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Banishing Reason from the Divine Image

Gregory Palamas' *150 Chapters*

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**BANISHING REASON FROM THE DIVINE IMAGE:
GREGORY PALAMAS' 150 CHAPTERS**

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore possible reasons for Palamas' use of Augustinian notions through detailed analysis of the argumentative structure of the chapters into which they are integrated. It will be argued that Palamas was primarily interested in Augustine not as a Trinitarian theologian but because he could find in the treatise *On the Trinity* conceptual frameworks that permitted him to rebut Barlaam's attacks against the hesychastic way of life in a more effective way than in his earlier treatises.

Gregory Palamas, a central figure in the Late Byzantine spiritual discourse, was a man of many words who tended to set out his ideas at great length. However, there is one exception to this rule, the so-called *150 Chapters*, written in the late 1340s, in which he attempted to give a concise summary of his thought.¹ The chapters, which contain short statements, are divided into two equal parts. The second part reflects the theological struggles with Gregory Akindynos in which Palamas was involved at the time.² By contrast, the first part revisits an older debate with Barlaam about the significance of scientific endeavour and rational thought for the spiritual ascent of the monk.³

Palamas begins his text with the declaration that both nature and history support the truth of Christian core beliefs, namely that the world had a beginning, that it will at some point end and that it will be transformed.⁴ This bold claim is then followed by a more detailed discussion of various aspects of the physical world where Palamas employs rational arguments in order to disprove pagan theories.⁵ This approach then leads him to a discussion of the processes by which these conclusions were arrived at: sense perception, imagination and syllogistic reasoning.⁶ However, all this is then summarily dismissed as merely natural knowledge that cannot comprehend the spiritual dimension, and the Bible is introduced as the only reliable source for

¹ Edited by R. Sinkewicz, *Saint Gregory Palamas. The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters. A critical edition, translation and study* (Studies and Texts, 83; Toronto, 1988), 80-257, under the title κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα φυσικὰ καὶ θεολογικὰ ἠθικὰ τε καὶ πρακτικὰ καὶ καθαρτικὰ τῆς Βαρλααμίτιδος λύμης).

² For the date and historical context, see Sinkewicz, *Saint Gregory Palamas*, 49-55.

³ On this debate see D. Krausmüller, 'The Rise of Hesychasm', in M. Angold (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, V, *Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge, 2006), 101-126, esp. 121-124.

⁴ Chapter 1, ed. Sinkewicz, 81.

⁵ Chapters 2-14, ed. Sinkewicz, 83-98.

⁶ Chapters 15-19, ed. Sinkewicz, 98-102.

knowledge about the world.⁷ This apodictic statement is followed by an account of the creation according to Genesis, culminating in the creation of the human being in the image of God, which Palamas locates in the human mind.⁸

This new theme is elaborated in chapters 34 to 37 where Palamas creates an analogy between the Godhead and its Trinitarian unfolding on the one hand and the human mind and its faculties on the other. In recent years this analogy has attracted the attention of scholars because it owes much to the later books of Augustine's treatise *On the Trinity* where a conceptual framework for the Trinity is derived from analysis of our mental processes.⁹ The influence of this text, which was accessible to Palamas in Maximus Planoudes' Greek translation,¹⁰ is particularly evident in the identification of the Spirit with the mutual love between the Father and the Son.¹¹ This is an odd choice because Augustine had concluded from this model that the Spirit proceeded both from the Father and from the Son and Palamas had to introduce considerable modifications in order to make it conform to the 'proper' Orthodox doctrine of the origin of both Son and Spirit in the Father alone.¹²

In this short article I will explore possible reasons for Palamas' use of Augustinian notions through detailed analysis of the argumentative structure of the chapters into which they are integrated. I will argue that Palamas was primarily interested in Augustine not as a Trinitarian theologian but because he could find in the treatise *On the Trinity* conceptual frameworks that permitted him to rebut Barlaam's attacks against the hesychastic way of life in a more effective way than in his earlier treatises.¹³

Palamas' discussion of the divine image begins abruptly in chapter 34 with the characterisation of the divine nature as the 'supreme Mind' (ἀνωτάτω νοῦς). This characterisation is evidently based on an analogy with the human mind, which in a previous chapter Palamas had already identified as the locus of the divine image in the human being.¹⁴ The remainder of chapter 34 shows that this relation is understood as a strict structural correspondence. There Palamas states that the divine nature is not only substantial goodness but also substantial life and substantial wisdom and many other things but then adds a caveat:

⁷ Chapter 20, ed. Sinkewicz, 102.

⁸ Chapters 21-33, ed. Sinkewicz, 102-116.

⁹ See R. Flogaus, 'Palamas and Barlaam Revisited: A Reassessment of East and West in the Hesychast Controversy of 14th Century Byzantium', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 42 (1998), 1-32, esp. 19 where it is argued that Palamas came across the translation first after 1344. See also R. Flogaus, 'Der heimliche Blick nach Westen. Zur Rezeption von Augustins De trinitate durch Gregorios Palamas', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 46 (1996), 275-297; and J. Lössl, 'Augustine's *On the Trinity* in Gregory Palamas' *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*', *Augustinian Studies*, 30:1 (1999), 61-82.

¹⁰ For Planoudes' translation see M. Papathomopoulos, I. Tsabare, G. Rigotti (eds), *Μάξιμος ὁ Πλανούδης, Ἀγιοστίμου Περὶ Τριάδος Βιβλία Πεντεκαίδεκα ἄπὸ ἐκ τῆς Λατίνων διαλέκτου εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα μετένεγκε, Εἰσαγωγή, Ἑλληνικὸ καὶ Λατίνον Κείμενο, Γλωσσάριο (editio princeps)*, Book 1: *Βιβλία Α-Ζ*, Book 2: *Βιβλία Η-ΙΕ* (Bibliotheca A. Manouse, 3; Athens, 1995). The Latin text is reproduced from *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De trinitate libri XV*, ed. W. J. Mountain et Fr. Gloire (CC 50, 50A; Turnhout, 1968).

¹¹ See J. D. Wilkins, "'The Image of this Highest Love": The trinitarian analogy in Gregory Palamas's *Capita 150*', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 47 (2003), 383-412, esp. 408-409.

¹² See Flogaus, 'Der heimliche Blick', 287-288.

¹³ See Wilkins, "'The Image'", 385-390, who gives a summary of the scholarly debate. My article has a narrow focus. It only concerns the controversy with Barlaam. This does not mean that Palamas had no other agendas.

¹⁴ Chapter 34, ed. Sinkewicz, 116-118.

Καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκεῖ διαφορά ζωῆς καὶ σοφίας καὶ ἀγαθότητος καὶ τῶν τοιούτων· πάντα γὰρ ἡ ἀγαθότης ἐκείνη συνειλημμένως καὶ ἐνιαίως καὶ ἀπλουστάτως συμπεριβάλλει.¹⁵

And there is no distinction there between life and wisdom and goodness and the like, for that goodness embraces all things collectively, unitively and in utter simplicity.¹⁶

This statement is clearly dependent on Pseudo-Dionysius' treatise *On Divine Names*, which in turn adapts the Neoplatonic hypostasis of the Mind, defined as the level of the 'one-many' where there is no distance between the subject and the Platonic forms as the objects of its knowledge.¹⁷ However, one notes one decisive difference. Pseudo-Dionysius makes it clear that the Christian God is to be equated primarily with the One of the Neoplatonists and only secondarily with the Mind.¹⁸ By contrast, Palamas makes almost no mention of this higher dimension so that God is exclusively likened to the Neoplatonic Mind. Such a step is highly unusual for Palamas and has already been recognised by Flogaus as an Augustinian influence.¹⁹

Here we must ask: what does this identification mean for the human being as the divine image? Palamas does not define the relationship between the 'supreme Mind' and the human mind but it is likely that he conceived of it in broadly Neoplatonic terms as they had been set out by Barlaam in a letter to him:

Ἐπεὶ δὲ αὐτὸς εἰκὼν ἐστὶ τῶν ἐξηρημένων θεῶν κατ' αὐτοὺς τῷ ἑαυτὸν νοεῖν τιθέασιν αὐτὸν καὶ τὰ ἐξηρημένα θεῖα νοεῖν ὡς τὴν ἐκείνων εἰκόνα νοοῦντα.²⁰

Since according to them (sc. the ancients) it (sc. the human mind) is itself the image of the transcendent divine realities, they posit that through mentally perceiving itself it mentally perceives also the transcendent divine realities, since it mentally perceives their image.

From this passage it is evident that the corresponding human mind must also be located at the level of the 'one-many' and of unitive thought. The significance of this nexus becomes evident in the following two chapters.

There Palamas extends his model to give it a Trinitarian dimension by introducing the Son and the Spirit, which originate in the divine nature and thus define it as their Father and Issuer. Yet whereas the analogy between the divine nature and the human mind is simply taken for granted, the question of what constitutes the proper analogy for the other two persons of the Trinity becomes the subject of lengthy discussions. In the case of the 'supreme Word' (ἀνωτάτω λόγος) we find the following list of options:

Καὶ λόγος οὐ κατὰ τὸν ἡμέτερον προφορικὸν λόγον – οὐ νοῦ γὰρ οὗτος ἀλλὰ σώματος νῶ κινουμένου –, οὐδὲ κατὰ τὸν ἡμέτερον ἐνδιάθετον λόγον –,

¹⁵ Chapter 34, ed. Sinkewicz, 118.

¹⁶ Translation by Sinkewicz, 119.

¹⁷ See S. Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism. Non discursive thinking in the texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius* (Cambridge, 2000), 214-215.

¹⁸ Pseudo-Dionysius, *On Divine Names*, I.6-7, XI.6, ed. B. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum I: De divinis nominibus* (PTS 32; Berlin and New York 2000), 118-119, 221-222.

¹⁹ See Flogaus, 'Der heimliche Blick', 288.

²⁰ Barlaam, *Letter 3*, ed. G. Schirò, *Barlaam Calabro. Epistole greche. I primordi episodici e dottrinari delle lotte esicaste* (Testi 1, Palermo, 1954), 301.542-302.545.

φθόγγων γὰρ οἶονεὶ τύποις κάκεῖνος ἐν ἡμῖν διατιθέμενος γίνεται –, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ κατὰ τὸν ἡμέτερον ἐν διανοίᾳ λόγον κἄν χωρὶς φθόγγων ἤ, ἐπιβολαῖς ἀσωμάτοις πάντῃ συμπεραιούμενος – κάκεῖνος γὰρ μεθ’ ἡμᾶς ἐστὶ καὶ διαλειμμάτων δεῖται καὶ χρονικῶν οὐκ ὀλίγων διαστημάτων διεξοδικῶς προϊὼν καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἀτελοῦς πρὸς τὸ ἐντελές συμπέρασμα προαγόμενος –, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸν ἔμφυτον ἡμῖν, ἐξ οὗ γεγόναμεν παρὰ τοῦ κτίσαντος ἡμᾶς κατ’ εἰκόνα οἰκειᾶν, ἐναποκείμενον τῷ νῷ λόγον, τὴν ἀεὶ συνυπάρχουσαν αὐτῷ γνῶσιν, ἥτις – καὶ μάλιστα ἐκεῖ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀνωτάτω νοῦ τῆς παντελοῦς καὶ ὑπερτελοῦς ἀγαθότητος παρ’ ἧ μηδὲν ἀτελές – πλὴν τοῦ ἐξ αὐτῆς εἶναι πάντα ἐστὶν ἀπαραλλάκτως ὅσα ἐκεῖνη.²¹

And (sc. it is) a word not like our uttered ‘word’ – for that does not belong to a mind but to a body that is moved by a mind –, nor like our inner ‘word’ – for that, too, arises in us so-to-speak arranged through patterns of sounds –, but equally not like the ‘word’ in our discursive thought, even though that is without sounds since it is brought to a conclusion through entirely incorporeal operations – for that, too, is posterior to us and requires both intervals and not a few temporal extensions as it proceeds in a roundabout way and is brought from an incomplete beginning to a complete conclusion. Instead, (sc. it is) like the ‘word’ that is congenitally stored up within our mind since the time when we were brought into being by the one who created us in his own image, that is, the knowledge that is always coexistent with the mind, (sc. a knowledge) that – especially here where it pertains to the supreme mind, the goodness that is complete perfection and is beyond perfection, in which there is nothing imperfect – is everything without deviation what that one (sc. goodness) is, apart from the fact that it is out of it.²²

Here Palamas discards three possible counterparts for the ‘supreme Word’ in the human being before finally settling for a fourth option. The exclusion of inappropriate parallels is traditionally part of discussions about analogies between God and the human being.²³ However, as Flogaus has shown the specific way in which this is done here is clearly derived from Augustine. The first two options are literal quotations from the treatise *On the Trinity* whereas the third option is a paraphrase: Augustine had spoken of the gradual formation of thoughts in general, whereas Palamas speaks specifically of syllogistic reasoning.²⁴ This is evident from his use of the verb συμπεραίνειν and the noun συμπέρασμα, which identify the ‘beginning’ as a ‘premise’ (πρότασις).²⁵

It is clear that the first two options are entirely inappropriate because they are linked to corporality. This is not the case for the third option, discursive reasoning, which is immaterial. Nevertheless, according to Palamas it also shows characteristics that preclude identification with the ‘supreme Word’: we only employ syllogistic reasoning when our mental faculties are fully developed, and in syllogistic reasoning

²¹ Chapter 35, ed. Sinkewicz, 120.

²² Translation by Sinkewicz, 121, with several modifications.

²³ See e.g. T. Toom, ‘The Potential of a Condemned Analogy: Augustine on λόγος προφορικός and λόγος ἐνδιάθετος’, *Heythrop Journal*, 48 (2007), 205-213.

²⁴ See Flogaus, ‘Der heimliche Blick’, 289-290.

²⁵ See e.g. *Alexandri in Aristotelis analyticorum priorum librum I commentarium*, ed. M. Wallies (Berlin, 1883), 282.16-30: αἱ προτάσεις ... τὸ ἐξ αὐτῶν συμπέρασμα. This is seen clearly by Wilkins, “‘The image’”, 398.

perfect knowledge of a thing can only be arrived at through a sequence of logical steps that are developed over time and can be interrupted.

The subsequent passage reveals the conceptual framework behind this negative conclusion: Palamas' criterion for locating the divine image in the human being is again the existence of direct structural parallels. The human 'word' must be congenital with the human 'mind' because the 'supreme Word' is coeternal with its originator, the 'supreme Mind', and it must be perfect from the outset because the 'supreme Word' is eternally perfect in the same way as the 'supreme Mind' is (the corresponding 'perfection' of the human mind, although never explicitly affirmed, is clearly taken for granted at this point). This second argument, which appears to have no direct counterpart in Augustine, relies on orthodox Trinitarian theology according to which the divine Word is the exact image of its originator.²⁶

Palamas identifies the 'supreme Mind' with the divine nature, which is in marked contrast to Patristic usage of the analogy where it is routinely identified with the Father.²⁷ In the light of the subsequent argument it is not difficult to make out Palamas' reasons for this shift. Patristic authors had employed the analogy in order to illustrate the relation between the divine persons. Such use, however, inevitably focuses the attention on the differences between the persons and not on their identity, which was crucial to Palamas if he wished to exclude discursive reasoning from the divine image. Taking the divine nature as his starting point clearly served his intentions much better. As we have seen it allows him to locate 'wisdom' in the divine nature, which in Christian tradition is virtually synonymous with 'word', and thus to emphasise from the outset that the Word has no 'content' of its own.

Even more importantly, however, it gives him a means to exploit the notion of consubstantiality, which requires the two persons to be located at the same ontological level. By unequivocally identifying the divine nature with the mind in a specifically Neoplatonic sense he invites his readers to draw the conclusion that the 'supreme Word' must also be located at this level. And since he has already identified the human mind as the structural equivalent of the 'supreme Mind' Palamas can now insinuate that any attempt to link the 'supreme Word' to the level of discursive reasoning would necessarily entail a heretical subordinatianist Christology.

The exclusion of discursive reasoning from the image relationship between God and the human being was obviously of the greatest importance to Palamas for it also dominates the next chapter about the Spirit. Here, too, we find a list of excluded options, namely the breath that accompanies our spoken word, which is corporeal, and the 'urge' (ὄρμη) that accompanies our inner and discursive word, which though incorporeal is co-extensive with this word and also proceeds in time and intervals and from incompleteness to completeness.²⁸ This list is evidently almost identical to the one in the previous chapter. It has no equivalent in the treatise *On the Trinity* and is clearly an elaboration by Palamas himself on the basis of the Augustinian template (only the peculiarly Augustinian distinction between the inner word and the word in the heart is dropped here, which signals a return to the mainstream). The strict parallelism is continued in the second half of the chapter where Palamas reproduces the same arguments, and indeed the same formulae, that he had used in order to

²⁶ See e.g. J. J. Rizzo, *Nicetas the Paphlagonian, The Encomium of Gregory Nazianzen by Nicetas the Paphlagonian. Greek Text Edited and Translated* (Subsidia hagiographica, 58; Brussels, 1976), 31.70-80.

²⁷ See e.g. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 7, PG 91, 1088A2-3: ὡς νοῖ τῷ μεγάλῳ καὶ λόγῳ καὶ πνεύματι τὸν ἡμέτερον νοῦν τε καὶ λόγον καὶ πνεῦμα ... προσχωρήσαντες.

²⁸ Chapter 36, ed. Sinkewicz, 120.

exclude discursive reasoning from the divine image in the human being in the case of the ‘supreme Word’.²⁹

As has already been mentioned Palamas identifies the Spirit as the ‘supreme Love’ of the originator for the ‘supreme Word’, which is one of the key concepts of Augustine’s Trinitarian theology.³⁰ Palamas’ dependence on Augustine is particularly evident in chapter 37 where the image relation is made explicit:

Τούτου τοῦ ἀνωτάτω ἔρωτος τὴν εἰκόνα καὶ ὁ κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ θεοῦ κτισθεὶς ἡμῶν ἔχει νοῦς πρὸς τὴν παρ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ διηλεκτῶς ὑπάρχουσαν γνῶσιν παρ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τοῦτον ὄντα καὶ συμπροϊόντα παρ’ αὐτοῦ τῷ ἐνδοτάτῳ λόγῳ.³¹

Our mind, too, since it is created in the image of God, possesses the image of this supreme Love in its relation to the knowledge, which exists perpetually from it and in it, in that this love is from it and in it and proceeds from it together with the innermost Word.³²

As has already been remarked by Flogaus this is a fair representation of Augustine’s analysis of mental processes as a model for inner-Trinitarian relations.³³ However, in the first part of the *150 Chapters* there is no sign of a sustained engagement with the specific questions that Augustine pursued in the treatise *On the Trinity*. I would therefore argue that Palamas became interested in Augustine for a different reason. In his discussion of triadic structures in the human being that can be taken as analogies for the triune God Augustine ultimately restricted the divine image to the higher part of the soul and he based this restriction on structural similarities between this higher part of the soul and the Trinity.³⁴ Thus the treatise *On the Trinity* contained a ready-made consistent conceptual framework on which Palamas could base his claim that discursive reasoning was outside the divine image in man. This advantage clearly induced Palamas to accept in this context Augustine’s equation of God with the Neoplatonic Mind, which is alien to traditional orthodox theology and indeed also to his own thought, but which is an essential precondition without which the analogy would not work.

Why was Palamas so keen on this argument? It permits him to formulate a coherent justification for the hesychastic vision on the basis of an existing tradition. So far we have taken Palamas’ references to the ‘supreme Mind’ and the human mind as its image at face value. If this were the case then Palamas would be in agreement with his adversary Barlaam who as we have seen had stated that the human mind contained the images of the forms found in God (although Barlaam would, of course, not have reduced God to the level of the Neoplatonic mind). However, there can be no doubt that what Palamas really means here is the hesychastic experience and that those whose minds are capable of looking into ‘their innermost part’ (τὰ ἐνδοτάτω ἑαυτῶν) where they find ‘the innermost Word’ (ὁ ἐνδοτάτος λόγος) are the hesychasts

²⁹ Chapter 36, ed. Sinkewicz, 122.

³⁰ See e.g. D. Coffey, ‘The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son’, *Theological Studies*, 51 (1990), 193-229.

³¹ Chapter 37, ed. Sinkewicz, 122.

³² Translation by Sinkewicz, 123.

³³ See Flogaus, ‘Der heimliche Blick’, 188-292.

³⁴ On Augustine’s use of analogies see R. Kany, *Augustins Trinitätsdenken: Bilanz, Kritik und Weiterführung der modernen Forschung zu ‘De trinitate’* (Tübingen, 2007); and L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge, 2010).

who seek the divine as light in the centre of their being.³⁵ Couching the hesychastic experience in terms reminiscent of Pseudo-Dionysius had an undeniable advantage: it linked the new movement to a venerable tradition. This strategy is already well developed in Palamas' earlier treatises *In Defence of the Hesychasts*.³⁶ However, it also had an undesirable corollary: in Pseudo-Dionysius' Neoplatonic framework discursive thought is the natural activity of human souls and only through prolonged engagement in reasoning will they eventually be able to integrate their separate thoughts into an approximation of unitive contemplation.³⁷ In the words of Maximus the Confessor:

Οὕτω γοῦν ἐνοειδῆ γενομένην ψυχὴν καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν καὶ Θεῶ
 συναχθεῖσαν οὐκ ἔσται ὁ εἰς πολλὰ κατ' ἐπίνοιαν αὐτὴν ἔτι διαιρῶν λόγος, τῷ
 πρώτῳ καὶ μόνῳ καὶ ἐνὶ Λόγῳ τε καὶ Θεῶ κατεστεμμένην τὴν κεφαλὴν· ἐν ᾧ
 κατὰ μίαν ἀπερινόητον ἀπλότητα πάντες οἱ τῶν ὄντων λόγοι ἐνοειδῶς καὶ εἰσι
 καὶ ὑφεστήκασιν, ὡς δημιουργῶ τῶν ὄντων καὶ ποιητῆ· ᾧ ἐνατενίζουσα οὐκ
 ἐκτὸς αὐτῆς ὄντι, ἀλλ' ἐν ὅλῳ ὅλῳ, κατὰ ἀπλὴν προσβολὴν εἴσεται καὶ αὐτὴ
 τοὺς τῶν ὄντων λόγους καὶ τὰς αἰτίας, δι' οὓς τυχὸν πρὶν νυμφευθῆναι τῷ Λόγῳ
 καὶ Θεῶ ταῖς διαιρετικαῖς ὑπήγετο μεθόδοις, σωστικῶς τε δι' αὐτῶν καὶ
 ἐναρμονίως πρὸς αὐτὸν φερομένη, τὸν παντὸς λόγου καὶ πάσης αἰτίας
 περιεκτικόν τε καὶ ποιητήν.³⁸

When the soul has thus become uniform and is gathered towards itself and God there will no longer be the *logos* that divides it into many in thought, since its head is crowned with the first and only and one *Logos* and God in whom as the maker and creator of the beings, all *logoi* of the beings exist and subsist in uniform fashion according to one unthinkable simplicity. Gazing at him who is not outside it but completely in it, it, too, will know according to a simple intuition the *logoi* and causes of the beings, by which it was perhaps led through distinguishing methods before it was betrothed to the *Logos* and God, moving in a saving and harmonic manner through them towards him who is the embracer and maker of each *logos* and each cause.

This model of the spiritual ascent ran directly counter to the practice of the hesychastic method where any kind of thought was a distraction from the quest for visionary experience, and it provided excellent ammunition for the enemies of the hesychasts. Indeed, Barlaam had claimed that the hesychasts had not only not reached the stage of unitive contemplation but were indeed little better than beasts. In his treatise *In Defence of the Hesychasts* Palamas had found it difficult to counter Barlaam's arguments because he had no alternative framework at his disposal that was more congenial to his concerns.³⁹

This is no doubt one of the reasons why he revisited the issue in his *150 Chapters* for in the meantime his reading of Augustine had supplied him with just such a framework. Starting from Augustine's restriction of the divine image to the highest

³⁵ Chapter 37, ed. Sinkewicz, 122.

³⁶ See Krausmüller, 'The triumph of hesychasm', 121-124.

³⁷ Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, VII.3, ed. Suchla, 198.4-20.

³⁸ Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia* 5, ed. R. Cantarella, *S. Massimo Confessore. La mistagogia ed altri scritti* (Florence, 1931), 196-197.

³⁹ See D. Krausmüller, 'Do we Need to Be Stupid in Order to be Saved? Gregory Palamas and Barlaam of Calabria on Knowledge and Ignorance', in D. Krausmüller and V. Twomey (ed.), *Salvation in the Fathers of the Church* (Dublin, 2010), 143-152.

part of the human being on the basis of structural analogies, he could replace the Neoplatonic concept of ascent with an alternative model of parallel but completely independent levels of mental operation: on the one hand discursive thought where an ‘urge’ towards knowledge gleaned from the outside initiates and sustains syllogistic reasoning and where each new thought process produces just more of the same without approaching the spiritual level, and on the other hand the contemplation of the hesychast where through ‘love’ the subject is one with the true and perfect wisdom that is always present in its innermost core.

Palamas’ efforts to exclude discursive reasoning from the divine image in man are in the first instance directed against Pseudo-Dionysius’ Neoplatonic model of divine processions into a hierarchically structured creation to which his adversary Barlaam had appealed. In the treatise *On Divine Names* Pseudo-Dionysius sets out how divine wisdom is participated by both angels and human souls but in ways that are appropriate to their ontological status: angels are ‘minds’ (νόες) and thus contemplate wisdom in an internal and unitive manner whereas human souls are ‘rational beings’ (λογικό) and accordingly appropriate wisdom through discursive reasoning.⁴⁰ It is evident that in this framework discursive reason reflects divine wisdom at the level of the human being and that it can thus be regarded as its image, albeit further removed from its source than the mind.

However, the significance of Palamas’ argument goes far beyond this specific context. It also deviates from a much broader Christian tradition, which saw the divine image represented in the thinking part of the soul without distinguishing between different faculties and which only denied this status to the body and to those faculties of the soul that human beings have in common with animals. In his *150 Chapters* Palamas has radically redrawn this age-old boundary, lumping together rational thought with its irrational counterpart and limiting the divine image to the hesychastic experience.

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⁴⁰ Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, VII.2, ed. Suchla, 195.3-20.

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