

**„AUREL VLAICU” UNIVERSITY OF ARAD  
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DOCTORAL FIELD: THEOLOGY**

**BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL VALENCES OF THE  
CONCEPT OF MASCULINITY WITH REFERENCE TO THE  
ROMANIAN PENTECOSTAL CONTEXT**

**DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY**

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## **DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY**

### **General Introduction**

The thesis entitled “*Biblical and Theological Valences of the Concept of Masculinity with Reference to the Romanian Pentecostal Context*” is situated within contemporary concerns regarding gender identity, approaching the concept of masculinity in a critical and constructive manner from a theological, biblical, and empirical perspective. The research begins from the observation that, in recent decades, the issue of masculine identity has gained unprecedented prominence, being marked by profound ideological and interpretative tensions.

On the one hand, traditionalist discourses tend to absolutize certain patriarchal models centered on authority, power, and autonomy, which often leads to a distortion of masculine vocation and to the exclusion of essential dimensions of humanity, such as vulnerability and relationality. On the other hand, postmodern approaches promote a radical relativization of gender identity, proposing an excessive fluidity that ultimately results in the erosion, or even the disappearance, of the distinctions between masculine and feminine.

Within this polarized context, the thesis seeks to articulate a balanced perspective grounded in biblical revelation, one that avoids both excessive rigidity and radical relativism. Accordingly, the research aims to demonstrate that masculinity is a created reality, affected by sin, yet capable of restoration through the work of Jesus Christ, who represents the ultimate prototype of authentic masculine identity.

### **Context and Relevance of the Research**

Studies on masculinity constitute a relatively recent field within the social sciences, developing significantly beginning with the second half of the twentieth century. Initially, these studies were motivated by the reassessments generated by feminist movements, as well as by the social and economic transformations that called into question the traditional roles of men. Within these approaches, masculinity is often conceptualized as a social construct, shaped by cultural, historical, and relational factors. Although such perspectives offer valuable contributions to understanding the diversity of masculine expressions, they fail to adequately

address the fundamental question concerning the ontological nature of masculinity: what does it mean to be a man in accordance with the will of God?

At this point, the need for theological reflection becomes evident, one that complements sociological and psychological perspectives through an appeal to the revelation of Scripture. Theology does not negate scientific contributions, but rather integrates them into a broader framework, providing an ontological and normative foundation for human identity.

### **The Problem and Motivation of the Research**

The research is motivated by the lack of systematic theological studies on masculinity within the Romanian Pentecostal context. Although numerous interdisciplinary approaches to the subject exist, they are often fragmented and lack a coherent biblical foundation.

The central problem of the thesis lies in the tension between two dominant perspectives: masculinity as a revealed reality and masculinity as a social construct. While the former tends to be absolutized in a rigid form, the latter is often extended to the point of a complete relativization of gender identity.

This study seeks to overcome this dichotomy by arguing that masculinity possesses a stable ontological foundation, yet a dynamic expression adapted to the cultural context. In this sense, the research aims to provide both a theoretical and practical framework for the development of authentic masculinity, in accordance with biblical revelation. Within the interpretative framework of the present study, only those masculine constructs that are aligned with the revelation of Scripture are considered authentic.

The motivation is both academic and pastoral. On the one hand, the research seeks to contribute to the development of contemporary theology of masculinity. On the other hand, it aims to offer a practical instrument for the formation of the Christian man, responding to the real needs of faith communities.

### **Theoretical Framework and Positioning of the Research**

The thesis adopts a critical stance toward the theory of masculinity as a social construct. While it acknowledges the validity of observations regarding the influence of cultural context on masculine identity, the research maintains that masculinity cannot be reduced to a mere social construct.

In the original state of creation, masculinity is a given bestowed by God, an integral part of human nature. After the Fall, however, this reality is affected, and its expression becomes imperfect, requiring an ongoing process of formation and restoration. It is only within this process of restoration that the notion of “construct” acquires its proper meaning; societies and individuals attempt to rebuild what was once broken. Yet in this endeavor, Scripture alone is capable of revealing both the “building materials” and the blueprint according to which this reconstruction must take place.

Thus, masculine identity is understood as a dynamic process, yet one oriented toward an ideal model. This model is not cultural or social in nature, but one revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, any authentic construction of identity must be carried out in relation to this prototype. Human identity, and consequently masculinity, cannot be fully understood apart from a relationship with Christ.

### **Research Questions and Objectives of the Thesis**

The study is guided by three fundamental questions:

1. What are the constitutive elements of masculinity from a biblical perspective?
2. To what extent are these elements reflected in the Romanian Pentecostal context?
3. What is the paradigmatic model of masculinity embodied in the person of Jesus Christ?

The primary objective of the research is to identify these constitutive elements and to integrate them into a coherent conceptual framework that can be employed both in theological reflection and in the empirical evaluation of masculinity.

### **Research Methodology**

The methodology adopted is a complex one, structured around three main dimensions:

*1. The descriptive-analytical dimension*

This stage involves the exegetical analysis of relevant biblical texts and the study of terminology specific to masculine identity. Methods of lexical, contextual, and theological analysis are employed in order to identify the fundamental dimensions of masculinity. The results of the exegetical work are subsequently integrated into a systematic framework through dialogue with dogmatic theology and the relevant scholarly literature.

*2. The empirical-scientific dimension*

This component consists of a sociological study conducted within the Pentecostal Christian Church in Romania. The research employs a questionnaire-based instrument, constructed on the basis of the variables identified in the theoretical stage. The purpose of this stage is the empirical validation of the theoretical concepts and the identification of the manner in which they are manifested within the reality of faith communities.

*4. The constructive-prescriptive dimension*

This stage proposes a paradigmatic model of masculinity, grounded in the person of Jesus Christ. The model is not an abstract one, but an applied one, oriented toward the concrete life of the Christian man.

## **Research Findings**

The biblical terminological analysis led to the identification of five constitutive elements of masculinity:

- humanity
- sexuality
- family
- boldness
- vulnerability

These dimensions reflect the complexity of masculine identity and highlight the fact that authentic masculinity cannot be reduced to a single trait or role. The research has demonstrated that each of these elements has a solid biblical foundation and that they are implicitly present in the various manifestations of masculinity throughout history.

The sociological study confirmed the relevance of these dimensions within the Romanian Pentecostal context, revealing both convergences and tensions between the theological ideal and practical reality.

### **The Original Contributions of the Thesis**

The thesis makes several original contributions:

1. The theological conceptualization of masculinity based on biblical terminological analysis.
2. The identification of a coherent set of constitutive elements, applicable across cultures.
3. The development of a sociological scale of masculinity, used for empirical evaluation.
4. The integration of theology and sociology within an interdisciplinary model.
5. The proposal of a Christological model of masculinity, with practical relevance.

### **General Conclusions**

The research demonstrates that masculinity is a complex reality that cannot be adequately understood either exclusively through the lens of tradition or solely through that of contemporary social constructs.

Authentic masculinity is characterized by:

- fidelity to biblical revelation
- the balanced integration of identity dimensions
- orientation toward the model of Jesus Christ

In conclusion, the thesis aims to offer a contribution to the understanding of the contemporary crisis of masculinity, proposing a theological framework and a possible practical model for the formation of the Christian man in the present context.