

The Theology of Gender - 6. The New Eve (Sofia Matzarioti-Kostara)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



The honor and respect of Christianity to women is demonstrated especially in the person of the Theotokos. She is the human closest to God; after Christ, she is the most beloved and honored person by men and God. She has a great place in worship and is most beloved to the Fathers who wrote extensively about her. St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite affirms that the whole world was created for the person of the Theotokos, and that she was created for Christ. In addition, God would have been pleased by the Theotokos alone, even if the whole of creation had become evil and rebelled against God.^[1] The Theotokos is she who: *“divinized the human race and brought the earth to the heavens and, on the one hand, made God the son of man and, on the other hand, made people the sons of God as she conceived within herself without seed and ineffably brought forth Him who created all things out of nothing and Him who transforms all things to well being and does not allow them to fall back into nothingness.”*^[2]



God did not let His beloved creatures feel hopeless after their exile from Paradise. Along with punishment, He offered hope through His promise of the birth of Christ by the Theotokos, by what was said to the serpent^[3]: *"I shall put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; it will bruise your head and you will strike its heel"*^[4]. This prophecy is considered the first "good news" to alleviate the pain of exile from Paradise, and expresses the messianic expectation that is fulfilled through the person of the Theotokos.

In Orthodox theology, the typological relation between Christ and Adam is paralleled by that of Eve and the Theotokos. Christ, through His Incarnation, recapitulated all of humanity in its original state as was intended by God's will from the beginning. He became the New Adam through whom the new generation of humans was born. However, this new creation presupposed the breaking of the shackles of Eve's disobedience^[5] which was brought about through the Theotokos' obedience (ὕπακοή).^[6]

The distinctive role of the person of the Theotokos in God's plan for the salvation of humanity is the source for the empirical, typological symbolism according to which the liturgical function of women in the plan of divine οἰκονομία is parallel to the work of the Holy Spirit, while the liturgical function of the male is parallel to that of Christ.^[7] This does not mean that Orthodox theology tried to ascribe to the Holy Spirit gender characteristics as Russian theological thinking did.^[8] On the contrary, the typological relation between the Theotokos and the Holy Spirit is based on the synergy of both in the plan of God's οἰκονομία.^[9] Through the Holy Spirit, the Theotokos became the "temple" of God and type (prototype) of the Church, since the motherhood of the Church and the motherhood of the Theotokos function through the energy of the Holy Spirit.

The Theotokos assists humanity in her Son's work of salvation. She intercedes for

all, because on the Cross He entrusted to her all humankind in the person of his beloved disciple John.[\[10\]](#) She became the spiritual mother of all people as Eve was the physical mother of all humans.[\[11\]](#)

The person of the Theotokos is the most profound example of the recognition of woman's value in Christian thinking. In his homily on the Nativity, St. Gregory the Theologian affirms that through the birth of Christ from the Theotokos without man's "help," Eve pays back her debt to Adam, because Eve was taken from the rib of Adam. From then on, man and woman are equal. However, equality does not mean the lack of distinctive roles and functions of the genders in all aspects of spiritual and social life.

[\[1\]](#) St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Συμβουλευτικόν Ἐγχειρίδιον*, (Αθήνα, 2001), 314-328.

[\[2\]](#) Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ, Ὁμιλία 42, 4, Ἔργα, *ΕΠΕ*, τομ. 10, σ. 590. «Τό ἀνθρώπινον γένος θεώσασα καί τήν γῆν οὐρανώσασα, καί υἱόν μέν ἀνθρώπου τόν Θεόν, υἱούς δέ Θεοῦ τούς ἀνθρώπους ποιήσασα, ὡς ἐν ἑαυτῇ συλλαβοῦσα ἀσπόρως καί Σαρκοφόρον ἀπορρήτως προαγαγοῦσα τόν ἐκ μή ὄντων τά ὄντα παραγαγόντα καί πρός τό εἶναι μετασκευάζοντα καί πρός τό μή ὄν οὐκ ἐῶντα διαπεσεῖν» (Translated by the author).

[\[3\]](#) See more in Pentiuc, *Jesus the Messiah*, 34-38.

[\[4\]](#) «καί ἔχθραν θήσω ἀνά μέσον σοῦ καί ἀνά μέσον τῆς γυναικός καί ἀνά μέσον τοῦ σπέρματός σου καί ἀνά μέσον τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς· αὐτός σου τηρήσει κεφαλὴν, καί σύ τηρήσεις αὐτοῦ πτέρναν» Gen 3:15.

[\[5\]](#) «...Μαρία ἡ παρθένος ὑπήκοος εὐρίσκεται..., ἡ δέ Εὐα ἀπειθής, παρήκουσε γάρ ἔτι παρθένος οὔσα. Ὡσπερ γάρ ἐκείνη, ἄνδρα μέν ἔχουσα τόν Ἀδάμ, παρθένος μέντοι οὔσα..., παρακούσασα, ἑαυτῇ τε καί τῇ πάσῃ ἀνθρωπότητι αἰτία ἐγένετο θανάτου, οὕτω δὴ καί Μαρία, ἔχουσα τόν προωρισμένον ἄνδρα καί ὁμως παρθένος, ὑπακούσασα, ἑαυτῇ τε καί τῇ πάσῃ ἀνθρωπότητι αἰτία ἐγένετο σωτηρίας» Εἰρηναίου, *Κατά αἱρέσεων*, III, 22, 4.

[\[6\]](#) «ὁ τῆς Εὐας τῆς παρακοῆς δεσμός λύσιν ἔλαβε διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τῆς Μαρίας· ὅπερ γάρ ἔδησεν ἡ παρθένος Εὐα διὰ τῆς ἀπειθείας, τοῦτο ἡ παρθένος Μαρία ἔλυσε διὰ τῆς πίστεως» Εἰρηναίου, *Κατά αἱρέσεων*, III, 22, 4.

[7] See more in V. Fidas, “Τό Ἀνεπίτρεπτον τῆς Ἱερωσύνης τῶν Γυναικῶν κατὰ τοὺς Ἱερούς Κανόνας” in the book *Ἡ Θέσις τῆς Γυναικός ἐν τῇ Ὁρθοδόξῳ Ἐκκλησίᾳ καί τὰ περί Χειροτονίας τῶν Γυναικῶν*.

[8] Ibid., 268-269.

[9] «Μετά οὖν τήν συγκατάθεσιν τῆς ἁγίας Παρθένου, Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπῆλθεν ἐπ’ αὐτήν κατὰ τόν τοῦ Κυρίου λόγον, ὃν εἶπεν ὁ ἄγγελος, καθαῖρον αὐτήν καί δύναμιν δεκτικήν τῆς τοῦ Λόγου θεότητος παρέχον, ἅμα δέ καί γεννητικήν. Καί τότε ἐπεσκίασεν ἐπ’ αὐτήν ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ Ὑψίστου ἐνυπόστατος σοφία καί δύναμις, ὁ Υἱός τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ τῷ Πατρὶ ὁμοούσιος οἶονεῖ θεῖος σπόρος καί συνέπηξεν ἐαυτῷ ἐκ τῶν ἀγνῶν καί καθαρωτάτων αὐτῆς αἱμάτων σάρκα ἐψυχωμένην ψυχῇ λογικῇ τε καί νοερᾷ, ἀπαρχήν τοῦ ἡμετέρου φυράματος· οὐ σπερματικῶς, ἀλλά δημιουργικῶς διὰ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος» Ἰωάννου Δαμασκηνοῦ, “Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστεως,” 3,2. *PG* 94, 985.

[10] See more in Jeanlin Francoise, “Ἡ Θέσις τῆς Ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας εἰς τήν Ὁρθόδοξον Ἐκκλησίαν ἐπ’ Ἀναφορᾷ πρὸς τήν Χειροτονίαν τῶν Γυναικῶν” in the book *Ἡ Θέσις τῆς Γυναικός ἐν τῇ Ὁρθοδόξῳ Ἐκκλησίᾳ καί τὰ περί Χειροτονίας τῶν Γυναικῶν*.

[11] «Αὕτη ἐστίν ἡ παρά μέν τῇ Εὐα σηματομένη, δι’ αἰνίγματος λαβοῦσα τό καλεῖσθαι μήτηρ ζώντων (Gen 3:20)...Καί κατὰ μέν τό αἰσθητόν, ἀπ’ ἐκείνης τῆς Εὐας πᾶσα τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἡ γέννησις ἐπὶ γῆς γεγένηται· ὧδε δέ ἀληθῶς ἀπό Μαρίας αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ τῷ κόσμῳ γεγένηται, ἵνα ζῶντα γεννήσῃ καί γένηται ἡ Μαρία μήτηρ ζώντων. Δι’ αἰνίγματος οὖν ἡ Μαρία μήτηρ ζώντων κέκληται» Ἐπιφανίου Κύπρου, “Πανάριον,” *PG* 42, 728C-732A.