

Summary

This paper was done starting from the experience and the love showed by Saint Symeon the New Theologian in his attempts to prove that the feeling and sight of God are possible when meeting with Him in His Divine Light.

The interest for the term "Divine Light" gave him an impulse to devote himself to this spiritual theological field not only at the level of theory, but mainly through personal and live experience in the relationship with God, through repentance and prayer, asceticism and study, advised and guided by his spiritual father, Saint Symeon the Pious.

Through his life, his works and disciples, Saint Symeon the New Theologian opened, in the eleventh century, a period of spiritual renewal and redefinition of biblical themes and patristic terms in an effervescent light designed to awaken the spirit of his era to the live experience of knowledge and relation with God.

Born in year 949¹ in Galatea, Paphlagonia – Asia Minor – to parents belonging to Byzantine provincial nobility, a wealthy family with great influence in political affairs, the young Symeon is taken to Constantinople at the age of eleven. He is a contemporary of the most illustrious representative of the Macedonian dynasty, Emperor Basil II the Bulgarohton (976-1025). Here he began his studies and soon afterwards enters into the service of the emperor.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian is perhaps the most prominent representative of the Church Fathers who identify with his mystical, ascetic and spiritual experience in his quest and his ascent to Divinity. This is not only something emotional and sentimental as in the case of Saint Macarius the Great of Egypt or intellectualist and speculative as Evgarius mysticism. The spirituality of Saint Symeon is characterized by an impulse of a unique force in terms of his direct personal experience.

The profile of the Byzantine society in the eleventh century did not feel the effects of the outstanding spiritual complexity and contribution which the author of *The Discourses, Catecheses, Hymns, Epistles and Chapters* generously offered to an audience who fidgeted in problems which were not beyond the everyday religious sphere, on the eve of tearing the unity of the Christian Church.

¹ ŠPIDLIK, Tomáš, „Syméon le Nouveau Théologien”, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, XIV (1990), col. 1387

We can consider that Saint Symeon the New Theologian appeared in Church life to resuscitate an ossified and empty monasticism, void of spiritual lifeblood, his spirituality being a reaction against monasticism that was most often formal, developed in Studion Monastery by the followers of Saint Theodore the Studite, after his death².

What motivated the reputation of Saint Symeon "The New Theologian" is his strength to assume an entirely surprising message not through its doctrinal or moral content, but through the intensity of his life, way of speaking and writing about his theological and spiritual experience, which can be called an authentic "epiphany" in the landscape of Christianity at the boundary of two millennia. Compared to the critical spirit of today's intellectuals, of the individuals anchored in a world defined by consumerism and the object paradigm to the disadvantage of the subject, the life and message of Saint Symeon the New Theologian developed in a similar situation and in a time as unresponsive as today.

He was not a systematic theologian, as for example Saint Gregory Palamas; he must be **seen as a prophet**, because his intention was not to remove the hierarchical structure of the Church, but to warn the Church of his time of secularization³.

For the representatives of theology of the eleventh century, the life and writing of the author of the *Theological and Ethical Treatises* have been occasions of disturbance and reaction to his effervescent spirit and mind inclined to study and meditation, to asceticism and contemplation, to burning prayers with tears of repentance.

The attitude of the church authorities on his personal worship for his spiritual father, Saint Symeon the Pious

Saint Symeon is attracted by the strong personality and spiritual authority of his father. This is not a single episode. For example, "the most famous Egyptian anchorites who left the fertile and populated regions of the Nile Valley or Delta who went deep into

² Drd. Ioan I. Ică, *Theology and Spirituality at St. Symeon the New Theologian*, in "Metropolitan Church of Transylvania" 32 (1987), no. 3, p.35.

³ Joost van Rossum, *Priesthood and Confession in St. Symeon the New Theologian*, in "St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly", vol.20, no.4, Crestwood, New York, 1976, p.5.

the desert. Very soon, some of them were distinguished by holiness, drawing in their neighborhood many imitators and followers who considered them their «fathers»⁴.[#]

I have started the project with the concept of the sight of the Divine Light from the spirituality of Saint John the Evangelist, of Saint Paul the Apostle, from which I have taken not less than 1403⁵ quotes, then I continued with Saint Cyril of Alexandria, the apophatic mysticism and vision of God in darkness at Dionysius the Areopagite and Saint Gregory of Nyssa, from the Light of the Mind of Evagrius Ponticus to the Light of the Heart of Saint Macarius of Egypt. I have synthesized the meanings and accents specific to the sight of the Divine Light at Maximus the Confessor and Saint John of Damascus, analyzing the multiple meanings and theological and spiritual valences at Saint Symeon the New Theologian, halting to the end at Saint Gregory Palamas who systematized the teaching about the vision of the uncreated spiritual light of God.[#]

He was convicted because of the opinions expressed in Epistle 1 concerning the Sacrament of Confession. The reason why he was found guilty and sentenced to exile by the Holy Synod of Constantinople (1009) was his worship for his spiritual father, Saint Symeon the Pious, whom he considered a saint before being officially recognized by the Church. Although Stephen, the Metropolitan of Nicomedia, considered that Saint Symeon the New Theologian undermined the prerogatives of the priesthood, he did not accuse his attitude before the Synod. The Meeting of the Holy Synod was revoked soon afterwards and Saint Symeon the New Theologian was declared unguilty⁶.

The centrality of the principles of spirituality of Saint Symeon refers to the overwhelming importance of acquiring, through personal effort, the virtues and through the grace of God, the Divine Light.

This is the fundamental theme and the spirituality peak of Saint Symeon the New Theologian.

⁴ Dom Lucien Regnault, OSB, *The day-to-day life of the Desert Fathers in fourth-century Egypt*, Translated into Romanian by deacon Ioan I. Ică jr., Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 1997, p.14.

⁵ Hilarion Alfeyev, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, p. 40.

⁶ Kallistos T. Ware, *The Spiritual Father in St. John Climacus and St. Symeon the New Theologian*, in “*Studia Patristica*”, vol. XVIII, 2, Kalamazoo-Leuven, 1989, p. 309.

He builds his accounts of his spiritual experiences and his digressions about the Divine Light starting from the biblical examples of paradigms of light, of the experience of God's vision, in the light of His glory, by Moses, Elijah, Paul, Archdeacon Stephen.

While accepting the Sacrament of ordination, Saint Symeon the New Theologian criticizes those priests who do not strive to be worthy of the so sublime mission they have to accomplish⁷.

His originality is obvious especially in his certainty and argumentation that he builds as far as concerns the human capacity to experience the Divine Light which the apostles and prophets had seen, not only in the kingdom of heaven, but also after leaving this world. He also proves scientifically, based on tradition, but mostly on his personal experience, referred to in the third person singular, that the Divine Light can be experienced and received in this life. This can be achieved only as a disciple in obedience to a real confessor.

The spiritual fatherhood is a monachal concept that arose when some Christians have chosen to live in solitary places away from populated areas. The early Christians did not need spiritual exhortation, as we discover later in the monastic life and beyond it. The bishop, the alive and seen representative of the Apostles, would speak in the name of the Risen Christ and, assisted by priests and deacons would take care of the spiritual needs of the community of Christians. Each Christian was formed and guided by his participation in the liturgical life and the guidance given by the bishop and priests or family and other Christian friends. After some Christians withdrew to lonely places to pray more and to seek perfection, they did not participate in the liturgical life of the community or in the Divine Liturgy. This was when the need of a spiritual father⁸ arose.

As noted by father J. McGuckin, Saint Symeon redefines by his energy, naturalness, sincerity and warmth, that the experience and opportunity to see God's glory should not be the result of researching a manual of asceticism, of a block of rules and methods of hermeneutics, of passing a period of time and an itinerary with indicators and

⁷ Athanasios Hatzopoulos, *Two Outstanding Cases in Byzantine Spirituality: the Macarian Homilies and Symeon The New Theologian* (Analekta Vlatadon 54), Thessaloniki, 1991, p.161.

⁸ Thomas Merton, *Spiritual direction and meditation and what is contemplation?*, Anthony Clarke Books, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire, Printed by professional book Oxon, United Kingdom, 1995, p.13

well plotted and tracked paths. „For him, vision does not necessarily take place “after” the necessary steps of repentance, like in the classical scheme of Christian ascetics and mystics of purification, illumination and union. It’s rather the unmerited vision of light that stirs repentance and achieves purification by its own appearance”⁹.

I have tried to emphasize in this paper that the spiritual experience of Saint Symeon is supported by Christ Himself, who is the *Light of the World* (In. 8, 12) and this Light can be seen not only in the life beyond physical body, but even in this life according to the words "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Mat. 5, 8). This directive is valid not only for the monks, but for all those who have received the Sacrament of Baptism. However, fidelity to the thought of the Church Fathers represents the best guarantee of an authentic monastic life¹⁰, as a more intensive training in order to acquire spiritual gifts.

At the beginning of the research approach I considered appropriate to make known some aspects of the problems of the appellation of "the New Theologian", received by Saint Symeon, and the dispute that took place between scholars who have turned to the works of Saint Symeon, in the last century, and which were the considerations and observations that have contributed to the preservation of this entitling.

I have structured this paper into several parts in order to follow the logical nature of the demonstration also used by the exposures in *Catecheses* and *Speeches*. First of all, the doctrinaire support on which Saint Symeon develops his spiritual theology, namely the Light of the Holy Trinity. The author gives in his writings a generous space for analysis by means of which he certifies the need of any Christian who has received the Sacrament of Baptism, to see the true Light, that is the Light from the true Light, that’s nothing else but Life and the union with the Holy Trinity.

This paper is designed in four parts. Each part contains four chapters, excepting Part IV which has five chapters.

⁹John A. McGuckin, *Saint Symeon the New Theologian and Byzantine monasticism...* p. 421.

¹⁰Julian Leroy, *La réforme studite, Il monachismo orientale*, in “*Orientalia Christiana Analecta*” 153, Roma, 1958, p.187.

I have tried to expose some aspects related to the intellectual nature and spirituality as manifested in the Christian East in the early centuries until the time of Saint Symeon the New Theologian.

The first part, which consists of four chapters, covers theoretical aspects that constitute the foundations of subsequent demonstration, namely that the grace of God is and can be also experienced by the human being in the form of the Divine Light.

In the first Chapter I have emphasized the need to define correctly the term of "Divine Light" known before the works of Saint Symeon. I have compared the multiple meanings of the term divine light, intelligible light, or natural / sensitive light, in the works of the most famous writers and Fathers of the Church, such as in the spirituality of Saint Macarius, at Evagrius, Dionysius the Areopagite, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, Saint John of Damascus. I did the same for subsequent writers and Fathers of the Church such as Gregory the Sinaite and the systematizer of the teachings about "Divine Light" in the fourteenth century, Gregory Palamas. I have shown that the Divine Light (φῶς) or enlightenment (ἐλλαμνις) is the seen nature of Godhead, of the energy or grace in which God makes Himself known. I have also highlighted here the contribution of Saint Symeon to strengthening the dogma of the Holy Trinity, in his dispute with singhellos (court theologian) Stephen responding him in writing as follows: "Our Father is a Father because He is - **ὅτι αἰεί γεννῆτωρ**¹¹ - forever and ever a Life Giver. But how does eternal birth take place? Since the Son does not separate entirely from the Father and comes across complete, in an unuttered manner, He always remains in the bosom of the parent and always comes in an unspoken manner. Son is the begotten Son because He **is born forever and ever**, and He is born before the ages¹². And the True Light is beyond time and space: „**ἐν Φῶς ἄχρονον – Lumière unique, itemporelle - a timeless light**¹³.

To succeed in seeing this Light a great and constant internal concentration and a change for the better of the entire being, by virtue of repentance, are necessary. Repentance represents "enlightenment", a passage from darkness to light. To do penance

¹¹ Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes*, II, 16-40, texte critique par Jonannes KODER, traduction et notes par Louis NEYRAND, s. J, Tome II, les édition du Cerf, 29, Bd de Latour - Maubourg, Paris, 1971, p. 146.

¹² Saint Symeon the New Theologian, *Theological and ethical treatises, Writings 1*, p. 57.

¹³ Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traité Théologiques et Éthiques*, in „Sources Chrétiennes”, no. 129, tom . II, Paris, 1967, p. 296; See also Saint Symeon the New Theologian, *Theological and ethical treatises, Writings 1*, p. 338.

means to open your eyes to the divine radiance; to not remain in the sorrow of the sunset, but to get the sunrise. From eschatological perspective, repentance means openness to the ultimate reality of the world to be, which is not only future but already present. Repentance means to recognize that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us, working with us¹⁴.

I have highlighted the distinctions between the categories of light as seen by various fathers, but never in a systematic and comparative manner. Natural light - sensitive, intelligible light; and the uncreated and divine light of the Holy Trinity - **φως της Τριάδος Θείου**.¹⁵

In Chapter II I have emphasized the distinction between mind and heart experience with a view to the Divine Light. For no one has access to the divine nature - divine being, but to its work. Although Saint Paul the Apostle says: "we shall be partakers of the Divine Nature", Saint Symeon considers thoroughly this expression and declares that man does not see the divine nature but the heavenly glory: " **Οὐ γὰρ τὴν φύσιν, ἀλλὰ τῆς δόξης ὁρῶσι δόξαν** ¹⁶- Because I do not see the [divine] nature but heavenly glory ¹⁷.

This light is defined as follows: " **Ὁ Πατὴρ φῶς ἐστίν, ὁ Υἱὸς φῶς ἐστίν, τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον φῶς · ἐν ταῦτα φῶς ἀπλοῦν, ἀσύνθετον, ἀχρονον, συναῖδιον, ὁμότιμον καὶ ὁμόδοξον**¹⁸- "Father is light, the Son is light, the Holy Spirit is light, and they form a single light, that is simple, uncompounded, timeless, eternal together, of a single honor and one glory¹⁹.

¹⁴ Kallistos WARE, *The Inner Kingdom*, translation by Eugenia VLAD, Christiana Printing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 49.

¹⁵ Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes*, in „Sources Chrétiennes”, 156, tome I, himnes 1-15, texte critique Par Johannes KODER, traduction par Joseph PARAMELLE, s. j., Paris, 1969, pp. 170-174. // See translation Saint Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns, Epistles and Chapters*, in *Writings III*, Deisis, Sibiu, 2001, pp. 56-57.

¹⁶ Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes*, in „Sources Chrétiennes”, no. 174, II, texte critique par Johannes KODER, traduction et notes par Louis NEYRAND, s. J, Tome II, 16-40, les édition du Cerf, 29, Bd de Latour - Maubourg, Paris, 1971, p. 152. See: Saint Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns, Epistles and Chapters, Writings III*, Introductory Study and Translation - deacon Ioan I. Ică jr., Deisis, Sibiu, 2001, p. 133.

¹⁷ Saint Symeon the New Theologian, *Theological and ethical treatises, Writings I*, Introductory Study and Translation - deacon Ioan I. Ică jr., Deisis Printing House, Sibiu, 1998, 59.

¹⁸ ΣΥΜΕΩΝ ΤΟΥ ΝΕΟΥ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΥ ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΗΓΟΥΜΕΝΟΥ ΜΟΝΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΜΑΜΑΝΤΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΞΗΡΟΚΕΡΚΟΥ ΕΡΓΑΤΟΜΟΣ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΣ .

¹⁹ See page 59.

Saint Basil also writes about this light: „**if there was something before the creation of this world that is material and corrupting, it surely had to be in the light;** The orders of angels, the heavenly hosts, all intellectual natures named or unnamed, all the ministering spirits, did not live in darkness, but enjoyed a condition fitted for them in light and spiritual joy²⁰.

In Chapter III I provided a space for the glory of God before the Incarnation of the Son of God. The sight of the glory of God under different aspects: in the Temple of Solomon, the bright darkness of Sinai, pillar of fire in the time of Moses, several attempts in Indian spirituality, as well as in the Iranian spirituality, astral light, the light of the poets, compared to the Orthodox mysticism and to - **τὸ ἀπρόσιτον φῶς**.

Chapter IV was dedicated to the representation of the glory of God and the conditions to get closer to Him and of practicing virtues. I have stressed the importance of prayer and penance; the paradox of God's vision and the vision of Heaven anticipated by the paradigm of Sinai and by the prophetic visions of the divine light.

Another principle in Symeon's spirituality is related to the importance, preparation, virtues and requirements that are needed to achieve the step of purity and shunning of passions which bring the light to those who dedicate themselves to the ascetic effort. The effort is not important in itself but it is a way to get the personal and gracious presence of the Holy Spirit. Another foundation of spirituality according to Saint Symeon the New Theologian is pneumatological²¹.

In the second part, I have proven that the patristic perspective of the paradigm of divine light is continued, developed, reformulated and defined in a specific approach by Saint Symeon, without changing the meaning of the theological terms used in spiritual experience.

In Chapter I, I have presented my personal contribution to the development of this PhD thesis namely that Saint Symeon is the first Church Father who sees the Divine Light as an anthropology. He analyzes and systematizes his experience so that we can speak, in his case, about an ontology of light, in which the body, mind,

²⁰ Saint Basil the Great, *Homilies at Hexaemeron*, p. 91.

²¹ Yves Congar, *Saint Syméon le nouveau Théologien. Une expérience de l'esprit*, in "La vie spirituelle", Janvier-février, 1978, N° 624, Tome 132, p. 866.

limbs, heart are called, are designed, are constructed and supported to become **photophore – light carriers**. However, **not only the human being but the whole creation, as I will demonstrate in Part IV, shall exist having light as their foundation, light as expansion, light as a means of communication, light as nourishment, light as knowledge, light as covering, light as substance by means of which communication takes place without using words, namely love – light, light as time out of time.**

Saint Symeon claims that the Contemplation of God in the light is not possible without the light emanating from God and no one can know God except for these visions. "For He did not tell a story or a word of knowledge, but a light of knowledge, and the light of knowledge as the light produces knowledge within us; - „**ἄλλως γὰρ οὐκ ἔστι γινῶναι τινα τὸν Θεόν, εἰ μὴ διὰ τῆς θεωρίας τοῦ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐκπεμπομένου φωτός**²². - **for no one can know God except by order of light radiating from Him**".

I have also highlighted in these chapters the symptoms and effects of divine light vision. From face, all "organs" or "limbs" „ **καὶ ἅπαντα τὰ μέλη μου**”, as Saint Symeon says, are lighted and they become carriers of light, „ **γίνονται φωτοφόρα**”. The presence of light make them more beautiful than the Beautiful „**Ἠραίων ὤραιότερος τότε ἀποτελοῦμαι**” and stronger and greater than the kings „**ὑπάρχω δυνατώτερος καὶ βασιλέων μείζων**”, richer than the rich, „**πλουσίων πλουσιώτερος**”. All this results in a feeling of lifting of human dignity, through the divine gift, a greater honor than all honours in the world, than all that can be seen on earth or in heaven „**καὶ τιμιώτερος πολὺ τῶν ὀρωμένων πάντων, οὐχὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ τῶν τῆς γῆς ἀλλὰ καὶ οὐρανοῦ δὲ καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ**”²³.

In Chapter II I have insisted on Tabor light vision imagery, as well as on the distinction between physical light and intelligible lights of spiritual beings.

In Chapter III I based the entire project on the existence and experience of the divine light of the Holy Trinity, in patristic tradition and the personal - hypostatic nature

²² Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traité Théologiques et Éthiques*, in „Sources Chrétiennes”, no. 129, les édition du Cerf, 29, Paris, 1967, p. 98.

²³ Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes* in „SC”, no. 174, tom. II, Paris, 1971., p. 12, // Stăniloae, Dumitru, *Studies of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Craiova, 1991, pp. 289-290.

of the divine light; the Light of the Word of God is not of the same nature with the light of the mind or the light of the heart; the effects of the divine light on space and time.

Chapter IV that is dedicated to the Paradigm of the Transfiguration of the Lord, establishes the Christological – pneumatological nature of the Knowledge of God.

Vladimir Lossky, after reading the writings of Saint Symeon, states that "in the experience of divine light from the writings of Saint Symeon the New Theologian there is no trace of **depersonalized ecstatic state**, when human consciousness is lost in the contemplation of an **impersonal divinity**".²⁴ On the contrary, this experience involves the highest union of a human being with Divinity, after union with the Holy Mysteries. This union, communion is the union demanded by the Savior Himself from the Father. "Father I pray that all may be one as we are one." **This union is a great mystery and therefore it escapes all rational definitions and all attempts of formulation in a human language.**

The Divine Light, although is not specific to the human nature, therefore it does not concern my nature, Father Stăniloae highlights in a note to his *Studies of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, makes me even more luminous, understanding of my own self. I am no longer locked in my darkness, in my haze that cannot light the meaning of my existence.²⁵ **Seeing the light and personal communion with God make the experience of His light inexpressible in human language.**²⁶

I have also shown in Chapter IV, subpoint four that the sensitive light of creation is a created symbol of the uncreated divine light.

The adjustment that can be found in nature, following the research, as Solomon the Wise teaches us, namely: "For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the maker of them is seen." (Solomon the Wise, 13, 5), is amazing. Another proof of this perfect setting is the force of gravity. Earth is at a distance so balanced from the Sun that only at this distance life can exist on Earth. Both land surface temperature and actual gravity that exist from the creation of the world, provide the possibility of plant photosynthesis as well as the possibility of human beings movement on the Earth's surface.

²⁴ Vladimir Lossky, *The Vision of God*, p. 119.

²⁵ Preot prof. Acad. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Studies of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Printing House of the Metropolitan Church of Oltenia, Craiova, 1991, note 30, p. 339.

²⁶ Vladimir Lossky, *The Vision of God*, p. 119.

I have exposed some actual physical data related to the energy substrate of the matter which always make reference to the light, enumerating universal settings and optimal parameters of nuclear forces, electromagnetic forces, of the forces of gravity and rotation and revolution, for life to exist.

The surface gravity of the Sun is 38 times greater than the surface gravity of the Earth.²⁷ In such gravity an atmosphere similar to that of the Earth could not exist. The same happens for a low gravity, like the earth's natural satellite, the moon, that has a 6 times lower gravity; there is no atmosphere or hydrosphere as those of the Earth which are capable, for certain values and constants, to support life and all living creatures. At such gravity no creature can stand on its own feet. If it had been a little lower at the birth of the universe, the primitive hydrogen clouds wouldn't have been condensed to reach the critical threshold of nuclear fusion and the stars wouldn't have appeared.

Irrespective of the parameters considered, the conclusion is always the same: if we alter as little as possible their value, we suppress any chance of life to appear. The fundamental constants of nature and the initial conditions that allowed the emergence of life seem to have been adjusted with extraordinary precision.

In this context we can deepen the bold statements for that time of Saint Basil the Great, in the fourth century, when he writes in *Hexaemeron* that: "**if there was something before the creation of this world that is material and corrupting, it surely had to be in the light**; the orders of angels, the heavenly hosts, in brief, all intellectual natures named or unnamed, all the ministering spirits, did not live in darkness, but enjoyed a condition fitted for them **in light** and spiritual joy"²⁸.

Quantum physics proves that there are waves or fields of matter in the depths of matter. Jean Guitton, in *God and Science*, shows that: "In classical physics, matter is represented by particles, while the forces are described as some fields. Quantum theory, on the contrary, sees in reality only interactions that are conveyed by some mediating entities called "bosons". Specifically, these bosons carry forces and ensure the relations between particulate matters that physics designate as "fermions", the latter forming "fields of matter". Therefore we have to note that quantum theory cancels the distinction

²⁷ Prof. Dr. Ing. Gheorghe Sandu, *The evolution towards the Creator*, the Printing House of the Metropolitan Church of Oltenia, Craiova, 2003, p. 152.

²⁸ Saint Basil the Great, *Homilies at Hexaemeron*, p. 91.

between fields and particles, between what is material and what is not material, in other words, between matter and what is beyond it²⁹.

Heinsberg was the first to deduce that this complementarity between the state of matter and that of immaterial wave puts an end, for good and all, to Cartesian dualism between matter and spirit; fundamental distinction between matter and spirit. This gave rise to a new philosophical conception, which we may call metarealism³⁰.

This finding has an epochal character and is more important than any Copernican revolution; since matter is both corpuscle and wave, this means that matter can be transfigured, that matter can spiritualize and transform into light, as patristic theology always asserts³¹.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian, through his own life and experience, writes, teaches and speaks, since the eleventh century, about the capacity of man to receive, as a gift from God, but also as a result of personal effort, the gift of vision of the Divine Light, even in this life, that the apostles saw on Mount Tabor and that can be experimented by those who devote entirely their life, love, all the intellectual, rational and affective faculties to the preparation, through repentance, for the union with God, in His divine light.

Part III exposes the personal experience of the divine light, by Saint Symeon the New Theologian.

In Chapter I, I have presented the close relationship between the Divine Light and the spiritual coordinates of human experience. Divine Light and Time; Divine Light and Love; Prayer as Divine Light. If spiritual light can have its own hypostasis.

In Chapter II I have exposed the experience of the divine light, as the glory of the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit, in the Christian tradition. The imprints of the divine light; the halos of saints. In this respect, Saint Mark says: „**Καρδία ἐστὶ καθαρά, ἡ παντάπασιν ἀνειδιον τῷ θεῷ καὶ αδιαμόρφωτον παραστήσασα τὴν μνημην, καὶ μόνοις τοῖς αὐτοῦ ετοιμη ἐνσημανθῆνα τυποῖς, δι' ὧν εμφανῆς πεφουκε γίνεσθαι** –

²⁹ Jean Guitton, in *God and Science*, Albatros Printing House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 81-82.

³⁰ Jean Guitton, in *God and Science*, p. 131-132.

³¹ Pr. Prof. Dumitru Popescu, "Science in the context of the Eastern and Western theology", in vol. *Science and Theology*, preliminaries to dialogue, XXI: Dogmatic Aeon, Bucharest, 2001, p. 25; See also the same article, slightly modified, in *Theology and Culture*, EIBMBOR, 1993, pp. 97-112.

A pure heart, he says, presents its mind before God without any form and ready to print in it the imprints of God, by means of which He uses to make Himself known³²”.

Contemplation is a touch of light that although involves personal need and effort, it does not cause this state of spiritual vision. This is because there is nothing concrete to be seen, it is a work of grace, a work and not a thing or a being circumscribed within the limits of some coordinates. It is also a gift of God. But the gift is not offered without endeavour. " Through many and various signs, enigmas, mirrors, through mysterious and unuttered works, by divine revelations, through intricate enlightenment, and „**δια θεορίας τών λόγων της κτίσεως³³**- **by contemplating the creation rationale**”- and by many others, because by each of them faith grows and ascends to God’s love³⁴.

If in Origen's spirituality God’s "vision" is inferior to the darkness of Mount Sinai, in contemporary Western spirituality, Cardinal Jean Daniélou shows in his work „*Platonisme et théologie mystique : doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse*”, that Origen did not reach the highest peak of the Knowledge of God, namely the third step, but remained at the second step.³⁵ This detail fully demonstrates that the possibility to contemplate God in Platonic philosophy as well as in Western spirituality is carried out through the natural powers of man. There is confusion between "negative theology" and what the Church Fathers consider to be "beyond the mind", because the Divine Light seen beyond understanding is more important than the theology through negation and **cannot be seen except by the power of the Holy Spirit³⁶**.

In Chapter III I have focused on personal encounter with God in this life. Saint Symeon, although he knows it is risky what he is doing, he goes up to the point where he declares publicly what he had lived and experimented. Father, I have been shown that Light. My hermitage house has disappeared and the world has gone, fleeing as far as I think, from His face. There was me, alone, and that single light. But I do not know,

³² Saint Mark the Hermit – The Hermit, *Heads on Watchfulness* 24, PG., 65, col. 1064 B.

³³ For the patristic argument in terms of contemplation of the “rationale of creation”, namely the vision and knowledge of God through the contemplation of creation seen, see Völker, *Praxis und Theoria bei Symeon dem neuen Theologen: Ein Beitrag zur byzantinischen Mystik*, Wiesbaden, 1968, pp. 313-315.

³⁴ Saint Symeon the New Theologian, *Theological discourses*, in *Writings I*, p. 75.

³⁵ Jean DANIÉLOU, *Platonisme et théologie mystique : doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Aubier, Paris, 1944, cap. 5, 588.

³⁶ Prof. & priest Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Significance of the divine light in the spirituality and worship of the Orthodox Church*, p. 435.

Father, if my body was there too; because I don't know if I got out of it; I didn't know if I had my body and I was wearing it. An unspeakable joy, love and immense longing were within me and they are still there, that rivers of tears started to run in my eyes, as you can see it now, too". In response, He says: "It was that, my child". And with that word he looked again at Him, and little by little he was perfectly cleaned and being cleaned he dared – **il interroge celui qu'il voit et lui dit« Mon Dieu, est-ce toi?» Il répond et dit: «Oui, c'est moi, Dieu, celui qui s'est fait homme pour toi; et voici que je t'ai fait, comme tu vois, et que je te ferai dieu»**³⁷ - he interrogated Him and said: "My God, is it You?" And He answered and said: "Yes, It's me, God, who became man for you, as you can see; behold, I have made you as you see, and you will be God!"

I submitted to your attention **the verbs of light**. The preferences of Saint Symeon, in relation to the formulation of **the verbs of light**, are varied and expressive: He lists many actions involving the vision of light by soul, by heart and by the eyes of the soul. Thus we encounter often verbs such as: 1."to irradiate"- **ἐκπεμπομένου**³⁸, 2."to adorn" - **κεκοσμημένου**³⁹, 3."to shine" - **λάμποντα**⁴⁰, 4. "to envelop"- **κατακαλύπτονται**⁴¹, 5."to enlighten" - **λάμπουσι**⁴², "to rise"- **ἀνατέλλον** (to rise up), I shall light in them, too - **λάμψω καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς**, "as I light now"- **ὡς νῦν εἶμι λάμπων**⁴³ or *blepein, oran, theasthai*, that are prevalent.

Chapter IV focuses on the distinction between the light of the knowledge, the light of inspiration, light as a disease, hallucination, nightmare and true divine light.

Part IV is the most consistent chapter that crowns those shown in the other three parts.

³⁷ Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traité Théologiques et Éthiques*, in „Sources Chrétiennes”, no. 129, les édition du Cerf, 29, Paris, 1967, p. 103. See also Saint Symeon the New Theologian, *Theological and ethical treatises, Writings* 1, pp. 256-257.

³⁸ Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traité Théologiques et Éthiques* 5, in „Sources Chrétiennes”, no. 129, les édition du Cerf, 29, Paris, 1967, p. 98.

³⁹ Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traité Théologiques et Éthiques*, in „Sources Chrétiennes”, no. 129, introduction, texte critique traduction et notes par Jean Darrrouzès, Tome II, IV- XV, les édition du Cerf, 29, Paris, 1967, p. 26.

⁴⁰ Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traité Théologiques et Éthiques*, in „Sources Chrétiennes”, no. 129, les édition du Cerf, 29, Paris, 1967, p. 50.

⁴¹ Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traité Théologiques et Éthiques*, in „Sources Chrétiennes”, no. 129, tom . II, Paris, 1967, *Disc.* 3, p. 426.

⁴² SC, 129, p. 426.

⁴³ Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *CATÉCHÈSE*, 23 -34, „Sources Chrétiennes” No. 113, tome III, introduction, texte critique et notes Par Mgr. Basile KRIVOCHÉINE, s. j., traduction par Joseph PARAMELLE, s. j., Paris, 1965, pp. 296 și 298. See Saint Symeon the New Theologian, *Catecheses* , in *Writings* II, Deisis, Sibiu, 2003, pp. 352- 353.

I have conceived **Part IV** as an edifice of the Eschatological Paradigm and of the concrete possibility for every man to experience the union with God through the medium of the divine light. And the last part is the final demonstration that highlights the whole debate about the Divine Light - the Eschatological Paradigm of the divine light-fulfillment and manifestation of all the promises revealed to Prophets, Apostles and all saints, regarding souls union with God in His divine light, by virtues, asceticism, contemplation, communion and spiritual unity through the Holy Mysteries. It is a focus on the readiness to receive the divine light and how it can be encountered in the Liturgical Spirituality of the Orthodox Church, namely in liturgical texts. The last Part is dedicated to the rediscovery and observation of the practical importance of the symbolism of divine light in Church, as a confession of faith in the Divine Light, and the presence of the concept of spiritual light in the whole Orthodox liturgical architectonics.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this work is that I have emphasized the relationship between the uncreated light of God, experience of God in the light and His vision under this amorphous "form", the Eschatological Paradigm of the Light. Parousia light; The Lord's Day – full revelation of Christ in the Light-, Deification, union of the soul with God.

Also, I have provided a reasonable space for the theme of symbolic vision of God from biblical perspective and of various forms of divine glory, before Incarnation and after Mount Tabor episode. They are grouped in Sinai paradigm, Prophetic paradigms, Tabor paradigm, Pauline paradigm, Stephen's paradigm or the Eschatological Paradigm.

I have attempted to present in another chapter **Simeon's anthropology** or an **ontology of the divine light** that is based on the possibility of sharing the Divine Light of mind and heart and soul and body, of the whole being, since the actual horizon of human existence.

The originality of Saint Symeon that I have highlighted is that the Divine Light, unlike all other forms of manifestation of light, is the only light that is alive. The Divine Light, according to the writings of Saint Symeon, is a personal one that speaks, understands, that conveys joy, confidence and that fills with unspeakable joy the person enjoying it.

Starting with the enlightenment, human knowledge is "knowledge in the Spirit", because it takes place after the man passes through the ascetic effort, by the virtues and

the gifts of the Holy Spirit man updates itself as central and intimate place of mind, opens the eyes for the vision of God. "The enlightening gifts of the Holy Spirit are shown to man when it opens this eye of him, this chamber designed to be filled with Divine Light"⁴⁴

Saint Symeon, like Saint Basil the Great, is submitting this profound concept according to which before the creation of the unseen world, there was the uncreated light of God, in which the created world exists today, and they do not overlap each other because they are not of the same nature. Saint Symeon even writes that the Divine Light and the existence of another existence of other nature in its place, do not stumble over one another because they are of different natures, nature that, in the case of uncreated light, does not stumble over anything, either time or space, or over any thing or any other form of existence.

I have stressed the importance that Saint Symeon attaches to the Divine light capacity, of God, to transcend and transform and to lend its uncreated attributes (radiance, immortality, eternal life, incorruptibility,...) to rational and personal beings (Angels and people), to reach perfection and eternal happy existence.

For Orthodox spirituality Saint Symeon is the summit of the discourses on spiritual and mystical experiences. He is not the only author that uses excessively verbs related to the Divine Light when communicating God's grace, through the coming of the Holy Spirit. No one can reach deification without feeling the presence and power of the Holy Spirit⁴⁵ ^{###}.

Without this inner view, mediated by the grace of the Holy Spirit, no one can be called a spiritual father and no one can advise anyone else. That is why Saint Symeon the New Theologian warns that *"the one that considers to have within oneself – if it is possible – all virtues, but he does not have the light of the Holy Spirit, nor has a good sight of his deeds, nor is entrusted to the uttermost that they are pleasing to God, is not worthy to receive foreign thoughts, even if he is elected patriarch by people, until he has light shining within himself"*⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Pr. Prof. Dr. Acad. Dumitru Stăniloae, *in the work already cited*, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Kallistos of Diokleia, *Deification in St. Symeon the New Theologian*, in "Sobornost", vol. 25:2, Oxford, 2003, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Saint Symeon the New Theologian, *Catecheses ...*, translation into Romanian, p. 339.

Though Hellenism and non-Christian writers did not influence the works of Saint Symeon the New Theologian, on the other hand Holy Fathers had an obvious influence on him. He often makes references in his works to the Holy Fathers, especially to Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, who seems to be his favorite writer (29 quotes), to Saint John Chrysostom (about 15 possible quotations and allusions) and to Saint Basil the Great (3 quotes and several possible allusions). Some reminiscences of the works of the saints: Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite, etc. have been also found. However, none of the latter are quoted directly by Saint Symeon the New Theologian.^{47#}

For Saint Symeon the New Theologian, deification includes soul and body in full. For him the soul is not a prisoner of the body, but the body and soul form a unity and are destined to deification. The glory of the saints is also shown in their deified bodies. These ideas were systematically exposed by Saint Gregory Palamas during hesychastic controversy, but can be also found in the works of Saint Symeon the New Theologian, although less developed.⁴⁸

I have dedicated a chapter to the relationship between the Holy Mysteries and the Divine Light. I have continued with another chapter in which I presented the two key moments during God's vision in light, by Saint Symeon the New Theologian. One vision occurred in 969, and the second one in the first weeks of 976, so seven years apart. The first vision took place when he was 20 years old, the second when he was at the Monastery of Stoudios, recently entered into monasticism.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian urges his apostles not to see in the mystery of the Eucharist a magic act that will change them without any effort of purification, of change for the better. This is because for Saint Symeon the New Theologian, as shown by Father Dumitru Stăniloae, "*the feeling or vision [contemplation] of God emerges in humans together with their purification from sins*"⁴⁹.

For Saint Symeon the New Theologian, it is love that deifies man, or spiritualizes him. To spiritualize means to imitate Him, to follow Christ, namely "to endure His

⁴⁷ Hilarion Alfeyev, *in the work already cited*, p.129.

⁴⁸ Kallistos Ware, *The Mystery of God and Man in St. Symeon the New Theologian*, in "Sobornost", vol.6, no.4, London, 1972, p. 234.

⁴⁹ Pr.Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Introduction to the Philokalia VI*, p. 12.

sufferings by means of asceticism, to be illuminated by the truth revealed by Him in order to reach the divine life."⁵⁰

Since the fourteenth century, Saint Symeon was rediscovered and reconsidered at his true spiritual and theological value, especially by the believers in Russia⁵¹.

It is noteworthy that Saint Silouan the Athonite (1866-1938) and his disciple, Archimandrite Sophronius (1896- 1993), show that the spiritual experience in Orthodox monastic tradition, even in our time, belongs to the same current as the experience of Saint Symeon.

Divine Light and Love, tears and repentance, apatheia and deification are central themes of the spirituality and theology of Saint Symeon the New Theologian.

Deification or the union with God by love is fully realized in the eternal life, although saints experience it even during earthly life, in an authentic and transfiguring way⁵².

The bright personality of this priest manifested when he exposed his opinion in regard to God's vision as light, ecstasy, apatheia and the deification of man. Even when he exposes his own mystical journey to deification, he places it in the context of the Orthodox tradition, considering his own experience as part of the mystical experience of the Church, insisting on the loyalty to the Orthodox Church⁵³.

⁵⁰ Nichifor Crainic, *in the work already cited*, p.110.

⁵¹ Ilarion Alfeyev, *Saint Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition*,... p. 339.

⁵² Kallistos of Diokleia, *Deification in St. Symeon the New Theologian*, in "Sobornost", vol. 25:2, Oxford, 2003, p.24.

⁵³ Hilarion Alfeyev, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition*..., p. 270