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# Seeing the Light of God in the Current Context of De-Christianization and De-sacralization. A Missionary Perspective

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## **Abstract**

Christianity is the Way, the Truth and the Life, according to the word of the Savior Christ, which means that authentic living, springing from the confessed knowledge of God, is God's call addressed to each believer. The contemplation or sight of the Glory of God is a spiritual landmark on man's journey towards the Resurrection; it is not an end in itself, but a stepping-stone on the way to our salvation. It can be hijacked by harmful phenomena such as de-sacralization or de-Christianization, both of which are emanations of secularization. Through God's Preaching, man can improve himself spiritually, even in a context hostile to religious perfection, marked by phenomena such as de-Christianization or de-Sacralization.

## **Keywords**

Christianity, Orthodoxy, de-sacralization, de-Christianization, secularization, mystical contemplation, spiritual vision, glory of God, mission of the Church, neo-religiosity, religious pluralism.

## **I. Introduction**

The contemporary period we are going through is marked (unfortunately) by the effects of the de-sacralization phenomenon, a phenomenon which is

strongly connected with the one of de-Christianization. The effects of these axiologically-paradigmatic changes focus especially on man's spiritual dimension. The focus is - and hidden between brackets - on man's *telos*, in fact on its dispossession of meaning, signification and calling. The two malefic phenomena mentioned ahead affect man's entire dichotomic being: both man's bodily look and his spiritual one. In other words, both man's psycho-somatic dimension as well as the pneumatic one of the one who is rightly named as - if he fulfils his call from God - "the garland of godly creation". The two dimensions form *the image of God* in man, sending to man's personal vocation, *the image* being, in reality, *the Trinitarian seal* the Fathers of the Church speak about, which comprises alike, both *σωμα*, and *ψυχη* and *πνευμα*. Thus, Saint Maximus the Confessor's theology, and especially Saint Gregory Palama's theology speak about *seeing God*, more precisely seeing *the glory of God*, which is the contemplation of the Taborist Light, unequally theologized on by Saint Gregory Palama. We understand, therefore that to this ecstatic state the whole being of man contributes (including *σωμα*), which gives an intrinsic value to the human body and to the whole visible creation of God, even if, within the framework of Eastern theology, there sprung up (under the baleful influence of secularism, in a reductionist manner) both an intellectualist direction - based on the mind (*νοος*), and a materialist direction - founded on senses. That is why, it is important to see to what extent seeing the glory of God (seeing the Light) may be reached within the current context of de-Christianization and desacralization.

## **II. The Contemporary Context of Christian Living. General Guide Marks**

The new vision over religion severely denatures the relation of religion with the Church, in the sense that it delimitates the religious phenomenon from the Church - perceived and seen only as a cultic secularized institution. Thus, religion is presented as being the expression of liberty, of the "free" will options of secularized man, while the Church is perceived as an obsolete reality, which constitutes itself as an obstacle in the way of

contemporary man freedom. On the other hand, the Church is considered as being the expression of a totalitarianism of a religious type, the religious unity promoted by the Church being ranked as an attempt upon freedom of expression – which leads to religious pluralism. And so it happens that, at present, in the entire West (Western Europe and America) one may speak of a real invasion of all kinds of “religions” and Asiatic oriental trends which have been attracting millions of partisans for some teachings and beliefs of oriental origin. Therefore, perspectives like that of Rudyard Kipling, who considered that the Orient is Orient and the West is West, and the two ones will never meet, proves to be completely mistaken given the current situation, when religious syncretism between the East and the West exists as a reality and as a fundamental coordinate of the religious phenomenon. Hence, traditional religiosity is replaced by a neo-religious phenomenon, which proliferates rapidly and alarming. This proliferation is based on the multi-cultural dimension of contemporary society but also on its secularization and on the individualism promoted by post-modernity. Consequently, the spirit of fragmentation is found, both culturally and religiously and is sustained as well by the social turbulences or by the periods of prolonged transition with catastrophic effects on all plans, but especially socially. Accordingly, the neo-religious groups exert a social aggression on person, given the fact that people, predominantly, recruit their followers from social classes with low financial possibilities (Jehovah’s Witnesses, Baptists, Adventists, Pentecostals etc.) but also from social classes especially rich (Scientology, Moon, Transcendental Meditation etc.)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For an image as clear as possible on the sectarian phenomenon one should look up: Nicolae ACHIMESCU, *Noile Mișcări religioase (New Religious Movements)*, Ed. Limes, Cluj-Napoca, 2012; Gheorghe PETRARU, *Secte neo-protestante și noi mișcări religioase în România (Neo-Protestant Sects and New Religious Movements in Romania)*, Ed. Vasiliana ‘98 (Publishing House), Iași, 20006; Gheorghe PETRARU, *Ortodoxie și prozelitism (Orthodoxy and Proselytist Trends)*, Editura Trinitas (Publishing House), Iași, 2000; Gheorghe ISTODOR, *Fenomenul sectar “creștin” (The “Christian” Sectarian Phenomenon)*, Editura Do-minor (Publishing House), București, 2009; Gheorghe ISTODOR, *Fenomenul sectar necreștin (The Non-Christian Sectarian Phenomenon)*, Editura Do-minor (P.H.), București, 2009.

The lack of an important catechetical dimension within the Orthodox Church, makes the intellectual young person to be tempted by the neo-religious “offers” because they are characterized by novelty and exotism, moreover, this one, lacking the necessary religious training, does not understand that, in fact, this “offer” is, in fact, a pseudo-religious one. The lack of religious education from the family, and Church, shapes around the young person certain reflexes and certain reserves involving the Church and Its teaching. Altogether, the young person perceives the traditional pejoratively, like an unacceptable, obsolete reality. To all these, one may add curiosity specific to age, a certain incompatibility between the teaching of the Church and its “values”, to which there is to be added a certain native tendency of “spiritual” search, which leads him and tempts him towards new forms of “religiosity”. Wherefore, an important aspect is represented by the neo-religious cultic approach, which do not force the young man – at least during a first phase – to any constraint of believing in the existence of a personal God and which feed trends of autonomy through different pseudo-teachings which expose the young person in the front, as author of his own “liberation” or “salvation”.

To all these, one may add the profound spiritual crisis from the post-modern society – as effect of some more and more pronounced tension between tradition and modernity -, doubled by a relativization of authentic Christian values, by a de-valorisation of the family as fundamentally Christian institution and by a malevolent conflict between generations, especially between parents and children. Thus, the religious future of mankind is uncertain, due to the inclination of post-modern man towards all kinds of pseudo-religious substitutes which outline a predisposition to reject the Personal Living God of the Revelation and to accept some uniform religiosity of secularized type, which leads to de-Christianization and de-sacralization.

## **II.1. De-Christianization – A Noxious Phenomenon of Christian Evolution**

In postmodernism, man is characterized by the desire to substitute God, using science and technique in order to find answers to fundamental

questions about life and its origin, other answers than those existing in the divine Revelation and which are taught by the Church. For example, in the CERN Labs in Geneva, it has been attempted to discover the so-called “God’s particle”, a formula through which, physicists say, the world was born<sup>2</sup>. One may speak about the very progressive de-Christianization of the West, which started to emerge and develop at the end of the Medieval Era, then, it manifested itself through a recess in the religious practice, encouraged also by the development of science and technique during the last two centuries. De-Christianization of the West has produced slowly and insensitively, existing a convergence with deliberate, systemic and brutal de-Christianization in Europe, starting with the Illuminism. Hence, European cultural guide-marks have stopped any contact with the vivid sources of Christianity, in parallel existing tendencies to rationalize Christianity and at the same time, to compromise it by making reference to the European religious wars and by exacerbating the conflict between intellectuals and clergy; the starting period was Illuminism and the “perfecting” period was post-modernism, if we take into consideration the fact that, in our epoque, the de-Christianization process found great exponents in Freud and Marx<sup>3</sup>.

Socially speaking, de-Christianization affected firstly the intellectuals and science people, later on this was also found between workmen cliques, more related to industrialization and urbanization, all this process being possible in the perspective of secularization, to which secularized theology makes reference.<sup>4</sup> Linguistically speaking, de-Christianization rather signifies the distancing of Christians from the Church, and to a smaller extent losing faith<sup>5</sup>, even if proliferation – at epistemological level

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<sup>2</sup> Leon LEDERMAN, Dick TERESI. *The God Particle: If the Universe Is the Answer, What Is the Question?*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 2006, p. 362.

<sup>3</sup> Nicolae STROESCU STĂNIȘOARA, “Tineretul și provocările timpului” (“The Youth and Challenges of the Times”), Conference held in December, 2006, at the Chapel of the Orthodox Diocese of München, München, November 2, 1980, in: *Convorbiri Literare (Literary Conversations)*, March, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> See: Simona NICOARA, “Controverse, opinii și dezbateri despre profilul secularizării” (“Controversies, Opinions and Debates in the Field of Secularization”), in: *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, No. 10, 2005, p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> See: Bernard PLONGERON, “La dechristianisation a-t-elle une histoire? Note pour

– of some typology of pragmatic and empirical science, mingled with ideological scientism, camouflaged and presented as science, oriented the modern man towards a voluptuous search of hedonist activities, in exchange for the interest for religious ones, transforming henceforward man into an insensitive entity, refractory to the issue of God<sup>6</sup>. To all these, one may add the post-modern manifestation, characterized by a weakening of religious life of most practician Christians, a manifestation which explains the emergence and proliferation of the de-Christianization phenomenon<sup>7</sup>. Last but not least, de-Christianization also includes a real crisis in language, in the form of an incapacity of using words, which may represent the profound sense of reality in the life of modern man; therefore, words lost their fidelity in relation with the reality they make reference to, being the expression of transforming the modern society from traditional to sceptical, the consequences being in the sphere of man's impossibility to face the issue of the meaning of life and of his own destiny, he, finding himself in front of these as completely disarmed and within the most profound uncertainty<sup>8</sup>.

## **II.2. De-Sacralization – A Direct Consequence of Losing Communion with God**

Secularized post-modern society leads to a quasi-total de-sacralization of contemporary man and at the same time to a relativization of his values

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une réflexion méthodologique”, in : *Christianisation, dechristianisation, Actes de la Neuvième Rencontre d'Histoire Religieuse tenue à Fontenrand les 3, 4 et 5 octobre 1985 organisé par le Centre de Recherches d'Histoire Religieuse et d'Histoire des Idées (Université d'Angers), le Centre Culturel de l'Onest (Abbaye Royale de Fontenrand) et la Société Française d'Histoire des Idées et d'Histoire Religieuse*, Press de l'Université d'Angers, 1986, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> “Editoriale: Il problema di Dio oggi”, in *La Civita Cattolica*, 1996, I, pp. 427-428; Teofil TIA, “Fotografia crizei valorilor: descreștinarea Europei contemporane. Analize și terapii pastorale”, in: *Spiritualitate și consumism în Europa unită*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2004, p. 425.

<sup>7</sup> See in this sense: J. De Viguier, “Christianisation, déchristianisation, rechristianisation. Esquisse historique en guise d'introduction”, in: *Christianisation et déchristianisation...*, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Teofil TIA, “Fotografierea crizei valorilor...” , pp. 427-428.

(we find ourselves in front of a reductionism which creates confusion). Starting ever since modern times, the Church has been excluded from the public space, it was not recognized the competence of an objective public discourse, and religiosity was reduced to the mere private, subjective space of man. The de-sacralization phenomenon or the contemporary man's tendency to free the profane from under the authority of the sacred is well represented by secularization<sup>9</sup>, or in other words said, it led to the process of secularization. Materialism touched on all the spheres of contemporary life, so that "the de-sacralization of social structures and of the political order are realities whose percentual weight and amplitude cannot be hidden"<sup>10</sup>, realities which firstly affect, from a missiological perspective, the relation of society with the Church.

De-sacralization is a phenomenon derived from the paradigms of modernism and post-modernism, having a strong impact on values and Christian life<sup>11</sup>, representing a real danger<sup>12</sup>. Wherefore it is reached "the lack of the Creator in the world"<sup>13</sup>, and "faith in God and in His Supernatural Revelation is banned from all fields of activity as being anachronic; faith becomes irrelevant, it is de-objectified, the creed becomes *a religious opinion* or *a religious feeling*"<sup>14</sup>. Western society manifested a real revolt against the institution of the Church, and this thing happened after a period

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<sup>9</sup> Mihai HIMCINSCHI, "Secularizarea - o problemă contemporană" ("Secularization – A Contemporary Issue"), in: *Revista Teologică*, 93 (2011) 2, p. 121.

<sup>10</sup> Mihai HIMCINSCHI, *Misiologie și Ecumenism, Partea I, Curs an III – sesiunea februarie-martie (Missiology and Ecumenism, Part I. A Course for the IIIrd Academic Year – Session of Exams February-March)*, Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” Alba Iulia, Facultatea de Teologie Ortodoxă, p. 130.

<sup>11</sup> Gheorghe ISTODOR, *Introducere în Misiologia ortodoxă (An Introduction into the Orthodox Missiology)*, Editura Do-Minor, București, 2009, p. 255.

<sup>12</sup> Gheorghe ISTODOR, *Iubirea creștină și provocările contemporane (Christian Love and Contemporary Challenges)*, Editura Sigma, București, 2006, p. 115.

<sup>13</sup> Gheorghe ISTODOR, *Misiunea creștină ca activitate permanentă și practică (Christian Mission as Permanent Practical Activity)*, Editura Sigma, București, 2006, p. 228.

<sup>14</sup> Gheorghe ISTODOR, *Dialogul dintre științe și religie din perspectiva Misiunii Bisericii (A Dialogue between Sciences and Religion from the perspective of Church Mission)*, Editura Do-Minor, București, 2010, p. 79.



of religious wars. At the end of XIII century there were proclaimed “The Declarations of the Human Rights” which, undoubtedly, have Christian roots, and yet, they oppose the institution of the Church, the Reform being the one which “started” the de-sacralization process of power, European modernity being born out of a double opposition: that of God’s “rights” against man and that of man’s “rights” against God. The consequences were devastating: tempted with the Prometheans’ fate, the “free” human creation is rising against “the moral God”, conceived as a “gendarme-God” or sadistic and emasculating father<sup>15</sup>.

De-sacralization – within the context of modernism – supposes a so-called evolution in the political, social or cultural domains, the immediate consequence being religious lapsing, reduced to a single department within the field of culture. From a strictly sociological perspective, there starts the accreditation of a relation between the de-sacralization phenomenon and social mutations, relevant in this sense remaining Acquaviva, which does not relate de-sacralization to certain contingent factors, but to the above mentioned “evolution” of modern society on the one hand, and on the other hand to being the result of some precise characteristics of psychology and of the human cognitive process<sup>16</sup>. Not in the least, relevant remains the point of view of the Russian Bishop Ignatie Briancianinov (1807-1867), who underlines, suggestively, the manner in which man reached a free fall within his existence, due to the temptations offered by de-sacralization, human sciences – an expression of man’s autonomy in front of God – being responsible with the estrangement of man from God, by presenting the divine Spirit as being without necessity and use to man, the conclusion of the Saint being terrible for man: “the light of men united with *the light* of devils, forming man’s agility (human

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<sup>15</sup> See: Olivier CLEMENT, “Creștinătate, secularizare și Europa” (“Christianity, Secularization and Europe”), in: Ioan I. ICAȚ JR., Germano MARANI, *Gândirea Socială a Bisericii. Fundamente – documente – analiza – perspective (Church Social Thinking: Foundations – Documents – Analysis – Perspectives)*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2002, p. 509.

<sup>16</sup> Teofil TIA, *Reîncreștinarea Europei? Teologia religiei în misiologia și pastorală occidentală contemporană*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2003, p. 83.



wisdom), which is strange to God, destroying man, in this manner, with the pride that resembles the devil's (I Cor. 3, 17-18)"<sup>17</sup>.

### III. Seeing God - A Soteriological Meaning of the Spiritual Man

The teaching about seeing God through contemplation is central in the mystical theology of the Eastern Church, the Fathers of the Church being the ones who developed this fundamental teaching. The Revelation of the Scriptures is composed of two series of texts focused on the vision of God, which seem contradictory and seem to exclude themselves mutually: thus, we find texts which comprise a formal negation of any vision of God, Who is Invisible, unknowing, inaccessible to created beings, nevertheless there are other texts as well which encourage us to look for the "face" of God<sup>18</sup> and promise us that we could see God the way He is. In the first category we have the texts of Exodus 33,23; I Timothy 6,16; John 1,18, and in the second group we find the texts of Genesis 32, 24-30; Exodus 33,11; Deuteronomy 34,10; Job 19, 25-27; I John 3,2; I Corinthians 13,12<sup>19</sup>. Hence, God is, as a result, both Invisible and Visible, according to the biblical Revelation. This seemingly and ambivalent contradiction between the Visible and Invisible God, is approached by the patristic literature in several ways: 1) this problematic is ranged within the context of the notion of God's essence and energies; 2) approaching the Visible - Invisible theme includes the Christological dimension, and 3) approaching the issue in discussion presents the eschatological perspective. With regard to the first modality, the Fathers showed that God is Invisible by His nature, but He can be seen through His energies, glory (Light), kindness and revelations etc. This teaching was developed by Saint Gregory of Nyssa and Saint

<sup>17</sup> IGNATIE BRIANCIANINOV, *Cuvânt despre om (A Word about Man)*, Editura Bunavestire, Bacău, 2001, pp. 76-77.

<sup>18</sup> ORIGEN, *Peri Arhon (Despre principii)*, coll. *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* vol 8, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1982, p. 131.

<sup>19</sup> ORIGEN, *Peri Arhon*, p. 131.

John Chrysostom. In relation to the second modality, it is stated by the Fathers that God is Invisible in His essence but He reveals Himself in the human body of the Son. These aspects are theologically valorised by Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Saint Irenaeus, Saint Athanasius the Great<sup>20</sup>, Saint John Chrysostom or Saint John Theodore the Studite. As for the third modality, there is an accent on the fact that God is Invisible in the present life but He will be seen by the righteous ones in the future kingdom of heaven. This aspect is met in Job 19, 25-27, I John 3,2, I Corinthians 13,12, and at Saint Isaac the Syrian, Saint Symeon the New Theologian or Saint Theodore the Studite. There is a fourth modality to explain the contradiction the Visible-Invisible God by placing it within the context of the idea of soul purification, which leads to deification; this notion is common with Teophilus of Antioch or Saint Gregory of Nyssa<sup>21</sup>.

There is a unity of thought with the Fathers when taking into discussion the subject above, and so it happens that Saint Symeon tried to found his teaching on seeing God in the patristic tradition, claiming that all the Holy Fathers before him have shared on the same teaching about *the seeing of the Holy Trinity as light*. Saint Symeon does not disconfirm the passages denying the possibility of seeing God and states that the notion of God's invisibility is one of the important components of the teachings of the Holy Father on seeing God in which the intellect sees what is invisible. At the same time, he mentions that God is Invisible for those who have their "spiritual eyes" closed and that they are not reborn yet; hence there is an attempt to appeal to traditionally solve the problem of God's Invisibility, namely God is to be Seen only with the "new eyes" of a human person, renewed and transfigured. As a result, the Saint states, in apophatic terms, that people see in an invisible manner the ineffable beauty of God Himself.

At the same time, Saint Symeon understands seeing God as a consequence of man's deification through Christ, the Christological dimension from the theme of seeing God being as important for Saint

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<sup>20</sup> ATANASIE CEL MARE, *Trei cuvinte împotriva arienilor (Three Words against the Arians)*, coll. *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* vol. 15, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1987, p. 258.

<sup>21</sup> Ion BRIA, *Dicționar de Teologie Ortodoxă (Dictionary of Orthodox Theology)*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al BOR, București, 1994, 318.

Symeon, as for many of his predecessors. As a consequence, seeing God is often described by Saint Symeon as seeing Christ, the vision of Christ not being marked by solipsism; He shows Himself together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Yet, there is an obvious difference between Saint Symeon and Saint Gregory of Nazianzus in the problematic of seeing the Holy Trinity, the first claims that the vision takes place in the current life, the second claims that the vision is situated in an eschatological perspective. Nevertheless, we have to mention that the eschatological dimension of seeing God is always present with Saint Symeon, but is never limited only to the future life. This aspect represents one of the elements for which Saint Symeon was perceived by his contemporaries as teaching erroneously.

In what contemplating the glory of God is concerned, one must have in mind firstly the etymological dimension: the Hebrew term “Kabod Yahweh”, where “Kabod” is a term used both in the current lay Hebrew but also in the Holy Scripture and it means on the one hand “to be heavy”, “to weigh heavily”, on the other hand it would send to “the honour” or “esteem” as the result of a state of “valour/ weight”, to which man would give importance<sup>22</sup>. We must take into consideration the importance of the semantic mutation of “Kabod” as well, which places into strong connection the exterior manifestation (which is required to be honoured) with the interior of the subject as spring or sustenance of the “ad extra” manifestation; the Glory (Kabod) is not a reality exterior to God (Yahweh), or a created product, but it is the love that springs from the uncreated abyss of His Being and which exceeds the created limits of time and space, so that man can have a share in it. In other words, God’s Glory or His manifestation towards the created beings has a single purpose, the sharing of men with It, so that His Glory becomes theirs<sup>23</sup>.

The Old Covenant anthropomorphic apparitions were not simple angel epiphanies but they had as subject the Son of God before the Incarnation, Who, in order to fulfil the Father’s economy, manifested Himself visibly

<sup>22</sup> *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, Volumul VI, Beauchesne, Paris, 1965, col. 422.

<sup>23</sup> John S. ROMANIDIS, “The Sickness of Religion and its Cure” as well as “Augustine Unknowingly Rejects the Doctrine of the Ecumenical Councils Concerning the Old Testament Lord of Glory Incarnate and His Vatican and Protestant Followers Do the Same”, taken from the site [www.romanity.org](http://www.romanity.org). accessed on 22.03.2024.

under a “human” form, or “eikon” Whom the Patriarchs and Prophets met and through Whom they were glorified. Therefore, there is a need to establish relations between elements specific to the divine manifestations within the immanent plan and the divine uncreated Hypostases, relations that will have a finite assertion once with the palamite dispute on the topic of the uncreated Light and man’s participation to It. We may understand the importance given by the relationship between “Kabod Yahweh” and the second Person of the Holy Trinity – the divine Logos. Even if the Son sometimes receives (either in the Holy Scriptures or in the Patristic literature) the name of “Glory/Light” this does not exclude the initial meaning of the Hebrew term of “ad extra” manifestation of Yahweh, of His real presence within the created plan via “the Glory/Light”. If for the Jewish theology “Kabod” could have represented at a certain moment a reality extrinsic to Yahweh, with the role to conserve the transcendence of the Divine or even a Hypostatic presence, other than Yahweh, with the same role for the Christian theology, the way we find it exposed in the New Testament and with the Holy Fathers, “the Glory/the Light” is altogether a name for the second Person in the Holy Trinity and for the Hypostatic manifestation of the Trinitarian God, Whom the created rational hypostases can find themselves in communion with. Within this relationship between Christ and “the Glory/the Light” one may discover the real meaning of the divine works which do not represent an impersonal reality, in a break from the divine Being, but they have the role to make the divine Hypostases divinely sensible to the believer. Therefore, the enypostasiated<sup>24</sup> “Glory/Light”, is found in the Hypostasis of the Logos: “the Glory/the Light” is Christ, not because we have to deal with a single hypostatic reality but because it is Christ’s, because through “the Glory/the Light” we are filled with Christ and it is Christ’s because it does not identify itself with His Hypostasis, also not being separated from Him, because it springs from the three hypostatic Being of God. We are filled with Christ as reality, we are filled with “Glory”, the energy being none other than Christ-the Glory/the Light through which He makes Himself present in ourselves as non-interference, unchanged, undivided and unseparated.

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<sup>24</sup> John S. ROMANIDIS, “The Sickness of Religion and its Cure”, [www.romanity.org](http://www.romanity.org), accessed on 22.03.2024..

This Christocentric characteristic of divine perfection does not lead to a marginalization of the Christian with the other divine Hypostases – the way Saint Athanasius, Saint Basil and the other Fathers showed in century IV -, but it evidences both the importance of the Incarnation of the Son of God – as Principle of our divine perfection, and the *perichoretic* character of the divine Hypostases, not only in the plan of theological living, but also in their economic work. Hence, even if the Spirit is “the seal” or “Chrismation” with the divine Glory, the One anointing us and sealing us is the Son, only in this sense do we understand the real meaning of the moment of Transfiguration on the Mount of Tabor, this being the real support and theological argument for the afterwards palamite teaching and wherefore understanding why the Christians felt this tight connection, up to the identification between Christ with “the Glory/ the Light” ever since the beginning – a fact which led them to deification, to being filled with glory -, even if the terminological mentioning of this relationship appeared later on.

There is a need to mention the fact that this dimension of the relationship with God which focuses on seeing and living in the divine glory *hic et Nunc* and not only in the eschatological plan will be highlighted in the Pauline writings as well as in the other apostolic epistles. For the Holy Apostle Paul, “the Glory” surely is not only the state of the eschaton, the man being created to live within this glory of God in order to partake to “the richness of his glory” (Rom 9,23), and yet the sin deprived man of this primordial glory. God’s glory is the very “place” of the kingdom of God, and distancing from this “Glory” is the very “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thessalonians 1,9). Last but not least this “Glory” is everlasting (II Corinthians 4,7; II Timothy 2,10; I Peter 5,10), for everlasting is the spring of glory and we are called to live in it eternally (I Peter 5, 10) and even to see with our own eyes (II Peter 1, 16). Having in mind everything which is witnessed, we may say that God’s “Glory” is and represents a deifying photo epiphany, speaking of an identity between the light of the Divine “Glory” and the works of the tri-Hypostatic Being<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Alexander GOLITZIN, *Mistagogia - experiența lui Dumnezeu în ortodoxie (The Mystagogy – Experiencing God in Orthodoxy)*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 1998, pp. 184-267.

#### **IV. Missionary Precepts on the Contemplation of the Light of God, Given the Conditions of De-Christianization and De-sacralization**

The way we could observe, starting with modernity, man and the society distanced from the Church, distanced from Christ, the Saviour and from His soteriological teaching preserved within the Church. Even if the reality of de-Christianization was a way too much rejected, yet, we have to admit it within the context of an existence marked by positivism, emphatically named *post-Christianism*. Equally, starting with modernity, a real paradigm of *de-sacralization* took over, as man's manner of thinking and living outside the communion with God; this phenomenon progressively insinuated starting with the Renaissance – when symbols of Greek-Roman paganism made way within the public space, next to the Christian symbols, with a clear tendency of replacing them, it continued with the Illuminism, which promoted man's autonomy in front of the Creator, thus founding radical anthropocentrism, it atomized, through the Reform, the Church unity and it culminated with the two anti-Christian “revolutions” – the French one and the Bolshevik one -, which imposed militant scientific atheism in man's life in the name of reason<sup>26</sup>, the two processes continuing at the start of millennium III by exacerbating atheism, materialism and naturalism, validated by scientism, without taking into consideration the existence of mysteries, which exceed the sphere of the visible world<sup>27</sup>.

We have to make an important statement, both phenomena have caused which spring from the interior of the Church, either we speak of God's servants or the believers; thus, the inadequate attitudes of the clergy are responsible of proliferating the two phenomena, as well as the believers' indifferentism, caused by the lack of a catechetical programme – necessary to be assumed and implemented by Christ's Church. Through the synthetic presentation of the two phenomena we understand the

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<sup>26</sup> Mihai HIMCINSCHI, *Misiune și mărturie. Aspecte misionare în societatea actuală (Mission and Witnessing. Missionary Aspects in the Contemporary Society)*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2008, pp. 7-8.

<sup>27</sup> Gheorghe ISTODOR, *Misiunea creștină...*, p. 229.

existence of a framework really hostile to any forms of spirituality with the contemporary man, we speak of a reality, as the contemporary man's predisposition, to relate to God and His Church from the positions of pseudo-religious nihilism, indifferentism or syncretism, all three being, as a matter of fact, symptoms of the quasi-installation of *de-Christianization* and *de-sacralization* in the life of the nowadays Christian. The question that rises is in strong connection with the relation between spiritual life – whose fundamental expression remains the contemplation of the Glory of God – and the “post-Christian” reality determined by the proliferation of phenomena which are noxious to salvation like the *de-Christianization* and *de-sacralization*.

No matter the historical period covered, God's calling is sub-scribed to the ecclesiastical man's pneumatic life, the stake – dogmatically and missionary speaking - being the avoidance, by all means, of man's decay into the state of being only “a body”, a state that generated (as is well-known) Noah's flood, a punishment meant to stand against man's passions at war with His Creator. Starting with modernity and continuing with post-modernity, the man become autonomous in relation to God gravitates between two states: of revenge towards God or of going astray in relation to Him, the first state being determined, among others, also by the two analysed phenomena within this study – the *de-Christianization* and *de-sacralization*. The de-Christianized and de-sacralised revolted man goes through a sinuous road, outside the calling and communion with God, his fundamental border stones being the proclamation of “the death of God” by Nietzsche and the reality of “the death of the religious man” proclaimed by the „homo deus” of transhumanism. In front of the degeneration of modern man, a state which may compromise the being, his call and his condition remain his salvation. The providence which springs from God's Love towards man, is a reality which makes possible man's spiritual life and can lead to his salvation. Therefore, through God's work, there is the possibility of man's deification, the contemplation of the Glory of God – from theory or myth, becoming a theandric reality, which defies and cures the whole content of the two noxious analysed phenomena.



## V. Conclusions

The after-post-modern period we are passing through makes topical the Pauline distinction between “the somatic man” and “the pneumatic man”; thus, a world which is more and more autonomous in relation with God and overwhelmed with the phenomenon of *de-sacralization* and *de-Christianization*, cannot recognize, support or promote the spiritual man. Seeing *the Light of God* in a world marked by pseudo-religious materiality, hedonism and indifferentism may be ranked – rather – as the manifestation of a sick mysticism, due to the fact that the *de-sacralization* phenomena amputates man’s *pneumatic* dimension, which leads to the initiation of real and noxious process of *de-Christianization*. There is a causal connection between the de-sacralization phenomenon and the de-Christianization one, mentioning that they are not happening at the same time, nor are they successive. De-Christianization is described within the context of a post-Christian “era”, which means, in other words, either the return to the pluri-pseudo-religious pagan period – marked by occultism, esoterism and libertinism -, or the modern and post-modern nihilistic period, characterized by a virulent anti-theism, with consequential effects on man and his spiritual life. In conclusion, the Church, through its mission, is trying to conserve man’s religiosity – as ontological condition -, in a world which develops more and more indifferent adversity towards the authentic religious problem of contemporary man.