

THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN BODY IN HESYCHAST THEOLOGY: SOME REMARKS

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ABSTRACT. In our current world, the human body has a most central place. On the one hand, we are called to respect and take care of our body. On the other hand, we often face cases of a strong disregard for the body or even attempts to damage or destroy it. What can Christian theology offer to the relevant debates? This article takes Hesychast theology, and in particular the writings of Gregory Palamas, as a case study, and tries to show that this teaching provides many opportunities to articulate and explain our enormous respect for the body. The following topics are analyzed: a) the spiritual dispositions imprinted (ἐνσημαινόμενα) on the body; b) the participation of the body in *theōsis*, now and in the age to come; c) the transformation of the body; and d) the role of the human heart.

Keywords: hesychast theology, Gregory Palamas, human body, soul, *theōsis*, communion with God, anthropology, intellectual perception (ἀίσθησις νοερά), spiritual dispositions imprinted on the body, human heart

Introduction

In the age of post-modernity and post-secularization in which we live, the human body has a prominent place. We receive instructions daily to take care of our health, diet, and exercise, issues which take on a primarily bodily interpretation. People pursue bodily pleasures—which today’s society has elevated to the highest goal of life—to the point of diminishing the spiritual dimension of life. On the other hand, even today there are phenomena of neglect

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or even abuse of the body, either our own bodies or those of others (e.g., self-harm or suicide, the ingestion of drugs or other addictive substances, sexual or non-sexual abuse). What is more, public opinion is often shaken about issues concerning the body. For example, in June 2022, the American public was divided over the Supreme Court's rejection of the famous *Roe v. Wade* (1973) decision, which held that the United States Constitution granted the right to abortion.

A stormy debate ensued, not only on social media, but also through intense rallies, speeches, and demonstrations. Pro-abortion advocates argued that “women have the right to treat their bodies as they wish” and that “no one can impose anything on them in relation to their bodies.” On the other hand, those who could not accept abortion stressed that the embryo is a human being from the very beginning of its conception and has, in addition to a soul, a body of its own. Therefore, no one has the right to exterminate them.

The debate is still ongoing. And this is only one of the many burning issues that concern us today and that are directly related to the body. But the key question for us is what Christian theology can offer, as far as the human body is concerned. In this direction, many important insights can be drawn from the way in which St. Gregory Palamas—one of the most prominent representatives of Hesychast theology—views the body. Some of his relevant views, the most pivotal ones, will be discussed in this paper. At first sight this attempt may seem idealistic or paradoxical, since we often have in mind that hesychasm and *askēsis* mean rejection or at least degradation of the body. But the reality is different, and I hope that this will become clear from what follows.¹

1. The Spiritual Dispositions Imprinted (ἐνσημαινόμενα) on the Body

A most central topic in the anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas is his notion of intellectual perception (αἴσθησις νοερά), which refers to the human person's communion with God and combines in itself both the spiritual and the bodily.²

¹ The subsequent analysis is an adapted and enriched version of Chouliaras, *The Anthropology of St Gregory Palamas: The Image of God, the Spiritual Senses, and the Human Body* (Studia Traditionis Theologiae 38) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 183–193.

² For an examination of this notion and the relevant bibliography, see Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*, 145–164. Cf. Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,20.24–27, 430 (153.7–11): Τῆ γὰρ ἀμφοτέρων συζυγία πείθει τὸν ἀκούοντα μηδέτερον νομίσει ταύτην, μήτ' αἴσθησιν, μήτε νόησιν· οὔτε γὰρ ἡ νόησις αἴσθησις ποτε, οὔθ' ἡ αἴσθησις νόησις· οὐκοῦν ἡ νοερά αἴσθησις ἄλλο παρ' ἐκάτερον αὐτῶν (“By joining these two words, he urges his hearer to consider it neither as a sensation nor as an intellection, for neither is the activity of the intelligence a sensation nor that of the senses an intellection. The intellectual perception is thus different from both”). For Palamas' *Triads* (Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων), I refer to Panagiotis Christou's edition in *PS*, vol. 1, and,

In other words, although this communion (or “spiritual perceiving/sensing”) is beyond natural sense-perception (αἴσθησις), it touches both the soul and the body.³ Thus, a central belief of Palamas is that “the human body, too, itself participates in the grace⁴ that operates through the intellect.”⁵ To support his position, he presents a very crucial argument in the *Hagioretic Tomos*.⁶ He maintains that the spiritual dispositions (πνευματικὰς διαθέσεις) which come from the charisms of the Spirit “in the souls of those who are making progress in God show their effects [or: are imprinted, ἐνσημαιομέναι] on the body as the result of the charisms of the Spirit.” Moreover, Palamas knows that the anti-hesychasts did not accept this reality, and for him this denial leads to heresy.⁷

For this reason, Palamas provides a justification and an answer to objections about the ἐνσημαιομένης τῷ σώματι πνευματικὰς διαθέσεις in different places throughout his literary corpus. For instance, in *Triads* 1,3,33, Palamas argues that the effects of the spiritual realities are manifested not only in the soul but also in the body. In particular, he stresses the fact that “the purifying mourning,” which is lived through God’s grace, is not manifested only in the human soul, but through the soul it is also transmitted to the body and the

in parentheses, to John Meyendorff’s *Grégoire Palamas. Défense des saints hésychastes*, 2nd edn (Leuven: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1973; first published in 1959). For the English translation I use (often with modifications) Nicholas Gendle, *Gregory Palamas. The Triads* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983).

- ³ However, the body has to be transformed so that it may participate in the spiritual realities. I discuss this issue below, in section 5.
- ⁴ On divine grace and the essence-energies distinction, see Tikhon Pino, *Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St Gregory Palamas* (London: Routledge, 2022).
- ⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,31.7-8, 442 (179.1-2): καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ὅτι καὶ τὸ σῶμα μεταλαμβάνει πῶς τῆς κατὰ νοῦν ἐνεργουμένης χάριτος. “Intellect” translates the Greek word νοῦς.
- ⁶ Palamas, *Hagioretic Tomos* (or *Tomos* of the Holy Mountain) [Ἀγιορειτικός τόμος ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἠσυχάζοντων διὰ τοὺς ἐξ ἰδίας ἀπειρίας καὶ τῆς πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους ἀπειθείας ἀθετοῦντας τὰς τοῦ Πνεύματος μυστικὰς ἐνεργείας κρεῖττον ἢ λόγος ἐν τοῖς κατὰ πνεῦμα ζωσιν ἐνεργουμένης καὶ δι’ ἔργων θεωρουμένης, ἀλλ’ οὐ διὰ λόγων ἀποδεικνυμένης], ed. Basil Pseftonkas, in *PS*, vol. 2, 567–578. Unfortunately, I did not have access to the most recent edition of the *Tomos* published by Antonio Rigo, *Gregorio Palamas, Tomo aghioritico. La storia, il testo e la dottrina* (Bibliothèque de Byzantion 26) (Leuven: Peeters, 2021). For a concise presentation and analysis of this text, see Christou, *PS*, vol. 2, 551–553, and Hierotheos Vlachos, *Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς ὡς ἀγιορείτης*, 3rd edn (Levadia: Ἱερά Μονή Γενεθλίου τῆς Θεοτόκου (Πελαγίας), 2007), 305–326. In this last book, one may see the tight connection of Palamas with the spirituality of Mount Athos throughout his whole life.
- ⁷ Palamas, *Hagioretic Tomos* 6.1-3, *PS*, vol. 2, 575: Ὅστις τὰς ἐνσημαιομένης τῷ σώματι πνευματικὰς διαθέσεις ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τῶν κατὰ Θεὸν προκοπόντων χαρισμάτων τοῦ Πνεύματος οὐ παραδέχεται. English trans. Robert Sinkewicz, “Gregory Palamas,” in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. 2: (XIII^e–XIX^e s.), eds. Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 186–187 (modified).

bodily sensations.⁸ And a clear proof for this “are the tears full of pain of those who mourn for their sins.”⁹ Palamas wants to argue that repentance and mourning for one’s sins is not something that takes part only in the human soul or spirit. It may begin there, but is also transmitted to the body, and thus also lived by the body and the bodily sensations. Therefore, Palamas wonders: “why shouldn’t we also accept with reverence the proofs [or: signs] of spiritual pleasure, for these signs are [also] manifested (ἐνσημαινόμενα) in (and through) the bodily sensations?”¹⁰ He refers here to Christ’s words, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Mt 5:4). Christ blesses those who mourn, because they will receive joy (χαρά), “the fruit of the Spirit.” But in this consolation (παράκλησις), the body takes part too, in many ways. These ways are known to them who have “experienced these realities” (οἱ ἐν πείρᾳ γεγονότες). Moreover, they are also revealed (and made known) to those persons who meet them, through various external signs, such as “their gentle (soft) ethos, sweet tear[s], grace-filled meetings of those who come to them.”¹¹ Taking the above into consideration, Robert Sinkewicz—whose contributions to the study and reception of Palamas in modern scholarship are significant—rightly argued that “Gregory’s concern is to show the progression of grace from internal activity to exterior manifestation.”¹²

⁸ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33, 443.28–444.1 (181.24-27): Εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸ κατὰ Θεὸν καθάρσιον πένθος οὐκ ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν μόνον τελεῖται τῶν ἀγωνιζομένων, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ ταύτης καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν κατὰ σῶμα διαβαίνει αἴσθησιν.

⁹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.1-3, 444 (181.27-28): καὶ δεῖγμα τούτου ἐναργὲς τὸ κατώδυνον τοῖς ἐφ’ ἁμαρτήμασι πενθοῦσι δάκρυον.

¹⁰ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.3-5, 444 (181.28-30): διατί μὴ καὶ τὰ τῆς κατὰ Πνεῦμα θείας ἡδονῆς τεκμήρια, ταῖς χωρούσαις τοῦ σώματος αἰσθήσεσιν ἐνσημαινόμενα, εὐλαβῶς παραδεξαίμεθα;

¹¹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.5-12, 444 (181.30–183.6): Τί δὲ καὶ ὁ Κύριος, οὐ διὰ τοῦτο “μακαρίζει τοὺς πενθοῦντας,” ἐπειδὴ “παρακληθήσονται,” τουτέστι τὴν χαρὰν, τὸν καρπὸν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἔξουσι τοῦ Πνεύματος; Ἀλλὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως ταύτης καὶ τὸ σῶμα μεταλαγχάνει πολυτρόπως. Ὡν τοὺς μὲν ἴσασιν οἱ ἐν πείρᾳ γεγονότες, οἱ δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἔξωθεν ὀρώσι δήλοι τὸ προσηγὲς ἦθος, τὸ γλυκὺ δάκρυον, ἢ χαρίτων γέμουσα τοῖς προσιοῦσιν ἐντευξίς κατὰ τὸν ἐν Ἄσμασιν εἰπόντα, “κηρία μέλιτος ἀπὸ στόματός σου στάζουσι, νύμφη.” Here, Palamas refers to the *Song of Songs* (4:11) (with some alteration): “Your lips distil honey, my bride.” Palamas speaks about the spiritual pleasure that is transmitted also to the body in other parts of his texts, as well; cf., e.g., *Triads* 2,2,10.

¹² Sinkewicz, “The Concept of Spiritual Perception in Gregory Palamas’ *First Triad in Defence of the Holy Hesychasts*,” *Christianskij Vostok* 1 (1999): 385. However, there are certain problems with Sinkewicz’s approach to the participation of the body in divine grace according to Palamas; see Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*, 194–197.

2. When the Body Participates in *Theōsis*: Now and in the Eschaton

Along these same lines, Palamas makes an important remark: it is not only the soul that takes part in the “pledge of the goods to come in the future,” but also the body, which walks together (συνδιανύον) with the soul along the road of the Gospel, which leads to the blessings of eternity.¹³ This is a crucial point in Palamas’ teaching. During their efforts here on earth to attain union with God, human beings have a foretaste of some of the beauties that they will experience in their life in Paradise. But this effort for union with God is not made only by the soul. The human person is not only “spirit,” but also “body,” and this body participates in our spiritual struggle. This is shown through the special word that Palamas chooses to use: τὸ συνδιανύον. Here, one traces the complementarity and cooperation that exists between soul and body. In Palamas’ mind there is no room for hostility between body and soul. It could even be maintained that the human body “has the right and privilege” to also foretaste in this life some of the blessings of the age to come.¹⁴

But Palamas goes even further: if one rejects this fact, “then one is also rejecting the participation of the body in the future age.”¹⁵ His argument is simple: if we believe that the body is really going to participate then in those mysterious blessings, it follows therefore that it will also take part (καταλλήλως ἑαυτῷ) in the divine grace which is given to the intellect in this life.¹⁶ Some important points should be highlighted here. First, the human body, according to Palamas, participates in the goods of the age to come; it takes part in eternal communion with God. Consequently, it must participate in union with God during this earthly life as well. It is not possible for theology to reject either of these two facts; if this happens, one produces a problematic theology. Second,

¹³ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.13-15, 444 (183.6-8): Λαμβάνει γὰρ οὐχ ἡ ψυχὴ μόνον τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ σῶμα τὸ συνδιανύον τὸν πρὸς ταῦτα τοῦ εὐαγγελίου δρόμον. For some other references to the Church Fathers (Basil the Great, Athanasios of Alexandria, John Climacus, and Isaac) supporting the fact that the body participates in the sweetness that the soul receives from prayer, see *Triads* 1,3,1, 410.18–411.8 (109.16–28).

¹⁴ For a relevant article, see Demetrios Harper, “Becoming Homotheos: St. Gregory Palamas’ Eschatology of Body,” in *Triune God: Incomprehensible but Knowable—The Philosophical and Theological Significance of St Gregory Palamas for Contemporary Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Constantinos Athanasopoulos (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 235–247.

¹⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.15-16, 444 (183.8-10): ὁ δὲ μὴ τοῦτο λέγων, καὶ τὴν ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι αἰῶνι μετὰ σώματος ἀπαναίνεται διαγωγὴν.

¹⁶ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.16-19, 444 (183.10-13): Εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸ σῶμα συμμεθέξει τότε τῶν ἀπορρήτων ἐκείνων ἀγαθῶν, καὶ νῦν δήπου συμμεθέξει καταλλήλως ἑαυτῷ τῆς ἐνδιδομένης πρὸς θεοῦ χάριτος τῷ νῷ.

Palamas uses the phrase “καταλλήλως ἑαυτῶ.” What exactly does this mean? One would suggest the following: the “καταλλήλως ἑαυτῶ” refers to the *synergy* of human beings with God, to the extent that they cooperate with God, that is, according to the measure that each of us allows God to act in our life. This is of course closely related with *askēsis*. Therefore, “καταλλήλως ἑαυτῶ” may also mean “as much as humans have progressed in their spiritual life.” However, there may be also another, very interesting, dimension. The human body, in its present state, has some restrictions in perceiving God. For this reason, it will be transformed at the general resurrection, so as to have full communion with God. Most probably “καταλλήλως ἑαυτῶ” here refers to this deficient reality of the current world, of fallen human nature. This seems to be the reason why Meyendorff translated this phrase as “conformément à sa nature” (“in accordance with/compatibly with its nature”).¹⁷

The same parallelism, namely between the participation of the body in the ‘ineffable goods’ now and at that time is also found in the *Hagioretic Tomos*, utilizing even certain identical expressions. However, the phrase “καταλλήλως ἑαυτῶ” is replaced by the word τὸ ἐγγωροῦν. This most probably means “according to the body’s potentiality, or to the extent that the body is capable of participating in God (συμμετέχειν Θεῶ).” The text reads as following: “the body [...] will doubtless participate even now as far as possible (κατὰ τὸ ἐγγωροῦν) in the grace communicated mystically and ineffably by God to the purified intellect, and it will experience the divine realities in a manner appropriate to it.”¹⁸ Behind the phrase “τὰ θεῖα πείσεται” is hidden the figure of (Pseudo-)Dionysios the Areopagite,¹⁹ to whom is attributed the famous dictum “οὐ μόνον μαθῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ παθῶν τὰ θεῖα.”²⁰ It should be noted that this is a phrase that Palamas uses frequently.²¹ In connection with this, Palamas refers to a noteworthy passage from Diadochos of Photiki:

¹⁷ Meyendorff, *Défense*, 182. Christou seems to give a similar rendering in his modern Greek translation, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Ἄπαντα τὰ ἔργα*, vol. 2 (Thessaloniki: Πατερικαὶ ἐκδόσεις «Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς», 1982), 221.

¹⁸ Palamas, *Hagioretic Tomos* 6.9-14, *PS*, vol. 2, 575: Εἰ γὰρ συμμεθέξει τότε τῇ ψυχῇ τὸ σῶμα τῶν ἀπορρήτων ἀγαθῶν, καὶ νῦν δήπου συμμεθέξει κατὰ τὸ ἐγγωροῦν τῆς χορηγομένης μυστικῶς καὶ ἀπορρήτως ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ χάριτος τῷ κεκαθαμένῳ νῶ καὶ αὐτὸ τὰ θεῖα πείσεται καταλλήλως ἑαυτῶ, μετασκευασθέντος καὶ ἁγιασθέντος. English trans. Sinkewicz, “Palamas,” 187.

¹⁹ Concerning the presence of (Pseudo-)Dionysios in Palamas’ *Triads*, see Alexander R. Titus, “The Reception of the *Dionysian Corpus* in the *Triads* of St. Gregory Palamas” (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2022).

²⁰ De Divinis Nominibus 2, 9, ed. Beate R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum I: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. De Divinis Nominibus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 134.1-2.

²¹ See, e.g., Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,34, 445.21-27 (185.17-24).

In those who have detached themselves from the goods of this life for the sake of the good things to come, the intellect, because of its freedom from worldly care, acts with vigor and perceives (ἐπαισθάνεται) the ineffable divine goodness and, according to the measure of its advancement, it also communicates to the body its own goodness. Such joy that then arises in the soul and in the body is an infallible reminder of the incorruptible life.²²

The important point here is that the intellect, “according to its own progress,” transmits also to the body this goodness that it perceives.²³ This is a clear indication of how communion with God is also transmitted to the body. In other words, the body has a crucial role in the operation of the spiritual senses of the human being.²⁴ Noteworthy is the usage of Diadochos’ “ἐπαισθάνεται.” This likely influenced Palamas in his own usage of “αἴσθησις νοερά.” Besides this, Diadochos also uses the phrase “αἴσθησις τοῦ πνεύματος.”²⁵ Consequently, for the above reasons, Sinkewicz seems to be correct when he maintains that, for Palamas, in this present life “the body and its natural senses have no direct perception of God. The body’s perception of the divine is mediated through the soul or the intellect.”²⁶

²² See Palamas, *Hagioretic Tomos 6, PS*, vol. 2, 575.19-25: ὁ νοῦς εὐρώστως διὰ τὴν ἀμεριμνίαν κινούμενος τῆς θείας ἀρρήτου χρηστότητος αὐτὸς ἐπαισθάνεται καὶ τῷ σώματι, κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς ἑαυτοῦ προκοπῆς, τῆς οἰκείας χρηστότητος μεταδίδωσιν ἢ δὲ τοιαύτη ἐγγινομένη χαρὰ τότε τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ τῷ σώματι, ὑπόμνησίς ἐστιν ἀπλανῆς τῆς ἀφθάρτου βιότητος. English trans. Sinkewicz, “Palamas,” 187 (slightly modified). The passage that Palamas provides is slightly different from what the critical edition offers; see Diadochos, *Capita gnostica (Capita centum de perfectione spirituali)* 25, ed. Édouard Des Places, *Diadoque de Photice. Oeuvres Spirituelles. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (SC 5 bis) (Paris: Cerf, 1955), 97; however, the meaning is not altered. Diadochos argues something similar also in his *Capita* 79, ed. Des Places, 137.

²³ Palamas, *Hagioretic Tomos 6.21-23, PS*, vol. 2, 575.

²⁴ The theology of the spiritual senses, which is found in the writings of many of the Fathers, is an attempt to explain how humans are able to perceive and sense God and in what ways this is achieved. Recently there has been renewed interest in the study of this theology. For related approaches (old and contemporary) and indicative bibliography, see Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses. Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Frederick D. Aquino and Gavrilyuk (eds.), *Perceiving Things Divine: Towards a Constructive Account of Spiritual Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*.

²⁵ Diadochos, *Capita* 15, ed. Des Places, 92.

²⁶ Sinkewicz, “Spiritual Perception,” 386 (slightly modified; Sinkewicz writes “mind” instead of “intellect”). For the transformation of the body in the age to come, so that it may partake in the vision of the divine light, see below, section 5.

3. A Case Study: Moses, St. Stephen, and St. Mary of Egypt

Up to now it was maintained that the body participates in the spiritual realities. To support his relevant arguments, Palamas brings three testimonies to bear on the issue: the figures of Moses, St. Stephen, and St. Mary of Egypt. First, as is well known, when Moses returns from his encounter with God on Mount Sinai, his face shines to such a great extent that those who are looking at him with their physical eyes are not able to bear “the abundance of this light.”²⁷ Palamas states that this light occurred because “the inner brilliancy of the intellect was outpoured also to the body.”²⁸ Secondly, “in a similar way did the physical face of St. Stephen appear like the face of an angel.”²⁹ Palamas clarifies this further: from within, St. Stephen’s intellect acquired an angelic aspect, for it was united to the divine light “in a mysterious participation,” “either directly or by consent (εἴτε κατ’ ἐπιβολὴν εἴτε κατὰ παραδοχήν).” And this union took place in a way “similar and proper to the angelic life (ἀγγελομιμήτως τε καὶ ἀγγελοπρεπῶς).”³⁰ Thirdly, Palamas refers to the life of St. Mary of Egypt (ca. IV/V c.?).³¹ In her *Life* it is mentioned that,³² during her prayer, she “was elevated above the ground, sensibly and as really being moved.” According to Palamas, this happened for the following reason: “because of the fact that her intellect was elevated, her body was also elevated, and having abandoned the earth, it was seen as if it were airborne.”³³ All these three examples show that, for Palamas, the human body is very much influenced by the progress and movement of the intellect, and, moreover, it participates in divine grace. But now, let us turn to an interesting Christological argument regarding the human body.

²⁷ Cf. Ex 34:29-35.

²⁸ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,31.12-15, 442 (179.7-10): Οὕτω Μωσέως ἔλαμψε τὸ πρόσωπον, τῆς ἐντὸς λαμπρότητος τοῦ νοῦ κάπῃ τὸ σῶμα περιεχυμένης, καὶ τοσοῦτον ἔλαμψεν ὡς μηδὲ τοὺς αἰσθητῶς προσβλέποντας αὐτῶ πρὸς τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς αὐγῆς ἐκείνης ἀτενίζειν ἔχειν.

²⁹ Cf. Acts 6:15.

³⁰ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,31.15-20, 442 (179.11-15): Οὕτως ὤφθη τὸ αἰσθητὸν πρόσωπον Στεφάνου ὡσεὶ πρόσωπον ἀγγέλου· καὶ γὰρ ἐνδοθεν αὐτῶ ὁ νοῦς ἀγγελομιμήτως τε καὶ ἀγγελοπρεπῶς, εἴτε κατ’ ἐπιβολὴν εἴτε κατὰ παραδοχὴν ἐνούμενος τῶ ὑπερανωκισμένῳ τοῦ παντὸς φωτὶ κατὰ μέθεξιν ἀπόρρητον, ἀγγελοειδῆς ἐγίνετο.

³¹ For the *Life* of St. Mary, see Maria Kouli, “Life of St. Mary of Egypt,” in *Holy Women of Byzantium. Ten Saints’ Lives in English Translation*, ed. Alice-Mary Talbot (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996), 65–93.

³² Cf. Kouli, “Life of St. Mary,” 79, where the testimony of Abbas Zosimas is presented: “He swore <to us>, calling upon God as the witness of his words, that when he saw that she was prolonging her prayers, he raised his head up a bit from the ground and saw her elevated about one cubit above the earth, hanging in the air and praying in this way.”

³³ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,31.20-23, 442 (179.15-19): Οὕτως ἡ Αἰγυπτία, μᾶλλον δ’ οὐρανία, Μαρία μετέωρος γέγονε καὶ τὸ σῶμα εὐχομένη τοπικῶς καὶ αἰσθητῶς, καὶ γὰρ, ὑψουμένου τοῦ νοῦ, συναυψώθη καὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τῆς γῆς ἀπαναστὰν ὤφθη ἐνάριον.

4. Christology and the Body: The Gethsemane Prayer

In his effort to stress the great affinity and connection between the human soul and heart, Palamas writes the following: when “the soul is warmed by and rather put into motion [or: excited] from the irresistible love of the only Desirable, the heart, too, is put into motion [or: excited].” Then, the heart experiences certain “spiritual leaps,” which “prove the communion of grace,” namely the fact that the grace of God is communicated from the soul to the heart. Palamas argues that this is something like a preparation—or, rather, anticipation—of the soul for the second coming of Christ, in the eschaton: He “who will come on the clouds in His Body, as promised.”³⁴ Of note is that Palamas relates the participation of the human body—here, the human heart—in the spiritual senses with Christ’s second coming in his body—and therefore also with Christ’s now being in His body, in the heavens. Thus, in the mind of Palamas the human body is somehow related to the body of Christ.

In a similar way, when the human person prays intensely, and “when the intelligible fire appears, and the intelligible flame is ignited, and, through spiritual contemplation, the intellect elevates the love [for God] in a flame reaching high into the air,” then “also the body is made light and warm.” In this case, those who see this person believe “that he has come out of the fire of a sensible furnace.”³⁵ For this last point, Palamas explicitly refers to John Climacus.³⁶ Worth noting is that Palamas uses some important keywords which clearly place the whole discussion in the context of his doctrine concerning the spiritual senses: a) ἀναφανέντος, b) ἀναφθείσης, c) καὶ τὸ σῶμα κουφίζεται τε καὶ διαθερμαίνεται, and d) τοῖς ὀρῶσιν.

Next, Palamas presents a very important argument: he gives a clearly Christological dimension to his theology of intellectual perception. In particular, he refers to Jesus’ prayer to the Father in Gethsemane.³⁷ As mentioned in Luke 22:44,

³⁴ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,32.24-28, 442 (179.20-25): Οὕτω τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνθουσιώσης καὶ οἰονεὶ συγκινουμένης τῷ ἀσκέτῳ ἔρωτι τοῦ μόνου ἐφετοῦ, καὶ ἡ καρδία συγκινεῖται, σκιρτήμασι πνευματικοῖς τὴν κοινωνίαν τῆς χάριτος ἐνδεικνυμένη καὶ ὡσπερ ἐνθένδε ὀρμωμένη πρὸς τὴν μετὰ σώματος ἐν νεφέλαις κατὰ τὸ ἐπηγγελμένον τοῦ Κυρίου ὑπαντήν. Cf. Mt 24:30; Mk 13:26; Lk 21:27; 1 Thes 4:17.

³⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,32, 442.28–443.6 (179.25-31): Οὕτως ἐν τῇ συντόνῳ προσευχῇ, τοῦ νοητοῦ πυρὸς ἀναφανέντος καὶ τῆς νοητῆς λαμπάδος ἀναφθείσης καὶ εἰς μετέωρον φλόγα διὰ πνευματικῆς θεωρίας τοῦ νοῦ τὸν πόθον ἀνεγείραντος, καὶ τὸ σῶμα παραδόξως κουφίζεται τε καὶ διαθερμαίνεται, ὡς ἀπὸ πυρὸς αἰσθητῆς καμίνου τοῖς ὀρῶσιν ἐξίεναι δοκεῖν, κατὰ τὸν συγγραφέα τῆς πνευματικῆς ἀναβάσεως.

³⁶ Cf. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* 28, PG 88, 1137C.

³⁷ The interpretation of the Gethsemane prayer caused many doctrinal disputes during the Monothelite controversy. For a pertinent analysis of how this prayer was approached both

“In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.” Palamas believes that Christ’s sweat is a clear sign of the warmth that one feels only when one is intensely praying; and this warmth is sensibly perceived in one’s body.³⁸ Palamas refers to the opponents of the hesychasts:

What will they now respond to this, those who argue that the warmth produced from prayer is demonic? Or rather, will they teach that one ought not to pray vehemently or intensively, so that the body—according to the soul’s combat—not receive the warmth which for them is forbidden?

For this reason, he claims that the anti-hesychasts teach a totally wrong method of praying, one that does not transform man or render him “close or similar to God (θεομίμητον).”³⁹

Here, the acquisition of a spiritual gift, warmth, is clearly given an ascetical dimension. This is why Palamas adds something important. First, he reminds the reader that human beings, in the fall, violated God’s commandment and deserted Him in the pursuit of pleasure (ἡδονήν). He then argues that when we “expel pleasure through the pain of askēsis that we voluntarily” choose to follow, “then we taste divine pleasure—which is free from pain—through intellectual perception (νοερᾶ αἰσθήσει).” Furthermore, this pleasure “transforms the body also to render it compatible with divine and impassible love.”⁴⁰ But a very crucial question arises here: what exactly is this “transformation of the body”?

prior as well as during the Monothelite controversy, see Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ. Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 140–147.

³⁸ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,32.6-8, 443 (179.31–181.2): Ἐμὲ δὲ καὶ ὁ κατὰ τὴν προσευχὴν ἰδρῶς Χριστοῦ τὴν ἐγγινομένην αἰσθητὴν τῷ σώματι διδάσκει θέρμην ἐκ μόνης τῆς ἔκτενοῦς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν δεήσεως. Here, Palamas seems to be influenced by Diadochos: see, e.g., his *Capita* 25 and 79, ed. Des Places, 97, 137, where Diadochos speaks about the transmission of grace from the intellect to the body.

³⁹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,32.9-15, 443 (181.2-10): Τί δὴ πρὸς ταύτην φήσουσιν οἱ δαμονιώδη τὴν ἐκ προσευχῆς ἀποφαινόμενοι θέρμην; Ἡ καὶ τοῦτο διδάξουσι μὴ ἐναγωνίως, μὴδ’ ἔκτενώς προσεύχεσθαι, ἵνα μὴ, κατὰ λόγον τοῦ κατὰ ψυχὴν ἀγῶνος, καὶ τὸ σῶμα τὴν ἀπηγορευμένην αὐτοῖς ἐπιδέξῃται θέρμην; Ἄλλ’ οὗτοι μὲν ἔστωσαν διδάσκαλοι τῆς μὴ πρὸς Θεὸν ἢ τὸ θεομίμητον φερούσης, μὴδὲ μετασκευαζούσης πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον τὸν ἄνθρωπον εὐχῆς.

⁴⁰ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,32.15-20, 443 (181.10-15): Ἡμεῖς δ’ ἴσμεν ὡς καὶ τὴν ἡδονήν, πρὸς ἣν φεῦ ἠύτομολήσαμεν τῆς ἐντολῆς ἀφηνιάσαντες, διὰ τῆς ἐκουσίου κατὰ τὴν ἐγκράτειαν ὁδύνης ἀπωθοῦμενοι, κατὰ τὴν προσευχὴν αἰσθήσει νοερᾶ γευόμεθα τῆς θείας καὶ ἀμιγοῦς ὁδύνης ἡδονῆς, ἣς θαυμασίως καὶ τὸ σῶμα πρὸς τὸν ἀπαθῆ καὶ θεῖον ἔρωτα μετασκευασαμένης.

5. The Transformation of the Body

A very important notion in Palamas' theology is the so-called "transformation" of the body, so that it may participate in spiritual realities. In his *Triads* 1,3,36, Palamas offers many useful insights on this transformation. Initially, he wonders: "How can bodily sensation [i.e., the faculty of sense perception] become aware of this light which is not properly sensible?"⁴¹ He answers that this may be attained through the power of the Holy Spirit. Besides, it is through this power that the Apostles saw the light on Tabor. This light "was shining not only from the flesh that carried in itself the Son, but also from the cloud which carried in itself the Father."⁴² Palamas wants to stress here that the glory of Christ shone both from His body and His divinity. Palamas quotes the words of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 15:44): "It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body."⁴³ This passage points out the difference that will occur between this life and life in the eschaton, as far as the human body is concerned. At present, the body is physical (ψυχικόν), but at that time it will be spiritual (πνευματικόν). Palamas connects this to the transformation of the body. And he adds that in Paradise human beings will be able to see the divine light because their body "will be spiritual, and it will see spiritually."⁴⁴ In other words, through its transformation, the body will be able to sense the spiritual realities spiritually, in a spiritual manner.

But here a question arises: is it easy for humans to understand in this life their capacity for union with God? Palamas would have a negative answer to this matter. He believes that our bodily situation renders it difficult to realize the existence of the νοερά αἴσθησις. To prove this, he draws an analogy with something similar: he argues that it is difficult for us to even realize that we have an intellectual soul, because the power of the 'flesh' is so strong in humans.⁴⁵ On the

⁴¹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.9-10, 447 (189.10-11): Ἀλλὰ πῶς αἴσθησις σωματικὴ φωτὸς ἀντιλήψεται μὴ κυρίως αἰσθητοῦ.

⁴² Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.10-14, 447 (189.11-15): οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν ἑαυτῇ φερούσης τὸν Υἱὸν σαρκὸς μόνον ἀπαστράπτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν ἑαυτῇ φερούσης τὸν Πατέρα τοῦ Χριστοῦ νεφέλης.

⁴³ σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν. ἔστι σῶμα ψυχικόν, καὶ ἔστι σῶμα πνευματικόν.

⁴⁴ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.14-18, 447 (189.15-19): πνευματικὸν δ' ὄν καὶ πνευματικῶς ὄρων τῆς θείας εἰκότως ἀντιλήψεται αὐγῆς.

⁴⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.18-22, 447 (189.20-25): Καὶ ὡσπερ νῦν ἔργον ἐστὶν ἰδεῖν ὡς ἔχομεν νοεράν ψυχήν, καθ' ἑαυτὴν ὑφεστάναι δυναμένην διὰ τὴν παχεῖαν ταύτην σάρκα καὶ θνητὴν καὶ ἀντίτυπον ἐπηλυγάζουσαν καὶ κατασπῶσαν, σωματοειδὴ τε καὶ φανταστικὴν μάλιστα καθιστῶσαν τὴν ψυχήν, διὸ καὶ τὴν κατὰ νοῦν νοεράν ἀγνοοῦμεν αἴσθησις. It seems to me that Meyendorff gives an incorrect translation of the phrase "Καὶ ὡσπερ - νοεράν ψυχήν."

other hand, in Paradise, it is the body that “will be hidden, as it were, because humans will acquire [or: will be conformed to] the angelic dignity.”⁴⁶

Furthermore, Palamas continues, the body “will become [very] thin, to such an extent that it will no longer appear material at all.” In such a state, the body “will not obscure the intellectual activities.” This will happen due to a total “victory of the intellect.” “For this reason,” Palamas concludes, “humans will delight in the divine light also with their bodily sensations.”⁴⁷ In other words, the body will be, as it were, absorbed by the intellect. It will become spiritual, and thus, at that time, we will see the divine light through our body too. Palamas refers here explicitly to a passage from St. Maximos the Confessor, which seems to play an important role in Palamas’ own theology of the human body. In particular, in his *Theological Chapters*, Maximos argues that, in the divine Kingdom, in Paradise, the soul will become

God by participation in divine grace, ceasing from all activity of intellect and sense, and at the same time suspending all the natural operations of the body. For the body is deified along with the soul through its own corresponding participation in the process of deification. Thus, God alone is made manifest through the soul and the body, since their natural properties have been overcome by the superabundance of His glory.⁴⁸

In particular, he translates it as following: “Aujourd’hui nous pouvons réellement voir que nous avons une âme intellectuelle qui possède une existence propre dans [...]” In other words, he regards that the phrase “ἔργον ἐστίν” should be translated as “we can indeed [or: really] (see).” However, according to *LSJ*, s.v. ἔργον, the phrase “ἔργον ἐστίν” followed by an infinitive (as here: ἰδεῖν) has the meaning of “it is hard work, difficult to do.” For this reason, Christou seems to give the correct rendering in his modern Greek translation, *Ἄπαντα τὰ ἔργα*, vol. 2, 227: “And as now it is *difficult* for us to see that we have a rational soul [...]” (my emphasis).

⁴⁶ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.22-25, 447 (189.25-28): ὡσανεὶ τὸ σῶμα κρυβήσεται εἰς ἀγγέλων κατὰ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ μεταποιηθεῖσιν ἀξίαν. Cf. Mt 22:30; Mk 12:25; Lk 20:36.

⁴⁷ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.25-28, 447 (189.28-31): διαλεπτυνθήσεται γάρ, ὡς μηδ’ ὕλην ὄλωσ εἶναι δοκεῖν, μηδ’ ἐπιπροσθεῖν ταῖς νοεραῖς ἐνεργείαις, ἐκνικήσαντος τοῦ νοῦ. Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ σωματικαῖς αἰσθήσεσιν ἀπολαύσσονται τοῦ θεϊκοῦ φωτός.

⁴⁸ Maximos the Confessor, *Capita theologica* 2, 88, PG 90, 1168A; English trans. from *The Philokalia. The Complete Text Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, trans. Gerald E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), vol. 2, 160. Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,37.2-8, 448 (191.2-9), gives the passage in this form: ἡ ψυχὴ [...] γίνεται Θεὸς τῇ μεθέξει τῆς θεϊκῆς χάριτος, πασῶν τῶν κατὰ νοῦν τε καὶ αἰσθησιν αὐτῆ τε παυσασμένη καὶ τὰς τοῦ σώματος συναποπαύσασα φυσικὰς ἐνεργείας, συνθεωθέντος αὐτῆ κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογοῦσαν αὐτῷ μεθέξιν τῆς θεώσεως, ὥστε μόνον τὸν Θεὸν διὰ τε τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος τότε φαίνεσθαι, νικηθέντων αὐτῶν, τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῆς δόξης τῶν φυσικῶν γνωρισμάτων.

Based on this passage, Palamas makes the following significant comments: First, “God is invisible to creatures, but is not invisible in Himself.”⁴⁹ In Paradise, however, the human person will see God, though in fact God will be “the One who sees (ὁ Θεὸς ὁ βλέπων ἔσται).” Furthermore, this will take place not only through our human soul, but also through our body. “For this reason, we shall see the divine and inaccessible light, in a most clear way, also through our bodily organs.”⁵⁰

Palamas argues that in the eschaton human beings will be totally united with God and thus be able to see Him. Moreover, in this vision of God the whole human person will participate, both soul and body. This will be done through what St. Maximos described in the aforementioned passage, namely a cessation of “all activity of intellect and sense, and at the same time suspending all the natural operations of the body.”⁵¹ This entails an “overcoming of the natural properties [or: activities].” Then, the divinization of the body occurs (συνθεωθέντος αὐτῆ κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογοῦσαν αὐτῷ μέθεξιν τῆς θεώσεως). Undoubtedly, these points show how great a value Palamas attributes to the human body.⁵²

Furthermore, Palamas points out two significant passages from St. Makarios which are relevant to our topic.⁵³ According to Palamas, the first says: “The deiform image of the Spirit, which is now imprinted on us (νῦν ἔνδον ὡσπερ ἐντυπωθεῖσα), will make (ἀπεργάσεται) then [in Paradise] also the body—which is external (ἔξω) [in relation to the soul]—deiform (θεοειδές) and celestial.”⁵⁴ And the second: “God, reconciled with human beings, restores (ἀποκαθίστησι) the soul which has truly believed—although it is still in the body (ἐν σαρκὶ οὖσαν ἔτι)—to the

⁴⁹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,37.8-10, 448 (191.9-11): Ἐπεὶ τοίνυν [...] τοῖς κτιστοῖς ἀόρατος ὁ Θεός, ἐαυτῷ δὲ οὐκ ἀόρατος.

⁵⁰ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,37.10-13, 448 (191.11-14): τότε δὲ οὐ μόνον διὰ τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς ψυχῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τοῦ σώματος, ὡ τοῦ θαύματος, ὁ Θεὸς ὁ βλέπων ἔσται, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ διὰ σωματικῶν ὀργάνων τότε τὸ θεϊκὸν καὶ ἀπρόσιτον φῶς τηλαυγῶς ὀψόμεθα.

⁵¹ Maximos the Confessor, *Capita theologica* 2, 88, PG 90, 1168A (cf. Palamas, 1,3,37): πασῶν τῶν κατὰ νοῦν τε καὶ αἰσθησιν αὐτῆ τε παυσαμένη καὶ τὰς τοῦ σώματος συναποπαύσασα φυσικὰς ἐνεργείας.

⁵² Concerning Palamas’ approach to the “cessation of all intellectual activity,” see Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*, 175–179. On St. Maximos’ stance on the human body, see Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor. Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵³ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,43, 454.26–455.5 (205.15-22): “ἡ θεοειδῆς τοῦ Πνεύματος εἰκὼν νῦν ἔνδον ὡσπερ ἐντυπωθεῖσα, καὶ τὸ σῶμα θεοειδὲς ἔξω τότε καὶ οὐράνιον ἀπεργάσεται.” Καὶ πάλιν “τῇ ἀνθρωπότητι καταλλαγείς ὁ Θεός, ἀποκαθίστησι τὴν πιστεῦσασαν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ ψυχὴν, ἐν σαρκὶ οὖσαν ἔτι, εἰς τὴν τῶν οὐρανίων φώτων ἀπόλαυσιν καὶ τὰ νοερὰ αὐτῆς αἰσθητήρια τῷ θεῷ πάλιν φωτὶ τῆς χάριτος ὀμματοῖ, ὕστερον δὲ καὶ αὐτῷ τῷ σώματι περιβαλεῖ τῇ δόξῃ.” Palamas mentions both of these passages in a different form than what appears in the critical edition available today. However, he does not seem to alter their meaning.

⁵⁴ Cf. Makarios, *Sermones*, 58, 3,2.12-16, ed. Heinz Berthold, *Makarios/Symeon. Reden und Briefe* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973), vol. 2, 185.

pleasure of the celestial lights, and gives sight again to its intellectual senses (καὶ τὰ νοερά αὐτῆς αἰσθητήρια [...] ὄμματόῦ) through the divine light of grace; after that [i.e., in the Resurrection] He will enclose with glory even the body itself.”⁵⁵ It is worth noting that, in this context, Palamas seizes the opportunity to argue that “the spiritual person consists of three elements: the grace of the heavenly Spirit, a rational soul, and an earthly body.”⁵⁶ In addition, as already mentioned, he again describes the vision of Tabor as a ‘preamble and pledge of the age to come.’⁵⁷

6. The Heart

Finally, there remains one last issue to be examined: what is the role of the human heart in the spiritual life? As is well known, Palamas was opposed to those who believed that “knowledge of beings and ascent to God may be attained through profane wisdom.”⁵⁸ For him, these two are attained only through the grace of God. He refers for this again to an important text of St. Maximos: “When God comes to dwell in such a heart, He honors it by engraving His own letters on it through the Holy Spirit, just as He did on the Mosaic tablets” (cf. Ex 31:18).⁵⁹ Then, Palamas refers to the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:3: “And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human [or: fleshly] hearts.”⁶⁰ Citing this passage, Palamas wonders: “Where are those who regard the inner heart as unsusceptible of God?”⁶¹ In other words, the heart is where the grace of God is received. To support his position, Palamas refers to a key text of St. Makarios:

⁵⁵ Cf. Makarios, *Sermones*, 58, 3,3, ed. Berthold, vol. 2, 185.20–186.6: καὶ τὰ νοερά αὐτῆς αἰσθητήρια πάλιν ἀποκαθίστησι [...] καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει ἀποκατασταθήσεται τὸ σῶμα εἰς τὴν ἀθάνατον καὶ ἄφθαρτον δόξαν.

⁵⁶ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,43.24–26, 454 (205.12–14): Ἄλλως τε καὶ ὁ πνευματικὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τριῶν ὑφέστηκε, χάριτος Πνεύματος ἐπουρανίου, ψυχῆς λογικῆς καὶ γήινου σώματος. Christou (*PS*, vol. 1, 454, n. 4) notes that this tripartite division of man goes back to the Apologists (mainly Tatian) and Irenaeus.

⁵⁷ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,37.13–15, 448 (191.14–17).

⁵⁸ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.9–10, 452 (199.21–23): Ποῦ εἰσιν οἱ διὰ τῆς ἔξω καὶ μωρανθείσης σοφίας τὴν γνῶσιν τῶν ὄντων καὶ τὴν πρὸς Θεὸν ἄνοδον δογματίζοντες;

⁵⁹ Maximos the Confessor, *Capita theologica* 2, 80, *PG* 90, 1161D–1164A: ἐν ᾧ γενόμενος ὁ Θεός, ἀξιοῖ τὰ ἴδια γράμματα διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἐγχαράττειν, καθάπερ τισὶ πλαξὶ Μωσαϊκαῖς. English trans. from *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, 158. Palamas writes ἐγχαράττεσθαι instead of ἐγχαράττειν. See Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.10–13, 452 (199.23–25).

⁶⁰ οὐκ ἐν πλαξὶ λιθίναις, ἀλλ’ ἐν πλαξὶ καρδίαις σαρκίνας. Palamas writes καρδίας instead of καρδίαις.

⁶¹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.13–16, 452 (199.25–29): Ποῦ εἰσιν οἱ τὴν ἐντὸς καρδίαν ἀνεπίδεκτον Θεοῦ λογιζόμενοι [...].

the heart directs and governs all the other organs of the body. And when grace pastures the heart, it rules over all the members and the thoughts. For there, in the heart, the intellect (νοῦς) abides as well as all the thoughts of the soul and all its hopes. This is how grace penetrates throughout all parts of the body.⁶²

Palamas also presents for this purpose another important text from St. Maximos, which perhaps influenced his own use of the word ἐνσημαινομένης:⁶³ “A pure heart is one which offers the intellect (νοῦν) to God free of all images and form, and ready to be imprinted only with His own archetypes, by which God Himself is made manifest.”⁶⁴ Based on this, Palamas argues that knowledge which comes by means of divine illumination is superior to profane knowledge: “How can the intellect, which is free of all images, and which is imprinted with God’s archetypes, not be superior to the knowledge which is derived from beings?”⁶⁵ Perhaps Palamas has here in mind the theology of the *logoi*.⁶⁶

Furthermore, Palamas argues that “imprinting the intellect with the divine and secret signs of the Holy Spirit” is far superior to “the ascent of the reasoning (διανοίας) towards God through negation.”⁶⁷ Palamas emphasizes the superiority of *theoptia* over *theologia*, because the former is attained through the light of God:

⁶² Makarios, *Ὁμιλίες πνευματικάι*, 15, 20.283-287, eds. Hermann Dörries, Erich Klostermann, and Matthias Kroeger, *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964), 139: ἡ γὰρ καρδία ἡγεμονεύει καὶ βασιλεύει ὄλου τοῦ σωματικοῦ ὄργάνου, καὶ ἐπὶν κατάσχη τὰς νομάς τῆς καρδίας ἡ χάρις, βασιλεύει ὄλων τῶν μελῶν καὶ τῶν λογισμῶν· ἐκεῖ γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ νοῦς καὶ ὄλοι οἱ λογισμοὶ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ ἡ προσδοκία αὐτῆς, διὸ καὶ διέρχεται εἰς ὄλα τὰ μέλη τοῦ σώματος. English trans. George A. Maloney, *Pseudo-Macarius. The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 116. Instead of the last phrase (ἡ προσδοκία – τοῦ σώματος), Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.16-21, 452 (199.29–201.3), writes ἐκεῖ τοίνυν δεῖ σκοπεῖν, εἰ ἐνέργραψεν ἡ χάρις τοὺς τοῦ Πνεύματος νόμους.

⁶³ For this word (ἐνσημαινομένης), see above, section 1.

⁶⁴ Maximos the Confessor, *Capita theologica* 2, 82, PG 90, 1164A: Καρδία ἐστὶ καθαρά, ἡ παντάσῃ ἀνείδεον τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἀμόρφωτον παραστήσασα τὴν μνήμην· καὶ μόνοις τοῖς αὐτοῦ ἔτοιμον ἐνσημανθῆναι τύποις, δι’ ὧν ἐμφανῆς πέφυκε γίνεσθαι. English trans. from *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, 158 (slightly modified). Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.21-25, 452 (201.3-8), gives the passage in a slightly different form: Καρδία καθαρά ἐστὶν ἡ παντάσῃ ἀνείδεον παραστήσασα τὸν νοῦν τῷ Θεῷ καὶ μόνοις τοῖς αὐτοῦ ἔτοιμον ἐνσημαίνεσθαι τύποις, δι’ ὧν ἐμφανῆς πέφυκε γίνεσθαι. As Meyendorff, *Défense*, 200, n. 3, and Christou (PS, vol. 1, 452, n. 6) point out, Maximos takes this text directly from Mark the Ascetic, *Capita de temperantia*, 24, PG 65, 1064B.

⁶⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.4-5, 453 (201.14-16): Πῶς γὰρ ὁ ἀνείδεος νοῦς, ὁ καὶ τοῖς θείοις ἐνημαινόμενος τύποις, οὐχ ὑπεράνω τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ὄντων γνώσεως;

⁶⁶ For a discussion of this issue, see chapter 2.1 in Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*.

⁶⁷ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.6-8, 453 (201.17-19): Ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς δι’ ἀποφάσεων πρὸς Θεὸν ἀνόδου τῆς διανοίας τὸ θείοις καὶ ἀπορρήτοις τὸν νοῦν ἐνημαίνεσθαι τοῦ Πνεύματος τύποις κατὰ πολὺ διενήνοχε.

“talking about God and meeting God are not the same thing.”⁶⁸ Palamas is clear that *theōsis* is something impossible if seen only in the context of common human measures: “To possess God in one’s self, and be purely related to God, and be commingled with the pure and unadulterated light, as far as it is attainable for human nature, belongs to the sphere of the impossible.”⁶⁹

However, in order for *theōsis* to be achieved, it is essential that the human person: a) be purified through virtue, b) “go out of himself or, better, beyond himself,” c) “abandon sensation, as well as every sensible thing,” and d) “be elevated above thoughts and intellection and knowledge derived from these.”⁷⁰ Then “we are totally given over to the immaterial and intellectual activity of prayer and receive the ignorance which surpasses all knowledge, and are filled in it [i.e., ignorance] with the superior splendor of the Spirit.” In this state, “we will be invisibly seeing the prizes of the nature of the immortal world” of Paradise.⁷¹ The goal of spiritual contemplation is “the mysterious communion and inexpressible vision (ὄρασις) of the Mystery, the mystical and ineffable contemplation and taste (γεῦσις) of the eternal light.”⁷² Of note here is the usage of such strong words as ὄρασις and γεῦσις, which show the importance that Palamas places on the activation of our spiritual senses, so that one may see and taste God.

Conclusion

I have tried to show that Hesychast theology, as expressed during the Hesychast Controversy, does not disregard or undervalue the human body. On the contrary, as demonstrated from the relevant teaching of St. Gregory Palamas, hesychasm entirely respects and even exalts the human body.⁷³ A basic explanation

⁶⁸ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.8-12, 453 (201.19-23): περί Θεοῦ γάρ τι λέγειν καὶ Θεῶ συντυγχάνειν οὐχὶ ταῦτόν.

⁶⁹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.20-22, 453 (203.2-4): Θεὸν δ’ ἐν ἑαυτῷ κτήσασθαι καὶ Θεῶ καθαρῶς συγγενέσθαι καὶ τῷ ἀκραίφνεστάτῳ φωτὶ κραθῆναι, καθ’ ὅσον ἐφικτόν ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει, τῶν ἀδυνάτων ἐστίν.

⁷⁰ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.23-26, 453 (203.4-8): εἰ μὴ πρὸς τῇ δι’ ἀρετῆς καθάρσει καὶ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἕξω, μᾶλλον δὲ ὑπέρανω, γενούμεθα, καταλιπόντες μὲν πᾶν ὅ τι τῶν αἰσθητῶν μετὰ τῆς αἰσθήσεως, ὑπερρθέντες λογισμῶν καὶ διανοιῶν καὶ τῆς διὰ τούτων γνώσεως.

⁷¹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.26-30, 453 (203.8-12): ὅλοι δὲ γενόμενοι τῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ νοεράς κατὰ τὴν προσευχὴν ἐνεργείας, καὶ τυχόντες τῆς ὑπὲρ τὴν γνῶσιν ἀγνοίας, καὶ πλησθέντες ἐν αὐτῇ τῆς τοῦ Πνεύματος ὑπερφραοῦς ἀγλαΐας, ὡς ἀθανάτου κόσμου γέρα φύσεως ἀοράτως καθορᾶν.

⁷² Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.9-11, 454 (203.23-25): ἡ κρυφία τοῦ κρυφίου μετουσία καὶ ὄρασις ἀνέκφραστος, ἡ μυστικὴ καὶ ἀπόρρητος τοῦ αἰωνίου φωτὸς θεωρία τε καὶ γεῦσις.

⁷³ There is also another very important dimension of Palamas’ ‘theology of the body’: he regards human beings as greater than the angels, as regards the image of God, due to the body. But space does not allow me to offer a detailed examination of his relevant approach here. For an

for this is that Palamas saw the need to defend the body against certain negative attitudes towards it in his epoch. In particular, his opponents were attacking the claim of the hesychast monks that the human body participated in prayer and in divine communion, and that the Trinity was revealed to human beings through the uncreated divine light (*theophanies*). For instance, Barlaam could not accept the participation of the body in prayer.⁷⁴ But these approaches, in turn, entailed the danger of undervaluing the body. Thus, for Palamas it is a point of fact that the human body has a central role in prayer and in the theophanies. When the body is seen through the prism of God's will, then it is our friend, and not our enemy. As he writes in a very important passage, remembering the words of the Apostle Paul:

Brother, do you not hear the words of the Apostle, "Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within us" (1 Cor 6:19), and again, "We are the house of God" (Heb 3:6), as God Himself confirms when He says, "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God" (Lv 26:12; 2 Cor 6:16)? So, what sane person would grow indignant at the thought that his intellect dwells in that whose nature it is to become the dwelling place of God [i.e., the body]? How can it be that God at the beginning caused the intellect to inhabit the body? Did even He do so wrongly? Rather, brother, such views befit the *heretics*, who declare that the body is *evil* and *created by the devil*. As for us, we regard it as evil for the intellect to be [or: be caught up] in *material thoughts* [or: to dwell on *fleshly thoughts*], but not for it to be in the body, since the body is *not evil* [*in itself*].⁷⁵

analysis, see Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*, 87–114. Cf. Palamas, *Capita 150*, 62.1–12, ed. Sinkewicz, *Saint Gregory Palamas. The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), 154–156 (slightly modified) (= *PS*, vol. 5, 70.29–71.9): Οὐ κατὰ τοῦτο μόνον μαῖλλον τῶν ἀγγέλων ὁ ἄνθρωπος κατ' εἰκόνα πεποιήται Θεοῦ, ὅτι συνεκτικὴν τε καὶ ζωοποιὸν ἔχει δύναμιν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἄρχειν. ἔστι γὰρ ἐν τῇ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς ψυχῆς φύσει, τὸ μὲν ἡγεμονικόν τε καὶ ἀρχικόν, τὸ δὲ φύσει δουλεῦόν τε καὶ ὑπήκοον [...] ὁ μὲντοι Θεὸς διὰ τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀρχικόν καὶ τῆς γῆς ἀπάσης παρέσχε τὴν κυριότητα. ἀγγελοι δὲ συνεζυγμένον σῶμα οὐκ ἔχουσιν, ὡς καὶ ὑπεζυγμένον ἔχειν τῷ νῷ ("Not in this respect alone has man been created in the image of God more so than the angels, namely, in that he possesses within himself both a sustaining and life-giving power, but also as regards dominion. Contained in the nature of our soul there is on the one hand a faculty of governance and dominion and on the other hand one of natural servitude and obedience [...] because of the faculty of dominion within us God gave us lordship over all the earth. But angels do not have a body joined to them so that it is subject to the intellect").

⁷⁴ Cf. Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*, 112–114, 133–136.

⁷⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,2,1.1–12, 393 (75.8–20), trans. Gendle, 41, and in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, 332 (modified; my emphasis): Ἀδελφέ, οὐκ ἀκούεις τοῦ Ἀποστόλου λέγοντος ὅτι "τὰ σώματα ἡμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἐστίν," καὶ πάλιν ὅτι "οἶκος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν," ὡς καὶ ὁ Θεὸς λέγει ὅτι "ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῶν Θεός;" "Ὁ τοίνυν

What now remains to contemporary theology is to bring all this richness and beauty concerning the body into dialogue with current events and the issues of today. For instance, what could all this mean to the ears of a modern person regarding matters such as the debate concerning *Roe v. Wade*, or other current important topics, as mentioned in the beginning of this article? Can the Hesychast theology of the human body have something fresh and interesting to offer in all this, and how exactly would this be achieved? I hope that my contribution provides some useful elements in this direction.

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- _____. *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*. Edited and translated by Robert Sinkewicz. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988.
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οἰκητήριον πέφυκε γίνεσθαι Θεοῦ, πῶς ἂν ἀνάξιοπαθῆσαι τις νοῦν ἔχων ἐνοικίσαι τὸν οἰκεῖον νοῦν αὐτῷ; Πῶς δὲ καὶ ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐνῶκισε τῷ σώματι τὸν νοῦν; Ἄρα καὶ αὐτὸς κακῶς ἐποίησε; Τοὺς τοιοῦτους λόγους, ἀδελφέ, τοῖς αἰρετικοῖς ἀρμόσει λέγειν, οἱ πονηρὸν καὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ πλάσμα τὸ σῶμα λέγουσιν. Ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐν τοῖς σωματικοῖς φρονήμασιν εἶναι τὸν νοῦν οἴομεθα κακόν, ἐν τῷ σώματι δὲ οὐχὶ κακόν, ἐπεὶ μηδὲ τὸ σῶμα πονηρὸν.

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