

The Nature of Theological Language

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Abstract: *Over time, there has been a historical relationship between philosophy and theology all over the world. In our days, the rise of analytical philosophy, which is best illustrated in the school of logical positivism, has created a close preoccupation with the meaning of language. This development in philosophy inevitably calls for a critical re-examination of the nature of theological language. The problem is the meaning of words applied to God and to creatures. If our words mean exactly the same thing when applied to God and to creatures, then God's transcendence is eliminated: God ceases to be God in order to be a creature or vice versa. On the other hand, if our words bear an altogether different meaning when applied to God, then God's immanence is obscured: man is no longer in a position to know God. We must emphasize from the outset that the theme is very difficult, because theology and language are living realities, following a dynamic path, unsupported by methods. Moreover, we cannot elaborate methods, isolated from life, which we then apply to life. It does not always yield results to apply the methods related to a certain spiritual activity to another of this kind.*

Keywords: philosophy of language, theological language, conventional language, adequate interpretation, religious experience.

Introduction

Nowadays, the theme of “theology-language” relation is situated at the heart of the problems. The latest profound classifications in theology and even more in philosophy and linguistics have developed new ways of approaching the theme and have offered some new methods, unexplored until now.

Mainly, existentialism, structuralism and analytic philosophy (linguistic philosophy) have become an inexhaustible source from which theologians extract the method and the means for explaining the current state of theology. And all of these happen in the hope that they will succeed to define the manner of practicing theology nowadays.

From the very beginning, we have to emphasize the fact that the theme is a very complex one, since theology and language are vivid realities, following a dynamic path that is not subject to certain methods. One cannot elaborate methods isolated from life, that can afterwards be applied to what life represents.

One of the greatest challenges addressed to the contemporary theology emanated from linguistic philosophy, especially from the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein and of the Neo-positivism of Vienna Circle, represented by Carnap and Reichenbach. These two considered that the essence of philosophy does not consist in metaphysics or gnosiology, but in the logical analysis of the word meaning. According to this view, the thoughts expressed by Wittgenstein can be considered as basis of a programme consisting in a reconsideration of the nature and philosophy's objectives:

“Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently, we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only point out that they are nonsensical. Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand

the logic of our language. And it is not surprising that the deepest problems are in fact not problems at all¹”.

Therefore, “all philosophy is a critique of language”². For Wittgenstein, philosophy does not represent science or doctrine, but mainly the activity through which the logic classification of thoughts is pursued, namely of propositions. The influence of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* work amongst the members of Vienna Circle was significant, but they interpreted it in a neo-positivist manner, using the anti-metaphysics conception, the theory of tautology of logic assertions and the theory of propositions, but setting aside ethics and its mystic. However, Wittgenstein was not a neo-positivist, even though he identified the method of philosophy with “to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science”³ and gave his readers the following advice “what we cannot speak about (ethics and mystic) we must pass over in silence”⁴.

Wittgenstein believed in a God hidden in transcendence who cannot be described in human language. He explained this impotence of the language by the fact that religious, ethical and aesthetic values have to be necessary and immutable. However, the world, being made up of the totality of the contingent acts, may only have a meaning and a value outside itself⁵ and language cannot describe them, for its limits are our world’s limits. However, according to this, “god does not reveal Himself in the world”⁶.

Therefore, we can notice a difference between neo-positivism and Wittgenstein’s thinking: while for neo-positivists only what can be said matters, namely what can be verified, for Wittgenstein what cannot be said has a greater value, whereas “even if all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life have still not been touched upon at all”⁷.

The exegetes of Wittgenstein’s work have easily spotted a change that happened in his thinking in time: if in his first period he pursued to create a logical, ideal language, in order to solve the problems, in his second period he looked at the common language, seeking an adequate therapy for it in *Philosophical Investigations*.

This is the moment when Wittgenstein introduced the concept of the “language game”⁸: any language encompasses, in fact, a language game and therefore, religious assertions make some sense within their own language game. In other words, human being can have other experiences than the ones that can be expressed through logical-positivist language: “the honest religious thinker resembles the man dancing on wire. It seems as he is walking almost solely on air.

¹Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, translation by Mircea Dumitru and Mircea Flonta, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2001, p. 95-96.

² *Ibidem*, p. 96.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 159.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 159.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 156.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 158.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 159.

⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Cervetări filozofice*, translation by Mircea Dumitru and Mircea Flonta, 2nd edition, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2013, p. 104.

The spot where he walks is the narrowest of the ones that we can envision. And still, he can really and truly walk on it”.

Wittgenstein thereby reopened the door to metaphysical and religious queries, showing that he was willing to admit their logical meaning in well determined conditions. In doing so, he had distanced himself from the neo-positivist circle. We have to point out the fact that his position rather carried theology and metaphysics in an area of silence. Reducing his philosophical method to depiction, Wittgenstein also limited the object of philosophy to what can be depicted.

Religion, with its supernatural contents, remains indefinable by itself and only the external and therefore secondary dimensions can be conceptualized. Therefore, Wittgenstein does not deny reality and the possibility of religious experiences, but considered religious language impossible, namely their expression.

A.J Ayer was even more radical when he denied the possibility of religious language by the absolute application of the empiric verifiability principle and Paul van Buren who was renowned for semantic atheism¹⁰. Certainly, all these attempts of clarifying the nature of language have a great importance. If Greek philosophy considered language to be an instrument of thinking and set definite rules to control it, contemporary philosophy has sought to analyse the language within itself, bringing to light the fact that it is more than a sonorous expression of a concept.

Theologians cannot continue to be impassable spectators of this process because theology is, as well, utterance about God and about the world from the perspective of divine revelation. Theological language involves and claims a general theory of language, however, in reality such a unitary theory does not exist. The sine qua non condition of the possibility of the religious language and, particularly, of theological language, is the personal and prior experimentation of God as a living and personal existence.

If, despite the progress of the biblical studies and of their proliferation in vast layers of Christian population, we are bound to confess a certain sterility of the Word today, this happens precisely because we are getting closer to it intellectually rather than sapientially, speculatively rather than cognitively, meditatively rather than entreatingly. In our proximity to God’s word we do not have to actually seek the manifestation of a certain idea or a knowledge growth, but rather a commitment between us and God, between the One who speaks to us and us who listen to; therefore we have to draw close to Him in order to conclude an alliance or a covenant.

God’s word is a word of life, namely a means of life in God. Without Him we will never become bearers of Christ’s life within us, we will never live the divine life of the Trinity itself. The etymologic signification of “word” (dabar, in Hebrew) indicates the depth of things, what remains hidden within them. To speak means to

⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Însemnări postume 1914- 1951*, translation by Mircea Flonta and Adrian Iliescu, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1995, p. 140.

¹⁰ Normann L. Gesler, *Filosofia Religiei*, editor Agnes Dragomir, Oradea, Cartea Creștină, 1999, p. 316-318.

express what is found within things, to make visible what transpires behind them as their dynamic and most profound reality, as their calling. When God speaks, He creates things, makes them arise; when God gives a name to things (cf. Genesis 1,5.8), He contains them outspreading His power on them, He carries them to the achievement of their own calling, because His Word works and does not turn back without producing an effect. (Isaiah 55: 10-11 and Genesis 1: 1-31).

In this Hebrew vision, so different from our ordinary conception of Greek cultural origin, the word is always effective, powerful and does not oppose action, on the contrary, it encompasses the action itself as a constituent of its own.

Here is what we find in the Scripture: not a treaty about life, about man and its history, but the profound reality of all of them, the sovereign power of God exercised and found in this reality. The Word of God is not a book or a collection of writings, but a seed (Matthew 13.19), something that contains life in itself (Deuteronomy 32.47) and develops this life in order to make the great tree of the kingdom grow. It therefore germinates in history as well as in the personal life of every man, grows by filling the reality with a new presence, sanctifies because it gives food to those who receive it, and shines (Psalm 119.105), because it reveals the secret of things, giving wisdom to those unlearned (Psalm 119.130) and leading things to their own ultimate perfection.¹¹ (cf John 17.17; Acts 19.20; Hebrews 4.12; I Peter 1.23; Luke 8.11; Mark 4.13-20, 26-32).

Therefore, before we ask what the value and meaning of the theological language are, we must investigate the possibility of the religious experience. It is confirmed even by the universality of the religious phenomenon and implies both the divine revelation and the man's ability to receive it. Once a religious experience has been experienced, the main way of expressing it and communicating it to others is language. What are the possibilities and boundaries of language in expressing a religious experience? To what extent can finite concepts articulated in language be applied to the infinite God? How can we be sure that theologising does not make a linguistic idol, an idol made up not of stone, wood or gold, but of our own words? It is therefore necessary for the theologian to ponder the nature of theological language in order to establish its foundations, dynamics, value and boundaries¹².

The characteristics of theological language

The Book of the Genesis explains the existence of man by the power of the Word of God, which created him in his image and likeness: “Let us make man in our image and likeness”. The Word of God not only designates the human being in this case, but also fulfils what this signifies, by giving existence. If the purpose of words is generally communication, transmitting information, establishing interpersonal relationships, from Genesis we understand that God, by saying the

¹¹ Enzo Bianchi, *Cuvânt și rugăciune. Introducere în lectura duhovnicească a Scripturii*, translation Maria-Cornelia Oros, Sibiu, Deisis, 1996, p. 23-24.

¹² Paul Evdokimov, *Cunoașterea lui Dumnezeu în tradiția Răsăriteană*, translation by Vasile Răducă, Bucharest, Christiana, 1995, p. 26.

word *man*, creates the human being, communicating all his/her specific elements among which the ability to know and love.

That is why man can be nothing but an open being, seeking fulfilment through communication. Since the Word of God is the basis of his genesis, the human person cannot be confined to interpersonal relations with his peers and to the relations with the universe surrounding him, but he has an ontological need for communication with his creator. This is fulfilled by virtue of the divine revelation, culminated and perfected in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

The language is thus presented as the main way in which man expresses his feelings, experiences, and experience, between which the religious ones occupy a central place, because they give meaning to the entire human existence. Depending on what it expresses, language can be religious, artistic, philosophical, technical-scientific etc. Clarifying and specifying the terms of language is particularly important precisely because it helps to clarify concepts and leads to a fairer understanding of different types of experiences.

Another aspect, which should be stressed, regards the report of the language, articulated by the letters of a language in words, with the truth of reality. Man expresses reality through language, depicts it from different perspectives, but he neither captures it nor deplete it, he cannot close it in words. In this respect, St. John Damascus clearly distinguishes the process of knowledge from its way of expressing it:

“The knowable is something and the explainable is something else, as the speech is something and the knowledge is something else. For this, there cannot be clearly expressed many of those that are understood about God in an obscure manner, but we are forced to express the things that are above us in our human way of speaking as we say that God sleeps, that he is angry”¹³.

The language uses concepts whereby the intellect approaches reality and knows it, the concepts consisting of a resemblance to reality the analogue language. For this reason, no human language is the exclusive holder of truth, and many language formulas can be convergent and complementary in expressing the profound truth of the human being or the universe.

Any attempt to fully identify the language with the truth of reality or with reality itself is exaggerated and mythologizes the language. In reality, something else happens: the experience of reality is much richer than expressing it through language.

Every man, in his own way, has faced at least once, with the inability to fully express the depth and complexity of some experiences. If this is the case with human language in general, the situation is all the more verified for religious language, because “no one has ever seen God”. And yet, religious language/theological language is possible before all by the power of God.

The condition of the possibility of theological language is articulating in two moments tightly united by the Godly iconomy: the creation of man as an

¹³ Saint Ioan Damaschin, *Dogmatica*, third edition, translation by Dumitru Fecioru, Bucharest, Scripta, 1993, p. 16.

ontological being open to God and the effective realization of the divine Revelation. The Abyss between God and Man is overcome by God Himself who spoke to man about Himself through creation, and then, in a more personal way, through the embodiment of His Son. The humanity he assumed was the first recipient of the Godly revelation and a unique religious experience.¹⁴ That is why the words of Jesus Christ, even if rendered by the intercession of God-inspired hagiographers, are of unique importance because they constitute a religious language chosen by God himself. Therefore “this original language, constituted by the unity of the words and gestures of Jesus, but also by the language that intercedes it, is the primary and normative source of any successive theological language”¹⁵. Jesus Christ is the divine Logos, the Father's logos, and thus the words He speaks in His human existence are the words of God, that is, the language of Revelation. However, it would be wrong to think that the words of the Redeemer would express the full richness of his religious experience produced by the divine Revelation. The Truth, being Jesus Christ Himself (In. 14.16), cannot be imprisoned even in the language He Himself chose. The concepts with which he composed the language of Revelation were borrowed from the language of the people in which he was crowned, and subsequently, through the divine inspiration of the hagiographers, they received the garment of the Greek language. This does not mean, however, that the truth of Revelation would simply be revealed by the correct syntax of the New Testament phrases.

a) The language does not include and does not exhaust the Truth

As long as experience means life and dynamic reality, it does not fit into linguistic forms and structures, which are relative.

As far as this subject is concerned, Saint Gregory the Theologian is explicit; his opinion is contrary to the one professed by Plato, who stated in *Timaeus* that when one gets to know God, it is completely impossible to express Him. This seemed strange to St. Gregory the Theologian, for whom the difficulty resided in knowing the truth itself. He thought that if there were knowledge (communion or experience) of the truth, then surely a word/ formulation would be found, in order to express such knowledge. However, this word/ formulation would be a weak expression (not well clarified, but somewhat obscured) of the experience¹⁶. Truth cannot be explained in the proper sense. The exact meaning is not expressed, when we use, for example, the terms “birth” or “procession”. We arrive at these formulations based on what happens to people, i.e. by analogy, as stated above by St. John of Damascus.

Under no circumstances does the word-formulation itself encompass reality. Moreover, we should bear in mind that the truth, the lived reality is uncreated and the word-formulation is an invention of the created man. There is no similarity between the created and the uncreated. Therefore, the form, the image

¹⁴ Constantin Coman, *Erminia Dubului*, Bucharest, Bizantyne Press, 2002, p. 134-143.

¹⁵ Rino Fisichella, “Linguaggio” in *Dizionario di Teologia Fondamentale*, Assisi, Cittadella Editrice, 1990, p. 641.

¹⁶ Sf. Grigorie de Nazianz, *Cele cinci cuvântări teologice*, translation by Dumitru Stăniloae, Bucharest, Anastasia, 1993, p. 24.

or the word, which may be like the truth and which may render it, at least partially, cannot be found¹⁷. The word is conventional.

What we want to express and the expression form are quite different, completely different from one another. Under certain circumstances, the man – who is a creature – knows the truth, knows God, acquires His experience, His life. Only at that moment, he feels supported and experiences a state of peace with the truth, within the truth. This is a habitual state preferred by all those who have experienced communion – an intense experience of the truth. This situation usually remains surrounded by silence. It remains unexpressed, unformulated; it does not become a word, i.e. theology. Then, there are no problems, i.e. neither the problem raised by the way of expression, nor the problem triggered by the authentic expression of the experience of truth.

However, the communion-experience of the truth is often required because of wrong teachings. This experience must necessarily be shared and expressed. Nevertheless, what word, what “coat” will be chosen for this purpose? Since there is no analogy between the means of expression and the truth, the one who underwent this experience will necessarily use an expression form known at the respective time, i.e. a language, a term, a structure. However, we should emphasize that any theological formulation should be tightly connected, first, to whatever the Church believes in and, second, to the spiritual climate of the time. The linguistic formulation of the authentic experience of the truth is always confessed by – it never contradicts – what constitutes the Church Tradition. Any new element clearly springs as a consequence and as a continuation of those that have been already formulated.

In terms of form, the linguistic formulation depends on the linguistic forms known in each era, on the means whereby people have learned to reason and wherewith they interact from a philosophical, cosmological, moral perspective. The use of such linguistic forms is self-evident, not because a contact point with the people of the time has to be found, but, in any case, because this language, these forms are known and available to the person formulating the experience.

It has a genuine connection to the truth – hence its experience – but it is also part of the time and culture of the respective country. In addition, the form of theological expression will be acknowledged as authentic by those who have acquired or who will acquire the experience of the theologian who used that expression form. Therefore, truth can be received by other persons mainly by the identity of the experience (not by the identity of the expression form).

Any means of expression/ words never refer to the divine nature, which is and remains undefined. If, of course, the language whereby truth is expressed had been a revelation, then we would surely have looked for the identity between language and truth, or at least for the analogy between theology and language.

Some contemporary philosophers proceed in the same way, identifying what they mean by what is meant, the existence of things with the language used in

¹⁷ Stilianou G. Papadopoulou, *Teologie și limbă. Teologie experimentală. Limbă convențională*, translation by Constantin Băjău, Craiova, Mitropolia Olteniei, 2007, p. 34.

order to express them. However, by limiting the existence to language measures for theology, they impoverish this existence and absolutize the language. God's existence is not contained in words, nor is it identified, of course, with them.

By its origin, knowledge – given by dogmas as rational and logical definitions of divine truths – is divine, secret, hidden; the revealed item does not have a specific meaning for everybody, it participates in the inability to comprise its origin, which is God. Hence the inability to be understood by all, and – ipso facto – the need to formulate it into concepts or notions that facilitate the knowledge of Truth¹⁸.

However, by faith, one can understand it (Is. 6, 10); after understanding it, one can proceed to its experimentation and thorough study, by continuously acquiring knowledge (1 Cor. 13:12), which begins on earth and perfects in heaven (Eph 4:13; Flp 3, 12-15), when we will see everything face to face (1 Cor 13:12; 2 Cor 5: 7).

Dogma is knowledge; however, it is not any kind of knowledge, but antinomian knowledge, over-knowledge. It formulates the truth revealed by reason, but its truths are supranational and supra-logical (A Person in two natures, a Being in three hypostases, etc.).

Apparently, this can be understood only by reason; however, in reality, we find that it can be understood only by reason illuminated by faith and heated by love: this is the nature of dogmatic knowledge. Due to some of its aspects, it seems identical to human knowledge; in other terms, it is essentially different from this knowledge.

Orthodox theologians have specified this antinomy of dogmatic knowledge, showing that the content of dogmas is divine, and their formulation is also achieved through human means, i.e. through language use.

b) Theological language is not revealed, it is man's work

The first element that we must emphasize when speaking about the act of theologizing – i.e. about formulating the teaching of faith – is that existence, truth does not identify with the linguistic form used in order to express it. Truth is uncreated, while language is created. Truth is offered, i.e. it is revealed by God – experimentally – to man, while language, which expresses the experience of truth, is invented and chosen by man. The first theological problematization of St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nyssa was precisely focused on showing that the theological language (“designations”) is the theologians' creation and choice. God is the “Creator of things”, the One who shows the truth; He is not the Creator of “high words”, which are created by man and for the man, because God does not need them.

The theological language, which is a human creation, remains independent from the limitations that pertain to what is typical of or to what relates to a particular human race. The truth does not have an exclusive language. The language of truth can belong to any people and to any age. Hebrew – the first

¹⁸ N. Chișescu, Isidor Todoran, I. Petreuta, *Teologia dogmatică și simbolică. Manual pentru facultăți*, vol I, second edition, Cluj-Napoca, Renașterea, 2004, p. 99.

written linguistic form of expression of the truth – should not be regarded by itself as God's language. It was Moses' language, whereby he expressed himself; it was the language of his cultural and spiritual environment; he was educated in this language. The same is true for all languages. They all can become means used in order to express the truth and none can become the “exclusive” language of truth¹⁹.

The only limitation of the theological language is that we are forced to express things, which are above us, in our human way of speaking. The language must borrow words, forms, images, patterns and schemes that pertain to the human field of knowledge and structures to which it is addressed. The Scripture does exactly the same thing; it does not use a “supernatural” and heavenly language, but unites and harmonizes its words with seen and sensitive things. Since he knows “God's will”, the biblical writer expresses it as much as he can and as much as his readers can follow; he does this by using words “known” and “common” to the people of his time.

Thus, the language is used and understood wherever there is truly a wide experience of the truth. However, we cannot state the opposite, i.e. we cannot say that we have a wider experience wherever an intelligible language is used.

c) Language shows the existence, not the nature of Truth

The characterizations and words we use for God (the truth) refer to His existence, not to His nature. They refer to what we know about God, not to what we do not know. His nature remains unapproached and therefore unnamed, inexpressible. The man's inability to know it fully triggers his total inability to name it in words that would characterize it. We cannot characterize what we do not know “because divinity is incomprehensible, it will be unmistakably nameless. Therefore, because we do not know its nature, let us not seek the name of its nature, for the name indicates things²⁰”. Language thus shows the existence and not the nature of truth.

d) Theological language is semantic and indicative

Theological language, as a testimony of man's encounter with the Trinity God, cannot be univocal, because it cannot express the complexity of this spiritual experience as any other human experience would express. In everyday or scientific interpersonal communication, we prefer the univocal language, and we believe that we can convey through it a certain piece of knowledge, in a clear and precise manner: the objective knowledge. However, although the human being has the possibility to thematize, to objectify the reality based on reason, determining the characteristics and elements related to its nature, there are situations where the univocal language is inappropriate:

“A univocal statement about creature and God would place them on equal footing. Either the Creator must be seen through the prism of finite conceptualizations (i.e. purely anthropomorphic) or the creature must be viewed

¹⁹ Papadopoulou G Stilianou, *Teologie și limbă. Teologie experimentală. Limbă convențională*, p. 38.

²⁰ Saint Ioan Damaschin, *Dogmatica*, p. 36.

through the prism of infinite concepts. The first version involves skepticism, the second one entails conceptual deification²¹”.

The profound dimension of human reality and experiences, in particular the experience of God's presence in one's personal life, is not confined to a unique concept, but prefers other types of language: analogical, allegorical, symbolic, expressive, dialogical or doxological.

The wise man does not discover, but neither does he hide the truth. What he does is to show, to signal, to underline the fact that, through divine hypostasis, one can find out His qualities or the qualities of other Persons of the Holy Trinity. This does not mean that the gap between theological words, as a created reality, and the divine existence, as an uncreated reality, is raised or covered. Divine existence does not dwell in the words that express it. Words do not encompass existence, they do not identify with it. If they were to encompass it, it would mean that anyone who invented and used a characterization of the divine existence would automatically become its equal, which is impossible to achieve; moreover, this is blasphemy.

No word, no image is sufficient; no word, no image is “enough for the truth”. Of course, the theologian is moved by the Holy Spirit, insofar as he is the bearer of the Church life and has the experience of truth; he becomes His fulfilling rational body. The Holy Spirit moves the theologian's mind, as he expresses logically and indicatively his experience-union with the truth. However, the words chosen by the theologian as logical expressions of experience are only “significant” or “declarative” or “semiotic” of the truth. In theology, words only signify or express the truth; they do not encompass it, they do not identify with it, partially or integrally. The words and the images of our sensitive reality can only signal, declare, underline a fact, which represents the experience of truth.

e) Theological language is conventional, it is not symbolic and absolute

The choice of theological terms, which are necessarily semantic and indicative, or declarative of the truth and not at all comprehensive, is made in a logical order. These words are loaded with a content of ideas and images of the natural reality, used to express the uncreated truth, without departing from their initial meaning²².

Linguistic images and terms never render the truth in the proper sense. However, the powerlessness and poverty of the language do not betray the truth. It goes without saying that the poverty of the language should not be seen as absolute, but it should be understood in a godly way because the language cannot comprehend the measure of truth²³.

The acknowledgement that any characterization of God and of His work is semantic-indicative, and therefore that the language of theology, in general, is

²¹ Gesler L. Normann, *Filosofia Religiei*, editor Agnes Dragomir, Oradea, Cartea Creștină, 1999. p. 260.

²² Papadopoulou G Stilianou, *Teologie și limbă. Teologie experimentală. Limbă convențională*, p. 47.

²³ Saint Chiril of Alexandria, “Scrieri (IV). Comentariu la Evanghelia Sfântului Ioan” în *P.S.B.* 41, Bucharest, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune, 2000, p. 93.

semantic and indicative, easily leads to the rejection of the dominant view that theology – like language – is symbolic.

Symbolism implies the analogy, to a less or greater extent, between a symbol and what it symbolizes. Thus, in all non-Christian religions, the symbol acquires holiness, i.e. it is itself a bearer of divine power, or it is sometimes identified, partially or totally, with the divine. Therefore, in this case, the symbol remains unchanged. Nevertheless, in the theological language of the Church there is no analogy between truth and language. Language, by itself, does not become a holy symbol, a bearer of divine power, and therefore worthy to be honored by itself. If language were to serve as a symbol – bearer of divine power – it would represent by itself the salvation and the source of divine grace. However, this is not the case. The words of the Gospel only show the truth, for which the Holy Spirit enlightens the believer, so that he could to live and believe it. God's words have no power in themselves. They are not magical. Thus, God's words in the Gospel are not those that He had spoken; they are the Evangelists' translation from Aramaic-Galilean. The same is valid for the word-terms "Symbol of faith" (of the "Creed") and for the definitions of the Ecumenical Councils. The symbols have undergone numerous linguistic developments (i.e. changes), to which the holy men were led by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusions

All the issues presented so far about language and about its connection with truth naturally lead to the following findings:

1) The experience of truth precedes theology, i.e. it precedes the expression or the revelation of truth;

2) The theological language is a relative factor, while truth is an absolute factor;

3) As a relative factor, language depends on the place, culture, education and time that framed its development;

4) All languages (at least the relatively cultivated ones) can become "indicative" of the truth, i.e. able to express God's will or the experience of truth;

5) Neither the Hebrew language, wherewith God first revealed the Old Testament, nor the Aramaic language, spoken by Jesus Christ, were sanctified. These two languages were used for conjectural reasons;

6) Language and theological words are "semantic" and "indicative" of the truth, which they do not encompass; they do not delimit it. Language plays an "indicative" and "semiotic" role, it has no analogy with the existence of truth;

7) The philosophical forms of the partial or total identification of the elements defined by the terms "signifier" and "signified" have no applicability in theology, as long as there is no analogy between truth and language, as long as the two categories are distinct, i.e. the uncreated truth and the created language;

8) The choice of language and words, in theology (in expressing the truth) is man's exclusive responsibility;

9) The same truth can be expressed by different words of the same language (e.g. Greek);

10) The words used by God, the Apostles, the Church Fathers and the contemporary preachers in order to preach do not lead to faith and truth, unless the one who listens to them is enlightened by the Holy Spirit and appropriates them.

The above findings, which of course are not the only ones, facilitate the deeper clarification of the role and nature of the theological language. Thus, the conventionality of the language emerges, as a basic feature and as a working procedure. The language of theology is conventional, i.e. it is the result of agreement and understanding.

As long as there is no analogy or opposition between truth and language, which may “*a priori*” require the use of one word or another, seen as a correspondent to a certain truth, then those who have an experience or connection with the truth, who believe something, agree, after much debate, to manifest it in a certain linguistic form. The agreement of those who experienced and knew the same truth, using the same linguistic form, came into the Church life after intense debate and unrest. Due to the conventionality of the theological language, two or more ways of expressing the divine truth are appropriated in a certain era.

Looking briefly at the background where today's theological language and discourse evolve, as well as at the forms that attempt to caricaturize it, we notice the need to dwell on this subject and grant it a wider and more well-founded range in the future.