

Feminine Authorities in the Romanian Orthodox Theology of the 20th Century

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Abstract: Often accused that feminine voices are not heard, the Orthodox Church has much to do in order to truly value the contribution of women. Nevertheless, there have been important feminine voices who have not only promoted its spirituality and life but also contributed greatly to the theology of this Christian tradition. In this paper, we will identify the most important feminine representatives from the twentieth century Romanian context and their main works in order to recall their contribution to the promotion of Orthodoxy. We will also present the ecumenical aspects of their publications, setting them in the original context in which they were written. The investigation's aim is to show that, despite the difficulties experienced by Romanians during the aforementioned century, there were important women who offered valuable contributions to understanding the spirituality, life and theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church from the Romanian perspective.

Keywords: Dumitru Stăniloae, women, Anca Manolache, Christology, Pnevmatology, angels, Romanian exile

Introduction

The Eastern Orthodox Church has often been criticized for being an institution dominated by men, not allowing women to have a sufficiently important role within its structures and life. There are undoubtedly many things still to achieve in order to ensure a greater representation of women and more

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diversified possibilities for them to live their vocation within the community. Some advances were surely made within the monastic tradition, where as Abbesses, the women have the possibility to be leaders, to develop different charisms and to teach others.

There were also other important feminine voices who promoted Orthodoxy in the West and in ecumenical circles. The names of women like Myrrha Lot-Borodine², Maria Skobtova³ or Elisabeth Behr-Sigel⁴ are relevant today not only for Orthodoxy but also for ecumenical discourse. This is especially true for example, in matters relating to the mystics, the role of cult in the Church's life, the ordination of women and the Orthodox perception on it⁵, or with ecumenism and the how Orthodox traditions can contribute to its development.

As in other areas, in Romania too, the feminine presence was not truly appreciated during the twentieth century. Still, there were a few representatives of the genre who were leading the way at different moments and who have bequeathed to their posterity many important ideas that are still used today in contemporary research. Moreover, some of them were also involved at key historical moments. In the paragraphs which follow, we will try to highlight the most important feminine theologians, their respective contributions and the insightfulness of their message.

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Mina Hociotă (1896-1977) and the Theology on the Battlefield

As is well known, the twentieth century was a bloody one. The first World War provoked a particular response from the Romanian Orthodox Church. At the time, there was a well-structured military chaplaincy coordinated by the Primate Metropolitan of Bucharest. Priests went onto the battlefield in order to offer the Eucharist to the soldiers and to pray together with them. They also distributed prayer books and catechisms to those who were fighting.

² Cf. Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Myrrha Lot-Borodine et la redécouverte de la théologie orthodoxe dans l'espace français," in *Studia Monastica*, year 60 (2020), nr. 2, p. 413-419; Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Mystagogie und Sakrament. Myrrha Lot-Borodine (1882-1954)," in *Geist & Leben*, year 93 (2020), p. 142-146.

³ Morariu Iuliu-Marius, "Une vocation singulière du monachisme orthodoxe: la Sainte Marie Skobtsova", in *Studia Monastica*, year 62 (2020), no. 1-2, p. 293-304.

⁴ Olga Lossky, *Vers le jour sans déclin. Une vie d'Elisabeth Behr-Sigel*, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 2007.

⁵ Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, Kallistos Ware, *The ordination of women in the Orthodox Church*, World Council of Churches Publication, Geneva, 2000.

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The armed forces needed nurses too. They were called to cooperate with the Red Cross and to take care of the wounded. In this context, there was a nun who would go on to distinguish herself through the amazing work she did caring for those who were injured. Together with Ecaterina Teodoroiu, to whom she would often be compared⁶, she was the first woman to become an officer in the Romanian Army⁷. Born in Transylvania in the village of Sălișteța Sibiului,⁸ she crossed the Carpathian Mountains and became a nun, initially in Moldavian lands at Văratec Monastery and then later in the South, where she became the Abbess of Nămăiești Monastery. As a nun, she studied and became a nurse; a fact that propelled her to go on the front lines⁹. Her care for wounded soldiers was well documented and it was here on the front lines where she was wounded also, almost losing her leg. As a nun, she is numbered among the women who have made a rich contribution, developing a mission of prime social importance. As one biographer noted:

„Mina Hociotă was a real support for the wounded people, but she was also a heroine, due to the fact that she offered to serve voluntarily and disinterestedly the cause of the neighbor, of the Romanian nation and of the Church.”¹⁰

In 1916 she was a youth of only twenty years. Her bravery at such a tender age is surely the result of her understanding of the Gospel put into practice. For all her efforts the Communist authorities, who did not have a very good relationship with the Orthodox Church, decorated her and held her up as a model to be followed. Unfortunately, for the women concerned with activities like those of the Văratec orphanage, administrative work or the care of ill people, Mina Hociotă did not write any theology books.

The only manuscript that bears her signature is in an autobiography, published in 2018, by Dragoș Lucian and Daniela Curelea.¹¹ It has been cited by

⁶ Antonie Plămădeală, „Marina Hociotă, Maica Mina de la Sălișteța Sibiului, „o nouă Ecaterina Teodoroiu” în războiul din 1916-1918”, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 116 (1978), no. 11-12, p. 1274.

⁷ Dragoș Lucian Curelea, Daniela Curelea, *Reconstruirea unei icoane de om: Monahia Mina Hociotă (1896-1977)*, Editura Andreiana, Sibiu, 2018, p. 25.

⁸ Mihai-Octavian Groza, „Prefață”, in Dragoș Lucian Curelea, Daniela Curelea, *Reconstruirea unei icoane de om: Monahia Mina Hociotă (1896-1977)*, Editura Andreiana, Sibiu, 2018, p. 9.

⁹ Mihai-Octavian Groza, „Prefață”, p. 9.

¹⁰ Dragoș Lucian Curelea, Daniela Curelea, *Reconstruirea unei icoane de om: Monahia Mina Hociotă (1896-1977)*, p. 33.

¹¹ Dragoș Lucian Curelea, Daniela Curelea, *Reconstruirea unei icoane de om: Monahia Mina Hociotă (1896-1977)*.

all the major historians and theologians who tried to find out more about her life and activity. Still, by word and deed, Mina Hociotă was undoubtedly a central figure in the Romanian female religious landscape. She proved that, in a context where feminism was not yet deemed to be particularly important and the value of women not generally appreciated, it was possible for a woman to make a telling contribution to the life of the Church and society.

Feminine Theological Contributions

If the nun Mina Hociotă was a crucial feminine figure in the war effort, there were also a few other women who made important contributions in the theological field proper. They are: Anca Manolache, Natalia Manoilescu Dinu and Princess Ileana. The first two wrote their PhD theses respectively, under the supervision of Father Dumitru Stăniloae. He is the most important Romanian theologian of the 20th century and the author, among others, of an important treaty on *Dogmatic Theology*.¹² Due to their competence in the academic field, these two women were instrumental in the movement towards ecumenical dialogue. Anca Manolache was active, for example, in different reunions and contributed to the Cernica meeting during the 1970s where she also met other important woman like Elisabeth Behr-Sigel. Their interests in these conversations emanated from Christological and Sacramental concerns as understood in the Orthodox tradition. The third, Princess Ileana, become a nun in the last years of her life. She is credited with the construction of a Romanian Orthodox Monastery and with a treatise on the Angels as presented in the Holy Scriptures. We will now try to present the essential aspects of the life and activity of each of these women.

Anca Manolache

Anca Manolache lived between 1923 and 2013¹³ and was, as already mentioned, a woman with deep theological concerns. After defending a PhD. thesis in theology, she published studies and articles in the journals of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate.¹⁴

¹² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 1-3, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodox Române, București, 2010.

¹³ Nicoleta Pălimaru, *Portret de teolog. Anca Manolache în dialog cu Nicoleta Pălimaru*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2003. Cf. <https://www.crestinortodox.ro/editoriale/admiratie-144349.html>, accessed 12. 11. 2020.

¹⁴ See, for example: Anca Manolache „Cunoașterea ocultă – o falsificare a cunoașterii adevărului”, in *Studii Teologice*, 6 (1954), no. 3-4, p. 174-188; Anca Manolache „Un capitol de anghelologie”, in *Studii Teologice*, 7 (1955), no. 1-2, p. 122-136; Anca Manolache, *Problema feminină în Biserica lui Hristos – un capitol de antropologie creștină*, Editura Mitropoliei Banatului, Timișoara, 1994; Anca Manolache, *Pași spre mântuire – eseuri și studii teologice*,

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When one looks at the life of a woman who bequeathed to posterity rich texts still in use today for creating bridges between spiritualities and traditions, he or she may be tempted to think that it was a very linear one. This surely is not the case. Anca Manolache's views are very dynamic, having been influenced by many different experiences. Shortly after her death Radu Preda, who today is the parish priest of a Romanian community in Germany, wrote about these diverse influences as follows:

„She graduated in Letters, Law and Theology, was imprisoned for political reasons for six years for not betraying her friends, that is, for "omission of denunciation", Anca Manolache, as I met her after 1989, conquered you through the hot curiosity of a person who did not want to simply find out something, information, but to experience Someone. A suggestive detail: Father Anania, the future metropolitan of Cluj, was to hire Mrs. Manolache at the Biblical Institute, a moment she described as "the second release". Beyond the coordinates of a biography, the copy remains the force that a woman can make in the service of the Gospel. Even if, through constitutive Mariology, Orthodoxy has theologically integrated the issue of femininity, thus avoiding beating the fields of feminism, it is no less true that we have a deficit. It is ignored, for example, that the priesthood of many clerics would be impossible without the commitment of their wives, or that women are the real basis of faith communities. As for their sacrifice, they will certainly receive God's reward. That, on the part of men, would deserve, until then, admiration.”¹⁵

She wrote on topics as diverse as occultism and its deficiencies, apologetics¹⁶ and angelology¹⁷ and yet somehow managed to avoid the censorship of the communist regime. After 1989 she addressed the issue of women and their role in the Eastern Orthodox Church. In a way, she resembles other women from the ecumenical field whom she also knew, like Elisabeth Behr-Sigel.¹⁸ She spoke

Editura Saeculum I. O. Press, București, 2002; Anca Manolache, *Sfintele Taine în viața Bisericii*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2004.

2004. *The Holy Sacraments in the life of the Church*. Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea Publishing House.

¹⁵ <https://www.crestinortodox.ro/editoriale/admiratie-144349.html>, accessed 12. 11. 2020.

¹⁶ Anca Manolache „Cunoașterea ocultă – o falsificare a cunoașterii adevărului”, p. 174-188.

¹⁷ Anca Manolache „Un capitol de anghelologie”, in *Studii Teologice*, 7 (1955), no. 1-2, p. 122-136.

¹⁸ Olga Lossky, *Vers le jour sans déclin. Une vie d'Elisabeth Behr-Sigel*.

about feminism and its relationship with the Christian tradition.¹⁹ Published in the Metropolitan See from Timișoara in the Western part of Romania, with the blessing of a controversial but open-minded bishop named Nicolae Corneanu, the book unfortunately did not have the expected impact on readers, despite its innovative content. She approached the role of women from an anthropological perspective. Some of her ideas were surely influenced by her experience at the Cernica Pan-Orthodox conference that took place in 1974 where she encountered other female personalities involved in ecumenism.²⁰ Her lived experience of the Romanian Orthodox Church also undoubtedly shaped her ideas. Nevertheless, she always remained faithful to the doctrine of the Orthodox Church, while at the same time provoking debate about those elements that could change.

In 2004, Nicoleta Pălimaru, who published a book of interviews with her,²¹ and posthumously it was published a book of her entitled *The Holy Sacraments in the Life of the Church*.²² The book is in fact, an anthology of previously published studies and articles of theology, (specifically sacramentology). What is interesting here is the fact that in order to present the Orthodox point of view, Anca Manolache quotes sources from the Catholic and protestant traditions respectively, like Joachim Jeremias.²³ She often compares theological and historical content, not to challenge but to show how the context determined a certain direction of development for one or other sacrament. Therefore for example, after presenting the position of the Orthodox Church on Baptism and Chrismation, and using arguments from Byzantine authors like Nicholas Cabasilas, she shows that, compared with the Catholic understanding:

“The Orthodox Church has maintained the old traditional practice of concomitantly performing these two Sacraments. The Sacrament of Baptism chronologically and causally precedes, which is whole, complete, perfect in itself; but its consequence on the receiving subject is preserved in the Sacrament of Anointing.”²⁴

Afterwards, she emphasizes the purifying dimension that the Chrismation has in the Orthodox tradition. Comparing it with other cultural approaches, she shows

¹⁹ Anca Manolache, *Problema feminină în Biserica lui Hristos – un capitol de antropologie creștină*.

²⁰ Cornel Coprean, *Dezvoltarea teologiei misionare prin conferințele misionare internaționale și consultațiile misionare interortodoxe*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2019, p. 351.

²¹ See: Nicoleta Pălimaru, *Portret de teolog. Anca Manolache în dialog cu Nicoleta Pălimaru*.

²² Anca Manolache, *Sfintele Taine în viața Bisericii*.

²³ Anca Manolache, *Sfintele Taine în viața Bisericii*, p. 10.

²⁴ Anca Manolache, *Sfintele Taine în viața Bisericii*, p. 20.

that the understanding of anointment as a purifying element can be found in almost all the revealed traditions and points to the fact that:

“The symbol of cleansing with oil is an old tradition in all the revealed religions; through its gift of penetrating all the fine tissues of the skin, it acquired the aspect of healing by softening the external hardness of the diseased body. The healing action of the body brought with it the idea of the soul’s healing, which the oil always carries in our ritual.”²⁵

Baptism placed in the larger anthropological context and the common perception regarding the ancestral sin (Manolache 2004:30) is therefore emphasized too. The same thing happens also in the description of the Eucharist and its common perception in the main Christian traditions: the Catholic, the Orthodox and the Protestant ones.²⁶ The differences between these theological traditions are to be understood under the aspect of diversity rather than that of exclusivity. Using the text of the Scriptures as the basis of her ideas, she insists on the fact that each Christian community speaks about the relevance of the Eucharist and is it thus seen as the fundamental point of reference that underpins ecumenical discourse. For a woman who was writing during the communist period and who published her texts under a very strict censorship regime, she is a really pioneering and brave writer. She had the ability to approach important aspects of theology in an ecumenical tone, while simultaneously remaining faithful to her own Church’s teachings and yet without offending others. Sadly, this has not always been the case in the ecumenical arena by some Orthodox theologians. In this regard, she proves herself a real disciple of Father Dumitru Stăniloae. She understood his teaching and this is reflected in the theological works that the Romanian theologian published in that period, both in Romania and elsewhere.

Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu

Another important feminine voice of the 20th century was Natalia Manoliescu Dinu, who lived between 1920 and 1992. She graduated in 1949 in the University of Bucharest from the faculty of philosophy. During her life she published different studies and articles in various journals in Romania and abroad. She also wrote books and edited others. One important book was dedicated to the saintly Orthodox bishop, Calinic from Cernica, who lived in the 19th century.²⁷ She also

²⁵ Anca Manolache, *Sfintele Taine în viața Bisericii*, p. 24.

²⁶ Anca Manolache, *Sfintele Taine în viața Bisericii*, p. 40-41.

²⁷ Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu, *Viața și activitatea Sfântului Calinic de la Cernica*, Editura Cuvântul Vieții, București, 2015.

left an interesting volume of memories²⁸ where she speaks about the main events that influenced her life as well as the genesis of some of her theological works.

It should also be noted that her work includes two important theology texts. One dedicated to the Holy Spirit and to the conception of the Eastern Orthodox Church, about Him and His work;²⁹ the other dedicated to Christ and the testimony offered by the Gospels about Him.³⁰ They are both works of great interdisciplinary value. Taught as works of spirituality, these two important texts also have relevance for dogmatic, Biblical and Patristic theology, due to the rich tapestry of references provided by the author.

Speaking about the one dedicated to Christ and his image as Savior according to the Gospels, Constantin Coman, who wrote the forward to it, emphasizes the fact that:

“The indisputable originality of the work consists in the theological-dogmatic commentary on the New Testament Biblical text. The exegete and the dogmatist meet happily in the same person. The book manages to overcome the unnatural distance between Biblical study and dogmatic study, imposed by a rather arbitrary division of theological fields, so that Biblical studies do not directly benefit from the contribution of systematic ones, nor the latter from the contribution of Biblical studies.”³¹

In order to offer a reconstruction of the image of Christ as it is emphasized by the Gospels, she presents every important episode from His preaching and tries to correlate it with the exegesis in order to offer a complex overview on how it was understood and received historically. At the same time, she has profound insights relating to dogmatic theology. For example, in the following fragment dedicated to baptism, a key anthropological claim is made:

“If baptism represents a crucial moment in the earthly existence of Christ, it is at the same time the prelude to the work of redemption of man and creation, because through this act the Savior foreshadows His sacrifice. By agreeing to sink into the Jordan, in solidarity with mankind who lay under the burden of sin, Christ buried Adam and thus began the building of a new man.”³²

²⁸ Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu, *Memorii*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2007.

²⁹ Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu, *Sfântul Duh în spiritualitatea Ortodoxă*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2005.

³⁰ Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu, *Iisus Hristos Mântuitorul în lumina Sfintelor Evanghelii*, Editura Bizantină, București, 2004.

³¹ Constantin Coman, „Prefață”, in Anca Manolache, *Sfintele Taine în viața Bisericii*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, p. 5.

³² Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu, *Iisus Hristos Mântuitorul în lumina Sfintelor Evanghelii*, p. 103.

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The idea of the new man should not be understood in a political way, although that political theology has its value. In the Romanian context in which she wrote this was dangerous, since the regime tried to control what theologians could publish on political matters. However, here the renewal spoken of by Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu refers to the interior change wrought by baptism in the soul of the one who believes. The text therefore not only underlines a fundamental aspect of the Eastern Orthodox theology, of which she is part, but also presents it in a way that is accepted by all the Christian traditions.

Sensitive aspects like eschatology are also emphasized in the context of Christ's work and preaching. Without being an expert on this topic, like Christian philosophers such as Berdiaev,³³ she still offers an interesting understanding of the idea of the Kingdom of God. This is obviously very important for Christians and represents the connection with eternity. She shows that:

"The Kingdom of God has an obvious eschatological character, because it will not take its final face until the end of history: this appeared especially in the parable of the tares and the net. It will not be fully realized until the next life - although the new eon is born and grows within the old one - when the whole creation will be reunited under the action of sanctifying grace."³⁴

Her understanding of ecclesiology has as its point of departure the relationship that existed between Christ and the disciples. For this reason, in the presentation of Christ's kerygma, she insists on the way he interacts with them. In certain situations He makes them feel privileged, while at others He has to help them realise that this privilege means service of others. But she also underlined the fact that:

"What is absolutely essential and proper to the apostolic mission is the relationship between the apostles and Christ. Everything they will do and suffer will depend on Christ and for Him: "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Matthew 10:22). All their ministry and sacrifice will have Him in mind ... This unique relationship, which defines the very notion of an apostle, is based on the boundless love that the apostles have for Christ."³⁵

The attitude of Christ is therefore normative for the Apostles and for their ministry, and they are called to follow his example. The dynamics of the relationship that he had with the chosen ones is also important to see. He taught them and helped them to have a better understanding of His message and work.

³³ Nikolas Berdyaev, *Essai d'autobiographie spirituelle*, Buchet-Castel, Paris, 1958, p. 38.

³⁴ Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu, *Iisus Hristos Mântuitorul în lumina Sfintelor Evanghelii*, p. 260.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 264.

The parallels that the Romanian writer makes between the contemporary situation and the time of Christ are also interesting. The contemporary society represents a topic that is not beyond her reach. Whether she speaks about the work of the Spirit³⁶ or about the work of Christ, she always refers to the aspect of actuality. She insists on the fact that material progress, when divorced from spiritual progress, does not bring happiness to the people but in fact, suffering and pain. Comparing the contemporary situation with Israel at the time of Christ, she underlines the fact that:

“The situation of man today, who rejects faith in God, is similar in some respects to that of the world around the birth of the Savior. Despite material progress, he feels overwhelmed by anxiety and experiences with acute intensity the phenomenon of loneliness, the result of the rupture of the transcendent. Man is once again alone in a world that seems more and more foreign to him.”³⁷

Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu is therefore an important Orthodox feminine voice in the Romanian Church of the 20th century. Offering a clear perspective, nurtured in her tradition, she was also well versed in ecumenical matters. These are emphasized in an interesting way in the synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology that she published during her life. Unfortunately, because of the fact that her work was not translated until today, and in a foreign language, means that she remains a personality with relevance for the Romanian context only. Thus, many people continue to accuse the Romanian Orthodox Church of not allowing the voices of women to be heard.

Abbess Alexandra (Princess Ileana)

Another important personality of the Romanian scene who has benefited from various monographs³⁸ is Princess Ileana, who later become a nun and is also known as mother Alexandra. A very erudite woman and author of a precious volume of memories, the sister of King Charles the Second of Romania had an interesting and tumultuous life.³⁹ After the installation of the communist regime in Romania, she went into exile.

³⁶ Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu, *Sfântul Duh în spiritualitatea Ortodoxă*, p. 74.

³⁷ Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu, *Iisus Hristos Mântuitorul în lumina Sfintelor Evanghelii*, p. 275.

³⁸ See, for example: Nicu Dumitrașcu, „Abbess Alexandra: The Princess of Love, Suffering and Compassion (An exercise of spiritual admiration)”, in *Studia Monastica*, 59 (2017), no. 1, p. 197-212; B. Cooke, *Principesă și monahie – domnița Ileana – Maica Alexandra*, Editura Sophia, București, 2011.

³⁹ Cf. <https://radiorenasterea.ro/principesa-ileana-2/>, accessed 12. 11. 2020.

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In 1959, after the death of her daughter⁴⁰ and her husband, the archduke Stephen, she came closer of the Orthodox faith. In 1961, she retired to the abbey „Theotokos” from Bussy-en-Othe, following bishop Anthony Bloom’s advice. In 1967, she became a nun and left for the United States. There in Elwood City, Pennsylvania, she founded the first Romanian Orthodox Monastery in the United States.

As an abbess, she found time to write about and develop ecumenical relationships. She had a vast correspondence with many personalities of the time and published an interesting treatise dedicated to the angels and their presence in the Scriptures.⁴¹ Published posthumously in her native language, the Romanian translator said in the foreword:

"This book by Mother Alexandra ('The Holy Angels') is an expression of her pure soul, a soul that has sought God throughout her life, led by the angel of childhood. Angels subject to God are seen only by those who are available, pure in heart, just as the heart of a child is pure."⁴²

Begun before her entrance into the monastic life,⁴³ the book highlights the presence of angels in the pages of the Bible. It had a very pragmatic motivation, as she underlined in the beginning of the treatise:

"At the present moment, bookshelves in airports, shops, or other places where books are sold exhibit numerous volumes on satanic cults, but nowhere do we see anything about the holy angels, who are God's messengers and the heavenly correspondent of the emissaries of hell."⁴⁴

Having a structure similar with a catechism, her book speaks about the how, according to the Scripture, the angels can be perceived. It also speaks about those characteristics that define their work and their presence in the Kingdom of God. Books like the Apocalypse, often avoided in the Orthodox tradition due to its rich symbolical content, are also discussed by the nun princess. She insists on the beauty of the descriptions from that text. She emphasizes the fact that in the symbolical sense of the text, the reality is also to be found:

"Nowhere is the story of the fall of Satan described more impressively than in the magnificent divine vision of St. John in the Book of Revelation. We must also not forget that St. John makes a symbolic account of the

⁴⁰ Nicu Dumitrașcu, „Abbess Alexandra: The Princess of Love, Suffering and Compassion (An exercise of spiritual admiration)”, p. 198.

⁴¹ Mother Alexandra, *Despre îngerii*, Editura Anastasia, București, 2009.

⁴² Irineu Pop-Bistrițeanul, „Prefață”, in Mother Alexandra, *Despre îngerii*, Editura Anastasia, București, 2009, p. 13.

⁴³ Mother Alexandra, *Despre îngerii*, p. 15.

⁴⁴ Mother Alexandra, *Despre îngerii*, p. 19.

heavenly war, which began long before the creation of the earth and in which the Church is still engaged."⁴⁵

Divided into three parts, the book speaks about the angels, their presence and manifestation, in the Old Testament in the first part. In the second she discusses angels in relation to the New Testament, and in the final section she comments on how the Christian tradition has understood and perceived them. The actions of both good and bad angels are analyzed, both on the basis of the text of the Holy Scriptures and on one of the books from the first centuries of Christianity. Their presence ministering to Christ and their role as the ones who announce the Resurrection is also emphasized by her. This book dedicated to the celestial beings shows their relevance for the history of salvation. Mother Alexandra underlines the fact about them that:

"The angels announce the resurrection, as the news of Christ's birth was heard in their proclamation:" For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people "(Luke 2:10); now, of course, the message brings more joy and is better understood: "He is risen ... go quickly and tell the apostles!" (Matthew 28: 6-7). All the time, the angels surrounded the Lord on earth, even if their presence was not always visible, but in the glorious hours they appeared to those who deserved to see them."⁴⁶

There are many other important aspects that can be found in the princess's work dedicated to the Angels. The value of her treatise is proved by the fact that it is still used today, both in Romania and abroad. The fact that it was written in English like her biography, makes it easy to read and understand to a global audience, adding to her renown. For this reason, it must surely be said that she is the most visible feminine theological Orthodox Romanian presence from the 20th century in the West.

Conclusion

As we have tried to show here, although there are still many things to do in order to make women's voices better heard in the Romanian Orthodox Church, during the 20th century there were a few pioneers who showed that the women are not totally neglected. Mother Mina Hociotă, who was not a theologian but a woman who helped the wounded soldiers from the battlefield and almost lost her life for this reason. She promoted Christian universal values like mercy by her actions more than by any writings. Anca Manolache and Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu, like Elisabeth Behr-Sigel and Myrrha Lot-Borodine in France, remind us that women are more than capable of contributing in valuable ways to academic and

⁴⁵ Mother Alexandra, *Despre îngerii*, p. 29.

⁴⁶ Mother Alexandra, *Despre îngerii*, p. 150.

theological discussions. Together with them, mother Alexandra brought together the administrative skills of a nun who could build a monastery in the United States. Her commitment to the study of the Sacred Scriptures resulted in an interesting treatise dedicated to the angels and the way the Bible presents them. Prior to the end of the Communist period, there was another important women, a historian of literature and literary critic, namely Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga.⁴⁷ Attracted by Orthodoxy, she decided to become a nun in the Moldavian lands even though she was a relative of the couple Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu. Although she never produced theological writings,⁴⁸ she remained after her profession. Her decision to join the monastic life is important and says many things about the way the Eastern Orthodox Church in Romania managed to attract people. In a society which is still in the process of transformation after the events of 1989 like the Romanian one, having those examples is important and may contribute to a future development of a category of theological feminine voices too.

⁴⁷ Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga, *Alte „Pagini engleze”*, Editura Universal Dalsi, Bucureşti, 2001; Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga, *Contemporanii mei – portrete*, Editura Niculescu, Bucureşti, 2008; Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga, *Eminescu*, Editura Nicodim Caligraful, Putna, 2015.

⁴⁸ Only a few biographies dedicated to some contemporary theological personalities like: Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga, *Arhimandritul Roman Braga*, Editura Doxologia, Iaşi, 2013 and a translation of the *Song of Songs*, realized together with Ioan Alexandru; Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga, Ioan Alexandru, *Cântarea Cântărilor*, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, Bucureşti, 1977.