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UDK: 27—423.5-055.2  
Original research paper

## THE DAUGHTERS OF MEN AND THE SONS OF GOD: THE FALL OF THE ANGELS AND THE (NON)VEILING OF THE WOMEN ACCORDING TO TERTULLIAN

### **Abstract:**

*The text outlines Tertullian's stances on the catastrophic unification (by way of marriage) of the daughters of men with the sons of God from the story about the fallen angels. The offspring produced by this merger is horrifically dangerous to the human race on earth, and therefore, Tertullian's aim is to prevent any sort of reactualization of such a disastrous event. He communicates this through his positions on the primordial sinfulness of the woman, and the blame cast onto the beautiful daughters of men, who, with their unhumble and uncovered beauty tempted the angels so strongly, that they caused them to abandon their celestial abodes and functions, and descend to earth, thus disrupting the order in the world, and bringing people problematic knowledge and various problematic capabilities, of which the vilest were those most appealing to the women.*

*Tertullian's aim is to insist on the necessity of the covering of women, especially virgins, since those were the errant daughters of men from the story, so that they do not pose a danger to the chastity of men, and more importantly, to the innocence, morality and the ontological stability of the angels, and with this, the structure and functioning of the religious community. These objectives are overviewed through his polemic with Marcion, and through his strong opposition to the customs of uncovering by a part of the women within the church(es). Through chosen examples from Tertullian's opus, the instances in which he mentions the motif of the fallen angels through the blame and sin of the daughters of men, and the need to prevent any such transgression are shown.*

**Keywords:** *Tertullian, fallen angels, virgins, women, veiling.*

### The problem of the woman's uncovered head

There are many mentions of demons in Tertullian's opus, in different contexts and with versatile points. Like in the other relevant authors of the period, Tertullian also emphasizes the line of the relation between the demons and the fallen angels from the story about the catastrophic unification of the angels (the sons of God) with the daughters of men. Consistent with a part of that fallen angels tradition, Tertullian links the fallen angels, or rather, their offspring, with demonic existence, and claims that the sole purpose of these demons in the world is to bring about the destruction of humanity. In several occasions Tertullian refers to the story of the fallen angels, and in this text some attention will be directed towards the examples where he directly mentions the story about the angels and the daughters of men.

When Tertullian opposes Marcion on the similarity between man and Christ, and man as the image and likeness of God, he comes to the point of the angels, by mentioning the woman in the light of the rules about (un)covering her head. Thus, he writes that the head of every man is Christ – according to the verses which continue with “and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1.Cor. 11:3). Of what Christ are we talking about, Tertullian wonders, if he is not the ruler of man?, for “head” here stands for “authority” or “rule”; and one can be a ruler only if he is the creator, for no one other than the creator can have authority. He then wonders to which man Christ would be a head, and adds that man should not cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God (1.Cor. 11:7). The biblical verse continues with “and woman is the glory of man”, but without mentioning this, Tertullian moves on to emphasizing that precisely man is the image of the Creator, who, with Christ as his Word, specifically willed man(kind) to be created “by our likeness, similar to us” (Gen. 1:26). How can there be a head unless it is the one in whose image man was made?, rhetorically asks Tertullian (*Adv Marc.* V,8). If I am the image of the Creator, he muses, then there is no space within me for one more head.

Then, shifting onto the inferiority of the woman, he wonders how she could have power over her own head (skipping over the possible implication according to which, if Christ is the head of the man, and the man is of the woman, then Christ would be the head of the woman as well), and asks whether this would be on account of the angels (*Adv. Marc.* V,8.2).<sup>17</sup> “Which angels?”, Tertullian asks, “in other words, whose angels?”. If the apostle means the fallen angels of the Creator, then this meaning contains great propriety, Tertullian claims, for it is proper that the face that had tempted them should wear some

<sup>17</sup>The Macedonian translation of the verse (1.Cor. 11,10) uses “for the sake of angels”. In Tertullian's case, though, a more suitable formulation would be “on account of” or “because of” (he uses the word “propter”). Considering that “for the sake of” denotes purpose, and “on account/because of”, a causal relation, obviously the latter would be a more plausible option, since Tertullian refers to a previous event. The former would work in the sense that he warns against the potential repetition of this event.

sort of sign of modest covering and obscured beauty. With this he clearly refers to the Watchers tradition, and the passion they had for the beautiful daughters of men. If, Tertullian continues, it is about the angels of the rival god, what fear should there be, having in mind that the disciples of Marcion (to say nothing of his angels) have no desire for women?<sup>1</sup> The apostle thinks that heresy is evil (1. Cor. 11:18-19), one among the weaknesses of the flesh (*Adv. Marc.* V,8), so, it is irrelevant that there is no real bodily passion, it is still evil. Obviously, he connects the angels with passion and lust, and, according to the initial story, with the human women. Tertullian blames the women, since the accent is on their pretty faces that lured the angels, like it had been an intentional elaborate ruse. The purpose is to insist on a humble guise and the submissiveness of the woman, inspired by, or merely consistent with apostle Paul's stance.

If man is head of the woman, like God is of Christ, and Christ is the head of the man, then the woman is the head of no one. As D'Angelo summarizes, the woman is, virtually, decapitated (D'Angelo 1995, 133). It seems that the orders for her to be veiled or shorn, serve as a sort of a word-play: the head of the woman and the head of the man, her husband, are joint together, considering that the woman who prays uncovered shames her head/husband. Some scholars think that the word "head" should be seen as "source", rather than "ruler", D'Angelo mentions, and that the use of "head" coincides with "source" (the creation of the woman comes from the man, she is from him and for him – Paul refers to *Gen.* 1-2, 1:27, 2:18, and 2:21-23). According to this, the relation with God as a source is secondary in relation to that with the man: she is (merely) the glory of the man, who is the image and glory of God. This certainly does not mean that "source" replaces the idea of "ruler", but justifies it even further (D'Angelo, *ibid.*).

Apart from the obvious reference to the angels from *Gen.* 6, or the Watchers tradition from *1 Enoch*, one possible interpretation is that the angels are the keepers of the Corinthian liturgical order, D'Angelo suggests. The angels have a meaningful role in Paul's and Corinthian cosmology: the tongues of angels speak in glossolalia (see 13,1), and the preference of celibacy is so that people can "live as angels". In what concerns the human beings, the angels are the watchers of the cosmical events, and people expect to be judged by them (4,9-13; 6,2-3). Therefore, the angels remain ambivalent and strange creatures, which could either enforce the order in the church's organization, or take part in sexual mayhem (D'Angelo 1995,134).

The idea is that the good and honorable man should look like a man. His bare head is his "glory" (*doxa*), and the glory of the woman is the covering (the hair or the vel) of the head. The short and uncovered hair is her shame. Besides, if the woman even has some (sexual) desire, it should be in the context of its "natural use" – meaning that it should be subordinated to the man, who controls her, Stowers remarks (Stowers 1994, 94). The description of the sinful

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<sup>1</sup> See footnote 14.

humanity through the categories of (un)natural use and dishonorable desire matches with the intolerance for gender deviations in Corinth, marked by “unnatural” hairdos and the (non)wearing of a covering (veil) for the head, Wright-Knust adds (Wright Knust 2006, 83).

The formulation “on account of the angels” in *1.Cor.* as the reason for wearing a head covering is strange: the terminology and word order from the previous verses is not repeated, but instead suddenly it is mentioned that women should have a rule over the(ir) head. Wright Knust wonders why Paul would use the term “exousia” in this situation. On the one hand, perhaps he is deliberately opposing the claims of some women (the Corinthian prophetesses) that they have the authority (exousia) to prophesize without a head covering, for they have transcended their gender in spirit and in Christ, thus achieving a manly powerful rule over themselves (Clark 1990, 157; Wire 1990, 157; Wire 1996, 179).<sup>2</sup> The veil as a symbol of the woman’s authority over her own desire, and also over the masculine desire that (otherwise) it could cause and attract is necessary (for, no matter how much some abstract equality is imagined in Christ, this does not undo the “natural” order in the real world of the social religious community). The authority (exousia) can be seen as a command over, or control of, one’s own sexual desires, or rather the facilitation of a proper distance from the others’. It is about a command of oneself, as opposed to the enabling of sexual liberation (cf. *1.Cor.* 6:12, 13; 7:37). So, if the women ought to have a covering/authority over their heads, it means that they must control their potential (passionate) desires with a certain authority – the desire should be covered, just as the less presentable body parts (the genitals) are covered (see *1.Cor.* 12:23-24), reminds us Wright Knust (Wright Knust 2006, 84).<sup>3</sup> The thought of the angels as the cause for the covering of the head/the authority concerning the unwanted (sexual) desire can be linked to the Watchers story from *1 Enoch*, Wright Knust remarks, because in this way it accurately refers both to the problem of the desire and of the temptation (as the sons of God lust for the daughters of men).

Women are responsible for the desires of the others, according to Tertullian, therefore, the virgins must cover themselves not so much for their own protection, but for the protection of the chastity and the morality of angels, men and boys from similar temptations (*De virg. vel.* 7.2-4). It does not seem that Tertullian’s interpretation diverges from Paul’s points: the veil or the head covering on account of the angels means that the uncovered woman provokes sexual desire in angels and men. Wright Knust writes that according to Paul, the

<sup>2</sup> Wright Knust thinks that this argument would be possible through the formula from *Gal.* 3:26, where no matter whether it is a Jew, a Greek, a slave or a free man or women, all Christians are equal in Christ (Wright Knust 2006, 84, cf. *1.Cor.* 12:13, where the third part, the one about the man and the woman, is missing). A discussion whether this formulation could open the question of gender equality, in Martin 1995, 299-233.

<sup>3</sup> The idea is that through an erotic metonymy, the head of the woman stands for her genitals (D’Angelo 1995, 139-140).

veil was a “prophylaxis”,<sup>4</sup> capable of protecting the women from the male gaze and sexual temptation (Wright Knust 2006, 85). But, Tertullian’s formulations sound like make the opposite point: that the male gaze, and with it, his desires, ought to be protected from the woman’s uncovered head. Women must have authority (a veil) over their head, as a dual protection from desire.<sup>5</sup>

Although the conclusion from *1.Cor.* 11:7-9 should be that a woman must be married, and subordinated to her spouse, Paul does not draw this conclusion, D’Angelo remarks. The conclusion Paul draws is that the woman must have exousia (authority) over her head, on account of the angels (D’Angelo 1995, 133-134). She further underlines that the Greek term does not refer to authority as a mere abstraction, but it can denote some spiritual being, or a class of spiritual beings. In this sense, it is possible that Paul uses a pun: the woman should have exousia, she should have the rule of her husband over her head, D’Angelo allows, and in this sense the verse would claim that women must be married. Still, both the ancient and the contemporary interpreters seem to dominantly think that the word “exousia” is almost universally understood as a covering, a veil, and interpret the veil as the sign of the authority (D’Angelo 1995, 134).

### The danger of/for the virgins

When Tertullian lists the reasons for covering the heads of women, commanded by Paul, he attempts to attest whether the same direction would apply to the virgins as they do to those who are not; in this way, a certain type of community with the same reasons and the same rules for the necessity to wear a head covering would be established (*De virg. vel.* 7). If the man is the head of the woman (in the sense that he represents an authority over her), then he should be the head of the virgin as well, as from her stems the woman whom he eventually marries (unless, Tertullian adds, if the virgin is not of some unknown

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<sup>4</sup> She mentions that she borrowed the term “prophylaxis”, but that, as it had been pointed out to her, the knowledge of the geographical range and the culturological meaning of the covering of the head are limited (Wright Knust 2006, 205). This statement is too strict, however, as there are numerous sources on the religious and political, as well as the socio-cultural role of the head covering (like the difference between free and protected as opposed to unfree and unprotected women; the sign of the social status; the participation in the religious cult and the everyday life, etc.).

<sup>5</sup> Wright Knust mentions that according to Witherington, the covering of the head was a way to warn the others (men and angels) that she who wears the veil is an untouchable woman towards whom they should be acting respectfully, which means that the covering of the head “would serve as a sign of respectability, not subordination” (Witherington 1995, 234.). However, Wright Knust is right in her reply that this narrow interpretation does not recognize that the woman’s “respectability” in this cultural context requires her submission (Wright Knust 2006, 205).

species, some monstrosity with a head of her own – of course that for Tertullian, a woman with a head of her own would be some unknown monstrous species).

Obviously, according to Tertullian's gender-coiffure criteria, it is shameful for the woman to have a shorn head or a very short/cropped hair (regardless whether she is or is not a virgin). He writes that in the world that is a rival to God('s), the short hair of the virgin would be considered attractive, in the same way that the long flowing hair of the young man would be considered appropriate. For the one for whom it is improper to sport a shaven head or short hair, it is proper to wear her head covered. Tertullian continues: the woman is the glory of the man (the virgin, who attains a minimum of worth as a potential wife to the man, is glory to herself), she is of the man, and because of the man, considering that the rib from which she had been fashioned, was also initially virginal. If the woman is to have authority over her head, it is even more just that the virgin should as well, since the essence of the reason (for the head covering) assigned for this claim belongs to her, Tertullian adds. Here again it is obvious that he blames the women for their existence as beautiful and attractive for causing the sexual lust in angels, instead of taking the superior celestial being at least equally accountable. Thus, he writes that if it is on account of the angels – those for which it is believed that fell from heaven due to their sexual desire for the women, then the question can be posed whether the angels (would) lust for bodies already tarnished, roused by the remnants of human passion, or for virgins, whose blossom usually serves to justify the human passion (*De virg. vel. 7*).<sup>6</sup>

Scripture teaches us that it so happened that when the people grew in number on earth, from them daughters were born; but, the sons of God, who desired these daughters of men, who were beautiful, took those they chose for themselves as wives, recounts Tertullian. In this description it seems that he is sticking to the biblical version of the fallen angels story, not referring to the *Book of the Watchers* from *1 Enoch* (otherwise recognized by him as sacred). Tertullian deems as important the fact that the Greek name for "women" has the same meaning as "wives". Therefore, when he writes "the daughters of men", he clearly means "maidens", considering that they still belong to their parents, as married women would not be referred to as "daughters", being "of their husbands", but rather "wives of men", which is not the case. Besides, Tertullian continues, the angels are not "adulterers" or "lovers", and the story clearly states that they (officially) married, thus becoming their husbands. This means that they wed the unmarried daughters of men, who were first born, remained unmarried (as maidens), and subsequently married the angels.

This brings Tertullian directly to the goal of the warning: the beautiful and dangerous fact must be shadowed or obscured by a covering. This fact threw

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<sup>6</sup> Or, as Dunning puts it, the association of the fallen angels with the virgins in Tertullian's argument on the importance for the veiling helps to elevate it from a mutual relation of quotidian encounters between the genders in the church of Carthage towards its celestial importance (see Dunning 2011, 142).



stumbling stones as high as the heaven, he claims. The use of the formulation “stumbling stone/block” is interesting, as it is one of the possible translations of the name of satan (see Todorovska 2018, 102-103). He casts blame even more elaborately on the women in this manner, as they are the only stumbling block, and the guilt for the angels’ action is theirs. This beautiful dangerous face, continues with the blaming Tertullian, when stood in the presence of God, in which it is accused of drawing the angels from their native frontiers towards the earth, should blush in front of the other angels. The previous evil liberty of the head should be suppressed, Tertullian insists, since it is a freedom that should not be displayed even in front of human eyes. Then he goes back to the initial question on whether those whom the angels desired were not maidens, but “already contaminated women”, and explicitly claims that even more, on account of the angels, it is the duty of the virgins to be covered, as it would be much more likely for virgins to cause the angels to sin (*De virg. vel.* 7).

Still, Proctor observes, although Tertullian sees the closeness between the angelic and the human creatures, or bodies, as potentially catastrophic for both the celestial and the human realm, he topples the logic of the uncovered virgins: their chastity does not render the bodies less attractive by nature, but rather enhances their potential sexual vulnerability (Proctor 2023, 376). Can it be assumed that the angels desired already defiled bodies and what was left of purely human lust, instead of burning even more strongly for the virgins?, Tertullian wonders (as it was mentioned, *De virg. vel.* 7.2; cf. 7.4). While the virgins considered their sexual modesty as part of their transformation into a transcendent corporeality of genderless, passionless angels, Tertullian emphasizes that they only enhanced their human feminine sexual nature, and therefore, they themselves invited the attack by the angelic creatures (Elliott 2010, 23). Proctor’s idea is that Tertullian formulates a sort of “counter-angelology” where the fallen angels from the mythical past undo the angelic ambitions of the women virgins (Proctor 2023, 376).

While the virgins thought that their devoted chastity can transform not only their spirituality, but their physiology as well, so that they might resemble the angels, Tertullian suggests a counter-model where the gender and sexuality of the virgins are defined mainly through the primordial women’s transgression (with the ancient angels). The nature of the virgins is not signaled by their ability to transcend the human gender (or rather, sex), Tertullian thinks, but through the unbreakable femininity (Elliott 2010, 26), a nature they share with the women whose actions with the angels are known to all (Upson-Saia 2011, 66). Contrary to what could be expected, Proctor explains, the virgins’ gender (sex) is formed by the angels, but not through asexuality and a genderless angelic life that they covet, but through a potential angelic sexual assault. The sexual threat of the fallen angels carries dangers that can disorder the other aspects of the virgins’ identities, and, especially important, the cultic purity of the Christian church (Proctor 2023, 377).

When Clark analyses the question on the status of women, in the use of Paul by Tertullian, the first thing she tries to uncover is what is meant by “woman”. Amidst the real or imaginary intellectual adversaries of Tertullian, some claimed that the church virgins were not exactly “women”, but a class different from the class of women. According to this, it can be asserted that Paul’s insistence that women cover their heads during prayer and prophesizing (1.Cor. 11:3-16), does not apply to virgins. They claimed, Clark continues, that they did not need to be covered, as they were free to be servants to God only (Clark 2013,133). Tertullian, as it was mentioned, replies that, considering that “virgins” are a subset of “women”, both groups belong to one community, and should, therefore, all be covered. So, those who claim that “woman” refers to those who “had known a man”, forget that Eve, right after she was created, was also called a “woman” (*Gen. 2: 22-23, De virg. vel. 5; 8*); as was the mother of God, regardless of the immaculate conception (*De virg. vel. 6*). According to Tertullian, the notion *woman* encompasses a category broader than “wife” (*De virg. vel. 5*). As it was briefly mentioned, he minds that the Greek language offers only one word for both categories, but the Christians who speak the Latin language can differentiate between the notions, which is useful in the situations where this distinction is important: for example, Tertullian is sure that the apostles of 1.Cor. 9:5-6 did not bring their wives with them (*De mon. 8.4-5*).<sup>7</sup> Clark summarizes: the woman should start veiling the moment she becomes sexually attractive, referring to the daughters of men from *Gen. 6*, who tempted the sons of God (*De virg. vel. 11, Clark 2013,133-134*).<sup>8</sup>

On the one hand, Tertullian thinks that women have the same angelic nature and the same hope for a reward as men (*De cul. fem. 2.5*), and on the other hand he emphasizes their predisposition (or at least, risky exposure) to sin. All women are from the genealogical line of the sinful Eve (as if Adam, the only one who had actually heard God’s command, was blameless, and as if Paul himself does not claim that sin entered the world through one man, *Rom. 5:12*; still, for Tertullian, through 1.Tim. 2:14, Eve was the first sinner of the world).<sup>9</sup> In order to atone for their sin, Christian women should not dress up, and should instead live in shabby clothes, without adornments, beautification, the use of cosmetics and the like. Tertullian is so convinced in the sinful nature of the woman, that in what is his “most famous line” (Clark 2013, 133), he addresses his probably female audience with the words “do you not know that you are the devil’s gateway?” (*De cult. fem. 1.1*). In what concerns wearing a head covering,

<sup>7</sup> This is somewhat problematic, as on the other hand he seems to hint that were wives (but in *De exh. cast. 8.3*).

<sup>8</sup> A reply, which is a summary of Clark’s main points regarding the status of the woman in Tertullian, in MacDonald 2013, 156-164. The issue of the angels is only briefly mentioned on 159.

<sup>9</sup> Examples of women who are good without additional qualifications are old widowed mothers (like in *De virg. vel. 9*), see in Turcan 1990, 16.



Tertullian invites the virgins, as “women” to either wear a veil, or be scorned as shameless daughters of Eve, which does not mean that he thinks that all women are the same, exactly because they are the result of Eve’s sin. One possible typology is that of Christian virgins, married women, and widows, and it is hard to achieve overlaps (see *De virg. vel.* 9).

Tertullian expects good angels to descent on earth, and to send the Christians to meet Christ (*De cult. fem.* 2.7.3), which is why the more modestly and chastely one acts, the better. In that sense, virginity has a special place of importance. If they were to have a designated official place, these virgins would have a special role to play in the church, which does not seem to be the case (see Clark 2013, 136). Rankin thinks that their basic function was to just exist; or rather, that they were to represent the holiness of the church, as a meaningful symbol of the virginal bride of Christ (Rankin 1995, 179–180). As Clark summarizes, their duties have not been specified: married to God, they relate to Him every day (*Ad ux.* 1.4.4), and unlike the busy wives from *1.Cor.* 7:34, they have no chores other than to serve God (*Ad ux.* 1.3.6; Clark 2013, 136).<sup>10</sup>

Clark thinks that since Tertullian is often reactive in either opposing someone or something, his strong insistence on the veiling of the virgins suggests that it was not a practice common in Carthage (*Ibid.*).<sup>11</sup> Clark claims that the main concern of Tertullian is of a sexual nature: according to the ancient analogy between the head and the genitals (of the woman), if the virgin covers the lower part of her body, so should the upper part be covered (*De virg. vel.* 12.1). In Paul’s theology, the higher parts of the body should exert influence on the lower elements: the spirits should concern the mind, the head concerns the genitals, the strong relate to the weak, and the Christian of a higher status should exert influence over the Christians of a lower status. In all cases, what Paul states about the human body, he expect to be implemented in the church, the body of Christ, so that there is no schism in the body (see *1.Cor.* 12:15), Martin mentions (Martin 1995, 103). The sexual significance of non-covering was widespread in the Greco-Roman culture, although the rules differ in times and various places, Martin adds (Martin 1995, 234). Besides, he notices a cosmologico-mythological

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<sup>10</sup> The Catholics of Carthage indubitably believed that the virgin did, in fact, have a head of her own, and by bestowing the honor of holiness in the freedom of her head declared the idea that the virgin is not subordinated to a husband, but only to Christ, D’Angelo points out (D’Angelo 1995, 149). Tertullian, to be fair, does not entirely disregard these views. The belief in the angelic nature, in order to motivate women to not fall prey to the attractiveness of the gifts (such as cosmetics and jewelry) by the fallen angels, which they themselves would later judge, goes along these lines (*De cult. fem.* 1,2). Tertullian sticks to the recommendations from *1.Cor.* 1:33-34 and *1.Tim.* 2:8-15, but insists on the right of the women to prophesize (*De virg. vel.* 9; *Adv. marc.* V, 8.11).

<sup>11</sup> This is confirmed by the fact that his opponents seem to think that his insistence is a novelty, see *De virg. vel.* 1,1; in 2,1 he lists several places where the veiling is common, which means that it is not in other places.

dimension as well: the function of the veil was to symbolize the victory of the order over the potential chaos, to mark an existence of civilization in myth (Ibid). The veiling of the woman was not merely for protection, but for civilizing the chaotic; for protection from “invasion and penetration”, as well as protection of the society from the danger and chaos represented by their femininity. The veil was to keep her untouched, but also to keep her in place (Martin, op. cit., 235).

The Scripture, Nature, and Discipline (the church order and rules), all three from God, have the need for covering, Tertullian claims (*De virg. vel.* 16.1). The veil on the woman’s head shows that although she is supremely Christianly devoted, the virgin Christian is still a woman, and should submit to the rules that apply to all adult women in the church (*De virg. vel.* 4.2; 7.1; 8.1). According to Tertullian, the baptism does not change the fact that women are temptresses (Brown 1988, 81). The uncovered heads of the virgins signal their (potential) fall from God’s grace, as they show their openness to sexual acts. The virgin who removes her head covering is penetrated by the gaze of untrustworthy eyes, she is tickled by fingers that point towards her, she feels a warmth that crawls onto her body from the kisses and embraces, her forehead hardens and she relaxes. She has learned, Tertullian presses on, to “pleasure” men in a way different than in conjugal matters, but not less sexually charged (*De virg. vel.* 14.5). The head covering offers a protection like a helmet, or like a shield for the head (*De virg. vel.* 15.1; or an armor, a ditch or a protective wall, in the context of military terminology, 16.4).

### **The danger of the woman and the necessity for her veiling**

D’Angelo also observes that the link between looking and sexuality, the eyes and the genitals, the gaze and fornication, is not a problem only in Tertullian, but rather that the same equalizations or comparisons worked in the ancient anatomy and physiology, as well as in the lyrical poetry, the Christian moral teachings and the ascetic texts; just as pop-culture equated the penetrating character of the phallus with that of the eye (D’Angelo 1995, 146).<sup>12</sup>

Women are so dangerous, that they need to use a humble guise in front of any male gaze. But, if men are threatened by the look of the women, it is solely due to their own eyes and desire (for which, again, the women are to blame, as they provoke them with their own existence). The gaze of the woman cannot “sexualize” the man, D’Angelo insists, partly due to his innate dignity. The man ought not cover, as he has no abundance of hair and it is not shameful to be shaved or bald, and in any case, it was not him the reason for the angels’

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<sup>12</sup> This truly is an incredibly widespread idea in the mediterranean apotropaic magic: against the evil eye amulets for personal use were implemented, or public architecture solutions containing rather realistic or fashionably stylized representations of phalluses. In this Tertullian merely uses the established believe, in order to use it in his moral and theological ideas.

transgression, since he is the image and glory of God, and his head/rule is Christ (*De virg. vel.* 8, D'angelo 1995, 147). It seems that according to Tertullian, the woman cannot be enticed into lust and fornication by looking at a man.

All adult women must be covered in church, as it was previously mentioned, on account of the angels (from *Gen.* 6, or the *Book of the Watchers*, *De cult. fem.* 1.3.1). As it was reiterated multiple times in this text, women are to blame for the fall of the angels, for being beautiful and carelessly uncovered, enough to tempt them to descend from their heavenly abode. The fallen sons of God and the daughters of men produced demonic offspring that brought diseases and all sorts of problems into the world. As it was profusely reiterated, women are at fault for the fall of the angels, by being beautiful and thus, having tempted them to come down from their celestial abode. The fallen sons of God and the daughters of men produced a demonic offspring which brought diseases, various problems in the world (*Apol.* 22. 3-4).<sup>13</sup> According to the tradition of the *1 Enoch* story, the angels brought with them evil down to humanity, of which Tertullian paints as the most dangerous the one to which the women are the most attracted, and which encourages their vanity, like jewelry, adornments, cosmetics, brightly colored clothes, astrology (*De cult. fem.* 1.2.1). The sin of the women stems from, and consists in, the primordial sin that all women have inherited from Eve. The consequences for the contemporaneity include the necessity for virgins to cover themselves, in order to prevent such dangerous liaisons. The face that cast the stumbling stone as far as heaven itself is so dangerous, that it must be obscured (*De virg. vel.* 7.3).

The angels have disrupted the order in the world (although Tertullian only indirectly claims this, always casting the primary blame on the daughter of men), and therefore, any recreation or reactualization of such disastrous circumstances must be prevented. Tertullian prevents women from becoming brides of the fallen angels, the celestial predators, by defining the virgins as brides of Christ, Elliott remarks, in order to make sure that no such thing will ever happen again (Elliott 2010, 18). As Clark suitably mentions, angels were threatening creatures in Tertullian's time.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See in *De virg. vel.* 7.3; 11.2. As it was mentioned previously, Tertullian uses the angels in his polemic with the heretics. Tertullian criticizes Marcion's ascetism, as it was mentioned in the first section of this paper, pointing out the absence of bodily desire (although on other occasions he praises celibacy, purity, the conscious choice of virginity, etc). Thus, Tertullian asks to which angels Paul refers in *1. Cor.* 11:10, whether of the Creator God, which would make it perfectly proper for women to cover their faces with a sign (a veil) that covers their beauty and shows their modesty, or by the angels of Marcion's god, in which case, no worries, as no one there has any desire for women (*Adv. Marc.* V,8.2.). According to Elliott, Tertullian keeps the angels "in reserve", to use every time he needs to strengthen the point of the submission and subordination of the woman (Elliott 2010, 23).

<sup>14</sup> They strike the necks of women whose veils are not long enough (*De virg. vel.* 17.3). The angels in apostolic theology are not purely meek or good characters; and the idea that people will judge them after the resurrection means that humans will surpass an-

Still, the reason for Tertullian being scandalized by the uncovered virgins remains interesting. According to Torjesen, in her socio-ecclesiastic explanation, Tertullian found himself in a moment when the church was undergoing a significant shift towards a more formal and more structured organization with strict hierarchy, and the insistence on the covering clearly shows how important it is to understand the church as a public sphere, and not the previously private and protected place for expressing one's faith (Torjesen 1989, 281). Hoffman opposes this argument, having in mind that even before the women were included in various "public" activities, like visiting the ill, the prisoners and the like (Hoffman 1995, 179). However, the very examples Hoffman provides are examples of a public-private sphere, and not a public religious ritual or the repetitiveness of exposure within the religious community in the cultic actions. Visiting the ill in their home, or the prisoner in his cell retains elements of the previous privacy of the women's contact with their environment; the participation in church rituals, on the contrary, does not.

Torjesen thinks that the virgins have a purely symbolic role, showing the virtue of the purity of the church and the existential devotion of its members. Nevertheless, if the virgins were to be bestowed public honors in the church, it would seem that they have official public duties, which explains Tertullian's anger – for him, nothing of the sort of public honor should ever be granted to a virgin/woman. Clark notices that Torjesen quotes from *De virg. vel.* 15, where this problem is not mentioned. In section 14, however, Tertullian criticizes the virgins brought into the midst of the church and publicly elated (by the public appropriation of their property/publicato bono sue elatae, Clark 2013, 140). Tertullian is deeply offended by the idea that virgins should be lauded in this way, and since he is strongly (and angrily) convinced about the dangers of their uncovered heads – the honor granted to the virgins and the other women is an insult to their designated natural inferiority (*De cor. mil.* 14.1).

One of the questions that Proctor attempts to answer is on the reason for the potential sexual danger of the angels to the uncovered women in *De virg vel.*, or rather the reason for the impenetrable protection of the veil. Proctor pays attention to the hypersexual desire of the angels for the daughters of men, the cosmic order in the intermediary celestial realm, and the careful watching of humanity (which is to be expected from creatures whose function is to serve as observers, as watchers).<sup>15</sup> Proctor's point is that all this supplies the

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gels in goodness (*Adv. Marc.* II,9.7; *De idol.* 18.9, see in Clark 2013, 139). The angel who appears in the dream of the woman prophetess of Carthage, apart from striking her "elegant" neck, sarcastically invites her to undress herself down to her loins (lumbos; the lowest part of the back). D'Angelo assumes that this angel was an offended keeper of the public order, rather than an enthusiastic suitor (D'Angelo 1995, 146).

<sup>15</sup> In the Watchers mythology, the angelic body was envisaged as having the gaze (the eyes) perpetually directed towards the human race. For Tertullian, the uncovered virgin is always observed (...) and always in danger to attract demonic attention (Daniel-Hughes 2011, 194).

material for Tertullian's strong stances about the veiling of the virgins; as well as that Tertullian's referring to the angels is to oppose the benevolent angelic corporeality to which the uncovered virgins referred – this places Tertullian as the author of a kind of counter-angelology, as Proctor formulates ((Proctor 2023, 366).

Proctor observes that the fallen angels serve to link Tertullian's opponents to a corporeality that is simultaneously alien to the ordinary human realm, and known for its breaking of the cosmic boundaries in the pursuit of sexual pleasure. The Watchers serve for Tertullian as an index of the relations between inappropriate sexual behavior and human identity. In this sense, the connected alienness and sexual perversion of the fallen angels' bodies spreads over to other bodily issues, like the adornment of women, and, especially, the abandonment of the rule for veiling/covering. In this way, the intrahuman identities of Christian corporeality (like sex, gender, sexuality, class) intersect with, or are formed alongside the simultaneous construction of the non-human angelic body (Proctor, *op. cit.*, 372).

The text outlined Tertullian's stances on the proper behavior of women, especially virgins, both in a church context and in the community in general. Tertullian's ideas are the product of his time: inspired by, or drawn from apostle Paul, and applicable to the questions that are part of the main theological and socio-ecclesiastical concerns of his contemporaneity. It was shown that Tertullian links the main ideas concerning the veiling of the women (virgins) with the story of the fallen angels. He blames the beautiful uncovered daughters of men who tempted the sons of God, so that an illicit merger happened, which produced a demonic offspring. Considering that demons play a huge part in some parts of Tertullian's opus, and he meticulously describes the ways in which they pose a danger to humans, particularly to the Christians, his insistence on the protection from a repeated demonic threat through the appropriate covering, or obscuring, of the female beauty is quite consistent. The text offered an overview of Tertullian's positions on the dangers of the uncovered head of the woman to the chastity of the men, and also to the moral decision-making of the angels, and with it, the ontological and socio-ecclesiastical order of the world.

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