



GENDER IN THE WRITINGS OF ORTHODOX FEMALE THEOLOGIANⁱ

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Abstract:

This paper examines the gender dimension of the theological discourse of women theologians through a detailed study of selected articles on the topic "Gender in the Discourse of Women Theologians," focusing in particular on the articles by Evanthia Adamtziloglou "Is Woman Created in the Image of God? A Historical, Christological, and Trinitarian Perspective," "The Feminine Dimension in Political Ministry," by Dimitra Koukoura "The Liberation and Subjugation of Women in the Modern World," "The Role of the Orthodox Woman in Contemporary Secular Society," and "An Orthodox Assessment of Feminist Theology" by Kyriaki Fitzgerald, translated by Dimitra Koukoura, as well as the article by Pigi Kazlari "Women Confronting the Phenomenon of Clericalism and Fundamentalism in the Orthodox Church." I then drew some conclusions about the role of women, which is strongly linked to the rhythms of nature and in harmony with the order that reigns in the universe. The aim of this research is to highlight the way in which gender influences theological thought, linguistic expression, and the understanding of issues of identity, the Church, and society in the contemporary theological field. Choosing this specific topic gave me the opportunity to evaluate the mission that women fulfill through their contribution to society.

Keywords: woman, feminist movement, Orthodox Church

Περίληψη:

Η παρούσα εργασία εξετάζει την έμφυλη διάσταση του θεολογικού λόγου γυναικών θεολόγων μέσα από τη λεπτομερή μελέτη επιλεγμένων άρθρων με το θέμα « Το φύλο στο λόγο θεολόγων γυναικών» μελετώντας λεπτομερώς τα άρθρα της Ευανθίας Αδαμτζίλογλου «Είναι η γυναίκα κατ' εικόνα Θεού; Ιστορική, Χριστολογική και Τριαδολογική θεώρηση», «Η γυναικεία διάσταση στην πολιτική διακονία», της Δήμητρας Κούκουρα «Απελευθέρωση και υποδούλωση της γυναίκας στο σύγχρονο κόσμο», «Ο ρόλος της ορθόδοξης γυναίκας στη σύγχρονη εκκοσμικευμένη κοινωνία»

ⁱ ΤΟ ΦΥΛΟ ΣΤΟ ΛΟΓΟ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΩΝ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΩΝ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΩΝ

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και «Ορθόδοξος αξιολόγησις της φεμινιστικής Θεολογίας» της Κυριακής Φιτζέραλντ, το οποίο μετέφρασε η Δήμητρα Κούκουρα, καθώς και το άρθρο της Πηγής Καζλάρη «Οι γυναίκες απέναντι στο φαινόμενο του κληρικαλισμού και του φονταμενταλισμού στην Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία». Έπειτα κατέληξα σε κάποια συμπεράσματα για τον ρόλο της γυναίκας ο οποίος είναι συνδεδεμένος ισχυρά με τους ρυθμούς της φύσεως κι εναρμονισμένος με την τάξη που βασιλεύει στο σύμπαν. Στόχος της έρευνας είναι να αναδειχθεί ο τρόπος με τον οποίο το φύλο επηρεάζει τη θεολογική σκέψη, τη γλωσσική έκφραση και την πρόσληψη ζητημάτων ταυτότητας, Εκκλησίας και κοινωνίας στο σύγχρονο θεολογικό πεδίο. Η επιλογή του συγκεκριμένου θέματος μου έδωσε την ευκαιρία να αξιολογήσω την αποστολή που πραγματώνει η γυναίκα με την προσφορά της στο κοινωνικό σύνολο.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: γυναίκα, φεμινιστικό κίνημα, Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία

1. Introduction

Every woman has an innate affinity with tradition, with the continuity of life. In God, existence coincides with essence; a woman is better able to approach holiness, essence, and existence through the power of humility, for “*humility is the art of rediscovering one’s place*” (Eudokimov, 2002:329). Contrary to any preaching of the equality of women with men and to any tendency toward revenge, a woman can manifest the most natural radiance of her charismatic state. It is the grace of consolation and faith that the female being imposes as a mother.

A woman’s mission is not found in the functioning of society but of humanity. Her sphere of action is not technical civilization but spiritual values. True transcendence unites the masculine and feminine elements in a transformation that brings about wholeness. The distinction between man and woman, between the two egos, ceases to exist. The modern world champions women and promotes their rights through feminism. Traditional religion is opposed to women, with countless prejudices and countless prohibitions. A simple glance at the everyday reality of modern times convinces us that a feminist spirit prevails in the world. Secularism stands up for women, fights for their rights, and works to liberate the second sex from the age-old oppression to which it has been subjected by men.

This feminist worldview has been adopted by certain avant-garde circles in contemporary theology, a movement that has become known as “*feminist theology*.” That is, the recognition of an authentic element of Christian tradition by a sensitive segment of today’s avant-garde theology. The positive contribution of the women’s movement lies in the fact that it clearly identifies a problem. The weakness of feminism is that it does not solve the problem. We owe it to the women’s movement for drawing our attention to the fact that the second sex is deprived of its freedom by men. The structures of society keep women in bondage in an unjust, immoral, and inhumane way. Feminism denounces the lack of freedom, the inhumanity, and the immorality of patriarchy. If we look deep within our conscience, we can see the degradation of women that persists to this day.

Feminism becomes a herald of freedom, an apostle of humanity, and an evangelist of morality.

In Judaism, despite the prominence of women in the history of salvation, it is held in rabbinic tradition that a man should thank God for not having made him an idolater, a slave, or a woman. In Islam, there is an explicit declaration of the natural superiority of men over women, as stated in the Quran. In the Far East, a characteristic example is the well-known custom in Hinduism whereby a widow is burned to death on her husband's funeral pyre.

The current reality of Christianity is the contradiction between the overwhelming number of women who make up the congregation and the incredible variety of discrimination against the female sex within the Church. The Church, the sanctuary, is fundamentally and at its core a woman-centered institution. Yet women are excluded not only from the priesthood but also from the holy altar, the "*sanctuary*" (Begzos, 1995:276). What matters is not the quantity of women's participation but the quality of their presence. Improving the quality of human relationships is urgent. And that means putting an end to authoritarianism and competitiveness. One thing, however, remains certain: the Orthodox ecclesiastical tradition is, in its reverence for the mother of God, inherently feminist. It would be a welcome development if ecclesiastical practice in its daily life were to align with this tradition.

2. Gender in the Writings of Evanthia Adamtziloglou

2.1 "Is Woman Created in the Image of God? A Historical, Christological, and Trinitarian Perspective"

In this article, the author takes it for granted that women are created in the image of God (Adamtziloglou, 2004:163). For if they are not, then they are not responsible for their actions, and God should not hold them accountable at the final judgment of the world. Then she bears no responsibility for obeying God's will. Through this line of reasoning, he seeks to draw our attention to the defining content of the concept of "*in the image of.*" This includes reason and free will, but human autonomy also plays a significant role.

The flexibility inherent in the concept of the authoritative man has been a decisive factor in the emergence of two trends in the history of its interpretation. One trend directs the authoritative nature of man toward moral perfection and a virtuous life, in which women are absolutely required to participate. In the other trend, which emphasizes the dominant power of men, women are not only forbidden to participate but must also submit and become objects in the exercise of male authority, because this is in accordance with God's will (Adamtziloglou, 2004:164).

Within the Church, it is Christ who exalted and honored the person of women. From the status they held in Roman society, He recognized their value as human beings equal to men. In Western European theological thought, however, female theologians lack the necessary framework to accept the self-evident (Adamtziloglou, 2004:165). Social developments are rapid and compel theological discourse to respond to the demands of the times. It is time for the theology of the Church of Christ to explain its positions by

drawing from faith and tradition the authentic theological message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The problem stems from the much-debated verse in 1 Corinthians 11:7, on which most of the above views are based: *“For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.”* This verse bears a direct connection to the creation narrative, with which it stands in some contradiction, because Genesis speaks of human beings, man and woman, as created in the image of God, whereas in 1 Corinthians 11:7 refers only to man (Adamtziloglou, 2004:165).

The moral interpretation of the biblical account of creation makes no distinction between the sexes. The commandments it contains apply to every person, for among both men and women, there are those who obey God’s law and those who follow idolatry. However, when Adam’s exalted and dominant position is particularly emphasized, then women are sidelined, just as the Gentiles are in the face of Israel’s preeminent position. These ideas of marginalizing Gentiles and women do not go so far as to devalue and reduce them to the level of animals, as will later occur in Rabbinic thought. In the sources of the Adamic cycle, woman is regarded as the cause of the Fall and of death. It is she who brought about the loss of glory. A woman does not bear the image of God. Jewish monotheism, that is, requires that one of the two sexes bear the image of God. A woman possesses only glory, which she loses with the Fall.

When modern scholarship, in its study of biblical creation, approaches the texts based on biblical criticism—and specifically literary criticism—it concludes that the two sexes are created simultaneously as is, that is, each a human being, and *issah*, as each woman. The two sexes are created simultaneously, but the male sex is formed from the first man, Adam, while the woman is the second man. The first-second order in the order of creation does not contain the element of dominion. Both humans have the duty to establish good governance in creation, for both will give an account to God on the Day of Judgment.

Looking back at history up to the present day, one observes that the reversal of the deification of the feminine has led to the arrogance, domination, and deification of the male gender, particularly within the Christian world. The position of authority is given to men within the Church, but this position is one of self-emptying rather than one of domination. Men have the privilege of expressing the image and glory of God, to ensure faith in the one God of Israel and to maintain the bridges with the people of Israel that were once severed (Adamtziloglou, 2004:183). And they must remain, for this chosen people, too will eventually understand and will wish to accept Jesus as the Lord Christ. It is the revelation of Christ that grants women every right to share in and participate in what men accomplish. In the Church of Christ, the reverse is also true. And men have every right to share in the gifts that women receive within the Church, something that is put into practice during the feasts of worship in honor of the Holy Women.

In other words, the Apostle Paul does not strip the man of his dominant authority in order to endow the woman with the corresponding power, so that only the agents of oppressive power and exploitation are changed (Adamtziloglou, 2004:183). Thus, he ensures the equality of men and women in Christ, so that if this is overturned, it would

mean that the lordship, the equality, the co-rule, and the equal standing of Christ before the God of Israel are immediately overturned. This is the great guarantee that the Apostle Paul left to the Church regarding the position of women. The Christological foundation of equality—and not of submission—possesses such power that its overthrow would also mean the dissolution of the Church of Christ.

As it appears, the issue of women, which has taken on such great proportions in theological discussions over the past decades, poses for the Christian world as a whole a reorientation regarding matters of faith and the life of the Church, and indeed in such a way that it could lead divided Christianity to its desired unity (Adamtziloglou, 2004:183).

2.2 “The Feminine Dimension in Political Ministry”

In this article, the author provides a historical overview and emphasizes that Plato envisioned the ideal state and considered the responsibility and cooperation of men and women in the governance of the city to be essential (Adamtziloglou, 2001:185). His fundamental prerequisite was education for both genders—in music, gymnastics, and military training—so that they might be treated equally. He called for appropriate laws that would reflect these natural principles and wanted them not to remain mere wishes, but to function in such a way as to change the unnatural state of affairs of his time.

Today, women’s participation in all decision-making bodies at the local, national, and global levels is considered essential. The issue is that the city and the state have lost the significance they once had. Industrial development, the widespread use of technology, and the speed of communication and information have turned the planet into a neighborhood, making women’s participation in political decisions essential.

In the Western world, Christian women are making important contributions to the discussion of the female dimension in political ministry. The recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development consistently emphasized in its resolutions women’s commitment to decision-making regarding the environment, planning, technological and scientific services, and management. In fact, this commitment is directed most urgently at women in the North who are struggling to survive under adverse political, economic, and social conditions: poverty, hunger, exploitation, and war.

It is a given, at least in Greek society, that a woman is the mistress and hostess of her home. She oversees key aspects of household management, which are often beyond men’s reach, such as the upbringing, care, and education of the children, food preparation, maintaining a clean environment, cultivating the land and raising livestock, the management of household goods, the supervision of weaving and handicrafts, aesthetic decoration, and the requirement that everyone adhere to rules of discipline so that the household functions properly. Interwoven within this complex of responsibilities are the principles of justice, manliness, piety, and prudence, interpersonal relationships, psychological balance, sexual maturity, and respect for the traditions and sacred customs of the tribe.

While Greek society is losing principles that have been handed down and tested over the centuries, Christian women in the West are beginning to realize, in their own

way, to articulate, and to record old and familiar truths. To begin with, the model of humanity shaped by the Enlightenment was that of the egocentric, autonomous individual—the white, rational man. This perspective viewed other beings as objects, regardless of whether they too are subjects with personalities.

The ideal of the autonomous individual in Western culture had a decisive influence on women's movements, which grounded their messages of liberation in female solidarity. But when the autonomous women of the wealthy North sought to convey their messages to the poor South, to the women of the Third World, they faced intense skepticism regarding autonomous liberation. There, women could not imagine themselves separated from their children, siblings, parents, friends, and husbands. Thus, Western feminists realized that they belong to a new "we," and this "we" has as its common ground all people, regardless of gender, color, social status, fragile human bodies, and the laws governing inner spiritual life.

Another truth is that the idolization of masculine rationality has engaged only a fraction of human potential in public affairs, with dangerous consequences on both a personal and social level. Thus, emotion, reference to personal relationships, and the connection between theory and empirical reality were sidelined. The female perspective seeks to transcend the one-sidedness of male logic, authority, and self-interest. It proposes linking knowledge to everyday reality, a personal connection to the learning process, and a radical detachment from the personal, social, religious, and political imperatives of the past. It does not categorically reject male logic. The aim is to combine reason with the heart, to govern instincts, and to harmoniously connect knowledge with the problems of the everyday environment.

A third truth highlighted by Christian women is that the model of the rational white man has historically been identified with that of the conquering ruler. The relationship between master and slave, conqueror and conquered, and the consequences of colonialism have left indelible marks on the experiences of peoples. Even today, fierce struggles for liberation continue to unfold in the quest to establish democratic societies grounded in individual rights. The intervention of women from the wealthy North aims to ensure respect for others, no matter how small they may be. They find violence and domination ineffective. They wish to learn the simple way of the poor people, upon which they have built this harmonious relationship with the world, with God, and with one another, so as to correct their mistakes and failures.

Finally, in the realm of politics, a new, radical ethical approach is proposed, grounded in responsibility, rather than the promises of modern technology for a comfortable and easy life. The men's proposal that the world needs a global ethic with rules, values, ideals, and goals grounded in responsibility sparks intense debate among women. The male perspective, on the one hand, proposes as virtues of the future piety, respect, modesty, sensitive feelings, humility, and frugality—which are feminine virtues—while on the other hand, it considers their inferior counterparts, such as pettiness, cowardice, fear, and anxiety in the face of duty, correspond to the female temperament. Thus, the concept of womanhood is burdened with the negative version of these virtues, which does not correspond to reality.

In the Greek context and within Orthodox life, moral equality is taken for granted. Whether man or woman, one is called upon to practice virtues whose cultivation is deeply rooted in our tradition. In the Western world, however, women are attempting to challenge the male-dominated order and, indeed, environmental issues by offering a different perspective and their own models (Adamtziloglou, 2001:192).

3. Gender in the Writings of Dimitra Koukoura

3.1 "The Liberation and Subjugation of Women in the Modern World"

In this article, the author, referring to Alexandros Papadiamantis's "The Murderess," acknowledges the role of women within unjust, male-dominated societies. According to findings in humanities studies, in the second pre-Christian millennium, the Iron Age also marked the end of a long period of matriarchy (Koukoura, 1990:73). The fierce warrior returns after a long absence as the master of his land and his family. His settled life promoted the development of agriculture and animal husbandry, but also the subjugation of women. The wife and mother loses the initiative she had previously developed, as well as the opportunities to cultivate her own personality. Her purpose and mission are to provide pleasure to the warrior and, above all, to bear male children for the family (Koukoura, 1990:74).

Demosthenes' views clearly summarize the ancient attitude toward women: "*The courtesan is needed for pleasure, the slave for work, and the wife for legitimate children.*" Following the example of Penelope, the lawful wife, confined to the women's quarters and adorned with her virtues, primarily inspires certainty regarding the paternity of her children, who not only continue the family line but also inherit the estate.

In Jewish society, a widow could marry her deceased husband's brothers. This economic view of marriage also explains the many irrational marriages recorded in history. A striking example is that of a princess in the feudal Middle Ages, who began marrying at the age of four and by the age of eleven had gone through three husbands, retaining their estates. Moreover, the well-known Latin epigram about the "blessed" Austria, which gained immense power thanks to the marriages of the greats of her royal house, ironically crystallizes the turbulent nature of marriage. Thus, it seems that emotion, interpersonal relationships, and mutual respect are absent.

In male-dominated societies, the unequal treatment of women was undoubtedly based on irrationality: men are endowed with superior intellectual qualities, as evidenced by the leading role they play in society and the culture they create. Consequently, women are destined only for secondary, marginal roles (Koukoura, 1990:74). For women to gain a significant place in society, radical economic changes and an industrial revolution were necessary. The industrial movements of the 19th century fought passionately against the prejudices and restrictions imposed on women. In their declarations, respect for the family is evident, but so is the unwavering demand for equal rights in family and social life. In this way, the unjust and irrational yoke of so many centuries began to give way.

Women have been victims of prejudice and restrictions, enslaved by notions that men themselves invented and perpetuated. Men are free to decide, act, and develop

within society. A historical view of culture, however, shows that a similar sense of superiority often leads to a servile dependence on women's charms and wiles. In the same way, the silent counterattacks of marginalized women from behind the scenes are also interpreted, where the slave takes revenge on her master and, unseen, achieves remarkable goals.

World War II drew men to the front lines, leaving the social arena open for women to test their abilities (Koukoura, 1990:75). These excellent results strengthened the feminist movement, which, however, grew to such an extent that the just demands for equal opportunities and equal treatment were transformed into a rejection of nature itself. Various solutions are proposed in order to find a stable form of freedom. It is worth taking seriously into account the Truth, which essentially liberates human beings, men and women alike, from every form of slavery and subjugation, from decay and the expectation of death. The life of Christians, for two thousand years now, bears witness to the experience of freedom, despite the siege of prejudices and superstitions. There is a solution for the modern world as well, for men and women, but perhaps a reevaluation is needed of the pastoral approach through which our Church conveys its message, so that amid all the noise it may stand out and be understood (Koukoura, 1990:75).

3.2 "The Role of the Orthodox Woman in Contemporary Secular Society"

In this article, the author emphasizes that traditional Orthodox Churches encompass societies that are rapidly moving toward secularization, while the Orthodox Diaspora in Western Europe and the United States of America operates within a purely secularized society (Koukoura, 2001:257). By the end of the 18th century, the proclamations of the French Revolution regarding human dignity and the transition from an agrarian to an industrial society—thanks to the machine, which revolutionarily implemented the findings of the natural sciences—by the mid-19th century, shaken, among other things, the traditional notions of women's roles in society.

The first feminist movement fought passionately to convince a harsh and deeply entrenched patriarchal society that there is also a female population on earth, capable of thinking, acting, and making decisions within society, managing their property, and raising their children on an equal footing with men. It is an indisputable fact that the peoples of the Mediterranean basin, where Christianity spread, as well as the diverse ethnic groups that flooded Western Europe during the early Christian centuries, were imbued with the principles of an unjust and irrational patriarchal system. The philanthropy, grace, and mercy of Christianity, the equality before holiness and salvation from decay and death, took many centuries to soothe primitive barbarism and harsh instincts.

The Apostle Paul's teaching on the unity of male and female in Christ Jesus and on the salvation of both in the person of Jesus is clear. Moreover, from the depths of the 4th century, in a manner that was revelatory and revolutionary in relation to the social customs of the time, the voice of Saint Gregory the Theologian denounced the injustice of male lawmakers at the expense of women. However, deeply rooted perceptions take a long time to be eradicated and require intense social changes to subside. The Industrial

Revolution triggered unexpected chain reactions that inevitably forced women out of the women's quarters and from the margins of social life. Modern women in societies directly or indirectly influenced by the fabric of Western civilization are now called upon to play many and varied roles within society. The same is true for Orthodox women.

Orthodox women attend school and university, elect state officials, and are gradually being elected themselves; they advance research, teach at academic institutions, operate various types of machinery, and constructs buildings. And as the cultural environment changes, so do her roles within society, both increasing and evolving. To her fundamental roles as mother and wife is now added the role of a working woman in society. This does not mean that women did not work hard before the Industrial Revolution; however, her work is now recognized and directly compensated.

After World War II, the women's movement took a different direction. The just demands of the rebellious women of the previous century for fair treatment within society and recognition of their creative role were transformed into declarations that deny the distinctiveness of female nature. In the first phase, the goal was to provide opportunities for the female personality to develop to the fullest extent within society.

The organic logic that provided the theoretical foundation for secularization "demystified" the world by dispelling arbitrary interpretations of nature and humanity, yet it also dismissed anything that transcends this logic. Human beings, however, cannot live without some answer to their metaphysical anxieties, and this is even more true for women, who are by their very nature shaped to experience the mystery of life and death more fully. In this way, we see in contemporary Western societies women who are active and liberated from the social prejudices of the past.

It is within such a European and global society that the Orthodox woman lives, and she is called upon to understand it, make choices that correspond to the truth revealed in the person of Christ, and bear Orthodox witness through her various roles. This is an extremely difficult role. The difficulty stems from humanity's very inability to comprehend the mystery of God's love and His divine Economy.

With the exception of a significant number of Orthodox women who consciously embraced the Orthodox Christian tradition at a mature age while living in the Diaspora, most Orthodox women were raised in societies where Orthodoxy left a strong imprint on the culture. This fact facilitates the formation of an Orthodox ethos, but it also entails many risks of the faith becoming ossified. The flip side of this attitude is that many baptized Orthodox women, mainly young ones, who do not harbor disrespect for the faith, have found that it has indelibly marked their cultural identity. These women, however, do not go any further, and few of them experience the greatness of life in Christ. There are, however, also contemporary Orthodox women—wives, nuns, and working mothers in society who turn to God's mercy and compassion to guide their steps, so that they may fulfill His commandments in today's secularized society. They pray to have the discernment at all times to prioritize which of the many roles they are called to play, and they seek enlightenment to understand their spouse, their children, and their neighbor with an outpouring of love.

For the formation of the modern Orthodox woman and for her to fulfill her role, an appropriate education is also necessary (Koukoura, 2001:269). In the desolate modern metropolises, in the nightmarish loneliness, in the hell of existential emptiness, in the darkness of the absence of the neighbor, and in the gloom of the omnipotence of the ego, it is generally women who stand out for their wisdom, enthusiasm, competence, stability, and philanthropy. It is up to Orthodox women to experience the light of the Resurrection and, through their lives, to bear witness to this truth in our secularized modern society. The fruitfulness of this sowing is the work of God's Grace.

3.3 "An Orthodox Assessment of Feminist Theology" by Kyriaki Fitzgerald. Translated by Dimitra Koukoura.

Dimitra Koukoura has accurately translated Kyriaki Fitzgerald's article "An Orthodox Assessment of Feminist Theology" (Fitzgerald, 1998:425). This article briefly presents the main themes found in many feminist currents:

- a) **Feminism and tradition.** To understand the positions taken by feminist theologians, one must situate them within the historical tradition of Western Christianity in general and of liberal Protestantism in particular. Feminist theologians look down on the ecclesiastical history of the East and West and suggest the need to correct it from the time of Emperor Constantine until the 16th century. They believe that many practices in the Church throughout the centuries are humiliating to women and reflect gender discrimination. For this reason, they feel comfortable creating a more just and equal treatment of women, free from the restrictions of the past.
- b) **Feminism and the Bible.** Feminists view the canon of the Bible as the product of a specific culture and the era in which it was written by men. Since it was written by men of an outdated society, they argue that the text of Scripture can be changed—that is, corrected—to meet the needs of our own era. However, when certain individuals "correct the Scriptures" to express a "new" and better theology, these changes violate the integrity of the Scriptures and the authority of the Church as the guardian and interpreter of the Scriptures.
- c) **Feminism and the Holy Trinity.** Many feminists, in their effort to remove concepts that imply gender discrimination from Tradition and the Scriptures, have rejected the established names for God, such as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These names have been replaced by other terms, such as "Mother," "Parent," and "Fire".
- d) **Feminism and Jesus Christ.** They focused primarily on the common human nature that Jesus shared with men and women and downplayed the fact that Christ came into the world as a man. The result of this distorted Christology is that many feminists describe the Lord in terms that denote either genderlessness or androgyny. They believe that Jesus came as a man because, had he come as a woman in those days, his message would have been disregarded by the male-dominated society.
- e) **Feminism and Power.** The feminist view of authority is both anti-patriarchal and anti-hierarchical. Patriarchy is seen as a structure imposed on the Church, which

excludes women from the right to hold any position of power within the Church. In general, they adopt a more “participatory approach” to authority. Authority must be shared equally between men and women. What is needed is full cooperation from both men and women in the life of the Church.

- f) **Feminism and the ordained priesthood.** One of the most significant concerns of the reformist protesters was the ordained priesthood. In order to reflect the human nature of Christ, feminists argue that the ordained clergy should include both men and women. The exclusion of women is unjust and contradictory to the new reality established by the Gospel.

This presentation aimed to outline some basic tenets of feminist theology. While there is great diversity and variation within the feminist movement, what was mentioned here serves as a sort of “primer” on certain feminist issues we need to be aware of. The most challenging aspect of this topic is the way in which feminism reflects an entire web of reality.

4. Gender in the Writings of Pigi Kazlari

4.1 “Women Confronting the Phenomenon of Clericalism and Fundamentalism in the Orthodox Church”

In this article, the author presents her own perspective from the viewpoint of an Orthodox Christian who was born and raised in Greece (Kazlari, 2004:461). She begins by noting that three significant conferences have been held within the Orthodox community on the following topic: *“Women, who constitute the majority of churchgoers, ‘observe’ what takes place in the realm of church life, without being able to participate and serve the Church in accordance with the gifts and abilities they have been given.”*

- a) **1976, Holy Monastery of Agapia in Romania.** First World Conference of Orthodox Women. Fifty women from all parts of the traditional Orthodox world and from Orthodox communities in the European and American diaspora participated, with the theme: “The Role of Women in Society and the Church.”
- b) **1988, Rhodes: Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference.** Seventy members participated as official representatives of churches and expert advisors from around the world, with the theme: “The Place of Women in the Orthodox Church and Issues Concerning the Ordination of Women”.
- c) **1990, Chania: Second Conference of Orthodox Women.** Twenty-three women from 15 countries participated, with the theme: “Church and Culture.” The three main areas of discussion were the priesthood, human sexuality, and participation and decision-making.

Although the deliberations of the three conferences addressed issues vital to the life of the Church, they remained confined to the pages of the proceedings and were limited to discussions within certain academic circles. It is universally acknowledged that the roles women can assume include: church administration, education and Christian formation, spiritual guidance for married couples and families, youth ministry, and representation in the ecumenical movement. The issue of women’s place in the Church is

an urgent matter that must be discussed within the context of today's living conditions. Women have grown accustomed from a young age to a series of prohibitions, for which they were never given explanations. They do not question much, since they have been taught that it is almost a sin to ask questions. The younger ones endure this with forbearance and tolerance.

The conclusions of all three inter-Orthodox conferences urged local church communities to change their stance and seriously address the issue. Regarding the ordination of women, the Orthodox Church of Greece must function as a living body, and then it will be led to solutions consistent with the Gospel and the integration of today's needs into the Body of Christ (Kazlari, 2004:466). To date, no theological arguments have been put forward that rule out women's ordination. The call for such a theological interpretation has been clearly raised since 1976 in Agapia, but has not yet been answered. However, the request for ordination to the diaconate is viewed positively by the Orthodox. At many Orthodox conferences, it has been expressed as a necessity.

The ordination of deaconesses should not be revived as a return to old structures, but should serve the current needs of the church community (Kazlari, 2004:467). While society has changed rapidly, and over the past fifty years, men and women have shared experiences of cooperation and companionship in their daily lives within a new division of responsibilities, the Church has not yet received the call to become a laboratory for a new quality of relationships in accordance with the spirit of the Church's synodality.

When we try to mask our inertia and confusion by turning to Scripture and Tradition, we easily slip into fundamentalist interpretations. A common tendency of fundamentalist thinking is to rush to patch up the cracks that life opens in the "ideologically tidy world" by using the "letter" of Tradition as a target. The true meaning of Tradition is the Church's living out of Holy Scripture throughout the centuries. Since Tradition is life—that is, the reception and transmission of the treasure of faith—it is by no means something static and ossified, but possesses the essential characteristics of a living organism.

In concluding the article, the author asks how women's active participation within the Church can help eliminate the distortions caused by fundamentalism. Women and men, by their very existence in the world, certainly act in different ways. Women, who for generations have upheld the fabric of family and community, are well-versed in this. They have a spontaneous tendency to be available and open; they more readily make room for someone else. They readily devote themselves to the protection and preservation of life (Kazlari, 2004:470).

All these are valuable qualities that drive them to reach out to people, to every person, to try to get to know them and communicate with them. Because fundamentalist consciousness erects walls and ideas between human beings and, for the sake of those ideas, sets aside all compassion and humanity. Knowledge of the other distorts them, disarming hands and emotions.

5. Comparisons of the three authors' positions

From the preceding analysis regarding Evanthia Adamtziloglou, one can conclude that she focuses her attention on the question of whether women are created in the image of God and on the female dimension in political ministry. Women are created in the image of God and are responsible for their actions. Christ elevated and honored the person of the woman by recognizing her value as a human person alongside the man. The Christological foundation of equality – and not of subordination – possesses such power that its overthrow would also mean the dissolution of the Church of Christ.

It also considers women's participation in all decisions made at the local, national, and global levels to be essential. In the Greek context and Orthodox life, moral equality is a given. In the Western world, however, women are striving to challenge the male-centered order by proposing their own models. The model of the self-centered, autonomous individual – the white, rational man – the idolization of male rationality, as well as the model of the conquering, dominant figure, decisively influenced the women's movements that conveyed messages of liberation to the foundation of women's collectivity.

Dimitra Koukoura highlights the liberation and subjugation of women in the modern world and their role in contemporary secular society. In male-dominated societies, the unequal treatment of women was based on the perception that men are endowed with superior intellectual qualities and play a primary role in society and culture. For women to attain a significant position, radical changes and an industrial revolution were necessary. Feminist movements fought against the prejudices and restrictions imposed on women and demanded equal rights in family and social life.

The author believes that the French Revolution's proclamations regarding human dignity and the transition from an agrarian to an industrial society shook the traditional notions of women's role in society. In modern Western societies, women are active and liberated from the social prejudices of the past. It is within such a global society that the Orthodox woman moves forward, called upon to bear Orthodox witness through her various roles.

Finally, Pigi Kazlari provides an in-depth analysis of the role of women in relation to the phenomena of clericalism and fundamentalism. The issue of women's place in the Church is an urgent matter that must be discussed within the context of today's living conditions. The call for the ordination of women to the diaconate is viewed positively by the Orthodox and has been articulated as a necessity at many Orthodox conferences. Fundamentalist consciousness erects walls of ideas between human beings and, for the sake of these ideas, sets aside all compassion and humanity. The active involvement of women, who have upheld the emotional fabric of the family and society, can help eliminate the distortions caused by fundamentalism.

All three authors focus on gender equality as a social issue, on the feminist movement's struggles against prejudice and social inequalities, and on the roles, women can assume in church administration, education, Christian upbringing, as well as representation in the ecumenical movement. The female population can think, act, and

make decisions within society, manage their property, and raise their children on an equal footing with men.

6. Conclusions

From the articles by the three (3) Orthodox female theologians, we can draw the following conclusions:

- In Jewish monotheism, only man is considered to be created in the image of God, while woman is blamed for the Fall and death. It is she who brought about the loss of glory. Woman does not bear the image of God; she possesses only glory, which she loses with the Fall. This teaching had corresponding consequences for the status of women in Jewish society.
- It is the revelation of Christ that grants women every right to share in and participate in what men achieve, since it goes without saying that women, just like men—who were both created at the same time from the first human—are also created in the image of Christ.
- The patriarchal Jewish social structures, which served as the cradle in which Christianity was born and developed, also influenced the early Church (see 1 Cor 11:7–8), but the great assurance that the Apostle Paul left to the Church regarding the position of women is the Christological foundation of equality and not of submission (Gal. 3:28), which possesses such power that its overthrow would also mean the dissolution of the Church of Christ.
- It is a given, at least in Greek culture, that the woman is the mistress, the hostess, and the law of the house. She is by nature formed to experience more fully the mystery of life and death and is called, like the man, to practice the virtues, the cultivation of which is rooted in our tradition. Furthermore, the active participation of women within the Church can help eliminate the distortions caused by fundamentalism.
- While it is universally acknowledged that the roles women can assume include church administration, education, and Christian formation, spiritual guidance for married couples and families, youth ministry, representation in the ecumenical movement, etc., the modern Orthodox woman also requires appropriate education to prepare her for and fulfill her role.
- It may be necessary to reconsider the pastoral approach through which our Church conveys its message, so that amid all the noise, it may stand out and be understood, and this regard, concerning the ordination of women, the Orthodox Church of Greece must function as a living body, and then it will be led to solutions in accordance with the Gospel and the integration of today's needs into the Body of Christ.
- To date, no theological arguments have been put forward that would rule out the ordination of women. The Orthodox Church views the call for ordination to the diaconate positively. At many Orthodox conferences, this has been expressed as a

necessity. Such an ordination, of course, should not be revived as a return to old structures, but should serve the current needs of the Church.

In my personal opinion, gender equality has always been the most intractable social problem. Given the role women played during the war, men cannot deny them the achievements they have earned. In every demand for her emancipation, a woman vacillates between her own rights and those of men. This means that there is no clear understanding of the boundaries of rights and obligations between her and men. Thus, the boundaries of the natural constitution of both sexes are violated, in a way that burdens the psychological world of both with feelings of guilt, inferiority, or even superiority (Lymouris, 2000:93).

Theoretically and practically, it is impossible to conceive of equality of rights or obligations between men and women unless one takes into account the roles and proper places of men and women in daily life and in society.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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