

FIRST READINGS IN MAXIMUS'S ANTHROPOLOGY

The Christological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor

LETTER 2: ON LOVE

- Divine love is a share in God
- Our love is taken up by God's love
- "For nothing is more truly Godlike than divine love, nothing more mysterious, nothing more apt to raise up human beings to deification."
- "Everything is circumscribed by love according to God's good pleasure in a single form, and love is dispensed in my forms in accordance with God's economy."
 - The single love of God is manifest in the diversity of creatures: one form and many forms
- "For love gives faith the reality of what it believes and hope the presence of what it hopes for, and the enjoyment of what is present. Love alone, properly speaking, proves that the human person is in the image of the Creator, by making his self-determination submit to reason, not bending reason under it, and persuading the inclination to follow nature and not in any way to be at variance with the *logos* of nature. In this way we are all, as it were, one nature, so that we are able to have one inclination and one will with God and with one another, not having any discord with God or one another, whenever by the law of grace, through which by our inclination the law of nature is renewed, we choose what is ultimate."
 - Here the unitive power of love is explored. But since it is the power of the creator, the union which results from love does not erase the distinctiveness of creatures. Even though this early language of Maximus speaks of one nature and one will, it is clear that the human nature and the human will are taken up into the divine without losing either the human distinctiveness or the human activity.
- Nature is fractured at its mode of existence.
 - Desire then becomes fractured and results in ignorance, self-love, and tyranny
 - Self-love springs from the ignorance of God
 - Tyranny arises from self-love as the desire to subjugate all to self
- "For reason, instead of being ignorant, ought to be moved through knowledge to seek solely after God; and desire, pure of the passion of self-love, ought to be driven by the yearning for God alone; and the incensive power, separated from tyranny, ought to struggle to attain God alone."
- The virtues are all aspects of love, which unifies the person.
- "And for this reason each one willingly frees himself from himself, by separating himself from any thoughts or properties to which he is privately inclined, and is gathered to the one singleness and sameness, in accordance with which nothing is in anyway separated from what is common to all, so that each is in each, and all in all, or rather God in others, and they are radiantly established as one, having the one *logos* of being in themselves, utterly single in nature and inclination."
- "In accordance with this, nature remains undamaged and undivided in those that have received this grace, not divided up into the differences introduced by inclination in the many."
- "God takes form in each, through his great love for humankind, out of the virtue that is present in each through the ascetic struggle."
 - This statement should not be understood to mean that through virtue the holy person begins to display God-like qualities and in this way God can be said to be present in him or her. Maximus's sense is stronger. As he has just described a few sentences before, what is happening is a genuine union between the human person and God: "the human being is made God, and God is called and appears as human". Since the holiness of the person is effected through grace, it is a real incarnation that is happening, visible to the degree to which holiness is visibly present in the person. The goal is what was described at the beginning of the paragraph: the unity of all of creation in God such that God is one and yet many and the creature remains itself and yet finds itself in God.

- The love of God and the love of humans are the same.
- Love enables the person to resist all sin.

FOUR HUNDRED CHAPTERS ON LOVE

The work is written in classic monastic style, that of short concentrated statements called chapters. Each chapter is arranged in groups of one hundred, or centuries. This work has four centuries. The chapters are meant to be crystallizations of spiritual thought upon which one can spend time meditating in order to allow its wisdom to engage the person's thought and imagination, inspiring the person to open themselves to the transforming grace that can come through the words. They were given one-by-one to the spiritual disciple by the spiritual master. The disciple was expected to memorize it and carry it with him or her in prayer until the next encounter. In the introduction, Maximus says that he draws these from the spiritual tradition.

Desire for God

- Apatheia
- Self-mastery
 - Fear of punishment
 - Suffering
 - Graced acceptance of suffering
- Desire for creatures and desire for God
 - Disdain for visible things
 - Idolatry

Perception of God

- Glory of creatures
- Love of God is love of creatures
- Renunciation as the first step
 - Of pleasure
 - Of money
 - Of anger
- Practice of love
- Fasting and being watchful
- Acquisition of divine knowledge

Familiarity with God

- Love of neighbor
- Care of others
- Transcend human judgments

Fear of the Lord

- Healing of memory
- "When the mind is completely free from the passions, it journeys straight ahead to the contemplation of created things and makes its way to the knowledge of the Holy Trinity."

Spiritual contemplation

- Ascent through body, intellect, to love of God
- From contemplation of physical realities to contemplation of God

Prayer

- Distraction is a sign of sin
- The passions inhibit prayer and are battled by prayer
- Pure prayer
 - Fear of God and hope
 - Divine desire and total purification: taken hold of by the divine

Knowledge

- Knowledge must be used well, in the same way as the feelings of the body
- "The one who anoints his mind for the sacred contests and drives away passionate thoughts from it possesses the character of a deacon. The one who illumines it with knowledge of beings and

obliterates counterfeit knowledge possesses that of a priest. Finally, the one who perfects it with the holy perfume of the knowledge of a worshipper of the Holy Trinity possess that of a bishop.

Contemplation

- The passage from the active life to contemplation is a passage from seeming to rely on our own efforts to the recognition of the priority of grace
- Unity results from purification
- Entering into contemplation is entering into never-ending divine desire
- "It is said that the supreme state of prayer is when the mind passes outside the flesh and the world and while praying is completely without matter and form. The one who preserves this state without compromise really 'prays without ceasing.'"

Submission to the Word

- "It is according to nature that the rational element in us be subjected to the divine Word and that it govern our irrational element. Therefore, this order is to be preserved in all things and there will be neither evil in beings nor anything available to draw them on to it.
- "When the mind has become stripped of passions and enlightened in the contemplation of beings, then it can be in God and pray as it ought."

Being, well-being, eternal being

- Our nature must take on the mode of divinity
- The will enables our participation in God according to the good and according to our person

Love of God and love of beings

- The increase in love of God increases our love for creatures
- "God is participated only; the creature both participates and communicates. He participates in being and in well-being but communicates only well-being, corporeal substance in one way, incorporeal in another."

"Many people have said much about love, but only in seeking it among Christ's disciples will you find it, for only they have the true love, the teacher of love."