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HOLY SCRIPTURE IN THE MONOTHELITE CONTROVERSY The Standpoint of Maximus the Confessor

In the period of the Monothelite controversy both the disputing parties referred to the Holy Scriptures. For example, Emperor Constans II (641-668) states in his *Typus* that he adheres to the Bible¹. Pope Martin (649-655) at the Synod in Rome (649) maintains that supporters of Monothelitism misinterpret Scripture and the testimonies of the Church Fathers². Thus, Scripture was treated as an important argument in the dispute.

The purpose of the paper is to illustrate the role of the Scripture in Maximus the Confessor's († 662) polemics against the Monothelitism. Maximus was a protagonist in the debate and his ideas formed the basis for the decision of the Roman Synod of 649, and then of the Council in Constantinople of 680/681. Maximus Confessor was convinced that the correct faith was necessary to salvation³. According to him, faith should be based on authoritative sources. He knows three types of sources – biblical, patristic and philosophical⁴ – but his theology first of all is rooted in Scripture. Maximus maintains that the theologian who bases his discourse on the authority of Scripture, operates from the authority of God's will⁵. The significance of Scripture in Maximus' theology is evident from the number of biblical quotations in his works and

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¹ Cf. *Typus (Constantis imperatoris)*, ed. R. Riedinger, w: *Concilium Lateranense a. 649 celebratum*, ACO II/1, Berlin 1984, 208, 27 (secretarius IV).

² Cf. ACO II/1, 11, 35-37.

³ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Epistula* 12, PG 91, 504B.

⁴ Cf. *Acta in primo exilio seu dialogus Maximi cum Theodosio episcopo Caesareae in Bithynia* XV, PG 90, 152C; Maximus Confessor, *Epistula* 6, PG 91, 425A. See S.L. Epifanowicz, *Преподобний Максим Исповідник и византийське богослов'я*, Київ 1915, 120; J. Pelikan, „Council or Father or Scripture”: *The Concept of Authority in the Theology of Maximus Confessor*, in: *The Heritage of the Early Church. The essays in honor of G.V. Florovsky*, ed. D. Neiman – M. Schatken, OCA 195, Roma 1973, 278.

⁵ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Orationis dominicae expositio*, PG 90, 873C.

from the works themselves directly focused on the interpretation of various biblical passages⁶.

This paper is divided into four parts. The first part as a short introduction briefly presents the essence of the Monothelite debate. In the second part we focus on the principles of Maximus' modes of interpreting the Scripture. The aim of the third part is to show Maximus' biblical argumentation concerning the debate. The fourth part gives attention to Maximus' conviction about the insufficiency of biblical argumentation.

1. The essence of the Monothelite dispute. The Monothelite controversy concerned the presence of a human faculty of will in Christ in the context of the quest for a compromise between both the Miaphysites and the Chalcedonians. In 633 in Alexandria the Pact of Union was adopted and embodied in Nine Chapters. The agreement should have led to communion between both Egyptian miaphysites and adherents of Chalcedon on the basis of a monoenergetic (one operation) formula (μία ἐνέργεια τοῦ λόγου)⁷. There was also promulgated a decree concerning one operation of Christ and His divine and human nature⁸. The statement on the one operation was developed to the statement on the one will. In 638 the emperor Heraclius issued his *Ekthesis* which contains formula: „single will of our Lord Jesus Christ” (ἓν θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)⁹. According to adherents of Monothelism, the two wills in one person of Christ would imply the simultaneous presence of two faculties of will that would lead to contradiction in one person of Christ¹⁰. There was not a clash of volition in Christ, so the presence of two faculties of will was impossible, hence also the two wills¹¹. The single will was understood by the monothelites as unity of operation in Christ, that is His human faculty never operated separately from the divine will and in opposition to it. They were convinced about “the whole divine and human

⁶ Cf. Epifanowicz, *Преподобниѣ Максимъ Исповѣдникъ*, p. 120-123.

⁷ Cf. *Satisfactio facta inter Syrum et eos qui erant ex parte Theodosianorum*, Mansi XI 564C-568B. See ACO II/1, 134, 19; *Vita ac certamen Sancti Maximi Confessoris* IX, PG 90, 77C-D. See also A.N. Stratos, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, vol. 1: 602-634, transl. M. Ogilvie-Grant, Amsterdam 1968, 298.

⁸ ACO II/1, 12, 8-12: „μίαν ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ [...] ἐνέργειαν, τῆς τε θεότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος”.

⁹ *Expositio orthodoxae fidei (Ecthesis)*, ed. R. Riedinger, w: ACO II/1, 160, 25-26. See G. Dagrón, *Kościół bizantyński i chrześcijaństwo bizantyńskie między najazdami a ikonoklazmem (VII wiek – początek VIII wieku)*, in: *Historia chrześcijaństwa. Religia – kultura – polityka*, vol. 4: *Bi-skupi, mnisi i cesarze 610-1054*, ed. J.M. Mayer – Ch.I.L. Pietri – A. Vauchez – M. Venard, Polish edition J. Kłoczowski, Warszawa 1999, 43.

¹⁰ Cf. Paulus II Constantinopolitanus, *Epistula ad Theodorum papam*, Mansi X 1024C-E; Pyrrhus Constantinopolitanus, *Epistula ad Iohannem IV Papam* (fragmenta), ed. R. Riedinger, ACO II/1, 338, 18-22.

¹¹ Cf. Sergius Constantinopolitanus, *Epistula ad Honorium Papam*, Mansi XI 533E; *Expositio orthodoxae fidei (Ecthesis)*, ACO II/1, 160, 12-19.

operation” which belongs to one and the same divine Logos¹². Jesus Christ as God and man at the same time was performing both the divine and the human things¹³. It seems that adherents of Monotheletism did not notice the biblical texts which might have pointed to the human operation of Christ. The Patriarch Paul referring to the words “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me” (Jn 6:38) and also to the Prayer in the Garden (Mt 26:36-46) states that he negatively perceives the interpretation of these fragments as pointing to the two wills of Christ¹⁴.

Adherents of Monotheletism taught one person of the Word of God which had a rationally animated flesh¹⁵, that is human nature. Any possible tension in the person of Christ was not a rational and free volitional opposition to divine nature, but simply a physical reaction of human nature. God’s will is able to tame it and to overcome its resistance. Thus adherents of Monotheletism denied any operation of Christ’s human nature separately from God’s nature and in opposition to it. The same Christ performs both divinely and humanly inseparably. Moreover, the flesh of Christ, according to them, never separately and of its own impulse performs the natural reflex in opposition to the will of the Word of God hypostatically united to it, but whenever and however and to whatever extent God the Word himself willed it¹⁶. The agony of Christ which took place in Gethsemane should not be considered as the human will¹⁷. According to the followers of the Monotheletism, Christ’s simple willing was united to the Word of God superficially as incidental (σχετικὴν) appropriation (κατ’ οἰκειώσιν), but not as essential (οὐσιώδη) appropriation¹⁸. It seems, that the willing of human nature of Christ has been deprived of the rational element. Such a conclusion is evident in the text of deacon Theodore of Constantinople¹⁹. However it seems that the Monothelites themselves were not capable of arguing their views²⁰.

¹² *Expositio orthodoxae fidei (Ecthesis)*, ACO II/1, 158, 39 - 160, 1: “πάσαν θεϊαν καὶ ἀνθρωπίνην ἐνέργειαν ἐνὶ καὶ τῷ αὐτῷ σεσαρκωμένῳ θεῷ λόγῳ”. See Sergius Constantinopolitanus, *Epistula ad Honorium Papam*, Mansi XI 533D-E.

¹³ Cf. *Expositio orthodoxae fidei (Ecthesis)*, ACO II/1, 160, 7-8.

¹⁴ Cf. Paulus II Constantinopolitanus, *Epistula ad Theodorum papam*, Mansi X 1025A.

¹⁵ Cf. *Expositio orthodoxae fidei (Ecthesis)*, ACO II/1, 158, 21: “ἐν πρόσωπον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ μετὰ τῆς νοερῶς ἐψυχωμένης αὐτοῦ σαρκός”. See C. Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century*, Leiden 2008, 104-105.

¹⁶ Cf. Sergius Constantinopolitanus, *Epistula ad Honorium Papam*, Mansi XI 537A and 536A. See Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom*, p. 149.

¹⁷ Cf. Paulus II Constantinopolitanus, *Epistula ad Theodorum papam*, Mansi X 1024E - 1025A.

¹⁸ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 304A-B. See Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom*, p. 106 and 149.

¹⁹ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 216B-C. More on the Monothelite Christology see D. Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ. Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford 2004, 45-62.

²⁰ Patriarch Sergius states that there is no need to deep in a problem. Cf. Sergius Constantinopolitanus, *Epistula ad Honorium Papam*, Mansi XI 536E. Likewise official documents recommend

Maximus Confessor in contrary to the Monothelites teaches two wills of Christ according to His consubstantiality to God and humankind²¹. So Christ possesses two wills – one divine and one human, because He is both God and man. Thus, human nature and divine nature have their wills, not just mere reaction or impulse. Our author reasoned that the natural will of human being is connected to the rational soul (θέλησιν τῆς νοεράς [...] ψυχῆς). He defines will as a reasonable force aimed at the desire according to nature²². Maximus associates the faculty of will with freedom of choice. He proves that human being has free will (αὐτεξούσιον)²³ which essentially is inherent in the mental and spiritual sphere of human being. Free will reflects God's image in a human person (κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ ποιήσαντος)²⁴. Thus, a human person, likewise God, has natural faculty of rational free will²⁵. Christ assumed the fullness of human nature²⁶; therefore, he possessed also human rational will. However there is still another human's will, gnomic (γνώμη)²⁷, which implies hesitation and deliberation since a person does not know what he/she wants. It is a purely human will, imperfect, and therefore, it often leads to sin²⁸. Christ did

not to discuss this point. Cf. *Expositio orthodoxae fidei (Ecthesis)*, ACO II/1, 160, 4-6; *Typus (Constantis imperatoris)*, ACO II/1, 206, 31 - 210, 15.

²¹ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 324C: “οὐ μόνον καθ' ὁ θεὸς καὶ τῷ Πατρὶ ὁμοούσιος ἦν θελητικὸς, ἀλλὰ καὶ καθ' ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἡμῖν ὁμοούσιος”.

²² Cf. idem, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 21D: “Τὸ γὰρ φύσει λογικὸν, δύναμιν ἔχον φυσικὴν τὴν λογικὴν ὄρεξιν, ἦν καὶ θέλησιν τῆς νοεράς καλοῦσι ψυχῆς”; ibidem, PG 91, 12C: “δύναμιν τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν ὄντος ὀρεκτικὴν”; ibidem, PG 91, 13A: “ἡ μὲν θέλησις ἀπλή τις ὄρεξις ἐστὶ, λογικὴ τε καὶ ζωτικὴ”. See L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund 1965, 222-226.

²³ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Mystagogia* V, PG 91, 672D: “καὶ τῆς μὲν νοεράς ἐξουσιαστικῶς κατὰ βούλησιν κινουμένης, τῆς δὲ ζωτικῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἀπροαιρέτως, ὡς ἔχει, μενούσης”.

²⁴ Cf. idem, *Ambiguorum liber*, PG 91, 1092B: “λογικὴν τε καὶ νοεράν ψυχὴν, ἅτε διὰ κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτὴν”. See idem, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 304C: “εἰ κατ' εἰκόνα τῆς μακαρίας καὶ ὑπερουσίου Θεότητος ὁ ἄνθρωπος γεγένηται· αὐτεξούσιος δὲ φύσει ἡ θεία φύσις· ἄρα καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὡς αὐτῆς ὄντως εἰκὼν, αὐτεξούσιος τυγχάνει φύσει· εἰ δὲ αὐτεξούσιος φύσει, θελητικὸς ἄρα φύσει ὁ ἄνθρωπος· εἴρηται γὰρ ἥδη, ὡς τὸ αὐτεξούσιον θέλησιν ὄρισαντο οἱ Πατερες”.

²⁵ Cf. idem, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 304C: “εἰ φύσει λογικὸς ὁ ἄνθρωπος· τὸ δὲ φύσει λογικὸν καὶ φύσει αὐτεξούσιον· [...] ὁ ἄνθρωπος [...] αὐτεξούσιος τυγχάνει φύσει· εἰ δὲ αὐτεξούσιος φύσει, θελητικὸς ἄρα φύσει ὁ ἄνθρωπος”.

²⁶ Cf. idem, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 42, PG 90, 405C-D; ibidem 61, PG 90, 629A-B.

²⁷ Cf. idem, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 17C: “τὴν γνώμην εἶναι φασιν ὄρεξιν ἐνδιάθετον τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, ἐξ ἧς ἡ προαίρεσις”. Maximus in order to explain the meaning of the γνώμη refers to the fragments of the Old and New Testament (Ps 32:4, Dan 2:15, 1Cor 7:25). See idem, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 312 B.

²⁸ Cf. idem, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 308C; idem, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 192 B-C; idem, *Ambiguorum liber* 1116B. See J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology. Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, New York 1974, 38; See also O. Kashchuk, *Człowiek jako dynamiczna jednostka duchowo-cieleśna w nauczaniu św. Maksyma Wyznawcy*, VoxP 35 (2015) vol. 64, 213-214.

not possess gnostic will. He was never in a state of ignorance concerning what he wanted²⁹. His human will was perfect and could not oppose to divine will or lead to sin. It was a deified will³⁰.

2. The principles of Maximus' Scriptural interpretation. Maximus the Confessor is convinced that Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture³¹. The thinker is primarily interested in acquiring of spiritual benefit from reading the Bible³². A Christian draws from the Scripture guidelines for the Christian daily life and arms himself for the spiritual battle³³. Scripture can also be a direct source of dogmatic teaching³⁴. It is the decisive authority for proving the two wills of Jesus Christ. Maximus claims that there is no greater proof³⁵. The way of life according to the principles of Scripture, leads to the understanding of faith, because through the love of God human mind attains enlightenment with knowledge³⁶.

Our author applies various modes of interpreting the Scripture, but he did not systematize his technique of interpretation. Maximus, like early Christian Alexandrian writers, used allegory³⁷ while maintaining the literal sense which, according to him, provides the reader with the example of everyday life³⁸. Scripture exhibits mysterious and unspeakable truth of God through the signs related to the human speech³⁹. Scripture is a kind of Incarnation of God⁴⁰ but this Incarnation is understood only through the lens of faith in Christ. The mystery of Christ reveals the mystery of Scripture⁴¹.

According to Maximus, both spiritual and literal interpretation guarantee the authenticity of Scriptural meaning⁴². The spiritual interpretation is much deeper

²⁹ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 42, PG 90, 405D and 408A-C; idem, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 308C-309A. More on Maximus' denial of gnostic will in Christ see Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ*, p. 155-162.

³⁰ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 80C - 82A and 48B-D.

³¹ Cf. idem, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 50, PG 90, 465C.

³² Cf. G.C. Berthold, *Levels of Scriptural Meaning in Maximus the Confessor*, StPatr 27 (1993) 129.

³³ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Mystagogia* 10, PG 91, 689B-C.

³⁴ Cf. Berthold, *Levels of Scriptural Meaning*, p. 129.

³⁵ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 325C - 328A.

³⁶ Cf. idem, *Capita de caritate* I 9, PG 90, 964A.

³⁷ Cf. Berthold, *Levels of Scriptural Meaning*, p. 132-133; A.E. Kattan, *The Christological Dimension of Maximus Confessor's Biblical Hermeneutics*, StPatr 42 (2006) 169.

³⁸ Cf. Berthold, *Levels of Scriptural Meaning*, p. 133-134.

³⁹ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 28, PG 90, 361C.

⁴⁰ Cf. idem, *Capita theologica et oecumenica* II 60, PG 90, 1149C - 1152A; ibidem II 37, PG 90, 1141C-D; idem, *Epistula ad Thalassium*, PG 90, 245A-B. See Kattan, *The Christological Dimension*, p. 170-171.

⁴¹ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Capita theologica et oecumenica* I 66, PG 90, 1108A-B.

⁴² Cf. idem, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 63, PG 90, 669C-D; ibidem 32, PG 90, 372C-D. See Pelikan, „*Council or Father or Scripture*”, p. 280-281.

than the literal interpretation⁴³. According to the spiritual mode of interpreting the Scripture a law of grace is understood, but according to the literal mode only a law of nature is seen⁴⁴. Maximus claims that the level of understanding of Scripture depends on the spiritual growth of its readers. Only a person of great spirituality and diligence can plunge into the very depth of Scripture⁴⁵.

The words of Scripture must be read with consideration of the meaning of what the author is trying to convey⁴⁶. The difference of the meaning of words and phrases should be taken into consideration especially in theological inquiry⁴⁷. But the ability to understand the Scripture is achieved only in the community of the Church⁴⁸.

3. Maximus' Scriptural argumentation in the Monotheletic controversy. Maximus the Confessor endeavors to conform his views on the question of human will of Christ by appealing to Scripture. When he claims of free will as a faculty of human nature, he refers to the words of the Book of Genesis: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26) He explains that the human person as the image of God has free will, because God has free will⁴⁹.

Maximus supports his claims about the two wills of Christ with direct quotations from Scripture. In this regard, he took into consideration verses which specifically refer to the two natures of Christ. For example, Maximus referred the passage from the Letter to the Corinthians "Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God" (1Cor 1:24) to God's nature, but another verse of the same letter "For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength" (1Cor 1:25) he referred to the human nature of Christ⁵⁰. From the quotations concerning the two natures of Christ Maximus turns to the passages of the New Testament which confirm the divine and human will of Christ. Referencing the words from the Letter

⁴³ More on the contrast between literal and allegorical mode of interpretation see Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 50, PG 90, 465B and 468A-B; ibidem 32, PG 90, 372C. On the spiritual mode of interpreting the Scripture see ibidem 64, 693B-C; ibidem 17, PG 90, 305A-B; ibidem 28, PG 90, 361C; idem, *Quaestiones et dubia*, PG 90, 792A.

⁴⁴ Cf. idem, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 65, PG 90, 745A-D.

⁴⁵ Cf. idem, *Ambiguorum liber*, PG 91, 1293A-B. The model of such a person for Maximus (*Epistula ad Thalassium*, PG 90, 245A-B) is Thalassium which acquired a deep understanding of Scripture.

⁴⁶ Cf. idem, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 43, PG 90, 413B. See Pelikan, „*Council or Father or Scripture*”, p. 279-280.

⁴⁷ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 289A; idem, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 273B-C. See Pelikan, „*Council or Father or Scripture*”, p. 278.

⁴⁸ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 63, PG 90, 676A-677D. See Pelikan, „*Council or Father or Scripture*”, p. 281.

⁴⁹ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 324C-D. See M. Doucet, *La volonté humaine du Christ, spécialement en son agonie. Maxime Le Confesseur, Interprète de l'Écriture*, „*Science et Esprit*” 37 (1985) fasc. 2, 127-131.

⁵⁰ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 329B.

to Hebrews (Hbr 2:14), Maximus emphasized that Christ had two operations because he was also a man and like people shared in human flesh and blood⁵¹.

Maximus teaches, that the divine will is evidenced by the following excerpts: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [...] how often I have longed to gather your children together” (Mt 23:37). He explains that these words Christ spoke not as a man but as God, showing divine will and different ways of performing providence for mankind. Our author recognizes the divine will of Christ also in another passage: “For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will” (Jn 5:21). This fragment, as interpreted by Maximus, can not be applied to the human nature of Christ, but to His divine nature. The Savior taught us that the Father, being God, by his will raises from the dead; so Christ, being consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος) with Father and of the same will with Him (ὁμοθελής), gives life to whom He wills⁵². Therefore, the Son has the same divine operation⁵³.

Maximus on the basis of Scripture proves also the presence of the human will in Christ. Our author references a passage from the Gospel, where it is written that Jesus decided to leave for Galilee (Jn 1:43) and refers this decision of Christ to His human will. In a similar vein he interprets other passages, in which is written that Christ desired, wanted or intended (ἐθέλω, θέλω) to do something as a man and His decision, according to Maximus, points to the human nature of Christ: “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am” (Jn 17:24); “And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), he said I desire. They offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it” (Mt 27:33-34); “And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea and he intended to pass by them” (Mk 6:48); “After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him” (Jn 7:1); “They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know” (Mk 9:30); “Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice” (Mk 7:24). Maximus explains that the words “could not escape notice” point to the weakness of the human nature of Christ, because Christ as God had power and as a man had weakness. Maximus confirmed his conclusions by reference to the Apostle Paul that Christ “was crucified in weakness, but lives

⁵¹ Cf. idem, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 105B-C, 123 and 160-161. More on the Scriptural argumentation concerning human will of Christ see Doucet, *La volonté humaine du Christ*, p. 125-130.

⁵² Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 325B - 328A. In the same vein Maximus interprets other passages of Scripture, such as Jn 5:17; 5:19; 10:25; 10:38. See ibidem, PG 91, 348D - 349A.

⁵³ Cf. ibidem, PG 91, 348A-C.

by the power of God” (2Cor 13:4)⁵⁴. This weakness affected Christ’s will. His unwillingness to make himself noticed by anyone may prove that His human nature had will (καὶ θελητικὸς ἦν ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ καθ’ ὃ ἄνθρωπος)⁵⁵.

Our author extends his conclusions about the human will of Christ, referring to the following passage of the Gospel of Luke: “And his disciples came to him saying where do you want us to go to prepare Passover for You” (Lk 22:8-9). Maximus notices that the Passover is consumed by those who live according to the law of Moses. Christ as a man was bound by the law (Gal 4:4)⁵⁶, so He performed his human will according to Law. Maximus confirms his conviction about the human will of Christ mentioning the verse of the Letter to the Philippians which declared that “Christ became obedient to death – even death on a cross!” (Phil 2:8)⁵⁷. Christ became obedient not as God but as a man. Therefore, He had human will (καὶ καθ’ ὃ ἄνθρωπος θελητικὸς ἦν)⁵⁸.

Having demonstrated the arguments for the human will in Christ Maximus confirms the harmonious cooperation of the divine and human will in Him. Regarding the statement on the deification of the human will of Christ our author refers to the interpretation of the words from the Gospel of John: “Now the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me” (Jn 14:30)⁵⁹. Interpreting the words of Apostle Paul “behold, the new has come” (2Cor 5:17), Maximus claims that the Apostle does not say anything else as that everything has become one. According to him, it is a new and ineffable way to express conviction about the mutual interpenetration of natures of Christ⁶⁰. This harmonious presence of the human and divine will in Christ is especially evident in His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:39). Maximus explains that the words “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me” express a tinge of fear, because they relate to human nature. It seems that Maximus here takes into consideration the weakness of the human nature of Christ and natural fear of suffering and death. The words “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You” (Mt 26:39) the Confessor explains as the excellent compatibility of the divine and human will in Christ⁶¹. Maximus argues for the full harmony of wills, even in the refusal of the chalice⁶². Maximus complements his argu-

⁵⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, PG 91, 320D - 324A.

⁵⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, PG 91, 321C.

⁵⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, PG 91, 324A.

⁵⁷ The passage from The Letter to Philippians (2:8) figures in PG as part of The Letter to Hebrew (10:6). Cf. *ibidem*, PG 91, 324A-B. See Doucet, *La volonté humaine du Christ*, p. 126-127.

⁵⁸ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 324B; *idem*, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 68D.

⁵⁹ Cf. *idem*, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 60B. On deification of human will of Christ see *ibidem*, PG 91, 80C - 82A; PG 91, 48B-D.

⁶⁰ Cf. *idem*, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 345D - 348A.

⁶¹ Cf. *idem*, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 65A-B, 196C-197A and 164-165.

⁶² Cf. F.-M. L  thel, *La pri  re de J  sus    Geths  mani dans le controverse monoth  lite*, in: *Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 2-5 Septembre 1980*,   d. F. Heinzer

ments with other quotations from the Gospel. Along with words “not as I will, but as You” (Mk 14:36) he mentions a passage “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me” (Jn 6:38)⁶³. In addition to this, the thinker appeals to the fragment from the Book of Psalms (Ps 40[39]:7-9) which contains the following words: “is written of me, that I will do Your will”. Maximus refers these words to Christ, who as a man delights to do the will of the Father. So, Maximus applied here the typological interpretation, according to which events, persons or statements in the Old Testament are seen as types prefiguring events, persons or statements in the New Testament. The words quoted from Psalm Maximus finds in the New Testament (Hbr 10:6-7)⁶⁴. That, probably, more entitles him to refer these words to the person of Christ.

The specificity of Maximus’ interpretation lies in updating the interpretation of Scriptural passages in the context of debate with Monotheletism. Maximus basing his argumentation on the biblical texts tried to prove the presence of the human will in Christ and the compatibility between divine and human wills. It seems that Christ’s agony and natural fear of suffering and death just underlines that He underwent His passion consciously and voluntarily. Christ’s words, according to Maximus, testify to both the natural discouragement regarding death and the conscious and free acceptance of the Cross by the human will.

The Biblical argumentation of Maximus the Confessor had both an advantage and disadvantage. The advantage is seen in his preferring the literal interpretation of Scripture, especially of the New Testament, probably in order to avoid manipulating the biblical text with many variations in interpretation and to make his argumentation trustworthy. It should be taken into consideration that the terms *θέλω* as *to decide or to want to do something* in the quoted above passages of the Gospel on the one hand, and *θέλησις* and *θέλημα* as a *will (volition, decision, desire)* in the texts of Maximus on the other, are related in root. This close relation strengthens Maximus’ argumentation concerning the presence of the human will in Christ and the conviction that will comes from nature, not from a person. The disadvantage of Maximus’ argumentation is seen in the fact, that no one biblical passage is complete enough to provide all the arguments necessary to achieve a full assuredness of the presence of the human will in Christ as it is understood by Maximus. Christ’s human faculty which was defined by Maximus as a rational will, the monothelites called the mere impulse of human flesh, deprived of the rational element. There is also the inconsistency between his conviction concerning the deification of the human will of Christ flowing from the allegorical mode of interpreting

– Ch. Schönborn, *Paradosis 27*, Fribourg 1982, 207-214. On the operation of will of Christ in the context of His agony see also Doucet, *La volonté humaine du Christ*, p. 131-143.

⁶³ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 241C and 244A.

⁶⁴ Cf. idem, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 324B-C.

the Gospel on the one hand, and the statement on its imperfect imitation of the divine will flowing from the literal mode of interpretation on the other. So Maximus' scriptural argumentation in the monotheletic debate was insufficient and required additional support and explanation.

4. Insufficiency of Scripture in theological argumentation. In the teaching of Maximus the Confessor Scripture is the decisive argument in theological reflection, because in it dogmas of evangelists, apostles and prophets are preserved⁶⁵. However the biblical argumentation is insufficient. Our author was well aware of the fact that the Monothelites do not accept his interpretation of Scripture. He was convinced that the interpretation of Scripture needs to be verified in accordance with the Tradition of the Church – the Fathers and the Councils⁶⁶. The Fathers are witnesses to the truth of interpretation of Scripture, because their teaching comes from the Scriptures⁶⁷. Our author believes that both the Bible writers and the Fathers wrote under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit⁶⁸. Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written. Taking into account the Church Tradition Maximus did not isolate himself from the additional explanation with the help of philosophical reflection. For example, he used the philosophy of Aristotle, who involved the will as a rational desire with the rational sphere of human being⁶⁹.

However in the teaching of the Fathers it was not always possible to find a final solution to the fresh theological problem. Moreover the Fathers were appealed to by both parties of the debate⁷⁰. Therefore, Maximus states that if it is impossible to resolve the dispute with the assistance of the Fathers, then the teaching of the Councils should be appealed to⁷¹, as the voice of apostolic

⁶⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, PG 91, 328A.

⁶⁶ Cf. Anastasius Apocrisiarius, *Relatio motionis inter Maximum et principes* 9, PG 90, 124A-B; Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 160C-D.

⁶⁷ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 320D. See *Acta in primo exilio seu dialogus Maximi cum Theodosio episcopo Caesareae in Bithynia* XV, PG 90, 152C; *ibidem* XVII, PG 90, 153 C; *ibidem* XXI, PG 90, 157D. See also J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 2: *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*, Chicago – London 1974, 8-36.

⁶⁸ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 320D: “Οὐ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἦσαν οἱ λαλοῦντες, ἀλλ’ ἡ δι’ ὄλου περιχωρήσασα αὐτοῖς χάρις τοῦ Πνεύματος”. See Pelikan, „*Council or Father or Scripture*”, p. 282-283.

⁶⁹ Cf. Aristoteles, *De anima* II 3,414a-414b. See J. Greig, *The Dilemma of Deliberation: On the faculty and Mode of Willing in Aristotle and Maximus the Confessor*, <https://www.scribd.com/document/127364720/On-the-Faculty-and-Mode-of-Willing-in-Aristotle-and-Maximus-the-Confessor>, 2-6 [29.07.2016]; Kashchuk, *Człowiek jako dynamiczna jednostka duchowo-cieleśna*, p. 220.

⁷⁰ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 292D. See Pelikan, „*Council or Father or Scripture*”, p. 284-285.

⁷¹ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 128B.

and patristic doctrine⁷². The Councils have become the guardian of the faith⁷³. Councils must fulfill some criteria of orthodoxy⁷⁴. If the Councils could not answer to the current theological dispute, the referring landmark for this situation should be a doctrinal position of the Roman Church, where true faith is thriving⁷⁵. This Church is the centre of the unity of all Churches⁷⁶.

(Summary)

The position of Maximus the Confessor concerning the biblical argumentation in the dispute with Monothelism consists in applying predominantly the literal approach to the interpretation of the New Testament. Since it was a Christological question, the New Testament played a substantial role. However, there are several instances of where Maximus applies allegorical and typological mode of interpreting the particular passages. Preferring the literal mode of interpretation may signify that Maximus sticking to the letter of the text avoided manipulating the inspired text with many variations in interpretation. Biblical argument is not sufficient on its own to be persuasive in theological discussion, therefore it requires additional support and explanation. That is why Scripture is not thought of as the sole authority for Christian faith. It is interpreted by Maximus with taking into account not only the teaching of the Fathers and the Councils but also the philosophical heritage. If the Fathers and Councils can not answer to the current theological question, the interpretation of Scripture should be collated with the teaching of the Holy See.

PISMO ŚWIĘTE W KONTROWERSJI MONOTELECKIEJ.
STANOWISKO MAKSYMA WYZNAWCY

(Streszczenie)

Stanowisko Maksyma Wyznawcy wobec Pisma Świętego w sporze z monoteletyzmem polega na tym, że chociaż Maksym zachęca do wydobycia z Pisma treści duchowych i w kwestiach duchowych stosuje głęboką interpretację alegoryczną,

⁷² Cf. Pelikan, „*Council or Father or Scripture*”, p. 287.

⁷³ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 257A-260D; idem, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 300D.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Acta in primo exsilio seu dialogus Maximi cum Theodosio episcopo Caesareae in Bithynia* XII, PG 90, 148A; Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 352D; idem, *Epistula ad Anastasium*, PG 90, 132. See Pelikan, „*Council or Father or Scripture*”, p. 286-287; O. Kashchuk, *Idea pentarchii jako rękojmia jedności Kościoła w dobie ikonoklazmu. Stanowisko Teodora Studyty*, VoxP 32 (2012) vol. 58, 218.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Acta in primo exsilio seu dialogus Maximi cum Theodosio episcopo Caesareae in Bithynia* XVII, PG 90, 153C-D; ibidem XVIII, PG 90, 156A.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Vita ac certamen Sancti Maximi Confessoris* XXIV, PG 90, 93D.

to jednak w polemice z monoteletyzmem stosuje w przeważającej mierze literalną interpretację Nowego Testamentu. Ponieważ chodziło o kwestie chrystologiczne, to bardzo ważną rolę odgrywały teksty Nowego Testamentu. Zdarzają się jednak nieliczne przypadki alegorycznej i typologicznej interpretacji poszczególnych fragmentów. Oparcie się na dosłownej interpretacji może świadczyć o tym, że Maksym trzymając się litery tekstu unikał manipulowania tekstem natchnionym, gdyż alegoria proponuje różne wersje interpretacji. Argumentacja biblijna nie jest jednak wystarczająca w refleksji teologicznej, ponieważ wymaga dodatkowej refleksji i weryfikacji. Dlatego Pismo jest interpretowane w duchu nauczania Ojców i soborów z uwzględnieniem także spuścizny filozoficznej i nie może zostać izolowane jako jedyny autorytet wiary. Jeśli zaś Ojcowie i sobory nie mogą udzielić odpowiedzi w zaistniałej sytuacji, to interpretacja Pisma powinna być skonfrontowana z nauczaniem Stolicy Piotrowej.

Key words: Holy Scripture, monothelism, Maximus Confessor, scriptural argumentation.

Słowa kluczowe: Pismo Świète, monoteletyzm, Maksym Wyznawca, argumentacja skrypturystyczna.

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