

**“Ovidius” University of Constanta
Faculty of the Orthodox Theology**

Summary of the doctoral thesis

The image of the woman after the Saint Scripture

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Key words: Old Testament, New Testament, woman, status, images, virtues, Saint Parents, Talmud, Midrash.

Summary

The doctoral thesis “The image of the woman after the Saint Scripture” treats the women’s issues through the divine word revealed in the biblical writings, insisting on the vision of the Fathers of the Church on this Anthropological subject that concern the contemporary world. Moreover, “women issue” is discussed today in both secular and theological media, “the humanists” and “the ecclesial ministers” trying to offer an answer on this challenge that often incites the spirits of the people who wish knowledge. Without getting too deep into meandering of the feminist contemplation present thesis is intended as a presentation of a beautiful face of biblical women *sine ira et studio*, both before and after the incarnation of Christ the Saviour, focusing on female figures in the history of the chosen people, identifying moral guidelines, highlighting the positive and negative behaviors, analyzing aspects of women’s status between the Old Testament and in the world inaugurated by the coming of the Son of God.

The topic is actual as possible, especially in the disputed Western medium, that is inked by the “feminist theology”; these thinkers choose to provide answers to some sensitive issues without having a patristic and biblical solid base, thus failing miserably or providing solutions in the strangest, some of them bordering heresy. Therefore, I believe that an Orthodox point of view, based on the word of Scripture and the theology of the Church Fathers, is welcome in this situation.

In the Romanian theology, this subject is treated sequentially and incomplete, being published on this subject a few articles in the professional journals, without insisting on all facets of the issue. I could mention in this way the following studies: Nicolae Neaga, *Personalități feminine în epoca Vechiului Testament* („Mitropolia Ardealului”, nr. 9-10/1959), Daniela Bolozan, *Femeia în referatul creației-elemente de antropologie* („Studii Teologice”, nr. 3/2010), Romul Căndea, *Femeia la vechii evrei*, („Revista Teologică”, nr. 7-8/1907), Eustohia Ciucanu *Femeia în teologia ortodoxă, rolul și misiunea ei* („Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei”, nr. 3-4/1986), Ion Dinu, *Condiția creștină a femeii* (Constanța, 1939), Irina Gavrilă, *Sfintele femei mironosițe* („Mitropolia Olteniei”, nr. 3-4/1972), Mircea V. Homescu, *Femeia în istoria biblică a lumii* („Altarul Banatului”, nr. 7-9/2002), D. Spânu, *Femeia în Evanghelie (Curs de popularizare)* („Candela”, Cernăuți, nr. 10-12/1927), Dumitru Soare, *Situația femeii în islamism și*

creștinism („Studii Teologice”, nr. 3-4/1957). I mention also the newer translations, particularly in the English language: Miriam Feindberg Vamosh, *Femei în timpurile biblice*, David C. Ford, *Bărbatul și femeia în viziunea Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur*, John Baldock, *Femeile din Biblie*, Pauline Bebe, *Femeile și iudaismul. Dicționar*, John MacArthur, *Douăsprezece femei extraordinare* etc. It is clear that the interest of the Romanian specialists in this field has focused on the analysis of the Mariological dogma and the maternal role of the women without extending the research area on the other items of the women's status in general.

As can be seen, the thesis bibliography includes many works published abroad, in French, English and German, being consulted several Talmudic and Midrash sources, relevant to the issues under discussion. A special place have the patristic writings, the encyclopedias and the Bible dictionaries, dealing with some aspects of the proposed subject. There are present the personal views, framed by the inspired interpretations of the Holy Fathers, which represent the norm in theology.

The thesis is divided into two main parts: The image of the woman after the Old Testament and The image of the woman after New Testament. The first part includes two sections: the woman in the creative essay, respectively the new Eve and her role in the history of the salvation and the feminine figures of the Old Testament. The second part includes three sections: the Virgin Mary - Mother of life, the female personalities in the New Testament and some aspects of women's status in the light of the teachings of the New Testament.

The last chapter is dedicated to the conclusions in which it analyzed the impact of the study in the today's theological and social context and the expectations regarding the future development of the society in connection with the approached subject.

The first chapter, entitled *Eve, Mother of Life. Woman in the creation essay and the vision of the Fathers*, presents in detail the first act of the human creation and the purpose for which he was brought into existence. It is interesting to note that the “creation” of our forefathers was not an accidental fact, but a great manifestation of the infinite charity of the Holy Trinity, a climax of all creation. It's important to say that all other creatures were made to serve man, and man was created to serve God. We note that the most creatures were created by the simple word of God: “Be!”, but the man was

created by a direct act of the heavenly Father: “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2, 7). Man was created in God’s image, being able to reach likeness. In the beginning the man was built and, later, the woman. It is interesting to note that the woman was not created from the same earth as Adam, but from pre-existing matter, his coast, which was finally recognized the first man: his coast, which was finally recognized by the first man: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2, 23). The woman was brought into existence to be a reliable aid of man, “ezer kenegdo”, equal partner for dialogue and action, “Mother of Life”. Equally interesting is that, in heaven, “Adam and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2, 25), because it has not intervened in the world the evil of sin. But original sin corrupted the natural order of the world, bringing the corruption, the death and the unjust subordination of the women. So original sin was committed in human history a true “Pandora’s box”, paving the way for all miseries on earth. The divine punishment didn’t cease to occur, because the man was sentenced to work the land with sweat constantly. The land gave him instead “thorns and thistles”. The woman was doomed to give birth in pain and to be drawn “forever” to her life partner. That introduction was absolutely necessary in the cognitive approach, providing the key to understanding the subsequent evolution of the male-female relationship in the time and space coordinates proposed by their earthly existence.

The next section of the paper details the female figures of the Old Testament. The first woman to appear in this exposure is Eva, “the archetype of the femininity” and “the mother of all living beings”. Then follows in the alphabetical order the presentation of the women in the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua, the Books of Kings, Judges, Ezra, Nehemiah, the other books of the Old Testament, and the deuterocanonical books. At the end are mentioned only fleetingly the minor female characters of the first part of Holy Scripture. However, some of these women impress today by their extraordinary deeds, providing models for all the souls living female, and not only. Let’s remember Hagar, whose life was marked by many trials. She was chased twice by her mistress Sarah and overcame the attempts by divine help. She gave birth to Ishmael, who was the “father of the Arab nations”. Equally is impressive the personality of Asenath, the daughter of

Putifera, the high priest of Iliopolis. She became the wife of Josepp, the father of Manasseh and Ephraim. Then impresses the drama of Dina, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, who was raped by Shechem, son of Hamor Hevea. He was punished by Simeon and Levi. Leah is the another female character of the Old Testament. She gave birth to many children, being the image of loving mother who conscientiously fulfills her mission on earth. Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, is one of the few prophetesses in the Bible. She did much good for Jewish nation and she was buried at Kades. Rahab the harlot is a remarkable woman who helped the chosen people especially in a crucial moment of his existence. Therefore, she is considered to be a real saving, not taking into account the brightless part of his personality. Rachel, the beautiful daughter of Laban, is the second wife of Jacob. Her history is marked by the disputes with Leah, finally she died tragically near Bethlehem. Rebecca is the second matriarch, daughter of Bethuel and the granddaughter of Nahor. She became the wife of Isaac and she has the same problem frequently encountered in the pages of the Bible - the sterility. Sarah is one of the outstanding women of the Old Testament. Having a proverbial beauty, she is distinguished by a strong character and the determination. Lastly surpassing the inability to procreate, she becomes the "mother" of many peoples, being the shining example of the conjugal fidelity. Zipporah, the Moses's wife, is one of the seven daughters of Jethro, an idolatrous priest. The Fathers of the Church compare her with "the Church of the Gentiles"; she was a strong character, independent, a true hero. Shiphrah and Puah, the two Hebrew midwives, intervened decisively in the saving of Moses. They remain models of faith and piety, sparing no effort to fulfill God's law. Tamara, the daughter of Judah, is a warrior in every sense of the word. Using some unorthodox maneuvers, manages to change their fate and to impose to the others. Abigail, one of the wives of David, stands out for his diplomacy and tact, her actions indicating a high degree of intelligence. Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, is an overwhelming character, charismatic, an uncompromising spirit, a paradigm of family love and the devotion to faith and truth. If at first she can not give birth, which gives him a great trauma, after the divine intervention, she gives birth to a male child, Samuel, who shall become a prophet of the Most High. It remains the image of the wise woman with a infinite love for God and the human beings. Bathsheba is one of the controversial characters in the Bible. She seduces David, and

became his wife. She gives birth to Solomon, who shall build the temple in Jerusalem. Debora is the first and the last woman judge who appears in the pages of the Scripture. Having a strong personality, she requires by the spirit of justice and a unusual determination, being called “mother in Israel”. The rich woman of Shunem is hosting the prophet Elisha. This holy man makes her a great service, since he raise up her son; wise woman of Tekoa is pleading successfully in front of David; daughter of Jephthah was offered burnt; Hulda is another prophetess of the Bible; Jael kills Sisera, the enemy of the chosen people; Michal becomes the David’s wife; the Queen of Sheba is one of the mysterious characters of the Bible; Tamara, the daughter of David, is raped by Amnon, her brother; this bad person was punished by Absalom; the widow of Zarephath is the image of the unselfish and hospitable woman; Esther is a “star among stars”, a savior in times of distress; Judith is a brave woman who beat the enemies of the chosen people with their own weapons; the mother of zhe Maccabees brothers is a model of faith and virtue; Ruth is the image of the woman who converts to Judaism; Shulamite is an eccentric who lives her life in full; Susana is a virtuous character who prefer the death before the dishonor; Vashti is also a virtuous woman, preferring to sacrifice their social position than to degrade in front of her conscience. In this chapter are presented also some negative female characters: Athaliah, the harlots, the Lot’s wife and daughters, Samson’s women, Jezebel, Noadiah, the Potiphar ‘s wife, the witch of Endor. In the first part, besides the scriptural and patristic sources are used also the Talmud and Midrash sources that fiil up the field of the knowledge in the domain concerned.

The second part, more extensive, offers a detailed image of the women in light of the New Testament. Also, the material is divided into three sections: the Mother of God-the new Eve-Mother of life, the images of the women in the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and other New Testament writings, and the status of women in the New Testament.

The first chapter is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, by means of who the Son of God was incarnate in the world. She is the new Eve, the true “Mother of Life” as her obedience crushed the serpent’s head, the devil-the enemy of the human race. She said: “Be it unto me according to your word”. Thus, the Blessed Virgin reinstated man in the situation before committing the original sin, when he was delighting in the presence of

divine grace. Therefore, unlike Adam's wife, who urged the first man to disobedience, Mary bowed to the will of God in all things and became the mother of all human beings who believe in Christ, leading them to the kingdom of God. Therefore, if Eve was the first woman of the old law, "Mother of Life" to death, Our Lady was the first woman of the new law, "Mother of Life" to eternal life.

The next section of the study is dedicated to the feminine personalities of the New Testament. First, are presented the life and the work of the Jesus Mother. Then, in the alphabetical order, are portrayed other emblematic characters of the Gospels, Acts, Pauline Epistles, Catholic Epistles and Revelation: prophetess Anna, who greeted the Saviour in the temple of Jerusalem; the ten virgins who waited anxiously for the coming of the Bridegroom; Procula Claudia, Pilate's wife, who pleaded for the release of Jesus; Elizabeth, the virtuous mother of John the Baptist; adulterous woman in the Gospel of John; the persistent woman of Canaan; the woman with the issue of blood, miraculously healed by the Lord; the woman bent over from the Gospel of Luke; the wise woman of Samaria; the daughter of Jairus - she was brought back to life by the divine power; the prude Johanna, the wife of Huza, an officer of the Herod; Mary of Cleophas, the mother of Jude and Simon; Mary Magdalene, the sinner converted to the saving faith; Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus; Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, one of the prudes; the servant of the high priest Caiaphas, the one who put in difficulty the Apostle Peter; the Peter's mother-in-law, cured by Christ; the prude Suzana, who served the Apostles on her deposits; widow with two mites, a sacrificial model of faith; the widow of Nain, the grieving mother who lost her only son, the comfort of her old age; Candachia – his eunuch was baptized by Saint Apostle Philip; Damaris of Athens, converted to Christianity by the apostle of the Gentiles; Eunice, the mother of Timothy; Junia, one of the disciples of Saint Paul; Lydia of Thyatira, the saleswoman of purple, the first person in Europe who embraced the Christian faith; Mary, the mother of John Mark; the foreteller from Acts, Priscilla, the worthy disciple of Christ; servant Rodi, the woman who embarrassed Saint Peter; Tabitha, who has been raised from the dead through the intercession of the Apostle Peter; Apphia, the Philemon's wife; Claudia of Rome, one who helped the Apostle Paul in his missionary activity unfolded in the eternal city; Evodia and Sintihi, Evodia and Sintihi, the disciples who have been involved in the

missionary work in Philippi; Phoebe, the unique deaconess of the New Testament; Hloee, who led the apostle to the Gentiles to write the Epistle to the Corinthians; Julia, Mary from Rome, Persis, Tryphena and Tryphosa, the feminine characters mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans, the woman clothed with the sun, presented in the last book of the Bible. Besides these exceptional women, another feminine characters who had a negative behavior are portrayed in the New Testament: Herodias, her daughter, Salome, Bernice, Drusilla, Sapphire, the great harlot from Revelation.

The third section of the second part presents some aspects of the women's status in the New Testament period. Here, the sources of the information are varied, insisting on the implications of the theme at present. Two important chapters are dedicated to the study of the deaconess and the "priesthood" of the woman. The theme is actual, taking into account the increasing pressure on Western feminist circles over the religious realities.

In the chapter dedicated to the conclusions is emphasized again the importance of this study in the context of major changes recorded in the contemporary society, and also is analyzed the role and the mission of the Christian woman, opposite to the post-modernist challenges that seriously threaten the stability of the family and the social relations in general. Therefore, the Christian woman has a say in the preservation and the promotion of the Gospel morality, being able to contribute substantially to the establishment of a healthy social climate, to build the true "city of God", representing the promoter of the redeeming values. Contemporary woman, dressed in "grace and truth", must continue the mission of the motherhood, having the duty to fight with all the "weapons of righteousness" for the imposition of the sound teaching, thereby bringing peace and progress.

Therefore, this study addresses a challenging issue, providing some new insights into the Christian anthropology. Important is the anchoring in the spirit of the early patristic centuries, which provides a guarantee of the truth and the equilibrium, especially when the theology must answer at some inconvenient questions. In this way, are prevented some totally unconstructive slippages that could occur in the cognitive demarche.

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