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Spiritual Revelations from the Perspective of Holy Scripture and the Traditions of the Orthodox Church

Duchowe objawienia z perspektywy Pisma Świętego i tradycji Kościoła Prawosławnego

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Słowa kluczowe: wyobrażenia duchowe, iluzje duchowe, halucynacje, prawosławna duchowość, psychologia duszpasterska.

Abstract

The article deals with the issue of the genesis, essence and meaning of revelations in a spiritual life from the perspective of orthodox pastoral psychology. The aim of the article is to point out how the tradition of the Orthodox Church perceives and evaluates the supernatural revelations of God, saints, and spiritual beings, taking into account the experience of faith. The starting point for the assessment is the testimony of Holy Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments, as well as the individual spiritual experiences of the saints who have analysed these issues. The article also deals with some spiritual states and phenomena related to that issue like spiritual fantasies, dreams and hallucinations, emphasizing the need to distinguish between

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these phenomena. In this context, they are trying to point out the need to distinguish between phenomena like hallucinations and delusions. At the same time the article offers certain criteria, which it is possible to identify spiritual and psychological pathology and help from the practical point of view to direct the spiritual life of the believer.

Streszczenie

Artykuł dotyczy zagadnienia genezy, istoty i znaczenia objawień w życiu duchowym z perspektywy prawosławnej psychologii pastoralnej. Celem artykułu jest wskazanie, jak tradycja Kościoła prawosławnego postrzega i ocenia nadprzyrodzone objawienia Boga, świętych i bytów duchowych, biorąc pod uwagę doświadczenie wiary. Punktem wyjścia do oceny jest świadectwo Pisma Świętego, zarówno Starego, jak i Nowego Testamentu, a także indywidualne doświadczenia duchowe świętych, którzy analizowali te kwestie. Artykuł porusza także problem stanów i zjawisk duchowych takich jak fantazje duchowe, sny i halucynacje, podkreślając konieczność rozróżniania tych zjawisk. Jednocześnie określono pewne kryteria, dzięki którym jest możliwa identyfikacja patologii duchowej i psychicznej, a także okazują się pomocne w praktycznym kierownictwie życiem duchowym osoby wierzącej.

1. The Spiritual Significance of Revelation

The supernatural revelation of God and other spiritual beings is one of the most debated issues in every religion. On the one hand man's desire to see into the realm of the other world and, on the other hand, the realization that the spiritual world is hidden from our immediate cognition often come up against various testimonies from the past as well as from the present, which compel us to look for explanations of these phenomena in the Holy Scriptures and in the testimonies of the Holy Fathers. How are we supposed to approach these facts? How does the church perceive supernatural revelations and how does it distinguish them from other pathologies? What are the criteria of spiritual and mental health that a person needs so that revelation does not become

a temptation? The answer to these questions is found primarily in Holy Scripture but also in the testimonies of the Holy Fathers of the Church.

The Gospel of John clearly speaks about which revelation of God is the only one for man. “No one has seen God at any time but the Son.” God addresses man through man’s love for Him and the personification of this love for a man is the incarnated Second Person of the Holy Trinity Christ. His coming to the earth and the beginning of the New Covenant is considered as the greatest revelation of God to this world. This idea is expressed in the great Orthodox liturgical feasts of Epiphany and Transfiguration: “You are my beloved Son, in You I am well pleased; obey Him” (Mark 1, 11). The spiritual world thus becomes accessible to man through the Word of God. God reveals Himself to man through faith as the Apostle Paul says in the Word of God: “So faith is by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom 10, 17). Faith has its origin in God: “that your faith should not be based on human wisdom, but on the power of God” (1Cor 2, 5) and His invisibility: “Faith is surely the substance of what we hope for, the reason for what we do not see” (Heb 11, 1). This is confirmed by the words of Christ to the apostle Thomas: “Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed!” (John 20, 29).

The Gospel prioritizes the meaning of God’s Word over supernatural revelation: “Then said the rich man, I pray thee, father, send him to my father’s house, that he may testify unto them of these things, lest they come to this place of torment. Abraham said to him: They have Moses and the prophets, let them obey them. But he answered: No, father Abraham, but if any of the dead went to them, they would repent. He answered him: If Moses and the prophets are not obeyed, they will not be persuaded, not even if someone were raised from the dead” (Luke 16, 27-31). At the same time the revelation of God to man is available to every believer in spiritual gifts such as the Holy Mysteries (e.g. Eucharist), through which God speaks to the heart of every person. He does it

in a way that everyone in the measure of his spiritual powers can accept. He opens Himself to man through his faith on the basis of which He makes Himself known to a man. According to Siluan of Athos, in order to know God, a person does not need wealth or education but humility and a pure heart, he should be self-controlled and love his neighbour. Then God Himself will reveal Himself to such a person in his soul, teach him humility and love and give him everything useful for finding peace (Sofroniusz 2007). The Holy Fathers speak of faith as a gift and a calling probably in the same sense that Christ called the apostles. The words of the Gospel describe it very precisely “you did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15, 16).

The direct revelation of God is hidden from the ordinary sight of man. In order to see Him one needs to have spiritual sight which, according to the words of the Saviour, must have “pure heart” (Matt 5, 8). The revelation of God in the Gospel is based on humility and purity which is often liken to the innocent state of the soul: “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden this from the wise and understanding and revealed it to infants” (Matt 11, 25). Christ thereby points out that the knowledge of God and the spiritual growth of a person are not possible without spiritual gifts and virtues. At the same time humility and awareness of one’s unworthiness are considered very important virtues that deepen spirituality. It was humility that was the greatest virtue of many saints such as John the Baptist, whom Christ considered a close friend. John expresses his relationship to him in these words: “I am not worthy to bend down and untie His shoe strap” (Mark 1, 7).

The spiritual world is hidden from immediate sense experience for many reasons. It is mostly the personal reasons of a person such as insensitivity and lack of interest in spiritual knowledge that weaken a person’s receptivity to spiritual stimuli. Also the over-emphasis on rational knowledge of reality and the belief that all religious phenomena can be logically explained. Christianity itself is dominated by relativism,

which, according to Max Kašparů, determines what can be believed and what cannot be believed from the teachings of the Church which commandments are good, which are outdated and need to be changed (Kašparů 2002). In this context very often a person's mystical or other supernatural experience (revelations) evokes the idea of mental illness.

On the other hand, one must be aware of the difference between the spiritual world and the world in which one lives. A person's immediate encounter with God, with angels or other beings causes a strong emotional experience which undoubtedly affects a person's mental balance. There are several places in the Old and New Testaments that describe man's encounters with angels and the feelings that accompanied those encounters. "When Gideon saw that it was the angel of the Lord, he said: Woe, O Lord, O Lord, that I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face! But the Lord said to him: Peace be with thee! Fear not, thou shalt not die" (Judg 6, 22-23). Or Tobias and Sarah's encounter with the archangel Raphael: "Here both of them were startled, fell on their faces and were overcome by terror" (Tob 13, 16). In the New Testament it is the story of the Annunciation of the Mother of God: "The angel said to her: "Fear not, Mary, thou hast found favour with God" (Luke 1, 30). In the New Testament, this is how Zechariah and the angels meet at the altar of the temple: "When Zechariah saw him, he was frightened and was filled with fear" (Luke 1, 12). Even the supposition that they see a ghost walking on the water instead of Christ caused consternation among the apostles sailing by the ship (Matt 14, 26).

There are more such places in Holy Scripture where angels or even God Himself appear to people. Such a revelation is not a common way of God communicating with man but rather an atypical one. God reveals Himself differently in the Holy Scriptures. For example, also through natural phenomena in the revelation to Moses on Mount Zion, in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles during Pentecost. In the first case it is a cloud that covered Mount Zion together with Moses, in the second it is tongues of fire that descended on the apostles. Sometimes

God speaks personally through a human voice. It happened during the Epiphany and Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor. In the Book of Genesis the most famous conversation is that of Adam and Eve with God who, before their fall, were able to converse with Him personally on a daily basis. Even the Old Testament prophets sometimes had the opportunity to hear and converse with God such as Moses.

All the revelations of God to man have one thing in common and that is that God is the one who first sought an encounter with a man. Unlike non-Christian occult practices, where contact with the spiritual world is forced, in Orthodox theology the revelation of God to a man is not conditioned by anything, it is always a personal decision. On the human side we can only speak of dispositions that enable, but never condition the revelation of God, e.g. the aforementioned purity of heart, humility.

Yet the Holy Fathers themselves, as well as the Holy Scriptures, warn against various forms of otherworldly experiences including revelation, by saying: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4,1). In the sense of these words everything “supernatural” that a religious person encounters should be considered. The Holy Fathers very often warn that revelations may not at all be what one first sees, but may conceal great spiritual pitfalls such as the appearance of demons or other pathological visions. Therefore, the warning of spiritual prudence and caution should be remembered in any revelation.

This is how Gregory of Sinai answers his monks’ question of what to do when a demon takes the form of an angel and tries to give him false hope: “One needs a great deal of discernment and prudence to distinguish right from wrong. Do not take lightly everything that appears to you, but rather be cumbersome and examine the good thoroughly. Always examine first and then believe” (Rose 2014). Simeon the New Theologian advises the praying “not to look to heaven” because of the fear of demons trying to trick a person. A similar view is shared by Saints Nilus of Sinai and John Climacus (Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain

and St. Markarios of Corinth 1983). Gregory of Sinai warns especially against the consequences of various revelations for people who strive for spiritual perfection and who, through revelations, fall into a state of spiritual delusion. It is the latter that is the greatest pitfall of many revelations and supernatural experiences, which ultimately lead a person away from the true knowledge of God. That is why Gregory emphasizes: God will not be angry with him who fears trespass and watches himself with great prudence. Even if he does not accept what God reveals to him without careful examination, he does not anger God, but on the contrary deserves praise for his prudence (Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Markarios of Corinth 1983).

According to Theophan the Recluse, in addition to any visions, one should also defend one's own pride and conviction that one is sinless and chosen. As he says in his book "Satan appeared to one person and started shouting – Here comes Christ! Then the man answered him. -Depart from me the trick. Christ will not come to me, because I am a sinner, and the tempter has left" (Feofan Zatvornik 2010). Ignatius Brianchaninov in his book *The Ascetical Experience* writes about the true vision of God as follows: "You want to see Christ: - come and see as the apostle John says. Christ promised the disciples that he would not leave them until the end of the world" (Matt 28, 20). He is with them in the Gospel and the Mysteries. It is not for those who do not believe the Gospel. They do not see Him because they are blinded by unbelief. Do you want to hear the Savior? He speaks to you through the Gospel. Listen to Him and avoid a life of sin; listen carefully to the teaching of Christ, which is life eternal. Do you want Christ to appear to you? He will teach you Himself. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, him will my Father love, and I also will love him, and will reveal myself to him (Brianchaninov 2018).

Nicodemus the Hagiorite recommends that any revelation should first be thoroughly examined and only then accepted and believed. He

even speaks of questioning revelation. According to him, the demon tries to seduce everyone who improves spiritually, including through visions or revelations. Sometimes he does this by lying when he reveals himself to man through an angel of light. In such a case the Saint recommends standing firmly in the position of one's own unworthiness and awareness of one's sinfulness. Fearlessly say in your heart 'return, wretch, to your darkness, I am unworthy' (Lorenzo Scupoli, Theophan The Recluse 1997). According to him we should always think first of our unworthiness and sinfulness and never be afraid of offending God. For God always loves and gives to the humble and modest and never punishes them. By behaving in this way we avoid the greatest pitfall of all – the spiritual curse that lies in wait for man in this way (Lorenzo Scupoli, Theophan The Recluse 1997).

2. Revelations and spiritual delusions

According to Aleksey Osipov the very name of the spiritual delusion explains its essence, it is a trick and self-delusion. There are other dangers associated with it such as spiritual dreaming and delusion, a high opinion of one's own spiritual perfection but above all pride (Osipov 2021). Very often this condition threatens inexperienced people at the beginning of their spiritual journey due to lack of knowledge about the spiritual life, unrealistic expectations and lack of spiritual guidance from a more spiritually experienced person. But it can also be possessed by people with some experience even after years of spiritual refinement. The danger of spiritual deluding is in the fact that it distorts a person's view of spiritual life, replaces spiritual reality with one's own fantasies and impressions, it prevents a person's spiritual growth, removes or prevents traditional manifestations of spirituality such as repentance, fasting and prayer. In a state of spiritual deluding a person loses what should accompany his spiritual life i.e. the feeling of his own fallibility and imperfection, spiritual vigilance and humility, on the contrary he acquires a feeling of self-sufficiency, experiences a particularly strong

connection with a higher reality. Spiritual delusion creates an undergrowth for false beliefs which on the contrary a person considers to be true, he ceases to be critical of himself and what he experiences. In his spiritual experience there arises a permanent conviction of direct contact with God or another spiritual being (angels, saints).

Gregory of Sinai mentions dreaming about oneself and one's spiritual state as the main causes of the appearance of the spiritual delusion and he sees the second cause in human nature itself and its untamed desires and passions e. g. desires for various kinds of bodily pleasures (Grigoriij Sinait 1999). In the case of dreaming self-deception becomes very dangerous. In some cases, as the Holy Fathers state, spiritual delusion may be inflicted on a person by God as a punishment for grave sins. It may also be the result of direct contact with demons, as John of Damascus said, that some people consider the work of demons to be the work of the Holy Spirit (Ioan Damaskin 2021).

According to Seraphim Rose there are two main manifestations of the spiritual delusion: the first is when a person tries to reach a high spiritual level without changing his spiritual state, controlling his passions and relying only on the self-sufficiency of his own ideas. As an example the life of the great holy bishop Nikita of Novgorod is given, who at the beginning of his spiritual activity reached the state of "enlightenment" and acquired the ability to know the entire Old Testament by heart. First, during prayer, he heard a voice praying with him then he began to see an "angel" who advised him to stop praying but to read books and teach people. In doing so he showed no interest in the New Testament and was even openly irritated when discussing it. After the common prayers of the monks of the monastery where he lived this ability disappeared. The big surprise was that the future bishop had not only never read the Old Testament but could not read at all. He later described this experience as a demonic deception and spent the rest of his life in severe ascetic struggle, spiritual vigilance and sobriety. We can find more such cases when an "angel" appeared to someone. Isaac the Recluse once saw, that

Christ coming to him together with angels, when he bowed to them the demons gained power over him and tormented him for a long time, causing physical and mental suffering (Rose 2014).

There is also another type of spiritual delusion that does not manifest itself in visions or direct contact with the spiritual world but in the exalted experience of “religious feelings”. According to Ignatius Brianchaninov it happens when there is an insurmountable contradiction in a person’s soul between what a person is after and what spiritual state he is in. Any person who does not have humility and reflection on his spiritual experience and does not follow the teachings of the Church can easily fall into spiritual straying (Brianchaninov 2018).

At the same time, he draws attention to practices often described in literature which only speak of a mystical connection with God and can cause nothing but enthusiasm in an unprepared person, which he achieves without repentance and crucifying the body with passions and desires. The man who burns in his heart the love of God but refuses to repent enters into union with the demon and acquires a hatred of the Holy Spirit. This summarizes the whole essence of the spiritual life of the primordial ascetics, their sobriety in their approach to spiritual experience. The path of their spiritual growth was a constant struggle with their passions and thoughts, incorrect self-evaluation and evaluation of others. Often it was only at the end of their journey that God let them know Him as a God of meek and humble people. In their case prayer to God was not an end in itself to give them some higher ability, but rather it was a cry for help to master everything. Self-reflection was typical for them in which they doubted themselves, considered themselves unworthy, which they also expressed in their prayers to God.

In the fight against spiritual delusion, it is considered to be very important to recognize it and be able to prevent it in time. Therefore, one of the important moments of the spiritual struggle is to maintain a state of sobriety which is considered a kind of opposite of spiritual delusion. Sobriety represents not only a critical view of oneself but also

an appropriate choice of spiritual means. Brianchaninov recommends maintaining sobriety by remembering that we are all in a state of confusion. According to him the very awareness of this protects a person from the pernicious idea that he is free from it. We need to be set free by the Truth that is our Saviour. Just as pride is the cause of deceit, so humility is a certain overcoming and victory over it (Brianchaninov 2018).

3. Revelations and dreams

Sleeping, and especially dreaming have attracted a lot of attention and interest in people since ancient times, mainly in what happens during sleeping and the meaning of individual dreams. Man tried to explain all this first through religion and now also with the help of psychology and medicine. Carl Gustav Jung gives an interesting explanation. According to him dreams are the language of the unconscious, a voice that a person does not understand and which brings him important information about himself. The unconscious through dreams helps a person to supplement his conscious life, it is a kind of inner voice. The whole problem is that the language of the unconscious, i.e. the logic of dreams is different from the logic and speech of consciousness, and is therefore incomprehensible to man. According to him an initiated person can understand the language of dreams through another spiritual being (angel or demon). In this way Jung indirectly refers to perceiving the meaning and interpretation of dreams, also relying on a certain spiritual experience (Jung 1989).

From a Christian point of view a dream is also related to the unconscious side of a person's soul but unlike consciousness, when a person decides what to accept and what to reject, he cannot interfere with the dream. Gregory of Nyssa describes a dream as an illusion of a person's real life, it arises accidentally from that side of the human soul that is unreasonable. In a dream the soul recalls experiences that it probably encountered during the day, the way it presents them is either inappropriate or even absurd. According to Ignatius Brianchaninov sleeping causes a person to rest his body and partly also his soul, during which

he loses consciousness of his existence, reason and will lose control over his thoughts, feelings and imagination. It is from these thoughts, which are not controlled by human consciousness, that dreams are formed. However, the Holy Fathers see the origin of dreams not only in the nature of man and his soul, but also in the ability of the spiritual world to interfere with him. In the Holy Scriptures we find more references to how God communicates with man through sleep and dreams (Brianchaninov 2018).

We read the first mention of it right at the beginning during the creation of man. God uses Adam's sleep to painlessly intervene in his nature and create a woman for him. In the Holy Scriptures, dreams are often spoken of as a way in which God communicates with some people, especially prophets. If there is a prophet among you, then I, the Lord, appear to him in a vision and speak to him in a dream! (Num 12,6). Whereas God revealed the fate of mankind to prophets, unlike ordinary people. Sometimes God speaks personally, such as to Abraham or King Solomon, sometimes He gives a person the ability to correctly interpret a dream, as, for example, it was with Joseph and the prophet Daniel. In his book, the righteous Job explains it as follows: "In sleep (usually), and also in the vision of the night, when men are already deeply troubled, when they rest in their beds at night, then he giveth his revelations to men's ears, and with his signs he terrified them" (Job 33,15-16). Also in the Gospel, the Lord addresses some people through sleep and dreams. So twice in the night the angel revealed the will of God to Joseph. The wise men who came to worship the newborn Christ were warned by an angel in a dream not to follow Herod. Finally, Pilate's wife at the time of Christ's condemnation also saw a terrible dream. As he sat on the judgment seat, his wife instructed him, "Have nothing to do with the righteous man, for I have suffered much for him this day in a dream" (Matt 27,19).

But the possibility of speaking to the human soul through a dream is not only used by God and angels, demons can also do it. John Climacus

deals with this in great details (John Climacus 1982). He explains not only the way they do it, but also the goal they are pursuing. In his book *Ladder of Divine Ascent* he compares a dream to dreaming as the initial state of a spiritually inexperienced person. Basically, the idea is repeated fifteen hundred years later by some psychologists that demons in dreams personify our wishes. As John says the demon of ambition can appear in a dream as a prophet who knows about a person's future. He reveals to him events that will take place in a short succession of time, thus promoting in man the conviction of his gift of providence. Also, the vices that man hides in the depths of his heart demons can very easily visualize through dreams. That's why it often happens that a dream shows what a person likes very much in his soul and what he secretly or openly deals with. The desire for anything will be reflected in what a person will see, whether it will be dreams about the aforementioned spiritual passions or physical pleasures, but also on the contrary, for people who lead a spiritual life focused on repentance, there can be dreams about the last judgment and suffering which awaits them there. From a spiritual point of view, John draws attention to the treachery of dreams that demons bring to us. Thus, from a spiritual point of view, nice and carefree dreams must not be evaluated better than, on the contrary, terrible or frightening dreams. The devil very often deceives a person in a dream and lulls his attention by suggesting spiritually misleading conclusions. For example, stop praying for the deceased because he is already in heaven. On the contrary, terrible dreams are very often sent by God to warn people, as it is expressed in liturgical texts, e.g. in the Akathist to the Pochaev icon of the Virgin Mary, where in the tenth song it is sung that the Virgin Mary warns all those who look back (return to old sins) with terrible dreams.

4. Revelations and hallucinations

Revelations, which are often mentioned in the Holy Scriptures and the lives of saints, must be distinguished from mental illnesses, which

can be accompanied by disturbances in perception and thinking. Mental illnesses represent a wide group of disorders that affect and disrupt a person's personality to varying degrees. Severe psychological disorders, the so-called psychoses that cause serious disturbances in the field of cognition and perception, which are called hallucinations. Partly the cause of hallucinations is explained on the basis of a metabolic disorder of the dopamine system or remains of unknown origin. According to Josef Kafka hallucinations have at least three features:

- A sensation that is not conditioned by a stimulus, and yet perceived by the senses
- Conviction about the reality of the perceived
- Habitual behaviour corresponding to the sick perception (Kafka 1998).

Hallucinations represent a very serious psychological disorder that significantly distorts the perception of reality. Despite this, hallucinations in humans are not an unusual phenomenon. According to estimates, they occur in unusual or individually specific situations in up to a quarter of people. (Hort 2000) Hallucinations and illusions are not necessarily related to mental illness, although they often are. In rare cases, they can arise as a result of strong psychological stress, or as an accompanying phenomenon of a serious somatic disease or as a result of the abuse of an addictive substance (drug). In this case, it is a situational fault with a clearly demonstrable reason for its occurrence. Perception normalises when the disturbing stimulus ceases. Hallucinations may be induced under conditions of sensory deprivation or hypnotic suggestion (Hort 2000).

In connection with perception disorders which also affect a person's thinking, it is necessary to mention the so-called delusions. From a medical point of view delusions are a person's opinions that do not correspond to reality but which a person irrefutably and permanently considers to be reality. Delusion is characterized by false, incorrect content and irrevocable, untouchable persuasiveness (Končerková 2005).

Delusions controlling a person's thinking become his dominant background on the basis of which even his own religious stories can be created.

Delusions may or may not necessarily be the result of hallucinations. It can be a separate disorder, in which the person's personality will be relatively well preserved (without noticeable manifestations). Among the numerous group of delusions are religious delusions, which, according to Končeková are divided into macromanic (exaggerating) and micromanic. The most common delusions with a religious focus are:

- Reformer delusions, the goal of which is to establish a new, more perfect and progressive religious community based on the personal conviction of the individual. In the background of the reformer's delusions, the person of a spiritually enlightened and charismatic leader stands out.
- Religious delusions, which are personal convictions of a person that he is chosen by God and through him God's plan for all humanity is to be realized. Very often such a person situates himself in the position of a prophet or a saint.
- Delusions of ruin – belief in the approaching end of the world and its complete destruction. In people with this type of delusions the meaning and desire to live is lost, the person falls into passive expectation. Very often this type of people attracts types with reformation and religious delusions. (Končeková 2005)

Psychic and spiritual anomalies have these characteristics in common, they are:

- Compulsive - they come even when a person does not expect them and does not want them, they have an intrusive nature.
- Violent - they are against the person's will, the person feels pressure and a limitation of his own freedom, the person in question does not control his condition and cannot change it.
- Frequent – in contrast to the revelations written about in the Holy Scriptures which happened once or several times in the

lives of the saints, pathology refers to daily or weekly recurring and often expected conditions.

- Purposeless – from a spiritual point of view and from the point of view of psychological integrity they are useless and even harmful.
- Unpleasant - “revelations” of this nature are a nuisance and are accompanied by feelings of fear and anxiety; unlike the awe described in the lives of the saints one does not experience the kind of spiritual joy that would be expected in such a case.

This feeling escalates in direct proportion to repeated “revelations”. Other signs of psychological and spiritual anomalies are their impact on a person:

- Deterioration of social relationships with close people (shutting down, sudden life change, loss of sense of responsibility for loved ones, alienation from them, compulsive interest in other people’s salvation).
- Rejection of spiritual guidance and obedience, humility and prudence are lost, the overall religious belief is distorted, it is simplified to an often bizarre private religion (e.g. a person only focuses on the world of angels or a specific being that appears to him).
- A feeling of exceptionality and irreplaceability, a feeling of a medium (I am chosen from above). Unlike the saints, who, despite their greatness never identified with the idea of exceptionalism.
- Engaging in esoteric and occult practices, spirit invocation and the use of private religious rituals and practices.

From a spiritual perspective at the root of every delusion is spiritual pride which can also be an obstacle to spiritual healing. Pride manifests itself in an insurmountable conviction of the person’s chosenness or in a rejection of God and a desperate damnation of life. Of course, apart from the treatment that a person consumed by delusions and hallucinations needs, coping with these states from a spiritual point of view is only possible on the basis of sincere repentance and humility.

5. Conclusion

The cognition of God is not forced, it is not a matter of education and acquiring some hidden knowledge or a matter of initiation as it is presented in many esoteric cults and doctrines, but it is opened gradually in the degree to which the soul of man is purified and ready to receive God and to what extent even God Himself wants to reveal Himself.

The fact that the spiritual world is veiled from direct knowledge has an educational aspect for man. Belief in God becomes visible in a person's love for God, its goal is not to arouse fear and respect, but love and a feeling of infinite care for a person on the part of God. That is why God reveals himself to man in his heart through grace. Holy Mysteries such as The Eucharist and the many intact relics of saints and miraculous icons testify to the fact that the revelation of God's grace in the Church is available to the sensory experience of every believer. The personal revelations which the saints had were themselves subjected to rigorous scrutiny, and therefore could never contradict the main ideas of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. As the apostle Paul pointed out, "we also, or if an angel from heaven should preach to you (another) gospel instead of the gospel which we have preached to you, let him be accursed." (Gal 1, 8).

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