UNIVERSITATEA "AUREL VLAICU" DIN ARAD ŞCOALA DOCTORALĂ INTERDISCIPLINARĂ FACULTATEA DE ȘTIINȚE UMANISTE ȘI SOCIALE DOMENIUL DE DOCTORAT "TEOLOGIE"

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DOCTORAND, VEZENTAN (BERZAVA) OTILIA N.

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The role of women in religious dynamics
in Islam and Christianity.

A theological approach in the context of migration
and Islamization of secular Europe.

TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT

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KEYWORDS: migration, Islam, Christianity, Islamization, demographics, family, role of women, dynamics, religious, feminism.

DOCTORAL THESIS ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Migration has become an important part of global existence, a phenomenon as old as mankind. Over the last decade in some parts of the world, such as Europe, migration has seen increased flows, constituting a complex issue in the context of Europe, and a phenomenon that is a reality that is still present today. Twentieth century Europe has seen a diversification of the migration phenomenon and a steady increase in the number of migrants, the causes of which are complex, a reality which will of course continue into the 21st century. The European continent has thus become a *de facto* continent of immigration. The phenomenon of migration has existed since time immemorial and has not ceased over time, but it has diversified and increased sharply in terms of the number of migrants, and has varied in intensity from one historical stage to another, developing new forms. Migration processes are taking place simultaneously and are increasing in many countries of the world. One of the long-term outcomes of this development could be the emergence of multicultural societies, tending towards new concepts of citizenship or nation state. Most developed countries have become diverse, multi-ethnic societies, and those that have not yet reached this level have moved decisively in this direction.

International migration, with its major demographic, social, economic and political consequences, has increased significantly since the 1980s, and interest in analyzing this process has intensified and has spanned all regions of the world.

An important moment when the crisis began to be perceived in its full historical dimension was in April 2015, when Europe faced an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants. Consequently, Arab migration reached a critical level in 2015 due to the exacerbation of military conflicts in the Middle East and Africa. Moreover, these events are a reality of what Houari Boumediene declared in 1974 from the UN rostrum: "The day is not far off when millions of people will leave the southern hemisphere and move to the north. They will come to you not as friends but

as conquerors. Their weapon will be children. The womb of our women is the weapon of our victory."¹.

Massive migration in recent years in Europe has been a particular challenge for the old continent and the exponential growth of the Muslim population has made the social, political and religious situation in Europe in recent years a truly complex one. The number of the Muslim population that has invaded Europe is steadily increasing, leading to extremely important changes in the demographic ratios in the world today in favor of the Muslim population. This can be seen not only in demographic terms, but also in the development of the phenomenon of migration, which has been attributed a temporary character, but has now acquired a permanent one, in other words, the presence of immigrants has changed from a temporary stay to a permanent settlement. According to a study published by the Pew Research Center in the United States, at least 7.4% of Europe's population could be Muslims by the middle of the 21st century.

With reference to the spread of Islam, A. J. Arberry also emphasized that the reason for its spread is Islam itself and its religious values. In this regard he wrote: "The rapid spread of Islam, especially visibly through vast provinces which had long been Christian, is a crucial fact of history. The sublime rhetoric of the Koran, this inimitable symphony, whose sounds move people to tears and ecstasy.... and the urgency of the simple message conveyed, holds the key to the mystery of one of the greatest catalysts in the history of religion. When all military, political and economic factors have been exhausted, the religious impulse must be recognized as the most vital and enduring."²

PhD thesis entitled: *The Role of Women in Religious Dynamics in Islam and Christianity*. *A Theological Approach in the Context of Migration and Islamization of Secular Europe*, examines how the increase or decrease in Christianity, the transmission of values and the perpetuation of Christian identity, versus the progress in Islam, regarding demographic expansion, the promotion of Islamic ideology, the Islamization of the societies to which they have migrated, with a focus on the role of women in religious dynamics in the context of migration and Islamization of secular Europe.

The research aims to identify the factors that favor the process of Islamization of Europe - namely religion (secularization and multiculturalism), demography (fertility rate and average age),

¹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Houari Boumedienne: Guardian of freedom*, April 11, 2008, https://gulfnews.com/general/houari-boumedienne-guardian-of-freedom-1.40394 accesat în 24.06. 2020.

² Arthur, J. Arberry, Aspects of Islamic Civilization as Depicted in the Original Texts, London, Routledge, 2013, p. 12.

sense of heritage of traditions (cultural and religious identity) - versus those that have favoured the decline, the chronic demographic deficit of Western Christian society, implicitly and the Muslim demographic expansion in the European context of secularization, in order to show the role of women in the religious dynamics in both Islam and Christianity.

We analyzed the role of women in Christianity in terms of numerical increase or decrease, in the transmission of Christian values, in the perpetuation of Christian identity, in parallel with the task that women perform in Islam, in terms of demographic expansion, the promotion of Islamic ideology, and implicitly in the dynamics of Islamization of the societies to which they have emigrated. We investigated the relationship between the preservation of traditional Christian values, religious identity in the praxis of the Christian and Muslim family, and its impact on the birth rate, the promotion of the religious ideology, and implicitly on the religious dynamics - chronic demographic deficit (European countries) versus demographic expansion (in the case of the Muslim population).

MOTIVATION

The motivation for choosing to investigate this theme, on the role of women in Christianity and Islam, in relation to the numerical regression as in the case of Christianity versus the upward growth of the Muslim population, in the context of a secularized Europe, was an image-symbol frequently encountered in my daily outings to the park with the girls, namely: a Muslim mother dressed according to Islamic tradition (a contrasting element in the current landscape), pushing a stroller with a baby in it, surrounded by 5-6 children in contrast to the Christian mother, whatever denomination she belonged to, with 1-2 children around her, in the best case 3. Added to this everyday spectrum was the female curiosity to learn more about this social phenomenon and to understand the mechanisms behind this reality. As a result, I started reading demographic studies and forecasts on this subject, I wanted to find out whether there is a correlation between ideology and birth rate, between the numerical regression (in the case of Christianity) versus the upward growth in the case of the Muslim population (in the case of Islam), and what is the contribution of women in Christianity and Islam in relation to this discrepancy between the two religions.

The relevance of the chosen title lies in the fact that it deals with a highly topical theme of great significance in the lives of contemporary Christian women, namely the relationship between the role of women in the two great religions and their demographic progress/ regression. The focus aspect of the title is highlighted by the concentration of the analysis of the problematic in a clearly

defined field of study, and a well delimited temporal space. The uniqueness of the theme chosen for research lies in the topicality and relevance of the issue for the praxis of the life of faith.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In this context, the present paper aims to outline the portrait of women in Christianity, to analyze their role in the increase or decrease in numbers, in the transmission of Christian values, in the perpetuation of Christian identity, in parallel with the portrait of women in Islam, analyzing their role in demographic expansion, in the promotion of Islamic ideology, implicit in the dynamics of Islamization of the societies to which they have emigrated.

Our approach is part of an effort to study the relationship between the preservation of traditional Christian values and religious identity in Christian and Muslim family praxis, and its impact on the birth rate, implicit in the promotion of the religious ideology. The role of women in both Christianity and Islam, in terms of chronic demographic deficit (as in the case of European countries) versus demographic expansion (as in the case of the Muslim population) and the analysis of the real impact of identity conflicts on social dynamics.

The main, general objective of the research is to verify which are the determining factors in the process of Islamization of secular Europe versus those that have favored the decline of Western Christian society, and what is the role of women in the evolution of this phenomenon of demographic explosion in Islam and demographic decline in Christianity.

The specific (operational) objectives are:

- 1. To examine the relationship that exists between the preservation of the values of Islamic religious ideology and their intergenerational transmission, in relation to the high birth rate in Islam.
- 2. To analyze the role that a woman fulfills within the Islamic family in shaping Muslim religious identity in the lives of children.
- 3. Investigation of the role that a woman plays in the Christian family in terms of transmitting Christian values and perpetuating Christian identity, and what is the consequence on the increase or decrease in numbers.
- 4. Compare how the maintenance and perpetuation of traditional moral values in the daily routines of family life in both Christianity and Islam influence the dynamics of religious life.

METHODOLOGY

The scientific approach of the research used the following methods:1. hermeneutic method - used to analyze and interpret the text of the Holy Scriptures and the Koran; 2. comparative method - used to compare the existence of a causal relationship between the phenomenon of demographic growth in Islam versus the decrease in Christianity and the role of women within this social phenomenon. 3. content analysis method - was applied to find the existence or non-existence of significant correlations between the aspects studied.

The scientific approach presupposes a methodology, i.e. a set of methods and techniques that guide the elaboration of a research and guide the scientific process. The objective of this approach is to gain a deeper understanding of reality. Research strategy is defined as a way of conducting a dialog between ideas and empirical evidence, i.e. a 'double fit' between ideas, hypotheses and empirical data, between explanations and observations, helping the researcher to discover order in the complexity of phenomena.³

Scientific discourse is a way of gaining knowledge about the world and the universe, with the aim of understanding the structure and connections between elements and phenomena. In fact, research is a systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypotheses about the presumed relationships between certain phenomena. The scientific endeavor is a sum of methods for exploring and tentatively explaining observed phenomena. To this end, science resorts to a methodology centered on testing the hypotheses formulated, i.e. explanatory answers about the observed reality. The method is the way, process or sequence of processes structured in an organized and systematic way of working, through which knowledge of the object of study is obtained.

The approach to the research topic involves the analysis of existing data, research of representative bibliographical resources in the analysis of the phenomenon under investigation (the Holy Scriptures, the Koran, specialized works in the fields of sociology of religions, psychology, demography, psychology - official statistics, forecasts and anthropology, thus determining the context, the purpose and objectives of the research.

The research methodology proposed throughout the scientific research combines:

1. *hermeneutic method* - it relied on the analysis and interpretation of the text of the Holy Scriptures in order to facilitate the approach to the role of women in the family and

³ Charles C. Ragin, Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method, Pine Forge Press, Sage, 1994, p. 49.

society, from the perspective of the Old Testament and New Testament teachings, as well as from the Qur'an, in order to analyze the Islamic perspective on the role of women in the Muslim family, social life, and in the intergenerational transmission of Islamic teachings.

- 2. Comparative method is one of the most widely used and consists in drawing parallels with other objects of study, in whole or in part, analyzing similarities and differences. The knowledge activity of this method is to elucidate the relationship between the elements of the picture, aiming to identify the invariant. Comparison is an indispensable intellectual operation for drawing up an analogy and a causal explanation, without which knowledge of any kind is impossible. It consists in seeking to explain facts by comparing them with others of the same, similar or contrasting kind. It is used when it is impossible, as in the exact sciences, to obtain identical and purely objective data. Comparison involves approaching and comparing the facts previously described and extracting similarities and differences, followed by grouping them into genera and classes. The final aim is to draw certain general conclusions and identify certain trends. In a study dedicated to the comparative method, the Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori⁵ 1. analyze this research method through three questions: why are we comparing? 2. what is comparable? 3. how do we compare? Why do we compare?
 - 1) Why have we compared the role of women in Islam and Christianity? The object of this comparison was to verify whether there is a causal relationship between demographic growth in Islam versus numerical regression in Christianity, and what contribution women make to this social phenomenon.
 - 2) What is comparable? We have compared two entities that are at the same time partly similar and partly different and are therefore comparable. The terms of comparison are the woman, the religious, social and family status she has in Islam versus Christianity.
 - 3) How do we compare? How to use comparative analysis in understanding the problem under investigation involves the following sequence of steps, namely: defining the subject, formulating hypotheses, operationalizing concepts, selecting

⁴ Rughinis, Cosima, Explicația sociologică. Metodă și imaginație, Iași: Polirom, 2007, p. 39-40, 63-70.

⁵ Sartori, Giovanni, *Compare Why and How. Comparing, Miscomparing and the Comparative Method*, in Comparing Nations. Concepts, Strategies, Substance, Eds. Mattei Dogand, Ali Kazancigil, Blackwell, 1994, p. 14-34.

data and comparing representative indicators, interpreting these data, making classifications and drawing conclusions.

3. content analysis method - the analysis of the content itself and the relationships between variables are key components of this research method, and the main purpose is to analyze the content using systematic and objective perspectives to find patterns, themes and relationships, the existence or non-existence of a significant correlation between the aspects studied. The method of content analysis was applied to the researched topic by going through the following steps: 1. Choosing the topic of study; 2. Gathering data, going through selected materials, evaluating resources and formulating hypothesis; 3. Creating a coding scheme; 4. Analyzing the data; 5; Identifying the argument; 6. Relating or systematization phase; 7. Integration or synthesis phase; 8. Modeling; 9. Theorizing - writing research reports.

THESIS STRUCTURE

The PhD thesis is structured in three chapters:

- 1. Context and definition of terms
- 2. Women in Islam and Christianity
- 3. The role of women in the family in Islam and Christianity

Chapter 1. Context and definition of terms, begins with an overview of the European context followed by a clarification of the concept of migration, and its components. Then three estimated scenarios of Muslim migration will be discussed, which anticipate the future demographic growth of the Muslim population in European society. It will present the dynamics of Muslim migration and the determinants in the process of Islamization of Europe, namely religion (secularization and multiculturalism), demography (fertility rate and average age), sense of heritage of traditions (cultural and religious identity) - versus those that have fostered the decline, the chronic demographic deficit of Western Christian society, implicitly and the Muslim demographic expansion in the European context of secularization.

Chapter 2. Women in Islam and Christianity, aims to present women from the perspective of Islamic teachings as expressed in the Qur'an, emphasizing: Muslim woman as a human being (equality of creation); the dignity of Muslim woman; woman and the fall; woman in the Islamic

family (daughter, wife, mother); woman in religious life (religious duties, mosque); Muslim woman in the public sphere (hijab - clothing, veil and its derivatives - niqab, chador, khimar, burqa). The chapter continues with the presentation of women from the perspective of Christian teachings with emphasis on: the Christian woman and God; the concept of imago Dei; the woman under the incidence of sin; the woman as wife; the woman in religious life/church; the woman in public life/ ministry.

The role of women in the family, in Islam and Christianity, presents the role of women in Islam highlighting the following aspects: the Islamic family - the place where women excel; family life in Islam; the structure of the Muslim family; the family as the cradle of human society: the process of education, Islamic duties, training for life; the family as the guardian of desires: arranged marriages, polygamy, divorce, the status of women; the family and the construction of the personality; the family as a refuge. The presentation continues by analyzing the Christian family as it stands between stability and transformation, with a focus on: Christian family life in the context of postmodern society: the erosion/destruction of biblical truth in the modern world; the dynamics of family life in postmodern society; the role of the family in the moral-religious formation of children; the emancipation of women - the loss of traditional family values (feminist perspective, promotion of non-values, abortion - a genocide, the decline of birth rates in Christian societies); the redefinition of biblical womanhood.

The dissertation concludes with research contribution, general conclusions and final conclusions, followed by new research directions.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

Why is investigating this topic important for the field of study? The importance of the theme in terms of topicality is given by the fact that it helps to a deeper understanding of the existential context, and in terms of applicability because it favors the awareness of Christian women of the imperative need to preserve and intergenerational transmission of biblical values, by taking an active role in education within the family.

The contribution, the contribution that the research topic brings to the field of study is by offering a clearer perspective on the issue, namely a cause - effect approach in relation to the regression of Christianity versus the progress of Islam and the role of women in these contexts. And the element of originality of the research topic in the context of the field of study is given by the complexity of the subject proposed for investigation, which requires an interdisciplinary

approach: theological, sociological, psychological, demographic and anthropological, and the motivation to create a research, which reflects a personal perspective on the subject under study, a personal exposition of existing scientific information, using analytical, synthetic and practical thinking.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

So a European society with a low density of religiosity, characterized by a moral decline, a chronic demographic deficit (Christianity) due to low fertility rates, as it has lost the will to reproduce, and a low degree of confidence, due to its detachment from its own civilization versus a Muslim culture whose dynamizing force is the high density of religiosity, a vertiginous demographic growth (Islam) caused by high fertility rates and a predominantly young average age, a high level of confidence, is a space conducive to the expansion of Islam. So even without any migration, the European average rises to 7.4%. It is worth noting that despite the lack of fertility of native Europeans, leading to a shrinking population - Muslims currently living in Europe will form a growing group in size due to fertility rates. In conclusion if current trends continue, Europe will become a majority Muslim region and the Islamization of Europe will only be a matter of time.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

So, the family remains the main, decisive factor and instrument in the transmission and implementation of moral values, the quality of moral education, and implicitly the character that a child will have at adulthood. The family is the child's first educational environment. The impact of the family on the child begins without preamble and with a certain power and can continue throughout a person's life. Because of their privileged position, parents are the primary educators, the strongest role model, and the greatest influence in the child's life. But the mother is always closer to the children. Children always adopt their parents' values and patterns of behavior. Parents, as the first role model, have a serious impact on the implementation of the intellectual and practical dimensions of children's personality, their methods of interaction with the environment and others, the formation of self-confidence, self-esteem, emotional stability, the way they cope with problems, the shaping of their behavior. The child's first understanding and experience of virtues and morals is acquired under the influence of the family's moral teachings. Attitudes and knowledge of values

such as honesty, love, altruism, responsibility, seriousness, mutual respect, courage, and modesty are formed and developed under the influence of family moral education, thanks to the long and continuous association of family members. Families and communities must be models for children and society in practicing moral values.

A mother's moral education is a key element in the process of a child's moral, spiritual education. The mother as educator is a child's first and best teacher, and the message that the mother gives to the child, the child will pass on to the outside world. The educational level of the children in the family depends more on the level of education of the father, the mother, so this factor strongly affects family relations and the successful development of children. To successfully carry out the moral education process, it is necessary to improve the quality of the educator, which implies equipping with knowledge and skills about moral education. Character develops gradually over time through the building and nurturing of moral concepts, conscience, religious values or opinions and social attitudes as an essential aspect of personality development. Maternal moral identity is a parental characteristic that can influence the accurate perception of maternal moral values. Moral identity is, therefore, the extent to which a person believes that being a moral person is important to his or her identity.

People may consider certain beliefs and values important and identify themselves based on these positive or negative traits. An important source of moral motivation may derive from moral identity, so someone who believes that being a moral person and acting in moral ways is important is more likely to take moral action when the opportunity arises. Mothers who have a high moral identity are more likely to seek to teach their children these values, and therefore to pass on their moral values to their children as an important goal of parenting. Through the mother's actions and demonstrated behavior, the child should learn about the importance of moral values. A mother has a central role in a child's early upbringing and development, serving both as the heart of education and as a key influence. The mother nurtures her child's emotional well-being, cognitive growth, moral values, social skills, and intellectual development. The messages she conveys to her child lay the foundation for lifelong learning and behavior. Children often mirror their mothers' character, values, and social norms, absorbing these qualities through observation and interaction. Thus, it is expected that the mother's moral identity facilitates the correct perception of maternal moral values and that parenting strategies influence their acceptance.

Therefore, the stage of childhood (0-7 years) is the most appropriate and effective period in terms of implementing moral identity. Moral education should start at an early age, because childhood is the most favorable period for instilling good habits. Moral education is important and

has a significant impact in shaping the character of individuals, especially children. Children who are given moral education in the early stages of their development tend to form a more positive character and behavior. Through moral instruction, children come to understand and appreciate ethical values that are beneficial in their lives. Moral education triggers a process of internalizing these values, reinforcing good behavior and acts of integrity in the long term. Moral education plays an important role in shaping an individual's moral conscience. It requires the participation of all elements of human life, not just cognitive aspects, and should be synchronized with the child's psychological growth, with the aim of developing all dimensions of human life, including intellectual, individual, aesthetic, and physical. In the process of character transformation, educational approaches and methods can be applied that are consistent with the level of development of the child's psychology. This is an important point because character comes from different components such as competence, motivation, habit and moral action.

We deduce that there is a correlation / mutual dependence between the process of moral formation of children and the progress of a nation, in fact they are in a relationship of interdependence. A national civilization is strong when morality becomes the foundation on which civilization is built. On the other hand, the civilization of the people and the nation will experience a setback when ethics and morality, which stem from morality are considered trivial and are despised. To strengthen the civilization of a nation and a people it is necessary to increase public understanding of the importance of moral education. Therefore, the strength of civilization for people and nation depends on the strength of good behavior or commendable actions. Therefore, the correlation of moral education with the progress of a civilization can be seen from the understanding that moral education is a process aimed at shaping one's character and morals, while the progress of civilization is a process characterized by an increase in the quality of life of the community, both economically, socially, culturally, and politically. The progress of civilization is measured not only by economic growth and physical development, but also by the moral qualities of society. Moral education is therefore a continuous educational process of construction and transformation of moral and social norms, and is an important guarantee for the lasting vitality of human morality.

Accordingly, the moral progress or regression of a religion is conditioned by the moral progress or regression of the women within it. The only thing that counts in history is moral force, and no nation has yet succeeded in achieving it by force. It has been said that if the women of a nation lose their virtue, the nation will lose everything. But how often is virtue talked about in public debate today? Too many of us have been intimidated for too long, so silence becomes a way

of relating to the outside world. Our society urgently needs the influence and action of Christian women. Women are truly key players in God's plan for the present age. They are not the only people involved, but their role is important, even crucial.

In conclusion, what is needed is a recovery of the heritage of biblical femininity in the family through the acceptance of motherhood. The enemy tried to destroy femininity. When God created woman, he created her with sensibilities that most men possess to a lesser extent. Women need these sensibilities because they were created to be life-bearing, nurturing. In fact, this is part of what it means to be a woman. It is important that women are allowed to bring these feminine qualities into every area of life. The whole fabric of our society must be touched by the qualities that women possess. As women have begun to ask why they have been placed in positions which have, in the eyes of the world, less importance, the enemy has given them the message: men do all the important work. As a result, child-rearing and housekeeping began to be seen as marginalized occupations. So many women were persuaded to move so far to the other side that they modeled themselves after the men they criticized. In the process, they denied their own femininity.

New research directions

- 1. Couple dynamics in polygamous families
- 2. What is involved in the process of building a Muslim identity from childhood to adulthood?
- 3. Dimensions of holistic prophetic parenting in Islam
- 4. A parallel between the practice of fundamentalist Islam versus the practice of modern Islam
- 5. The psycho-social impact of divorce in the polygamous family

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