

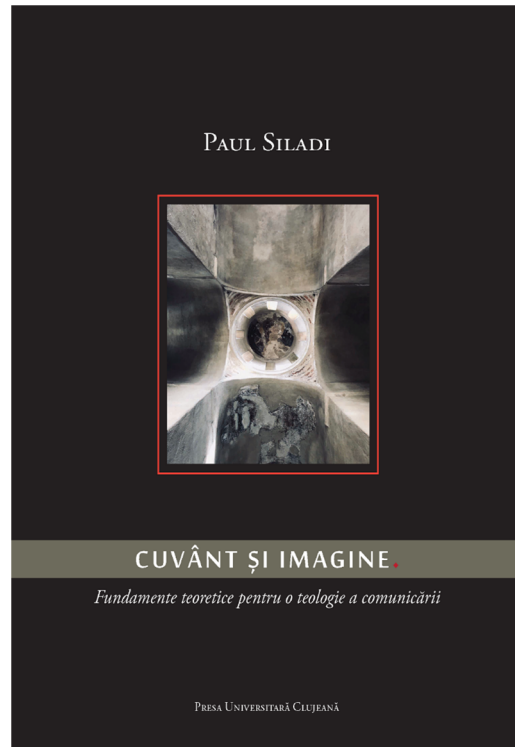
Paul Siladi, *Word and Image* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2019), 588 pp. [In Romanian]

Among the most surprising works published in the first half of the current year the volume signed by Paul Siladi occupies a very special place. Written as a ThD thesis under the coordination of Fr. Prof. Valer Bel, Siladi's work is attempting to prove that it is impossible to fully deliver the Christian message if word and image are separated. Mission is understood as the sum of the Church's actions, by the means of which it transmits, sustains, and creates the environment for experiencing faith.

The author divides his volume in nine chapters preceded by an *Introduction* and followed by *Conclusions* and *Bibliography*.

The *Introduction* serves to contextualize the topic and shows that the inseparable connection between word and image is based on Christ Himself, Who possesses the double quality of being both the Father's Word and His Image. Even if the word and the image have been the objects of numerous analyses, their connection has only seldom been addressed from a theological point of view, and there are only a few works dedicated exclusively to it, mostly in the western protestant space (Jean Phillippe Ramseyer, Jacques Ellul, Jérôme Cottin). A notable work in the Romanian theology is the Th.D. thesis of fr. Dumitru Vanca, focusing chiefly on didactical and catechetical aspects. All these contributions at the theology of the word and the image will be analyzed in detail.

Chapter I entitled *State of the research* [p. 25-70] lists the works dedicated to the issue of the word and the image in Romania from the second half of the 20th century on, precisely because Romanian theologians have shown interest in this matter. The articles were divided into three categories, depending on subject matter: studies dedicated to the word, the icon/image, and to the relation between them. In addition to these, there is a section presenting the articles of icon theology appeared in representative western journals. It must be said that in the multitude of local papers dedicated to the icon, there is not enough originality, neither in approach, nor in structure. The remarkable



iconology articles written by fr. Stăniloae have stood the test of time and have irrevocably marked the Romanian theological thought (restricting it to Christology as fr. Ioan I. Ică jr criticizes). Equally worthy of being remembered are the article written by Ioan Rămureanu on the veneration of icons in the first three centuries of the Christian era, and the well documented contributions of fr. Nicolae Chifăr in the field of Byzantine iconoclasm and the icon theology elaborated on that occasion.

Chapter II entitled *Word and Image-A semantic and philosophical analysis* [p. 71-92] is reserved to the theological investigation of the two concepts, beginning with their etymology and then extends towards their philosophical meanings. The first phase presents the meanings of the word 'cuvânt' (word) in Romanian, and then compares them to the ample meanings the Greek word *logos* has. Regarding the concept of *image*, the theological language uses two different key concepts, inherited from the Greek: *eikon* and *eidolon*. Although both of these terms may, on a certain level, be translated with *image*, the relation the types of images have with reality is different. *Eikon* is an image reflecting a reality, whereas *eidolon* is the image of an illusion, of a figment of imagination. The most well-known analysis of the two concepts in Romanian theology is fr. Dumitru Stăniloae's study 'The idol as image of deified nature and the icon as window on divine transcendence'. Synthesizing fr. Stăniloae's ideas from the introduction to his study, it can be stated that even though *eikon* and *eidolon* partially share a common semantic field centred on the image, the distinction between them at a strictly conceptual level isn't all that unambiguous in the biblical sphere. The last section of *Chapter II* is dedicated to a brief presentation of the Latin terms for image: *imago*, *forma*, and *figura*.

Chapter III is dedicated to Christology (*Logos and Eikon – a Christological approach*) [p. 93-150]. In Christian theology the connection between *Logos* and *Eikon* is based on their unity in the unique person of the Son of God, Who the Scriptures define as the Word and Image of God. The chapter has two parts: the first one presents the philosophy and the theology of the divine *Logos*, and the second focuses on the Christological significance of the term *eikon*. The fact that the Son of God made flesh was the Father's *Logos* or Word has never been challenged, being part of what might be called the common doctrinaire corpus of all Christian theologies. For this reason, the space reserved for the divine *Logos* in the structure of the thesis is smaller than the one dedicated to the Son as Father's Image. The way we comprehend God's visibility, considering the biblical sources, bears the mark of our confessional appurtenance. This is the case of the French Calvinist theologian, Jérôme Cottin, who tried to outline a Protestant theology of the image, but who still holds fast to the traditional positions of the Reformation, reaffirming the incompatibility between the theology of the image and that of the word. For the Reformed theologians such as J. Cottin the biblical statement that the Son is 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1,15) is nothing more than a reformulation of the Johannine assertion that the Son is the Word of God. By contrast, the Orthodox east has developed in time an image theology based on Christology. The issue of the Son's visibility was central to the Church Fathers, as one that had ultimate implications and was an endless source of theological speculations. For the Romanian theology the one who absorbed and went into these aspects of Christology even deeper was fr. Dumitru Stăniloae. His vision is largely concentrated on the point where Christology and anthropology connect, elaborating on the implications of the embodied Christ's being God's Word and Image has for the word and image used in human communication.

In *Chapter IV, The Man and Creation from the perspective of Word – Image Binom* [p. 151-178], the author analyses the connection the two concepts have on an anthropological and cosmological level. On the former level, it is significant that the man is created in the image of the Logos-Image, a syntagma reuniting the two fundamental qualities of the Son of God, namely being God's Word and Image. These qualities are also found in the man created in the image of the One Who is both Logos and Image. Moreover, the word-image binomial is not confined to the anthropological sphere; it can be seen in the entire creation. The world hides behind the image, through which it is accessible to us, reasons of the things placed there by God; when the man perceives them he knows their source, God the Word. An eloquent expression for this is fr. Stăniloae's phrase naming the world 'plasticised reason', a meaning that became material, and due to its corporeality, accessible to sight.

Chapter V, Logos and Eikon in the Iconoclast era [p. 179-332], the most extensive section of the thesis, is dedicated to the analysis of the relationship between *logos* and *eikon*, between word and image during the Iconoclastic period. This age is fundamental for our topic, because that is when the theoretical bases for the icon theology are laid and because those conflicts are 'the genesis of a thought on the image we have inherited'. The foremost representatives of the iconodules, namely St. Germanos of Constantinople, St. John of Damascus, St. Nicephoros of Constantinople and St. Theodore of Studion have paid special attention to the connection between word and image in their treatises.

Chapter VI, entitled Word and Image in the Western Thinking [p. 333-388], is dedicated to the relationship between word and image in western theology and is consequently divided into two sections: a presentation of the reception and the consequences of the Byzantine iconoclasm in the west, and a review of two works of reference on the topic, written by Jean-Philippe Ramseyer and Jacques Ellul. They have very different approaches and perspectives. Ramseyer is much closer to Orthodox than to Catholic theology when he writes about the word of God: from the beginning it is connected to the sphere of visibility, for the simple reason that when God speaks He also acts, or rather God acts by speaking. His word is not a vehicle of intellectual communication, but an action by which God becomes involved in history, calling beings and things into existence. This way, although He is not actually visible, the Word of God becomes visible through His actions. According to J. Ellul, the sight introduces a *plastic* dimension in biblical revelation. It is naturally an immaterial plastic, a sort of spiritual body whose visibility offers itself to the inner sight. Therefore, sight is a Word in immaterial images. On the other hand, the French Reformed theologian, Jacques Ellul assumes an iconoclastic position. Endowed with fantastic intuitions, Ellul's image criticism cannot be fully ignored, even when he writes about the use of icons in the church.

Chapter VII, Word and Image in Modernity [p. 389-424], deals with the word-image relationship in modern times. The starting point is the idea that modernity and postmodernism share a continuity, not only historically, but mostly with respect to ideas. The specific element of modernity on a semiotic level is breaking the bond between signifier and signified. Words and images are self-referential: they no longer refer to something found beyond them. Both words and especially images have this destiny. The solution to free the image from this tyranny is the icon, free from the logic of modern imagery. Instead of the image's self-reference, the icon's kenosis which fades as much as possible in order to allow a bridge to the beyond to form.

Chapter VIII, Mission through Word, Image and Sacrament [p. 425-464], presents the mission through word, image, and Sacrament. The entire cult of the Church and, above all, the Sacraments, are examples of the union between word and image, spirit and matter. The word, the image, and the Sacrament are means through which the Church can efficiently fulfil its mission to grow and to incorporate all people in the mystical body of Christ, so that they may all live fully this way. A special aspect of this union is the witness given by the holiness one's life. Taking Christ as a model in life he who preaches the word of God has to complete the words he utters by his own image, as the fulfilment or the embodiment of those words. The word which doesn't become a reality in the one who articulates it is a mere empty promise. For someone to have a *powerful word*, a persuasive word, capable to convert others, it is necessary that that word be accompanied by the image of the person talking, embodying the message of the Gospels he preaches. This reality is exemplified by the monks in the Egyptian desert, for whom personal example took precedence over empty, moralising talk.

The last chapter, Inclusive Simultaneous [p. 465-476], analyses several possible definitions of the word-image relation. Firstly, there is the definition of N. Ozolin who perceives this relation as 'analogy and complementarity'. When this relation is discussed from a theological perspective, its terms are theology and icon, and everything becomes clearer now: the two concepts, *analogy* and *complementarity*, show their faults, but this does not annul their didactic value. The source of the shortcomings is the tendency for a mechanical understanding brought about by the latter term. Usually, two complementary objects form a unity, which is often something else than what each element is in itself. In this case, theology and icon form a unity that is paradoxically nothing different from what they each express.

The *Conclusions* [p. 477-488] emphasize that both concepts are simultaneous means of communicating and transmitting revelation, and they are equally means of communicating and transmitting the faith in God and His work. Jesus Christ is the supreme and ultimate synthesis of God's work, because He is the embodied Son and Word of God, as well as 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1,15). Among the ways God communicates Himself and his work to us are the word and the image/icon, in a relation of inclusive simultaneity, playing a major part in the mission of the Church, namely in preaching, supporting and experiencing faith. The word and the image have various concrete forms of being present in the Church. The word is found in the Scriptures, in preaching, in prayers etc. The image is found in icons, the image of Christ and His saints, the image of the confessor, the image of the Christian mother etc., even the image of the authentic Christian community. The word and the image in their simultaneity, in these forms or others, are means of communicating and living the faith, means of Christian witness and mission. The preached word must be accompanied by image. The man, created in the image of He Who is the Word and the Image of the Father, is in his turn word and image, and in order for his testimony to be authentic, his words must express his inner reality, they must spring forth from an authentic experience of the reality preached. Otherwise the words remain empty and never go beyond being mere sound (even articulated ones), a superficial shell for a distant truth. In these situations, the risk of hypocrisy is immense.

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