creatures as well as the free choice of God to bring them into being with multiple possible outcomes intact. This system allows creatures to exercise freedom in respect to God while God remains unchanged by the unfolding drama of creation and history.¹⁷⁶

B. The Logoi and Ontology

What then, is the ontological status of the logoi? Their intimate connection with created beings and rejection of their autonomy from God may lead us to think that they are created like the beings they inform. Thunberg links this question to immanence and transcendence.¹⁷⁷ The answer he arrives at, in his words, is "a double one."¹⁷⁸ We must hold in tension that the logoi precede the entire cosmos and are uncreated wills of God which can only be realized as they bring creation into being. From a different perspective, we might understand them as God's uncreated intention to bring about creation from all eternity, which only becomes manifest outside of the divine essence as that creation is brought into being. Yet the logoi are not passive or static, they represent God's continued presence and activity in created being.¹⁷⁹ On account of

¹⁷⁶ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 62. Von Balthasar employs similar logic in his clarification in the revised introduction to *Mysterium Paschale*. In an attempt to protect against charges of patripassionism, he speculates about an *ur-kenosis*. This argues that the self-emptying of the Trinitarian persons is an eternal, preexistent reality of which the Paschal Mystery is the temporal revelation. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990), VIII. The similarity lies in the assumption of a reality present within the ineffable God that only later comes to be realized outside of God.

¹⁷⁷ Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 138.

¹⁷⁸ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 138.

¹⁷⁹ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 138.

this, Thunberg states that the logoi are “both transcendent and immanent.”¹⁸⁰ This double answer helps us to understand a passage in *Amb* 33 in which the Confessor relates that it is by his logoi that the “Word ‘becomes thick.’”¹⁸¹ The dual status of the logoi as transcendent and immanent are demonstrated in this passage in which Maximus relates that the Logos is “wholly present in the whole universe” and simultaneously “wholly present in individual things.” The conceptual categories of transcendence and immanence help us to make sense of how the Logos could be present “wholly” to both frames of reference (universally and particularly) while being “undiminished.”¹⁸² The logoi are the “sole bridge from the inner mystery of divine being” as expressions of that being’s will made manifest in creation.¹⁸³

Following Riou, Loudovikos sees Maximus’ logoi as a uniquely maximian solution to many of the problems with conventional ontology. The logoi do not represent, in the words of Riou a “general ontology applicable on the cosmic level.” Maximus’ approach is ontological inasmuch as it addresses creation as “a sacramental and revealed structure in the created world.”¹⁸⁴ Loudovikos claims that this differentiates the logoi from other ontologies since it is “meta philosophical.”¹⁸⁵ Maximus provides a similar schema to created reality but does so on the basis of participation in the revealed logoi of God. Conventional, and particularly Neoplatonic, ontology assumes the emanation of the essence of an all-encompassing Being from which lesser beings are derived. The inner logic might look similar, but the source is completely

¹⁸⁰ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 138.

¹⁸¹ *Amb* 33 PG 91:1285D.

¹⁸² *Amb* 33 PG 91:1285D.

¹⁸³ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 60.

¹⁸⁴ Alain Riou, *Le Monde et le l’Église Selon Maxime le Confesseur Théologie Historique* 22 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1973), 56. cited in Loud 54)

¹⁸⁵ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 54.

different. Thus, Loudovikos approves the use of “ontology” to describe the Confessor’s thought but with the reservation that the source is sacramental and revelatory, not “being” as such.¹⁸⁶

Within the framework of ontology, we can pick up the thread of the argument from *Amb* 7 that “the one Logos is many logoi and the many are One.”¹⁸⁷ For Maximus, this is a matter of procession from God and return to God. We can understand the many as One and the One as many due to ontological movement: “According to the creative and sustaining procession of the One to individual beings ... the One is many. According to the reverte, inductive, providential return of the many to the One ... the many are One.”¹⁸⁸ The unity of the many in the One is not established as a gross absorption of the many into a one or the compounding of the many onto the One. Maximus describes this unity with the image of a circle. The return of the logoi are as radii which have originated from the center of the circle (which Maximus tells us “pre-contains the radii” by virtue of its form) but then return to it through the arc of their movement.¹⁸⁹

The circle is a favorite image of the Confessor which he uses to describe the Logos/logoi dynamic.¹⁹⁰ Maximus uses the circle within these three passages in unique ways that demonstrate his doctrine of participation. The *Sentences on Theology* contain the most laconic example of this illustration.¹⁹¹ The Confessor likens the “simple and undivided knowledge” of “all the preexisting principles of things” (logoi) to “straight lines which proceed from the center” of “an undivided position.”¹⁹² Tollefsen highlights the presence of the term “undivided” which features prominently in the Christological definition of Chalcedon.¹⁹³ He argues that the use of the

¹⁸⁶ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 54.

¹⁸⁷ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1081BC.

¹⁸⁸ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1081C.

¹⁸⁹ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1081C.

¹⁹⁰ *Cap. Gnost* 2.4 PG 90:1125d-1128a and *Myst* 1 PG 91:668AB. See Tollefsen, Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 69-81.

¹⁹¹ *Cap Gnost* 2.4 PG 90:1125d-1128a.

¹⁹² *Cap Gnost* 2.4.

¹⁹³ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 69.

Chalcedonian term is not an accidental allusion but is itself a conscious reminder of the language which describes the hypostatic union. In turn, we should call to mind the complementary term “unconfused” which ensures consistency with the Confessor’s orthodox position. Without this balance, the illustration would be susceptible to an interpretation in which the logoi would cease to be differentiated when “considered in God.”¹⁹⁴

The balance of the Chalcedonian “undivided” with “unconfused” ensures that we understand the logoi as a unity in plurality, an imprint of Chalcedonian logic on the thought of the Confessor.¹⁹⁵ The way these terms are used in the works of the Confessor are fundamentally the same way in which they were used by Chalcedon to describe the hypostatic union. The union between the human and divine natures in the one person of Jesus Christ is understood to be unconfused, without change, undivided, and unseparated.¹⁹⁶ The function of these terms is contained in the same definition: “at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being.”¹⁹⁷ What is described here is a particular manner of union that allows for preservation.

¹⁹⁴ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 69. Here, Tollefsen is engaging in an interpretation of Maximus much in the same way we see Maximus interpreting the thought of Gregory in the *Ambigua*. He projects Maximus’ support for Chalcedonian orthodoxy upon ambiguous aphorisms. While we find his argument convincing, it is noteworthy to see how his rhetoric follows the same pattern.

¹⁹⁵ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 100. The extent to which Maximus’ theological system should be held to strictly to an application of Chalcedonian thought to parallel topics such as ontology and anthropology has recently been challenged by Törönen. See Melchisedec Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St. Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.. Törönen’s critique stems from the Confessor’s reliance on sources that might have conflicted with that definition, such as Maximus’ indebtedness to Neoplatonism. Though Tollefsen applies Chalcedonian thought to Maximus broadly, his discussion of non-Chalcedonian influences over the Confessor achieves a level of nuance that answers Toronen’s. After analyzing Toronen’s critique, Blowers agrees with Tollefsen’s insistence that we call to mind the whole of the Chalcedonian definition when Maximus uses the term “undivided.” See Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 136.

¹⁹⁶ *Council of Chalcedon*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, vol. 1, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, (Washington: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 86 ln 30-35.

¹⁹⁷ *Council of Chalcedon*, 86 ln 35-40.

Tollefsen explains that “undivided” (*adiairetos*) as used here, and subsequently in the above passage from *Cap Gnost.* 2.4 works to preserve the union of two different sorts of being.¹⁹⁸ Within an ontological schema of created being, this may be used to describe two beings united in a common genus. In Christ, the uncreated and the created share a union despite not sharing a common nature. As it pertains to the hypostatic union it is impossible to make a division between the united human and divine natures. “Unconfused” (*asugchutos*) clarifies the sort of union. The mode of union is one in which what makes each nature unique is not destroyed. An unconfused union allows for the particularity of each nature. The result is not a mixture but a subsistence of natures within a unity. The intimacy of what is united does not cancel out the individual traits of each nature.

Describing the unity of the lines at a single point within *Cap gnost* 2.4 as “undivided” is evocative of the other adverbs that qualify the union and preservation of natures. The balance Tollefsen calls for is a warranted demonstration of the Confessor’s application of the Chalcedonian categories to ontology. The same undifferentiated unity that can be found in the hypostatic union is reflected in the logoi as they are seen in God - in both their pre-existence and as they come to their final meeting in God. Maximus expects a continued consistency: in bringing together the human and divine in Christ, God did so in an unconfused, undivided way. As created beings participate in God through their logoi, they will likewise do so in an undivided and unconfused way.

These conclusions can be carried into our discussion another instance of the circle image already mentioned in *Amb* 7.¹⁹⁹ This image of radii contains a double movement that characterizes their beginning and being gathered again. These movements correspond to a) “the

¹⁹⁸ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 205.

¹⁹⁹ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1181C.

creating and sustaining procession of the One to individual beings” and b) “the reverteive, inductive, and providential return of the many to the One.”²⁰⁰ Tollefsen clarifies the second movement citing the Neoplatonic origin of the idea: We should not understand this movement in a way that bespeaks an absorption into the divine essence or a metaphysical return toward a higher principle.²⁰¹ Instead, the movements are processions of the logoi toward actualization in particular being and a turning back of those individuated beings toward their origin.²⁰² A Neoplatonic understanding of this dynamic would end with “communion” of the participating beings with their cause.²⁰³

In anticipation of Maximus’ anthropology, it must be acknowledged that the movement of conversion is a free one. The logoi act as a paradigm, a formal cause for particular beings in this regard.²⁰⁴ By virtue of their logoi, created beings are naturally attracted toward God. This nature does not imply necessity. Maximus is careful to retain the possibility that beings, especially rational, intellectual beings, have freedom to move in accord with their logoi or to move in opposition to them. It is only *if* they move in accord with their logoi that they will be gathered to God.²⁰⁵ This being said, Maximus does not set up a dichotomy between the natural movement of creatures, their rational/intellectual actions, and the graced eschatological gathering by God. Any movement according to the logoi, Maximus would call “natural” since it corresponds to the pre-existent will for that being that comes from the Creator.

Natural movement according to the logoi is the movement described by conversion. It would be a mistake to assume that this movement is only necessary because of sin, that creation

²⁰⁰ *Amb 7 PG 91:1181C.*

²⁰¹ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 72.

²⁰² The idea of a conversion that does not reach a definitive return allows on one level for the movement to be understood in the mode of eschatological movement described above that continues in perpetuity.

²⁰³ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 73.

²⁰⁴ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 75.

²⁰⁵ *Amb 7 PG 91:1180C.*

was already moving in opposition to the logoi and thus needs to turn back toward God. In Maximus' apology for Gregory's statement that "we are portions of God flowed down from above," the Confessor offers clarification from the double movement we have described above.²⁰⁶ The statement "portion of God" refers to the procession in which created reality participates in God, naturally, not simply as their origin but in a continued way. This is because God, through the logoi, acts as an efficient and sustaining cause both of the individual and of all creation.²⁰⁷

The statement that we have "flowed down from above" correlates to the process of conversion and denotes the need to return to acting in accordance with the logoi after having strayed from them. Tollefsen describes this downward movement as the cause of "sinful separations and enmity in the cosmos."²⁰⁸ It is in the drawing of all of creation back to God through conversion that these divisions are overcome and the effects of sin are conquered. The unity of the logoi in the one Logos is the result of the breaking down of this enmity. If we limit conversion to the resolution of this enmity would it not admit that conversion is a result of sin? Does the movement of conversion assume a previous movement in opposition to the logoi?

As we described above, for Maximus, movement is within the inherent nature of created being. To be created means to have movement. This is due to God's own willing of the logoi as principles of this movement. By juxtaposing the "flowing down from above" with movement according to the logoi, Maximus is describing this movement in a historical, dramatic fashion. The return to movement according to the logoi that characterizes conversion is not a reaction to the flowing down from above but was always God's original intention for created

²⁰⁶ *Amb 7 PG 91:1181C.*

²⁰⁷ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 76.

²⁰⁸ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 77.

beings. For Tollefsen procession/conversion establish “historical limits of the world.”²⁰⁹ If we understand the “flowing down” in a historical and not a logical way we can see it as a movement that happens in opposition to conversion rather than being the cause for the need of conversion. Procession/conversion is itself a historical process that is interrupted by the “flowing down” of sin. Understanding the process in a historical way, as an unfolding in time, is a Christian adaption of the Neoplatonic dynamic that gives the process a definitive beginning and consummation.²¹⁰ As such, procession/conversion creates a space, a distention that acts as a stage upon which beings act in accord with or in opposition to their logoi.²¹¹

This historical process is different than a second double movement described by Maximus: expansion/contraction. Tollefsen differentiates between these movements which denote ontological distinctions and unity and the movement of creatures according to their logoi.²¹² While the former movement pair included volition in history, expansion/contraction is a matter of logical distinction in which the two movements happen in simultaneity.²¹³ Expansion describes the process of distinction. This happens at every level of individuation: from genus, to species, all the way down to the delineation of being, derived from Porphyry, to the particular being as an individual.²¹⁴ Here we see the plurality of creatures emerge in a logical manner. The distinctions are not themselves cause for division or separation but individuation in accord with the logoi. This is complementary to the first part of the procession/conversion movement in that God does not simply sustain the cosmos in unity, his knowledge of and intention for created beings extends to their individual logoi.

²⁰⁹ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 78.

²¹⁰ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 78.

²¹¹ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 79.

²¹² Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 78.

²¹³ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 79.

²¹⁴ *Amb 7 PG 91:1077B-C*. See Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 82. for details on the “Porphyrian tree.”

Just as conversion is not an undoing of procession, so contraction does not erase the distinctions made in expansion. Contraction is the gathering of individuals of a species into successively larger groups “until it is gathered up into the most generic genus, and there its contraction comes to an end...”²¹⁵ The gathering is not of disparate elements but of like into like from the smallest category to the largest, general category of all created being. This movement establishes a communion between all of creation that is built upon progressively larger expressions of that communion.²¹⁶ The double movement of expansion/contraction demonstrates the divine intention to create a unity in plurality that is irreducible.²¹⁷

The consummation of these two double-movements demonstrates the centrality of God intended unity-in plurality within the Confessor’s thought. Expansion/contraction results in an expansive communion of communities that overcomes difference, a communion that incorporates all created being while uniting them all to the uncreated by virtue of their participation in the logoi. Communion that overcomes difference while sustaining plurality is also the result of procession/conversion. Moving according to their logoi, beings that undergo conversion are gathered up according to those same logoi in the manner described in contraction. Yet this pair of double-movements does not collapse into one. First, there is the historical versus ontological frame of reference described above but secondly and perhaps more preeminently, is the eucharistic allusion Maximus makes in his description of conversion.²¹⁸ The verb for gathering in the Confessor’s description of conversion is “*anaphora*.”²¹⁹ As the same

²¹⁵ *Amb 7 PG 91:1177C*.

²¹⁶ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 79.

²¹⁷ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 79.

²¹⁸ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 77.

²¹⁹ *Amb 7 PG91:1081C*.

word used to describe the mode of communion brought about by the Eucharist, conversion as *anaphora* evokes the participation of all creation in a liturgical communion with God.

We can correlate this interpretation of conversion with Maximus' use of the same image of a circle to describe the unity in diversity that is brought about by the Church as the Body of Christ.²²⁰ Those incorporated into this body share in a mode of communion in which God “encloses all things in himself ... [limiting] their extents with a circle.”²²¹ Beings circumscribed in this circle, an image of the Church, they retain their identity but are drawn into relationship with “one, simple, and single cause and power”²²² from which they cannot be distinguished on account of their relationship with the one who outshines them.²²³ Here we encounter the Chalcedonian “unconfused” (*asugchutos*) once more. Maximus uses “unconfused” to describe how natural relationships between beings and the one who unites them are overshadowed without having their identities destroyed through assimilation.²²⁴

Despite the Chalcedonian qualifiers, the language of maximian ontology sounds similar to the neoplatonic and stoic descriptions of creation. A singular way in which we can differentiate Maximus' Christian cosmology from these philosophical positions is to recall that the Logos is identified as a person, the Son of the Father. This complements ontological language with the understanding that it is founded upon personal relationship. It is Christ who gathers and holds the logoi together “as his own.”²²⁵ Christ as Logos is the same Christ the Lord sought in the spiritual and moral path of perfection.²²⁶ The logoi have a personal character as the

²²⁰ *Myst* 1 CCSG 13-14 PG 91:668AB.

²²¹ *Myst* 1.190-195 PG 91:668AB.

²²² *Myst* 1 ln 188 PG 91:668A.

²²³ *Myst* 1 ln 147 PG 91:665A.

²²⁴ *Myst* 1 ln 137-142 PG 91:664D-665A.

²²⁵ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 79.

²²⁶ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1081CD.

will of Christ for individual created beings. As the means by which particular beings are brought into being, sustained, and brought to inseparable union with God, the logoi are individuated manifestations of the one Logos to each being.²²⁷ As such, they are manifestations of Christ's love and intention for created beings.

Two key ways in which Christ relates to creation are in his providence and judgment. As expressions of the divine will, we can speak of providence as judgment as two overarching logoi by which God knows his creation and makes his will known. Maximus defines these logoi in different ways throughout the *Ambigua*. In *Amb* 67, he presents them in a way that appeals to a moral sense. Providence is understood as God's assistance in moving according to their logoi to "be what they are."²²⁸ Judgment is a punitive correction that reorients created beings toward their logoi when these principles are "damaged and perverted."²²⁹ In this moral definition, providence and judgment effectively guide beings toward their logoi as a channel, offering boundaries to their action while being boundless in themselves.²³⁰

Alternatively, Maximus offers an ontological understanding of providence and judgment within an ontological framework. The Confessor distinguishes between this expression of the logoi and the moral, "convertive" one which is active in "returning whatever has gone astray to its proper course."²³¹ Within his ontological framework, Maximus defines providence as "the power that holds the universe together, keeping it aligned with the inner principles according (*logos*) to which it was originally created."²³² Judgment likewise is not "punishment on sinners"

²²⁷ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 80.

²²⁸ *Amb* 67 PG 91:1400B.

²²⁹ *Amb* 67 PG 91:1400B.

²³⁰ *Amb* 67 PG 91:1400B.

²³¹ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1133D.

²³² *Amb* 10 PG 91:1133D.

but the “differentiated distribution of beings.”²³³ Judgment is properly God’s delineation of creatures, how they are arranged, and how he brought them into being.²³⁴ Maximus makes clear that these two conceptions of providence and judgment are not describing two separate realities.²³⁵ Our free response to the logoi denotes whether we perceive them as punitive. This experience is a subjective one. A response that rejects the logoi would experience providence and judgment as a correction since God directs “the course of things that are beyond our control in a manner contrary to what is within our control” if we have done evil.²³⁶

Both Thunberg and Loudovikos affirm the moral sense while emphasizing the ontological aspects of providence and judgment.²³⁷ For Thunberg, these logoi are another guarantor of the diversity of beings able to be united in God, a design that God has for his creation from the beginning. These logoi forbid violence to the “individualized multiplicity” we find in creation.²³⁸ In God’s original intention for creation and its eschatological fulfillment, which is deification, God upholds his will and does not revoke the effects of providence and judgment. God contemplates individual beings as distinct from one another. Judgment is used to describe the God intended differentiation between particular being. Providence guides the relationships of the particular beings and is the “principle of unification,” facilitating union without confusion.²³⁹

Loudovikos notes that providence and judgment inform God’s free act of creation. If they were not connected in this way, they would work as though they were uncreated

²³³ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1133D.

²³⁴ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1136A.

²³⁵ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1136A.

²³⁶ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1136A.

²³⁷ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 91.

²³⁸ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 134.

²³⁹ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 134.

principles.²⁴⁰ Thus, God contemplates and creates in accord with his willed providence and judgment. The delineation of creatures, their particularity, is not superadded onto an already unified creation but are the result of God's own choice. Similarly, Maximus describes the transformation of created beings according to providence and judgment in a way that expects their growth and movement. We can conclude, therefore that these logoi do not only corresponding to "substance" but also to "potency and activity" since God's preexistent contemplation of created beings includes potency and activity.²⁴¹ Providence and judgment are related to Maximus' concepts of movement, freedom, particularity, and communion since without differentiation and the drive for union the schema has no room for movement and no consummative goal.

For Loudovikos providence encompasses the capacity of a being to grow toward the fulfillment of its natural potential.²⁴² This includes its growth in relation to its own essence, its potential, as well as activity. Judgment is a protection of this growth. It can be conceived as punishment for deviations from the logoi. This explains why things do not progress in growth but rather disintegrate when they move in opposition to their natures. That God's logoi, God's will for creation is circumscribed with the overarching logoi of providence and judgment tells us that for Maximus God conceives of the worlds not as a static reality of perfection but as a multiplicity of possibilities moving toward that perfection. The Confessor describes these logoi as penetrating "both our present and future life, as if they were different generations..."²⁴³ In this, providence and judgment have about them an eschatological character. God leads created beings by these logoi in a way that acknowledges that they are not presently perfected but can be in the

²⁴⁰ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 91.

²⁴¹ *Amb* 67 PG 91:1400B.

²⁴² Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 91.

²⁴³ *Ad Thal* PG 90:517D.

future. Once again, we find that for Maximus, motion, change, and dialogue are God intended realities manifest in creation.

What are the possibilities inherent in movement according to the logos? Is it a simple binary of either obedience to the logoi or rejection of them altogether? Yes and no. Movement in a way that is opposed to the logoi always results in self-destruction. In Maximus' schema, movement away from the logoi is a movement toward non-being.²⁴⁴ Movement in opposition to the logoi is consummate with an attempt to change the logoi. The free actions of beings in relation to the logoi does not change the logoi in and of themselves. Attempting to change the logoi is destructive to the logoi and in turn destructive for that being, the “flowing down” of sin that Gregory describes.²⁴⁵ This does harm to the original way in which God intended for created beings to use their natural powers.²⁴⁶

C. Tropos

Maximus writes that there was an original, natural mode, tropos (τροπος), which God had given. The Confessor describes tropos as the place of innovation within created beings. Nature, which corresponds to the logoi of a being is not changed but a change in mode of that being leaves the nature intact.²⁴⁷ Changes made to created beings that are not in opposition to their logoi are changes in tropos. Mitralaxis catalogues varied meanings of the Greek term that are illuminative: derived from the verb *trepo*, tropos can mean “to turn, to turn in a certain direction, to alter, to change ... it presupposes action/activity and an actualized relation.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1084D.

²⁴⁵ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1084D.

²⁴⁶ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1097C.

²⁴⁷ *Amb* 43 PG 91:1341D.

²⁴⁸ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 32.

Maximus explains that through sin, movement in opposition to the logoi, humanity has rejected this original God given mode. In its place, God has granted another mode “more marvelous and befitting of God than the first, and as different from the former as what is above nature is different from what is according to nature.”²⁴⁹ This new mode is established in the hypostatic union, the new theandric mode by which humanity can act in accord with the logoi. For now, it is sufficient to note that the logoi, God’s original plan is unchanging, it undergoes “no innovation.”²⁵⁰ The mode, tropos, by which the logos is lived out is able to be changed.

Maximus uses the term tropos to qualify how logoi are realized in a variety of ways: theological, logical, ethical, physical, and even hypostatic.²⁵¹ The term is often attached to logos as a “logos/tropos” dyad that communicates the possible ways by which logoi may be realized. Larchet notes that the preeminent function of this dyad in Maximus’ work is to account “for the fact that the reality of any natural order can attain to a new, supernatural mode of existence, while remaining the same in its essence.”²⁵² As with many aspects of the Confessor’s thought, the concept of tropos reaches the pinnacle of its purpose when used to describe the process of deification. On one hand, tropos can be understood as the resulting state of a created being that has encountered divine grace.²⁵³ On the other it can be used to describe what is variable in the working out of logoi through the course of history.

The distinction between logos and tropos allows for varied responses among created beings to their logoi. Moving in accordance to one’s individuated logos does not mean a sort of

²⁴⁹ *Amb 7 PG 91:1097C.*

²⁵⁰ *Amb 7 PG 91:1097C.*

²⁵¹ Jean-Claude Larchet, "The Mode of Deification," in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Paul Allen and Brownen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 342-3.

²⁵² Larchet, "The Mode of Deification," 343.

²⁵³ Larchet, "The Mode of Deification," 343.

fated, uniform action but a free response. This is consistent with Maximus' view that God contemplates created beings as moving. As they move, rational beings would likewise be contemplated as willing on their own account. The matter of volition that is not opposed to the logoi are changes in tropos. Free action is then not simply a matter of a conformative response to one's particular logos. This dynamic reveals a wide berth for free response according to the logoi.

A simple demonstration of this point comes from considering the exercise of human freedom in the creation of art. A person composing a work in an artistic manner is not simply moving along a predetermined path of their logoi. They are exercising an ability to act in a way that creates. Maximus acknowledges two sorts of creative activity. The first is the natural process of making beings "identical in form and substance and absolutely identical to them."²⁵⁴ Maximus' laconic explanation of this activity is difficult to decipher but it seems to indicate reproduction in species. The second activity is done to something that different than the actor in identity and nature. This occurs when "a person actively engages something extrinsic and substantially different, and from it produces something foreign" doing so "from some other source of already existing matter."²⁵⁵ This second sort of activity, Maximus writes, "is a scientific characteristic of the arts."²⁵⁶ Since this creation is by no means a sharing in God's creating *ex nihilo*, an explanation consistent with Maximus' ontological schema is that the logos of that item remains intact while the creative action indicates a change in tropos.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ *Amb* 26 PG 91:1268A.

²⁵⁵ *Amb* 26 PG:1268B.

²⁵⁶ *Amb* 26 PG:1268B.

²⁵⁷ In his personalistic approach to this subject, Mitralaxis emphasizes the relational characteristic of such a change in tropos. Following Yannaris, human acts of creation leaves something of their own otherness imprinted within it. Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 35.

To these we may add a third type of possible activity, a negative one that does not move in accordance with the logoi but against it. This movement is in direct opposition to providence since it ignores the logos of providence. This is a sort of art of sin which Maximus describes as a historical reality. Passed on from one generation to the next, humanity has made “progress in evil.”²⁵⁸ Thunberg interprets this as a misuse of humanity’s “inventive power.”²⁵⁹ The competing cause to that of the logoi are “fleshly passions,” following these only leads to “mortal despair.”²⁶⁰ Just as this power to create can work as a means for the freedom to form the tropos of one’s logoi, the application of that same activity to the logoi themselves further develops the art of sin, which is destruction of the logoi.

While the binary choice of using humanity’s freedom to move according to the logoi remains, we see that the choices themselves are not binary in nature. Once the inventive power of freedom is applied to the right subject, the *tropos* (mode) rather than the logos (principle or essence) of a created thing, a multitude of possibilities can be embraced. Thunberg calls the possibility of movements in accordance with the logoi, moving in “harmony with the logos.”²⁶¹ Creation then is a medium on which rational beings may act, changing the tropos and not the logos in a manner that is not predetermined by the logos itself but for which the logos allows the possibility of. Again, possibilities that do violence to the logoi are not contained within these logoi themselves. Choices that oppose the logoi sets the being on the path toward nothingness, the opposite of the movement of conversion, the path of deification. Movement according to the logoi is in agreement with the original divine intent that facilitates the final eschatological communion and consummation that is participation in God.

²⁵⁸ *Liber Asceticus* PG 90:912A translated in Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 56.

²⁵⁹ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 59.

²⁶⁰ *Liber Asceticus* PG 90:912A translated in Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 56.

²⁶¹ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 79.

D. Eschatological Consummation of Creation

The God who creates offers to all of creation consummate communion with Himself through the logoi.²⁶² Maximus' cosmological vision is inseparable from the eschatological hope of deification. This hope derives from the maximian affirmation that all creation is good, it is the result of the free act which is God's creation of the cosmos for the express purpose of participation in God.

Maximus boldly proclaims that "the Logos of God (who is God) wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of his embodiment."²⁶³ This is the divine plan from the beginning, "God will be all things in everything, encompassing all things and making them subsist in Himself" and it is because of this plan that created beings can be called "portions of God."²⁶⁴ As we have seen, Maximus describes a plan for the participation and not the annihilation of created beings in God. This preservation of their created identities is upheld by, and brought about, in Christ, the center and source of the logoi. It is due to Christ's mediation that we can affirm that creation comes to be entirely in God without "ontological assimilation."²⁶⁵

The unification of creation in God is both a future and present reality. It is accomplished by Christ as origin and goal of the logoi. The proleptic manifestation of the eschaton is made present in the paschal mystery. As with the discussion of the Logos as the center of the circle, so here Maximus emphasizes that the Logos is not a bare ontological principle but breaks down divisions within the course of history in his person. Christ's Incarnation and subsequent raising,

²⁶² See Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 66; Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 84.

²⁶³ *Amb 7 PG 91:1084CD*.

²⁶⁴ *Amb 7 PG 91:1092C*.

²⁶⁵ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 89.

the unification with and deification of human nature, brings together all things in Himself. “He obscured in Himself the property of division that had cut [creation] in two.”²⁶⁶ Maximus describes Christ as the one who gathers all of these things up into himself²⁶⁷ according to the logoi, translated by Conostas as the “most primal and most universal principle” in a way that preserves them “absolutely indivisibly and beyond all fracture.”²⁶⁸

The Incarnation serves as Maximus’ eschatological map from which he derives the fate of all creation.²⁶⁹ The Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ’s own body is an affirmation of all human bodies.²⁷⁰ In *Amb* 42, Maximus observes that Christ as both architect and “pioneer” of salvation does not manifest a perfected state beyond the body. Perfection then does not mean the sloughing off of creation or the “casting aside of the body.”²⁷¹ The precedent set by Christ leads Maximus to expect that the body itself is a recipient of salvation and unification in God.²⁷²

The incorporation of human bodies into the unity that is Christ does not function as a limit to that communion but signals an expansive vision. The hypostatic union of the Logos with the human nature is not a self-encapsulated reality but spills over into the rest of creation. Christ overcomes division and reveals the logoi of humanity as capable of bearing the image of Christ, “intact and completely unadulterated.”²⁷³ The image of the Body of Christ includes this complete humanity as well as “the extremes of the whole creation” which he incorporates “as His own parts.”²⁷⁴ Though Maximus stops short of calling all of creation, eschatologically realized, the

²⁶⁶ *Amb* 41 PG 91:1309C.

²⁶⁷ *Sunneusin*, *Amb* 41 PG 91:1309C Conostas 112 line 7.

²⁶⁸ *Amb* 41 PG 91:1309C.

²⁶⁹ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 111.

²⁷⁰ Andreas Andreopoulos, “Eschatology in Maximus the Confessor,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Paul Allen and Brownen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 328.

²⁷¹ *Amb* 42 PG 91:1333A.

²⁷² *Amb* 42 PG 91:1333CD.

²⁷³ *Amb* 41 PG 91:1312A.

²⁷⁴ *Amb* 41 PG 91:1312A.

Body of Christ, he writes that everything is recapitulated in Christ in “a manner appropriate to God.”²⁷⁵ Participation in God does not undo the ontological difference discussed above and it is necessary for us to continue to affirm this difference. Without this difference, Maximus would not be writing of participation but absorption. Instead, what has been created out of nothing, what is different than God has been created for communion with God: “It is for the sake of [deification] that all things that are have been constituted and are maintained in being, and that things that are not are produced and come into being.”²⁷⁶

To better understand what Maximus means by participation, we return to his reversal of the Origenist triad. The Confessor’s own creation-motion-stasis has as its final term a stage that must not be confused with satiety. As we have discussed above, Maximus has brought two seemingly contradictory ideas into contact with one another. First, there is the nature of created things which is always in motion, even as they come to be in God, propelled by Gregory of Nyssa’s concept of perpetual progress. Second, there is the use of the term “stasis” that connotes the cessation of all movement. Both of these are necessary for Maximus’ schema of participation to be understood correctly. On one hand, the perpetual progress means that creatures never reach the state of satiety. As opposed to the Origenist *henad*, they can never be filled up and grow bored of God. On the other hand, their stasis in God means that they never deviate from this final state.²⁷⁷

Maximus again uses God’s activity as the basis for his understanding of creation’s participation in God, this time drawing on Trinitarian theology rather than Christology. In describing God as “ever-moving repose” Maximus does not think of God in terms of creaturely

²⁷⁵ *Amb* 41 PG 91:1312A.

²⁷⁶ *Letters* 24 PG 91:609CD. Trans in Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 83.

²⁷⁷ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 91.

movement but is instead describing the processions of the Trinity. Just as in his descriptions of God's "being" as "beyond being" and non-being, so here the Confessor would call God's own motion "beyond motion."²⁷⁸ The Trinity includes the fullness of both motion and fixity. Participation in God means that the created motion is replaced by the dynamic that exists in God. That is to say that the participation of created things in God leads to a sharing in the ever-moving repose that exists in the Trinity.²⁷⁹ Thus, creaturely motion is not annulled but receives a new, divine impetus. This transposition of creaturely activity into divine activity does not annul the creature. The *logoi*, the underlying reason and nature of creatures is never changed. The mode, *tropos* is eschatologically changed, now moving in a divine mode. This ensures that the whole of creation is preserved in deification. From the highest category of creation as "all that is" to the particular member of any given species, deification does not assimilate being but leads it into the divine communion.²⁸⁰

For Maximus, creation does not need any "addition or subtraction" in order to be called good.²⁸¹ Though creation is never complete in and of itself the way that God is, it is not due to any deficiency or evil inherent to creation. Incompleteness is a sign that creation was made for communion with God. Mitralaxis summarizes this point clearly: "The motion of the created towards its beginning and end, its source and purpose (a motion that can be clearly discerned by those who can contemplate the *logoi* of beings) amplifies the fact that creation is 'good' as it tends to the attainment of completeness."²⁸² Natural motion is logically good since this motion is according to the *logoi* while the goal is always beyond the reach of nature itself. This

²⁷⁸ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 120.

²⁷⁹ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 122.

²⁸⁰ See Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 123.

²⁸¹ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1176B.

²⁸² Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 136.

insufficiency does not negate creation's goodness but points it beyond itself toward the Other by and for whom it is made.

Here we can see the totality of Maximus' response to Origenism as an affirmation of creation. Each triadic moment of creation-motion-stasis ratifies the others. In creation (*genesis*), God freely creates according to his wills (*logoi*) from nothing beings who by nature (their *logoi*) move toward communion with the divine. Motion according to the *logoi* reveals simultaneously the origin of created being in the goodness of God's wills for being as a whole and in particular as well as the end of deification for which that being was created. This movement is in accordance with the overarching *logoi* of providence, which reveals the divine destiny of created being, and judgment which upholds the divinely conceived differentiation of beings. The incorporation of created being in stasis, the ever-moving repose of God in the Trinity is the final state of motion and communion. This state does not collapse into a mode that annuls either of the previous two parts of the triad. The genesis of creatures is not violated as the otherness of these beings is preserved. Without this otherness, we would not be speaking of communion but rather absorption in God. Secondly, the motion toward God, motion according to the *logoi* continues despite the description of the state of "stasis." God, from all eternity has contemplated creatures as "beings in motion." This motion does not cease but is elevated into a new mode (*tropos*) in God, one that shares in the divine communion. The ever-moving repose is the consummation of the communion between God and the cosmos. For Maximus, the whole of the cosmos is pointed toward the final, perpetual communion with God.

CHAPTER THREE

MAXIMUS ON DEIFICATION

A. Theandric Activity as the Goal of the Incarnation / Resurrection

Maximus' view of mediation is inextricably entangled with his Christology and anthropology, both of which are heavily influenced by his ascetic focus. These elements come to form a theology of deification that is both eschatological in the sense of coming to fruition in the fulness of time and that it is realized before the eschaton in a proleptic manner. This drama of deification does not stand apart from the cosmological schema explored in the last chapter but is the template, linchpin, and keystone for the cosmological redemption within the one Logos, the person of Christ. Christ fulfills the original vocation of humanity in a way that enables the whole of humanity to participate in the task of mediation. Maximus' understanding of the Christic act of mediation via the *logoi* affirms the goodness of creation even as it is mediated (converted) back to God. The invitation for humanity to participate in these mysteries through deification makes the fulfillment of the original human vocation possible. This is expressed as a eucharistic reciprocity between God and humanity with the whole cosmos as its medium.

In this chapter we will unpack Maximus' theology of deification as the foundation of this communicative reciprocity. The Incarnation and Paschal Mystery of Christ the Logos provide both the model and goal of this transformation. Maximus' Neo-Chalcedonianism synthesizes unique categories for understanding the hypostatic union which results in a new theandric activity. This activity provides both the impetus and *telos* for the deification of humanity. We will explore Maximus' description of the process of deification and how he understands this process in relation to humanity's mediatorial role. This role is made possible through humanity's unique status as a microcosm of creation, which informs Maximus' view of the

human body as well as his influential thought about the freedom of Christ and deified humanity. Humanity's communion with the theandric activity established by Christ allows for the eucharistic reciprocity between the creator and the created to manifest collectively in the Church's liturgy and can be understood in an individual way as an interpersonal communion of individual persons with the Logos. Understood as a dialogue between persons, Maximus' schema highlights the importance of human freedom, describing its active role in the return of the logoi to the Logos.

The point of departure for this discussion is Christ as the central Logos from which all of creation proceeds and to whom God wills of all creation to return to according to their individual logoi. The role of Christ as Logos is not that of an impersonal natural principle or force but as the Second Person of the Trinity by the free act of God, unites all things in himself. The epitome of Christ's unifying action is the mystery of the hypostatic union according to which "all the ages and what is contained in all the ages have taken in Christ the beginning of being and its end."¹ Though the whole of creation was already guided toward God through participation in the logoi, the hypostatic union introduces a new "eschatological matrix" in Christ and his body, the Church.² This movement surpasses natural teleology. We should recall that nature is good in itself and does not in and of itself resist deification. The created world, instilled with the potentiality to participate in God from its *genesis* through the logoi, provides the "raw materials for deification."³ Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection provide the paradigm for deification not

¹ *Ad Thal* 60 PG 90:621B trans Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 135.

² Riou, *Le Monde et le l'Église Selon Maxime le Confesseur Théologie Historique* 22, 88-89. trans Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 134.

³ Harper, *The Analogy of Love*, 127.

solely for humanity but for the whole of the cosmos which will be healed of division and come to rest in Christ.⁴

The deification of creation is restorative and transformative. By its participation in the uncreated, the cosmos is granted a mode (tropos) which exceeds its natural telos. This is only possible through the mysteries of the Incarnation and Resurrection.⁵ The mysteries of Incarnation and Resurrection are themselves inextricably linked in Maximus' thought. Their universal impact provides the starting point for Maximus' understanding of both God in himself and God's economic manifestation in the cosmos.⁶ The cosmological reflections of the previous chapter are reliant upon these mysteries since they are the means by which the cosmos ultimately participates in the divine.

Keeping Maximus' mystical theology in view will help us understand the communion of natures found in the hypostatic union. Nichols calls the Word incarnate a "living synthesis of all apophasis and cataphasis."⁷ This would imply that in the Incarnation we can name both an affirmation and a negation. In adopting human nature without destroying it, the Logos unites himself to what he is not. Inasmuch as the Word is united to human nature without eradicating it, human nature is affirmed. Since human nature is incorporated into a new, super-eminent, mode of being, we can understand that it is a negation of human nature since that nature alone is insufficient.⁸ As with mysticism, the resolution is something beyond the original nature. In Christ, natural beings are made to be above nature consonant with the mystical perspective of being beyond nature. The categories of mystical theology are important here because the new

⁴ Cattoi, "Liturgy as Cosmic Transformation," 418.

⁵ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 70. citing *Ad Thal* 2 59.134-49.

⁶ Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 62.

⁷ Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 63.

⁸ Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 63.

mode should in no way be understood as a simple additive of the divine to the human nor as a mixture of the two. To avoid misrepresenting the hypostatic union and its fruit requires the apophatic approach along with precise language. Here we revisit the adverbs of Chalcedon this time addressing the mystery for which they were formulated: the communion between the human and divine in Christ is unconfused (ἀσυγχύτως), undivided (ἀδιαρέτως), without change (ἀτρέπτως) and without separation (ἀχωρίστως). The communion of the human and divine natures produces a new sort of activity that is connoted by the descriptive term “theandric.”⁹

Maximus appropriates the term “theandric energy” (θεανδρικὴν ἐνέργειαν)¹⁰, from Pseudo-Dionysius who uses the phrase to describe a unity of human and divine action rather than a singular composite energy.¹¹ Thunberg writes that the term “theandric” becomes Maximus’ preferred expression of the union of humanity and divinity in Christ.¹² Understanding Maximus’ interpretation of this term is central to piecing together the Confessor’s understanding of deification.

Dionysius coins the term while explaining how Jesus could be “placed in the same order in being with all men.”¹³ In the Incarnation, Christ is no less “overflowing with transcendence” but assumes this new way of being out of love for humanity.¹⁴ Jesus does not act at times in a divine manner and at others in a human manner. The Incarnation has produced a new way of action, a new energy: “by the fact of being God-made-man he accomplished something new in

⁹ *Theandric* is a construction of *theos* (God) and *Andros* which means man (as in male). The preferred term today is *theanthropic*. Since Maximus used theandric, I will continue to refer to *theandric* when referring to his theology.

¹⁰ *Amb* 5 PG 91:1057C.

¹¹ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 72.

¹² Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 72.

¹³ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1987), 264. *Letter* 4, PG 3:1072A.

¹⁴ *Ltr* 4 PG 3:1072C

our midst-the activity of the God-man.”¹⁵ One underlying issue with Dionysius’ formulation is that it could be interpreted in a way that agrees with both monophysite and diaphysite views.

Despite this ambiguity, the term was repeatedly adopted by Neo-Chalcedonians. Severus Asmounein used it to describe a single activity in Christ while John of Scythopolis understood it in a manner that allowed for both the mixing of the human and divine in a single activity with the added complication that the natures could also act independently of one another.¹⁶ Maximus’ own formulation views this new energy as taking hold in a new mode, *tropos*, that respected the two distinct natures in Christ. A change in *tropos*, as we have discussed above, leaves the nature – the *logos* of a particular being – intact. In the case of Christ, it is a common mode that is the point of communion of the human and divine natures. This is a union that does not introduce confusion, division, separation, or change to those natures. The Chalcedonian adverbs protect against understanding the hypostatic union as a chimeric composite nature.¹⁷

Maximus elaborates upon Pseudo-Dionysius’ thought in *Amb 5* which addresses the Areopagite’s description of Jesus as both “the cause of men” and “truly man.”¹⁸ We should note that this and the other first five chapters of *Ambigua ad Thomam* were written while Maximus was emerging upon the stage of the Christological debates surrounding the energies in Christ.¹⁹ While Maximus still does not make the sort of strict categorical distinctions between theological subjects, *Amb 5* can be clearly recognized as a topical work on Christology. Compared to *Amb 7* in which the Confessor presented a wide sweeping description of cosmology, Christology, and

¹⁵ *Ltr 4* PG 3:1072C.

¹⁶ Cyril Hovorun, "Maximus, a Cautious Neo-Chalcedonian," in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Paul Allen and Brownen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 114-5.

¹⁷ Andia, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor," 180.

¹⁸ *Amb 5* PG 91:1045D.

¹⁹ Constas, ed., *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua of Maximus the Confessor*, XX.

deification, *Amb 5* remains focused upon the hypostatic union with appropriate development and nuance.

The Confessor fleshes out his own understanding of the hypostatic union before introducing the Dionysian term. In Christ, human and divine natures enter into a unity that is a “conjunction,” a “true union,” that is “neither of [the natures] exclusively.”²⁰ In effecting this union, the person of Christ no longer acts in a way that is only divine or only human: “in no way acting through one of the natures in separation from the other.”²¹ Instead, the activity is itself revelatory of this union: the human and divine are seen working together and in a complementary manner they “[confirm] the presence of the one through the other.”²² The union between these natures qualifies the activity of each. Christ “experienced suffering in a divine way ... worked miracles in a human way...”²³

Maximus stresses the unity of action going as far as to say that “divine and human energy coincided in a single identity.”²⁴ This term “identity” can be tricky since out of context it may be mistakenly interpreted as pointing toward a single identity in action but not in person. Thunberg and von Balthasar prefer a qualified phrasing, adding that the natures act in a single identity “in mutual preservation.”²⁵ This addition is consonant with the Confessor’s thought and is implicit within the context of *Amb 5* which places a heavy emphasis on preserving the principle of the natures being held in communion.²⁶

²⁰ *Amb 5* PG 91:1056A.

²¹ *Amb 5* PG 91:1056A.

²² *Amb 5* PG 91:1056A.

²³ *Amb 5* PG 91:1056A.

²⁴ *Amb 5* PG 91:1056C.

²⁵ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 72.

²⁶ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 72.

The Confessor introduces his own clarifications on the interaction of these natures and allows the Chalcedonian adverbs to do the heavy lifting within his argument. In doing so, Maximus creates a synthesis between Dionysian and Chalcedonian orthodoxy. The result is a union that “does not impair distinction” between the natures while at the same time does not diminish the essential principles that participate in the union.²⁷ The hypostatic union is not an adding together of the human and divine in a way that provides a product, the middle of two extremes.²⁸ What is “new” is the mystery of the “ineffable mode (ἀπόρρητος τροπος) of natural coherence (συμφυιας).”²⁹ The shared activity takes place at the level of “mode” (τροπος). As with the mode of deification, properly understanding the distinction between the underlying principle that determines nature (λογος) and the mode (τροπος) of activity is pivotal. The mode of activity helps us understand that it is not the natures that are changed but the manner by which they now operate. The divine acts humanly and the human acts divinely. Collectively they share in theandric activity. In defining theandric activity as a τροπος, Maximus seeks to clarify the Dionysian term with the Chalcedonian affirmation that the human and divine remain unconfused (ἀσυχύτως) and undivided (ἀδιαρέτως) in Christ. This is the mode of activity that is proper for “‘God made man,’ to Him who became perfectly incarnate.”³⁰

Following Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus avoids using the term “one” for this new energy. This would necessarily introduce by itself a new nature. What is singular for Maximus is the mystery of the activity, which is a communal activity. This is not a common unity of two extremes but the working together of two natures in communal activity. Both retain their natural

²⁷ *Amb 5 PG 91:1056CD.*

²⁸ *Amb 5 PG 91:1056D.*

²⁹ *Amb 5 PG 91:1056D-1057A.*

³⁰ *Amb 5 PG 91:1057A.*

energies but these energies no longer work without being in concert with the other energy:

“therefore it is not permitted to say that there is simply ‘one,’ or a ‘natural,’ energy common both to Christ’s divinity and His flesh.”³¹

A second reason Maximus is unwilling to call the name theandric energy “one” is that he wants to use “theandric” in a way that connotes dynamism. It is not a thing in and of itself but is a “mode of exchange” between the human and divine natures present in Christ.³² This is because the union preserves the human and divine natures in a way that is without change (μεταβολῆς) or confusion (συμφύρσεως).³³ Though Maximus uses a different word for change than the ἀτρέπτως of Chalcedon, the meaning is the same. There is a perichoretic quality to this communion, the divine and human natures are “interchangeable” with one another yet are inseparable from the person of Christ.

The Confessor utilizes a vivid image to demonstrate this communion. He asks us to ponder a sword, heated in fire.³⁴ The two natures are preserved while taking up the properties of the other. First, the sword becomes hot as the fire is hot. Swords heated to the point that they change in color can set other objects on fire as though the sword were itself aflame. Likewise, it is difficult to distinguish between the burning of the flame and the cutting of the sword. In a sense, the flame has taken on the sword’s property of sharpness.

A few clarifications will help us further understand the sort of union Maximus is seeking to describe. Though a modern scientific framework may tell us that there is indeed a change going on within the composition of the sword, we can see that this is not what Maximus is

³¹ *Amb 5 PG 91:1057B*. Maximus’s view formed the statements of the Lateran council on Christ’s theandric activity, though this differs from what is in *Amb 5* because by the Lateran Council the focus had become on one distinct activity while Maximus’ description is of the human and divine in an inseparable communion. See Hovorun, 115-116. It is conceivable that Maximus saw his own wording as compatible with what was taught at the council.

³² *Amb 5 PG 91:1057D*.

³³ *Amb 5 PG 91:1057D*.

³⁴ *Amb 5 PG 91:1060A*.

attempting to communicate. If it were a change in the sword that Maximus was after, he could have contextualized the heating as part of the shaping of the sword in a kiln by a blacksmith. In Maximus' example, there is no change. Secondly, what may seem to be a limitation of the image actually reveals the true character of the union. If a sword is tempered at a high temperature such that it changes color it would begin to cool once it is removed from the heat. At this point, the metal, once cooled may have been changed by its encounter with the fire but would have also lost the characteristics of the fire.

Maximus describes an ongoing, dynamic union between flame and blade. He is not after a result that emerges as the fruit of the combination of two elements with different natures. The point at which the flame is sharp and the sword can burn is the moment of union. Just as the image of a sword heated by fire communicates an active union, so the theandric energy is not a "result" of something but an active communion of natures. The human and divine retain their own nature while taking up the properties of the other. Though unlike the sword which takes on the properties of heat, there is no possibility of separation between the two - the hypostatic union is an eternally active communion. The image of the flame evokes this dynamism. The hypostatic union is an indissoluble union, ongoing and ever dynamic.³⁵ The new theandric energy is not a composition of two natures because the natures are ever participating in shared communion. If one of the natures were to be subsumed by the other (the sword melted by the fire, to draw out the example) there would be no union because one of the natures had been destroyed. The communion of the human and divine is one that is active, communicative of properties, ongoing, and indissoluble.

³⁵ *Amb* 5 PG 91:1060B.

In this energy Maximus characterizes the divine as active and the human as passive. It is tempting to juxtapose the Confessor's description of passive, suffering humanity with an impassible, unmoved concept of the divine. Maximus does not approach human passivity in this manner. By characterizing humanity as passive in this regard, his emphasis is not on refuting related issues such as patipassionism nor does it represent a conceptualizing of the divine nature in a fundamentally unmoved state. Reading concerns for the immovability of God would project a western approach to theological reflection far more characteristic of thomism. In the present text, the Confessor is not comparing human nature to God's in any way. When he discusses human passibility, Maximus addresses humanity insofar as it is bodily, suffering, and contains within its contingency the possibility of death.³⁶

The union of the Logos to a human nature grants God the realm of human suffering. In this very suffering that Christ brings humanity together in Himself: "By means of the suffering, He makes us His own" and enables humanity to be deified "for we have become that which He revealed."³⁷ The theandric energy of the hypostatic union acts upon the passive humanity, affecting the whole of human nature. Maximus' formulation of theandric energy does not stop with Christological definition but encompasses the deification of all humanity. We read in *Amb* 4: "In doing lordly things in the manner of a slave, that is, the things of God by means of the flesh, He intimates His ineffable self-emptying, which through passible flesh divinized all

³⁶ For more on human possibility in Maximus see Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 206-11. We should also refrain from projecting onto Maximus an Anselmian theory of satisfaction. As we shall see, God adopts the human nature capable of suffering in order to unite it with the divine. Nowhere does Maximus speak of salvation as if it were necessary for God to suffer as restitution for sin or to make satisfaction. Compare the below description of the deification of humanity with Anselm's soteriology in Anselm of Canterbury, "Cur Deus homo," in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G.R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³⁷ *Amb* 5 PG 91:1060B.

humanity...”³⁸ The theandric reality in Christ is salutary and revelatory. The Incarnation and Passion are the means by which all of humanity can become deified.

The path for deification has the hypostatic union as its template. Humanity only receives divinization through the communion of divine and human natures - human nature is unable to reach this on its own.³⁹ Humanity’s participation is one that does not leave its own nature behind but likewise enters into an active communion, one that is reciprocal and preserves human and divine identity.⁴⁰ Thunberg frames this dynamic within the terminology of movement, as we discussed last chapter. In becoming human, the Logos moves “tropologically toward man.”⁴¹ Thunberg describes humanity as passive, this time not only by nature but due to sinfulness, moving in a “false direction.” The mystery of Christ is what enables humanity to turn, to be “activated by the divine movement” and due to the hypostatic union in Christ, respond by “divinizing [our]self.”⁴² This does not mean that after the mystery of Christ’s hypostasis is established humanity is in no further need of communion with God. Thunberg clarifies that Maximus’ vision of deification enables humanity to move “beyond” what is natural and “beyond the existential.”⁴³ The means of this movement is the communal, existential relationship, the theandric unity in which humanity can now participate.⁴⁴

This union affects the totality of the human person but does not deprive the human person of freedom. We will return to this point later but for now we should note that reciprocal communion leaves an “empty space” between the “uncreated and the created order.”⁴⁵ Within

³⁸ *Amb 4 PG 91:1044C*.

³⁹ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 72.

⁴⁰ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 72.

⁴¹ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 54.

⁴² Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 54.

⁴³ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 62.

⁴⁴ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 62.

⁴⁵ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 63.

this space divinized humanity is able to move. This movement is not fated obedience or natural necessity but is movement characterized by Thunberg as “intentional.”⁴⁶

We should remember that the union is no mere “abstract synthesis” but occurs at the hypostatic level from which the divine is brought into relationship with human hypostasis.⁴⁷ The goal is participation in the mode of exchange of divinity and humanity. Redemption, deification, moving according to the logoi in a divine mode is primarily a relational reality and secondarily a metaphysical one. This new mode enters into creation first through the person of Christ and then through human persons united to Him through their own deification. Humanity occupies a specific place in the dynamic of our own deification and the deification of the cosmos. As created persons, humanity has the capacity for union with the person of Christ as well as the capacity to mediate that union to other facets of creation. Christ remains the foundation upon which the redemption of creation rests but inasmuch as humanity participates in the exchange of modes that is theandric action, we become participants in the redemption of creation. Humanity in Christ, collectively as Church, and as particular individuals in communion with Christ constitute “the hope for salvation of the whole creation, [they are] priest and mediator of creation.”⁴⁸

Participation in the mediatorial task of Christ is the promulgation of the new tropos. The remainder of this chapter will chronicle how humanity’s own mode is changed, what that means for freedom, the physical creation as manifest in the human body, and ultimately how humanity mediates the divinization of the cosmos in reciprocal communion with the divine.

⁴⁶ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 63.

⁴⁷ David Yeago, "Jesus of Nazareth and Cosmic Redemption: The Revelance of St. Maximus the Confessor," *Modern Theology* 12, no. 2 (April, 1996 1996): 175.

⁴⁸ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 69.

B. The Process of Deification as a Change in Tropos

Change in tropos, the mode of a being's activity, is Maximus' way of preserving both human and divine natures in Christ first and second his way of preserving the totality of the human person in communion with God. Nichols describes Maximus' approach to the topic of deification following Garrigues: "divinization and Christology form one single mystery."⁴⁹ Maximus' experience as an ascetic and his reception of the monastic tradition allowed him to form a synthetic vision that carried his Christological and anthropological insights into spiritual theology. As such, Maximus' concept of deification is not only couched in dogmatic terminology but includes a spiritual theology that unfolds, a process of deification.

Nichols interprets Maximus' description of deification as a perpetuation of God's will to be embodied: The Word, born of the flesh in the Incarnation also seeks to be "born ceaselessly according to the Spirit, in those who desire him."⁵⁰ This pneumatic birth of deification happens as human nature grows according to the virtues. Far from a simple confirmation of humanity's natural dynamism, living according to the virtues necessitates deification, "transposing [nature] into a new key."⁵¹ This transposition is not one that is reserved exclusively to the afterlife. Deification mysteriously takes hold of "the whole 'natural' life of human creatures."⁵² The process is one that embraces the history of human movement as it is transformed and restored by grace.⁵³ It is the reception of grace as the participation in the life of God that allows human nature to take part in deifying movement not as a defying of its own nature but in accord with this new key, moving beyond its own nature.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 207. citing Juan Miguel Garrigues, *Maxime le Confesseur: La charite, avenir divin de l'homme* (Paris: Beuchesne, 1976), 112.

⁵⁰ Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 207.

⁵¹ Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 207.

⁵² Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 247.

⁵³ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 247.

⁵⁴ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 248.

The first step of this transformation can be equated with the colloquial meaning of “conversion.” Though we have already explored Maximus’ nuanced understanding of this term as a movement according to the logoi, here it can be presented as the beginning of deification. Anyone who turns away from sin and sets their life on the path to virtue yields to convertive movement. Maximus writes that such a one can be said “to enter with Christ, our God and high-priest, into virtue, which is figuratively perceived to be the Church.”⁵⁵ Growth in virtue grants a share in divine charity that Thunberg describes as a participation in God similar to the dynamic *communicatio idiomatum* in Christ.⁵⁶ Just as both human and divine attributes subsist in the one person of Christ so the person undergoing deification is the recipient of “reciprocal attribution, that the attributes of those whom it unites pass from one to the other ... and that it makes man act and appear as God, through the one and unchangeable decision and motion of will on both sides...”⁵⁷

The details of this process, Maximus describes within the framework of his logos-tropos distinction. As these terms were used to describe what was new in Christ so it is used to describe how the human logos can act divinely.⁵⁸ Maximus formulates this interaction and growth toward deification in a triad that forms the mode (tropos) in which human nature is expressed in a divine manner corresponding to being/well-being /eternal being.

The progression is straightforward, moving from being to well-being to eternal being. Some confusion may arise since in places Maximus since uses both of his key categories, logoi and tropoi, interchangeably to describe these movements. The centrality of these categories and this process requires us to clarify this before examining the Confessor’s texts. Tollefsen argues

⁵⁵ *Myst* 9 PG 91:689AB.

⁵⁶ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 110.

⁵⁷ *Letter* 2 PG 91:401B trans in Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 111.

⁵⁸ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 196.

that Maximus is right to use both terms since being, well-being, and eternal being all depict a phase of participation in God. Just as we saw earlier with providence and judgment, God guides creation by certain principles (logoi). Here there is a need to speak of how beings are regulated or modified so that they may participate in God at the levels of being, well-being, and eternal being.⁵⁹ If beings were not guided by these principles, external to themselves, we would wonder why they would “not participate in the fullness of activity all at once.”⁶⁰ That there is a process of deification then necessitates that the participation in the divine be guided by these principles. As these principles are participated in, we can speak of the participation in the logos of being, of well-being, and of eternal being as modifications made not to the logoi of individuals but to their tropes. Such as they connote principles by which beings participate in God and are deified, these phases are logoi. When naming how creatures participate in God, they are tropoi.

Movement toward God is taught by these principles which bestow participatory properties on creatures depending on which mode they lie within.⁶¹ Maximus lays out these phases in a consistent manner throughout his *opus*. As with the logoi in general, being, well-being, and eternal being are discernible to those who have sharpened their spiritual vision.⁶² Within the first section of the *Chapters on Theology*, Maximus presents an illuminative illustration of these logoi. He describes them as activities that correspond to different days within creation.

Being corresponds to the sixth day of creation. It is associated with natural genesis. It was on the sixth day that we see the “full accomplishment of natural activities.”⁶³ For Maximus

⁵⁹ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 174.

⁶⁰ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 174.

⁶¹ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1116C.

⁶² *Amb* 10 PG 91:1116C.

⁶³ *Cap Gnos* 1.55.

this is not only an image of natural creation in the beginning but for the fulfillment of created natures. Growth in natural virtue belongs to the sixth day, which “reveals the principle of being of things.”⁶⁴ This natural movement, though it moves creatures according to the way they were made, including rational creatures and is “a symbol of practical activity”⁶⁵ are actually the accomplishment of God since it was God who wrote this movement into the logoi.⁶⁶ Movement according to being corresponds with movement according to the essence of a created being but is characterized by potential, not actualization of this essence.⁶⁷ Loudovikos understands this as an affirmation of the goodness of creation itself as well as God’s goodness. The creation is complete in and of itself but has the potential for spiritual growth.⁶⁸

Well-being is likened to the seventh day which is “the fulfillment and rest of the natural activities of those who contemplate the ineffable knowledge.”⁶⁹ This day begins the cessation of natural movement and the beginnings of created beings moving according to a divinized tropos. Though this day is not used to denote the final rest of deification in God, the Confessor’s use of “rest” calls to mind the seemingly contradictory “ever-moving repose” we discussed previously. The day of rest is also the pivotal day of human activity. It corresponds to the movement of conversion. This is an active day because it includes the choice to enter into the rest of the Sabbath.⁷⁰ It is at this stage which rational beings freely make use of “the potential of nature,

⁶⁴ *Cap Gnos* 1.55 and 1.56.

⁶⁵ *Cap Gnos* 1.57.

⁶⁶ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1116B.

⁶⁷ *Amb* 65 PG 91:1392A. We assume here that when Maximus speaks of actualization, he does so in a non-contradictory manner, not speaking about natural movement as such but the movement that ultimately finds rest in God. In other words, even the accomplishing of the natural capacity of motion is only a foretaste of what is possible through deification, a mode that lies beyond the capability of nature alone.

⁶⁸ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 80.

⁶⁹ *Cap Gnos* 1.55.

⁷⁰ *Amb* 65 PG 91:1392C.

either according to nature or against nature.”⁷¹ The activity of conversion, choosing well-being, movement according to nature that leads beyond itself, is the moment of freedom.⁷² It is also the opportunity for the misuse of this freedom, which would bar the creature from entering into well-being “the misuse of natural powers” which “necessarily leads to their destruction.”⁷³ This intermediate mode is characterized by free action while the two opposite it (being and eternal-being) are characterized by God’s own action.⁷⁴ Loudovikos draws a direct correlation between this mode and the spiritual state of the baptized who have freely chosen to proleptically place themselves in a life beyond natural life, a simultaneous reception of grace and a putting of that grace into action.⁷⁵ The free choice to enter into well-being can be understood as the moment when the divine tropos begins to grow within the creature and sets it on the path to eternal-being.

The culmination of deification, eternal-being, is a sharing in the eternal eighth day. This is the “ineffable mystery of the eternal well-being of things.”⁷⁶ The one who has been found worthy of this eternal day “becomes himself God by deification.”⁷⁷ Maximus presents this day in all of its eschatological splendor. It is the “perpetual day, ... the unalloyed, all-shining presence of God, which comes about after things in motion have come to rest.”⁷⁸ This state of eternal well-being is confirmed by Maximus to be a participation in God, who gives those within it “a share in Himself.”⁷⁹ This sharing, again, is not according to the nature of the created being but is

⁷¹ *Amb* 65 PG 91:1392C.

⁷² *Amb* 65 PG 91:1392C.

⁷³ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1116C.

⁷⁴ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1116B.

⁷⁵ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 81.

⁷⁶ *Cap Gnos* 1.56.

⁷⁷ *Cap Gnos* 1.54.

⁷⁸ *Amb* 64 PG 91:1392D.

⁷⁹ *Amb* 64 PG 91:1392D.

solely the action of God according to grace.⁸⁰ Loudovikos attributes all that Maximus says about deification to this final mode of being: herein is the Resurrection and ever-moving repose that is facilitated by participative theandric unity.⁸¹

The communion between the created and uncreated is brought about due to the change in tropoi according to the logoi of being, well-being, and eternal well-being. The Confessor ascribes the being and eternal-being to God (which he calls the “extremes”) while allowing the drama of freedom to unfold in the middle term of “well-being.”⁸² In citing God as the active agent of the first and last stages, does the Confessor seek to bracket the second mode affected by freedom or as the sole place where created freedom can be exercised? Tollefsen cautions against taking an absolute stance here. To affirm that the effects of freedom are limited to well-being would be problematic since eternal-being would no longer be connected to the free choice of the creature. Instead, the result of free decision carries into the mode of eternal being. Eternal being, be it well-being or ill-being is the result of the decision for or against conversion. “The quality of this eternal existence is open to [humanity’s] own influence.”⁸³ This dynamic is consistent with Maximus’ dedication to freedom. Rather than uncoupling eternal being from the results of free choice, deification includes the permanentizing of free decisions. The final stage is the deification of the created being that has already chosen well-being. To better communicate this, Tollefsen encourages a combination of the final two modes, already found in Maximus’ reflection, calling the mode of deification “eternal well-being.”⁸⁴

⁸⁰ *De Char* 3.25. While Maximus indeed does in this passage mark eternal-being as the action of grace, Tollefsen cautions against limiting the understanding of grace to this state as though grace were not active in the others. Tollefsen suggests that Maximus’ understanding of grace includes the original creation and that in the redemption, grace “brings the participation of God on to higher levels of communication through God’s activity.” See Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 172.

⁸¹ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 81.

⁸² *Amb* 10 PG 91:1116B.

⁸³ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 173.

⁸⁴ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 173.

Bradshaw reflects on how this process as a whole showcases freedom's involvement in the shaping of the *tropos* of logoi that lasts eternally. The logoi have an initial mode by which they move naturally. The freedom of the creature gives specificity to the mode by which the logoi are actualized. The creature shapes the mode of the logoi as one responding in the course of a dialogue.⁸⁵ While the logoi themselves remain intact, the trajectory upon which the created being travels is forever shaped by this freedom. Beyond a simple affirmation or denial of well-being, creaturely response changes the mode in a way that is particular to that response. The mode and path by which the logoi have had their *tropos* modified by the response of created beings determines whether and how those logoi are regathered into eternity.⁸⁶

C. Deification and Human Freedom

Maximus is best known for his formulation and defense of dyotheletism, the proposition that there were two wills (*thelema*) in Christ which correspond to Christ's two natures. The controversy gripped Christendom, threatening the already fragile unity between East and West. It was this issue that led the Byzantine monk to ally himself with the Pope in the hope of winning over his countrymen. Ultimately, dyotheletism would be accepted by the Church, both East and West at the Third Council of Constantinople (681) but not before Maximus was banished from the debate through exile and the grotesque punishment of having his right hand and tongue cut off so that he was incapable of writing and speaking against monothelism. The conviction that this formulation of Christological wills was true earned Maximus the title of Confessor.

The development of neo-Chalcedonian dyotheletism is one of the Confessor's central contributions to theology. Maximus' definitive formulations of this view were cast in the

⁸⁵ Bradshaw, "St. Maximus on Time," 93.

⁸⁶ Bradshaw, "St. Maximus on Time," 93.

crucible of the ongoing debate and grew in nuance and clarity over the course of the events that led to his persecution. It would be a mistake, however, to bracket the Confessor's understanding of dyotheletism from the rest of his thought. As we have seen, Maximus' theological worldview is intricately woven so that each part is consistent with the others. His thought on the wills of Christ is no different. We can repeat as we have already said in relation to Maximus' description of deification here: what the Confessor writes about the hypostatic union is manifest in the ecclesial reality of His Body. Our reflections on the wills of Christ are relevant to Maximus' anthropological outlook. We saw this in the previous section, regarding how the process of deification has the exercise of human freedom at its center and gives rise to the possibility of human free choice setting the eternal tropos of the creation that participates in God. Prior to the point of conversion that is the entrance into "well-being", Maximus demonstrates that freedom is the central characteristic of the human person. We will explore the place of human freedom in Maximus' anthropology before delving into the far more complex issue of how that freedom is manifest in Christ and how theandric activity reflects back upon human freedom.

A common exercise in the writings of the Church Fathers was to inquire into the meaning of Genesis 1:26 in which God creates humanity in his "own image and likeness." Speculation on the image and likeness include the human capacity for reason, the possibility of good action, or the ability to love. For Maximus, the image of God is made manifest in the expression of freedom. God gives humanity the ability to be like God who has the freedom to self-actualize and self-determine.⁸⁷ For Maximus, the image and the likeness of Genesis 1:26 can be separated into two distinct realities. The image tells us how humanity has been created. Humanity has the power to decide their own fate through the exercise of freedom. Whether humanity conforms to

⁸⁷ Harper, *The Analogy of Love*, 112.

the “likeness” of God or not is contingent upon the human choice to follow the logoi. Though the exercise of human freedom according to the logoi constitutes the culmination of action consonant with human nature, we cannot understand even this free movement as independent of God. As we noted in our discussion of deification in the natural phase of “being”, God is responsible for the genesis of human nature and the possibility of virtuous action which is nothing more or less than the human person’s adherence to that same created nature. The realization of God’s likeness is then both the result of free human action and humanity’s participation in the immanent God, written in their nature according to the logoi.⁸⁸

Freedom is pointed toward the same goal of deification. The nascent potential of humanity to participate in God must be affirmed by self-determining activity. That free choice and divine action are needed does not make the process of growing in God’s likeness less “natural” for Maximus. Harper provides an acute summary of this dynamic:

Although the human essence or nature already iconizes God’s essential attributes, it does so *in potentia* and must be activated through self-determination in order to properly exist like God, voluntarily receiving from divinity at each stage of the natural maturation process what it needs to continue eschatological movement.⁸⁹

Nichols points out that this should not be understood as a rote obedience to God but as true acts of human self-determination.⁹⁰ Maximus describes how God values the “shining thoughts of the

⁸⁸ Harper, *The Analogy of Love*, 113.

⁸⁹ Harper, *The Analogy of Love*, 114.

⁹⁰ Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 162.

mind” which can be no less than the free contemplation of divine things as precious “pearls.”⁹¹ The free exercise of the human intellect is for Maximus a holy act.⁹² Recall that God’s own contemplation of creation, including humanity, is according to the logoi of providence and judgment. These logoi allow beings to move, even according to their logoi, in a manner that respects their God given freedom. In Maximus’ cosmology, God conceives of and contemplates individual beings as moving within contingent possibility. This is related to freedom. Though the realization of the eschatological state is a unified one, the logoi represent the relationship of God to each individual creature. The exercise of freedom in the response to the logoi introduces a tropic variance that is as particular to the creature as the logoi they were created by. The eschatological potential set by God is exercised such that each creature reaches the fulfillment of that potential in its own way.⁹³ This uniqueness does not declare the free creature self-sufficient. Even in freedom there is an interplay between the creature and God. Charity, for instance, can only be practiced in union with God. The free human response of charity is then incapable of expression without divine action and we see in it the dynamism of human-divine action once again. Garrigues calls this synergy a “co-acting” that both divinizes humanity through participation, growing in likeness of God, while “not suppressing distinctively human activity.”⁹⁴

To complete the maximian interpretation of Genesis 1:26 would be to affirm that the potentiality for free action, the image, is the same in all rational creatures. The response, the formation of the likeness in each creature is in a way so particular that each response is its own unique expression of God’s likeness.

⁹¹ *Amb* 10 PG 91:1204A.

⁹² *Amb* 10 PG 91:1204A.

⁹³ Harper, *The Analogy of Love*, 193.

⁹⁴ Garrigues, *Maxime le Confesseur: La charite, avenir divin de l’homme*, 184. trans in Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 215.

Maximus' understanding of human freedom carries over into his Christological reflections on freedom. The capacity for freedom and self-determination is therein reaffirmed as the way humanity carries the image character of God.⁹⁵ The discussion of freedom thus far has not necessitated the tracing of Maximus' definition of creaturely freedom as such. The use of these terms in a Christological context requires that we delve into the nuances of his definitions. For instance, to this point we have spoken of freedom in the overarching sense of *autexousia* or "power over oneself," self-determination.⁹⁶ According to McFarland, Maximus' use of the term is meant to communicate "individual ownership of responsibility for action."⁹⁷ Despite how Maximus' depiction of deification intertwines human freedom into dialogue with divine principles, this overarching concept is consonant of the sort of self-determination necessary for moral praise and blame. Beyond this equivocal sense, Maximus' usage differentiates between specific types of freedom.

The key distinction is between natural will (*thelema physikon*) and gnostic will (*thelema gnomikon*). Natural will, as the name suggests, corresponds to what is proper to rational beings by nature. Human natural will is intrinsic to human nature. For Maximus, the natural human will is what defines us as human agents.⁹⁸ This is the *autexousia* that plays a crucial role in the process of deification and it is according to this determination that the tropic response to the logoi is made.

The gnostic will is often contrasted with the natural will though sometimes in ways that it is consonant with the natural will and others where it is juxtaposed as a corruption of the natural

⁹⁵ Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 163.

⁹⁶ Ian A. McFarland, "The Theology of Will," in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Paul Allen and Brownen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 520.

⁹⁷ McFarland, "The Theology of Will," 520.

⁹⁸ McFarland, "The Theology of Will," 521.

will. In either case, gnostic will is understood as corresponding to a mode of the human will. It is properly speaking a tropos not a logos.

The moral character of gnostic will is debatable. In the most ambivalent sense of the gnostic will, it can be understood as an “a particular instance of willing, oriented to some real or imagined good.”⁹⁹ The natural will then is the inherent ability to choose. The gnostic will would be individual modes of that will as distinct choices are made.

Andreopoulos interprets Maximus’ reflection on the gnostic will as a reality that did not exist prior to the fall. Sin has broken the natural will, now in need of restoration, the mode of human willing is trapped in the gnostic will.¹⁰⁰ The gnostic will consists of humanity acting in an indefinite manner via subjective opinions and requires continuous deliberation. Yet even in this negative valuation of the gnostic will, the mode of the will becomes the epicenter of deification. It is in this exercise of will that the decision for or against the logoi – for or against conversion – takes place.¹⁰¹

In both interpretations, gnostic will is the formulation of particular decisions based upon human opinion, which is the literal meaning of *gnome*.¹⁰² The formation of this opinion would not be enough for an act of gnostic will. It is accompanied by deliberation and is consummated in judgment, the moment of decision.¹⁰³ The gnostic will has the capacity to either follow the divine will or become divergent from it.¹⁰⁴ Though Andreopoulos and others emphasize the

⁹⁹ (*D Pyrr*, PG 91:308C cited in McFarland, “The Theology of Will,” 520.

¹⁰⁰ Andreopoulos, “Eschatology in Maximus the Confessor,” 329.

¹⁰¹ Andreopoulos, “Eschatology in Maximus the Confessor,” 329. Andreopoulos notes that the restoration of the human will to its proper mode is a task that is taken up principally by the Logos in Christ on the level of ontology rather than a moral level.

¹⁰² McFarland, “The Theology of Will,” 522. Maximus sees *gnome* as a multifaceted word, citing twenty-eight meanings of the word in Scriptures and the Fathers. See Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 171. citing *D Pyrr* PG 91:312AC.

¹⁰³ *Opusc.* 1, PG 91:16; cf 21D-24A, trans McFarland, 522.

¹⁰⁴ *Opusc.* 3 PG 91:56B.

fallen state of the will, this does not necessarily mean that the fruit of gnostic deliberation always produces incorrect decisions.

We are finally approaching the level of nuance present in the Christological discussions on Christ's human and divine will. As a preamble and final word about the human will in an anthropological sense, we ask an eschatological question: what happens to the natural human will as a result of the process of deification? Maximus consistently teaches that the hypostatic union includes all that is proper to the human nature. The natural will is an intrinsic part of that human nature, united to the second person of the Trinity. As the human nature is united to the divine in the hypostatic union so "we too... will come to be in the world above ... undergoing no change whatsoever in nature."¹⁰⁵ Clearly this includes also human natural will, the *autexousia*, of self-determination. The Confessor confirms as much in *Amb 7* when describing deification and the subjection of all things to God's will: "Let not these words disturb you, for I am not implying the destruction of our power of self-determination..." but that humanity's will in mode of deification would be moved by desire for God.¹⁰⁶ Maximus' eschatological vision includes free human action, self-determination, in the eschaton. This freedom united to the divine freedom and resulting in theandric activity would include human nature but move in a manner that is beyond its natural power. The permanence of this free movement in God, the ever-moving-repose discussed in the previous chapter, would be an elevated form of freedom, not a limitation of freedom. This freedom would be delineated by God's will for creation encapsulated in the *logoi* of providence and judgment.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ *Amb 31* PG 91:1280D.

¹⁰⁶ *Amb 7* PG 91:1076B-C.

¹⁰⁷ For a comparison of unbridled freedom founded in indifference versus freedom as a concept that elevates rational creatures to the goal of excellence see Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomaas Noble (Washington DC: The Catholic University Press, 1995).

Deified freedom is exemplified first in Christ. Only on account of the hypostatic union is human nature, inclusive of freedom, compatible with deification. What then of the gnostic will? Maximus' stance on this issue evolved as his combat with Monothelitism intensified. Before the monothelite controversy Maximus included the gnostic will in Christ. The inclusion had a soteriological purpose, Christ was the only one capable of restoring human deliberation.¹⁰⁸ As a result of a prevailingly negative evaluation of *gnome* within the debates, the Confessor made what Blowers calls a "great reversal," which denied that Christ's will was expressed in a gnostic mode.¹⁰⁹ He settled on a definition that gnostic will is fallen and ambivalent which was incompatible with the hypostatic union.

Speculation that this mode of the will was due to the Fall was not the only reason Maximus changed his view on *gnome*. Couching the problem in his distinctive terminology, Maximus understands that the composite hypostasis of the human/divine union would have been incapable of the gnostic mode. This mode of willing, he argues, is not only proper to human natural will but to the human hypostasis as a whole. The whole human person corresponds to the human logoi. Since Christ's humanity participates in the hypostatic union and cannot be summed up as a human hypostasis, the gnostic mode of willing does not apply.¹¹⁰ The Confessor's rejection of *gnome* in Christ also has a soteriological logic. The gnostic will, vacillating about which decision to make, would not have been capable of bringing about the stabilization of the human natural will - it would have lacked the resolve to do so.¹¹¹ Instead,

¹⁰⁸ Paul M. Blowers, "Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus on Gnostic Will (γνώμη) in Christ: Clarity and Ambiguity," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 63, no. 3 (2012): 47.

¹⁰⁹ Blowers, "Gnostic Will in Christ," 47.

¹¹⁰ Blowers, "Gnostic Will in Christ," 47.

¹¹¹ Blowers, "Gnostic Will in Christ," 47.

Maximus holds that Christ has a natural human will that is at once deified and always obedient to the Divine will.

The Confessor's stance on this issue has sparked some soteriological concerns among maximian scholars. That Maximus' mature writings reflect a rejection of *gnome* in Christ is almost universally agreed upon. The concerns center around Gregory of Nyssa's adage "what is not assumed is not redeemed."¹¹² Despite the Confessor's argument that the *gnomic* will is a *tropos* of the will rather than the nature of the human will, the worry is if Christ did not deliberate within himself then the process of human deliberation has not been redeemed. The description of the *gnomic tropos* as the making of particular decisions compounds the issue since that is the only mode in which humanity experiences freedom prior to deification and obedience.

Ian McFarland's interpretation of Maximus' teaching changes the register in such a way that avoids these difficulties. Instead of focusing on the *gnomic* will as the making of particular choices, McFarland highlights the Confessor's emphasis on investigation and deliberation as actions characteristic of *gnome*.¹¹³ This places the issue firmly in the bounds of knowledge. If *gnome* is an attempt to form an opinion about the good through investigation and deliberation then it would not be fitting for Christ to have it since the hypostatic union would mean that Christ always had knowledge of the good and would always act in an obedient manner in accordance with the good. McFarland explains that this would have made Christ's human willing "qualitatively different" than what any other human being would have experienced yet without any change in Christ's human nature.¹¹⁴ The difference here is that all of Christ's

¹¹² *Ep* 101, PG 37:181C. Among those who hold that Maximus' position is at least potentially problematic include Blowers, Raymund Schwager, and Basil Struder. Cf Blowers, "Gnomic Will in Christ," 48.

¹¹³ McFarland, "The Theology of Will," 526. See *D. Pyrr*, PG91:309A

¹¹⁴ McFarland, "The Theology of Will," 526.

particular decisions are formed in accordance with the good because Christ could see the good clearly and had no need to investigate and deliberate.

The Agony in the Garden (Lk 22:43-44) is the key biblical text for the Confessor. The way *gnome* is defined plays a crucial role as to whether Maximus' use of this passage clarifies the redemption of the human will or leads to the bespoke problematic. Understanding *gnome* as vacillation and deliberation leads Blowers to question whether we could understand Christ's agony in the Garden as redemptive of the human will.¹¹⁵ For Blowers, the appearance of this vacillation in Christ makes the event at Gethsemane unique and he questions whether denying *gnome* honors the drama present in the biblical witness.¹¹⁶ McFarland's analysis allows for there to be a real drama, a true struggle of obedience in Christ without the presence of *gnome*.¹¹⁷ The Agony in the Garden demonstrates for McFarland an exercise of the human will in Christ that corresponds to the acceptance of his vocation.¹¹⁸ There is in Christ a drama that is based upon his true human nature, the fear of death, and not reliant on the darkness of the human intellect caused by sin. This human nature is reconciled to the divine nature in the exercise of the human will to become obedient to the divine will. There must be drama, a certain tension. As a response to the monothelite, human will must be conformed to the divine will. Maximus' theological opponents held that the human will would not have struggled since it had already been overcome by the divine will in a way that would have made obedience compulsive.¹¹⁹ The crux of the issue

¹¹⁵ Blowers, "Gnomic Will in Christ," 48. To be fair to Blowers' argument, he is attempting to reconcile the exclusion of *gnome* with Maximus' earlier use of the same mode as a reconciliatory avenue for the human will in Christ.

¹¹⁶ Blowers, "Gnomic Will in Christ," 47.

¹¹⁷ McFarland, "The Theology of Will," 526.

¹¹⁸ McFarland, "The Theology of Will," 526.

¹¹⁹ McFarland, "The Theology of Will," 529.

for Maximus is that it is against human nature to will death and therefore could only be chosen as a response to the call made by the divine will.¹²⁰

Once more, we see Maximus' Christology as a means for working out the problems of deification. If we understand *gnomic* will as the result of imperfect knowledge which would require deliberation then we can understand that as the human person is enlightened by God's knowledge and will manifest in the logoi, they are able to more easily choose the good, a lessening of this *gnomic* mode. Ultimately, deification means that the human will no longer relies on fallible judgments but is capable of the same agency that is inherent to its nature. Gethsemane as an example for the interplay between divine and human wills writ large brings some conclusions to the fore that we can make based upon Christ's redemptive suffering. The process of deification is not bereft of drama. The struggle is not one in which the human is easily conformed to the divine but includes the divine call and transformation through suffering. The present example shows that Christ's obedient response was not without suffering. This obedience does not deprive Christ's humanity of *autexousia* yet the exercise of this freedom to act beyond his human nature produced agony. Freedom is both preserved and surpassed by deification.

D. Deification and the Body

Lars Thunberg succinctly expresses Maximus' approach to the human body, the Confessor does not condone "a departure from the lower elements in man, but a restoration and reintegration of man as a whole."¹²¹ The mission of restoration is an affirmation of the goodness of creation, particularly in this case the goodness of the whole human nature and all of which it

¹²⁰ McFarland, "The Theology of Will," 529.. See *D Pyrr* PG 91:293C.

¹²¹ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 327.

consists. Within the context of Ancient Greek thought, this view of the body offers a distinctly Christian approach. Whereas other thinkers in the Hellenic tradition may see the body as dead matter, brought to life by the soul, for Maximus the body itself has a participation in the Logos and is capable of being deified.¹²²

As a general point of his anthropology, Maximus includes the body within his schema of deification because it is an inalienable element of the human nature. Returning to *Amb* 7, Maximus describes deified life as God acting to the whole of the human nature as the soul acts to the body.¹²³ This does not cancel out the existing relationship between soul and body, both are retained. Here, Maximus is describing the sort of life, the mode of life, that will be lived by the deified. This relationship is one in which God permeates the human nature in a mysterious way so that we can no longer speak of the deified as living life in a natural manner.¹²⁴ This life is not less than a natural one but is beyond it. The Confessor emphatically includes both the soul and the body as participants in this dynamic, the soul receiving “immutability” and the body receiving “immortality.”¹²⁵

Christologically, the body plays an important role in fulfilling God’s desire to be embodied in all of creation. Once again, the process of deification and Maximus’ Christological teaching are reflexive: Christ in assuming human nature has in his hypostasis a wholly deified human body. This is not accidental but serves a crucial purpose. The deified body of Christ is not an obstacle for apprehending the Logos but is the divinely chosen means by which the Logos is definitively revealed. This character carries over to human corporeality as a whole which

¹²² Harper, *The Analogy of Love*, 122.

¹²³ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1088C.

¹²⁴ See *Amb* 7 PG 91:1088BC.

¹²⁵ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1088C.

becomes “the organ for [the divine glory’s] manifestation and active presence throughout the whole cosmos.”¹²⁶ Deification transforms the whole person, including the body, through participation in God and is expressed in the living out of the virtues, primarily charity. For Cooper, Maximus’ description of the presence of God in the body as the incarnation of love gives the human body a sacramental character.¹²⁷ The body becomes a communicative means for charity and as deified persons interact with others, they enable the latter to share in deification.¹²⁸

Christ’s body and therefore all human bodies acquire a theophanic character through deification. This truth underscores the difference between Maximus and those who downplay or reject the body. Cooper notes that this is all the more extraordinary given the Confessor’s ascetic context. The strict discipline of the body leads to the understanding that the body itself was the “most contingent and mutable object of creation.”¹²⁹ The monastic experience of tempering bodily desire and the struggle with bodily sins led to the temptation to characterize the body as a source of difficulty. Following the logic of Maximus’ thought on the Incarnation and deification, Cooper writes “the human body-when ennobled by deification, has been selected by God in his own good counsel as the primary means of his self-demonstration in the cosmos, and thus the high point of creation’s access to him.”¹³⁰ The deified body becomes the crossroads between the impermanence of contingent creation and the one who holds all of creation together.¹³¹

How does Maximus portray the body during the process of deification and what is its final fate once that process has been consummated? We should be clear that in his work on

¹²⁶ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 115.

¹²⁷ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 47.

¹²⁸ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 47.

¹²⁹ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 100.

¹³⁰ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 100.

¹³¹ We have already seen how Christ’s earthly body at the moment of the Transfiguration is understood by Maximus as the revelation of God in creation which corresponds to what we can post about God in a cataphatic manner. See chapter 2. Since Maximus is consistent in projecting his Christological conclusions on the rest of humanity we expect that he would posit similar revelatory potential in any fully deified human body.

deification, the majority of the Confessor's writings about the body are a proleptic expectation, the description of the body's participation in God within the context of a realized eschatology. For Maximus, there is no tension between the reality of life in God lived in the present and the age that follows. The present, proleptic, state of deification always acts as a signpost to that final consummation. It is a fitting share in that final state proper to the present. When Maximus considers the body, he does so in a way that describes deification in a pre-resurrection existence.

In his comprehensive study of the subject, Cooper explores Maximus' portrayal of the deified body. Of particular interest is how Maximus emphasizes the passivity of human bodies.¹³² Recall that in his description of the hypostatic union, human nature allows the Logos a share in passivity, particularly the ability to suffer.¹³³ In the same passage the passivity of human flesh (δια σαρκὸς φύσει παθητῆς) is emphasized.¹³⁴ There is here an instrumental use of bodily passivity by Christ to affect salvation which makes the flesh passive in the process of deification. The body then, participates in deification by becoming passive to the theandric activity affected by the graced incorporation of the whole human person in God.¹³⁵ Based upon this, we echo Cooper's conclusion that the human body is deified and expresses deification by suffering.¹³⁶ Granting to the body the role of suffering does not negate the goodness of the human body or creation as such. In suffering, the body has within itself an intrinsic martyrdom, a witness that points through its own contingency beyond being. Deified suffering is not a masochistic practice or a resignation to punishment but an active drawing close to the same mystery manifest through the crucifixion. Maximus does not speculate on the aftermath of bodily death, the apex of bodily

¹³² Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 241.

¹³³ *Amb* 5 PG 91:1060B.

¹³⁴ *Amb* 5 PG 91:1060B.

¹³⁵ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 241.

¹³⁶ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 241.

suffering, except to say that the body continues to have a share in God, no longer subject to natural processes and is wholly deified in its action.¹³⁷

E. Humanity as Microcosm

The eschatological trajectory expressed by the body through suffering cannot be separated from human nature as a whole. As a compositional unity of body and soul, humanity occupies a distinctive place within the cosmos. Thus far we have taken these elements of humanity, so to speak, in turn focusing on specific aspects of humanity including the change in tropes in deification, how that dynamic transforms freedom, and the body's role in deification. Now we turn to the unique reality of human nature as understood by the Confessor: the gathering of disparate elements of creation into union. For Maximus humanity is a microcosm. This is the central *locus* around which Lars Thunberg bases his reflection on maximian thought. Understood as a microcosm, humanity occupies a unique place in God's plan for creation:

The very fact that the things of the world are reflected in man present him with a vocation to gather them together for his and their final goal. He should relate opposite phenomena: mortal creatures with immortal creatures, rational beings with non-rational beings, etc. In this way man should function as a world in miniature, and for this reason he was created as a reflecting image of the whole cosmos.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1088C.

¹³⁸ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 73.

Christ is the first and paradigmatic realization of this vocation. Humanity can only strive to fulfill this unifying call because of Christ's recapitulative redemption, granting humanity the ability to heal the "natural fissures" in creation.¹³⁹ The Incarnation inaugurates this unitive action by first perfecting humanity in himself through the hypostatic union. Christ chose to affect this unity first because it is the building block upon which the rest of the gathering relies.

Maximus elaborates on the image of humanity as microcosm in *Mystagogia* 7. For the Confessor, the redemption of a single human being is the redemption of the whole of creation in miniature. He analogizes between the whole of creation which includes visible and invisible elements with humanity which is also visible and invisible because their nature is the unity of soul and body.¹⁴⁰ Maximus' view is that humanity represents the whole universe and perhaps more provocatively, describes the universe as a human being.¹⁴¹

The cosmos itself is like the unity of the visible and invisible in humanity because the whole cannot be teased out of the parts. The invisible belongs to the universe as much as the visible.¹⁴² This anthropomorphic analogy should not be taken to mean that creation itself forms some sort of hypostasis but that the visible and invisible, the sensible and insensible elements, belong to the same reality of the cosmos in the same way that we cannot speak of a human nature without considering the soul and body. This is tied to the cosmos' eschatological fulfillment: "The universe, as a man, will then have perished in that which can be seen, and it will be raised again—new from that which has grown old—at the resurrection that we presently await."¹⁴³ The commonality of composition becomes a commonality in resurrection. Just as humanity in

¹³⁹ *Amb* 41 PG 91:1308D.

¹⁴⁰ *Myst* 7 CCSG 33.

¹⁴¹ *Myst* 7 CCSG 33.

¹⁴² *Myst* 7 CCSG 34.

¹⁴³ *Myst* 7 CCSG 34.

deification is permeated by God's action and presence so the whole universe, likened to the same reality, will be raised in a manner wherein God's presence permeates the whole. This is Maximus' way of expressing the eschatological fulfillment of 1 Cor 15:28, that in the Resurrection, God will be all in all. It is crucial to keep the Confessor's Neo-Chalcedonianism in mind. In this final consummation he holds that the human along with the whole cosmological creation will be penetrated by the Logos without being ontologically assimilated.¹⁴⁴ The Logos does not seek to deconstruct creation or remove the individuality of the human person instead its tropos is changed to a divine one without in any way altering its being.¹⁴⁵

F. Consecration of Creation as the Vocation of Humanity

Just as the whole of creation can be conceived of as a human being that will be raised and share in eschatological fulfillment, the human person can be said to contain all of the elements of creation. Humanity contains the potential to relate with each of the five "divided elements" by virtue of the human nature.¹⁴⁶ The unity of disparate elements in humanity points toward God's original plan for the human species. God's intention was for humanity to serve as a mediator, a point of unity, for the communion between God and the cosmos. Maximus tells us that humanity is listed as the final part of God's creation with this express purpose in mind.¹⁴⁷ Humanity is to be the natural link (συνδεσμός τις φυσικὸς), the point of unity for all of creation with God.¹⁴⁸ This original difference was not due to sin but, as we reflected upon in the previous chapter, due to the natural differentiation of God's judgment. Maximus describes this original human

¹⁴⁴ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 89.

¹⁴⁵ Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 213., citing Garrigues, *Maxime le Confesseur: La charite, avenir divin de l'homme*, 169.

¹⁴⁶ *Amb* 41 91:1305B.

¹⁴⁷ *Amb* 41 PG 91:1305B.

¹⁴⁸ *Amb* 41 PG 91:1305B.

vocation as a gathering up of all of creation into one. This proceeds through a series of natural divisions (male and female, paradise and the world, heaven and earth, the sensible and the insensible) to the point where the whole of creation is brought together in a unity, “one single creation.”¹⁴⁹ Having overcome these divisions, Christ unites creation to Himself through uncreated love, overcoming the fifth and final division of created-uncreated.

Maximus tells us that this final division is overcome through Christ’s ascension. Having mediated all of the divisions in nature through uniting them to himself in the hypostatic union, Christ ascends to heaven and with him all the extremes of creation.¹⁵⁰ Maximus calls our attention to Christ’s human body “which is of the same nature and consubstantial with ours” in which Christ had already united the natures of the cosmos.¹⁵¹ In doing so Christ reveals and restores humanity’s original vocation as mediator of creation to the uncreated. Christ gathers all of creation together, “fulfilling as man ... all that He Himself as God had preordained should take place, having completed the whole plan of God the Father for us...” which allows all with a human nature to participate in that vocation once more.¹⁵²

The vocation of mediator is understood to be imprinted on the process of deification. By growing in union with God, humanity first mediates God to the human body.¹⁵³ From this point, the intent was for humanity to bring God to reside in all things in accord with nature.¹⁵⁴ The lasting result was to be a creation “drawn together into a unity as they converge around the one human nature.”¹⁵⁵ The hope for deification is not, then, a hope that is limited by the scope of

¹⁴⁹ *Amb* 41 PG 91:1308AB.

¹⁵⁰ *Amb* 41 PG 91:1305B.

¹⁵¹ *Amb* 41 PG 91 1309B.

¹⁵² *Amb* 41 PG 91:1309D.

¹⁵³ *Amb* 7, PG 91:1092B.

¹⁵⁴ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1092C.

¹⁵⁵ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1092B.

human individuality. It is not a relationship that finds its boundaries in an exclusive relationship between God and the self but by the very vocation of humanity breaks down the border between self and creation. The deification of the human person “constitutes the hope for the salvation of the whole creation.”¹⁵⁶

In every description of humanity’s vocation as mediator, Maximus notes the historical reality of sin. This reality does not annul God’s original intention but impedes it greatly. Through the misuse of freedom, humanity has become estranged from God’s original goal and intention.¹⁵⁷ Sin is movement that is discordant with the original intention of God, a contradiction of the logoi. It is a violation of human nature and vocation.¹⁵⁸ Instead of uniting creation, sinful humanity introduces new and deeper divisions. Instead of uniting what was divided, humanity “divided what was divided.”¹⁵⁹

Due to this discordant movement, we see why it is only through the Logos’ own Incarnation as a human being that humanity’s role can be once again restored. This does not mean that the Incarnation was not an original part of God’s plan. In a sense we see that God’s desire to be embodied in all of creation already points toward the intention of Incarnation. The matter at hand is that the original vocation of humanity can only be realized as a consequence of the Incarnation and redemption. The incorporation into the one Logos from which humanity exercises the power to offer God’s presence to the rest of creation, to consecrate that same creation to God, is only possible now by means of the redemption. For Maximus this redemption is intrinsically linked to membership in the Church.

¹⁵⁶ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 69. Mitralaxis also describes the role of mediator found in Maximus as a priestly role, a concept to which we will return later.

¹⁵⁷ Amb 7 PG 91:1092D.

¹⁵⁸ Amb 41, PG 91:1308C.

¹⁵⁹ Amb 41, PG 91:1308C.

G. Mediator Role Expressed Liturgically

The Church is a reflection of divine activity, bringing about the “oneness” desired by God.¹⁶⁰ The entry of the human person into the Church is an entering into union with God. Thomas Cattoi describes the Confessor’s mystagogical outlook as a “reverse-kenosis.”¹⁶¹ The self-emptying of Christ has as its mirror image the leaving of passions and attachments that is necessary to become one of Christ’s faithful to enter into the restored relationship with God facilitated by the church.

Within a liturgical framework, the Church stands as the Body of Christ and is representative of the same cosmic unity that is the goal of deification. The church does God’s unifying work through its collective actions as that body.¹⁶² The community in microcosm encapsulates the macrocosmic action of the church. The liturgical assembly unifies its individual members without confusion, surpassing all of their natural relationships and by the incorporation of those individuals acts in a corporate manner for the unification of all creation.¹⁶³ This does not only address the internal elements of humanity. The church extends its reach to non-human elements of creation. The cosmos is “another Church that is made without hands.”¹⁶⁴ The Confessor draws a direct correlation between the church “made with hands” to the cosmic church that has for itself a sanctuary and nave.¹⁶⁵ Maximus explains that the unity of the church as a building derives from the liturgical action which takes place within it: “The nave is identical to the sanctuary according to power because it is consecrated by the anaphora at the consummation of the mystagogy and, conversely the sanctuary is identical to the nave according to activity

¹⁶⁰ *Myst* CCSG 14.

¹⁶¹ Cattoi, “Liturgy as Cosmic Transformation,” 427.

¹⁶² *Myst* 1 PG 91:665C.

¹⁶³ *Myst* 1 PG 91:665B.

¹⁶⁴ *Myst* 2 PG 91:669A.

¹⁶⁵ *Myst* 2 PG 91:668D-669A.

because it is the place where the never-ending mystagogy begins.”¹⁶⁶ The church derives its unitive character from its use as place for the consecratory action and remembrance of the mysteries. As the church, the members are incorporated into a unity that outshines their differences. By gathering up members regardless of their natural differences into an indivisible union, the church does the same work that God does and with the same activity. Maximus tells us that God is the only one capable of bringing about such a union and when the church performs this action it acts as “an image relates to its archetype.”¹⁶⁷

Undoubtedly this same action takes place in the church of the cosmos in which the Confessor to identify it as a nave and sanctuary. In his translation of the text, Armstrong notes that this liturgical context grants the word *anaphora* (ἀναφορᾶ) a meaning beyond the mundane “reference” by which it is otherwise translated. Here the term can mean “offering” and in this setting refers to the Eucharistic offering of the liturgy.¹⁶⁸ We can conclude that the cosmos stands in unity with the church as an edifice in which the offering is made, an offering that brings each of these realities into unconfused unity. Thunberg calls this the Confessor’s “ecclesial vision of the world.”¹⁶⁹ The cosmos, as a macrocosmic church is the place of sacrifice and consecration. The church cannot be separated from the creation it inhabits as though it were some exterior reality. The church as described here is a “double reality” that interpenetrates and draws the cosmos into itself.¹⁷⁰ Maximus does not envision a separation between the world and the church. The church acts as a consecratory power from within not the “imposition of an omnipotent causality.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ *Myst* 2 PG 91:669A.

¹⁶⁷ *Myst* 1 PG 91:665C.

¹⁶⁸ Armstrong, ed., *Maximus the Confessor: On the Ecclesiastical Mystagogy*, 56n42.

¹⁶⁹ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 121.

¹⁷⁰ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 121.

¹⁷¹ Nichols, *The Byzantine Gospel*, 145.

Incorporating our earlier reflection on the logoi allows us to see that the cosmos as church is not simply a backdrop for this mystery but a participant in the liturgy. The liturgy is the working out in time of the right movement of the logoi embedded within creation. The double-movement of procession and conversion, which we reflected upon in an ontological context, are similarly present in the liturgical dynamic of consecration. These movements make up, as it were, two points of departure by which the Logos affects transformation. The cosmos, inseparable from the multitudinous logoi, point humanity toward the one Logos. The church, by virtue of the unity present in humanity and participation in the mediation of Christ, draws creation into one in the anaphora. The Logos meets and unites the cosmos and humanity in the one deifying liturgical act of consecration allowing for the divine tropos to not only be manifest in humanity but to become embodied in the whole of the cosmos. The church, in both senses of the image, takes on the task of its archetype, bringing the whole of creation into the unity made possible by Christ's hypostatic union.¹⁷² The result of this convertive and unitive movement is a dissolution of difference without confusion. The whole of creation manifests this liturgical unity and sings out in the one voice of the Logos which demonstrates their unity not by dissolving it but by gloriously outshining their visible distinctions.¹⁷³ Von Balthasar credits Maximus with the novel insight, absent from both Evagrius and Pseudo-Dionysius, that the whole of creation participates in the church's liturgy.¹⁷⁴ The liturgical incorporation in Christ is not done despite creation, it consists of creation expressed as "incarnational, ascetic, sacramental" creation.¹⁷⁵ The

¹⁷² Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 321.

¹⁷³ *Myst* 1 PG 91:665A.

¹⁷⁴ Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 321.

¹⁷⁵ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 251.

material diversity of creation is the instrument of consecration.¹⁷⁶ In this action the whole of creation is brought into union with Christ, it is deified. As Thunberg explains:

When, in the Church, the created multiplicity assembles around Christ, who is the only logos of the totality-assembles without confusion, but also without separation between the divine and the human, as the Chalcedonian formula states-then the Church expresses in a ‘typical’ mode (i.e. as type) one of the same principle and one of the same power of unity on the level of creation.¹⁷⁷

The influence of Chalcedon on Maximus forms a critical point for his liturgical understanding. Cattoi observes that the declaration of unity “One is Holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ,” that concludes the holy mysteries and is recorded by Maximus in *Mystagogy* 21, can sound “remarkably isochristic ... a complete erasure of difference between deified individuals” and the divinity to which they have been joined.¹⁷⁸ We have already noted multiple times that participation in the divine, the fruit of the process of deification and the goal of liturgical transformation, does not annul the nature or individuality of the creature. The preservation of identity within deification indicates two truths. First, it is God’s affirmation of the goodness of the cosmos as created. The intimacy brought about by Eucharistic participation and the transformation of the natural mode to the divine mode does not constitute the erasure of the fundamental structure of reality.¹⁷⁹ Secondly, it highlights the uniqueness of every created being.

¹⁷⁶ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 252.

¹⁷⁷ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 117.

¹⁷⁸ Cattoi, “Liturgy as Cosmic Transformation,” 432.

¹⁷⁹ Cattoi, “Liturgy as Cosmic Transformation,” 432.

Cattoi points out that even the uniqueness of created beings is a shared trait that draws them to communion.¹⁸⁰ This particularity is not a static one. The preservation of unique created beings reveals God's design, the unrepeatable logoi by which each creature in its particularity has an unrepeatable role to play within the divine plan.¹⁸¹

H. Eucharistic Reciprocity

Approaching individual participation in the cosmic action of offering the logoi back to God introduces tension between the one and the many. Maximus' whole project is unquestioningly pointed toward an eschaton in which all are united, crossing the boundaries set by the five levels of division with a shared origin in and consummation with the uncreated divinity of God. Teasing out how distinct individual beings participate within this dynamic may seem counter to the whole project. As we have seen time and again, the preservation of the individual in a fashion compatible with Chalcedonian language undergirds the Confessor's theological opus. Mitralaxis affirms that when we speak of the human person's task as mediator that we are speaking on the level of the individual: "... each and every separate otherness that is to be restored as a perfect otherness in perfect communion, and not merely to the aggregate-otherness."¹⁸² If this is the case, we must pay close attention to how Maximus views each and every individual person's developing relationship with the divine and the restorative process that happens as the result of that relationship. The ultimate unifying task is not one that wipes out this relationship but affirms it. We should also acknowledge that while Maximus' use of microcosm and speaking of the whole of creation and the church as a human would allow us to

¹⁸⁰ Cattoi, "Liturgy as Cosmic Transformation," 432.

¹⁸¹ Cattoi, "Liturgy as Cosmic Transformation," 432.

¹⁸² Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 139.

increase the scope of this dynamic beyond that of the individual, doing so tempts us to ignore the pivotal role that the relationship of individual created beings and God plays within this schema. Allowing the one to be absorbed into the many does violence to the whole project. The tension between the one and the many must remain intact.

Logoi and the Person

Loudovikos' work places the relationship between persons, human and divine, at the center of his interpretation of Maximus' theology.¹⁸³ The reframing of the Confessor's work is comprehensive, touching each aspect of maximian thought. At its core is the understanding that the nature communicated by God through the logoi is not a static reality but is presented to the person as their own "ecstatic personal vocation, rather than an immutable 'given.'"¹⁸⁴ If the logoi had been proposed by Maximus as immutable ideals that have their being apart from God, they would have exerted power over God's freedom as we discussed in chapter two. Here we will see that this would have stripped humanity of freedom as well. Instead, understood as divine wills, which rely on the response of creation for their ultimate fulfillment, the logoi are the person's "eschatological ontology."¹⁸⁵ Far from a permanent ontological character, the logoi form the basis of a vocational dialogue between creator and created, an eschatological dialogue.¹⁸⁶ Loudovikos underscores Maximus' eschatological emphasis. What makes the Confessor's thought stand out is not so much how he describes the origin of the logoi but the process of their eschatological fulfillment.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ See Loudovikos' *A Eucharistic Ontology*. Within this work, Loudovikos contextualizes the whole of Maximus' thought within this interpersonal relationship, a critical step for adapting the Confessor's work for the conversation regarding personal vocation, lay or otherwise.

¹⁸⁴ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 8.

¹⁸⁵ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 4.

¹⁸⁶ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 4.

¹⁸⁷ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 4.

The logos/tropos dynamic demonstrates that God creates with the intention of having a dialogue with his creation. Creation is not intended to be a monologic procession/return to God of an already perfect creation simply offered in return the same way it was received. The counter example of the return of an already perfect creation evokes the biblical image of the fearful steward of Mt 25:14-30 who does nothing creative with the gifts entrusted to him by his master. Dialogue is a risky notion that places the fate of the logoi in the hands of created beings. It also creates a possibility alien to teleological fatalism: the dialogic view holds that creation interacts with the logoi in such a manner that there is reciprocity between creation and its creator. Mitralaxis calls this dialogue “a primary characteristic of existence, an ontological category.”¹⁸⁸

This dialogue is radically personal, happening between the individual and God but it is in no way conceptually independent. Maximus’ liturgical outlook understands this dialogue as the individual’s participation in the collective liturgical movement. The dialogue is characterized first and foremost as Eucharistic. The center of the eucharistic mystery is a personal dialogue characterized by the “exchange of gifts.”¹⁸⁹ This exchange is the *raison d’être* for Maximus’ insistence on the dissoluble character of personal individuality.

In *Ad Thalassius*, Maximus describes the logos/tropos dynamic as a eucharistic reciprocation of gifts given.¹⁹⁰ Not only the logoi embedded within human nature but the whole of the created logoi discoverable in creation through the exercise of wisdom are received by the human person as a gift from God.¹⁹¹ The eucharistic movement is immediately recognizable: the inner principles (logoi) of all created things, once they are known become gifts offered back to

¹⁸⁸ Mitralaxis, *Ever-Moving Repose*, 87.

¹⁸⁹ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 37.

¹⁹⁰ *Ad Thal* PG 90:481C trans in Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 38.

¹⁹¹ *Ad Thal* PG 90:481C.

God and have a transformative effect allowing the human person to reveal “in himself through his life all the majesty of the divine wisdom which is invisibly present in existent things.”¹⁹² It is important here to underscore that Maximus does not create a boundary to this dynamic that ends at the person. What is offered is not only the elements of creation that are manifest and participate in the person’s own body, the individual microcosm of humanity. The individual eucharistic mediation is an offering of all created reality in which that person discerns the logoi.

Treating creation as a gift that could be offered to God exposes Maximus’ logic to a critique that threatens to reduce dialogue to monologue. The concept of offering creation as a gift to God seems to forget that the creation itself has God as its origin. Would it not be the case that ultimately what is happening here is only a nominal “offering,” a return to God of that which already belongs to God in a way that only appears to include authentic personal involvement? Maximus tells us that God is the only one capable of creating according to the logoi. Attempting to change the logoi leads to the destruction of that entity. God is ultimately the source and destination of all creation that has its origin in and moves according to the logoi. It would seem then, that the only offering creation could make to God would be a sinful innovation of the logoi. How then can we speak of creation being offered to God in any sense of the word?

The key lies in Maximus’ understanding that God offers creation to us as a free and authentic gift. Created things are not only gifts in appearance. Maximus’ God gives freely with no ontological requirement that the gifts be reciprocated. The nature of creation and its ontological distance from God allows God to bestow creation as a gift to itself. A gift truly distinct from God, authentically other. As the gift is received, God recognizes the creature’s legitimate possession of that gift as its own. God’s free offering is a relinquishing of these gifts

¹⁹² *Ad Thal* PG 90:481C.

to creatures. The Confessor tells us that this is a demonstration of God's goodness and provides us with an ability to offer an authentic gift back to God, not out of obligation but out of freedom: "[God] accepts His own gifts as offerings from us, reckoning the whole contribution as ours."¹⁹³ The giving of gifts does not happen on the level of appearance. God gives authentically and becomes a participant in the relationship that can now openly receive gifts. The giver becomes the receiver of gifts, recognizing an "indebtedness" for the gifts coming from creation.¹⁹⁴ By treating what has been given as exclusively belonging to humanity, God can then participate in this Eucharistic relationship in a truly dialogical manner.¹⁹⁵ Without this element, the communion would be one sided, a participation of creation in the creator and not a communal exchange. This dynamic becomes the guarantor of creation's freedom. Communion with God, received by God as gift, is in no way obligatory or compulsory.

The Confessor grounds God's ability to give and to receive in His complete independence from creation. Since God is totally other, beyond the created world and essentially self-sufficient, God has no need of what creation can offer.¹⁹⁶ The return offering of the *logoi*, the *tropoi* changed by their actualization within created beings, are received as gifts. They do not return to God out of a matter of necessity because God by nature has "no need of any of these things."¹⁹⁷ Understood as a gift to be received and given, maximian cosmology reveals creation itself to be profoundly dialogical.¹⁹⁸ Its whole purpose is to facilitate the Eucharistic giving and receiving of gifts.

¹⁹³ *Various texts* 3.7 PG 90:1261C trans in Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 39.

¹⁹⁴ *Various texts* 3.7 PG 90:1261C.

¹⁹⁵ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 39.

¹⁹⁶ *Ad Thal* 90:480A trans in Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 39.

¹⁹⁷ *Ad Thal* PG 90:480A Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 40.

¹⁹⁸ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 66.

This Eucharistic exchange is inconceivable without the person. The person as God's dialogical partner is the hinge upon which Maximus' ontological system is built.¹⁹⁹ Loudovikos develops a specific definition of the person based on maximian thought. "The person is the spiritual event in which the inner principles of entities are made into man's 'gift's offered' to God and God's 'gifts bestowed' on man, circulating between created persons, thus fulfilling their natural function."²⁰⁰ Understood under the hermeneutic of gift, all of creation partakes in this interpersonal exchange.

I. Becoming, Micro-Eschatology, and Micro-Dialogue

The broad categories of "person" and "gift" once again tempt a macrocosmic understanding of maximian thought. Contemplating these ideas in such a categorical manner may evoke imagery of the whole creation, represented as a composite other, exchanging gifts with the divine. Loudovikos, following Maximus' writings closely, emphasizes that for this system to avoid breaking down into a matter of necessity, it must be built around the individual responses of distinct persons.²⁰¹ The logoi are offered by God as gift and proposition to creation writ large, yes, but more importantly as proposals that elicit responses from individual rational beings. Freedom to respond, to self-determine and have an influence over the eternal trajectory of the logoi is the key moment of receiving the gift and reciprocity. Without this, the individual exercise of the freedom of persons, we could not understand the logoi as God's wills. They

¹⁹⁹ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 96.

²⁰⁰ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 96-7.

²⁰¹ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 64.

would become aligned with the ideals of Greek philosophy, not awaiting a response from creatures but by effecting what they represent by their compulsive power.²⁰²

Responses in freedom are precisely the pivotal moment of deification, as we outlined in the journey of being, well-being, eternal well-being above. Maximus' ontological vision is not one of static being but of a constant progress toward becoming. Though the person only moves toward deification by responding affirmatively to the proposals of the logoi, they do so by the mode of free response and not out of necessity. A fated natural teleology would affirm every critique of onto-theology and ultimately lead to the pantheistic assimilation of persons Maximus guards against.²⁰³ Basing the process of deification upon becoming rescues it from a fated following of nature.

The distinction between being and becoming is a distinction between teleology and eschatology. Maximus' view is a thoroughly eschatological one wherein creation itself is not a finalized perfection. It does not contain its *telos* in itself but by virtue of the logoi is placed on an eschatological trajectory beyond its nature. This eschatology becomes manifest to each and every individual creature through the logoi. The proposals of the logoi to individual beings make up for that being their own, unique, "micro-eschatology."²⁰⁴ God's offer for fulfillment and participation with the divine nature is proposed to specific individuals awaiting their free response. These principles set up an eschatological relationship: "each logos is able to represent the Logos Himself to the actual being in question."²⁰⁵ The discernment of the logoi, growth in virtue, and the response to the call to deification are all encapsulated in an eschatology for that

²⁰² Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 64.

²⁰³ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 202.

²⁰⁴ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 117.

²⁰⁵ Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 80.

particular being. By offering a personal, unique eschatology, Loudovikos writes that God presents Himself as a “God for them” whose offering is a free gift of love.²⁰⁶

The call and response take the form of a micro-dialogue between God and each unique person.²⁰⁷ Dialogic reciprocity entails a reception of gifts and an offering of gifts through the logoi by the transposition of their tropoi. Deification is eternal participation in this dialogue, the encounter between the uncreated God and created persons which in turn effects the tropos of those created beings that surround that person. The transposition of the logoi found in creation to the new divine mode of life is not an accident of these individual micro-dialogues. It is constitutive of those same micro-dialogues. The logoi discerned in nature are the currency of gift through which the human participation in the divine is made possible. Without the logoi of created things, both within humanity itself and those logoi that have been discerned, there would be no recognition of being coming from God. There would be no free turning of the person toward God in well-being and thus no eternal affirmation of that choice in eternal-well-being. Creation distinct from the human person is a required element for this micro-dialogic relationship. Without creation there is no gift to be received or given.

These micro-dialogues demonstrate how each human person engages the vocational call as mediator. This mediation does not happen in spite of the natural state of the cosmos but in fulfillment of those natural logoi that exist within the cosmos. The cosmos as created is already good yet unable to reach eschatological completeness without this task of mediation, one that changes the mode from a natural existence to a divine one. This dynamic would be impossible without the freedom of self-determination that constitutes the response to the logoi. The

²⁰⁶ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 117.

²⁰⁷ Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 117.

individual gathering up of the logoi and the offering to God of logoi as a gift from humanity shows how the goodness of creation and the task of mediation complement one another.

Understood as the same dynamic that is the process of deification, dialogic reciprocity is the act of participation in the divine. Deification is also God's ultimate ratification of each individual person.²⁰⁸ Even at the pinnacle of deification, the human person retains the Chalcedonian quality of being distinct from God without separation on the level of nature. Eucharistic dialogical reciprocity can continue eternally because the natural logoi of created beings are not assimilated into God.

The result of each individual dialogue is not a state of isolation of the person with God but of communion. The gifts given through dialogic reciprocity are not given to God as an overarching principle but to God in the person of the Logos, Jesus Christ. The unique exchange of gifts, though remaining distinct, are gathered in Christ to the one hypostatic union that allows for the created to participate in the uncreated. Each unique micro-dialogue then leads the individuated unity of body and soul that constitutes a particular humanity to union with Christ, union with church, union with the cosmos. The ineffable unity of all things in Christ, the eschatological fulfillment of deification, preserves the particularity of the person and their freedom yet unites it to every other micro-dialogue, along with the whole of creation in a way that is without a change in nature, undivided, inseparable, and unconfused.

²⁰⁸ Cattoi, "Liturgy as Cosmic Transformation," 430.

CHAPTER FOUR

MAXIMUS & THE THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY

During the summer of 2016, Pope Francis held a celebration honoring the 65th anniversary of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI to the priesthood. At the conclusion of the celebration, Benedict XVI gave a short address, which was only the second time he had spoken in public since he resigned from the Papacy in 2013.

Speaking to Pope Francis, an array of cardinals, and others present he called to mind a fellow *ordinandi* who had the word *eucharistomen* inscribed on a holy card commemorating the ordination. Benedict emphasized the fulness of this Greek term of thanksgiving:

Eucharistomen harks back to the reality of thanksgiving, to the new dimension that Christ imparts to it. The cross, suffering, all that is wrong with the world: he transformed all this into “thanks” and therefore into a “blessing”. Hence he fundamentally transubstantiated life and the world, and he has given us and gives us each day the bread of true life, which transcends this world thanks to the strength of His love.¹

In a rhetorical move that resonates equally with Maximus’ thought and Vatican II’s description of the laity, Benedict called for the participation of all Christians in Christ’s one act of thanksgiving:

¹ "Commemoration of the 65th Anniversary of the Priestly Ordination of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI," updated June 28, 2016, 2016, accessed February 3, 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/june/documents/papa-francesco_20160628_65-ordinazione-sacerdotale-benedetto-xvi.html.

We wish to insert ourselves into the “thanks” of the Lord, and thus truly receive the newness of life and contribute to the “transubstantiation” of the world so that it might not be a place of death, but of life: a world in which love has conquered death.

Benedict’s desire for himself and for all to participate in this transubstantiation of the world is an apt summation of many of the themes that are present in Maximus and later re-expressed by Vatican II in its own ecclesiastic milieu. His use of priestly language to describe a universal human task propels the application of his words beyond the prestigious gathering of clerics to the life of all Christians. The linking of liturgy, participatory action and especially the Eucharist, and transubstantiation are touchstones that we will return to at the conclusion of this chapter.

Our analysis of Maximus’ thought over the previous two chapters has culminated in a strikingly similar image of the eucharistic exchange of gifts. Eucharistic dialogical reciprocity draws together the multitudinous radii of the Confessor’s opus to form a dynamic that is comprehensive and can be introduced into the ongoing conversation on the laity. This reciprocity aptly describes the call and response dynamic of the irreducibly unique person in the myriad of vocational roles manifest in the laity. Far from a description of an isolated relationship between “God and me” this reciprocity is inseparable from the Christic action of unifying the whole cosmos in the one Logos. It is a thoroughly Chalcedonian way of understanding each person’s role in the whole Christ.

As a recapitulation of maximian theology, dialogic reciprocity relies upon key insights from the Confessor’s thought. First, that God created the cosmos, visible and invisible, as a free act of love. Forming the whole through a free act of will, every part comes to be on account of

its participation in God via the logoi. These logoi serve a twofold function that correspond to God's will to create a diverse creation (the logoi of judgment) and to gather the whole of this creation back into Himself (the logoi of providence). These stamps of the creator are present in each creature, from the inanimate natural elements to rational beings. They are expressions of the one Logos, the person of Christ, and act as the means of participating in the Logos by way of origin and eschatological return. This participation moves toward God's goal of becoming embodied in all things everywhere.²

As free rational beings united to both the visible and invisible creation, humanity was to serve as the natural link between the Creator and creation. For Maximus, the vocation of humanity as mediator is not a result of sin or the depreciation of creation as such but the very means by which God holds a dialogue with creation. The currency of this dialogue is the gift of the logoi embedded within creation. The logoi do not exist apart from creation, making creation the necessary dialogic medium between God and rational beings. God, having freely given, allows humanity to freely receive and offer back that same creation to God as humanity's own gift to Him. In the offering, the divisions of being are broken down and gathered into a whole without doing violence to their individuality.

Tragically, sin stifled humanity's ability to make this offering in a natural manner. The unifying of human nature with the divine in the hypostatic union introduces a new theandric mode of action. In Christ, humanity is able to act in a divine manner and can once more fulfill this original vocation. Christ as the Logos Himself, the original end, is revealed as the means of this unification.³ Without doing violence to their identity as persons, humanity is able to act in

² Amb 7 PG 91:1084D.

³ Following Maximus, we can speculate that the Incarnation and hypostatic union of Christ was intended from all eternity and not a response calculated due to sin. As the culmination of God's desire for embodiment in the cosmos, Christ is the proleptic corner stone on which the human task of mediation now rests.

this new divine mode, now capable of fulfilling this original vocation in Christ. Entry into that same theandric activity manifest in Christ's hypostasis grants ineffable communion between human and divine realities. Deification is the recognition, ratification, and permanency of dialogical reciprocity.

Recapitulated as Eucharistic dialogic reciprocity, the Confessor's crucial insights about the cosmos, anthropology, and deification can be brought into a fruitful conversation with the reflections on laity discussed in the first chapter. We will take the latest literature on the laity as our point of departure and work in a reverse-chronological manner toward the Second Vatican Council. In doing so, we will be able to draw upon the insights and concerns within the post-conciliar literature when forming our synthesis of Maximus with the council. The focus of this discussion will be the understanding of mediation and creation. As we approach the conciliar text itself, we will analyze the key terms of the conciliar description of the laity, namely "secular" and "consecrate." In doing so we will be equipped to understand the points at which Maximus and the council find agreement and where further reflection may be necessary. In the final section we will attempt to outline a possible theology of the laity based upon a synthesis of Maximus and Vatican II.

I. Maximus and the Developmental School of Post-Vatican II Lay Theology

We found in chapter one that the post-conciliar literature on the laity could be separated into two schools of thought: the magisterial school, in which *Lumen Gentium's* description of the laity as "secular" is defended and a second, the developmental school, which sees the Second Vatican Council as a point of departure for further discussion on the laity. Since the magisterial school is chiefly composed of statements that re-present the conciliar documents we will engage

this school when discussing the conciliar texts proper. Broadly speaking we will introduce Maximus' thought into the conversation between these two schools in a reverse chronological order.

The nature of the developmental school's critique requires that it be addressed before any meaningful dialogue between Vatican II and Maximus can be attempted. Development authors call into question key concepts used by both Vatican II and Maximus to describe the Christian life. The developmental school names a threefold set of problematic dichotomies: the laity/clergy, the secular/sacred, God and the world. Their reflections causally link the lay/clergy distinction to the understanding of a passive laity who must be always receptive to an active clergy. This mirrors the relationship between secular and sacred spheres and ultimately bears upon our perception of how God relates to the world. The underlying concern is one of inequality. These dichotomies, as expressed by the developmental school, bar the laity from access to God outside of receiving the sacred from the clergy. On account of these problematic dichotomies, the development school seeks alternative models of ecclesiology that no longer make use of the concepts of mediation, the secular, or the sacred.

Rooted within the liturgical and monastic traditions of his time, we can candidly ask whether or not Maximus would recognize the ecclesial distinction that is at the foundation of the developmental critique of lay theology. If so, would he affirm or deny that it was necessary to use the terms "lay" and "clergy" to describe the Church? A reading of Maximus within the framework of post-conciliar lay thought might see his proximity to Dionysius the Areopagite, who is attributed with enshrining the hierarchy with its privileged place in ecclesiology and assume that the Confessor would hold an ecclesiological view consonant with one of his major influences. We would be hard pressed to blame anyone for making such an assumption,

especially given Maximus' own description of his prominent work on the liturgical life of the Church, the *Mystagogia*, as an expansion on Dionysius' *Ecclesial Hierarchy*. Our own reflection on Maximus' theology shows that he leans upon liturgical concepts such as the Eucharist and anaphora in which he frames the cosmic and personal drama of eucharistic dialogical reciprocity.

Maximus rarely writes directly about the ordained and their activity. An interpretation of the priest and the actions during the anaphora is a notable omission from the Confessor's *Mystagogia*. This is underscored by the structure of the work which depicts the liturgy as the process of deification. Maximus' description of the clergy is not to be found within the liturgical reflection of the *Mystagogia* but in his correspondence. In a letter to the Bishop of Kydonia, the Confessor describes the priest as taking God's role as mediator among his people, even to the extent that God is "physically seen" through the activity of the priesthood.⁴ In another place, Maximus describes the priesthood's role as mediator in detail. The work of the priesthood consists of drawing every soul to God, granting it a share in "its own knowledge, peace and love," and to "present to God those it has initiated into the holy mysteries"⁵ The Confessor writes that "the goal of the true priesthood it to be deified and to deify" through true knowledge and love.⁶

Does this description of the ordained priesthood as mediators and initiators into the divine mysteries mean that Maximus is susceptible to the same criticism leveled at Vatican II by Doohan, O'Meara, et al? This criticism has many strata to it and we should deal with them individually. For instance, it is clear that Maximus conceives of a priesthood that acts in a ministerial role, at the very least mediating the rites of initiation and presiding over the anaphora.

⁴ *Letter to the Bishop of Kydonia* PG 91:604D trans in Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 41.

⁵ *Letter to Bishop John* PG 91:624D-625A.

⁶ *Letter to Bishop John* PG 91:624D-625A

Does this mean that the Confessor conceives of the Church as an “unequal society,” a two-caste structure of lay and ordained? To consider this question thoroughly we should look closely at the tradition of mediation in the Dionysian literature and how Maximus’ reception of that tradition informs his ecclesiological framework.

A. Dionysian Mediation

Returning to Dionysius’ influence on Maximus is crucial because it is the place where the post-conciliar literature consistently names the birth of the lay/clergy distinction.⁷ Hahnenberg decries the use of a Dionysian hierarchical mediation, the exercise of *sacra potestas*.⁸ According to O’Meara, the acceptance of Pseudo-Dionysius’ writings at the Parisian school in the Middle Ages was an enshrining of Neoplatonic hierarchical structure within ecclesiology and the foundation for the passive-lay, active-clergy dynamic.⁹ He describes the Dionysian influence on ecclesiology as the erection of “a fixed, descending, pyramidal structure of a single authority possessing all being.”¹⁰ O’Meara adds that treating this Neoplatonic structure as a divinely willed model for the church is “untenable.”¹¹

Aside from a broad understanding that the Dionysian model introduces Neoplatonic ideals into Christianity which requires the exercise of a *sacra potestas* restricted to those who receive it through priestly ordination, O’Meara offers scant detail about how Dionysius’ system works. We find in his discussion of Aquinas’ description of the relationship between the

⁷ Though some such as Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 11., trace the genealogy of the term “laity” to the first century letter of Clement, this early distinction does not carry the problematic undertones of the schema attributed to Dionysius. See 1 Clem 44.

⁸ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 46.

⁹ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 178.

¹⁰ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 279 fn46.

¹¹ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 279 fn46.

episcopate and priesthood that O'Meara considers Thomas' ecclesiological outlook to be influenced by Dionysius "for whom diversity flows from unity."¹² From this description we can gather that O'Meara and those who criticize Dionysian ecclesial structure, of which mediation represents a key component, see this structure as one of Neoplatonic emanation. The power flows out from the one, mediated by succeeding ranks of hierarchy, to the many.¹³ This model describes the lay/clergy dichotomy and is also present in the criticism of ecclesiologies that focus too heavily upon a Christological approach, meaning the *sacra potestas* is held by the few apart from the many. The point of contact with God in this schema is only through the hierarchy and without it there is no access to the divine.

This is an accurate depiction of Dionysian ecclesiology, to a point. The hierarchy functions as mediators for the faithful inasmuch as they initiate them into the mysteries. The recipients of this mediation do so in a triad of stages that correspond to the sacramental life. They are first illuminated in baptism, purified in chrismation, and perfected in their participation in the Eucharist.¹⁴

The Areopagite's schema differs from a purely Neoplatonic both in what is being mediated and how it is mediated. He is not describing an ontological mediation of something the hierarchy has that the faithful do not. It would be a misrepresentation of Dionysius to claim that his model is one in which the hierarchy, the ordained have as their own the *sacra potestas* power

¹² O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 292 fn14.

¹³ A short note about terminology: (1) The concept of hierarchy should not be saddled with the cultural baggage that the term represents within our early 21st Century usage, something akin to a social rank or pecking order. Instead, it should be understood as combination of Greek *hieros* "sacred" and *arche* "source or origin." (2) I continue to use the term "*sacra potestas*" because it is used within the literature on the laity. The phrase itself does not appear in Dionysius though the concept could be analogous to what he describes as the "power of consecration" the activity by which the hierarchy initiates the faithful into the mysteries. *Ecclesial Hierarchy*, 505D. A key part of my argument is that the objectified version of *sacra potestas* does not exist in Dionysius and is thus not inherited by Maximus.

¹⁴ *EH* 3.1.424D, see Nikolaos Loudovikos, *Church in the Making* (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), 39.

of mediation that is theirs to exercise. This would be an objectification of that power. While the Areopagite describes the hierarchy itself in an ontological manner, the sacred never becomes the possession of the clergy. The divine energy always belongs to God alone. Instead of the passing along of an ontological power that can be possessed, Dionysius describes a mediation based upon participation. Though the hierarchy itself is an ontological ordering, the act of mediation does not pass on something of its own ontology, as would be the case in Neoplatonic emanation.

The Neoplatonic concept of emanation, as it is found in Proclus and others, includes the transmission of being from superior to subordinate beings. The Proclean model based the passing of the sacred upon the ontological order from higher levels to inferior entities.¹⁵ What is communicated is from the ontologically greater to the ontologically lesser which can have only a lesser share due to their nature. Those receiving from the hierarchy are dependent on those above and have no share in the ultimate source of being as such. They only receive what is passed on to them from the higher, those above them in the hierarchy, making them necessarily passive and of lesser value. The proper foil for the arguments and concerns of O'Meara et al is the Proclean understanding of hierarchy.

Dionysius' model differs in both what is mediated and how it is mediated. First, what is mediated is not a share in "being" filtered down through hierarchical descent but an undifferentiated share in the purifying divine activity (*energeia*).¹⁶ This act of mediation is not one that involves an ontological stepping down and a flowing from more to less. It is not an ontologically reduced facsimile. It is the participation in the whole of irreducible divinity. The

¹⁵ See Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon, eds., *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 445-577. 1089.17-1239.21 See also Elias Tempelis and Christos Terezis, "The Presence of Proclus in George Pachymeres' Paraphrase of Ps.-Dionysius' *De Divinis Nominibus*," in *Proclus and his Legacy*, ed. David D. Butorac and Danielle A. Layne (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 272 fn3.

¹⁶ Loudovikos, *Church in the Making*, 35.

divine activity participated in is not the possession of the hierarchy or the faithful which is why we cannot speak in any sense of a passive reception but an active participation. Initiation into these mysteries can in no way be a passive process because it is an initialization of that same dynamic divine activity in the individual. This activity, or in Dionysian terms *energeia*, never ceases to be the activity of God alone who operates through the hierarchy that serves as an icon, ever pointing through itself to the ultimate source. This is a distinctly Christian view of hierarchy that differs from earlier Neoplatonic views which would consider not only the source but each stage in the hierarchy as divine.¹⁷

A proper understanding of the Dionysian process of consecration/deification then is one in which the hierarchy remains distinct from those being initiated as to their functional role as consecrators. This function does not grant them a higher share in the sacred than the recipient. As utter mystery and simplicity, God cannot be divided. Participation in God is likewise not to be divided. The sacred is never portrayed as the possession of the hierarchy. The result is not a dependency upon the hierarchy for access to God but an equal share in relationship to the divine.

The notion of participation clearly differentiates the Dionysian hierarchy from the Proclean. There is a tension between the divine activity and the Areopagite's emphasis on ecclesial structure and function. The latter can tempt us to lose sight of the unity of divine activity. Loudovikos notes that Dionysius' apophatic approach to divine activity, expressed in the charisms which interpenetrate one another, is overshadowed by the clear and distinct

¹⁷ Loudovikos, *Church in the Making*, 36. See also Cooper who notes: "In Dionysius the word (draw 'elkuso' via Jn 12:32) comprehends the totality of the function of the Church's sacerdotal office in which the hierarch - the bishop - serves as a mediating ray for the assimilation to God of all the orderly ranks under him. This of course indicates that Dionysius, and Maximus following him, understood the notion of hierarchy differently from the way it is popularly understood today." Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 174. and Harper following Louth: "whereas the modern understanding of hierarchy stresses separation and exclusion, for Denys it connotes inclusion and union." Harper, *The Analogy of Love*, 116.

functional designations of the hierarchy.¹⁸ Decoupled from the apophatic, this structure stands as an objectified edifice, ripe for misinterpretation as an ontologically ordered descending hierarchy.

Does Maximus' own understanding of mediation and hierarchy draw similar emphases? The structural elements and descriptions are suspiciously absent in the Confessor's own ecclesiological reflections. Conostas notes that Maximus does not use the term "hierarchy" once within his writings. Given the ubiquity of the term in the Dionysian corpus and the multiplicity of other terms Maximus adopts from the Areopagite, Conostas sees this omission as a "tacit rejection" of the very structural notion of hierarchy.¹⁹ This of course would require a nefarious reading of the praise offered by the Confessor of Dionysius' *Ecclesial Hierarchy* at the outset of his own *Mystagogy*.²⁰

Without interpreting the omission of hierarchy as a rejection of the concept in toto, we can at least say that what Dionysius emphasized, Maximus deemphasized. Loudovikos writes that Maximus does not reject Dionysian hierarchy as much as he goes beyond it.²¹ The central point of the Confessor's position is familiar to us, drawing from the first chapters of the *Mystagogy*: the Church acts as God acts, in a participative manner and does nothing apart from this divine activity.²² Where Dionysius is concerned with drawing out the particularity of distinction, Maximus draws together consubstantial unity in action. This does not mean the dissolution of difference and the creation of a confused amalgam. We do well to remember that the Confessor's thought has a Chalcedonian grounding. The differences of the individuals are

¹⁸ Loudovikos, *Church in the Making*, 42.

¹⁹ Maximos Conostas, "Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite, and the Transformation of Christian Neoplatonism," *Analogia* 2, no. 1 (2017): 4.

²⁰ *Myst* 48 CCSG6.

²¹ Loudovikos, *Church in the Making*, 44.

²² Loudovikos, *Church in the Making*, 45.

united in a characteristically Chalcedonian manner into the one body that is the Church.

Loudovikos proposes an understanding of this that holds in tension the preservation of individual members in light of the whole: “The Church, I would therefore say, is the eschatological mode of the human person’s unity, whereas the human person is the consubstantial mode of the unity of the Church.”²³ This concept of consubstantiality is key to Loudovikos’ interpretation of the Confessor. This is necessary since Maximus recognizes priests as mediators of deification, does not explicitly reject an ecclesial ordering that could be understood in a hierarchical manner, while at the same time affirming the participation of each individual in the one divine activity that is consonant with deification. Maximus’ description of the unity of the Church as a human being lends itself to being described in a consubstantial way. While we might point toward a hierarchy of functions within a body, the body acts as a single unity. That is to say, the actions of the body are carried out with the same energy, expressions of the same person in a consubstantial manner. These activities, though they can be individually recognized, are actions united in substance: “And each of the Church’s energies or charisms is spiritually validated only as a manifestation of a complete likeness to the specific divine energy to which it corresponds, since it expresses the whole of this energy and it alone.”²⁴ The interpenetrating consubstantiality of the actions of the whole Church allows for the expression of unity that Maximus affirms in his ecclesiological writings.

²³ Loudovikos, *Church in the Making*, 46.

²⁴ Loudovikos, *Church in the Making*, 47. We should also note that when speaking of the unity of the charisms we are not envisioning a body that is the sum of its parts. The interpenetrative nature of charism is apophatic in itself since it is necessary to recognize certain functions but impossible to separate them from one another. As Loudovikos writes: “every charism is the whole of ecclesial being.” In this analysis, the structures of the Church are not conceived of as “being” but “becoming” as such the hierarchical functionality is not a reflection of the eternal but the means by which all are to enter into that same unity. Here the hierarchy exists not to be enshrined over all but to constantly fulfill its task of drawing in all to become members of the apophatic unity and participants in the divine activity. See Loudovikos, *Church in the Making*, 49-50.

At the heart of this consubstantiality is Maximus' concern for both divine unity and the unity of the Church. Cooper notes that a central feature of Maximus' thought is the "baptismal unity" described by Paul in Galatians 3:28: "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female, for you are all one in Christ." Due to the consubstantiality of the charisms, this unity is not impeded by differing ecclesial rank but facilitated by it.²⁵

We have come full circle to the concerns for ecclesial unity found within the post-conciliar literature. Would Maximus recognize the ecclesial dichotomy of lay/clergy in a manner that can be comprehended by the conversation surrounding Vatican II? Our response must be both yes and no. The answer is yes in the affirmation of general categories of hierarchy/clergy and lay/faithful. It must be no if we have in mind an ontological ordering that values the charisms bestowed on the hierarchy in a way that would put it over and above the charisms received by the faithful. The unity of the charisms forbids this. Yet the Confessor can still see the hierarchy as a means for consecration and initiation. The recognition of each of the charisms containing all charisms within them in an apophatic unity guards against an idealistic dichotomy in favor of a consubstantial unity.

B. Ecclesial Distinction and Structure

We must be cautious here to delineate between definitions of ecclesial structure and lay activity. There is scant reflection upon lay activity in the development school. When it is mentioned, the whole maximian idea of humanity acting as a mediator is rejected for reasons we have discussed at length. Concerning ecclesiological structure, Maximus and the developmental school (specifically Hahnenberg and Gaillardetz) hold much in common.

²⁵ Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus*, 178.

Maximus' thought is generally compatible with Hahnenberg. The two thinkers share the view that the activity of the clergy and the laity are of profound value. A major difficulty in reconciling Maximus with Hahnenberg is that the Confessor would still draw a solid line of demarcation between the types of activity undertaken by the hierarchy and those of the laity. The difference is that Maximus would not see this as a lessening of the dignity of lay activity but as a proper expression of the one charism manifest in the particularity of their activity. Maximus may agree with Hahnenberg that the clergy are only so in light of their relationship to the community but would argue that this relationship is characterized by a distinct activity, an expression of the one charism. The "dividing line model" looks different from the Confessor's theological framework. In Hahnenberg this distinction is seen as the root for separation, in Maximus it is an expression of unity in diversity.

Maximus' pneumatological emphasis is similarly inseparable from his Christological theology of the Logos. The charismatic activity of the Church is the result of the response to the logoi. The pneumatological frame of reference is interchangeable with the Christological mode. The dynamic of charism and logoi are one in the same due to the perichoretic nature of Trinitarian activity. This theological reflection demonstrates the point on the unity of the charisms. Just as the logoi participate in the one Logos, so the charisms as they are lived share in the one anointing of the Spirit open to all the baptized. In Maximus' thought one can in no way deemphasize the Christological in favor of the pneumatological.

The post-conciliar trajectory discerned by Gaillardetz seems compatible with Maximus' thought. By Gaillardetz's evaluation, the council's thought was moving "strongly in the direction of simply identifying *laicus* as the normal situation of the practicing Christian who seeks in their

daily life to bring all of history to its fulfillment in Christ.”²⁶ We would find particular agreement in the description of the micro-eschatological eucharistic exchange as portrayed by Maximus and the common activity of daily life expressed in Gaillardetz. The clergy/hierarchy would share in this role but would also carry out those extra responsibilities that are particular to their state. What is at issue in Gaillardetz is not the special mission of the clergy, which he affirms to an extent but the existence of a special mission of the laity.

C. The Secular and the Sacred

In a radical departure from preceding expressions of ecclesiological structure, Doohan declares the term laity “theologically dead.”²⁷ Doohan precedes Gaillardetz and shares the basic concept of the lay now occupying the position of common membership within the Church. As Doohan puts it “the laity are Church.”²⁸ We could expect that Maximus may agree with this thought which is directed by a general thrust of equality among ecclesial members due to the dignity of baptism. Doohan’s rejection of “laity” as a category is also based upon the observation that it leaves the vast majority as passive recipients of clerical ministry. Maximus’ view does not approximate the caricature of hierarchy that sets up the clergy as an ontologically superior class to the laity. The Confessor would equally take issue with the description of any participant in the Christian life as “passive.” As we have seen, every member the Church in Maximus’ outlook is in communion with and participates in the same deifying life of God. As we have outlined in our last chapter, every Christian, clergy and laity alike, are active participants in the Eucharistic reciprocity that is the individual’s dialogue with God as well as the

²⁶ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 18.

²⁷ Doohan, "The Lay-Centered Church," 23.

²⁸ Doohan, "The Lay-Centered Church," 23.

core of ecclesial identity. The participative communion that forms the basis of this reciprocity, culminated in liturgical action, is always an active participation. Maximus describes the eschaton as a continuation of this activity. The liturgical offering of creation to God does not come to a final resolution but is transposed into the eternal communion with God: ever-moving-repose.

Doohan had considered a view similar to Maximus' in the overview of lay theology at the outset of *The Lay Centered Church*. While he lauded attempts to reframe the life of the laity as an engagement with the world founded on the value of creation, he thought that the position would be incomprehensible to the vast majority of the faithful:

A basic problem in this theology of laity is that it demands a radical conversion in the way one understands the essential contribution of earthly life to salvation. Many people find it difficult even to admit the need for such conversion, for "that the earthly and heavenly city penetrate each other is a fact accessible to faith alone."²⁹

Though Doohan does not reject this mode of thinking outright, he leaves it undeveloped in favor of the ecclesiocentric "laity as Church" model he pursues throughout the rest of the work.

The difficulty noted by Doohan contains within it a kernel of argument that finds its realization in the secular/sacred dichotomy.³⁰ Recall that the line of argument expands the lay/clergy distinction to their relevant spheres of secular/sacred which imply that there must be a similar line of demarcation between the world and God. The parallels between these dichotomies are clear but we must ask whether affirming one necessarily brings about the others. This is important because over the course of the fifty years that followed the council the literature on the laity attempted to undo these contrastive pairs. The argument tends to flow both ways: recognizing God's presence in the world does away with the conceptual notion of separate

²⁹ Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 15.

³⁰ Doohan himself names this a superficial distinction between 'priest/sacred' and 'lay/temporal'." Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church*, 212.

sacred and secular realities which makes the distinction between laity and clergy moot. This would include exercise of *sacra potestas* which is always referred to in a divisive manner. The development of the argument in ecclesiological spheres often follows an inverse order: all of the baptized are equal meaning that there should be no distinction between laity and clergy, there can be then no demarcation between sacred and secular activity which means that one cannot distinguish between God's presence and the world. The result is always a doing away of distinction in order to avoid separation.

For Doohan this means moving beyond the notion of laity as a distinct set of the faithful since the laity act as Church. Gaillardetz's point of departure is not the work of the clergy but the so-called secular character of the laity, writing that the identification of lay action with action in the world creates disparity with the clergy who are concerned with the sacred.³¹ Claiming the laity work in the world implies that they do not work in the sacred which demeans their baptismal dignity. The same dynamic leads O'Meara to rid his ecclesiological view of sacral, priestly language and replace it with the non-dichotomic vocabulary of mission, service, and relationship. This lens is placed in juxtaposition with mediation: "Ministry approaches the reign of God not as high priest or banker but as servant."³² The dichotomy of world/God is directly related to this. The efficacy of individual sacraments, the work of the clergy/hierarchy, are overshadowed now by the sacramental nature of the world qua Rahner's circles of grace.³³ The clergy are not proprietors of graced reality because reality — the Church as sacrament in particular and the world as creation — is already graced.

³¹ Gaillardetz, "Lay-Clergy Distinction," 10.

³² O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 227.

³³ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 2.

Lakeland plays these arguments out to their logical conclusion. In *The Liberation of the Laity*, Lakeland assumes this post-conciliar theological shift, that nature is already graced, as his point of departure.³⁴ This radically reconfigures the mission of the Church and his conception of ecclesiology: the means and goal are already embedded within creation and God's mission for humanity consists in "the humanization of the world."³⁵ Lakeland's view is simultaneously a playing out of and a reaction to the authors that came before him. If the post-Vatican II literature solves the dichotomy of the secular/sacred by overemphasizing intra-ecclesial activity, making everything ecclesial-sacred activity, Lakeland solves it by highlighting the secular, making every action a secular one.

This begets a self-contained vision of creation which would be violated by mediatory activity. Indeed, Lakeland's view of priesthood and mediation is one in which the priest (in all senses of the term) "ferries back and forth between God and the world."³⁶ A world that is self-contained, "self-sufficient," is in no need of mediation since there is nothing to be added. "The secularity of the world is the divine plan."³⁷ To admit such a mediation would be to denigrate the status of the self-sufficient secular into one of dependency. Lakeland admits that the world is dependent on God as its cause and architect but reminds us that God abides in the world in a graced way. The graced status of the world is constitutive of its self-sufficiency and allows it, for Lakeland, to be self-referential. To fulfill human nature is then not a seeking of something that is outside of the world, for in this there would be a regression to the sacred/secular, world/God dichotomy. Instead, the mission is one of free action and human promotion. This action is good in and of itself as part of the secular, graced world. Lakeland asserts that these

³⁴ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 151.

³⁵ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 151.

³⁶ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 91.

³⁷ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 173.

actions should be self-referential only. Any reasoning or reduction of these actions to an exterior referent would do violence to them, it would “compromise its graced character in the name of something supposedly more fundamental.”³⁸

In seeking a solution to the secular/sacred dichotomy, Lakeland has traced a cosmology that shares many characteristics with the maximian view. First, both affirm God’s presence is within all of creation in a way that allows it to fulfill its very nature. God’s presence is embedded within creation, for Maximus as the *logoi* and for Lakeland as the grounding of graced-created reality. Both champion freedom of human action. Freedom is an extraordinary good intended by God in the order of creation, it should be valued and fostered. Lakeland’s liberation of the secular world is an affirmation of this freedom while Maximus sees in this freedom the very image of God. The world, creation (in Lakeland’s terms, the “secular”) is good in its own right. In Maximus, it is a gift from God that should become the subject of freedom.

This point of convergence is where their cosmologies part ways. Lakeland’s view holds that there is no reason “behind” the secular, that secular reality is the reason. For Maximus the *Logos* is always present within creation as the *logoi*. God is not simply “behind” creation, for the Confessor God stands before creation as its eschatological goal.

Lakeland’s description of the secular would be virtually the same as Maximus’ if we strip the Confessor’s view of dialogic reciprocity. God creates the cosmos as good and humanity with the good nature, *logoi*, embedded in them to be acted upon freely. In this portrait there is no continued relationship. God simply abides. This is not a cold deism, but a lukewarm affirmation of humanity’s affairs deprived of further aspiration.

³⁸ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 154.

Eschatological vision is driven from Lakeland's cosmology because it makes the world about something other than the world. This is done to protect the world from being cut up into two distinct spheres: the secular and the sacred. To say that the world has a further goal is to admit this separation from God which is, for Lakeland, the root of hatred for the world.³⁹

maximian thought provides us with an alternative to this view. The Confessor dealt with the world/God dichotomy by transcending it. As we have seen, the doctrine of the logoi allows Maximus to affirm the goodness of creation in a radical way while setting it firmly on the path of eschatological fulfillment. The Confessor's cosmology was forged as a response to Origenism. It is a protection against a negative view of the world seen as a punishment or a corruption of God's plan while at the same time maintaining a clear distinction between God and the world. In Maximus' view, the world participates in God by its very creation in the logoi. This logic trends toward a unity-in-distinction that requires us to constantly hold in tension the distinction between God and the world while affirming God's presence to each individual being and the whole of created being through the logoi. This distinction is the apophatic foundation of Maximus' thought: the distinction between God and the world becomes the guarantee that all of creation can participate in a dialogue between God and the world.

Mediation takes on a different meaning in this context. It is not needed to uphold the goodness of creation. The ontological divide between God and the world is not a chasm of goodness but of finite versus infinite being. The contingent nature of the world, which is an affirmation of God's creation of the world in freedom, does not devalue creation but allows God to perpetually uphold its goodness through participation in the divine. The task of mediation is

³⁹ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 154.

not a bestowal of goodness onto creation but a crossing of this ontological divide via relationship in a manner that does not cancel out the autonomy of the world or any of its inhabitants.

Dialogic reciprocity encapsulates the maximian alternative. The eucharistic exchange of gifts in charity does no violence to nature or claim that the world need be hated or done away with. On the contrary, the dynamic of exchange and mediation in Maximus takes the form of a constant relationship that uplifts creation toward its eschatological fulfillment which is eternal well-being with God. Conversion in the maximian schema does not leave the world behind in favor of God nor does it insinuate that the world is lacking something that is proper to it. maximian deification does not make mediation as a means to an end but recognizes this active exchange as constitutive of communion with God. Mediation does not bring something into creation that is not already there. It allows creation to be creation in all of its goodness. What is changed in Maximus' schema is the mode, the way of being creation. The introduction of the divine tropes into creation allows creatures to act freely not in isolation or as passive recipients but in participative eucharistic communion that is the very act of deification.

II. Vatican II's Description of the Lay Vocation and Maximus

Up to this point we have reflected on the post-conciliar developments of the role of the laity, specifically the possibility that *Lumen Gentium's* description of the laity leads to a series of harmful dichotomies. Maximus' theological vision provides a way to transcend these dichotomies with his characteristic Chalcedonian logic. This logic emphasizes unity based upon distinction based in relationship. At its center is the vision of Eucharistic reciprocity.

We turn now to the conciliar texts and the subsequent interpretations of them by the magisterium. Our aim will be a dialogue between the maximian system and these sources.

Maximus' nuanced system of theology helps to clarify the vision of the council and stands as a solid foundation from which it can be interpreted.

In the first chapter of this work, I outlined the council's teaching on the Church as a unified structure of three distinct groups of members: the clergy, religious, and the laity. All together these make up the collective faithful of the Church or in the phrase most used by the document to describe the Church "the People of God."⁴⁰ The document is intentionally structured in a way that emphasizes this unity. There is not a diversity of missions but all participate in the one mission of the Church. The mission is one of unity through the Spirit that works in every member of the People of God.⁴¹ This view is groundbreaking in its recognition of the laity as sharers in this mission and not mere instruments of the hierarchy.

Lumen Gentium, later affirmed by both *Apostolicum Actualisitatem* and *Gaudium et Spes*, describes the laity by their activity within the world as the norm of their identity and mission. The special task of the laity is "to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer."⁴² Constitutive of this task are the daily lives of the laity and their participation in temporal affairs. Though the document describes this work as being done in a spirit of witness, it has a value in and of itself as an ordering of the world to God.⁴³ This work is an expression of the laity's share in the office of priesthood. The secular activity of the laity is united to the one offering of the Church which culminates in the celebration of the Eucharist.⁴⁴ In this very act the laity are said to "consecrate the world itself to God."⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *LG* 9.

⁴¹ *LG* 32.

⁴² *LG* 31.

⁴³ *LG* 31.

⁴⁴ *LG* 34.

⁴⁵ *LG* 34.

Two of the most often critiqued aspects on the council's description of the laity are present here. First, though the conciliar fathers made an explicit effort to avoid a stratification of roles within the Church, as we described in chapter one, this is exactly how some received the description of the three states. Similarly, the description of lay activity as secular with the purpose of consecrating the world to God led to the prevailing critique that the council was making an attempt at delineating clear and separate spheres of activity for the clergy and laity. This interpretation took hold despite the conciliar text explicitly rejecting the separation of these spheres.⁴⁶ The post-conciliar literature is proof enough that the documents leave themselves open to such an interpretation even if the source of this interpretation is the lived experience of Church members during the post-conciliar period and not the documents themselves.

We explored the response of the magisterial school to these developments in John Paul II's *Christifideles Laici*. This post-synodal exhortation did not grant the theological grounding asked for by the fathers of the synod but was a reiteration of the teachings of *LG* along with correctives and further clarifications about the proper roles belonging to the laity within the Church. There is a distinct focus on complementarity within the document, underscoring the unity of action described in *LG*. John Paul II cautions against confusing these roles since doing so would break down this complementarity.⁴⁷ Following this line of thought, the Pope draws a sharper distinction between the work of lay persons in the Church and the ordained, noting that their priesthood differs "not simply in degree but in essence."⁴⁸ Though John Paul II explains that this is ultimately for the sake of unity and complementarity among the Body, it is not difficult to see how it could be received as a further distinction between secular and sacred

⁴⁶ *GS* 43 makes the distinction that these affairs belong "properly" to the laity not "exclusively" to them.

⁴⁷ *CL* 20.

⁴⁸ *CL* 22.

spheres of activity. Though complementarity is the theme, the focus is a reiteration of the proper ordering of offices and roles within the Church.

It could be argued that the refrain of complementarity agrees with the maximian portrayal of the apophatic expression of the one charism in the many activities of the Church even though the topic of the Church's one charism is not clearly treated within the text. To further facilitate the application of Maximus' thought we can draw a parallel between *CL* and Dionysius' *Ecclesial Hierarchy*: both are primarily concerned with the right organization of the Church. Due to the centrality of this issue, each work lends itself to the interpretation that their goal is to uphold separations. In turn, they could both be accused of drawing sharp dichotomies where there should be only be distinction. In the case of *CL*, the desire for a definitive theological definition is neglected by a pressing concern for order in response to specific situations. Any deeper grounding based upon complementarity and a vision of the Church acting as a whole is eclipsed by the attention paid to basic questions about ecclesiological roles and functions.

This parallel lends itself to an application of Maximus' wider ecclesiological vision similar to how the Confessor deemphasized the structural imagery found in Dionysius. Because Maximus does not share this structural concern, I propose that viewing the conciliar descriptions of the laity through the maximian lens developed in chapters two and three provides the deep theological grounding desired by the bishops who attended the synod on the laity. Here we are less concerned with a detailed mapping of ecclesial roles and more interested in providing a theological context for lay activity.

We should be clear here that there are no direct references to Maximus in the Vatican II documents nor that we would be able to derive the conciliar description of the laity from the works of the sixth century monk and mystic. It goes without saying, then, that this is not an

argument for the proper interpretation of the council as though the thought of Maximus were linked to it as a source or stands as the ultimate authority behind its validity. Neither should this be taken as a reproof of the conciliar texts. The scope of these documents, even on such specific topics as the laity or the mission of the Church are far too wide to contain all of the detail necessary to provide a thorough account of the underlying theologies. We should expect that the documents are themselves embedded within the larger tradition of the Church.

With this in mind, the task we mean to accomplish is a contextualizing of this description of the laity in a way that grounds it in the Confessor's profound vision of the cosmos. As we have seen, the maximian vision resists the temptation to dichotomize distinctions into differences. The post-conciliar literature was prudent in pointing out the possibilities and eventualities involved in a dichotomous interpretation. Reinterpreting the conciliar text within the framework of cosmos and mediation outlined in the previous chapters helps us to navigate beyond the dichotomies that threaten the underlying message of ecclesial unity found in the conciliar documents. The maximian lens will bring into sharper relief the task of the laity and expand upon it so that it is not susceptible to accusations that it is too vague an enterprise to carry out.⁴⁹

In the first chapter, we noted that the documents outlining lay activity in the world often viewed the world in a variety of ways. These spanned a gamut of definitions from one of alienation wherein the world was seen as opposed to the Church's mission to the neutral setting in which the affairs of human life transpire in the secular as the subject of God's plan. Each of these plays a part within the maximian framework of God's presence in the world through the logoi. Though we can say with surety that the creation of the world in and through the Logos

⁴⁹ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 99, 143.

and the abiding presence of the logoi make the whole of creation enduringly good we can see room for where the negative description of the world could be used in a maximian context. The world as opposed to God's plan only exists where it has cast off its underlying identity and trajectory. The world as created is always good but if, through the free choice of seeking to subvert the abiding logoi in resisting its nature, even this good creation can reject God's plan. The rejection of the embedded logos of a particular being threatens it with non-being. Attempting to replace the logos destroys that being.⁵⁰ This means that the ecclesial mission to the world is not one that is against creation but is ever for creation. If ever Maximus were to speak of creation opposed to the plan of God it is only in the context of inviting creation to return to natural action according to the logoi.

The same participation in the logoi plays out as a rejection of the world as a so-called neutral sphere of activity. Yes, choices can be made in which the logoi are lived out or resisted but ultimately the nature of the world points toward its source in the one Logos. Maximus' theological vision is the concrete affirmation of the third view of the world listed here: it stands as the ultimate subject of God's plan. This view is consummately expressed in the now familiar description of the divine desire: "the Logos of God (who is God) wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of his embodiment."⁵¹ The mission of the Church is soteriological but also eschatological, transcending the very notion of bringing about healing to a prior state of goodness. The work of redemption is inseparable from the work of deification. The affirmation of the good world is not negated in the activity of the Church or its members but is ultimately the proper end of the indwelling logoi. Thus, we can only admit an understanding of the "secular" within Maximus that is inscribed with this ultimate eschatological end. This is not limited to

⁵⁰ *Amb* 7 PG 91:1097C.

⁵¹ *Amb* 7 91:1084CD.

actions, situations, or spheres that have an express ecclesiological or sacral meaning. It would be fitting to stress the presence of the logoi in the particularized obscurity of mundane situations and activities. Here we find tremendous overlap of Maximus' thought and what is described as secular: the "ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation ... and even the hardships of life..."⁵² Every facet of creation and activity is an encounter and potential moment in this process of deification.

A crucial point for correctly representing the maximian dynamic is to hold in tension the ontological difference between God and the world without setting up a God/world dichotomy. We discussed above how this ontological distance is rooted in the Confessor's mystical theology. This in no way sets up a competition between God and the world such that where God is the world is not or vice-versa. On the contrary, the ontological distance allows for God to both transcend of all creation and be intimately present to all of creation in the logoi. Ontological distance in Maximus' schema facilitates the communion between God and the world. Creatures always remain ontologically creature but through communion with God act in a new mode. The distinction between *logos* and *tropos* enables Maximus to describe how created realities are transformed in their mode of activity while retaining their own logoi/nature. The preservation of their nature allows created beings to enjoy participative communion with God. A theology that admitted the breakdown of the distinction between God and the world would be one in which the communion would last for a finite interval. Alternative models of divinization would see the absorption or annihilation of creation as part of this process. Not so for Maximus. The definition of communion and divinization for the Confessor is a thoroughly Chalcedonian one that it is without confusion, without separation, without change, and without division. Modeled

⁵² LG 34.

after the hypostatic union, the eternal exchange between persons does not allow the dialogue of God and creation to break down into a divine monologue.

Ontological distance as facilitator of communion means that tasks and beings in the world are distinct but not separate from God. The logic of the tasks and actions remain the same when transformed into divine activity through their change in tropos. The world and the actions that take place within it never cease being secular in the sense that their subject and practical activity appear the same as actions that are non-deified. The baker, the businessperson, the truck driver, the artist, and parent all perform the same activity but in a new mode. Maximus' theological vision of the logoi acknowledges God's presence already in these tasks in a non-competitive manner. Yet the eschatological invitation to deification allows this activity to become divine activity. The important point for us at this juncture is that the world and the tasks within it, though transformed in tropos, still function and retain the identity as created. The ontological distinction and distance do not create a stumbling block for this communion. Distinction is the guarantor of communion.

The maximian theology of the cosmos offers us an important interpretive lens for our engagement with the Vatican II text. It singles out a definitive description of the world as the subject of God's plan which in its deepest identity can in no way play the part of an antagonist in a drama that pits God against the world. Neither is the world a mere blank slate, a neutral ground for action. Even so, the world is ever distinct from God. Encompassing all of creation, it remains distinct and avoids dialectic absorption or annihilation by the divine in favor of remaining a dialogic partner with God. We have seen Maximus express this on a macro-level. He uses the image of a single human person in worship to describe the whole world. He uses the cosmos in a way that it is interchangeable with the Church in its role in eucharistic dialogic

reciprocity. This does not mean that the individual is forgotten. In characteristic maximian fashion, the Confessor retains the individuality of every distinct person, forbidding us to lose sight of them in light of the vastness of creation. As we have seen the macro-dynamic of dialogue is based upon the micro-dialogues between God and individuals.

Grounding the interpretation of Vatican II in maximian thought also assists us in a descriptive manner. The understanding that it is the tropos of activity that changes and not the type of activity affirms the wide scope of human action present within the laity. Maximus describes this diversity in his ecclesiological reflection:

For numerous and almost infinite number are the men, women and children who are distinct from one another and vastly different by birth appearance, by nationality and language, by customs and age, by opinions and skills, by manners and habits by pursuits and studies and still again by reputation, fortune, characteristics and connections. All are born into the Church and through her are reborn and recreated in the Spirit. To all in equal measure she gives and bestows one divine form and designation, to be Christ's and to carry his name.⁵³

The many members who bear the divine name share in the same divinized tropos but through their own logoi. The diversity in action does not negate a share in the one divine activity. Maximus is not scandalized that these differences perdure in the midst of the deifying Church but rather relishes the variety of expressions in the Spirit.

⁵³ *Myst* 1 PG 91:664D-668A.

Within this diversity, the council recognizes distinction. How does the lay/clergy distinction appear through our maximian lens? The relationship between laity and clergy is spelled out in *LG* 32. This passage identifies the clergy in a way that is consonant with maximian thought: they are “dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others.”⁵⁴ A performative example of this can be found in the *Mystagogy*. Beginning with the reading of the Gospel, Maximus identifies the priest with “the spiritual Word of contemplation.”⁵⁵ The procession of the priest toward the people with the Gospel is an image of the Incarnation the Word “coming from heaven to dwell with his people.” The Confessor so closely identifies the priest with the Word that the text no longer makes mention of the priest as an individual but recounts all of the ritual actions undertaken by the priest as actions of the Word. This continues throughout the most profound moments of the Divine Liturgy, the revelation of the mysteries, the chanting of the Trisagion, through the conclusion of the Liturgy in the singing of “One is Holy.” In all these things, the priest acts as the Word, undifferentiated by Maximus as the agent who leads the faithful to deification through participation. As with the discussion of Dionysian mediation above, understanding the role of the clergy as primarily initiators into the mystery of Christ does not place them in a persistent power dynamic. Even in their mediatory role, the clergy’s share in Christ is a participative share that can be relinquished, as we shall explore below.

In this same passage of *LG*, the clergy are given the task of “teaching ... sanctifying ... ruling.” This final task has no maximian parallel, making it difficult to understand the concept of “ruling with the authority of Christ” within the maximian framework. In the context of *LG*, ruling is always connected to the visible structure of the Church which requires some form of

⁵⁴ *LG* 32.

⁵⁵ *Myst* CCSG 670; PG 629B.

practical governance.⁵⁶ Governance is understood as the facilitating of growth in Christ in a way that is consistent with the role of clergy, especially bishops, named by Hahnenberg. They are the sign of unity for Christian community and foster the growth and exercise of the charisms. *LG* likens the role of governance to that of a father and shepherd who is always prepared to lay down his life for those under his care.⁵⁷

In their role as the visible rulers of the Church, the clergy are not the source or ultimate authority. As with Maximus' understanding of mediation being a participative union in Christ so *LG* describes the mode of governance exercised by the clergy. Though they are "ruled by human shepherds; are nevertheless continuously led and nourished by Christ Himself."⁵⁸ Drawing a parallel between the maximian understanding of mediation allows us to frame governance as something other than a claim to power or the establishment of ruling clerics who oppress the majority of the faithful. Governance that is understood as a theandric task that is only properly exercised legitimately if it has a share in the participative union with Christ would deprive the clergy of an objective claim to authority. Maximus' relationship with eastern and western ecclesial authority is a narrative example of this dynamic in action.

During his final years, the height of the monothelite controversy, Maximus proffered his obedience to Pope Martin I and his predecessor Theodore I over the eastern patriarchate not as a statement about papal primacy but based upon Christological orthodoxy. The account of the Confessor's trial demonstrates that ecclesial communion and authority was one of his prosecutors' primary concerns. They asked Maximus to accept their Christological definitions not out of a concern for right-belief but due to concerns over ecclesial communion, berating the

⁵⁶ See *LG* 14 & 20

⁵⁷ *LG* 27.

⁵⁸ *LG* 6.

Confessor as a stumbling block to that unity.⁵⁹ The prosecutors' plea with Maximus continues until it reaches a crescendo: "Why do you love the Romans and hate the Greeks?" They ask, to which Maximus responds: "We have a precept which says not to hate anyone. I love the Romans as those who share the same faith, and the Greeks as sharing the same language."⁶⁰ With this final rejection of communion with the east, Maximus sealed his ecclesiological allegiance as well as his fate as a confessor.

Maximus did not tacitly accept the doctrinal authority of the eastern clergy, he recognized their error. Christological orthodoxy was the rule by which he judged ecclesial communion. In turn we could conclude that this communion affects his view of ecclesial authority. The eastern patriarchs and clergy did not possess this authority *ex officio* but due to their communion with the reality from which that authority flowed.

Just as the laity have so long been deemed "sharers" in the mission and work of the apostolic Church which had been previously seen as the proper role of the hierarchy, here the hierarchy itself becomes a "sharer" in the governance of Christ insofar as they themselves have been drawn into divine life. We could illuminate this concept further by offering the negation of LG 6: If Christ is no longer the one who is continuously nourishing and leading the laity in the actions of the clergy, the human shepherds have no claim to authority.⁶¹

The document concludes the description of the lay/clergy relationship by quoting St. Augustine of Hippo: "What I am for you terrifies me; what I am with you consoles me. For you I

⁵⁹ Maximus the Confessor, "The Trial of Maximus," in *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 23-24.

⁶⁰ Confessor, "The Trial of Maximus," 26.

⁶¹ An attempt is made to address the topic of governance in a thoroughly maximian fashion. The matter of discerning when and to what extent clerics relinquish this authority by acting in ways contrary to Christ, as with any reality reliant upon participative communion carries with it an apophatic element that makes prudential judgment impossible. See Loudovikos, *Church in the Making*, 55.

am a bishop; with you I am a Christian.⁶² This indicates not only what is the cause of Augustine's trepidation - the role of the Bishop - but what he and all clergy share in common with the laity, their role as Christians. As the following section 33 unfolds we are ready to affirm something that is implicit within Maximus' schema. In their participation in Christian life, the laity do not so much share a task that is exclusive to their state as much as they carry out the task of the one Church in a distinctive place and manner. This constitutes the laity's proper role in the apostolate. Their own work is a participation in Christ since they "expend all their energy for the growth of the Church and its continuous sanctification, since this very energy is a gift of the Creator and a blessing of the Redeemer."⁶³ This mission is specifically to "make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt the earth."⁶⁴ Once again, the task itself is not a separate one, it is rather the individuated expression and the location in this time, in this place that make up the laity's irreplaceable contribution. A multiplication of the clergy would not be fit to execute the task of the laity. The laity do not simply make up for what is lacking in clerical number, effort, or ability. Following the doctrine of the logoi, each member of the faithful has at the center of their life an exclusive micro-dialogue that they alone can carry out in the unique milieu they occupy.

Maximus' theology can serve as an interpretive key for understanding the laity's place in *LG* 34's consummate image of the lay priesthood: consecrating the world itself to God.

For all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne—all these become 'spiritual

⁶² Augustine *Serm* 340, 1: PL 38, 1483 - cited in *LG* 32

⁶³ *LG* 33

⁶⁴ *LG* 33

sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'. Together with the offering of the Lord's body, they are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, as those everywhere who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God.⁶⁵

The following points represent a maximian re-imaging of Vatican II's theology of the laity.

A. The World Constitutes a Eucharistic Gift

First, our discussion of world consecration must happen with the understanding that the act implies in no way that mediation somehow devalues the world. Consecration in maximian terms does not mean introducing a commodity into the world that it was somehow previously lacking. We find in both the Vatican II documents and Maximus' cosmology an emphasis on gathering creation as an offering to be united to the action of the Church.

This text evokes the dynamic of eucharistic reciprocity. We can link the text thematically to Maximus' thought in the shared concept of gathering up all of human activity throughout creation, uniting it to the cosmic liturgy as a eucharistic consecration. The eucharistic nature of this consecration further distinguishes it from a view of mediation that acts as a sort of commerce, a trade, or a ferrying of some commodity of grace or ontological being between God and created beings. Eucharistic action as a rule stems from the free act of thanksgiving and self-offering to the other. The unitive aspect of Maximus' approach undergirds this: the one consecrating in a eucharistic manner gathers up all the various aspects of life as constitutive of themselves as an offering. For the Confessor, the human vocation of mediation is not a task that

⁶⁵ *LG* 34

happens exterior to the person and the deifying communion with God as though it were clear and distinct offerings of separated realities. Far from a task that casts aside the material for the spiritual, the action of eucharistic offering takes place in a thoroughly incarnated, embodied reality. The personal gift offered by humanity cannot be decontextualized from the particularity of an individual person. Apart from the variety of mundane phenomena that sample human experience in *LG* 34 there would be nothing for humanity to offer.

To further clarify this in a maximian framework, the gifts that are gathered, united to the human person, and offered to God do not happen with the world as a so-called neutral backdrop. The gifts gathered and eucharistically offered are the embedded logoi which are inseparable from the particular beings that they abide within. Dialogue as a eucharistic exchange of gifts is constituted by the offering of logoi presented from the creature to God now with a tropos of gift. Therefore, the dialogic reciprocity can be in no way extracted from creation in an ideal, uncreated manner. To be within this reciprocal dynamic means conversing in the key of logoi which necessarily includes the consecration of created realities to God. To sum up this point, dialogic reciprocity of the laity does not happen in the midst of the world as some backdrop, it happens in the world because it is the world itself as constitutive of experiences, relationship and reality that is offered back to God. It is with this world that humanity acts eucharistically and by means of the world as created reality that thanksgiving is offered.

B. “Secular Character” As Descriptive of Micro-Dialogue

In this context we are describing in dialogic reciprocity is the underlying action of all Christians. Maximus tends toward describing Christian action as a unity. Acknowledging a “secular character” for the laity that uniquely differentiates this activity from that of the clergy

may not be consistent with his thought. As we have seen, the hierarchical priesthood occupies a specific place in Maximus' thought but even the basis of their activity is described within this eucharistic framework. In fact, it provides the model for the rest of human activity. We can return to a point made in the analysis of *LG*'s claims about lay activity: The emphasis of the document does not set up different spheres but grants individuals with a specific orientation of mission. The activity of eucharistic offering is held in common by the whole of the Church. Maximus' vision for the Christian life as an individuated participation in the cosmic liturgy reflects this dynamic.

In Maximus we find no affirmation of a task that belongs to the laity alone. There is, however, the remains of a definition of the laity in a "negative" manner of those who are not ordained. Yet this is not the return to a dynamic in which the lay life is somehow lessened or devalued by the lack of an exclusive task. The action of the hierarchy serves the Christian mission, the lay mission to embody God through the logoi. While the hierarchy participates in the totality of the shared mission, their activity as mystagogues or the exercise of *sacra potestas* is not done for its own sake but as an integrated part of the greater work of God's embodiment. This is an important change in ecclesiological perspective since it is not an inclusion in some alien mission being offered by the hierarchy.

The "secular character" would not connote a specifically lay set of actions but is used to describe the expansive, extra-ecclesial location of that activity in lay life. Secular character still communicates something special about the lay faithful: theirs is to execute the mission of God's embodiment in themselves and the particular facet of the cosmos that they alone can address. The deemphasis of secular action in favor of a concentration on interior ecclesial works can lead to a state in which the reality which the secular character describes is left unaccomplished and

the vast majority of human activity seen as irrelevant to the mission of the Church. As a maximian adaption, we can see mundane human activity as individual instances of micro-dialogue. Though the range of human activity is diverse they participate in a common end often obscured in particularity. Taking time to map out a role or theology for the graphic artist, the accountant, the philologist, or the botanist would both grant us too wide a set of experiences and one that is too narrow. The dialogue happens embedded within the world and as between the human and the divine on both an individual and collective level. We cannot here discount the cognitive dissonance noted by Doohan. Tasks in the world tend to be dissociated with ecclesial activity. A description of the laity should not seek to deepen this perceived rift but show how this is an unnecessary exclusion. The secular character, then, can be interpreted as a shorthand for individual micro-dialogues as a reminder that these are constitutive of an individual vocation, a mission to the world.

C. Humanity's Gift Expressed in Freedom

An invaluable facet of Maximus' thought is the championing and description of freedom. We have seen that for Maximus, the world is created from nothing and given by God out of freedom. Human response, a mirroring of divine freedom, can reach its divine potential by offering those same freely created realities back to God in conversion. A maximian understanding of the consecration of the world to God removes any temptation to view this return as a fated *reditus* caused and guaranteed by forces of necessity. The notion of a necessary return to God is a violation of freedom and threatens to depersonalize humanity into cogs in a divinely arranged *machina*. A formulation based on necessity would destroy dialogue and break down the communion between persons.

Such a remission of freedom is impossible for Maximus who sees free will as a primary way in which humanity images God. The Confessor guards this freedom in his eschatological formulation of the dynamic. God does not impose forces of necessity upon creation but invites it to free response. The converse of this would be a graced-forcing of creation to unfold in a certain manner bereft of freedom.

Applied to the life of the laity, the preservation of human freedom is invaluable to a description of the diversity of lay action. If God's plan is a free dialogue and not one of monolithic necessity, the variety of human responses can be understood positively. As we discussed in chapter two, the *logoi* as expressions of God's wills create a space for a multitude of free human responses. This has two direct consequences: first, it reframes our understanding of vocation and second it underscores our inability to evaluate how those around us respond to their own micro-dialogue with God.

Within the maximian model, contemplating one's vocation contains something of the "interior dimension" of pre-Vatican II vocational theologies described by Hahnenberg.⁶⁶ Maximus affirms a fundamental nature and ordering of the life of the individual as a plan by God by acknowledging the *logoi*. The revelatory elements do not take the character of an ossified "will of God" in one's life but form that basis of the dialogic relationship. Recall that for Maximus the *logoi* that could be interpreted as God's plan for the individual and the cosmos is contemplated by God as containing each possibility of one's response to that *logoi*. Within this milieu of change, the stream of dialogue, the manifestation of individual *logoi* may contain differing possibilities over the course of one's life, these *logoi* penetrate "both our present and future life, as if they were different generations..."⁶⁷ While holding in tension the human

⁶⁶ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 139.

⁶⁷ *Ad Thal* PG 90:517D.

person's constant ability to live in a manner that rejects the logoi, we affirm that living one's vocation is not within this model a simple discovering of what one ought to do and sticking with it. Living out one's vocation is a continued dynamic of relationship, the living of that relationship within the same participative communion of deification.

Even in cases where we have developed discernment in our own manifestation of dialogic reciprocity, we would expect that the result of the micro-dialogue between God and our neighbor would be different. These differences would not immediately ascribe moral value to one response over the other since they are responses to different individuations of the logoi.

Here we are reminded of the apophatic nature of dialogic reciprocity: inasmuch as the dialogue is between God and the individual, it is an exclusive dialogue. As such, it requires that the response come from the individual involved in that specific dialogue. Acknowledging this necessitates a space of freedom for that dialogue to take place. There can be no sense in which responses could be constructed by someone outside of that dialogue or foisted upon the dialogic participant by an outside authority.

This emphasis on freedom proffers an ecclesiological model that is radically different from the pre-Vatican II caricature of a laity whose task is but to "pray, pay, and obey." The clergy should never seek to short-circuit this dialogue but to ever form, invite and exhort Christians to participative communion in God. The shared state of all Christians as participants in their own logoi dialogue with God should create a foundational empathy. In no way can the role of the laity, or any Christian, be subsumed into mere obedience or passivity. The action of every Christian must attain to the maturity Gerard Philips uses to describe well-equipped laity: they must have "accurate judgment, inventive spirit and creative imagination."⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Philips, *The Role of the Laity*, 144.

This bespeaks an individual genius of particularity. Without being able to draw conclusions as to the correct response in all possible instantiations of the logoi we must affirm that the one who is capable of giving that correct response is always the dialogic participant and none other. As such their freedom must be respected. In no way does the allowance for this freedom connote an inability to name immoral action or responses that are contrary to the logoi writ large. What we are concerned with here is the myriad of creative responses made possible within the relationship of whom the only proper executor is the individual participant in dialogue.

The value of freedom also yields an eternal meaning to individual human action. This is similarly rooted in the nature of creation as freely created by God. God hands over creation in a way that relinquishes claims on ownership. The dynamic Maximus describes for the return of creation to God is incumbent upon free action that changes not the nature, the logoi, of creation but the mode of creation in free human response. God then receives the gift back in the manner it has been offered by the created agent.

During the dialogic exchange the logoi constitutive of the gift remain intact but the trajectory changes due to the novel tropos applied to it by the creative response of the creature. The particularity of the response is characterized by two radical elements of individuation: the particularity of the logoi and the particularity of the response to those unique logoi. That this dynamic has at its core the return of the logoi embedded within every facet of the cosmos has inestimable consequences for lay or “secular” activity. The ubiquitous nature of the logoi forbids us from dismissing any authentically human act of freedom as irrelevant to the church’s life and mission. The decision for or against converting the logoi in a manner that returns them to God is a decision with eternal ramifications in every circumstance. As they return to God, the

logoi carry with them the inventive effects of human freedom. In a sense, God allows humanity to have a share in the ultimate direction and meaning of creation. While never losing sight of the communal unity in eschatological fulfillment we acknowledge that the most minute or interior movements of human freedom carry an eternal relevance. God's reception of tropologically deified creation is an eternal acknowledgement of human action.

D. World Consecration as Participative Communion

Contextualizing the consecration of the world within the maximian eucharistic framework rejects the exercise of dialectic for the sake of an outcome in favor of dialogue. A dialectic approach may follow a logic of God being combined with what is not God resulting in some new synthesis. Reviewing Maximus' comments on theandric activity we can see that this is not his aim. Maximus is interested in a new activity that does not mix natures but preserves them in participative communion. We recall here the image of the fire and the sword the Confessor used in *Amb* 5. Each takes on the characteristics of the other without a change in nature. So too with the hypostatic union and by Maximus' extension of that same logic, communion between the human and divine.

Participative communion describes an action that does not end. There is no cessation of this dynamic once a desired outcome is met. The consecration of the world cannot, therefore, be seen as some appropriation of the world by the Church or God. The result is not a completed action but an establishing of the communal dynamic. To admit an end to world consecration would be akin to seeing an end to the eucharistic exchange of gifts.

While Maximus describes deification in a three-step process of being, well-being, and eternal well-being, we should note that what is established at the end of the process is not a new

being but a permanence of the relationship of the original being with God. The transformation that results has to do with the mode of being, affirmed by the free choice in conversion of that being's original logoi to return to God in an eschatological manner. At no point does a new being emerge from this process. So too, the offering back to God of all creation does not result in a different creation but a deified one. Even the use of the word "result" is misleading here since we are speaking about an establishing of a relationship in eschatological permanency. Even as God is embodied in the deified world, ontological distance is never done away with. In each person and in each created reality, consecration establishes participative communion that has yet to be eschatologically ratified.

That this dialogue perdures as a permanent dynamic within the eschaton is supported by Maximus' temporal theology of ever-moving-repose. This concept allows us to see deified creation as coming into the repose that connotes the impossibility of regressing from the final union with God while acknowledging the continual dynamism of this "ever-moving" relationship. The deified receive this quality of ever-moving-repose as a reflection of God's activity. We are reminded here, of the Confessor's use of the Gregorian idea of perpetual progress. The never-ending communion bespeaks a further deepening of the relationship. Though this relationship is eschatologically permanentized it is one that is not susceptible to Origenistic satiety.

The above intermingles with a fine point of eschatology due to the nature of this dynamic as a participative and not a productive one. In offering creation to God through consecration humanity never acts in a way bereft of divine activity. Eschatological consecration is always then a result of divine activity and never human action alone. Though humanity is invited into

the role of consecrator, eschatological realization can never be said to be contingent upon anything but divine action.

Conclusion: Consecrators of the World to God

At the outset of this chapter, we mentioned Benedict XVI's hope that we might all be gathered in Christ's activity of transubstantiating the world. The Pope Emeritus was not referencing a fully developed theological concept but making a striking parallel between the liturgical action of consecration and the offering of the world to God. Transubstantiation of the world is similar enough to conversion of the logoi that it can be used here because it addresses the same eucharistic realities that make up maximian dialogic reciprocity.

Maximus would not have been familiar with the concept of transubstantiation since it was not coined until the 12th century.⁶⁹ The concept is characteristically western, drawing upon the Aristotelean framework of substance and accidents. Without belaboring an explanation of the philosophical categories at work we can understand the concept of transubstantiation as an acknowledgement that while the outward appearance of a thing remains the same, God is capable of changing the reality behind it.

An aspect of transubstantiation that is particularly well suited for our purpose is that from a position removed from the reality, especially without the perspective offered by faith, one does not notice any change in the reality which is being addressed. To draw a direct comparison: in the same way as one who observes the eucharistic species from an outside perspective sees only bread and wine, the lives of Christians who have turned the tropoi of their lives to God would consist of the same matter of joy, suffering, love, and death that makes up every human life. The

⁶⁹ James T. O'Connor *The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 183.

daily bread offered and consecrated to God is of the same good creation which every human person experiences from their own unique perspective.

Here I propose a change in tropos is accompanied by a subjective element, a change in meaning. This is in keeping with our application of transubstantiation. In sacramental theology it could be said that the eucharistic action is accompanied by but not limited to a *transignification* that indicates to the believer that this bread and wine now mean something different without exhausting the mystery of the sacrament.⁷⁰ In the same, I submit that the change in tropos is signaled by a change in subjective meaning for the one making the offering. Once again, this is not meant to equate a change in tropos with a change of meaning but names a change in meaning as one of the traits of a reality which has been handed over as an offering, a *logoi* recognized, affirmed by human freedom that is on a trajectory back to God.

This proposition touches directly the practical daily living of the faithful and begs specific application. First, we should note that each of these examples are participative instances of the divine-human activity that Maximus names theandric, the language I am using to express these examples may tempt us to see them as taking place as an exclusively human action but, if we are to be at all faithful to the maximian perspective, we must always remember that God remains ever involved in this activity. Second, there is a need to make a chalcedonian distinction that does not imply separation between actions that are explicitly undertaken as an offering to God and those that acquire their status as an offering because they are the natural actions of human persons on the path to deification. The first I call explicit offerings since even if they are

⁷⁰ For discussions on transignification vs transubstantiation see Rock A Kerevesty *Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eucharistic Theology from a Historical Biblical and Systematic Perspective* (Chicago: Hillebrand, 2004), 211. For an in-depth discussion on symbolism and signification as one aspect of one aspect of a sacrament that does not exhaust the reality communicated see Louis-Marie Chauvet *Symbol and Sacrament* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), 430-436.

not undertaken for the sole purpose of being an offering to God the recognition of the activity as offering grants it an explicit change in meaning intended by the offeror. The second I call participative offerings since they take on the character of offering not as a direct result of being recognized as such but because they make up the daily matter of life of one in participative communion with God.

Explicit offerings include any of those actions in which the meaning is understood to be directly connected to God. As the most explicit offering, times of prayer and liturgical action are the means by which other realities in our lives are offered and consecrated. This includes the handing over of one's life, struggles, joys, and hopes in the course of the Church's liturgical action as well as personal prayer. Actions taken in the name of charity and justice also fall under this category: the reordering of society taken up as a vocational call of the laity represents an explicit offering to God of practical circumstances. Similar to this are actions taken for the sake of creation in the name of preserving the ecological gift that God has given. These actions, inasmuch as they share an intentionality that is done for the sake of or on behalf of God's plan, are explicit offerings of creation to God.

Participative offerings, due to their indirect nature, may be recognized by the offeror as acts of consecration during moments of reflective introspection but do not owe their status of offering to this recognition. They are performative in nature and consist of those daily life decisions that unceasingly demand the attention of the faithful. These offerings are the living out of the married life, daily occupations, physical and mental relaxation, and hardships cited in *LG* 34. Many of these realities are difficult to extract from the complicated circumstances that make up daily life and in naming these actions and situations I in no way intend to present them as a

comprehensive list nor do they represent clear and distinct sacrifices that could be isolated from one another but in concert make up the life and creation offered.

One common scene from family life can serve as an intersection for many of the complex realities characteristic of a participative offering: a mother's loving care for her child. It would be difficult to find an act of love that is more natural or ordinary, yet it is the nature of this love that we see the logoi of selfless care and dedication manifest. Images of this are iconically written into the human psyche. From the point in which the child relies on the mother for existence en utero, to first years of feeding, teething, soothing, playing, crying ... Regardless of life circumstances mothers give something of their very lives to their children. Such self-gift demonstrates participative offering to the point that it would be bold not to recognize the presence of the logoi even in the actions of non-believers.

The biological roots of maternal charity are not a stumbling block for us here, as though the act of self-giving in motherhood would be better if it were a matter of sheer will. That maternal love arises partly out of a mother's natural desire and disposition toward loving is itself a proof that the logoi tend toward dialogic character of self-gift. Maximus' creation affirming thought prepares us to recognize that the logoi are not opposed to corporeal reality but written into it. The realization that such love draws the mother out of herself, toward charity, and is best realized in other-centered-self-gift may be a natural path through which many recognize and pursue conversion of the logoi.

Similarly ubiquitous to human living is the tragedy of suffering. In *LG* 34 this reality is coupled with a qualification: it must be "borne patiently." This is due to the ambivalent character of suffering, which may engender spiritual growth or death equally based upon free response. There are, of course, voluntary sufferings which fall under the above heading of explicit

offerings: fasting, mortification, trials and challenges offered up. More common are the innumerable trials, difficulties, hardships, and tragedies that beset humanity no matter our station in life. These become participative offerings whether they have been acknowledged as such or not. The bearing of hardships and not the flight from them is itself a sacrifice.

The culmination of involuntary human suffering, death, has a unique place in Maximus' theology of deification. In his study of the human body within the maximian corpus, Cooper observes how Maximus' thought connects bodily death to the realization of deification.⁷¹ Deification puts death to active use as a means of detachment, purification, and witness. In this sense, the long suffering of a terminally ill patient may be seen not as the defeat of medicine or a meaningless event but as a witness to life beyond the physical. Without foregoing the accompanying emotional experiences of sadness and grief we can see in death a participative offering of the dying who point beyond the contingent creation in which the final manifestation of deification is impossible.

In contrast to emotionally evocative events such as suffering, death, and motherhood is the quintessentially mundane example of the day-to-day work of the faithful. As with suffering, there are instances of this daily work that manifest themselves as explicit offerings. Those daily tasked with a mission at the service of their moral or religious conscience can clearly draw the tropological meaning shift we have proposed. Health and mental care workers, advocates for the disenfranchised, and public servants, to name a few, may see their work to and for others as a sacrificial offering. Connecting professions that are not commonly associated with service or mission proves far more difficult.

⁷¹ Cooper, 245-6.

What do trash collection, fast-food service, or balancing a corporate budget have to do with consecrating the world to God? Within these contexts we have individual opportunities for explicit and participative offering. Explicitly those employed in occupations could see their own activity as an explicit call to live out the logoi in their particular place of work. Justice remains justice whether it is the collective bargaining for worker's rights or if it is the manager's decision to ensure that a single parent has ample time off. An explicit offering might be made of particular relationships based upon their employment and there are many who find their Christian identity as a workplace evangelist.

Concurrent with these explicit opportunities is the participative offering that takes place within the workplace by the simple virtue of the faithful living and working within it. These manifestations of offering tend to be hidden and are often unacknowledged. They are made by the simple living out of the logoi in the context of the world. As with the example of transubstantiation, these lives are only noticeably different if analyzed at the level of meaning. For instance, the person formed by the logoi of faithfulness and honesty may carry out their task in the same manner as anyone else, their unexplored motivations inseparable from their life with God. Similarly hidden is the resistance of temptation which from the perspective developed by the Confessor is the free affirmation of the logoi which converts them back to God.

Manifestations of these virtues for Maximus point toward God in and of themselves. As self-contained milieus in their own right, workplaces share many of the same raw experiences represented in our other examples. Certainly, places of employment have proven to be a source of stress and suffering for many. As such these spaces become stages for our life's drama and for the faithful this life is a manifestation of God's presence.

As participative offerings, the change in meaning does not require a conceptualization of God's presence or action but a uniting of that reality to our deepest selves. Though the change in action is taken in relation to and for the sake of the Logos and logoi, the effectiveness of our consecration of the world is not contingent upon the ability to draw conceptual connections from the realities of life to God. If this were the case, the consecration of the world to God would be indistinguishable from the pietistic habit of explicitly referencing every experience we have to God. The reality we are attempting to recognize tends to be just as hidden as the lives that undertake it daily. By acknowledging a change in meaning as a change in tropos I mean to say that this change resonates to the very core of who we are as persons even if the presence of the logoi can only be acknowledged in these situations during periods of introspection and prayer.

Proleptic Participation

From the maximian standpoint, the exercise of the common priesthood puts the laity within a proleptic participation of the eschatological dynamic. Living in a manner that offers the sum of human experience, in the Spirit, to God as a eucharistic offering constitutes a proleptic participation in the deified life. Though ever mindful of a future eschatological consummation, Maximus does not draw a sharp line of distinction between deified human activity in the present and future eschatological fulfillment. Thus, the Confessor holds in tension an ever-accessible realized eschatology with the promise that the foretaste will be perpetuated and fulfilled when it enters the eternal dynamic of ever-moving-repose.

Upheld by the preservation of persons and God's affirmation of human freedom, the proleptic experience of deified life is itself the union of God and humanity through consecration of the world. That this reality is present as a foretaste does not lead to the alleviation of any part

of the human life or condition. As *Lumen Gentium* indicates in its list of human activity, this does not inaugurate a cessation of human suffering, human work, human leisure, or human creativity. Human freedom to undertake tasks, to hope, to dream, and to act is not stifled but granted a new divine mode. This means that there is no quantifiable goal to deified human action. Participation in eucharistic dialogic reciprocity means that at no point can we identify the boarder or goal of the activity of mediation.

There is a tension here of eschatological hope. Proleptic participation in the eschaton through the consecration of the world is not a discursive movement of progress from one point to the next. At no time can a claim be made that God has fully been embodied in one created reality or another. The task is an unquantifiable one. There is no territory to be definitively conquered, no filling of vessels with a commodity of grace, no perfect society to establish. There is only the perpetual communal offering. This understanding of world consecration avoids two extremes contradictory to eschatological hope: triumphalism and futility. It avoids triumphalism because neither can one say that the work has been completed in this or that sphere nor can one claim that having completed a task, or that the final work of divine dialogue is fulfilled. It avoids futility because the very point of the work is communion and not some preconceived product. Deified life is not out to overtake, conquer, compete with, or cancel human experience but to come into intimate communion with it. “The Logos of God (who is God) wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of his embodiment.”⁷² Eschatological hope is not for an accomplishing of this consecration once and for all but the participation in the eternal communion that is the embodiment of the Logos.

⁷² *Amb* 7 91:1084CD.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this dissertation was to develop a theological lens that is faithful to the thought of Maximus the Confessor and to bring that lens to bear upon the continuing conversation on the theology of the laity. As a result, I have addressed two major issues that dominate the discussion of the laity since the Second Vatican Council. The first of these is the perceived contradiction of terms in the conciliar language, that the task of the laity is to “consecrate the world to God.” The second is ambiguity and non-specificity in the conciliar teaching about lay life outside of explicitly ecclesial activities.

Maximus’ rich thought pressed our study beyond these questions and invited us to consider the lay life as an individualized instance of the dialogic reciprocity between humanity and God. Drawn from the Confessor’s vision of cosmological unity in Christ, this dynamic reveals that the life of the laity is a performative participation in God’s desire to realize the mystery of His embodiment in the cosmos. This understanding moves the task of the laity from the periphery to the center. God’s plan to unite all things in Christ is made manifest by the daily offerings made in every lay life, no matter how obscure.

To address the primary concerns of the post-conciliar literature, I had to first trace the scholarly literature on the laity. In Chapter 1 I mapped out the formulations of lay theology present in the documents of the Second Vatican council and the two schools of thought that characterized the reception of the Council’s teachings. The Magisterial school reaffirmed the conciliar teaching and continued to apply it to emerging situations within the Church without addition. Pope St. John Paul II’s *Christifideles Laici* re-explored the conciliar teaching with an

emphasis on complementarity between the laity and clergy but retained the themes and language of the council.

A second voice that emerged from the post-conciliar discussion were those theologians who saw the theology of the laity as it was expressed in the conciliar documents as a *terminus a quo* from which further theological discussion was not only invited but necessary if the theological identity of the laity was ever to be defined. These theologians make up what I call the developmental school. A combination of identifying the documents of the Second Vatican Council as a point of departure and the theological developments of the 20th century led these thinkers to a number of shared conclusions and concerns. One crucial issue raised by the development school addressed three corresponding dichotic pairs: the laity-clergy, secular-sacred, world-God. They viewed the conciliar language as implying a set of distinct spheres which, at best, implied that the laity had been relegated to a passive role and, at worst, envisioned the laity and the secular as being completely cut off from God. This vision of the laity was not only in contradiction with the claim that the Second Vatican Council recognized the laity as equal sharers in the Church's life and mission, the development school understood the dichotic pairs as implying that creation itself is not good due to its need to be consecrated.

What is the purpose of a laity whose mission is the consecration of an already good world to God? How can we understand the ecclesiological categories of laity and clergy in a manner that does not relegate the laity to an exclusively passive role? Maximus' cosmological vision is uniquely suited for addressing these aporia. In Chapter 2 I provided a detailed description of the Confessor's cosmology. At the root of Maximus' thought are the Chalcedonian adverbs used to describe the hypostatic union. This union is distinct without separation, without change, without division and without confusion. These enable the Confessor to make important distinctions

without implying a breakdown in unity or a shared identity that would result in assimilation. I explained how this is key to his cosmological system since it allows Maximus to describe a cosmos that is characterized by an ontological difference that is a necessary prerequisite for communion with God.

This understanding framed my introduction of Maximus' key cosmological term: the logoi. As wills of God, the logoi are creation's participation in God. All of creation was made according to the logoi and has the logoi embedded within it. The logoi are God's abiding presence within creation understood in a Chalcedonian manner: God is united to creation as its source and destiny. Creation is in itself good but is not to be confused with God. The good character of creation can never be lost since it can never be separated from the logoi which informs its nature. There is embedded within the logoi an eschatological invitation to return to God. This may be fulfilled or resisted by the free action of created beings and is manifest in the mode, tropos, through which they express their logoi. This mode may be in line with the logoi or it may be opposed to the logoi as is the case with the corruption of sin. The movement of the logoi on a trajectory back to God, conversion results in the eschatological consummation of creation, the fulfillment of God's desire to become embodied in creation through the logoi. Maximus' cosmological vision gives us some of the tools necessary to solve the problem of a good creation offered back to God: participation in God through the logoi gives creation an undeniably good character yet there is an invitation to return so that God's intentions for creation might come to consummation.

Building upon the cosmological vision laid out in Chapter 2, in Chapter 3 I reflected upon Maximus' description of deification. Deification provides the details of how the Confessor's cosmology unfolds in time as well as revealing humanity's unique role in God's plan. Maximus

describes the change affected by deification as a communion with God through a change in tropos. Deified humanity has Christ, the Logos himself, as its prototype. The Confessor presents the hypostatic union as the key to reclaiming the original vocation for humankind: the mediation of all creation to God. Humanity follows the Logos according to their particularized logoi. Maximus explains that Christ united all of creation despite their apparent divisions in his person, exercising activity that is the unified action of God and humanity, otherwise known as theandric activity. By living their lives in union with God, humanity lives in accord with a new, divine tropos and becomes individual manifestations of theandric activity. This activity is expressed in the exercise of human freedom within the creation both in an individual way and corporately as Church. Maximus' formulation of this dynamic and the presence of the logoi in all of creation make the whole world a participant in the cosmic liturgy. I outlined how this liturgy is expressed on an individual level as a dialogue between God and the individual as a free exchange of gifts, as Loudovikos has coined it, a eucharistic dialogic reciprocity. This summation of Maximus is particularly well suited for theological reflection on the life of the laity since it deals with mediation as individual micro-dialogues with God present within particularized human experience.

In chapter 4, I applied Maximus' theological framework to the problems raised by contemporary theologies of the laity. Addressing the issues at the center of the developmental school's critique was central to this task, particularly whether or not Maximus would agree with a view that the laity were passive receptacles of grace acted upon by the clergy. As I have outlined above, this is connected to a host of issues including the goodness of creation and the fittingness of using language of mediation and consecration. The solution I presented was unique to Maximus' adaption of Dionysius and Chalcedon.

First, I distinguished between the sort of mediation the Confessor would have received from the Dionysian tradition which recognizes only God, not the clergy, as the one from who the whole Church receives the charisms. As mediators of this divine activity, the clergy are not set over, above, or against the laity. Both participate in the charisms that belong only to God. I contrasted this with the thought of Proclus whose ontological understanding of mediation requires that members of the hierarchy retain a share of the power they communicate to those below them and to whom they only impart a lesser share. From this I concluded that Maximus' understanding of mediation, even as it would pertain to an ecclesial hierarchy, acknowledges an equal share among all. Joined to the Confessor's reception of Chalcedon, I highlighted the participative nature of the communal share in the charisms. This allows for the clergy and laity to express the charisms in their own manner, in their own situations without claiming that they are in competition with one another.

Turning to how Maximus could develop and deepen the theology of the laity present in the conciliar texts, I viewed the description of the laity found in *Lumen Gentium* 34 through the lens of maximian dialogic reciprocity and explored a number of key insights. Among these were the acknowledgement of the whole of creation as a eucharistic gift that could be offered to God. The return of this gift is the act of consecration enacted through human freedom. I explored the innumerable expressions of human freedom made possible by Maximus' understanding of the logoi of providence and judgement. As long as they are in accord with the proper nature gifted to creation by God, the logoi, these acts of human freedom are received by God, as such they become a human contribution to theandric activity that enter into eternity.

My attempt to create synergy between maximian thought and conciliar theologies of the laity lead me to consider the life of the laity as it is manifest in different sorts of offerings as

consecration: explicit and participative. The latter is an act of consecration by the living of deified life in any circumstance. Though it may not be acknowledged it is not a lesser sacrifice but consists of an offering due to the theandric activity that pervades the life of the faithful. These particular acts of consecration, no matter how hidden or obscure, are themselves proleptic foretaste of the definitive eschatological consecration – the unity of the logoi in the Logos.

A. Omitted Topics Related to this Study

There are many lines of inquiry related to the topic of this dissertation that may have proven fruitful to discuss but I have omitted for the sake of focus on the interplay between Vatican II, contemporary theologies of the laity, and the thought of Maximus. Some of these topics are tangentially related to the topic of laity others run parallel to the argument.

Perhaps the most glaring omission is a detailed study of Karl Rahner's theology of grace.¹ As I noted several times in the text, no other theologian influenced the development school as much as Rahner. Rahner is often cited by development school authors as the guarantor of their formulation of the God-world relationship and by extension their concern regarding the aforementioned dichotomies.²

I believe a study of Rahner in relation to this topic would make a fitting dissertation on its own and could be approached by various lines of inquiry: to what extent did Rahner's theology of grace influence the development school? Do the conclusions reached by the development school accurately represent Rahnerian thought? A comparison of Rahnerian and maximian

¹ See Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1978)., Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Continuum, 1994)., helpful introductions to this and other aspects of Rahner's thought include William V. Dych, *Rahner* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992). and Leo O'Donovan, ed., *A World of Grace: An Introduction to the Themes and Foundations of Karl Rahner's Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1980).

² This is particularly the case for O'Meara who has written extensively on Rahner's thought see Thomas O'Meara, *God in the World: A Guide to Karl Rahner's Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007).

thought would also be fruitful: At what points do the thought of Rahner and Maximus intersect and on what issues would they have differed? Human freedom and goodness of creation stand out as fertile points of departure for a conversation that places these theological giants in dialogue.³

The voluminous nature of Rahner's work on grace, along with the plethora of interpretive literature proved prohibitive to incorporating it in the current project. Rahner's substantial writings on the lay vocation were pre-conciliar and were not representative of his mature theology of grace. Any exploration of his thought on the laity would have had to include a study of his theological development throughout the 20th century.⁴ The discussion would have also distracted from the nature of the project which was to view theologies of the laity through a maximian lens.

Rahner's contribution is evocative of the nature-grace conversation that dominated the theological discourse of the 20th century and continues today.⁵ The outstanding issue is the possibility of a nature completely separate and bereft of grace. The debate has impacted almost every facet of theological inquiry: theological anthropology, moral theology, and sacramental theology to name a few.⁶ The application of Maximus' thought to the theology of the laity is, in a

³ For Rahner's view of the interaction between grace and human freedom see Karl Rahner, "Questions on Theology of History," in *Theological Investigations 5: Later Writings* (Herder & Herder, 1970). Rahner espouses a view of charisms as individual manifestations in one whole charism similar to Maximus' in Karl Rahner, "Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church," in *Theological Investigations 12: Confrontations* (New York: Seabury, 1974). For Rahner's thought on the act of consecrating as it relates to clergy and laity see Karl Rahner, "Consecration in the Life and Reflection of the Church," in *Theological Investigations* (Herder & Herder, 1983).

⁴ Examples of Rahner's explicit thought on the lay vocation leading up the council include Rahner, *Christian in the Market Place*, and Karl Rahner, "The Sacramental Basis for the Role of the Layman in the Church," in *Theological Investigations VIII: Further Theology of the Spiritual Life 2* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971).

⁵ The work of Henri de Lubac was precipitous to this conversation, one cannot approach it without being familiar with the issues he raised: see Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Crossroad, 1998), and Henri de Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, trans. Richard Arnandez (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984).

⁶ For how a view of this debate nested within the greater development of theological anthropology see Stephen J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993).

sense, an engagement of this problem in microcosm with an ecclesiological focus. Loudovikos, Tollefsen, and von Balthasar have demonstrated that Maximus does not separate nature from grace.⁷ Due to his place in history and the theological method of the east, the Confessor stands outside of the issue. An analysis of the nature-grace conversation through a maximian lens could adopt a method akin to the present one which does not read Maximus into a debate but presents him as an alternative that could speak into the conversation.

A third major thread that I have not broached within this dissertation is the sexual abuse scandals and coverups that have called many aspects of the laity-clergy relationship into question. A thorough study of Maximus on the subject would be fruitful. As a lay monk who spoke out in opposition to a position adopted by a majority of the hierarchy, the Confessor stands as an example of one who confronted the clergy from within the church. The witness of his life underscores his understanding of charism and the church's ability to preserve the fulness of the one charism despite failures within the clergy. In his work on ecclesiology, Loudovikos formulates Maximus' position on charism as a consubstantial participation in a singular reality.⁸ The understanding of a charism in which clergy participate but may render themselves unsuitable to exercise may help the church grapple with grievous offenses and lead to further reflection.

B. Further Developing Maximian Lay Theology

In closing, I would like to highlight three avenues down with the conclusions of this dissertation could be applied and further developed. These areas of study emerge within vastly

For an understanding of how this debate influences the development of virtues and the proper end of humanity, specifically as formulated by Aquinas see Jean Porter, *The recovery of virtue : the relevance of Aquinas for Christian ethics* (Louisville: John Know Press, 1990). Jennifer A. Herdt, *Putting on virtue : the legacy of the splendid vices / Jennifer A. Herdt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

⁷ See Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*, 10., Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 122., Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 190.

⁸ Loudovikos, *Church in the Making*, 55.

different frames of reference: philosophical, ecclesiological, and the self-contained milieu of particularity.

Applying Maximus' thought to the contemporary actions of the laity has, I believe, indirectly addressed some of the core issues of post-modern philosophy. The deconstruction of metaphysics fueled by the thought of Nietzsche and culminating in thinkers like Derrida and Foucault are essentially based upon the great scandal that all human values, as expressed in ideas, language, and culture, are subjective and correlative. The world we perceive, they observe, is so greatly dependent on our linguistic categories and self-formed viewpoint that we have no hope of attaining to an objective, absolute truth. We can summarize this post-modern tenet as disillusionment at the realization that all meaning consists of subjective linguistic constructions, or more colloquially, that it is all "made up."

Common responses to this assertion are the direct denial of radical subjectivity in the hope of coming upon some bed-rock objectivity. This is often sought by means of rational proof, logic, or grounding philosophy in belief in God.⁹ All of this is undertaken in order to grant some form of objective meaning.

The dialogic reciprocity of divine communion found in Maximus does not go down such a route. Maximus' formulation of God's embodiment as an accomplishment of theandric activity shows a radical comfort with the human, the subjective, the relational. The logoi are not principles that drop to the earth as granite monoliths. The will of God has at its center the relationship it maintains and promises to fulfill. God's openness to possibility, the respect for freedom allows the logoi to be received and offered as the result of human meaning-making.

⁹ I believe that this accounts for the resurging popularity of thomism, embraced by some conservative leaning groups as the exclusive orthodox form of philosophical and theological thought. For an exposition on different strains of thomistic thought and their relation to the wider theological horizon see Tracey Rowland, *Catholic Theology* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017).

The dialogue between God and humanity is not about coming to an objective view of the cosmos but the participative communion of the cosmos with the divine. This process does not take the subjective viewpoint as a chrysalis which will be discarded in favor of an objective realization in the eschaton but is in fact the eternal ratification and affirmation of this subjectivity by deification.

The most sacred realities of Catholicism reflect this worldview. The biblical corpus and Tradition in general, are theandric works, God-inspired human words, couched as it is in cultural and linguistic limitedness now rightfully received as the canon. Liturgically, the offering of human words and actions that have ever-evolved over the past two-thousand years is the theandric presence of God among humanity: sensible, corporate, corporeal, and real.

The nature of humanity and God's relationship as a theandric dialogue and the apophaticism that underpins the Confessor's theology allows the dynamic as we have described it to coexist alongside the post-modern critique of ontology. The mystical/apophatic rejection of concepts and ideas evidences the maximian acknowledgement of the humanly conceivable as contingent. Maximus' taxonomy of the cosmos would certainly be rejected as a subjective explication of phenomenon but the dialogic dynamic that emerges from his analysis would remain. Theandric relationship, not human knowledge of objective reality, bears the weight of maintaining humanity's communion with God.

While I believe that the above represents a new dialogue between Maximus and contemporary philosophy, it is not the first time the Confessor's thought has been brought into a conversation with post-modernism. Two notable authors who have applied the Confessor's work to contemporary philosophical issues are John Zizioulas and Jean-Luc Marion. On the topic of otherness, personal communion, and desire, John Zizioulas compares the thought of Maximus

and Pseudo-Dionysius to Emmanuel Levinas in order to show that the “other” of post-modern philosophy and Patristic thought are not consonant with one another. Zizioulas notes a fundamental difference between Levinas and Patristic thought. For Levinas, the human desire for God only leads to desire itself, which is ultimately unfulfilled since God as Other does not have any desire for humanity or anything at all. For Patristic thought, which for Zizioulas is best represented by Maximus, God not only desires communion with humanity but provokes humanity’s desire and is its ultimate destination, resulting in unending communion between humanity and God.¹⁰ As mentioned above in chapter 2 note 77, Jean-Luc Marion folds concepts from Maximus’ mystical theology into his phenomenological explorations. Marion applies these concepts as a substitute for traditional ontology which he rejects as a mere idol. He attempts to forge a new path to theology in place of ontology, based upon the saturated phenomenon of gift that leads to love and the affirmation of God as the giver of that love.¹¹

C. Descriptive Ecclesiology

A practical advantage of this theology of the laity is that it does not necessitate a radical reconfiguration of ecclesiological structures. In many ways the actions that are done in every facet of ecclesial life remain the same when viewed through the maximian lens. The refocusing of the Church’s activity toward the consecration of the world does not require clergy, lay minister, religious, or laity to cease what they are doing and take up some novel activity.

The maximian tempered lay theology, with the embodiment of God realized in communal theandric activity as its hallmark, acts as a descriptive lens for what has already been the action

¹⁰ See John D. Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 48-51.

¹¹ See Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012). and Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

of the Church not only in the past sixty years but throughout the sum of her history. While promoting the equality of all members of the body, the maximian schema places strong emphasis on the participation of the whole with the dynamic of eucharistic offering. The goal of a constantly renewed theandric communion, that is not manifest once and for all outside of the eschaton, shifts the focus from intra-ecclesial life and work to the practice of this theandric communion among those who may conceive of themselves as tangentially related to the Church's life and mission.

The activity necessary to fulfill each individual's mission, their sharing in the mission of the Church does not look like an ever-increasing devotion modeled after the lives of clergy and religious. Transformed, deified human activity still looks like human activity. The consummating liturgical action of transubstantiation may be a useful register for this point: the bread and wine remain the same in outward appearance while now encompassing a new divine reality. Likewise, the daily tasks of humanity in their banality can be lived in a theandric manner without changing their constitutive tasks or appearance. The goal is the realization of divine communion in every time and place.

D. Theandric Response in Radical Particularity

Our previous point about ecclesiology -- that the maximian lens does not offer a new way of being church that requires a reconfiguration but is a descriptive lens that further assists us in seeing a lay-lived theandric communion as a sign that the dynamic is being properly understood and lived -- leads us to acknowledge the relevance of radical particularity. Grasping this point is a matter of understanding the inestimable relevance of the peculiarities and eccentricities of particular human milieus to the divine plan.

Often the stage upon which the church's life and mission are conceived are extracted far beyond the mundane: what is important are the events of Calvary, the shifting of life and culture of society, the influence of the Church upon the *res publica* or some other compounding of human activity such that it is often difficult to see how individual relationships contribute to their outcome.

In contrast, the stage of the dialogic exchange is the obscurity of individual communities and lives. Dialogic reciprocity embraces the radically particular and elevates it to the stage upon which the salvation of the world takes place. Perhaps it would be illustrative to reformulate the return of the logoi in these contexts not as the salvation of *the world* but the salvation of *worlds*. Changing the frame of reference here is not meant to deny the final unity of the cosmos but to draw attention to the phenomenological experiences of humanity and our creation of our own worlds which we inhabit. One has only to drive down a city street to become overwhelmed by the innumerability of these worlds: the discount tire center, the fast-food restaurant, the corporate office, the family of four huddled in a small apartment. Every instance comes with their own set of self-centric concerns: how to solve this supply problem, will there be enough customers tonight to pay the employees, how to resolve an ongoing interpersonal conflict, does this diagnosis mean my daughter will never be happy...

To its inhabitants, every one of these worlds is of inestimable importance. They can contain the hopes, fears, sufferings, and longings of generations. Each of these have nested within them an infinitude of experiences, all of which may be brought to bear to the theandric relationship of dialogic reciprocity. Inasmuch as these expressions of human particularity and freedom do not run contrary to the logoi, they are the fertile ground for the fulfillment of God's desire to become embodied in every fissure of the cosmos.

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