

POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá / Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies

URL časopisu / URL of the journal: <http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk>

Autor(i) / Author(s): Artur Życki – Katarzyna Dziewięcka
Článok / Article: The Impact of Monotheistic Religion Principles on the Education and Professional Career of Women
Vydavateľ / Publisher: Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov – UMB Banská Bystrica / Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations – UMB Banská Bystrica

Odporúčaná forma citácie článku / Recommended form for quotation of the article:

ŻYCKI, A. – DZIEWIĘCKA, K. 2014. The Impact of Monotheistic Religion Principles on the Education and Professional Career of Women. In *Politické vedy*. [online]. Roč. 17, č. 4, 2014. ISSN 1335 – 2741, s. 76-94. Dostupné na internete: http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk/userfiles/file/4_2014/ZYCKI_DZIEWIECKA.pdf.

Poskytnutím svojho príspevku autor(i) súhlasil(i) so zverejnením článku na internetovej stránke časopisu *Politické vedy*. Vydavateľ získal súhlas autora / autorov s publikovaním a distribúciou príspevku v tlačenej i online verzii. V prípade záujmu publikovať článok alebo jeho časť v online i tlačenej podobe, kontaktujte redakčnú radu časopisu: politicke.vedy@umb.sk.

By submitting their contribution the author(s) agreed with the publication of the article on the online page of the journal. The publisher was given the author's / authors' permission to publish and distribute the contribution both in printed and online form. Regarding the interest to publish the article or its part in online or printed form, please contact the editorial board of the journal: politicke.vedy@umb.sk.

THE IMPACT OF MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION PRINCIPLES ON THE EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL CAREER OF WOMEN

Artur Życki - Katarzyna Dziewięcka*

ABSTRACT

This article presents religion as one of the factors that significantly affect such spheres of life as female education or career. For each of the described religions, i.e. Judaism, Islam or Christianity, different moment in the developmental process is defined as the age of religious maturity, which involves full responsibility for actions and obligations associated with religious rites. The religious practice in the family life shapes the manner and method according to which the young woman is raised, the priorities according to which she will live in her adult life, and the values to which she will adhere. Basically, the common aspect to all three religions: Judaism, Christianity or Islam is the top choice of religion by the child's parents, which, in most cases, means the transfer of religious tradition cultivated by parents to their children.

Key words: woman, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, woman in the monotheistic religion, education and religion, religion and career.

Introduction

Faith is one of the factors that have an impact on the daily lives of women who live according to its principles. In different societies and cultures, different religious sources directly and indirectly affect the daily life situations and women. The variety of religious sources often affects the unclear and ambiguous definition of the role of women in the given religion. Religious sources often incorporate the ambiguous elements that can be interpreted in different ways, depending on the subject which determines the interpretation. What is more, the entire wealth of multidimensional and mature religions, to

* Prof. dr hab. Artur Życki is a professor at the Institute of Political Science, Jan Kochanowski University, Kielce, ul. Świętokrzyska 21, 25-406 Kielce, Poland, azsujk@wp.pl.

Katarzyna Dziewięcka is PhD. student at the Faculty of Management and Administration, Jan Kochanowski University, ul. Świętokrzyska 21, 25-406 Kielce, Poland, dziewieckak@gmail.com.

which undoubtedly Judaism, Christianity and Islam belong, contains many elements. These elements include, among others: written religious sources, oral communications, statements of representatives of the clergy, traditions, practical judgments religious institutions, the position of religious leaders. None of the described religion is monolithic, they all include a variety of opinions, vision and directions that every religion takes at any time and place. Therefore, regardless of the fact that in every religion, there are stable and unquestionable principles, there is also a large space in which there are different views, different opinions and positions.

The dynamic and variable nature of each characterised religion has an impact on how its principles in a given place and time will be related to the approach to women, their assigned roles, their rights and duties. Another factor that cannot be overlooked in the description of the situation of women in these religions is the geographical space in which they reside. The lives of women of the same religion will look different in another country, city, community, and even family. Moreover, it is not possible to state that the condition of women in big cities will be more beneficial for example, the position of women in Afghanistan will be much better in a small village than in a big city. The authority exercised in a given country, the habits and customs adopted and practiced in society or even family traditions alongside the "hard law" of religion shape the situations of women living in different geographical, religious and political areas.

Theoretically, a measure of the attractiveness of a particular religion for women should be the place appointed for them, i.e. the more possible functions and respect available for a woman, the better. Practice shows, however, that it does not always happen. Often in a house where a young woman is raised the religious principles are inculcated to her even if they seem to be disadvantageous or even uncomfortable, in which case other family members namely other women soothe and promise to help a young woman to arouse her sense of duty. The status of women is raised as a very important issue for all kinds of reformers. Some argue that the measure of whether a religious system cares about the welfare of man is included in the message for women. Currently, the existing religions are the product of patriarchal culture where a female person is to be mother, wife and a source of pleasure for a male person. All other ambitions should be sacrificed for the good of the family. Looking at the Judeo-Christian and Islamic beliefs, it can be concluded that their content is, inter alia, misappropriation of power attributes and characteristics of mother such as severity, mercy and forgiveness by his father.

1 Patriarchy as a determinant of the hierarchy in the family and society

Every human being has a different role to perform in life as it is in determined in the holy book of Judaism - Torah. In accordance with religious law, Jewish children can grow up together until they are three years old. At that age the roles and responsibilities of children in Judaism begin to differ. The boys cut the hair and are sent to special schools called Chaderam. In the same period of the development, the girls begin to learn how to perform their duties related to the management of the house, preparation of the ritually pure meals and religious rituals. The girl cannot go to school, even if she wants to. In religious schools boys only gain knowledge of a strictly religious nature. When it comes to responsibilities, only men are required to study the Torah. Women can, but they do not have to deal with the reading of the holy book. They do not have to comply with the obligation to recite prayers three times a day, to which men are obliged. The question of attending the synagogue is resolved in a similar manner, i.e. men have a duty to attend, and women can participate in the prayers, if they want to. It is usually explained with a large number of responsibilities in daily life of the Jewish woman. In terms of broader education, men were required to focus only on religious literature, women were not limited with this restriction, and they had free access to literature and often benefited from it. Today, women in most Jewish communities can study and teach the Torah, the Talmud. What is more, they can also issue binding halachic rulings. The sphere of women's education in Judaic societies largely depends on their degree of orthodoxy; in some denominations the limitations to the role of women were completely abolished (Gebert, Olej-Kobus, Kobus, 2009).

A Jewish girl becomes a woman at the age of 12-13, and even then she is responsible for the compliance of her actions with the law and the principles of religion. This age is also the time when she meets the principles of running a household, rituals, traditions and precepts of the Talmud in terms of how to prepare ritually pure food. Despite the designated female role, mainly related to the taking care of the family and household management, Judaism provides her with important religious actions especially reserved for her, e.g. during the start of the Sabbath. On Friday evening, she lights the candles, covers her face with her hands and delivers the blessing of the Sabbath lights (Tworuschka, 2009).

Based on the Old Testament, which is the written source of the Christian and Judaic religion, the main female goal and ultimate purpose is to deliver the

offspring. In this way she carries out God's plan. However, the procreation has to occur according to strict and specific rules; it cannot be mechanical mass activity. An important role here is played by the marriage. In addition to being mother, which is the most important female purpose, she also has to be the bedrock for a man.

Deep differences between the vision of purpose of a man and a woman in the light of religion appear in the time of studying Torah. For a man this action is an obligation, the woman is exempted from it in order to perform her duties related to home and family fully and conscientiously. The traditional commandment to teach contained in the Torah referred only to sons. It is the duty of the father to lead his sons in religious studies. The Talmud repeatedly underlines the need for learning and development throughout life. Education in the light of Jewish tradition and culture begins with the moment when the child begins to speak, i.e. at the age of about three.

In addition to the exclusion of women from the reading of the Torah to a large extent, there are also other exclusions, including that of the smallest congregation prayer - minyan, consisting of ten men or the participation in the liturgy of blessing after the meal as a third person. However, some of these functions have been accepted by women in certain areas of the east and west. In some sects of Judaism women began to lead the devotion and lead their own prayer. These activities played an important role when, in the 20th Century, Jewish women began to define their new roles. Even orthodox Jews began to establish institutions for women. While some Orthodox rabbis argue that fathers should not teach their daughters, as teaching them the Torah is an expression of obscenity, along with time, there is a tendency of moving away from this type of practice. (Abel Azeem, 2010)

A very important moment in the religious education of Jewish boys and girls is bar-mitzvah celebrated at the age of 12 when it comes to girls and bar-mitzvah at the age of 13 in case of boys. The boys, along with a specific event become "*sons of the commandment*" and from that time onwards they are full members of their religious communities, and they are of age for their religion. During the ceremony, they read the Torah in Hebrew. During the next Sabbath after the feast they can read the Torah in the synagogue, from then on they form a part of the so-called "*minyan*" or quorum of at least ten men, whose presence is necessary for the celebration of worship. Jewish girls during the holidays are "*daughters of the commandment*", an event of their lives which gives them the right to light the Sabbath lights and speaks blessings. Greater importance is

attached to a bar-mitzvah of boys; celebrations for girls are organised in a similar fashion only in Reform communities (Tworuschka, 2009).

Analysing the impact of the Christian religion on the education of women who practice this religion would go back to its roots or the attitude of its first promoters to female education. Drawing on the words of one of the Apostles, Saint Paul is the author of the following statements.

Let your women keep silence in the churches for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church (New Testament, 1st List of Corinthians).

Despite the quoted passage of the New Testament, in the Bible there are many passages that could be considered to be derogatory for women. In many stories, however, their important role is highlighted, i.e. it is women who accompanied Jesus on his last journey. In the New Testament many times we come across stories in which the protagonists are brave, strong, and wise women. Jesus entered into direct relationships with the biblical women, which is not obvious and commonly used at that time. He spoke to the Samaritan woman, which evoked surprise among His disciples. He emphasized and appreciated the power of faith of **Mary Magdalene**; He worshiped, and praised His mother, Mary, with whom He repeatedly set an example. It was she who raised Him and so in a sense – she taught Him. However, there was no woman among the disciples of Jesus Christ, which can be regarded as His will that His words should be transferred only by men, disciples. It is not fully explained in any part of the Holy Scriptures.

In the historical context when we try to discern the church approach to the female study of religion and other sciences as well as their role in various matters we come across a lot of unflattering statements uttered by the superiors, the fathers of the Church.

Women should not speak because they wear Eva's stigma on their lips, which sealed the fate of man. - Pope **Honorius III** (Agnosiewicz, 2002).

As long as a woman lives in order to give birth, and to raise children, as long between her and a man there is the same difference as between body and soul; but if she wishes to serve Christ more than the world - then she ceases to be a woman, and she is named "man" because we wish that all should be raised to the status of a perfect man –St. Jerome (Deschner, 1998).

At the time of **Pius XII**, there was a provision of Church Law prohibiting a

woman to approach the altar and in case of participation in the Mass she should keep a reasonable distance. Pius XI, in his words, presented the attitude of the Catholic Church for female self-actualisation:

For a mother the family home and its surroundings should be the most important field of activity and concern. And it is a terrible abuse that all costs should be removed, if because of the thinness of father's income the mother must seek gainful employment outside the home with neglect of her proper cares and duties, above all, the education of children (Quadragesimo Anno, Encyclical of Pope Pius XI).

We remember, however, that although the history of the Church there have been many infamous opinions and comments about women, their wisdom, ability or purpose, individual statements of the representatives of the Christian religion cannot be considered to be the official position of the Church. In the history of Christianity, there have been many words about the particular destination of women and their specific role, their mature wisdom and which is most important in the context of gratitude for the dedication to God and other people.

Despite refusing to admit women to some ministries and roles, Christian Church is strongly marked by the symbolism of women. In many religious sources Church is described as a woman, the beloved spouse of Christ and mother giving birth to new children. The symbolism of the Church manifests itself also in the forms of all the women of the gospel. Through the story of their lives, the ends of the Church symbolism are determined by beginning with the woman caught in adultery and ending with pure clean Woman of Mary to be the perfect model of the Church. Returning to the influence of religion on women, Pope **John Paul II** repeatedly states that the positive changes in the situation of women occur more rapidly in the Christian religion than in the case of other religions. According to the Pope, this state of affairs was supposed to be due to a direct message of Christ. Actually, women had to play a very important role in his life, despite the fact that they did not occur among his disciples, for they accompanied him in the most important moments of life from birth to death on the cross and then to the resurrection, which also took place with their participation. In opposition to the biblical traitor – Judas, the Scripture does not speak of any woman who would have betrayed Jesus.

It is true that for many years faith has had no decisive influence on the education of women professing Christian religion, but it cannot be said that nothing has been changed in this relationship. In Poland today, it is possible to

observe the revival of ultraconservative ideology by the institutions of Church and their allies. This phenomenon lies in the fact that these entities preach the notion that all progressive ideas, among others, the liberalisation of women and feminism were introduced by the Communists or the “spoilt” Western countries. Hence, by the aforementioned environment, feminism is considered to be a source of moral concern and social evil. The ambitions of women and their increasing devotion to professional careers are portrayed as incompatible with their nature, hostile towards families and in consequence of the source of dissatisfaction and a lack of will to live (Dominiczak, 2003).

In Polish society, the Polish Church actively deepens stereotype of Polish-Mother, whose main task is the procreation and education of children, the ideal is to be based on Mary, the mother of Jesus. The system of values and the distribution of gender related roles are transmitted by the Church to the next generations of young girls through sermons, religious education, and by family members. Although Polish women are increasingly better educated, majority of them believe that their natural duty is to perform household duties (Dominiczak, 2003). The situation in Poland can be an example to show how the attitudes of young women who adhere to the Christian faith are shaped by institutions of the Church. In any other country, which is an area of influence of that religious phenomenon it would look a bit different. The way how institutions shape the faith promoting the position of women who adhere to a particular faith will depend on many factors, economic and social conditions, traditions and history (Sujkowska, A. Kaczor, 2012).

Islam is a religion with a consistent and relatively closed world view, in which the role of man in society is strictly defined. Although men and women are equal before God, they are created to perform specific tasks and fulfil their specific roles. Despite the accuracy of Islamic Law, its rules consist of various cultural elements and traditions. This also refers to the role of Muslim women. The principles that directly affect the daily lives of Muslim women are not always consistent and understandable, and there is a wide margin for the interpretation of these principles.

In respect of the issue of the role and value of women in Muslim societies, there have been contradictory positions. The second caliph, Omar, spoke out against women as follows: *Search for God, flee from evil, the source of which are women and beware of those even the most pious among them.*

However, within the same work, the same author writes: *the development and population of the world depends on women (...).*

Another scholar of Islamic culture, Averroes, a Spanish-Arab philosopher under the influence of the teachings of Plato strongly criticised the attitude of Islam towards women.

In those countries, talents of women are unknown, because they are intended to serve only the purpose of reproduction. Hence their task is to handle the men, to deliver, raise and feed children. This destroys their skills. Because in these countries, it is believed that women are not capable of operating in any of the male subjects, often they actually resemble plants. They are a burden for men; this is one of the root causes of poverty of these countries (Wiebke, 1982).

We would like to quote a passage from the book of **Krzysztof Mroziejcz**, a renowned expert on culture of one of the Islamic countries – Afghanistan, as the passage perfectly captures the atmosphere of a distorted and unfair image of Muslim women in the eyes of the Muslim man.

Men and women are similarly built up. Head is a place for the brain, in which the most important part of man – the mind resides. But the man has a little more sense than the woman who, in turn, is more prone to emotions and disease than the man. (...) Woman who has less reason, contains more of Satan (Mroziejcz, 1990).

Although the role of women in the Muslim world seems to be the most obvious and defective role, in fact it depends on many factors, among others: local, ethnic, religious, and social factors.

The issues related to the education of women in the Islamic world are also ambiguous and not the same in all parts of the world. In the books about the life of **Prophet Muhammad** it is possible to find passages about women, women of society, poets, singers and educated slaves of courtly circles. Despite the fact that for the followers of the Islamic faith the life of the **Prophet Muhammad** sets often a pattern to follow, it cannot be followed in this case. It is known that the problem of a lack of access of young Muslim women to science is extremely large.

Little had been known about the education of women in Islamic countries until the time of the 19th Century. These issues resulted from various factors, such as membership states. As the woman was in her upbringing prepared to perform the roles associated with the work in the household, she was taught to perform her practical tasks. It occurred in the conservative families. Different customs prevailed in patrician families, where young girls were taught the basics of erudition and became acquainted with the principles of Islam. It also

occurred that girls received education at the level equal or similar to that of the sons in the same family, the only difference was that the girls were taught by female teachers, and the boys by male teachers. The second place of study for children outside the home were Islamic Quran schools, which in principle serve the purpose of providing education for boys; however, from time to time there were exceptions and single representatives of the female sex were admitted. The schools taught primarily Quran reading, its principles and reciting the verses of the holy book of Islam from memory. Writing and basic issues related to numeracy were also taught. There are epics telling of friendships between men and women, which have their origin in Quran schools, which may provide evidence for the existence of the co-educational Quran schools.

Of course, not all young Muslim women could be so lucky to be able to receive education on equal or similar level to that of their male peers. It is indicated in a fragment of a set of teachings by Persian prince **Kai Kawus** dedicated to his son and successor.

Entrust her to clean and well-mannered matrons, and when she grows up, transfer her to the teacher to teach her how to pray, fast, and fulfil her religious obligations prescribed by the sacred law. But do not teach her how to write! When she grows up, try as soon as possible to give her to man. Because it would be better for a daughter if she had not been born but as she was born she should either lie in the grave, or get married (Wiebke, 1982)

Whether young girls can attend school and receive education is dependent not only on the principles of religion and the prevailing tradition, but also on the current political situation. Once in Afghanistan the radical groups of the Taliban came to power, they introduced another ordinance restricting the freedom of women. Young Muslim women were not allowed to attend school. In order to leave their house they had to be accompanied by the man, a member of the family. Of course, the only acceptable attire was burqa. Women were not allowed to tap shoes, use make-up; they had to walk in such a way as not to expose their feminine shapes that could not in any way be visible from under the burqa. Moreover, women were banned to do paid work outside their house, which in some cases deprived the whole families of a source of income. (Modrzejewska-Leśniewska, 2010)

Kasim Amin's publication on the progressive degradation of women in Muslim countries represented a great contribution to the social status and education of women in Islam. The author stresses that the unfavourable situation of women is not apparent from the original principles of Islam but the

ideas and customs of the peoples who adopted this religion. He gives as an example of women from the society of Muhammad, who benefited from much freedom which is today prohibited for Muslim women. Decades after the publication of **Kasim Amin's** book women began to receive the right to education. Historical and symbolic date is the year 1873 when the first school for girls was opened in Cairo, and a statement was even issued about the necessity of uncovering the face by female students. Unfortunately, the order turned out to be premature; back then the Egyptian women were not mentally prepared for such a change and they did not exercise their privilege. In 1863, the first school for teaching girls was opened Turkey. It was mainly intended to prevent the import of governesses for daughters of rich families from outside the country. Another progress in the sphere of education of young Muslim women was made in 1893, when in the University of Istanbul at the Faculty of Medicine women received the right to participate in free classes as listeners. It was due to, inter alia, the need for female physicians, for majority of women in Turkey did not want to be treated by men. Regular lectures for women began to take place in 1914. In 1913, when the act was passed to make education obligatory, the stipulation was surprising that education was to be coeducational for children until they reach the age of twelve. This solution still does not work in all Muslim countries. In 1921 joint lecture halls for men and women were constructed at the University of Istanbul, but women had to sit separately and veil was allowed to be removed only during lectures. In 1935 the University of Tehran was established, while in 1938 the Shah issued a decree allowing women to study and allowing their access to the previously banned professions, or even to government positions. In 1928 women from higher social strata in Iran were awarded scholarships for studies abroad.

2 Aspirations and careers of women

When it comes to career, Judaism assigns for women many activities that are designed to be performed every day, and for which they are responsible. These obligations require the active participation of women not only in family life but also in social life. Jewish life requires that she should have many skills, among others: knowledge of the principles of hygiene and treatment, reading in Hebrew or any other language used by the public in the comments to the Bible, the Torah scrolls sewing, decorating their webs, fixing fringes to the mantle of prayer and many other daily duties, necessary to live in harmony with God.

Within the framework of social activities, women also have to participate in the fraternity funeral. Regarding the direct practice of religion and rituals, women are not secluded from this sphere in Judaism. They have the right to circumcision or even shochet, i.e. to become the master of ritual slaughter.

According to the principles of Judaism woman has many responsibilities associated with home and family to perform. Sometimes it is difficult to combine her professional life with strict obligations that need to be made in a particular place and time; particularly in case of the Orthodox Jews women often give up their careers to perform the obligations related to faith and family. Most Jewish women can perfectly combine a career with family life. With the appropriate knowledge they successfully dealt with and deal with commercial and banking activities. Moreover, in the Judaic environments the publishing market is dominated by women, especially those who work in family publishing houses (Tworuschka, 2009).

According to the principles of the Christian religion, in the real professional life Christians should be guided by the principles of religion. This applies equally to men and women. As Christians we should oppose injustice and oppression at work, and our duty is to react to this type of practice, even at the risk of our life or career (Stott, 2009).

Increasingly, in the public dialogue of Christian communities, including Poland, there appears an issue of the participation and role of women in social, political and public life. As a result, two extreme models of women were formed; on the one hand, woman as the guardian of home, totally committed and devoted to her family, completely fulfilling herself in the role of mother and wife, abandoning the work. On the other hand, there is a liberated woman deliberately resigning from motherhood and family life for career fulfilment, or pushing family life for a further period of time. Unfortunately, these two models have little in common with the real image of the modern woman who increasingly desires to connect family life, religious life and professional life together. Formally, in compliance with the principles of the Christian religion, professional life can go hand in hand with family life, but a woman should not forget about the priority of the latter. Women in religious sources, especially in the New Testament, were not only presented from the perspective of the role of mother and wife. However, in practice, it is more and more difficult for women to combine professional career with Christian religious life, without any loss in those areas. Professional work often requires many sacrifices, it is labour intensive, and it often comes into conflict with family life. However, the lack of

sufficient state aid and financial situation often forces women into the sphere of employment, even in those moments in which they wish to devote to motherhood. On the other hand, the lack of state support in terms of access to kindergartens or nurseries often forces women to stay at home, despite their wish to pursue their professional ambitions, or it prevents their decisions about motherhood. These are all problems that the believing women meet in their daily lives; however, there is also good side to these negative aspects. With any inconvenience women become stronger and have invaluable logistical capabilities appreciated in a variety of areas of life.

The difference in the relationship between professional work and belief in regard to women is that it should be of such a nature which is not in conflict with the Christian vocation of women, so as not to hinder their natural self-actualisation, i.e. their procreative function and family life. The Church emphasises the fact that the phenomenon of unequal pay has still not been eliminated for equal work performed by men and women; it criticises equal retirement age for men and women. The Church in its dialectic also stresses the need for the State to provide the aid for reconciling the women's professional role and their role of bearing children, the Church believes that the aid which is currently granted is not sufficient.

Emotions rise when the issue of women's ministry at Holy Mass in Church is discussed. Approaches to this problem are different. Currently, some forms of this service are allowed, which depends on the denominations and churches, varying considerably in some cases. To be able to talk about the ministry of women it is necessary to fulfil certain conditions. In Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches there are no female priests. Churches which have women committed to the priesthood are Lutheran Church, French Reformed Church or the Church of Scotland.

Conditions which are indicated to be needed for the ministry of women cover the content of what is going to be preached among others. Indeed, they should stick to the authority of Scripture, and they neither should nor need rely on their own authority. One key text should be used to teach, i.e. the Bible. The second condition concerns the learning context, as learning should be a team activity. In this team a female place does not create a problem, but not necessarily it is a woman who will lead the team. The third condition is a style of teaching. Here again, one should be submitted to the authority of Scripture. One should not have such character traits as fussiness, pride and lust for power. This relates to both sexes. Humility is very important, and its large resources may be the basis

for a woman to teach a man. It cannot happen that a woman willing to take an active part in the teaching of the Church and the transmission of the gospel is directed by selfish reasons, or even by the desire and willingness to align with the man on the issue, and with the Church hierarchy.

Still the saying turns out to be true that Muslim women can do what their husbands tell them to do. In some areas of Islam influence the distribution of population in male and female parts has created typically female professions. Among them there are such well known professions in our culture as midwife, matchmaker and hawkers. In the past women were also engaged in such activities as washing the female corpus, female bath-service or a kind hairdresser who did the hair-do to the bride on her wedding day. The profession of female mourners was also popular as they provided the funeral participants with a specific mood full of grief, sadness, and even despair with their crying. The female professions were closely related to the position they occupied in society. Women from lower social strata most commonly occupied themselves with spinning, as they could not leave the walls of their home for business purposes.

In the period between 1920 and 1930, Muslim women were admitted to education at local universities and they were also admitted to the previously prohibited professions. The year 1922 turned out to be significant for careers of Muslim women, when medical practice was opened in Istanbul. The first woman lawyer appeared in 1927 and the first judge in 1930. Two years later, the woman was a prosecutor, contrary to the contemporary situation in Egypt where women nowadays cannot exercise the profession of judge and prosecutor. In Iraq another groundbreaking date was 1937 when the first woman received a doctorate from the University of Beirut; in 1960, the first woman of the same nationality acquired a degree in chemistry abroad. In the same country - Iraq in 1979, the first female graduates of the law received nominations for judges.

In the context of Islam, we should also mention the phenomenon of prostitution, which was strictly forbidden by the Quran. What for us, the Europeans, seems to be incredible is the fact that a practice associated with this profession was well known in an airtight and harsh world of Islam. Historically speaking, in 1666, in Isfahan there were 14 000 registered and taxes paying ladies of easy virtue practising this profession. Their work was supervised by the woman of the highest status, and women went to their customers in the company of servants, through whom they were ordered (Wiebke, 1982).

In the issue related to the impact of religion on their career, this impact is

visible in all three religions. As far as the sphere of rights and obligations that religion imposes on the followers of Judaism is concerned there is a fairly broad field with which religious law interferes. The extremely important commandment concerning the Jews is to have children. There is no alternative for a woman as the first commandment of the Torah clearly speaks of the necessity of procreation. For modern Jewish women it is a real challenge to reconcile the most important law of the Torah, which is directly related to everyday life, if some of them do not want to begin family life at a young age (Jeřdrzejewski, 2009).

The responsibility for ensuring that the woman should live under the laws of the Talmud in large part rests on the father. In the holy book of Judaism we find the statement. *You shall not dishonour your daughters by making them harlots*, contrary to appearances, this quote refers to the important role of the father in the “*marriage*” of his daughter. Strictly speaking it is an injunction that father should not delay his daughter’s getting married.

One should remember that the restrictive rules of Judaic religion that concern women are respected by orthodox Jewish communities. In the Reform communities, women live according to completely different principles, the source of which is the interpretation of the Talmud by female scholars and theologians. In modern societies, Jewish women do not want religion to confine them in such an important way, and they also do not want to sacrifice their spiritual life. That is why female movements became popular as women want to re-interpret religious sources again, to evaluate their female role, and design roles for women. In recent years, a large number of Jewish women have been in dispute with tradition. Liberal Judaism has expressed its views on the equality of women, among other things, changing the text of prayer book. After long discussions in Conservative Judaism, the right of women has been introduced to take up the office of rabbi. A group called the Bet Debora became famous in Germany as a forum for feminist renewal.

Changing the social position of women professing the Christian religion in Europe and America has become possible due to the modification of canon law, the departure from the practice of the Church to cling to every single verse of the Gospel and, above all, the separation of Church legal code from the state. It was a change for the better, which has established itself in our mentality to the point that today the declaration that the Catholic Church or some Protestant communities discriminate against women provokes hysterical attack of religious societies.

Women's rights in Islam except its holy book the Quran are regulated by other legal acts, for various reasons, including the fact that a wide scope of religious principles contained therein is interpreted usually to the disadvantage of women. Muslim women undoubtedly owe much to the prophet Muhammad, the most important prophet of Islam, and women who surrounded him. His wife, Aisha was the first woman in the history of Islam, exerting real influence on politics. As one of the many wives of the prophet she took an active part in the shaping of Islam, as a religion with a positive attitude to women. She decided about the authenticity of the hadith, she acted as a kind of the expert whenever there was a doubt as to one of them, and even the male representatives of the Islamic clergy often asked her for advice. Her activities showed opposition to the generally applicable exclusion of women from public life. Aisha, as a woman who was the closest to Muhammad, after his death, often interpreted his imprecisely formulated words and developed abbreviations he used. She was often called a prophetess and mother of believers (Nowodworski, 1873).

Currently the Islamic world more and more frequently discusses the issue of professional activity of Muslim women. The holy book of Islam - the Quran clearly says that neither the husband nor father can deny a woman employment. However, this provision is in conflict with a marital agreement, which allows for a situation in which the husband forbids his wife to leave the house herself. Certainly, the question of the professional life as many other everyday activities of Muslim women is regulated by the area of residence and other factors. Professional activity taken by a woman must be consistent with the moral assumptions of Islam. In the light of this religion certain professions are reserved only for men who have a higher resistance to stress, in the extreme situation they can keep a cool head and not succumb to emotion as it happens in the case of vulnerable women. In many traditional families, there is still a belief that the most important task in the life of a woman is to be loyal to hearth and home; therefore the most appropriate place for her work is the house. A very important obstacle for the activity of Muslim women is their attire. It is true that the holy book of Islam - the Quran clearly says that a woman should not unduly uncover her body, and she should cover it but it does not say anything about such a radical form of covering the body, which is the burqa. In the areas of the most conservative Islamic societies currently there is such attire called the burqa. It is the result of the most fundamentalist way of interpretation of religious law. The burqa covers a woman's body from head to toe, including the face. The burqa has only a mesh on the eyes, which allows only for looking

forward and prevents any vision from the side, which is necessary in the performance of many daily activities such as driving a car. The burqa is a very uncomfortable dress; it is extremely tedious especially at high temperatures. In less fundamentalist Islamic societies less radical attire is allowed such as the hijab or headscarf.

Although Islam is generally associated with hell on earth for women, and the laws of the Quran equated with powerlessness and limitation of women's decision-making are in some respects more liberal than those of the Bible. The evidence of this statement is the fact that the legal status was given to women in the 7th Century, while women in the Judeo-Christian tradition received it only in the 12th Century. Norms and rules that govern Muslim women depend largely on the part of the world in which they live and the religion to which they adhere. It is not really possible to agree with the statement that the difficult position of women in Islam is determined solely by strict rules of the Quran. The problems caused by believing Muslims are often related to a long and deep process of departing from the principles of Islam, where there is a lack of transparency and that what is expressed in the holy book is constantly mixed with what people practice and what is transferred from generation to generation constantly changing and distorting its shape. The Muslim world needs a rebirth, as in the issue of women no significant and lasting changes can occur without the reforms carried out in the overall operation of the Muslim society. Religion is one of the elements of constructing the order of the gender system. The roles of men and women are culturally constructed and socially determined not only by nature but primarily by culture (Leszczyńska, Kościańska, 2006).

Conclusion

To conclude, religion is one of the factors that have an invaluable impact on the situation of women in different parts of the world. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the three denominations, among which there are so many differences and similarities. The first two denominations, Judaism and Christianity, despite their common roots and history are different in many respects and they move away from each other. Islam is a religion that from the perspective of Europeans is still unexplored and incomprehensible. For centuries faith has been determining the fate of women in the world. Sometimes for them faith is a source of help and courage, and sometimes it becomes a tool in the hands of political actors who make it a part of a political strategy as to achieve the

planned target. The interpretation of written sources of religious rights is an extremely important issue as in everyday life the difficulties, which women come to face in different parts of the world are often not the result of unfair or abusive religious law, but errors in its interpretation or its misinterpretation. Despite many differences which occur between women around the world in fact the problems they face are often similar, and the most important issues in life combine their fate. The solidarity of women of different cultures seems to be a very important issue, thanks to which their life is assessed from their own perspective in order to understand and accept differences.

Without distinction of religion and faith, all women should have the right to decide for themselves, the right to choose a partner of their life and make their own decisions in terms of such issues of motherhood as having children or their quantity. Gender equality should be realised from an early age, girls should have the same access to education as boys, but this, however, does not occur in all societies. In any case the State should provide women with social conditions to give birth and raise their children as well as the legally regulated property issues related to inheritance or division of property in case of divorce, as women should not be also discriminated in this respect.

Another issue related to the inference of State or religious institutions in the affairs of families is domestic violence, as women no matter what kind of religion they belong to should be protected from, and should be provided with help and support, as they are often in a position to cope with the problem of this type. Undoubtedly, in such major religions as Judaism, Christianity and Islam women have always been in more difficult positions than men. In many cases, women struggle with the restrictions and laws that usually are made by men.

Therefore, religion could be the source of support for modern women. However, as the practice of social life indicates, it does not work in majority of the countries in the world. Monotheistic religions, especially in their traditional, conservative trend, do not give women the same opportunities as they give to men. In many countries we still have patriarchy to reckon. This diminishing the role of women is supported by religions. Women who believe, learn, and want to carry out a professional career come into conflict not only with the communities from which they originate, but with also religious leaders and their family. Moreover, they even contradict with themselves. The only solution to this matter is very often the rejection of professed faith, alienation, or emigration. This is a personal tragedy of these women when the upbringing and emotions stand up to knowledge and their aspirations.

For women of all faiths to live freely and pursue their aspirations in all areas of their life it is needed to have the help from the State, as well as the relevant legislation and the support of the clergy representatives. Although these changes are slow, undoubtedly the world today is more than ever before interested in the situation and rights of women in society.

References:

- ABDEL AZEEM, S. *Status kobiety w islamie vs tradycja judeo-chrześcijańska*, [accessed on 2014.07.15]. Available at: www.troid.org
- AGNOSIEWICZ, M. 2002. *Miejsce i wizerunek kobiety w chrześcijaństwie*. In: Forum, no. 38/2002, p. 49. ISSN 0015-8402.
- DESCHNER, K. 1998. *Kryminalna historia chrześcijaństwa*, t. 1, Gdynia: Wydawnictwo Uraeus, p. 229. ISBN 8385732586.
- DOMINICZAK, A. 2000., *Edukacja kobiet*, In: *Kobiety w Polsce w latach 90*, Warszawa: Fundacja Centrum Praw Kobiet, pp. 87-88; pp. 94-95. ISBN 8390640643.
- GEBERT, K. - OLEJ-KOBUS, A. - KOBUS, K. 2009, *Polski alef-be.*; *Żydzi w Polsce i ich odrodzony świat*, Warszawa: Carta Blanca. Grupa Wydawnicza PWN, p. 49. ISBN 9788361444602.
- JAGIELSKI, W. 2010, *Afganistan karze za porzucenie islamu*, In: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 02.12.2010. ISSN 0860-908X.
- JĘDRZEJEWSKI, P. /opr. nauk./ 2009. *Judaizm bez tajemnic*, Kraków: Stowarzyszenie Pardes, p. 198. ISBN 9788361134800.
- LESZCZYŃSKA, K. – KOŚCIAŃSKA, A. /red./, 2006. *Kobiety i religie*, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, p. 8. ISBN 8388508962.
- MODRZEJEWSKA-LEŚNIEWSKA, J., 2010. *Afganistan*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, pp. 413-414. ISBN 9788374362207.
- MROZIEWICZ, K., 1990. *Kabul w okresie postu*. Kraków: Literackie Wydawnictwo „Myśl”, p. 125. ISBN 8308024297.
- NOWODWORSKI, M., 1873. *Encyklopedia Kościelna*, Warszawa: Drukarnia Czerwińskiego i Spółka, p. 84.
- Oświadczenie Rady Społecznej przy Arcybiskupie Poznańskim: *Chrześcijaństwo wobec kobiety*, [accessed on 2013.03.295]. Available at: http://www.jakubapostol.org/Pismo_Swięte_Starego_i_Nowego_Testamentu.Biblia_Tysiąclecia. 1990. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Pallotinum, ISBN 8370142184.

- Quadragesimo Anno*, *Encyclical of Pope Pius XI* (15/05/1931) [accessed on 2014.07.15]. Available at:
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno_en.html
- STOTT, J.R.W, 2009. *Chrześcijanin a problemy współczesnego świata*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Credo, p. 231. ISBN 9788360131282.
- SUJKOWSKA Z. – KACZOR A., 2012. *Stereotypy związane z płcią a uczestnictwo kobiet w życiu publicznym*, In: *Spółeczeństwo obywatelskie jako wspólne dobro*, L. Kacprzak, B. Koszel, A. Marcinkowski /red./, Piła: Wydawnictwo Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej, pp. 290-291. ISBN 978-83-62-617-20-3.
- SWIDLER, L. 1976. *Women in Judaism: The Status of Women in Formative Judaism* Rowman & Littlefield, ISBN-10: 0810809044.
- TWORUSCHKA, M. U. 2009. *Judaizm*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Agora, p. 74. ISBN 9788375525557.
- WIEBKE, W. 1982. *Kobieta w islamie*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa. Artystyczne i Filmowe, pp. 42-43; 71-72.