

Neža Zajc*

Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Slovenia)

ST. MAXIMUS THE GREEK (MIHAIL TRIVOLIS, ARTA,
CA. 1470–MAKSIM GREK, MOSCOW, 1556): AN INSIGHT INTO
HIS PERSONAL EUCHOLOGY**

Summary: This text establishes a foundation for the argument that Maximus the Greek dedicated his life's work to safeguarding and upholding ancient principles for individual spiritual practices, in opposition to the influence and control of the state and imperial authority. This task was accomplished through both his work as a translator and the author of sacred devotional texts and hymns associated with Byzantine hymnography and the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition. Notably, it is his inner veneration of the Holy Theotokos that marks the primary sensibility of the defence of this intense, inwardly-focused faith in direct communion with the Divine. Maxim's defence of the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition was accomplished by the special guidance of the Holy Spirit as his personal internal principle that he used not only in the prayer (hesychastic, ascetical) and in the theological works (hagiographical, liturgical) but also in philological works (of editing, translating, redacting), and especially in exegetical texts. Therefore, the strong Byzantine patristic and monastic thought as the basis of his contemplative practice, formed in the years spent at the Holy Mount Athos, in the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi, was the most important source of his authentic and divinely inspired, original Orthodox theology.

Detailed consideration is especially given to his prayers. Among them, the most important place is reserved for "The Kanon to the Holy and Divine Spirit Parakletos", which reflects several possible influences, such as the Akathystos hymn, the Great Kanon, and the individual canon, as was St. Constantin's Kanon to St. Demetrius, all of which confirm the very archaic Byzantine and Slavonic sources that properly could serve Maxim for his Old Church Slavonic linguistic basis. Thus, his prayer is a highly original, monastic and deeply personal work that bears witness to his ascetic (hesychastic) practice. All of this tends to confirm that his grammatical and linguistic view of the Old Church Slavonic language was shaped well before his entrance to Muscovite Russia and that not only was he unjustly accused of heretical mistakes (and thereby imprisoned), was, more importantly, in Russia almost entirely and, possibly intentionally misunderstood. Nevertheless, and despite his suffering, until the end of his life, Maxim argued that his use of Slavonic language was spiritually guided and, therefore, sacred.

Keywords: Byzantine monasticism, The Holy Mount Athos, St. Maximus the Greek, asceticism, hesychasm, Old Church Slavonic.

* Address: dr. Neza Zajc; e-mail: neza.zajc@zrc-sazu.si; ORCID: 0000-0001-5220-3553.

** This article was written in the framework of the research program, (New) Cultural History of the Intellectual Heritage: Slovene Historical Space in the European Context (ARRS P6-0440). – The institute of Cultural History, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The introduction

Maximus the Greek¹, born as Mihail Trivolis in the Greek town of Arta in Epirus, became one of the most educated men of his age, through humanistic and philological experience in the heart of Renaissance Italy, where he worked with Iannos Laskaris, Marko Musurous, and Aldo Manuzio. While in Italy, he resided at the Mirandola Castle on two occasions. During these stays, he served as a personal assistant to Giovanni and taught Greek to Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola. During his subsequent monastic Athonite period at the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi (1506–1516), dedicated to the Holy Annunciation, he was ordained as a monk Maxim (following the holy example of Saint Maximus the Confessor). This period represents the most spiritually confident ten years of his life.

At the Holy Mount Athos, his previously acquired humanistic and philological skills were highly honoured and appreciated, and he continued with the redaction and production of manuscripts, as well as with the writing of his own hymnological works. These combined activities and interests contributed to the development and building of his personal euchology. Among such works, it is worth mentioning his “Verses, dedicated to Great Dmitry, bundled with a lance” (Grek, 2008, p. 114–115), in which the prayer speech is transformed into directly addressing Jesus Christ, exactly as once did St. John, the Archpriest of Thessaloniki (Jugie, 1974, II, p. 364; *Patrologia Graeca*, col. 1341). While at Mount Athos, Maxim also wrote “A Prayer to Hieromartyr Erasmus” (Graikon, 2017, p. 329–341) and “Canon to St. John the Baptist”² (Graikon, 2017, p. 341–351). He also widened his linguistic repertoire, adding the Slavonic language (for example, he redacted the rare Greek version of the Hagiography of St. Clement of Ochrid, the Bulgarian scholar and saint, one of the disciples of St. Cyril and Methodius, and first Orthodox Slavic bishop (in First Bulgarian State) who died in Ochrid (North Macedonia).

Maxim, as the closest and devoted disciple of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Niphon II (who, after leaving the position of Metropolitan of Valachia (1504–1508), entered the Athonite Monastery of Dionysios (Sinitsyna, 2008, p. 19), also spread the Orthodox faith by preaching to non-Orthodox Slavic nations in the Balkans and the nearby borderlands. Thus, Maxim supported Niphon II’s work well beyond Mount Athos, realizing several missions to Slavic lands as part of his legation.

Later in his personal texts (for example, in his letter to Russian Metropolitan Macarius), Maxim claimed that he preached the unspoiled Orthodox faith

¹ For more about his biography, see: Denissoff, 1943; Sinitsyna, 1977; Zajc, 2015, p. 314–325.

² The Holy Mount Athos, Vatopaidi Monastery: Mss. Cod. 1016.

– under the sacred power and guidance of the Holy Spirit – in front of heretics and non-believers. This was one of his first attempts to engage with his personal battle against the Catholic invention in the Christian Creed, that is, the insertion of the so-called lat. *filioque*. In addition to his explicit confrontations against the changes in the basic Christian *Creed*, he also fervently and vigorously employed the power of the Holy Spirit, the source of his life’s dedication, to further affirm the significance of a pristine monastic existence. More critically, at this same time, it could be noted that he began to involve the invocational call to the Holy Spirit (liturgical Epiclesis³ as used in sacramental rites) as the main active principle for the initial introduction to inspired “Divine wisdom”, cultural knowledge and historical awareness, but also as guidance in Maxim’s thorough translational and redactional (not only by linguistic and textual critics) work.

As a well-experienced and trusted Athonite monk, Maxim occasionally visited such places as Moldo-Valachia, Macedonia (Ochrid), Albania, Serbia, and Bulgaria (Melnik⁴) (Ephrem, 2006, p. 286–295), where significant cross-Christian influences met. Although this work was not ecumenical, it opened dialogue, since Maxim directly said that he professed in front of Roma(nia)n speaking people, calling them “Lachs”⁵, and it is possible that their conversation was conducted in Latin (cf. Runciman, 2006, p. 327). In these meetings, Maxim could get the first closest acquaintance with the (possibly, Old Church) Slavonic language. In Melnik, for example, in the Church of St. Nicholas, there were significant frescoes depicting the Epiclesis intercession that might be said to reflect Western iconographical influences (Bardy, 1926, p. 496–509), including the depiction of Jesus Christ as the Archpriest. This could speak in favour of that fact that Maxim never opposed Western monasticism or ascetical sources *without reason* (he wrote with admiration about the Franciscan and Dominican orders – Rzhiga, 1935–1936, p. 102–103). Yet, he was continuously reminding of the evil that came from human speculations, such as that added by the Roman Church by lat. *filioque* to the Apostolic Creed in the 9th century. Maximus the Confessor was the last Eastern Church Father that clearly stated his theological view (in the letter to Marinus) that the Father, as the source of Life, is always Father of the Son, but the eternal flow (gr. *proiénai*) of the Holy Spirit

³ The Epiclesis is the rite of the procession of the Holy Spirit, originally and usually performed upon the eucharistic gifts, the bread and wine, in order to transform them into the Lord’s essences. In the second part of the Epiclesis, or the procession of Anaphora, during the Consecration, there is a direct call for the Logos to descend, as a central part of the eucharistic liturgy of Anaphora. This was also already the specification of the oldest Oriental liturgies, such as with the Euchologion of Serapion of Egypt (4th century) (Salaville, 1932, p. 22, 25).

⁴ One could also speculate that “Melnik” was the Bohemian city of Mielnik. However, and given further investigation, the latter surmise would be very hard to prove.

⁵ In the letter to Metropolitan Macarius (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: Mss. Slave 123, fol. 79 r.).

from the Father is applied upon the Church and the eternal manifestation of the Spirit of God and of Christ (Siecienski, 2010, p. 85).

After the invitation and request of the Great Prince of Muscovite Russia, Vasili III, for the translation and redacting of liturgical books, in 1516, Maxim travelled to Moscow. On that trip, he might have stopped (c. August 1517) at the Church of the Monastery of d' Argeș, Argeș, in Moldo-Vlachia (today, Romania) (Ševčenko, 1997, p. 63–64; Ševčenko, 2011, p. 299, 304), where the relics of Niphon II were being consecrated. On that occasion, it is quite possible that a rare portrait of a young Athonite monk (that is, *of Maxim*) was made. Although the explicit, historical or circumstantial evidence speaks against this thesis (for it is believed that this portrait was actually a depiction of Neagoe Basarab, at that time a famous donor to the Holy Mount Athos, even though the appearance of the young man in the portrait is in contradiction with his previously known images), the *visualitas* associated with this image (that is, its historical-exegetical *topology*) of a young monk standing close by the side of the Patriarch strongly speaks against the conventional belief. Moreover, the depiction of a “Greek monk” (Sinigalia, 1998, p. 43) standing as a faithful disciple near the Patriarch would tend to suggest (if not confirm) that this is a man well-known to the Patriarch, who also collaborated with the Dionysiou Athonite monastery several times. The iconological evidence of the depiction suggests that this could be only the Vatopaidian monk, Maxim.

Once in Muscovite Russia (1518), Maxim immediately started with the translation and redaction of liturgical manuscripts. But after seven years (first in 1525, and then again in 1531), he was called before the Moscow Church Council and accused of heretical mistakes in his translations and other texts, and consequently imprisoned in Russia for nearly 27: after 11 years in the Monastery prison, in solitary confinement in complete darkness and without permission to communicate, read, talk or write, the circumstances of his living conditions became slightly milder: in 1536 (after the second trial against him in 1531) he was removed from the Monastery of Iosifo-Volokolamsk to the Monastery of Otroch-Tver, where he was at least allowed to write. Yet he remained in the monastery cell without permission to exit for the following 16 years. In 1552 he was removed to the Monastery of the Holy Trinity St. Sergius Lavra, and it is considered that he was, somewhat, finally liberated.

During Maxim's first imprisonment in Muscovite Russia – when he was living in brutal conditions of starvation and complete darkness in the prison of the Joseph Volokolamsk Monastery – Maxim (in the year 1529) survived an assassination attempt with smoke in his cell. During that he wrote on a wall, with a piece of charcoal, a hymnographical work in verse entitled the “Kanon to the Divine and the Most Venerable Holy Spirit Parakletos”. During Maxim's

first imprisonment in Muscovite Russia – when he was living in brutal conditions of starvation and complete darkness in the prison of the Joseph Volokolamsk Monastery – Maxim (in the year 1529) survived an assassination attempt with smoke in his cell. During that he wrote on a wall, with a piece of charcoal, a hymnographical work in verse entitled the “Kanon to the Divine and the Most Venerable Holy Spirit Parakletos”.

In 1531, while still imprisoned, the accusations against Maxim were renewed. But this time, the condemnation included accusations that Maxim made heretical errors in the translation of “The Life of the Mother of God”⁶, a text from the *Menologion* of Symeon, the Logothete Metaphrastos. Although this text (the translation of which Maximus finished in 1521 – Sinitsyna, 1977, p. 65) was carefully and mindfully translated, some crucial and intimate moments concerning the inner life of the Mother of God were being refused by the opposing Russian clergies who were seeking only further reasons in support of the accusations of Maxim’s heresy. Yet, this episode resulted in increasing and enhancing Maximus’s life-long commitment to the contemplation of the purity and untouchable glory of the Mother of God, a theological issue long reflected in his lifelong literary work. Although he was not released from the monastery imprisonment, he was at least allowed to write in his cell, and from that time forward he wrote down numerous texts in Old Church Slavonic of very different and varied content in a theologically-inspired voice. In this paper we will focus on his rare but very decisive personal prayers.

For Maximus himself, one of the most important texts among these works was “The Confession of the Orthodox Faith”, which is presented as the first text in all lifetime collections of works completed by Maxim’s own hand. It is in this text that he admits that he added to the Trinitarian formula the obligatory consecration of The Mother of God. But he also clearly states that in all prayers, he was literally singing in his internal depths (in his heart and in his soul). His faith was, indeed, deeply personal.

Maxim also wrote three other confessional prayers, which could be seen as his personal Orthodox euchology. All of them contain important arguments for the appropriate pronunciation and exclamation of the Orthodox Trinitarian system. This is the reason that all of his prayers are subtitled with a polemical note. For example, “The Prayer to the Holy Mother of God”, which is subtitled “Also about the Suffering of the Christ”, contains the direct addressing of The Mother of God with a familiar use of the second person, talking directly to “Thou”, while in a humble tone, it asks for the love of God the Father and praises the suffering of Christ. The prayer “About the Birth of Christ, and Also

⁶ St. Petersburg: Russian National Library (RNB): Mss. Col. Sof. 1498.

Against False Jewish Beliefs” is concentrated around the leitmotif of human ungratefulness toward Christ Himself. “The Prayer to the Holy Trinity, That It Must Be Sung During the Whole Bright Week” (i.e., the week before Easter) is the shorter and the most structured one. Its expression continues the main theme of the unhumiliated people that do not see the Goodness and philanthropic nature of the Christian God in the Holy Trinity.

The Kanon to the Holy Spirit Parakletos of Maxim the Greek

The deeper meaning of this poetic prayer, which could offer a pious end to one’s lifetime, is also empowered with an invocatory moment by strict mindfulness for the beginning of Maximus’s daily writing, as the author notes in the introduction/prolegomena with the following instruction: “The Kanon is sung in the third hour of a day with a sober (clear, solid) mind and not darkened from excessive eating and drinking”. In these words, one may find a spirit of contrition in which the penitential hymn of the *Great Canon* must be sung. It is intended to be a personal, precatory, solicitous prayer (“покаянный канон”), and also a humble prayer service (the “Moleben”), as it is also entitled, and a supplicatory hymn forming a part of Maximus’s daily compline. It could be presumed that Maximus pronounced this prayer silently, but *in extenso* not only as a prelude, but as his inner *Kanon Paraklitikos*. After mentioning the seventh penitential Psalm 142, with a significant refrain – “Bring my soul out of prison that I may give thanks to Thy name” (that David was pronouncing when he was in the cave), Maximus is also saying that troparions must be sung “silently and slowly”, in the first voice (tone, mode). Notably, the preparatory stage or initial introduction/prolegomena before the beginning of the singing and reading of this Kanon is described as “kneeling similar to a slave and falling to the ground and with great fear” – an instruction that is repeated in the Kanon *five* times. This transitional literal prostration takes place in front of the Holy Trinity, to which the first praise is given, and ends with a special dedication to the Holy Spirit.

Just before the beginning of this Kanon, there is another contemplation, as a precursor, about the interior of the Temple or Church (“Радуйся дверь Господня непроходимая”, “Joy the Impassable Door of God”)⁷, which is also repeated in the so-called “New Kontakion to the Annunciation”, written in

⁷ This is, in fact, an implicit address to the Mother of God of the icon, called “Paramythia” from the 13th century. At the same time, this form corresponded to the prayer-invitation of the Holy Theotokos of Ivron, called the “Doorkeeper”. That kind of reference to the Old Testament (Ezek 43:27; 44: 1–4), which entered the liturgical address of the Mother of God, was not only a reference to the Athonite rule to worship the icon before leaving the church, for the Igumen was each time giving the keys from the doors of the monastery to the doorkeeper, but also a means to the realization of the dedication of the Church.

Maximus's Greek Psalter⁸, but also known from Vatopaidi's prayer of the 16th century. Now following Psalm 50 (as in the Canon by Joseph Hymnologos and following the singing of *heirmos* and the *troparions to Christ*), the author implies the special rule for the chanting of glorification. In particular, he notes the combination of a specific sequence, indicating the three songs of praise, varying and metamorphosing through the whole Kanon until the end. This rule is presented in the Prologue to the First Ode as the three versions of the Kyrieleison (to God the Son, Jesus Christ; to the Holy Trinity; to the Holy Paraclete)⁹, and it is observed after every *heirmos* (which is at the beginning of each ode). Moreover, Maximus added to each song obligatory praise of the Holy Theotokos as two special "thanksgiving" short praises (verses) in the form of doxology ("Doxa" – "Слава") in honour of the Virgin Mary, which should create the conclusion of every song. These doxologies or *Theotokions* always contain four lines. It appears that one or two verses in honour of the Virgin Mary are regularly inserted between the odes¹⁰, which traditionally begin with the initial words of the *heirmoi*, similar to those that were known as the *heirmoi* of the *Kanon Paraklitikos to the Holy Theotokos* (as the ninth part of the Greek liturgical Anthologion) that was first attributed to the Metropolitan of Crete, Elias II (Laurent, 1958, p. 122). Thus, the *Kanon Paraklitikos* was always addressed to the Virgin, especially in Constantinople, and it was also associated with the funerary Canon (cf. Ševčenko, 2011, p. 252).

It could be stated that "The Kanon to the Holy Parakletos"¹¹ combined the direct speech characteristic of the Kontakion with the penetrating mood of eschatological awareness and expressed the dogmatical view of Trinitarian and Christological theology, which was especially related to the structure of the Great Canon. But renewed reading might open further references. "The Kanon to the Holy Parakletos" also shows certain traits of a penitential prayer, especially in that it includes a personally addressed speech (gr. *ἀπόστροφος*, *ἀπόστροφος*) as an element of prosody. The meaning of this poetic prayer, which could, as noted above, offer a pious end to one's lifetime, is also conveyed in an invocatory moment with empowered eschatological mindfulness in the personal prayer for the beginning of Maximus's daily writing.

⁸ Saint Petersburg, RNB, Russian National Library: Cod. Gr. 78.

⁹ This order and prayer rule was found to be rare by Russian scholar (Kazimova, 2006, p. 299), whose studies have a minor value since they provide the later point of view (17th century and further), when Maxim's Kanon was explicitly *reorganized* for the liturgical worship of the Russian cult of the Mother of God – Sviataia Bogoroditsa.

¹⁰ It must be also said that lines (verses) and stanzas are in this, our view, only presumed because this Kanon is written in typical Old Church Slavonic poetical prose.

¹¹ The manuscripts are: Moscow, Russian State Library (RGB): Cod. MDA, fund. 173.I.042, fol. 409r.-416r.; Moscow, Russian State Library (RGB) Mss. Rog. Kladb. № 302: fol. 432r.-440r.

“The Kanon to the Holy Parakletos” of Maximus the Greek does not feature concrete imitations of the forms of the Great Canon (the “Lenten Canon” by Andrew of Crete – Kretski, 2013, p. 57), which could be, however, found in his “The dialogues between the Soul and the Mind” (Grek, 2014, p. 159–176, 176–198) by the words, addressed the (escape of) soul from the devil (Grek, 2014 p. 188).

The Kanon has nine odes (literally eight, since the second, which in Byzantine liturgy is obligatory, is missing), which was traditional for the Akathistos hymn and the Great Canon. Moreover, the nine odes from Maxim’s Kanon are not directly modelled on the pattern of the nine canticles from the Scripture (vs. Great Canon), although they have the significant character of humble hymns of silent praise. The nine biblical canticles could be traced in the implicit level of reading, but they are not presented as the main reference, as they are in several of Maxim’s texts¹². But all nine odes contain troparions of a special eulogy with an interchangeable dedication to God the Son, to the Holy Trinity and to the Holy Spirit, and to the Holy Mother of God.

We could thus think that the Akathistos hymn, transformed to the form of the Canon, served to Maxim for the structure of odes, built on the deeply personal reception of the nine biblical songs, while the contemplation about the content of the life of the Virgin from the hagiographic text of Symeon Metaphrastes was utilized as the kernel of constant and final praise to the Holy Theotokos. Before the ultimate prayer to the Holy Spirit in the form of an epilogue, there is a paraphrase of the prayer, sung in front of the Athonite icon, entitled “Axion Estin” – which was also the quintessence of Maximus’s “Kanon to St. John the Baptist” – but which also appeared in the manuscript of Maximus’ own Greek Psalter¹³. Yet, in this Kanon, it is assimilated into the veneration of the Holy Parakletos. By the final verses addressed to “The Bride, unbrided” (assigned to Her primarily, especially to honour the feast of the Annunciation), it could be presumed that Maximus’s main or most important source for such profound and constant internal prayer to the Holy Theotokos came from his deepest reflection of the Akathistos hymn, which also appeared in his own Greek Psalter and reveals that, in his memory, the Holy Theotokos, singing of the prayer and personal monastic dedication, were nearly organically simultaneous.

Maxim wrote down this Kanon mostly from within, with his memory as the primary resource. Yet, he also did not wish to imitate the previous contributions. It seems valid and honourable to say that he was, indeed, finally writing under

¹² Our observations are based on a detailed study (partly published in the author’s articles), which unfortunately, cannot be presented in this paper.

¹³ St. Petersburg, Russian National Library (RNB): Mss. Col. Sof. 78: fol. 160v–161r. etc.

the purest spiritual inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is worth mentioning that Maxim's contribution highlights the praise of the Holy Mother of God and expresses gratitude for the power of vigil-singing throughout the entire night without interruption. This practice holds significant importance, especially in that form of the Akathistos hymn, because it serves as the argument for the period when signs of invoicing the Holy Theotokos for protection in military endeavors in such hymnological praise were not yet evident (Wellesz, 1956, p. 151–152). Thus, it is also obvious that Maxim the Greek was well aware of the power of the prayers to the Holy Mother of God toward protecting believers from heresies and doubtful teachings, as he exactly expressed in his "Prayer to the Holy Mother of God, and also about the Lord's Suffering" (Grek, 2014, p. 59–63), and as it was also expressed in the in the first versions and forms of the Akathistos hymn, especially concerning the argumentation of Christological dogma and specifically against the first Christian heretical teachings, Monophysites, Nestorians, Arians (Wellesz, 1956, p. 147–148), Eutychians and Macedonians (Ritter, 2006, p. 41).

Indeed, within the appropriate forms and locutions associated with the Trinitarian address, and with echoes from the ancient Kontakia (dated before the 7th-century Byzantine reform and its expansion (Wellesz, 1998, p. 203), in his Kanon to the Holy Spirit Parakletos, Maxim perfected Slavic rhythmical variations and theological proclamations that resulted in analogical poetical correspondences to the oldest prayers and Byzantine hymns. At the same time as he managed to find the place (not exactly theological, but liturgical, t. e. in the supplicatory prayers, equality) for the Holy Theotokos alongside (next to) the three Holy entities of the Orthodox Trinity, he reaffirmed the pious veneration of the Holy Mother of God that flourished especially from 11th to 15th centuries in the developing Byzantine hymnography but at the same time also in the Western liturgical, as well in the Slavonic ascetic (monastic, liturgical, spiritual) poetry.

This is, in many respects, indicative of his ongoing induction into the mysteries of divinely-inspired creative praxis. He managed to find the proper theological affirmed (Orthodox) position for the Holy Theotokos, as an additional prayer call to the three Holy entities of the Orthodox Trinity. When during the period from the 11th century to the 15th century a significant rise in the devout veneration of the Holy Mother of God. This reverence thrived not only within the developing Byzantine hymnography but also extended to the liturgical rites of the Western Church (Ropa, 1996, p. 28–32). Moreover, the veneration of the Holy Mother of God found expression in Slavonic poetry as well. In fact, Maxim's poetic prayer, could be associated with the oldest Slavonic liturgical practices, dating to the first Slavonic liturgical poet, St. Cyril,

Constantine the Philosopher (Jakobson, 1985, p. 286–346)¹⁴, who wrote a similar accordance in the Kanon entitled “To the Memory of Saint Demetrius and Martyr in Christ”¹⁵, and, involving the Holy Virgin, in the dogmatical Trinitarian form, but also through stanzas, troparions, and heirmoses.

Such prominent theological emplacement of the Holy Theotokos may be found in the ancient Christian hymns, as in St. Ambrose’s liturgical poetry¹⁶, or in the meditations of St. Gregory of Nyssa, particularly about the Song of Songs (Louth, 2014, p. 141–153). Both Church Fathers, namely St. Ambrose and St. Gregory of Nyssa, recognized and esteemed the significant role of the Holy Mother of God. St. Ambrose, the first liturgical hymnographer in the Western, early Christian tradition, possessed also a profound understanding of Greek and held great respect for Eastern theological thought (Duval, 1974, p. 9–66; Zajc, 2014, p. 162, 166–167). Similarly, St. Gregory of Nyssa, honoured the esteemed position of the Holy Mother of God. They both acknowledged Her as the rightful and venerated personality not only symbolized but embodied the Holy Church, bridging the transition from the Old Testament to the fresh meaning of the New Testament. This recognition emphasized the unique and sacred role She held as the dwelling place for the Incarnated Logos, to Whom is adequate to address the constant solemn and reverent praise. Through the poeticized reverence and veneration of the Holy Mother, a profound inner space of personal (intimate, related to one’s soul) worship was able to establish. This space served as a means for *mediation* and *meditation* on the eternal and timeless dimension of authentic and personal Christian piety, as exemplified by Maxim.

However, the *theotokia* of the odes alternately invoke the Virgin Mary as the purest, and these invocations take place in *all* odes. The one who embodied the incarnation of the Holy Word within herself is supplicated ... (in order not to repeat “to invoke”) to grant redemption from transgressions and barbarian horrors to all who beseech her. In contrast to Constantine’s Canon, Maxim’s Kanon consistently acknowledges and pays homage to the Holy Mother of God in *each theotokion*. Furthermore, the concluding section of the Kanon incorporates a prayer for spiritual guidance in a similar vein – a humble entreaty for protection from the world’s adversities through the divine Grace of the Eternal Virgin.

¹⁴ However, the authorship of this Canon remains as the subject of the academic debates until today (Kozhurarov, 1995, p. 215–219; see also: Mircheva, 2004, p.71–93).

¹⁵ In this article will be named as Constantine’s Kanon.

¹⁶ St. Ambrose is mentioned by St. Maximus the Greek as the one devoted Father of the early Church (“the thaumaturgic Archierei of God”) in his crucial text, entitled, “A Speech of the Grief and Sorrow about the Unethical Behaviour of the Emperors of the this Last Epoch.” St. Ambrose is mentioned in the last yell (the prayer) by the main female personage named Basilea, created in this text by the author. (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Slave 123, fol. 75 v.). Such liturgical position of the consecrated man as Archierei is sourced from the Bible, since it literally appeared in nominative three times in Bible (John 18:15; 18:22; Acts 9:1) and, in genitive: nine times (in Matthew, etc.).

This kind of veneration through the invocatory progression of the Holy Spirit could also be associated with St. Gregory of Nyssa and his manner of simultaneously accepting a transcendental or eternal (not simply an Orthodox *economic*¹⁷) relationship of the Spirit to the Son in the Trinitarian order (gr. *taxis*), while the manifestation of the Spirit, of course, proceeds from the Father, already acknowledged as the Father of the Son, and, therefore, always also in closest natural relation to the Son (in “The Letter to Peter” by – G. Nyssa, Behr, 2004, p. 419). Hence, the vision of St. Constantine was already compared to the contemplation of St. Gregory of Nyssa, who devoted the first of his sermons to the “mystery of the Canticles” (Jakobson, 1985, p. 325). Indeed, Maxim’s philosophically-theological worldview was significantly deepened through the narrowing of hesychastic practice and the church space and its liturgical role itself. It could be slightly compared to the symbolic approach of the representation of the mystery of the Church and in the interpretation of the Holy Scripture (liturgical texts) of Maximus the Confessor (“theology of Scripture”), according to whom the individual soul could finally coincide as closely as possible *with* the church. In his text *Mystagogy* (Myst. 4: 627 AC), the Spirit is presented as the altar, the sanctuary as the soul and the church nave as the body. Also Gregory of Nazianzus, in his cosmological theology, envisioned the Church not only as a new universe but also as the very soul itself, and the Spirit was regarded as “the altar of the internal cult” (Bornert, 1966, p. 100). The close connection between gr. *pneuma* (the Spirit) and gr. *psyche* (the soul), enlightened by the grammatical relation of the Slavonic correspondents, is becoming closest through the quasi-personal associations¹⁸. However, the purpose of perceptual sensuous expressions is to unveil the sense of humility within the believer’s soul, which is established already in the First Ode of Maxim’s Kanon. These expressions also coincide with the added significance of the Holy Spirit. The triangle of the semantic roots built the contradictory occasions of the necessity for the high awareness in the conscious prayer: “Always with the winds of the dreadful passions and spirits (gr. *daimones*), that confused the soul, I am addressing the Holy Spirit about my salvation”¹⁹.

It should also be mentioned that Maxim disclosed the relationship between the Spirit and the soul through the intervention of the mind, which was detected already in the theological constitution of humanity of St. Maximus the Confessor (in *Ambigua* 10 – Louth, 1996, p. 94–154). This kind of trilogy is intended to

¹⁷ Gr. Oikonomia, lit. household management: the totality of God’s activity towards His creation and His salvation (cf. Cunningham, 2010, p. 293).

¹⁸ Mss: Moscow, Russian State Library (RGB): Cod. MDA, fund. 173.I.042, fol. 412 r.

¹⁹ Mss: Moscow, Russian State Library (RGB): Cod. MDA, fund. 173.I.042, fol. 409 v.

reflect the Holy Trinity as the archetype of mind (gr. *nous*), reason (gr. *logos*) and spirit (gr. *pneuma*), with Spirit in the closest relationship to the human soul (gr. *psyche*), which in this view is seen as triadically structured (Siecieski, 2010, p. 75). Yet, this perception was possible only because of the incarnation of the Divine Word, which is responsible for the human's ability to perceive the composition of the Trinity in his soul. Indeed, the main theme and leitmotif also of Maxim's long prayer is the humble attitude to save and rescue the human soul. The latter was also characteristic of "The Kanon to St. Demetrius" of St. Constantine.

St. Constantine – St. Maximus: Kanons

Similar to St. Cyril, in Maxim's "The Kanon to the Holy Parakletos", the lexical roots of the words are repeated throughout the entire Kanon to reinforce the mutual cohesion of its odes. But other explicit accordance between the two enlisted Canons of St. Constantine and of St. Maximus the Greek can also be noted. If we partly adopt Jakobson's linguistic approach (using keywords and paronomasia) to the philological analysis of Maxim's Kanon, we may note the following semantic features that act as the guiding parts of the stanzas of the prayer:

- The wisdom (мудрость) present in Constantine's Kanon acts as the highest wisdom (премудрость) in Maxim's Kanon. The changeable acknowledgment of these semantic features could also be found in Maxim's "Dialogue between the Soul and the Mind", used in the negative sense (Grek, 2014, p. 170), and in the other text, used in the higher sense for the determination of the human-divine nature of Jesus Christ and to denote how after the signs of the maleficent fruits one could recognize the false spirits and beliefs (in the text: "Against False and Evil Texts of Aphrodite Persius"): "For this reason, the God of all, and the King, the combined Superwisdom of the Father, and our Lord, Jesus Christ, warned his disciples (Mt 7:15-16)" (Grek, 2014, p. 133).
- Naming of the biblical persons in the non-festal troparia (Jakobson, 1985, p. 305) in Constantine's Kanon. – In Maxim's first heirmois, there is the biblical passage with the circumstances of Moses and God's gift of manna for Israel in the desert (409 r.).
- Cruelty in adjectival form (лютий – this is one of Maxim's favorite expressions in almost all his texts) in both Canons, already in the first Ode and repeated throughout the whole text in the interchanging, admitting sins of the soul.

The benighted soul accompanied by several negative epithets is present in both Canons. The expulsion of the evil spirits from the soul by the prayers of the Holy Theotokos in the 5th Ode is revealed to be truthful in Maxim's Kanon²⁰.

- The Earth (nominative) is acting as the new land in the 5th song of Constantine's Kanon (Jakobson, 1985, p. 289). In Maxim's Kanon, the Earth is playing the role of the "only truly Holy", and the surface (body) of the Mother of God because She has given birth to the Divine body of God the Son. The connection between the Earth and the human soul is, therefore, natural (supplicatory context) of the 1st Ode.
- The praise of the womb of the Holy Virgin in the 7th Ode Constantine (in the *theotokion*: "O most pure, containers in Thy womb"). The first Ode of Maxim's Kanon speaks about the womb of the Theotokos in a paronomastic repetitive (*parallelismus*) manner:

"In the *womb* begun virginly,
(when) He was exalted from the *womb*,
before the time God the Father bore Him,
(but) defeated by the sweet pleasures of the *womb*
with the power of Thee, make me free"²¹.

- The establishment of the atmosphere of calmness, tranquility, and silence in the *theotokion* of Constantine's 6th Ode. In Maxim's Kanon, it is similar in tone in the 3rd Ode, within the extended praise of the Holy Spirit. The metaphors of the calm harbor, the ship, and the storm can be found in the 6th Ode in both Canons.
- In the 7th Ode, there is the Biblical Canticle of "The Three Children in the Furnace", associated with the repeating yell in both Canons.

The latter examples are quite astonishing concordances that could be proof that Maxim somehow was acquainted with the oldest (archaic) Slavonic hymnological species²² that were established close to Western lands and might not have been exclusively related to the Russian sources²³.

²⁰ Mss: Moscow, Russian State Library (RGB): Cod. MDA, fund. 173.I.042, fol. 411r.–411v.

²¹ It has to be said that Maxim's Kanon in the manuscripts appears as written in the "regular" Slavonic poetical prose. These verses are transcribed and translated in our paper in order to show the significance of his sense of rhythm.

²² More about Maxim's Slavonic idiolect see: Zajc, 2016, p. 375–382.

²³ This is the topic for our further research.

Conclusion

The metaphorical substantive of the blossoms of the life, reserved for the Holy Mother of God (the spring, flower button, fruits of the trees), as they appear in both Canons, are the primary means of confirming the inner dedication of this kind of personal canon.

The seventh ode, in a sophisticated manner, praises the Trinitarian principle. Three times it repeats the refrain: “Blessed art Thou Who art God of the Fathers”. In this refrain, one could find the implicit reflection of the biblical hymn, the Canticle of the Three Holy Children in the Furnace, as it was conveyed traditionally by the Resurrection Kanon (Wellesz, 1998, p. 215), whereas in Maxim’s Kanon it is transformed into the praise of the Holy Trinity. Before the third repetition, there is the directive, “Read these words, kneeling on the ground”, denoted as “The third voice”, which speaks about the possible sound or musical interpretation and realization of this Kanon (Maxim’s aim, internal, confidential thought?). This Ode ends with the following verses to the Holy Theotokos:

“With divine reason and with warm repentance, Thou, full of divine grace, my mind and my soul, darkened with sins, make illuminated throughout with a light, and with the Archangel, I am singing: ‘Be Joyful, the Queen’.”

That praise continues, and the inner connection between the Holy Parakletos and the Holy Theotokos is opened in the prayer of the intercession, addressed to the Theotokos with the words: “The Grace of the Parakletos insert in my soul”.

The theme of purification, as in Constantine’s Kanon (cf. Jakobson, 1986, p. 312), is constantly re-(de)fining through the conscious presence of both the intercessional, gifting nature of the Holy Virgin and the ever-present help of the Holy Spirit. It is in the intertextual reference between the person and the Divine energy fire that the gesture of “absolute purity” is made, integrated into two natures of the Logos (the God the Son), even if across the whole of Maxim’s Kanon the place for veneration is slightly displaced, though not complete as it is through the whole his Kanon all the time fully felt and all the time adjoined. Close to the end of Maxim’s Kanon, the primary theme of purification has not disappeared, nor has it been displaced, since the last prayer is supplicatory and powered only by a tone of repentance that encircles a deeply humble mood. The role of the Holy Theotokos in the process of purification is not passive but co-collaborative²⁴, considering the image of ardent faith is equally represented

²⁴ This kind of praise could be found in the Byzantine homilies of Marial homilies of Nicolas Cabasilas (Jugie, II, p. 463), one of Maxim’s favorite Church Fathers, especially regarding the definition of the Divine Liturgy.

in the Holy Church and in Mary. In fact, combining the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ directly with praise to the Holy Theotokos, while at the same time making a very special appeal to the Holy Spirit Parakletos, could be seen as the only way to continue Maxim's polemic regarding Catholic invention in the Creed with *lat. filioque*, introducing, as a result, a corrupting insertion of human's manipulation and speculation.

Traditionally, the theme of the Ninth Ode of the Kanon had to be the praise and adoration of the Theotokos, based on the Magnificat (Lk 1:46) (Wellesz, 1998, p. 214–215), but Maximus, this time, dedicated only a *heirmos* to Her. Again, the poetical speech is controlled by the rule: the first stanza to Christ, the second to the Trinity, and the third to the Holy Parakletos, which is prolonged in five stanzas, each composed of four lines. The praise to the Holy Theotokos shows the strong and obligatory connection with the Holy Parakletos: "Divine protectress of the God and Men, please bring this poor song and a prayer to the divine Parakletos, Thou, the Most Holy Theotokos".

Epilogue

The supplication to the Virgin to grant deliverance from trespasses and joyousness – to those who call Her in faith – is, again, completely stated in the final ode and prayer. Nevertheless, the mystery of the Incarnation of the Logos and the inner interconnection of the verses of this Kanon could not be gained without the strictly ascetical experience from the monastic period at the Holy Mount Athos of Maximus, when he, an Orthodox believer, through the vivid consciousness of the highly mystical imperative connection between the Holy Theotokos and the Holy Parakletos, could experience the sanctity of such liturgical action. Through the versability of the stanzas and the obvious spiritually and mystically inspired fluency in the non-changeable flexibility of the Trinitarian formula, the reader could admit that the warm gratitude of Maximus the Greek to the Holy Theotokos in every single Ode is felt because they offer to the author him a return to his truthful and sincerely genuine, devotional home, that of the Holy Mount Athos. "The Divine Kanon to the Holy Parakletos" provided Maxim with an interlude form of intercession, whether completely internalized and subconscious, that nonetheless played out consciously as a preparatory prayer for the entrance into his deeply personal euchology, within which he was able to be aware of the possibility of an earthly redemption and, to have, possibly, the most pious humbled breath, a humble breath of distant freedom of the soul in the future life invoked.

Św. Maksym Grek (Mihail Trivolis, Arta, ok. 1470 – Maksim Grek, Moskwa, 1556): wgląd w jego osobistą euchologię

Streszczenie: Maksym Grek identyfikował się z nurtem mistyczno-ascetycznym w prawosławnym monastycyzmie – współcześnie nazywanym hezychazmem. Autor artykułu stawia tezę, że przez całe swoje życie skupiał się i poświęcił ochronie oraz kultywowaniu starożytnych praktyk duchowych, opartych na stałych zasadach, które były w opozycji do władzy państwowej i cesarskiej. Zadanie to realizował zarówno poprzez swoją pracę tłumacza, jak i autora sakralnych tekstów dewocyjnych, a także hymnów związanych z hymnografią bizantyjską i tradycją prawosławną. Jego cześć i umiłowanie Bogurodzicy prowadziły go do komunii z Bogiem. Był przekonany, że tylko dzięki mocy Ducha Świętego możliwa jest ochrona prawosławnej tradycji chrześcijańskiej, co uzewnętrzniało się w jego modlitwie (hezychastycznej, ascetycznej) i w dziełach teologicznych (hagiograficznych, liturgicznych), ale także w podejmowanych pracach filologicznych (tłumaczeniowych, redakcyjnych), a zwłaszcza w tekstach egzegetycznych. Dlatego silna bizantyjska myśl patrystyczna i monastyczna, będąca podstawą jego praktyki kontemplacyjnej, ukształtowana w latach spędzonych na Świętej Górze Athos, była jednym z ważnych źródeł jego teologii prawosławnej.

Autorka artykułu szczegółowo rozważa modlitwy św. Maksyma Greka. Wśród nich najważniejsze miejsce zajmuje Kanon do Ducha Świętego i Boskiego Parakletos, który odzwierciedla kilka możliwych wpływów, takich jak hymn Akathistos ku czci Najświętszej Dziewicy czy inne kanony modlitewne, w tym zwłaszcza Wielki Kanon, tak jak i Kanon ku czci św. Dymitra, z których wszystkie potwierdzają archaiczne źródła bizantyjskie i słowiańskie, mogące służyć Maksymowi za jego starocerkiewnosłowiańskie podstawy językowe. Jego modlitwa jest więc dziełem wysoce oryginalnym, monastycznym i głęboko osobistym, świadczącym o jego ascetycznej (hezychastycznej) praktyce. Podejmował przekłady z greki na cerkiewnosłowiański, co było też jednym z powodów postawienia go w stan oskarżenia. Uważał, że wypracowane podwaliny językowe i gramatyczne języka starocerkiewnosłowiańskiego tworzą język strzeżony, a więc święty. Przez lata więziony, niezrozumiany do końca życia, osądzony jako heretyk, jednak wierny do końca swoim poglądom, dziś Maksym Grek uznany jest za świętego.

Słowa kluczowe: monastycyzm bizantyjski, Święta Góra Athos, św. Maksym Grek, ascetyzm, hezychazm, język starocerkiewnosłowiański.

Bibliography

Manuscripts

Moscow, Russian State Library (RGB): Cod. MDA, fund. 173.I.042, fol. 408 v.–416 r.

Moscow, Russian State Library (RGB): Cod. MDA, fund. 173.I.042, fol. 409 r.–416 r.

Moscow, Russian State Library (RGB) Mss. Rog. Kladb. № 302: fol. 432 r.–440 r.

Sankt Peterburg, Russian National Library (RNB): Mss. Col. Sof. 78.

Sankt Peterburg, Russian National Library (RNB): Mss. Col. Sof. 1498.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: Mss. Slave 123.

The Holy Mount Athos, Vatopaidi Monastery: Mss. Cod. 1016.

Sources, Literature

Bardy Gustave, 1926, *Melchisedech dans la tradition patristique*, Revue Biblique, 35, p. 496–509.

Behr John, 2004, *The Nicene Faith I*, New York, St Vladimir's Seminary Press.

- Bornert René, 1966, *Les commentaires byzantine de la Divine liturgie du VIIe au XVe siècle*, Paris, Institut français d'études byzantines.
- Cunningham Mary B., 2010, *The glossary*, in: Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 293–294.
- Denissoff Élia, 1943, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, Paris–Louvain.
- Duval Yves-Marie, 1974, *L'originalité du »De virginibus« dans le mouvement ascétique occidental: Ambroise, Cyprien, Athanase*, in: Ambroise de Milan. *Dix études*, Y.-M. Duval (ed.), Paris, p. 9–66.
- Efrem Kutsu, archimandrite, *Svjatoj Maksim Grek kak vatopedski monah*, in: *Rossija-Afon: tysjacheletie duhovnogo edinstva, Materialy mezhdunarodnoj nauchno-bogoslovskoj konferentsii*, Moskva 2006, p. 286–295.
- Graikon Maksimon Agion, 2017, *Apanta Agion Maksimon Graikon*, vol. 4, Iera Megiste Mone Vatopaidion.
- Grek Maksim, prep., 2014, *Sochinenia*, vol. 2, Moskva.
- Jakobson Roman, 1985, *Selected Writings*, vol. VI, *Early Slavic Paths and Crossroads*, part 1, ed. S. Rudy, Berlin–New York–Amsterdam 1985
- Jugie Martin, 1974, *Homélies Mariales byzantines*, *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 19, fasc. 3, no. 93, textes grecs édités et traduits en latin, Martin Jugie (ed.), Belgique, Turnhout, Brepols.
- Kazimova Galina A., 2006, *Kanon moleben k božestvennomu i poklanjaemomu Paraklitu prepodobnogo Maksima Greka: k voprosu ob atribucii i funkcional'noj transformacii teksta*, in: *Lingvističeskoe istočnikovedenie i istorija ruskogo jazyka (2004–2005)*, Moskva, p. 281–294.
- Kretski Andrej, 2013, *Véliki kánon*, (ed.) Gorazd Kocijančič, Ljubljana, Kud Logos.
- Laurent Vitalien, 1958, *Le rituel de la proscomidie et le métropolitain de Crète Élie*, in: *Revue des études byzantines*, vol. 16, *Mélanges Sévérien Salaville*, p. 116–142.
- Louth Andrew, 1996, *Maximus the Confessor (The Early Church Fathers)*, London, Routledge.
- Louth Andrew, 2014, *“Di inizio in inizio”: il progresso spirituale continuo in Gregorio di Nissa*, in: Luigi d'Ayala Valva, Lisa Cremaschi, Adalberto Mainardi monaci (ed.), *Le età della vita spirituale*, Atti del XXI Convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa, Bose, 4–7 settembre 2013, Bose edizioni, comunità di Bose.
- Runciman Steven, 2006, *The Great Church in Captivity (A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War Independence)*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Salaville Sévérien, 1932, *Liturgies orientales*, notions générales éléments principaux, Paris, Librairie Bloud & Gay.
- Siecienski Edward A., 2010, *The Filioque. A History of a Doctrinal Controversy*, New York–Oxford, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology.
- Sinigalia Tereza, 1998, *Une hypothèse iconographique*, *Revue roumaine d'histoire de l'art*, série beaux-arts, vol. 35, p. 33–45.
- Sinitsyna Nina V., 1977, *Maksim Grek v Rossii*, Moskva.
- Sinitsyna Nina V., 2008, *Rannee tvorčestvo prepodobnogo Maksima Greka*, in: Maksim Grek, *Sočinenija*, vol. 1., Moskva, p. 15–83.
- Ševčenko Ihor, 2011, *The Four Worlds and the Two Puzzles of Maxim the Greek*, *Palaeoslavica*, 19, p. 294–304.
- Ševčenko Ihor, 1997, *On the Greek Poetic Output of Maksim Grek*, *Byzantinoslavica*, 58, p. 1–70.
- Ševčenko Ihor, Nancy Patterson, 2011, *The Service of the Virgins's Lament Revisited*, in: Leslie Brubaker, Mary B. Cunningham (ed.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium. Texts and Images*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies, p. 247–262.

- Wellesz Egon, 1956, *The “Akathistos”. A Study in Byzantine Hymnography*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 9/10, p. 143–174.
- Wellesz Egon, 1998, *The History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, Oxford.
- Zajc Neža, 2014, *St. Ambrose of Milan and the Establishment of the Christianity within the Conventions of the New Language for the Christians*, *Vox Patrum*, 34, vol. 61, p. 157–169.
- Zajc Neža, 2015, *Some Notes on the Life and Works of Maxim the Greek (Michael Trivolis, ca 1470 – Maksim Grek, 1555/1556). Part 1: Biography*, *Scrinium*, vol. 11, 2015, p. 314–325.
- Zajc Neža, 2016, *Some notes on the life and works of Maxim the Greek (Michael Trivolis, ca 1470 – Maksim Grek, 1555/1556). Part 2: Maxim the Greek’s Slavic idiolect*, *Scrinium*, vol. 12, p. 375–382.

Proofreading by a native speaker: Mark Jensen

Weryfikacja artykułu – finansowane ze środków Ministerstwa Edukacji i Nauki na podstawie umowy nr RCN/SP/0292/2021/1 z dnia 1.11.2022 r.; kwota środków finansowych stanowiących pomoc przyznaną w ramach programu „Rozwój czasopism naukowych” 19 610 zł.

