

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY IN CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC RELIGION

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**Abstract:** Each religious tradition has its own specifics and differences in the perception of the same state, institution and value. These specifics of a particular religion can also be found in the perception of marriage, family and the upbringing of children. Islam and Christianity with their forefather Abraham, worshipping one God, pay major attention to family. Both religions are aware of its value and importance in today's society. For a society, in which family is experiencing a profound crisis. Particular similarities and differences in the perception of family in Islamic and Christian religion are included in the following article.

**Keywords:** family, marriage, Islam, Christianity

### 1 Introduction

The existence of the family, the basis of every country in the world, is threatened by many factors at this time. Current families are disintegrating due to the following reasons: alcoholism, addiction to gaming, tyranny or it is simply a whim of both partners and unwillingness to try to maintain the union at all costs for the good of children and society. Relationships are caught up in infidelity, jealousy, even in hatred. Children, a gift from God, are often the subject of disputes, hassles and divorce hearings. Affected by such situations, they are incapable of starting their own fully functional families later on. And so, young people, when perceiving this trend, worried and afraid, do not tend to get married and start their families. They live together without being married, without a sacrament, without a shared name, which is a joint, according to which we belong to a particular family. As an educator, I listen to the stories of children on a daily basis, and one week, the main role is playing mommy in an apartment with her "new friend" and a weekend with daddy in a house with "two new aunts". I could go on: "Daddy lives far away, I visit him sometimes. The aunt that lives there with him is expecting a baby and I do not know what it will be to me. Mommy also has a tummy, and the uncle is pretty good to me..." Many children tell me they have two dads, others do not have any... We make such society ourselves. The question is how world religions perceive family and how they could defend against this situation. To compare the institution of marriage and family in different religions, I chose two world religions based on the same tradition: Christianity and Islam.

### 2 Family in Christianity

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (hereinafter referred to as "CCC", 1999, p. 538, 2202), "Family is a basic unit of a social life. It is a natural community in which husband and wife are called to dedicate one another in love and to deliver a life. Authority, stability and lifelong relations within a family are forming the basis of freedom, security and brotherhood within society. Family is a community in which it is possible to acquire moral values from an early childhood; to begin worshipping God and to properly rejoice in freedom. Family life is an introduction to a life of society."

Hardly can we build a house without foundations, or with poor fundamentals. The house can withstand the first winds or frost and will be demolished because it does not have its strength and resistance. The same principle can be applied to a society without a good foundation – without family, which is solid and holds together, it cannot withstand the onslaught of bad influences and its entire core will be permanently impaired, it will lead to extinction. Inside the family, children should be taught moral values and educated in the right use of their reason and freedom – we can already see, it does not work that way. Parents are constantly overwhelmed by work and lack of time, so they pass the duties and responsibility of raising children on educators, teachers and the media. According to Christian

religion, parents should be the first teachers of life and faith. "Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery – the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. Parents' respect and affection are expressed by the care and attention they devote to bringing up their young children and providing for their physical and spiritual needs. As the children grow up, the same respect and devotion lead parents to educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom" (CCC, 1999, p. 542, 2223, 2228).

In a functional marriage and family unit children can learn moral values necessary for a healthy attitude towards life and society. For functional relationships within the family, friendships, later in the workplace and therefore the whole society. "Marks of the True Christian - Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:9-21). The image of society where these values would be being lived would definitely look a lot different than the one we already know.

The basic verse of the Bible defining marriage, which shows its importance, is a verse from the Old Testament, from Genesis: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). A man should be emotionally stronger and mature; he should leave his safe home environment and live with a woman. For a woman – as a daughter, this decision is more difficult, since she is bound to her mother and to help her parents and the household in which she grew up. About the decision for marriage – and the reasons for its establishment, we read in the New Testament, in the Letter to the Corinthians: "Principles for Marriage - Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Inseparability of marriage – To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be

reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife" (Corinthians 7:1-11).

For the same reasons (among others) of possible adultery and prostitution, men and women should enter into marriage in Islamic religion as well; it will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter of this contribution.

Regarding the next part of the verse about the inseparability of marriage, Christian religion based on the Bible is expressing a negative attitude towards divorce. In the New Testament, in The Gospel According to Matthew, we find the first mention about it: "And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let not man separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery" (Matthew 19:1-9).

Therefore, no man or a judge or notary is allowed, according to Christianity, to separate – divorce marriage. Divorce is against God's plan, it is unacceptable. It is a social plague, as accurately found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Divorce is a grave offense against the natural law. It claims to break the contract, to which the spouses freely consented, to live with each other till death. Divorce does injury to the covenant of salvation, of which sacramental marriage is the sign. Contracting a new union, even if it is recognized by civil law, adds to the gravity of the rupture: the remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery" (CCC 2384). "Divorce is immoral also because it introduces disorder into the family and into society. This disorder brings grave harm to the deserted spouse, to children traumatized by the separation of their parents and often torn between them, and because of its contagious effect which makes it truly a plague on society" (CCC 2385). Therefore, it affects not only the spouses, but also children, families of both sides, relatives, friends, and thus society as a whole. It affects children of all ages; it interferes their emotional condition and an idea of a perfect family, and thus reflects the fear of starting their own one in the future. An exception to being separated or divorced and being able to receive the sacraments is applied for innocent victims of divorce, abused women, deceived partner. Such exceptions are being granted by bishops in particular dioceses. Although these victims of divorce can access to the sacraments, she cannot live with a new partner; it is still considered adultery. We can find the mentioned fact in the Catechism, in the textbook of Christianity: "It can happen that one of the spouses is the innocent victim of a divorce decreed by civil law; this spouse therefore has not contravened the moral law. There is a considerable difference between a spouse who has sincerely tried to be faithful to the sacrament of marriage and is unjustly abandoned and one who through his own grave fault destroys a canonically valid marriage" (CCC 2386). Widows may get married for a second time, but only in a church, therefore receiving the sacrament of matrimony; she cannot live with another man without ecclesiastical marriage.

The status of women in Christian marriage is similar to the Islamic religion. In Islam, it is still somewhat lower, despite the fact that at the time of Muhammad, this area was experiencing a great progress. Therefore, a woman is subordinate to a man even in Christianity, because a man has to provide for the family, and should be responsible for its functioning. However, the Bible points out that it does not give him the right to humiliate or even torture his wife; a man should appreciate his wife as he appreciates his own body, and thus should not hurt her, as he would not hurt himself. He should honor her, as we read in the New Testament, in The Epistle to the Ephesians: "Husbands,

love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:25-33).

Most discussed polygamy in Islamic religion is unacceptable by Christianity, as we can find in the Catechism: "However, polygamy is not in accord with the moral law. Conjugal communion is radically contradicted by polygamy; this, in fact, directly negates the plan of God which was revealed from the beginning, because it is contrary to the equal personal dignity of men and women who in matrimony give themselves with a love that is total and therefore unique and exclusive" (CCC 2387).

Callaghan in recent Guide to World Religions describes the condition of a marriage conclusion in a church today; he evaluates the overall view of Christianity on the family in the past and today as follows: "Early Christianity considered the family a basic unit; however, authority and influence were often concentrated in monastic institutions and clerical spheres which supported celibacy. Another feature of early Christianity was leaving of ascetics to abandoned places, therefore this way of life did not result into a family life. All the mentioned aspects caused that Christianity in early centuries and Middle Ages often faced paradoxes regarding family. Christianity supported traditional marriage and children's upbringing in marriage; however laymen, both married and unmarried; usually found themselves out of forceful structures where mainly clerical celibacy prevailed. Even in modern times Christianity emphasized the importance of family as a basic building unit of society, believing the ideal of marriage is between a man and a woman. Therefore, it was difficult for many churches to incorporate divorced people who had civil marriage. Yet, at the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21th century, the percentage of marriages conducted in the temple rapidly decreased, moreover, the impact of traditional church teaching on daily life decreased as well. Many believers are convinced that in order to change this trend, the church should be less focused on sexual morality and appreciate that morality is pervading to the social and economic spheres. They are comparing the history of an early church and Jesus Christ' initial concept with more recent historical periods, when the church merged with the powerful and did not fight for the needs of the helpless and homeless. Especially Christians in South America have formulated a theological approach, which emphasizes social justice and deliverance from physical misery in addition to spiritual liberation as the basis of Christian salvation seeking" (Callaghan, 2012, p. 35).

I think young people do not conclude marriages in a church from fear; fear of failure, divorce and the subsequent difficulties. They are overwhelmed with the information about an increasing divorce rate and stories of famous people about another sinking marriage. Engaged couples lack mutual trust, respect and security. They face the fear of infidelity, lies or even abuse. They know that by divorce they would lose the opportunity to continue to receive the sacraments and thus strive for Heaven. Everywhere we here a familiar phrase "we do not need a piece of paper". However, God wants to bless the relationship of two young people in love, he wants to give them strength everyday and give them the greatest gift of all – children.

On the first steps of a new journey which is a married life, engaged couples are accompanied by the words of the Bible in a church during the ceremony, specifically the New Testament, in

a First Letter to the Corinthians – The Way of Love, which I will close this chapter with. Love described in this hymn should serve them as a model for their whole life, which they should cherish. Only this way they will handle everyday worries of a marital and family life; and this true, selfless love should be passed on to their children and the next generations; so the society which we live in, could be better:

“The Way of Love - If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (Corinthians 13:1-13).

### 3 Family in Islam

As I mentioned in the introduction, for both religions family is equally important. According to Callaghan: „Marriage is a union between two individuals; however in Islam, it has a much broader meaning, because through marriage, two families are bonding as well. It is in the family where a child and young person can be formed and dedicated to Islamic values and the Islamic way of life. Family is the unit that provides education to children, as well as teaching. Significant parts of the Quran are dedicated to teachings on marriage. According to them, all sexual activities should be performed in marriage; extramarital relations are strictly prevented. In a Muslim society, rigorous punishments can be imposed for fornication or adultery. In many Muslim communities, conventional marriages are conducted. Such practices may be strange to Western countries, but in Muslim communities, this agreement is considered a wise decision. It creates an alliance between two families. Marriage is concluded with the assumption that couple may rely on collective wisdom and advice of parents and wider community” (Callaghan, 2012, p. 69).

It is written similarly by Partridge: “Family is a key element of Muslim life and society, one of the cornerstones of social stability and security within municipality (umma). Quran and Hadith abound regulations, restrictions and warnings concerning the organization and behavior of Muslim families and family ties are the strongest of all social relations. Loyalty and devotion to family are superior to any other social loyalty. Muslim family is created by marriage, and any extramarital relations between men and women are being disputed by Islam. The act of procreation remains exclusively within the family unit; fornication and adultery (ziná) are sins, which are rigorously punished by Islamic law. Such distortions are considered a source of chaos (fitna). Privacy and modesty are essential for the procreation and proper upbringing of children. A parent has the first responsibility for the proper care of children as well as their upbringing, and there is a hadith confirming proverb “Love begins at home”. Family care is even more important than religious charity. Despite western opinions, Muslim parents treat boys and girls equally. Children are considered a gift from Allah and there are special commands in the Quran against child abuse, particularly those relating to the pre-Islamic custom of burying little girls alive under the sand” (Partridge, 2006, p. 387).

Highlighted proverb above can be the basis for any family – Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Atheist. Only a person, who can feel love and is experiencing love himself, can give it further.

A prophet once said: “The best of my people is the one, who proves his family the perfect kindness and goodness.” Muslims in rural areas or in larger cities lived mostly in multigenerational extended families, which often included several cousins, aunts and uncles. These large families overcame the isolation that affects a modern family. The formula for obligations and social responsibility in a large family was based on Islamic norms, customs and values.

Muslim family norms represent the respect for elders, love and attention to children; to a larger extent than the competition, self-control and cooperation. In relationships within a family and between families has enhanced the timeless, revitalizing qualities such as selflessness, patience and being caring” (Haeri, 2000, p. 173).

Here we can see a big difference between families living in the West, as well as many Christian families. Isolation, which affects them, is not good. We are observing a trend of separating from an original family. People are visiting their parents and grandparents less frequently; unfortunately, families are often meeting only at the funerals.

“In Islam, marriage is not considered a sacrament, rather a social and civil partnership” (Callaghan, 2012, p. 69).

Here we can see another difference, which is in the perception of an institution of marriage; since in Christianity, marriage is one of the seven sacraments – along with Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Holy Orders, Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation. It is administered in a church, in the presence of a priest and the witnesses from both sides.

We are approaching the most discussed difference between Islamic and Christian religion, which is polygamy: “In some Muslim communities, man is allowed to marry multiple women. However, he must treat all his women equally. If he does not, he should only marry one woman. This custom originated after the Battle of Uhud, in 625 A.D.; when a lot of women were left destitute. Polygyny provided a solution. Many Muslims believe it was a rare situation at that time, and should not persist now” (Callaghan, 2012, p. 69).

It is written similarly by Huston Smith in one of the best publications about religion: “It is true that the Quran allows a man to have up to four wives at the same time, but there is an opinion that a careful interpretation of these rules are moving towards monogamy as the ideal. This view is also supported by the Quran that says: “But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one or those your right hand possesses” (Surah 4:3). Some lawyers conclude that the Quran actually preaches monogamy, as it is almost impossible to divide your love and attention evenly.

Despite what has been said, the fact is that the Quran permits polygyny; after the death of Khadija, Muhammad had more women. Muslims consider both facts as examples of adaptability of Islam to different circumstances. They say that there may be circumstances where it is more moral to choose polygyny. One of the examples is the extermination of the male population in the war that confronts the choice between polygyny and the fact that majority of women would be deprived of the possibility of motherhood and starting their own households, which would lead to prostitution. Muslims also emphasize that polygamy is at least as common as in the West, except that there are occurring consecutive marriages. Is the serial polygyny morally significantly higher than the current polygyny, while Muslim women have the right to leave the marriage through divorce, if they wish so” (Smith, 1994, p. 166 n).

I met with the term “serial polygyny” for the first time. The West has nothing to blame a Christian religion for; many of us are

already married for a second or third time. They were not able to behave respectfully towards their first two wives, they cannot even talk after divorce, they are starting new families and it affects the children the most. In Islam, a husband is supposed to treat all his wives equally, he has to be righteous. In this regard, Western men still have a lot to learn. However, it does not have any connection to Christian religion; because it is, and should be conducted only one – by God and with one partner for a lifetime.

Hruškovič (1997) in a publication *Islamic Legal System and the Process of its Formation* writes that marriage in Islam is understood primarily as an economic contract between the families of the spouses. “The contract of marriage causes certain legal effects. A woman becomes entitled to the mahr and the right to existential resources. She also obtains the right to share of inheritance. When entering a marriage, she gets the mahr which can easily be described as the fee that a husband is obliged to pay; however, it is not a requirement. According to a classical Sunni law the institute of the mahr served to ensure a married woman, and which a man is endowing a woman with, when entering into a marriage. The mahr was particularly significant for the development of the legal effects of marriage. The institute of the mahr is retained in modern Islamic law” (Hruškovič, 1997, p. 57).

Allah does not approve of divorce, but it is allowed, if necessary, there are also several types of divorce. Their differences are influences by the traditions and countries, I will mention the countries of Central Asia, where the original Islamic law “has already known four types of divorce, according to Sharia” (Hruškovič, 1997, p. 64):

1. Divorce Baa'in (irrevocable divorce),
2. Divorce Raj'ee (the husband may revoke his divorce),
3. Divorce Khula (the wife takes the initiative to divorce and has to part with her dower or a part of some other property),
4. Divorce Mubarat (mutual agreement of both spouses, however the husband is entitled to require a material compensation for an agreement to divorce).

In Christianity, celibacy is very important for a priestly and religious life, in Islam “celibacy itself is not considered a virtue except for special cases, as the inability to properly provide for a wife. People in appropriate age are advised to marry in order to not be tempted by extramarital sexual relations” (Partridge, 2006, p. 387). According to Christianity, celibacy is the only possible alternative to live for God and to be liked by God only, and not by the wife or the husband; so the priests and religious can devote all their time to faith.

We can approach to the status of women, which is contradictory in both religions. “Islam is usually blamed for the degradation of women, mainly because it allows polygamy. In historical perspective, when comparing the status of an Arab woman before and after Muhammad, we find that this is apparently a false accuse. Under conditions where the birth of a girl itself was considered a disaster, the Quranic reforms significantly improved the status of women. They forbade the killing of children. They demanded that the inheritance should include daughters – obviously, not equally as sons, considering that daughters are not financially responsible for their household as the sons are. In terms of civil rights; the right to education, the right to vote and the right to pursue a profession; the Quran leaves open room for the full equality of women and men, which is gradually being approached by Muslim nations with the modernization of their customs. The most important contribution of Islam for women was definitely a new marriage adjustment. The Quran also demanded that the woman should express a free consent before marriage; and it also significantly strengthened marital relationship. The Quran does not forbid divorce, but tolerates it only as the last option. During marriage, a husband should give to his wife a financial amount, on which they both agreed, that a woman obtains if it comes to a divorce. Wives, as well as husbands, can initiate divorce if necessary” (Smith, 1994, p. 166 n).

Haeri describes, in detail, the role of men and women: “The role of a man, associated with material support and protection, makes him responsible for provision of the household. Because of his responsibilities, he acquired the authority within the family so its members can function fully and effectively. The man's protective role, however, does not prevent a woman from having her possessions. The Prophet's wife Khadija was extremely rich although she decided to use her possessions in the name of Allah. In the best stages of Muslim life, a woman played a key role. In this century, their role persisted mainly in rural areas as a necessity, but in urban conditions, the role of a woman is often reduced to taking care of the household. Lack of education and social awareness led to the inability of women to creatively contribute to a wider spectrum of a social life. A woman, however, should not have such status, as continually emphasized the Prophet and the Quran. If it is impossible to fully experience the liberation that Islam brings to all human beings, then oppressive tribal nature and ignorance prevails. Healthy family life and development, which Islam supports and brings with the individual and in society, can flourish only if there is an active, complementary relationship in its core, of which the Quran says: “They (wives) are a garment for you and you are a garment for them” (Surah 2:187) (Haeri, 2000, p. 173).

The Quran also includes various commands related to the status of men and women, and these commands “clearly indicate that there is a fundamental principle of equality and reciprocity” (Surah 2:187 and 228), which Muhammad emphasized in his valedictorian speech on the top of Mount Arafat. Duties of husband and wife are not equal. The husband is the breadwinner of his wife and children, thus giving them necessary food and clothing, while the wife is obliged to maintain domestic order and directly raise children. Equality reflects a theological equality between men and women, which many verses of the Quran emphasize (e.g. Surah 4:1) (Partridge, 2006, p. 389).

This Surah in particular, but also many others, is mentioning Spencer in his book *Islam without a veil*: “Muslims, when faced with western views on the issue of women's rights, are often pointing out several verses, which establish equality of men and women in front of Allah. One of them says: “O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women” (Surah 4:1). Another says: “Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another” (Surah 3:195). Although, there is a certain hierarchy: “And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them” (Surah 2:228). This superiority is a God's command: “Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth” (Surah 4:34). Spouses are therefore recommended: “Your wives are a place of sowing of seed for you, so come to your place of cultivation however you wish and put forth [righteousness] for yourselves” (Surah 2:223). It can be stated that in addition to this instruction, we still have not found anything stronger than the verses of St. Paul, which are worshipped by the priests and the pastors in the West: “Subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Ephesians 5:21-22). The idea that men are superior to women was at different times enforced according to this verse, however this interpretation is simultaneously balanced with a responsibility of a man to love his wife with sacrificial love: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it” (Ephesians 5:25). But if the apostle truly wanted to say that men are superior to women in a certain consideration, it is not to such an extent as it is in the Quran, for example, in the instruction for the court testimony: “And bring to witness two witnesses from among your men. And if there are not two men [available], then a man and two women from those whom you accept as witnesses - so that if one of the women errs, then the other can remind her” (Surah 2:282). This means that the female witness is of half value of the male witness” (Spencer, 2006, p. 87).

Thus we can see the difference between individual religions in the status of women. In Christianity and Islam a woman is subordinate to man, with the condition to respect a man; in Islam we observe the difference based on the Quran that a woman's testimony is worth half that of a man. Many argue that Muslim women are humiliated by veiling, however, this fact explains Smith in more detail (Smith, 1994, p. 166 n): "Regarding the veiling of women and their separation, the Quranic commands are concise. It only says: "Say to thy wives and daughters and the believing women, that they draw their veils close to them" (Surah 35:39). Extreme applications of this command are the matters of local customs and are not religiously binding."

#### 4 Conclusion

The importance of family in Islamic and Christian religion is the same in many ways. Both religions put emphasis on the upbringing of children; on their lead to virtues – wisdom, justice, love, the right use of their freedom with full responsibility, so they can grow into people with the potential to change this society for the better.

Both of these world religions consider the establishment of marriage as an institution to be a result of human nature, which has a natural tendency to adultery and promiscuity. To avoid these tendencies, sexual intercourse is allowed only within marriage. In Christianity, marriage is a sacrament as well as a decision for a priestly life in celibacy. In Islam, celibacy is not a virtue, nor marriage a sacrament.

In the Islamic world, two families are joining by marriage – economically, by wisdom and experience. In Eastern countries, we observe a trend of small families with one child that tend to be separated from their original families.

By marriage, a Muslim woman receives a protection from her man – the opportunity to inherit, and a mahr. It is similar with a Christian woman; however, we do not find anything about a mahr in Christian texts.

Regarding the equality of men and women: in both religions, we are all equal in front of God; however, there is a certain superiority of men over women in Christianity and Islam, for simple reasons – a man has an obligation to provide for his family, while a woman fulfills her role as a mother. When

considering superiority, there is an obligation based on the Bible and the Quran, to have respect for the wives. The veiling of Muslim women is a matter of traditions and customs in particular areas.

Divorce is forbidden in Christianity, not accepted by God. Muslims have the opportunity to divorce their wives, there are also many types of divorces, which are mostly based on an economical compensation. Allah does not approve of divorces; he only allows them when necessary.

A Christian man can only have one wife for a lifetime, a Muslim man can have up to four wives if he treats them with equal respect and affection.

The greatest match remains the fact, that in the institution of marriage, both religions want to reach the good: the good of an individual, both partners, the good of children and the good of the whole society. Society that needs a functional family inevitably.

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