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Title of the thesis: *New Eve? Images of Biblical Eve in Selected Historical, Theological and Literary Discourses*

Date: 9th May 2022

SUMMARY

The author of the thesis *New Eve? Images of Biblical Eve in Selected Historical, Theological and Literary Discourses* focuses on variability of the presentation of the first woman. The portrayal of biblical Eve makes her ponder on the issue of a woman's value. She reflects upon the influence of the myth of Eve on the perception of a woman. Although the definition of 'biblical Eve' does not refer to any real person, there are many approaches to this term. The author differentiates between two of them: *consistent* and *inconsistent* one. The former indicates that Eve may be seen in an extreme way, in categories of good and evil, the latter, additionally defined as *new*, is more complex. *Consistent Eve* means that she is perceived only negatively: as a sinner or temptress, or, on the contrary, an initiator of development and redeemer. A *new* way of looking at Eve is inconsistent and nuanced.

The author notices that the myth of Eve the sinner can be found mainly in ancient and medieval texts (though it was also repeated later) and the image of Eve – the redeemer is connected with modern feminist criticism. Therefore, there are many versions of Eve, negative and positive one, pristine and new. The meaning of the adjective 'new' may also vary. It might refer to both the modern interpretations of the image of Eve and to the feminist construct of the New Woman, who, in the author's opinion, is inconsistent. Thus, the thesis aims at answering the question of who the new Eve is, and by whom and in which context she is so perceived.

The thesis may be of interest for various scholarly fields such as literary studies, philosophy and culture. The author begins with the term 'image' that she understands as some mental representation. Depending on discourse a biblical image of Eve is perceived in various ways. Taking into consideration the criterion of chronology the author compares them. Traditional presentations of Eve may refer to a painting, whereas those new ones are identified with photography. A biblical image of Eve undergoes various processes. The same is true about a photograph that is cropped, enlarged, reduced or whose focus may be regulated. That is why a photo changes constantly. Comparing the two approaches to a traditional and modern form of image, the author indicates that the former one distorts the image of Eve as it limits it to a negative aspect,

whereas the latter is more nuanced and complex. The author relates the term of inconsistency to the image theory by Ronald Barthes and the concept of truth by Ludwig Wittgenstein. What all these categories have in common are changeability, plurality and complexity, aspects totally different from those that are emphasized in traditional images of Eve. They are, however, visible in modern interpretations of those images that are discussed on the basis of the chosen discourses in respective parts of the thesis.

The first chapter presents the image of Eve shown in the texts by ancient and medieval theologians. Forming the doctrine of the catholic Church, they probably wanted to show the consequences of sin and the importance of the institution of Church in eradicating it. Therefore, the writings by St. Paul, Augustine or Thomas depict Eve in a negative way. The image is not altogether a consistent one. Inconsistencies have been especially noticed by modern critics of the mentioned texts: Augustyn Eckmann, Piotr Dernowski and Joachim Gnilka, and also Carol Meyers, a feminist historian.

In the second chapter of the thesis the author shows mainly positive and inconsistent images of Eve, many of which appeared at the time of the flourishing of feminism. The author claims that some of the feminist scholars opposed the Catholic church by using those images. It was them who believed that the Church is responsible for the repetition of the negative image of a woman. The author analyses the texts by both radical and reformist feminist scholars. Radical feminists like Mary Daly, are of the opinion that the Church presents a negative depiction of Eve, whereas reformist ones: Phyllis Trible, Mieke Bal and already mentioned Meyers focus on her more complex and nuanced image.

The third chapter may be treated as the Church's reply to the charges laid by feminism. Texts by John Paul II, Benedict XVI or Waldemar Chrostowski and the authors of the monograph *Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism* (2008) and *Duchowość kobiety* (2007) show inconsistency and complexity of the image of Eve, and, at the same time, protect the feminine worth. Whereas radical feminism perceives the image of Eve presented by the Church as negative, new feminism assumes that a woman's extraordinary dignity was intended by God.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to literary images of both Eve and a heroine compared to her, and more general issues connected with the diegetic world. The author reflects on, for instance, how the world presented in the given text imitates reality and how Eve imitates a woman. It is connected with the term of *mimesis*. Referring to Aristotelian theory of imitating reality via poetry, the author divides the chosen texts into those that treat about real, ideal and caricatural reality. Thus, there are several different realities and also several different Eves.

New Eve is, therefore, perceived in a variety of ways. Feminism associates it with the construct of the New Woman, modern theology of the catholic Church – with the term of new

feminism. Literature also presents various images of Eve. Those inconsistent ones are frequently related to the ideas of freedom, emancipation or feminine worth. It turns out that inconsistent representations are not necessarily connected with modern texts only. In fact, they may be also found in ancient and medieval theological commentaries and in 17th – century epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667). Thus, the question about new Eve acquires a wider significance. It refers not only to the feminine worth, but also indicates a more contemporary way of perceiving various, also pristine texts.