

## Preface

### Motivation for the Study

THIS STUDY CENTERS ON THE THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF TWO theologians from markedly different worlds, Maximus the Confessor (580–662) and Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1926).<sup>1</sup> Its central thesis is that both Maximus and Moltmann root their understanding of the human calling (or vocation) within their trinitarian-christocentric visions. The motivating factors behind this investigation into Maximus and Moltmann are threefold. The first is *ecumenical*. By collating Maximus and Moltmann, I seek to demonstrate remarkable points of convergence between two theologians from such disparate contexts. In doing so, my aim is to offer a critical example of constructive dialogue across traditions, one that furthers knowledge of the other and fosters mutual understanding and respect.

A second motivating factor is *historical*. By this, I mean that through juxtaposing Maximus and Moltmann, I intend to show the historical importance of a proper understanding of the human vocation, a theme that spans the history of Christian thought.

The third factor is *practical*. That is, I propose that reading Maximus and Moltmann together sheds mutual, supplementary, and increased light on the important theme of the human calling in creation. Two theological perspectives, with all their overlapping and distinctive ideas, offer more insight into this intriguing subject of the human calling in creation. These three motivating factors, therefore, suggest some of the impulses that led me to probe Maximus and Moltmann's trinitarian and christologically based theological anthropology.

1. Excellent background information on Maximus is found in Nichols, *Byzantine Gospel*, 1–23; Louth, *MC*, 3–18; Blowers, *CMJC*, 13–43; and on Moltmann in Bauckham, *TJM*, 1–27; Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 3–94; Moltmann, *How I Have Changed*, 13–21; Prooijen, *Limping but Blessed*, 1–117.

## Background of the Project

The background of this research project entails, basically, three experiences. First, in a remarkable doctoral seminar at Loyola on creation theologies, I was immersed in Moltmann's *God in Creation*, studying his creation theology alongside other fertile thinkers like Irenaeus, Athanasius, Origen, Augustine, Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Barth. I was struck by the way Moltmann integrates a panoramic vision of the triune God who is revealed in Christ, with a sweeping perspective on the cosmos, in terms of his panentheistic understanding of creation and its consummation through the indwelling of God's glory. Moreover, the way Moltmann works out his trinitarian structured theological anthropology in critical conversation with Orthodox creation wisdom, piqued my interest. To counter modern tendencies that understand human beings distinct from or against creation, Moltmann develops a theological anthropology with humanity living in communion with creation.

A second experience was another doctoral seminar, one that focused on Orthodox theology and spirituality. This provided the opportunity to study Maximus in-depth. His all-embracing vision of the Holy Trinity, "the Holy Trinity's creation" (as he puts it), the cosmic links between Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection and the transfiguration of all things, and humanity's calling in creation, seemed to fit so beautifully with Moltmann's theology.

Thirdly, in preparation for presenting a paper on Christian spirituality and ecology at the American Academy of Religion, I had the opportunity to search out my initial hunches regarding Maximus and Moltmann. Through developing my argument in the paper for the AAR, I began comparing, contrasting, and coalescing some of the elements in their theological anthropology. And in the course of the various paper presentations, our lively panel discussion, and the constructive feedback given by colleagues, I was on my way to developing this current research project. Since its completion as a dissertation at Loyola in 2009, I have continued to rework it in several places based on discoveries emerging from further research, including a new final chapter.

## Scope of the Research

While both Maximus and Moltmann offer extensive theological visions<sup>2</sup>—analogous to sprawling mosaics made up of numerous, interlocking tiles—it is necessary (in a study like this) to pick one central motif on which to focus. Thus, I have selected the theme of theological anthropology, which I argue springs out of their trinitarian and christological reflection, as a way to define the scope of the study. Selecting this theme of trinitarian and christologically grounded anthropology will allow me to focus on a number of salient features within this area of their theological “mosaics.”

## Purpose of the Study

In light of the above motivating factors, background, and scope, my overall purpose in this study is to explore Maximus and Moltmann’s theological anthropologies<sup>3</sup> and demonstrate how they spring out of their trinitarian-christocentric visions. That is, I propose that their conception of what it means to be human is based on and formed by reflection on the Trinity and the revelation of God in Christ. Moreover, as I develop my argument, I highlight correlations between Maximus and Moltmann. I also point out key distinctive features, in order to recognize their differences and avoid homogenizing their theological visions and portrayals of the human vocation.

2. Please note that I am using the term “vision” with reference to both Maximus and Moltmann’s theology. Maximus’ theology, as Florovsky and Blowers assert, is not a thoroughly condensed system. It is an organic collection, a series of “sketches” that portray the ascetic life. As Florovsky argues, “It is the rhythm of spiritual life rather than a logical connection of ideas which defines the architectonics of [Maximus’] vision of the world, and one could say that his system has more of a musical structure than an architectural one. This is more like a symphony—a symphony of spiritual experience—than a system” (*Byzantine Fathers*, 213). See also Allchin’s introduction to Thunberg, *MM*, xvi, where he reflects on Maximus’ system of theology as a spiritual vision. Moltmann’s theology is characterized by its resistance to creating a complete “theological system.” As Bauckham says, Moltmann’s theology is known for its openness to dialogue, its ongoing, partial, and unfinished nature (*TJM*, 7). This is one of the reasons Moltmann calls his works of systematic theology “contributions.” Moreover, like Maximus, Moltmann’s theological vision is marked by its biblical basis, christological center, trinitarian dimension, and eschatological orientation (*TJM*, 8, 26).

3. Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) suggests that theological anthropology will be a primary focus for theological reflection in the twenty-first century (“La théologie orthodoxe,” 219–38).