

WOMAN AND RELIGION IN MODERN WESTERN CULTURE

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Abstract. The social upheavals of the 20th century contributed to the fact that women were forced to expand the list of their traditional social roles, which could not but lead to a change in the status of women within religious organizations. The development of various women's movements, and in particular the feminist movement, has contributed to the growing interest of researchers in studying the role and images of women in religion.

Key words. Islamic law, modern islam, western culture, religion, gender equality, religious environmentalism

In modern society, religion plays a significant role, and its transformations lead to the emergence of new religious and cultural phenomena, in particular such as religious feminism. This is not a single movement; its representatives can be active groups or individuals professing some religion (Christian feminism, Jewish feminism, Islamic feminism, etc.). Increasingly, modern feminists are setting tasks related to issues of the position of women in religion in general and in specific religions in particular. Women strive not only to strengthen their role in the religious community, but also to create theological concepts that explain the possibilities of female religious teaching and the priesthood. This trend is especially pronounced in modern Western culture.

Changes affect not only Abrahamic religions, but also new religious movements (NRM), in which the “female factor” also plays a big role. In recent decades, many NRMs have appeared, in which environmental ideas of “religious environmentalism” and ideas about the reproductive power of a female deity, actively promoted by adherents of such a movement as ecofeminism, play a large role. Supporters of these religious movements, as a rule, do not limit themselves to theoretical constructs; they are inclined to create utopian projects for transforming the world.

Women's movements contributed to the emergence and active development of such a direction of humanitarian research as gender, which for quite a long time they actually remained “women’s studies” (“”). Gender studies of religious issues themselves are a phenomenon of modern Western culture, which makes it possible to include them in the scope of research into the problem of “women and religion in modern Western culture.”

Of course, “women's movements,” both scientific, political and cultural, influence the development of modern art and culture, which becomes especially noticeable when

analyzing modern cinema. The inclusion of this type of art in the field of debate about the role of women in society and religion, in turn, contributes to expanding the information field of the problem and greater involvement of society in discussions on issues of women's religious feminism. Therefore, we can say that, on the one hand, cinema represents this problem, on the other hand, it itself is a factor shaping the public view of it.

Taking into account the issues outlined above, the topic “woman and religion in modern Western culture” is relevant for the modern world, and allows for a deeper study of important issues raised within the framework of modern discourse in the context of the study of religion. Of course, this topic is extremely complex and multifaceted, and in this article we consider only some of its aspects.

The article examines the degree of development of the presented problems, and formulates the goals, objectives, object and subject of research. In addition, the methodological basis of the work is considered, its scientific novelty, theoretical and practical significance are revealed, and the places of testing are indicated.

“Western culture” consists of three paragraphs that reveal the history of the emergence of gender, women's and feminist studies, their features and development in the academic field. An analysis of the application of this type of research within the framework of the study of the history of religion and the religious aspect of “Women’s Studies”, women’s and feminist theology is also presented. “Gender studies as a new methodological approach in the study of the history of religion,” is devoted to the development of the concepts of “gender” and “gender studies,” as well as the inclusion of this area in the study of the history of religion. In recent decades, gender studies have become especially widespread in various fields of knowledge. The emergence and development of the “women’s studies” that preceded them led to the scientific community asking the question of how and why certain ideas about women and their position in society, including in the sphere of religion, arose. A gender approach to the topic “woman and religion” allows us to emphasize that it is impossible to understand religion by studying only men. Gender studies in religion include a critical analysis of what religions say about women, what norms, rights and rules of behavior they prescribe. The term “gender” itself covers a wide range of phenomena: in gender, as an analytical category, there is a mutual dependence between the masculine and the feminine, a woman is understood through a man and vice versa. The concept itself refers to processes and structures, be they linguistic, religious, economic, and so on, that are capable of producing social asymmetries between men and women.

Gender studies are becoming an important part of the study of the history of religion, and it is thanks to the emergence of this approach that the possibility of studying historical issues is expanding, while focusing on the problem of gender equality, and not just on the “male” and “female” aspects. Due to the fact that the

gender approach has not yet completely strengthened its position in the study of the history of religion, we can certainly call gender studies a new methodological approach in this area. The second paragraph of the chapter “The religious aspect of “women’s studies” Women’s Studies” contains an analysis of the emergence of such a direction of interdisciplinary research as “Women’s Studies” and their role in the study of the history of religion. Initially, the direction of “Women studies” had the name “Female Studies” (this name appeared thanks to the researcher S. Tobias from Cornell University), later transformed into “Feminist studies”, but this name was soon considered not entirely correct. This is how “Women’s Studies” appeared, which was later replaced by “Women studies” or in the Russified version “women’s studies”. In matters of religion, such studies are based on the study of the place and role of women in a particular faith, while not ignoring gender issues of gender equality. Numerous studies on this topic examine religious traditions in relation to the roles that women and men play in them. The authors study the relationship between gender and religion, which ultimately has a significant impact on scientific research in other areas.

With the advent of "women's studies", for example, the possibility of studying historical issues not only from a male point of view, but also from a female one, has expanded. Characteristic of such works is a revision of history from the point of view of women's experience, emphasizing the role of women in historical and social processes, including in the life of various religious communities. Women's Studies primarily addresses the status of women in the Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The third paragraph, “Woman and Religion in Modern Western Scientific Research,” contains examples of works that reveal the problematic position of women in religion – issues of the female priesthood, female religiosity, women’s rights in the church and in religious society. It is noted that interest in women's theology does not disappear, which is important when studying issues related to the topic of women and religion. This paragraph characterizes the movement of “mujerista” theology (mujerista - from the Spanish “mujer”, literally “woman”), which emerges as a liberation theology aimed at the possibility of self-identification for Latin American women, mainly Catholics. In liberation practice, mujerista is a theology that empowers Latin American women to develop to have a sense of moral choice, and also explains the importance and value of their experiences on an equal basis with other women.

This part of the dissertation introduces another important modern theological movement - “womanism”, which is associated with both racial discrimination and sexism, and thus “woman”, “feminist”, “common” merge into a single whole, which becomes a kind of new version of feminism - “womanism”. The idea of womanism appeared in the discipline of theology in the 20th century, at a time of religious diversity and the development of different branches of theology as such. Womanist theology is predominantly the theology of African-American Christian women in the

United States, who highlight the problem of their suppression by the church and church community, and society as a whole. This kind of women's theology is a critical reflection of black women around the world - God created all human beings in his own image. Feminist theology and liberal "black" theology influenced the development of womanist thought. Much of womanism's focus on gender is just a basic point, as black women experience discrimination based on both gender and skin color. Black women are not only oppressed by men, but also by white women. In addition to these two directions, an analysis of an alternative "women's religion" is presented – "religion of the Goddess" (Goddess religion), which became a logical consequence of theological and intellectual searches in the field of feminism, and the rejection of patriarchal or androcentric religions. By the middle of the 20th century, there was a trend in Western culture towards the revival of the Goddess Religion. The main area of dissemination of these ideas is the USA. In 1971, Mary Daly theorized that male dominance in religion was linked to the image of God the Father as ruler of the universe, and Elizabeth Davis published *The First Sex*, in which she argued that women were once dominant. Thus, E. Davis revived interest in the Goddess Religion and matriarchy. Religious feminism in modern Western culture" consists of four paragraphs and contains a detailed description of the development of the influence of feminism on the Abrahamic religions in modern Western culture. "The Origins of Feminism and the main stages of its development" is devoted to the analysis of the three stages of the development of feminism, as an established and objectively existing phenomenon with deep historical roots.

During the development of the feminist movement (mainly the second and third waves), one can trace the path of its penetration into various spheres of society. The most significant impact of feminism on religion and associated stereotypes and norms of female behavior. The interaction of feminism and religion has also led to the development of religious feminism in modern Western culture. "Christian Feminism: Origins and Modern Times" touches on such topics as: reinterpretation of the Holy Scriptures, the creation of a "feminine" religion, as well as the problem of translating the Bible taking into account "gender-neutral language" (the tendency to designate an object without specifying its gender). Of course, such questions and problems indicate an increasing interest in certain circles of modern society in such a phenomenon as Christian feminism.

Also presented is a brief analysis of *The Woman's Bible* by Elizabeth K. Stanton, whose name is usually associated with the first interest in Christian feminism and the "feminine" reading of the Bible. Particular attention is paid to the history of the order of deaconesses and the problems of the female priesthood. An analysis of the current position of women in the Christian Church showed that in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, more and more churches came to the conclusion

that it was possible for women to become priests or bishops. “The main problems and current state of Jewish feminism” reveals the concept of Jewish feminism, the history of the emergence and development of this phenomenon, the foundations of which lie in the traditions defined by Judaism. This direction of religious feminism emerges at approximately the same time as secular feminism (XVIII-XIX centuries). The main emphasis in this paragraph is on the description of modern Jewish feminist organizations - “Ezrat Nashim”; "Women of the Wall" (Nashot HaKotel); "Orthodox Jewish Feminist Alliance" (JOFA). The problem of “aguna” is emphasized - a woman who does not have the right to marry a second time due to refusal spouse to give her a divorce, or if the whereabouts of the husband are unknown (whether he is alive or dead). Also, an aguna is a widow whose late husband did not leave offspring, and the elder brother (of the deceased) refuses the rite of khalitsa (the release of the widow, with the aim of her further independent choice).

Of course, this problem is one of the most important for the majority of representatives of Jewish feminism. Considerable attention is paid to the analysis of other current problems, in particular the possibility of women's participation in religious life on an equal basis with men (women's rabbinate). For many years, Jewish women fought for the right to be awarded the title of rabbi. Regina Jones first received this title in the thirties of the twentieth century within the framework of Reform Judaism in Germany. In 1985, Emmy Eilberg became the first female rabbi in Conservative Judaism in the United States. Thus, the struggle of Jewish women for equal rights with men in the field of religion is not limited to demands for equal presence in the service, but is also accompanied by demands for the opportunity for women to occupy leadership positions in the synagogue. The fourth paragraph, “Controversial issues of modern Islamic feminism: dialogue between Western and Eastern cultures,” is devoted to ambiguous and controversial issues of the position of women in Islamic society.

Many Muslims equate women's emancipation not with modernization, but with “Westernization.” This is mainly due to the past colonization of Muslims by Western countries and the modern influence of the West as a model of intellectual and social transformation.

For our research, Islamic feminism is of particular interest, since Muslim culture is increasingly spreading and assimilating in Western countries every year, which leads to active mutual influence of these two cultures, each of which takes on certain features of the other. If initially Islamic feminism existed according to the principle and likeness of Western feminism, it gradually begins to move towards Islamic forms, moving away from Western ones. One of the cardinal differences between Islamic feminism and Western feminism is the issue of the “veil” (hijab). Hijab is perceived by Western feminists as a symbol humiliation of a Muslim woman, while this attribute of clothing

is gaining amazing popularity among Muslim feminists and others. For Islamic feminists, the hijab is an element of freedom of choice: to hide or not to hide is what is important to them. The issue of women serving in the mosque does not go unnoticed. In a number of countries, for example in Canada, the USA and Spain, cases of joint prayers of men and women have been recorded, more that took place under female leadership.

One of the most famous prayers was the prayer of Amina Wadud, which took place in the USA in 2005, in the Episcopal Church of St. John the Evangelist in New York (mosques refused to hold such a prayer). Islamic feminism is actively developing not only in Eastern countries, but also in Western ones, where it interacts with the dominant traditions of modern Western culture and with secular feminism as well. When analyzing the position of women in Islamic society, as well as issues related to Islamic feminism, it is important to keep in mind that in many ways the status of women is determined not by the religious attitudes themselves, but by the traditions existing in certain ethnic groups, which in turn depends on the region. where they practice Islam. In conclusion, the results of the study are summarized and the main conclusions are formulated: the emergence of gender studies, largely provoked by the development of socio-political women's movements, had an impact on the formation of new trends in modern Western religion and theology (womanism, mujerista, etc.), and also significantly influenced modern popular culture, which in turn contributed to the popularization of ideas about women's religious leadership.

In addition, under the influence of mass culture, as well as new ideas and various social movements, new religious movements, primarily neo-pagan ones, arise and transform. Against this background, the attention of researchers in recent years has been attracted by such a phenomenon of modern Western culture as the Goddess Religion, which is relevant for some feminists seeking to find alternative ways to express women's religiosity. Research interest in the topic of women and religion is growing every year, and, importantly, it is becoming more and more relevant within the framework of the modern changing world.

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