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MESSAGE
OF HIS ALL HOLINESS, BARTHOLOMEW, ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE,
NEW ROME AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
TO THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON SAINT MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR
(Belgrade, October 18-21, 2012)

Your Graces the Holy Bishops and the most devout clerics,
Eminent gentlemen the Professors,
Blessed children in Lord, --

“Luminous and God-joyous is today’s festivity that gathers us to the spiritual celebration which bestows the rays of divine grace ... on the hearts of all who have come” (Theod. the Studite, *Words of praise at the occasion of the feast of the Beheading of Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John I*, PG 99, 757). We, participating in spirit in this spiritual feast in honor of our Most Venerable Father Maximus the Confessor, commemorating the 1350th anniversary of his repose, do hereby communicate the greetings of the Holy Great Church of Christ (whose offspring was also the blessed Saint) to all that are chosen to be present.

The Saints represent God’s gift to the world, precious beacons within the darkness of this transient world, and an example to be followed leading us to our final goal – the Kingdom of God. Just as the Son and the Logos of God is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8), so are the Saints always actual, even if this is not always clear to the man of our time, since they convey His messages by incarnating them in their lives and, by doing so, developing and crystallizing the teaching of faith. It is for this reason that we consider your endeavor, through this Symposium, to focus on the contemporariness of our Holy Father Maximus by examining his work from different angles; inasmuch so as it is necessary and salvific to assert models and spiritual foundations as antidotes to various evil phenomena. It is in this sense that we shall briefly present some issues which were of no less concern to the Saint than they are to us today.

Firstly, in the center of the teaching of Saint Maximus is love, this driving force from which the entire creation is derived, and, thereon, after the fall of man, the very salvation accomplished through the loving self-emptying and incarnation of God. Our Most Venerable Father dedicates four hundred chapters of sayings to serve as a guide to those who are willing to acquire this God-like virtue, as the roof of practical asceticism the value of which requires ascension/emphasis both diachronically and especially so in our days when the imposed consumer civilization is trying to eliminate every “non-productive” value as such.

His clarification of the two natures and energies of God-man [Theanthropos] is multi significant, both from the Christological and the soteriological aspects (see *Aporia*, PG 91, 1056: “For by assuming flesh endowed with intellectual soul, the preeminent lover of mankind truly became man, and because His divine energy was humanized through its ineffable union with the

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natural energy of the flesh, He completed the plan of salvation on our behalf in a 'theandric' manner", and "of one essence with God and Father in divineness and of one essence with us in humanity being a mediator of God and man, is required to save the natural proximity with that for which he mediates, by becoming both of them" Epistle 12, to John Kuvikularios, PG 91, 468].

Especially interesting, and not only for theology and asceticism, but also for psychology, is the distinction between the natural and the gnostic will, i.e. between the willing power of the soul and the ever-personal will of each man (Dispute with Pyrrhus, PG 91, 293), within which our Lord Jesus Christ was also to partake as the perfect man (see e.g. *Letter to Marinus*, PG 91, 48 ff.).

And our attention is specially being drawn to the Saint's position formulating that "there is nothing evil in creatures except misuse, which stems from the mind's negligence in its natural cultivation" (*Chapters on love*, III, 4, PG 90, 1017), and Maximus' statement concerning the contemporary ecological problem: "mistaken use of thoughts on which follows the misuse of things" (*Chapters on love*, II, 82, PG 90, 1008; also see I, 92, PG 90, 981), which confirms the extended influence of sin on material creation in our days also, since the decay of this very good creation given to us by the Creator becomes the consequence of spiritual decay, as the people's Apostle Paul had already sermonized: "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21).

Leaving more professional and more detailed analysis of the Most Venerable Father to the speakers and their lectures, we conclude by conveying on you all who are participating in the Symposium with scholarly contributions, and to those who have put effort into its organization in various ways, our fatherly and patriarchal good wishes and blessings, wishing through the prayers of our Most Venerable Father Maximus the Confessor, a rich spiritual fruition from this in his memory noble organization.

October 8, 2012

Your beloved brother in Christ and
fervent supplicant before God,
+BARTHOLOMEW of Constantinople