

“IN THE HOLLOW OF THE ROCK ON HOREB” – GOD’S SIGHT, OPTICAL PERCEPTION, OR SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING?

Abstract

“Primum videre” is a saying from the ancients that highlights the fundamental importance of sight. In Holy Scripture, the descriptions of God often fluctuate between two attributes: the seen and the unseen. Many biblical passages in the Old Testament emphasize that God is unseen or cannot be seen. He is “unseen” because He remains a mystery or secret; He is transcendent, existing beyond the limits of our sensory experience—the Absolute who cannot be confined or reduced to an image. However, numerous texts also state that specific individuals, particularly those chosen by Him who have grown in virtue, have experienced God revealing or disclosing Himself to them. The New Testament makes it clear that God has fully revealed Himself in Christ. This study begins with the classic New Testament verse Jn 1:18 and draws attention to the intriguing contrast between the seen and the unseen, or between sight and blindness. It seeks to provide a relevant answer—through the insights of the Church Fathers—to the question posed in the title, which pertains to anyone aware of their status as a creature.



REV. ALEXANDRU MOLDOVAN

Faculty of Orthodox Theology
1 Decembrie 1918 University, Alba-Iulia
pr.alexandru.moldovan@gmail.com

Keywords

Sight, Blindness, Light, Darkness, Revelation, Contemplation

Preliminaries

“Primum videre” was a saying of the ancients that emphasized the fundamental importance of sight. In Germanic languages, the word “wardon” meant “to observe” or “to watch over.” This term led to words like “guard,” “guardian,” and “wardrobe,” all of which are related to the actions of watching, guarding, or supervising. The verb “to see” (*ὁράω*), used by biblical authors, also comes from an Indo-European root and

effectively conveys the act of knowing. Many of our words, such as "visible," "seen," "vision," "supervision," "revision," "review," "celebrity," and "glimpse," are derived from this verb (Ravasi 2023, 266).

In the New Testament—particularly in the Johannine writings—"to see" or "to behold" often also means "to (re)cognize," with the sense of a confession of faith:

"We *have seen* his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father» (Jn 1:14);

"You will *see* greater things than these.» (Jn 1:50);

"You will *see* heaven opened." (Jn 1:51);

"Sir, we wish *to see* Jesus." (Jn 12:21);

"Whoever *has seen* me *has seen* the Father." (Jn 14:9);

"Have you believed because you have *seen me*? Blessed are those who have not *seen* and yet have believed." (Jn 20:29);

"That which we *have seen* and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us" (1Jn 1:1-3).

These statements present a stark contrast to others that describe God as "unseen" (*ἀόρατος*). For example, it is written, "He (Christ) is the image of the *invisible God*" (Col 1:15); "*invisible*, the only God" (1Tm 1:17); "By faith he (Moses) left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him *who is invisible*." (Heb 11:27). God is considered "unseen" because He embodies mystery and secrecy. He is transcendent, existing beyond the limits of our sensory experience, and is the Absolute who cannot be confined or reduced to a mere image.

The statements we find about God in the pages of Holy Scripture oscillate between these two attributes, between the *seen* and the *unseen*. Saint Paul tells us that the Son of God, the Savior Christ, is "the image of the *invisible God*" (*εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου*—Col 1:15). At the same time, the Savior assures us that whoever has seen Him has seen the Father (Jn 14:9). The person who has purified themselves of passions and sins, the "pure in heart," can see God (Mt 5:8). In heavenly Jerusalem, the servants of the Lord "will *see* His face forever» (Rev 22:4), an experience denied «to those who do evil» (3Jn 11).

The verb "to see" (*ὁράω*) is used in the New Testament to describe the encounters of disciples or myrrh-bearing women with the Risen Christ; these are encounters somewhat improperly called "apparitions." The evangelists say that the Lord: "appeared" (*ἐφανερώσεν*); "revealed Himself" or "was seen"; He allowed Himself to be recognized

personally (*ᾠφθη*), a word used by Saint Paul in the pericope of 1Cor 15:1-8. Saint Luke, in the "Road to Emmaus" episode (da Spinetoli 1999, 732), preserves this tension between *sight* and *blindness*, saying of the two disciples that "their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (Lk 24:16) and that only at the breaking of the bread "their eyes were opened, and they recognized him," yet the Lord "vanished from their sight." (Lk 24:31). Thus, Christ reveals Himself, yet somehow remains in the glory of the unseen God (Ravasi 2023, 266).

Any encounter between two persons represents a *dialogue of faces*; the biblical author says that "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses *face to face*, as a man speaks to his friend" (Ex 33:11); "with him (Moses) I speak *mouth to mouth, clearly*, and not in riddles, and *he beholds the form of the Lord*" (Nm 12:8); Moses spoke with the Lord as two friends or two lovers speak when, having no more words, they silently gaze at one another.

For Semitic thought, the noun *panim* ("face" or "countenance")—used very frequently in the pages of the Old Testament (2,127 times)—is a plural form indicating the complexity of a face that is never merely a cutaneous phenomenon, a complex of sensory organs, but an *expressive sign of communication*. For this reason, in the pages of Holy Scripture, the *face* or *countenance* can also indicate the *interior of a person*, not just what is outwardly visible; a person's face always betrays their interior, *negatively*: "So Cain was very angry, and *his face fell*" (Gn 4:5-7a) or *positively*: after receiving from the priest Eli the confirmation that the Lord would hear her prayer, Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, *had a different countenance*: "Then the woman went her way and ate, and *her face was no longer sad*" (1Sam 1:18).

We are interested in the *face* or *countenance of God* and the *possibility of seeing Him*. If, as we have seen, the face indicates, for Semitic thought, the person themselves, it is easy to guess why the sight of the Lord's face is refused or forbidden to humans. The ancients believed that humans, being sinful, could not survive this experience: «But, He said, *you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live*" (Ex 33:20); "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Lk 5:8).

Resorting to anthropomorphism, the hagiographers used *symbolism* to speak of God. Thus, they speak of the *eyes* of the Lord (Cantalamesa 2015, 59-60) that scrutinize human hearts: "Search me, O God, and *know* my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me" (Ps 139:23-24a; Ps 26:2); of the *eyes* of the Lord that cannot see (cannot tolerate) iniquity: "You who are of purer eyes than to see

evil and *cannot look* at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?" (Hab 1:13); of the *mouth* of the Lord that utters judgments and gives commands (Ps 119:13); of the *ears* of the Lord that "hear the prayers of His servants" (Ps 130:2).

Also, in the Book of Psalms, the idea of *the possibility of seeing the Lord's face* when a person enters the holy place to pray gradually takes shape: "He loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face." (Ps 11:7); "As for me, I shall behold *your face* in righteousness" (Ps 17:15); "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps 42:2); "Your face, Lord, I will seek" (Ps 26:13). If a person commits sin and persists in it, the Lord "and hide my face from them" (Dt 31:17); knowing themselves to be sinful, a person begs God not to turn His face away from them: "*Hide not your face from me*, lest I be like those who go down to the pit." (Ps 143:7); a person knows that if the Lord turns His face away from His creation, "they die" and "return to their dust" (Ps 104:29). Finally, the human created "in our image, after our likeness" (Gn 1:26) has inscribed in their genetic code *the search for God*: "Such is the generation of those who seek him, *who seek the face of the God of Jacob*" (Ps 24:6).

In the Synoptic Gospels, God is the One who "*is and sees in secret*" (Mt 6:4,8,18); He counts our steps and the hairs of our head (Mt 10:30; Lk 12:7), He cares for His creation, yet His dwelling place is "heaven" (Mt 6:9; Lk 11:2); He is "our heavenly Father" (Mt 6:32). Thus, no matter how intense, our relationship with Him seems to be one "at a distance": "Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven and see; have regard for this vine, the stock that your right hand planted, and for the son whom you made strong for yourself." (Ps 80:14-15). Psalm 80^[1], in its entirety, has as its refrain the words: "Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!" (Ps 80:3,7,19). The absolute novelty highlighted by the evangelist John, more than the Synoptic evangelists, is that our Father is not only "in heaven" but also "with us on earth" in the person of Christ. God "appeared," in Christ, to people^[2]; *He revealed Himself* perfectly (Cantalamessa 2015, 101-2).

"No one has ever seen God" (Jn 1:18a)

The classic New Testament text containing both statements—that God *cannot be seen*, but that, in Christ, *seeing Him is possible*—is represented by the last verse of the celebrated *Johannine Prologue* (Jn 1:18), which forms a literary unit with the entire

Christological hymn and contains a very well-known statement in biblical tradition: "No one has ever seen God; God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, *he has made him known.*" The name of God placed at the beginning of the sentence is in the accusative and links the assertion: "No one has ever seen God" (18a) with what is affirmed in the second part of the verse: "God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known" (18b). If this is so, then verse 18 contains an opposition between "seeing" and "making known," which could be formulated more explicitly as follows: "Indeed, no one has ever seen God, but the Only Begotten Son (of the Father), He has made Him known (revealed Him)."

In a situation without exit or resolution (given by *the impossibility of seeing God*), the Only Begotten Son intervened^[3], because only He could do it, for, as the evangelist John affirmed in the hymnic Prologue, He Himself is God and is intimately united with the heavenly Father, being begotten of the Father. Within this verse (18), we see that, as in verse 14, the word "God" is substituted with that of "Father," and we highlight the dialectic of "seeing/making known."

Verse 18 expresses three fundamental things: first, the statement that *no one has ever seen God*; second, that the Son is the mediator of seeing God (Mihoc 2003, 54); and third, that the Only Begotten Son has made God known to people.

We will analyze them in turn. According to Holy Scripture, *seeing God* represents the profound aspiration of the faithful person.

It is quite tricky, however, to choose the most appropriate variant of the verb "to see" in the Greek language of the New Testament, because the New Testament authors use several words with slightly different meanings. The most frequently used verb is *ὁράω* (*to see*), used 448 times in the New Testament. In the conjugation of this verb, we also find the root of the Romanian verb "to see," more precisely the aorist form *εἶδον* (a form that appears 350 times in the New Testament), a root we also find in the sacred Indian tradition (the holy Indian revelation is contained in the collection of the four "Vedas"). The verb "to see" and, alongside it, the verb "to believe" are two key verbs in the Fourth Gospel^[4].

In the pages of the Old Testament, *seeing God* was «reserved» only for those at the beginning of the visible world, and later this experience of encountering God took place within religious worship. First in the Holy Tabernacle, then in the Temple of Jerusalem, the glory of God dwelt, and only in the holy place could the human desire *to see God* be symbolically satisfied. To see God does not refer to, or indicate, merely an intellectual

contemplation, but a *spiritual experience*, a "face to face" or a "tête-à-tête" with the Living God (Martini 2022, 487-500).

Two biblical traditions tell us why humans cannot see God. According to the most widespread view, this impossibility derives from *the fallen and sinful condition of humans*^[5]. The world cannot approach the Holy One without suffering the consequences. The prophet Isaiah, when called by God to his mission, exclaimed: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; *for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!*" (Is 6:5).

Another tradition links the impossibility of humans seeing God directly to *divine transcendence*. God is the Absolute, independent of any condition and not subject to any restriction; God is transcendent; He passes beyond the horizon of our experience. Philo of Alexandria expressed this admirably, speaking of God's appearance to Abraham: "God went out to meet him (Abraham) and showed him *what he was able to see*. For this reason, it is not said that the wise Abraham *saw* God, but only that God *revealed Himself* to him" (Philo of Alexandria, *De Abrahamo*, 8). Strictly speaking, we should say that "God reveals Himself" (that He *revealed Himself* or *appeared*), and not that "He is seen," because God is not an "object" that must or can be looked at, but a "subject" who allows Himself to be encountered. And because the two partners who meet are not on an equal footing, it is appropriate to highlight, in common speech, the priority or initiative of God about humans (Dufour 2007, 131).

In this sense, biblical wisdom literature has said and emphasized repeatedly that humans *cannot approach God* and cannot fully express or comprehend His works:

"Could we say much (about God), without ever finishing; in a word, He is all. How shall we glorify Him? For He is greater than all His works. The Lord is to be feared and very great, and His power is wonderful [...] Who has seen Him and will tell? And who will glorify Him as He is? Many and greater than these are hidden; for we have seen but a few of His works" (Sir 43:31-32, 36) or

"The power of His glory, who shall measure it? And who shall be able to declare His mercies? It is not possible to diminish, nor to add, nor to search out the wonderful works of the Lord" (Sir 18:3-4)^[6].

Note that this wisdom tradition employs the verb *ἐξηγήστο/ἐξηγήστε* (*He revealed*), a verb also used in the text of Jn 1:18, a fact that confirms the Johannine Prologue's affiliation with the wisdom tradition (Brown 1999, 49-50). In the Gospel

of John, the echo of this line of thought is heard: "No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man" (Jn 3:13). And in this case, as in Jn 1:5, it is not about the sinful condition of humans, but about their condition as creatures before the One who brought them into existence, the Only One who can reveal or disclose Himself. This conviction could explain a vital exception, very ancient, which affirms that some (admittedly few) *were able to see God* and remain alive: "Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank." (Ex 24:9-11). After Samson's parents spoke with the angel of the Lord and understood that the one who appeared to them was indeed the angel of the Lord, Manoah said to his wife: "We shall surely die, for we have seen God" (Jdg 13:22). The woman, however, proves wiser than her husband, considering that God does not reveal Himself and His will to kill humans, but so that humans may know and fulfill His will (Jdg 13:23).

Holy Scripture presents several "appearances" of the Lord or His angels and "visions" of heavenly things granted to the chosen ones of the Lord who belonged to the First Covenant. Still, God revealed (or allowed Himself to be seen) only "from behind" or "in part" (as in a mirror, in riddles), which means He reveals Himself only in *symbols*^[7]. One of the frequent symbols through which biblical authors indicate divinity is *fire*, as we see in the episode of the *burning bush* (Ex 3:6). Before that experience (which Moses *desired to look at closely*), the human subject *covers his face*, "for he was *afraid to look at God*." (Ex 3:6). But even in this well-known case, the biblical text tells us that *«the angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire»* (Ex 3:2a).

Two other testimonies (though there are more) show us that God appeared or spoke "from the midst of the fire":

"Then the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice." (Dt 4:12) or

"Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. Since you saw no form on the day that the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire" (Dt 4:15).

The prophet Elijah the Tishbite, on the other hand, felt (discovered) the nearness (even the presence) of God in a "still small voice" (1Kgs 19:12), but he too *covered his*

face with his mantle (the cloak he wore) and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave (1Kgs 19:13). Thus, only through a *symbol* (or a discreet sensory mediation) can humans encounter divine majesty (Dufour 2007, 132).

According to another mode of expression—well known to biblical authors—a “veil,” “curtain,” or “covering” separates the sight of the Lord from human eyes, a *veil* that could take the form of a *cloud* (*bright* or *of fire*), a *cloud* that hid what should not be revealed. With a *veil*, Moses covered his face after he finished speaking with the leaders of the congregation of the sons of Israel (Ex 34:33). “For behold, darkness shall cover the earth—says the prophet Isaiah in a well-known messianic prophecy—and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you” (Is 60:2). This until the *veil* (which covered Moses' face) is removed: «And he will swallow up on this mountain—it is about Mount Zion—the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.» But not only the *veil* or *curtain* will be «removed,» but, above all, death will be abolished forever (Is 25:7-8a).

The *veil*, *curtain*, or *veil*^[8] that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the holy place symbolized precisely this impossibility (inability) of humans to see God «face to face.»

The diversity of traditions related to *the impossibility of seeing God* is justified by the fact that Theology (and theologians) must express themselves about this subject: *the relationship humans have with God*. If I ask this question from my perspective as a human, then it is not hard to realize that the impossibility of seeing the Lord is due to my state (or condition) as a sinful human, a condition that does not allow me to see (or stand near) God^[9]. If I ask this question from the Lord's perspective, then I say that God does not allow Himself to be “domesticated” or represented by a sensory image; He does not want to be treated as an object but reveals or shows Himself to humans *when* and *how* He wills (Dufour 2007, 132).

“God the only Son, who is at the Father's side” (Jn 1:18b)

According to Pauline theology, the *veil* that separated God from human sight was removed when God became incarnate, became Man in Christ: in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Saint Paul affirms that until his time, “when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses (that is, the Torah) is read a veil lies over their hearts” (2Cor 3:14-15). Only *turning to the Lord* (through repentance) guarantees the lifting or

removal of the veil (2Cor 3:16).

The mediator of our access to divine glory is "the Only Begotten Son," who is "from the Father" (Jn 1:14) or "in the bosom of the Father" (Jn 1:18). The evangelist calls Christ "Only Begotten from the Father" to show us clearly who Christ is; He is the Son of God or the incarnate Logos in history (Jn 1:1). Saint John adds—precisely for clarity—the fact that the "Only Begotten Son," the Word or the Incarnate Logos is Himself the true God, a somewhat curious clarification, given that immediately after comes the statement that God "has never been seen by anyone." Nevertheless, if the evangelist John affirms that Jesus—as the incarnate Logos—is the true God, could it be that he intends to force the paradox? The evangelist wants to tell us that only God can speak adequately about Himself (Dufour 2007, 133).

As is known, the Greek word *kólpos* (*bosom*) indicates the upper part of the human thorax^[10]; thus, the expression "to be in the bosom of the Father" does not necessarily indicate the "consubstantiality" of the Son with the Father but indicates the "intimacy" of the Son with His Father. Using, in this case, the preposition *εις* (*in*) and not *εν* (*on/at*), as in the text of Jn 13:23 (referring to the gesture of the disciple John leaning on Jesus' breast, where the particle *επι* is used), to indicate the relationship of intimacy, the evangelist John specifies that it is not only about *the unique degree of closeness* of the Son to the Father but also about a kind of *finality* expressed by the Belgian exegete Ignace de Poitiers: "The Only Begotten Son is directed toward the heart of the Father" (Ignace de la Potterie 1977, 234).

This is His essence, as the present form of the verb *ho òn* says. It is not something "occasional" that Jesus is directed toward His Father; this is not something the Son does "from time to time," but He is entirely, totally, and always directed toward His Father; His present indicates a presence (a situation) that goes beyond what some of the Church Fathers called the "beatific vision." With His whole being, with all His words and deeds, the Savior Christ "and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." (Jn 1:14).

"He (Christ) has made him known (God)" (Jn 1:18c)

To tell us what exactly the Logos accomplished among humans, the evangelist John had at his disposal several classical terms, but he did not use the term *ἀπο-καλύπτω* (to reveal, to unveil, to disclose)^[11], nor *δεικνύω* (to show, to indicate)^[12], nor *φανερῶ* (to show or to manifest), as in the text of Jn 17:6: "I have manifested your name

to the people whom you gave me out of the world." Why did the evangelist choose such a discreet term—which refers to *interpretation*—like *ἔξ-ηγέομαι* (*to narrate, to make known, to explain*)? The verbs he could have used (and which we mentioned above) are related to the idea of "seeing," typical of the apocalyptic genre, which the biblical theme (also mentioned above) of the *veil* or *curtain* could favor. The evangelist John, however, moves in a different cultural space, being much closer, as we have seen, to the wisdom tradition (Dufour 2007, 134).

On the other hand, the evangelist John proves to be the heir of the ancient biblical tradition according to which "seeing" God was "postponed" for "the last times" (for "the fullness of time" Gal 4:4), while "hearing" (a voice or a word) implies, at the same time, God's communication with humans through the word (Grilli 2011, 7) (but also through the Word or divine Logos) and the submission or obedience of humans to this Word. For the pious and devout Jew, *listening to the word of God* was the most important thing.

Within the Johannine Prologue, the Logos or the Word of God—Himself the true God—is the main subject. The idea of "seeing," "unveiling," or "revealing" is substituted by the Word that "is heard"—but in the New Testament, it is also "seen." After receiving the news of the Savior's birth from the angel, the shepherds say: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us" (Lk 2:15) (Valentini 2017, 270-271). Hence, in our text, there is a verb—*ἔξ-ηγέομαι*—which refers to language and which, according to the adopted translation, means "to make God known."

Exegetes have seen in these linguistic details the influence of Greek religion: the servants of pagan sanctuaries or temples also fulfilled the function of "exegetes" or "interpreters" of divine oracles (*theia*). The philosopher Plato, in his work—*Republic*—says of the god Apollo that "he established his dwelling in the center (the navel) of the earth—at Delphi—as the traditional interpreter of religion (*patrios exēgētēs*) to guide the human race" (Plato 2022, 169)^[13]; from this god, people expected the legislation by which to conduct their lives. Now, this hypothesis has no foundation in the Johannine text and does not reflect, however little, the mentality of the biblical authors, according to which truth is not what *is sought* or *discovered*, without regard to its relationship or connection with life (Dufour 2007, 135).

Therefore, it is preferable to consider the original meaning of the term *ἔξ-ηγέομαι*, which, both in the Greek literature of New Testament times and in the literature of the

New Testament, means "to make known" or "to explain in detail."

It is also interesting that the verb ἐξ-ηγέομαι is used to indicate *the narration of an eyewitness*, as in the text of Mk 5:16: "And those who had seen it described to them what had happened (διηγῆσαντο) to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs." The disciples who were witnesses to the Transfiguration are told "not to tell (διηγῶσονται) anyone what they had seen on the mountain" (Mk 9:9). In this sense, the verb ἐξ-ηγέομαι is the most appropriate within the Johannine Prologue: the Only Begotten Son—as the true God—the only one who descended from heaven, the Witness par excellence, can "narrate" or "make God known" (Mihoc 2003, 54, 134), because He narrates what He has seen: "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise" (Jn 5:19). The Son's narration is "authentic" because only God can speak about God.

About Wisdom—another name for the Word of God—which no human can fully comprehend with their mind, it is said that "God has weighed it," "set it in the light," and "measured its depth"—another translation says, "God has narrated it" (Job 28:27).

Translating the verb ἐξ-ηγέομαι in this form allows us to remain close to the idea of the Logos or the Word (the main subject of the Johannine Prologue). An impossible *seeing*—something that would belong to immediate evidence—is substituted by the act of *speaking* of the One who is Himself the Word of God, an act that invites "listening" (Grilli 2011, 7).

John the Baptist—in chapter 3 of the Fourth Gospel—says: "For he whom God has sent utters the words of God" (Jn 3:34). The Logos or the Word of God said: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9) and tells it to us—who believe those who have seen Him.

In Place of Conclusions

The phrase "No one has ever seen God" (Jn 1:18) could be—and often is—the statement of a discouraged person who has sought God and not found Him. In a certain sense, the same phrase could be the statement of the atheist or the agnostic, to whom the Gospel—especially that of John—offers a valid answer: with the Incarnation of the Son of God, we can no longer say this! In Jesus Christ, God came out of the inaccessible light in which He dwells and *revealed Himself* or *appeared* (Tit 3:4).

The phrase "God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known" represents, therefore, the vigorous affirmation of the Gospel that claims and proclaims the fact that God *appeared* in Christ and that Christ is the only "exegete" or "interpreter" of God: "And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, *his form you have never seen*" (Jn 5:37).

We have seen that in the pages of Holy Scripture, the statement that "No one has ever seen God" is opposed by the statement that, nevertheless, to some people (His chosen ones) God has appeared (revealed Himself). St. Gregory of Nyssa says that God appeared to humans in two ways: *in light* and *in darkness*. It is a paradoxical way of speaking about the *appearance* and *seeing of God*. For ordinary (natural) humans, seeing in darkness is impossible.

The human mind—affirms Saint Gregory—advances toward knowledge and comes ever closer to seeing (that is, to contemplation). But while doing this, it seems that, in fact, the divine nature is 'unseen' (unintelligible). Only by 'leaving behind all that is seen' will it continually advance toward spiritual vision and will eventually see 'what is unseen' or impossible to see and understand. For, in the end, *to know Him (God) lies precisely in not knowing Him*. Because the One sought is above all knowledge, surrounded by His incomprehensibility, as by darkness. That is why the wise John, having reached this *bright darkness*, says: '*No one has ever seen God*' (Jn 1:18). Because the knowledge of the divine being remains unapproachable not only to humans but to the entire intelligible nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1995, 123-4).

"Moses—affirms Scripture—spoke with God as one speaks with a friend" (Ex 33:11), but this happened only after he grew stronger in knowledge. Yet, although "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend," it seems it was not enough for Moses, for he asks the Lord to show Himself, "as if the One always seen by him had not appeared before: *Please show me your glory!*" (Ex 33:18). St. Gregory of Nyssa, commenting on this biblical passage, says:

The servant asks the Master to show Himself, and the Lord answers the one who asks and does not reject his desire, but saddens him again, telling him that, in fact, what he asks the Lord cannot yet be contained in human life. Nevertheless, there is a place—*in the cleft of a rock on Mount Horeb*—where the servant could place himself, a place from which he could see the back of the Lord (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1995, 150-1).

The same holy father warns us not to take *literally* these words, because if we do so, their meaning will remain hidden or impenetrable.

Only to things that have a form—says Saint Gregory—can one speak of a face or a back. But any form limits a body. Therefore, he who imagines a form in God will not consider that He (the Lord) is free from a bodily nature [...] If, therefore, someone understands ‘the back of God’ literally, he is led to this madness by the natural chain of thought. Because the front and the back belong only to a form, and the form is proper to the body [...] But then, what is the proper meaning of what is written (in Ex 33:18-23), apart from the literal one? And if this part of the written word of Scripture compels us to seek and find another meaning, it is fitting, without doubt, to understand the entire narrative in the same way (symbolically or spiritually), for the meaning we find in part must be seen (also) in the whole. Therefore, the place near God and the rock in that place and *the cleft of the rock* and Moses’ entrance into it and the covering of its mouth by the divine hand, and the passing and calling of God and then the seeing of His back must be understood (comprehended) by lifting them to a higher plan (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1995, 152-3).

Saint Basil the Great saw in “the cleft of the rock on Horeb” the image of the Church and the Holy Spirit:

What is for us Christians that cleft (or that place) where we could withdraw to contemplate and worship God? Of the Spirit, Scripture says: ‘*Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock.*’ (Ex 33:21). By the word ‘place,’ what else is understood if not *contemplation in the Spirit*, (a state) in which, finding himself, Moses was able to see God, who appeared to him to the extent he could be known? This (the Holy Spirit) is the proper place for true worship (adoration). What other place shall we bring it? To the place of the Spirit, as the Lord says: ‘The true worshipers will worship the Father *in spirit* and truth’ (Jn 4:23) [...] The Spirit is truly the sanctifying place. And the saints are the ‘place’ fit for the Spirit, for they offer themselves as a dwelling for God and become His temple’ (St. Basil the Great 1988, 77).

If in a certain sense we humans are “temples of the Holy Spirit” (1Cor 6:19), in another sense the Holy Spirit is our place (or sanctuary) of worship. We are His human temple, and He is our divine temple (Cantalamessa 2022, 210).

What beauty and power this gives to Christian worship! At times, we all feel the need to withdraw from the tumult of the world “into the cleft of the rock on Horeb” to worship God in silence and peace, as the great Moses once did. There is a place or a space—a kind of unseen niche—within us, always ready to receive us, wherever we are and whatever we do; in this “niche,” we can worship God “in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23-24).

Freed from earthly passions, the human soul soars lightly toward the heights, rising from the lowly to the exalted.

“The great Moses—says St. Gregory of Nyssa—ascending continually, never stops climbing, nor does he set a limit (boundary) for himself in the movement toward the heights, but, once he has set his foot on the ladder that leans on God, as Jacob says, he steps always to the step above and never ceases to rise, because he continually discovers something above the step reached in his ascent to the heights” (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1995, 154).

Consumed by thirst or longing for God, Moses

burns with desire and is hungry for more [...] And, as if he had not yet partaken, he prays to obtain, asking God to show Himself, not as much as he (Moses) can see, but as much as He is.

Saint Gregory calls this longing or yearning for *seeing the glory of God* a kind of “passion” or “the love of the sentient soul for the One who is by nature good, holy, and just”.

Therefore, the ardent lover of the Beautiful, rejoicing in the One who always appears to him higher, as an image of the desired One, wishes to partake of the very face of the archetype (model). For this is the bold request of desire that surpasses all boundaries: to rejoice in the Beautiful, not through mirrors and images, but face to face (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1995, 155-6).

In the same paradoxical way, which we have seen so many times in the binomial “seeing/not seeing” in the pages of Holy Scripture—Saint Gregory expresses himself:

And the divine voice *gives* him (Moses) what he asks *by not giving it*, showing him, in few words, a depth immeasurable in meanings. For the great generosity of God was pleased to fulfill Moses' desire but did not promise him (at all) any cessation and satiety of desire. Because He would not show Himself to the servant as He is, if what he sees in Him were such as to make the desire of the one who sees cease. For to truly see God consists in this: that the one who looks at Him never reaches the end (the limit) of the desire to see Him (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1995, 156).

This is what it means *to truly see God*: never to find any satiety in the desire to know Him. Always, the one who seeks God and wants to see Him must burn with the desire to see ever more.

The great Moses, however, saw something: he saw—says Scripture—"the back of the Lord" (Ex 33:23). Humans cannot see God "face to face."

The same God—affirms Saint Gregory—who once spoke to Moses, says to His disciples, revealing the meaning of what was once said in riddles, saying: 'If anyone would come after me' (Mt 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23). The same thing He says to the one who asks Him for eternal life: 'Come, follow Me' (Mt 19:21). *And he who follows (someone) sees the back of the one before him*. Therefore, Moses, who now desires to see God, is now taught how God can be seen: *to see God means to follow God wherever you go* (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1995, 164).

There is, however, another possibility (the one that descends, not the one that ascends): when the people of Israel saw that Moses delayed, they went to Aaron and said, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us" (Ex 32:1); gods to follow. But before this new "god" (which was an idol in every sense, made from the gold offered by its worshipers), the people behaved strangely: this new "god" no longer inspired fear and trembling in them^[14]. Moreover, Israel attributed to this new "god" the miracle of liberation from Egyptian bondage and celebrated a feast (Ex 32:6).

The desire *to see God* is at the origin of any human restlessness. Still, the same willingness could paradoxically become the beginning or foundation of any religious aberration: in the sense that humans, incapable of living without God and, on the other hand, discouraged and disappointed by the Lord, who seems to want to remain in His unseen space—for, in any case, He does not allow Himself to be "domesticated"^[15]—humans, I say, are willing to fashion for themselves a "god" after their image, that is,

an *idol*, a *seen* and *tangible* god, a god who will quickly resolve, in the way they want, all their whims and false needs.

Now we understand the meaning of the words: "You cannot see My face" (Ex 33:20,23). St. Gregory of Nyssa specifies:

that is: do not pass (O man) before the One who guides you! For in this case, your path will be against Him. Because good does not oppose good, but follows it. And by the one who goes against well, understand the one who places himself before Him, for sin looks against virtue. Virtue, however, is not seen going against virtue. Moses does not look contrary to God but looks at what is behind Him (the back of the Lord), for he who looks contrary will not live. Therefore, the divine voice decrees: 'for man shall not see me and live!' (Ex 33:20) (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1995, 165).

In the episode of the "burning bush," Moses saw *a wonderful thing*: "I will turn aside to see *this great sight*, why the bush is not burned" (Ex 3:3). There was a question in his soul: Why does it burn and is not consumed? (that is, it burns but is not consumed, not destroyed, not annihilated). The Church Fathers are convinced that this question was inspired by the Holy Spirit, who was already directing his attention to the Logos. The Logos was—even in Greek mentality—the reason of all things. The Logos is—and in Christian thought—the place where all questions find their answer and from which they all depart, to penetrate and dwell entirely in the human heart. In this Logos is rooted our desire for meaning, our desire to understand everything, to know everything (Martini 2022, 522-3).

But behold *the scandal* on which the Church Fathers have paused and meditated at length: "And the Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14); the Logos became small; "but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant" (Phil 2:7), so that He is here, not elsewhere; He is now, not before or tomorrow; He made Himself, in a way, accessible, because He came near to us (even to the bodily); He openly offers Himself to an interpersonal relationship, a relationship that includes all of us, making Himself partaker of human nature, so that He can be encountered by each of us in a unique and perfect way.

From this familiarity that God had with Moses, almost unique in biblical history, the memory remains in the entire subsequent tradition. The author of the Book of the Wisdom of Jesus Sirach, praising the servants of the Lord from the past, will say of Moses these things:

"... Moses, beloved of God and men, whose memory is for a blessing, the Lord gave him the glory of the saints and magnified him with fear over his enemies; and by his words (Moses) the Lord performed swift miracles. He glorified him before kings; He gave through him commandments to His people and *showed him His glory*" (Sir 45:1b-4).

This relationship so familiar and so intimate between a mortal and God, this "face to face" (Ex 33:11; Dt 34:10), was "reserved" only for Moses. But when the Logos became incarnate in history, behold, God diminished (emptied) Himself, not only because He assumed a dimension (human nature) that He did not have before, but because He "particularized" Himself (became concrete; individualized Himself). As troubling and scandalous as this appearance of God in human flesh was, the Church Fathers were not afraid to approach it, to gaze at it with wonder and understand it; they even had the courage to say that, by becoming incarnate, the Word of God, who is so radiant or who has so much light that He can illuminate, in an instant, the minds of all, at the same time appeared in opaque flesh; He thickened (or became coarse).

This "opacity" or this "diminution" of God is a "stumbling block" or "cause of scandal" for us who, with our "pagan" mentality, always desire "a sign from God" to believe in Him: "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?" (Jn 6:30). With our irreducibly philosophical mentality, we want "to catch" and "to comprehend" God in the nets of our mind, in our phenomenological and sociological laws, which regulate our religious manifestations. We would like a God who is understood by all in the same way. In this case, it happens that God, about whom we think we know everything, slips through our fingers, making Himself small to remain free or to remain Himself.

It is characteristic of the Lord to make Himself small (to diminish or empty Himself), but in a way that He is not constrained by this diminution. Conversely, the greater our ideas or opinions about God, the more the Lord surpasses or transcends them.

The Lord is great and small at the same time, escaping our attempts to "program" our encounter and dialogue with Him; God is Love (1Jn 4:8 16), and love does not admit "scheduling"; God made Himself small (diminished Himself) overturning our attempts to comprehend Him in definitions and dogmatic formulas and gladly accepts being "a stumbling block" for all who do not wish to leave Him the freedom to love us as He wills, with an unpredictable, inventive, burning, tender, jealous, and fervent love.

The God of Holy Scripture and of the Holy Gospel always surprises and troubles us; even in our human loves, when they manifest in our souls, we continually discover unpredictable things: often you have the impression that you know the person beside you whom you love, only to discover immediately that you barely know them at all. God manifests Himself like a volcano, which does not tolerate being "controlled" or "monitored" to be found, through human calculations, where, when, and how to manifest. The God of Holy Scripture is utterly free from any conditioning, and so He is from one end to the other of Holy Scripture.

Through purification and an authentic Christian life, we can be in living contact with God, for "our life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3), and precisely this "life in Christ" does not allow us to give up—as St. Gregory of Nyssa says—our perpetual advance in the knowledge of Him. Life in Christ is what allows us to see (by faith) God "face to face," discovering, at the same time, that not only do we know Him, but He also knows us as we are, that is, in that uniqueness which no one knows better than He and in that solitude which no human can explore in depth, and this until "we shall see him as he is." (1 Jn 3:2).

Notes

[1] Psalm 80 centers on two well-known theological themes: *the theme of the vine* (which is Israel, in a particular sense, and the world, in a general sense), and the theme of the *face of the Lord*, but the term around which the entire psalm gravitates is the verb *šûb* with its double meaning of "return" or "come back" and the sense of an imperative addressed to people: "return," "come back to yourselves" (in nature) or "repent" (Mt 3:2; Mk 1:4, 15). The theme of *returning to the Lord through repentance* appears frequently in the writings of the prophets (Is 31:6; 45:22; Jr 3:12; 4:1; Zh 1:3; Joel 2:12) and is the main theme of Psalm 80: the Lord «returns» or «turns His face toward His people,» and Israel is restored by returning to the Lord. This «return» is symbolically illustrated by the shining of the light of the Lord's face over His servants (Ps 4:6; Ps 31:16; Ps 44:5; Ps 68:1-2; Ps 89:16; Ps 90:8; Ps 119:135; Job 29:3; Prov 16:15). The return of creatures to their God (through repentance) automatically attracts the shining of the Lord's face over them (Ravasi 2015, 677; see also Moldovan 2018).

[2] This statement is also taken up by Saint Paul, who, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, expresses himself thus: "the knowledge of the glory of God shines on the face (countenance) of Christ" (2Cor 4:6). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews—using a *hapax legomenon*—will say that "the Son is the radiance of His glory and the *exact representation* of His being" (Heb 1:3a); The word *χαρακτήρ* means "imprint" or

“engraving”; an exact reproduction of the original (Spicq 1953, 8).

[3] Ancient manuscripts present three slightly different variants for the expression “the Only Begotten Son”: (a) “the Only Begotten God,” (b) “the Only Begotten Son,” (c) “the Only Begotten.” The last variant (c) is without foundation and is found only in some Church Fathers. Variant (b) “the Only Begotten Son” is better attested and is used frequently by Saint John (Jn 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9), seeming to be a clarification of variant (a), which is the best attested in manuscripts (Dufour 2007, 129).

[4]

“We *have seen* his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (Jn 1:14);

“When you were under the fig tree, *I saw you*” (Jn 1:48); “You *will see* greater things than these» (Jn 1:50);

“You *will see* heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man» (Jn 1:51);

“You are seeking me, not because *you saw* signs” (Jn 6:26);

“Then what sign do you do, that *we may see* and *believe* you?” (Jn 6:30); “Sir, we wish *to see* Jesus” (Jn 12:21);

”Whoever *has seen* me *has seen* the Father.” (Jn 14:9);

“Have you believed because you *have seen me*? Blessed are those who have *not seen and yet have believed*” (Jn 20:29);

“Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and *he saw and believed*” (Jn 20:8);

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which *we have seen* with our eyes, which *we looked* upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and *we have seen it*, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and *was made manifest to us*—that which *we have seen* and heard we proclaim also to you» (1Jn 1:1-3a).

[5] St. John Chrysostom, in *Homilies on Matthew*, says:

“God did not speak through writings with Noah, with Abraham and his descendants, with Job and with Moses, but spoke with them *face to face*, because *He found their soul pure*. When, however, the whole people fell into grave sins, then yes, then there was need for writings, for tablets, for the recording in writing of all the deeds and words of God [...] Over time, however, people turned away from the right path; some because of wrong teachings, others because of their life and conduct [...] Think how bad we have become! We, who were supposed to live so purely that we would no longer need the Holy Scriptures, but instead of paper, we

would have given our hearts to the Spirit to write on them, we have lost this honor and have come to need writings" (St. John Chrysostom 1994, 15).

[6] See also other texts, such as: Ps 106:2; Prov 30:4; Baruch 3:29.

[7] The symbol indicates a reality that *is* and *is not* the reality it indicates, which is of another nature. The human mind is what makes the connection between the symbol and the reality it indicates.

[8] The death of Jesus on the cross has as its immediate effect the "tearing" or "rending" of the veil (*καταπέτασμα*) of the Temple in Jerusalem: "And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom." (Mk 15:38). The fact is recorded by the evangelist Mark without any explanation, and finding a theological significance for this fact is left to the reader's discretion. There were, in fact, two veils: the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies and the veil that separated the Holy Place from the court of the priests (the one at the actual entrance to the Temple). Pierre Benoît considers that the evangelist thought of the outer veil, the one at the entrance to the holy place, a fact that would have had a stronger visual effect, for only this veil could be seen by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This outer veil was raised twice a day by the ordinary servant, while the second veil (which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies) was raised only once a year, on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). The tearing or rending of the veil indicates, therefore, the suppression of the secret and exclusivism of Judaism. Divine worship and access to God cease to be the privilege of a single people, for this will be possible for all (including pagans). This is the profound meaning of the phenomenon produced by the death of the Savior on the cross (Benoît 1993, 294). Josephus Flavius (*Bell. Jud. 5.214*) describes the veil that separated the Holy Place from the exterior of the Temple as being "a kind of representation of the universe... it had embroidered on it the whole panorama of the heavens. In other words, the outer veil represented the vault of heaven. To pass beyond the outer veil and enter the Temple was like entering the heavens after death. There are only two texts in which the evangelist uses the verb 'to tear' (*σχίζω*) in Mk 1:10 (at the baptism of Jesus) and in Mk 15:38, at His death [...] Read in parallel with the account of the Lord's baptism, the tearing of the veil would indicate the revelatory act by which God definitively leaves the Temple. The tearing of the veil presupposes the judgment of the Temple and the cessation of its lawful activity (Drimbe 2024, 214-215).

[9] At the end of the episode known as "The Miraculous Catch of Fish" (Lk 5:4-11), the apostle Peter fell at Jesus' feet, saying: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Lk 5:8).

[10] The woman rests at the breast of her husband (Dt 28:54), and the man finds rest

at her breast (Dt 28:56). This image denotes an affectionate (loving) attitude, specific to spouses, or specific to mothers who hold and protect their children at their breasts.

[11] We have only one exception in Jn 12:38, where the evangelist quotes a text from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah: "to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (Is 53:1).

[12] See the following texts: Jn 5:20; 10:32; Jn 14:8: "Lord, *show us the Father*, and it is enough for us."

[13] At Delphi, there was a stone believed to indicate the center of the world (of the Earth's disk). On this stone was placed the throne from which the Pythia gave oracles in delirium, and certain priests—called "interpreters" or "exegetes"—translated them into intelligible hexameters. Translator's note (199) from p. 462.

[14] "Fear and Trembling" is the title of a book written by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard and published in 1843. His book was printed by Humanitas Publishing House in 2005.

[15] It is interesting and suggestive that Moses' desire to see the glory of God (Ex 33:18) is expressed immediately after the biblical author presented (in the previous chapter, Ex 32) the episode of the "Golden Calf," a classic case of idolatry. In fact, what was the sin of the sons of Israel? It was not about greed or making gold their own "god," for those people were willing to give up their gold. The golden calf was not considered a "foreign divinity," for it was worshiped as "the God of Israel" (Ex 32:4). The feast organized on that occasion was one in "honor" of the Lord (Ex 32:5). So then, why does Saint Paul and all of Scripture call that episode "idolatry" (1Cor 10:7)? It is idolatry because the relationship between the people and their God was changed. On Mount Sinai (when he received the Law), the people stood at a distance, filled with fear and trembling; at the foot of the mountain, however, the people ate, drank, and danced. It is a subtle attempt to "tame" or "domesticate" God, an attempt that God does not accept or tolerate (Cantalamessa 2022, 150-1).

References

BENOÎT, Pierre. *Passione e Risurrezione del Signore. Il mistero pasquale nei quattro evangelii*. Torino: Gribaudi Editore, 1993.

BROWN, Raymond E. *Giovanni. Commento al Vangelo spirituale*. Assisi: Cittadella Editrice, 1999.

CANTALAMESSA, Raniero. *Un imn al tăcerii. Meditații despre Tatăl ceresc*. Alba Iulia: Reîntregirea, 2015.

CANTALAMESSA, Raniero. *Urcușul pe Muntele Sinai*. Alba Iulia: Reîntregirea, 2022.

DA SPINETOLI, Ortensio. *Luca. Il Vangelo dei poveri*. Assisi: Cittadella Editrice, 1999.

DRIMBE, Amiel. *Isus, nedeslușit. Studii asupra Evangheliei după Marcu*. Oradea: Ratio et Revelatio, 2024.

DUFOUR, Xavier Léon. *Lettura dell'Evangelo secondo Giovanni*. Cinisello Balsamo (Milano): Edizioni San Paolo, 2007.

GRILLI, Massimo. *In ascolto della voce. Commento alle letture domenicali e festive (Anno B)*. Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2011.

IGNACE DE LA POTTERIE. *La Vérité dans saint Jean*. 2 vol. Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1977.

KIERKEGAARD, Søren. *Teamă și cutremur*. București: Humanitas, 2005.

MARTINI, Carlo Maria. *I grandi della Bibbia. Mosè. Esercizi spirituali con l'Antico Testamento*. Milano-Firenze: Giunti Editore S.p.A. / Bompiani, 2022.

MIHOC, Vasile. *Sfânta Evanghelie de la Ioan. Introducere și comentariu*. Vol. 1. Sibiu: Teofania, 2003.

MOLDOVAN, Alexandru. „Portrait of St. John the Baptist in the prologue of the Fourth Gospel.” *Romanian Orthodox Old Testament Studies* 9.1 (2023): 24-41.

MOLDOVAN, Alexandru. *Profeții biblici*. Alba Iulia: Reîntregirea, 2018.

PAȘCA-TUȘA, Stelian, Ioan Popa-Bota and Bogdan Șoptorean. „The Word was the true Light...” (Jn. 1:9) – Saint Cyril of Alexandria's Christological Discourse on Light in His Commentary on the Johannine Prologue.” *Studii Teologice* 1 (2018): 59-78.

PLATON. *Republica*. Traducere de Andrei Cornea. București: Humanitas, 2022.

RAVASI, Gianfranco. *Il Libro dei Salmi. Commento e attualizzazione*. Vol. 2. Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2015.

RAVASI, Gianfranco. *L'alfabeto di Dio*. Cinisello Balsamo (Milano): Edizioni San Paolo, 2023.

SF. GRIGORIE DE NYSSA. *Despre viața lui Moise sau Despre desăvârșirea prin virtute*. Traducere de Ion Buga. București: Ed. Sfântul Gheorghe-Vechi, 1995.

SF. IOAN GURĂ DE AUR. *Omilii la Matei. În Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești*. Vol. 23. Traducere de Dumitru Fecioru. București: Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1994.

SF. VASILE CEL MARE. *Despre Sfântul Duh*. București: Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1988.

SPICQ, Ceslas. *L'Épître aux Hébreux*. Paris: Gabalda, 1953.

VALENTINI, Alberto. *Vangelo d'infanzia secondo Luca. Riletture pasquali delle origini di Gesù*. Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2017.