

## *Pressure on Enlightenment. Criticizing the Bible and Philosophy. From Nogarola to Du Châtelet*

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*The Enlightenment is well known for its critical analysis of the Bible. Though the Renaissance sources have been acknowledged as an inspiration of this movement, the Querelle des femmes and its critique of the Bible has never been considered as a possible catalyst for the enlightened philosophical discourse. For centuries women have fought against interpretations of the Bible. This paper argues that the Querelle des femmes criticized the Bible not only because of its patriarchal content but also criticized philosophical thinking that, for supporting the views from the Bible and its misogynist stance, misused the instruments of rational philosophy. Arguments from 1400-1750, from Nogarola to Du Châtelet prove women philosophers' fight in favour of a critique of the Bible from a rational point of view, reflecting also on the status of what it meant, to argue rationally.*

Keywords: *Bible critics, Querelle des femmes, Isotta Nogarola, Émilie Du Châtelet, Enlightenment.*

### 1. *The Freedom to Philosophize: Bible Critique in the Early Modern History of Women Philosophers*

Du Châtelet shared the liberal ideas of the radical Enlightenment. She was even a catalyst for it, as we understand today. In favour of this claim, this paper connects methods from her *Examinations of the Bible* to crucial ideas of the Querelle des femmes. Du Châtelet's philosophy manifests the importance of the principle of contradiction as conditional of any truth, and she continues to combat philosophical idolatries, sharing important ideas and methodical reflections with women from the Querelle des femmes and its critique of the Bible and philosophy. Throughout the more than one thousand pages of her *Examinations of the Bible* Du Châtelet demonstrated that God "shows irrational and senseless disregard for his laws of nature", as Judith Zinsser holds<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> J. Zinsser, *Emilie Du Châtelet's Views on the Pillars of French Society: King, Church and Family*, in L. Curtis-Wendtland e.a., *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women*, Surrey, Ashgate, 2014, pp. 17-32, p. 25. The quote refers to E. Du Châtelet, *Examens de la Bible*, ed. by B.E. Schwarzbach, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2011.