

# MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR'S POLEMICS AGAINST ANTI-ORIGENISM\*

## *EPISTULAE 6 AND 7 AS A CONTEXT FOR THE AMBIGUA AD IOHANNEM*

### **Who were Maximus' adversaries in the *Earlier Ambigua*?**

For a long time after the publication in 1955 of Polycarp Sherwood's fundamental research *The Earlier Ambigua of St Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism*, studies of the *Ambigua ad Iohannem* were greatly influenced by his thought. As is clear from the title of his work, Sherwood in his approach to the *Earlier Ambigua* placed his main emphasis on Maximus' polemics against Origenism. Speaking of Maximus' adversaries in the *Ambigua ad Iohannem*, he primarily mentions "the contemporary Origenists".<sup>1</sup>

Although the 6<sup>th</sup> century of the Byzantine Roman Empire was really marked by the struggle with Origenism, there are certain reasons to suppose that in the 7<sup>th</sup> century the situation was different. Although few Origenist-intellectuals could have still remained in the monastic circles, Origenism within the borders of the Empire was almost uprooted, and the anti-Origenist reaction went too far, as is seen from the direct and indirect evidence that we find in Maximus' works and some other sources. There was a threat, especially in the monastic circles, of the spreading of ideas which were not less wrong than the Origenists', and to some extent were even more dangerous because they were simple and could be easily understood by many.

### **Epistle VII as a context for the *Ambigua ad Iohannem***

For strong evidence in favor of this statement, one can mention Epistle VII (*Ep. 7*) of Maximus. Before I address its main message,

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<sup>1</sup> Polycarp SHERWOOD, *The Earlier Ambigua of St Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism*, Rome, 1955, p. 8.