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***“BUT WOE UNTO YOU, SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, HYPOCRITES!” –***

**A HISTORICAL, LITERARY AND EXEGETICAL-THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**ON MATTHEW 23**

**(PhD Thesis Summary)**

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**Key words:** Matthew 23, hypocrisy, Pharisees, Jesus Christ-Pharisees conflict, woes as exorcisms.

In this paper we present, based on various other theories, an Orthodox point of view on the topic: *“But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”* A historical, literary and exegetical-theological perspective on Matthew 23. It can be said that the New Testament biblical research covered all possible areas, that all the canonical books were reviewed and interpreted, especially the Gospel of Matthew, on which my study draws attention. There is always a risk, but also an audacious thing to find certain gaps exegetically exposable. Orthodoxy has a wealth of theological exegesis of the greatest importance, drawn by the Holy Fathers. But if we stop on the exegetical literature of modernity, we note that most studies on the Gospel of Matthew come from Catholic and Protestant tradition. This is a certainty the absence of studies dedicated to the Gospel of Matthew that come from the Orthodox tradition, and more, the Romanian Orthodox Bible School. That was why we stopped on the Gospel of Matthew, namely on Chapter 23, which presents the final point of the conflict between our Lord Jesus Christ and the Pharisees, the peak of this dispute. Chapter 23 of the Gospel of Matthew was not explored in Romanian Bible studies, only rarely and tangentially. However the seven woes from chapter 23:13-33 are absent in Romanian orthodox biblical studies, this issue not being addressed in the Romanian academic studies. Therefore, observing this gap based on a selective introspection of these few studies, a relevant approach, in a doctoral dissertation, of Chapter 23 is to be welcomed to fill this void. The novelty brought forward by this paper is in particular the fact that in the second part it highlights an aspect never spoken

about, namely the evaluation of the seven woes of Matthew 23 as being our Savior exorcisms against the demonic spirit of hypocrisy.

The systematic study of Chapter 23 from Matthew and the woes against the Pharisees and scribes was quite ignored or avoided by the biblical research, in recent years leading to many controversies. The Pharisees are seen as two times victims, once victims of Jesus, then of Matthew. This is one level of the exaggeration. Another level of controversy is the fact that they are evaluated as a group, unilaterally and considered wicked and malicious. Pharisees are not attacked en bloc (*But woe unto you, scribes and pharisees who are hypocrites!*), for we know from the New Testament positive examples from the Pharisees: Nicodemus – the secret dialogue partner of Jesus – John, chapter 3, Gamaliel – the advocate of the group of Apostles before the Sanhedrin – Acts 5:34-40, Saul the Pharisee became Paul and others who embraced the faith in Christ (Acts 15:5 – *there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed*). These exceptions (and probably not just those in the group of 6000 Pharisees) confirm that this view is not at all entitled.

Regarding the significance of the title of the present paper “*But woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!*” A historical, literary and exegetical-theological perspective on Matthew 23, it is important because it brings to the fore an issue that will enrich the Romanian Orthodox exegetical landscape, namely the motivation of our Savior Who pronounced the woes against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes, but also for the consequences of a correct assessment of the situation in the Church today: the insistence for a correct exegesis, within the spirit of the Gospel, which will have positive effects for the purpose of preaching, living a genuine life in Christ. The importance of the paper lies in its usefulness for an extended category in the Church, for students interested in church life, theology students, alumni and future priests, theologians, but especially for the New Testament experts, deacons, priests and bishops of the Church. The work is a good mirror for the categories listed, it can show mistakes to be avoided: hypocrisy, abuse of image and false exegesis.

**Theoretical Position.** The central point of chapter 23 is that the anti messianic exegesis on Moses Torah and prophets, but also the behavior and hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes disqualify them as descendants of those who murdered the prophets, by making illegitimate the quality of leaders and experts of the Old Law which they were supposed to have, especially after the year 70, when, after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the Sanhedrin, composed mainly of Sadducees had lost control of religious affairs. We reflected on the conflict between Jews and Christians, specifically between the post-Iabne Phariseeism and Matthew’s community, conflict hidden in Chapter 23. The fact that the Gospel is old is proven by the expressing of many

aspects related to the beginnings, yet undefined entirely, of Matthew's community, concentrated in the question: Do we keep distance of the Jews or not? The Jews become Christians could be sensitive to this distance from the Temple, from Moses, the Torah and those who read it and interpreted it according to a exclusively Jewish significance.

**Updating of Matthew 23 and the positive implications of this work.** This thesis consists in an exhortation to a critical assessment of the Orthodox clergy, to whom is brought into attention a dense text and at the same time, actual through the severity of its expression in terms of deviations of the spiritual leader. A leitmotif of the thesis, found in all sections of the chapters, is the one concerning the seriousness of the pharisaism in today's Church. In these updates inserted in the text we emphasize that if the attitude of theologians or clergy is identical to that of the Pharisees, Christ will scold them through woes also. This is one of the lessons of Chapter 23, a fruit of the Gospel of Matthew for the Church from the twenty-first century. We add here an exhortation by Father Grigorie Marcu, published in *Theological Review, Attitudes – Priests Must Confess Also*, RT 1938, no. 11-12, p. 507, in which he appeals to Matthew 23: *“Let us consider, in contrast, to the heavy words the Savior had for the Pharisees, knowing that they are the servants of God that say but do not do and to guard ourselves against the danger of the same sentence. To this end, do not linger to read again, with all the attention, chapter 23 of St. Gospel of Matthew”*. The Phariseeism, understood as hypocrisy of the life of faith has not disappeared from history, it did not remain only in the description of the pages of the Holy Gospel, it was not only then harshly criticized by Christ, but we meet the woe as literary genre and the admonition of hypocrites long before, in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, intertestamental literature and even in the texts of the rabbis and Pharisees contemporary with Jesus Christ. But the woes have a large range in the present reality. The danger of Pharisaism is huge, especially to those who preach the Word, the Scripture experts, the professionals of faith. This study will be an alarm that the anti-clerical signals of the society should not be ignored when it pronounce itself regarding the decision on the Churchmen abuse, especially the clergy. This research will join other studies appeared on the Gospel of Matthew, with a contribution that reveals the importance of Chapter 23 for the life of the Church.

The paper consisting of 26 chapters, is divided into 3 parts. In the first part, introductory, are presented some chapters which significantly study the topics from Chapter 23 from the Gospel of Matthew. In the second part we inserted an exegetical analysis of Chapter 23, respecting the historical-critical method, but not giving it the last word in all the situations, but only where this was the case. In the third part we proceeded to the selection of several themes emerging from this speech, which help to contextualize the theology of woes seen as exorcisms.

## PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

A special chapter of the thesis considered theology journals in Romania, chapter divided into two categories of studies on the Pharisees and the Pharisaism: those originating in Sibiu, as the exegetical contribution of this old theological center is relevant in two productions from Sibiu, *Revista Teologică (Theological Review)* and *Mitropolia Ardealului (Metropolitan of Transylvania)*; and the last part of the chapter focuses on the studies published in other theological centers in Romania. The finding we have reached at the end of this chapter makes it clear that the Pharisees and scribes still appear in studies, particularly in those addressing sectarian Judaism of the New Testament era or in sermons to the Parable of the Publican and Pharisee, but the 7 woes are absent in the Romanian Orthodox Bible studies. The last chapter of this part is a presentation of the four terms repeated in the diatribe of our Saviour: the woe, the Pharisees, the scribes and the hypocrisy. The last chapter of the first part brings a presentation of the Pharisees to the level of 2015. It's about two recently published monograph written by Mary Marshall and Roger Amos.

## PART TWO: EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS

This part has three main chapters:

### **1. Matthew 23:1-12. Exegesis and Theology**

This chapter includes the exegesis and the theological interpretation of the first part of Chapter 23 from the Gospel of Matthew, verses 1 to 12. The chapter is divided into five chapters which analyze all 12 verses, which received a logical, theological and thematic layout, as it was thought by the evangelist Matthew.

The first subchapter has in the forefront the audience, emphasizing that the audience is a group of divers colors, crowds (including pilgrims to Jerusalem) and apprentices. The Hebrew people is presented in Matthew halfway between the two groups: the church and the emergent Phariseism. But we notice a progression of the crowd towards the position of disciples: from the astonishment for the miracles (9:33), towards a Messianic interest observed in the fulfillment of Christ's miracles (12:23), a positive statement about (21:9) the status of Jesus as the Son of David.

The second subchapter treats the addiction of those who use Moses' name as a cover for the sins hidden by godliness, ie the scribes and Pharisees, named here unworthy descendants of the seat

of Moses. We noted as a plausible the words of Cecil Roth and the negative connotation he gives this metaphor: to sit on Moses' seat was "*a symbol of intellectual arrogance*" Once the leaders have been briefly portrayed, our research stopped on a question: Does our Lord Jesus assert the authority of the Scribes and Pharisees? The answer that we've identified to this interrogation is that we should not overturn or destroy Moses' seat, because the scribes and Pharisees came under it, our Savior requires compliance with the law even when those who proclaim it are unworthy. "*Do not do after their work*" generated an escape, an aversion to the Pharisees, a fariseo-phobia of the Christians in Matthew's Church. Verse 4 brings up another key word in Matthew 23: *burdens grievous to be borne* (compared also with Luke 11:46), demonstrating the failure of ministers and justifies the continuation of speech. these *burdens* are the strict requirements of the tradition on ceremonial rituals and moral debt details. The woes forthcoming from verse 13 are foreshadowed by verse 4, where it is marked the difference between men's burdened shoulders and the finger of Pharisees who do not help.

The third subchapter discusses the section Matthew 23:5-7, where we find three Matthew's couplets in six examples of religious show: a. All their works make them be seen by people; b. They widen their phylacteries and expand the tassels on the hem; c. They like to sit at the head of the table at banquets; d. (They like to sit) the first pews in synagogues; e. (They like) the world to bow in front of them in markets; f. (They like) to be called by men Rabbi.

We have revealed in this third chapter the absence of sincerity. The definition of leaders' character, as it is summed in verse 5, could be: Pharisees and scribes are people seeking reflectors and advertising. From here begins a graphic portrayal of the leaders: they wear special signs, ask for special privileged positions and public fame. Enlargement the phylacteries was again a pharisaical exaggeration, since according to Fillion's testimony, the size of each part that make the Tephilin, had a mathematical precision. The Pharisees are not satisfied with the primacy that are honored at the tables, but look forward to the synagogue and the agora. Two issues that we have outlined, seeking to make them relevant in the economy of the exegesis of this chapter: the blame meaning of the double presence of the word **πρωτο** and the presentation of the synagogue as sacred place become space for displaying the primacy and, later, place of persecution of Christians. In the debate about the synagogue and the church we have stated that the origin of the conflict in Matthew 23 resides in the fact they disputed the legitimacy, each for his part claiming Israel's genuine prerogatives. In Matthew 23 the persecution through synagogues is evident in Jesus' woes against the scribes and Pharisees, but especially in the final part of the chapter. One of the most interesting aspects of this chapter concerns the scribes and the Pharisees' passion for the presence in the agora where the bow and the vocalization of the greeting received was a motivation of religious zeal.

The fourth subchapter focuses on Matthew 23:8-10 and ban of using of titles rabbi, teacher, father. *They and you* are two distinct teams in this part. We connected avoiding the titles with the change of the leaders who exercised leadership in Matthew's community, who are not the former leaders who claimed a particular way of addressing. If One is the Teacher, but at the same time in the early Church there were people in leadership positions, it appears that hierarchy, parents and teachers of the Church are put in their service through God's will and always alerted to flee from arrogant titles. The term used to describe the freedom to use it is **ἀδελφοί**. It encourages a family imagery, but contains a desire to universalize. Fraternity inhibits subordinate, conventional relations, but does not cancel hierarchy, for Christ remains the Teacher, that is **καθηγητής**. Perhaps Matthew said this word to connect with other keywords in this section: **καθέδρας**-seat and **ἐκάθισαν**-they seated from verse 2, thus using the rhetorical device of homonymy.

The fifth subchapter presents verses 11 and 12. Here we emphasized the idea of primacy which serves everyone and especially the idea that Jesus Christ is the model of humility and ascension. We have made a reference to the Lord's servant, an expression that has been the subject of many prophecies in Isaiah (Ebed Yahve – chapter 53). Verse 11 does not insist on one's own taste for obscurity, nor for a heroism of personal negation, or a paralyzing humiliation, but it is a new emphasis on the pride of the Pharisee (parable found only in Luke) whose presence at the temple was ultimately doomed to failure, and a praise for the publican (here Matthew), who has successfully ended his presence in the sacred space.

## **2. Matthew 23:13-33. Exegesis and Theology**

This part of the paper attempts to investigate whether the speech on the woes can be accepted in the way rendered by Matthew in Chapter 23. Matthew the Evangelist organizes his theological material he possesses or that he knows from his closeness experience of Jesus Christ. The Evangelist Matthew, emphasizing this discourse of the Saviour renders the importance of this message to the crowd and his disciples, but with reference to the scribes and Pharisees. As a publican, bound to be attentive to details, we can say that Matthew puts in front of the reader the text from Chapter 23 in a very faithful manner, but adding some interpretative elements, intended to emphasize the application of speech to the situation of the Church in those times. The original context in which this chapter was uttered is an essential aspects; so that there were questions regarding the theological, historical and cultural circumstances of the Judaism from the first century AD to have a proper perspective on the subject. In addition to Mark's text priority compared to Matthew's and Luke's, the theory that we based our thesis on, we added a material common only

to Matthew and Luke, which could have spread another form of woes, which was probably taken into account by Matthew.

The texts with woes from the different synoptic versions have provided an extensive contribution to the paper. The fact that the woes appear in all the Synoptics demonstrate that they are a vital segment of the message of Jesus Christ, being evidence that we can give maximum credit to the integrity with which they are presented by Matthew, Mark and Luke. The woes were not first uttered by Jesus Christ, nor invented by Matthew's Church, but they have their place well defined, since the prophets and continuing with the intertestamental and apocalyptic literature language. Our Saviour continues a tradition and the evangelist Matthew puts it in writing, applying the woes uttered by our Saviour to the situation of his Church. The Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes wherewith it begins, was a constant parallel to the woes, for if the program for a new life is contained in the Beatitudes, in the woes of chapter 23 is criticized by Jesus the alternative route that the Pharisees used to propose to the people, through the authority they enjoyed. Beyond other testimonies regarding the Phariseeism of the first century, that of the evangelist Matthew has as foundation the deepening of the theme of the woes from the human-divine perspective of Jesus Christ. The Orthodox tradition does not dispute the woes as they are broadly reported by the former publican, compared to the other Synoptics, but he sees in them a sign of our Savior's mercy as compared to the severity of the leaders who were possessed by the spirit of hypocrisy which paralyzes the opportunity to see in Him the Messiah. The Saviour teaches us one of the most current lessons in Matthew 23. It is the lesson about the dangers of the hypocritical attitude of the specialist in religion, the professional of the Scriptures.

### **3. Matthew 23, 34-39. Exegesis and Theology**

Chapter 23 summarizes the conflict between Christ and His opponents and prepares the ground for His arrest and death following in chapter 26 of the Gospel. There were identified some anti-pharisaism points: 1) addition of pejorative epithets, 2) two verses (32 and 33) have led to the presentation of the Pharisaic persecution on Christian missionaries in a close relationship with the persecution of the prophets by the Jewish previous generations, 3) verse 34 explained more specifically the contemporary persecution (flogging in synagogue, chasing from town to town), 4) the expression *on you* superimposed on *this people*; 5) the location of Jerusalem, presented as a peak of the discourse against the Pharisees gives an anti-pharisaical force which the original does not possess. Matthew indicates that the hostility towards the Pharisees is proportionate with the regime of the Pharisees' persecution on Christian missionaries. The synagogues in Matthew 10:17



and 23:34 are, in this context, those where the Pharisees gathered or the public synagogues where the Pharisees were influential and could change gatherings' decisions. The chronology of the persecution described in Matthew is difficult to determine. Do we talk about persecution previous to the year 70 or those conducted after the fall of Jerusalem? Leading missionary outside the community is already primordial. "*My house*" (Matthew 21:13) becomes at the end of chapter 23 "*your house*" (Matthew 23:38), which means abandoning the Temple where is evident the mimicking of the relationship with God by the generation that crucified the Son. The anti-Christian program from the first century can be summarized as: 1) the Jewish Christianity was a movement more significant in the communities from Palestine than it would seem. Hebrew Christians were ideological adversaries of rabbis; 2) Hebrew Christians were scattered through Jewish towns and villages in Galilee. They must have noticed much of the Torah as the Jews did; 3) The strategy against Christians was to exclude them from all areas of Jewish life, both religious and social. The main battleground was the synagogue, although it seems that for a while the believers in Christ have continued to attend synagogue on the Sabbath. The persecution of the prophets of the Old Testament and of the Christian missionaries had, in the author's mind, as punishment the destruction of Jerusalem in 70. Old Testament martyrs are in solidarity with Christ. The Old Testament righteous blood from Abel to Zachariah is concentrated in this generation, for rejecting a prophet is identical to reject a messenger. Jesus is the Messenger par excellence, He is sent by the Father. Those who killed a prophet in Israel's past history actually killed Jesus Christ in advance. The prophets and the righteous of Israel were therefore, according to this idea, delegates or assigns, agents, messengers, lieutenants of Christ in various historical generations. The generation that rejects Jesus will take over all the righteous blood into account. The hope is that God rejects Israel or only its leaders but accepts others in their place.

### PART THREE: THEMATIC ANALYSIS. WOES AS EXORCISMS

#### Woes as exorcisms.

There have been formulated arguments that the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees has as starting point the exegesis on the Torah of Moses, especially that the inadequacies between the exegesis and the daily life of the Pharisees could not be approved by Christ. The reasons that Christ disapproves of Pharisees and scribes are disclosed in the eight scandals expressed in Chapter 23 by seven woes: the soteriological scandal (verse 13), the missionary scandal (verse 15), the theological scandal (verses 16-22), the Disciplinary scandal (verses 23-24), the purification scandal (verses 25-26), the image scandal (verses 27-28), the criminal scandal (verses 29-32).

The most acute problem in this chapter, felt by all commentators, is that of classifying the Pharisees to their exact portrayal. A large part of the exegesis, especially the traditional ones, but having strong support in modernity, say that the Pharisees were very bad people, without having anything good and our Saviour calling them hypocritical totally and hopelessly denies them. The second extreme visible increasingly more focuses on the rehabilitation of the Pharisees, who were, as it is sometimes said, people totally honest, dedicated to mentoring people in the intricate details of fulfilling the Law, only they have had a negative unidirectional presentation from Jesus and the evangelists, especially Matthew. In other words, they were *good guys but with mischievous press (media)*.

The difficulty before which we were, addressing Matthew 23, at exegetical and theological levels, consisted in that the two extreme positions could not be valid.

The first position was not fair to our Savior Jesus Christ. He received sinners, promised forgiveness, why just the Pharisees be unfairly rejected? They were sinners, they had their sins, the sins of the profession, as robbers, as publicans, as fornicators. Why were denied and why Christ detached from them? The second position made an entire chapter of Matthew irrelevant. Could our Savior lie? Did he say the words written in the first Gospel, in Chapter 23? If this is not possible, we concluded that there was a real problem, a huge obstacle that blocked the Jewish leaders the access to the Messiah, more than other categories were hampered by sinful passions.

THE SOLUTION we reached following the research that solves, we believe, this dilemma and we present it in this thesis, is that the Savior could not hate or curse the Pharisees, but as any of sinners, loved them, however, advising them, rebuking them, seizing them with fear and complaining about them, and especially by scolding them through some woes so that they not let themselves be led by the evil one. So we concluded that the woes in Matthew 23:13-33 are exorcisms and they represent a scolding of the demonic spirit of the hypocrisy which subjugated the scribes and the Pharisees.

In this endeavor we had four arguments and we want to present them in the order that we have discovered them. First, Fr. Prof. PhD. Vasile Mihoc, in his study *Aspecte ale spiritualității comunității mateiene în lumina textelor și a trăsăturilor specifice primei Evanghelii (Aspects of the Spirituality of Matthew's Community in the Light of the Texts and the Specific Features of the First Gospel)*, in *Theology, Ministry, Ecumenism – Tribute to His Eminence PhD. Antonie Plămădeală*, Sibiu, 1996, p. 325, uses the expression "*the scolding, technical term for exorcisms*". The rationale that started from this short phrase has several points:

1. As Christ commanded the demon He scolds, the same He behaves with the Pharisees, who were His adversaries, trying to oppose His mission.

In the text from Matthew, our Savior scolds the Pharisees, wishing to chase away the evil spirit of hypocrisy, which paralyzes their mind and heart, and bring them closer to Messiah.

Such as demons were expelled when they brought disorder in the life of the possessed, so are scolded the Pharisees who brought spiritual disorder in Matthew's community.

The Pharisaical behavior is identical to the situation of the evil spirits: neither shall they enter into communion with God nor others are allowed to enter (Matthew 23, 13). The evil spirit of hypocrisy was therefore the one which instigated the Pharisees to block the access of the faithful to the kingdom of heaven.

The sense of correction the evil spirits that dominated the Pharisees and scribes is the same as that expressed in the famous Pauline dictum: *"For whom the Lord loved He chastened, and scourged every son whom He received"* (Hebrews 12, 6).

2. This first step needed a concrete articulation applicable to the Pharisees. So came the second pillar. The Patristic scholar Cristian Badila in his study supports the idea promoted in this thesis when he says: *"Jesus commits miracles, healing the blind, dumb, crippled, possessed. Denying the presence and effective work of the Holy Spirit in these healings the Pharisees take the place of the blind, dumb, crippled, possessed, becoming themselves, those who accuse Jesus of collusion with Beelzebub, Beelzebub's true offspring"*. (Cristian BĂDILITĂ, *Păcatul împotriva Duhului Sfânt: incursiune biblică si patristică (The Sin against the Holy Spirit: Biblical and Patristic Insight)*, în *Glafire(nouă studii biblice si patristice)*, Polirom Publishing, Iasi 2008, pp. 111-112.) Then the argument continues: *"The Pharisees are representative proto-heretics, they render Jesus to the human level, and when they must give a verdict on His divine work, they put it on Beelzebub's account. Therefore they descends Him to the devil, denying the work of the Spirit"*. (*ibid*, p. 115) The woes in Matthew 23 thus acquire a completely separate note and exorcisms valences, and Matthew 12 (the demonization of the Pharisees) is the anteroom of Chapter 23. The Pharisees are possessed by Beelzebub precisely at this point of the slander brought to Christ that He casts out demons and does miracles with the help of Satan.

3. Father Academician Dumitru Stăniloae in the volume *Chipul evanghelic al lui Iisus Hristos (The Gospel Image of Jesus Christ)*, shows that in Matthew 12, and in all the Synoptics, it is outlined the purpose of the crescendo of the conflict lasting several days: *"The polemical dialogue of two or more days between Him and the Jews culminated in mutual accusation as*

*servants of demons. But Jesus, Who preached a God of love, could not have demon. We all often committ evil things. But we still keep the faith in God, if we do not justify the evil with the faith in God, but with our helplessness*". (Fr. Prof. PhD. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Chipul evanghelic al lui Iisus Hristos (The Gospel Image of Jesus Christ)*, Metropolitan Centre Publishing, Sibiu, 1991, pp. 161-162). When he says "*Jesus could not have demon*", father Stăniloae hints to the fact that the Pharisees, who accused Him of collaborating with the Lord Beelzebub, had demon.

4. Hieromonk Arsenie Boca in *Cărarea Împărăției (Path of the Kingdom)*, stopping on this episode in Matthew 23, stresses that Jesus scolded them like no other, but did not hate them: "*but Lord as God, knowing the thoughts of the adversary, he did not hate the Pharisees put to work for him (how could have He, being good by nature?) but through the love for them, He beat the one that worked through them, and to those carried by him, He did not cease to exhort, to reprove, to frighten, to complain, as some that could do so not to be led by him. Cursed by them, He was longsuffering. Savior scolded them like no other, but He never hated them, since the devil in them He scolded and and humiliated, giving him out and really burning him, and He loved them and taught them as before*". (Hieromonk Arsenie Boca, *Cărarea Împărăției (Path of the Kingdom)*, Forth Edition, Arad, 2003, pp. 10-11). When the Pharisees did not believe themselves possessed by the evil, they cast upon the Lord the demonizing charge: "*Satan rebelled against our Saviour the powerful people of those times, the cunnings of the time, scribes and Pharisees of the old world, his tools, weak people but with great power, just to make Jesus hate them, and so He will fail against the second commandment, the commandment to love the people*" (*ibid.*, p. 30).

### **The Effects History of Matthew 23**

A broader chapter reflects the presence of woes from Matthew 23 in Hymn 58 of St. Symeon the New Theologian (the eleventh century). One reason for the proximity of the two texts is the word woe, phrase found only in specific contexts where prevails the imminence of the judgment that God makes to people. The woe, like a lamentation for the dilapidated state in which men came through their own actions, notifies the anticipation of an unfavorable judgment. In Matthew 23 the One Who pronounces the woes is Christ (*Woe unto you*), and those whom they are addressed are the scribes and the Pharisees. We find another hypostasis of the woes at St. Symeon the New Theologian, where the expression takes on a shade of integration of the author in the

category of those defendants fact that we could not meet in the Gospel. *Woe unto us*, says St. Simeon, by evaluating with humbleness of mind his own unworthiness in front of the high calling of priesthood. Another chapter explores the biblical concern of two priests, personalities of a real spiritual dimension, without being biblical scholars and exegetes by training – the greatest Romanian theologian and the best-known Romanian confessor and hieromonk, Dumitru Stăniloae and Arsenie Boca. In their works focused on issues which the Savior condemns in Matthew 23: Phariseism, as threat for the professionals of the Scripture and of faith, and hypocrisy, as a state which paralyzes the loving relationship of man to God and inhibits the most the relationships between people. Their theological ideas, like some records on Chapter 23 from the Gospel of Matthew, are easily distinguished from the classical interpretations of the biblical scholars. This is exactly what we tried to follow in this section, namely the distinct position of the two theologians, the seriousness of the danger with which they burden the concepts in Matthew 23: the hypocrisy, the negligence for inner purification. They both emphasized in outstanding texts, the notes of the polemical conflict between our Savior and the Pharisees: exposing the formalism and the pharisaical reply which consisted in false reproaches and questions with accusing intentions addressed to Christ.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Abbreviations

Preliminaries .....	11
The object of the research .....	12
Thesis argument-woes as exorcisms or opposition to Jesus as demonization .....	13
The theoretical position and purpose of the research.....	16

## PART I

Introduction.....	18
1. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!.....	19
1.1 About Woes.....	19
1.2 About the Hypocrisy .....	27
1.3 About the Pharisees .....	34
1.4 The Good Pharisees and the good doctrines of the Pharisees .....	41
2. The lack of approach of Matthew 23 in Romanian Biblical Literature .....	54
3. The Pharisees in two monographs which appeared in 2015 .....	73

## PART II

### Exegetical Analysis

Introduction .....	78
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#### A) Matthew 23: 1-12. Exegesis and Theology

1. Matthew 23:1: Audience:-τοῖς ὄχλοις-crowds and disciples-τοῖς μαθηταῖς .....	79
2. Matthew 23: 2-4: Moses' seat and unworthy descendants who occupied it .....	84
3. Matthew 23: 5-7: the report of the gospel with esteem and excessive effort to prevail and ranks .....	100
4. Matei 23, 8-10. The prohibition of using the titles: rabbi, father, teacher .....	120
5. Matthew 23: 11-12: humility and exaltation.....	134

## **B) Matthew 23, 13-33. Exegesis and Theology**

Introduction .....	139
1. The first woe (23.13) The effect of the pharisaical legalism on the entry into the kingdom of heaven ... ..	140
2. The second woe (23.15) - the total failure of the Pharisees proselytizing effort .....	153
3. The third woe (23.16 - 22) - vows: fertile ground for the Pharisees to get lost in details.....	166
4. The fourth woe (23.23 - 24) - The exactitude to the land plants and the indifference to the commandments of heaven .....	176
5. The fifth woe (23.25 - 26) - The failure of the Pharisees to see the importance of interior .....	183
6. The sixth woe (23.27 - 28) - The ambivalence of the grave and the Pharisees: attractive exterior and interior repulsive .....	194
7. The seventh woe (23.29 - 33) – The hostility of leaders against God's messengers.....	202

## **C) Matthew 23, 34-39. Exegesis and Theology**

Introduction .....	212
1. The Amplification of the anti pharisaism in Matthew 23.34 -39 .....	214

### **Part III**

#### **Thematic Analysis**

#### **"Woe to you hypocrites! : Assessing woes in Matthew 23.13 to 33 as exorcisms against the demon of hypocrisy. The opposition to Jesus as demonization**

1. The exorcism in New Testament times.....	230
2. Matthew 12, an anticipation for the hypothesis woes as exorcisms .....	237
3. The Rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 23. "Rebuke", the technical term for exorcisms .....	246

4. Jesus Christ as Exorcist in Matthew 23 .....	255
5. Matthew 23: woes as exorcisms.....	266
6. Hypocrisy - Form of demonic possession in Matthew 23, 13-33 .....	276
7. Matthew 23, 33: reptilian image of the Pharisees as an argument to demonic origins of hypocrisy .....	283
8. Deformation of Torah through interpretation and practice, a consequence of demonic possession at Pharisees .....	292

### **The Effects History of Matthew 23**

1. "Woe to you! / Woe to us! 'Spiritual leader in Matthew 23 and Hymn of of St. Simeon the New Theologian 58 .....	307
2. Father Dumitru Stăniloae and Father Arsenie Boca about Pharisees and Hypocrisy .....	333

### **The Excursus**

1. Some perspectives about eucharistic liturgy accuracy and negligence in Matthew 23 .....	340
--	-----

<b>Final conclusions .....</b>	<b>356</b>
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<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>362</b>
---------------------------	------------

List of published papers.....	389
-------------------------------	-----