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OUTSTANDING SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

QUALIFY FOR THE FUTURE WORLD
KIA NOHO TAKATŪ KI TŌ ĀMUA AO!

Tick this box if you
have NOT written
in this booklet

☐

Scholarship 2022 Religious Studies

Time allowed: Three hours
Total score: 24

Check that the National Student Number (NSN) on your admission slip is the same as the number at the top of this page.

You should answer ONE of the questions in this booklet.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–20 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in any cross-hatched area (✂). This area may be cut off when the booklet is marked.

YOU MUST HAND THIS BOOKLET TO THE SUPERVISOR AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.

WOMEN AND RELIGION

INSTRUCTIONS

Write an essay about women and religion in response to ONE of the questions below.

Space for planning is provided on page 4 of this booklet. Begin your answer on page 5.

EITHER: QUESTION ONE

"We have to cultivate contentment with what we have. We really don't need much. When you know this, the mind settles down. Cultivate generosity. Delight in giving. Learn to live lightly."

Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo (a senior Western Tibetan Buddhist nun)

"The Qur'an teaches that 'both women and men have the same capacity for moral agency, choice, and individuality'. It appoints both of them as 'each other's guides and protectors'."

Paola Garcia (a writer, a Sufi dance teacher, and a passionate student of Sufism and Islamic philosophy)

Many deeply religious women have strengthened the faithful in their religious traditions without overtly focusing on patriarchal and political issues. Evaluate the significance and impact of the role of women in keeping religions alive and real for the faithful.

OR: QUESTION TWO

"'Your God is too small': basically this is what feminists are saying to the guardians of patriarchal religion. The God that has been defined by the culture and consciousness of ruling-class males in patriarchal religion is inadequate to encompass the whole of humanity, specifically the other half of humanity – women ..."

Rosemary Radford Ruether (an American feminist scholar and Catholic theologian)

"You stand proudly now at the helm of a metaphoric waka wahine which has been navigating its way across this church for many, many years. For it is in this moment that each of us can recall with abundant aroha those women whose relentless struggles – and very occasional triumphs – in ministry have finally culminated in this amazing day."

Canon Dr Jenny Te Paa-Daniel (speaking at the installation service of the first Anglican Māori woman Bishop of Aotearoa, Pihopa Waitohiariki Quayle)

It might be argued that there has been systematic sidelining and silencing of women in religion over the centuries, in areas such as scriptural interpretation, leadership opportunities, and in their roles in society. Given the many voices and actions of protest about this, has any significant progress been made in empowering women, thus giving them more of an equal footing in their religious traditions?

PLANNING

A
Mary Andel Suzanne Andel

A2

Eve Mary Andel

Any significant progress been made in empowering women
equal footing

empowerment - can they have a place in the religion?
can they feel that they can do what ~~they~~ a man can do? significant
- through each
of these women

Eve

current problems - at a time

how it has had implications
for women

Mary

- problem - current state of affairs
- new perspective
- progress?

religious orders
For the first time in the history of the world,

The supreme victory of masculinity is consummated
in Mariolatry

Andel

if even if all of these women were like A,
what effect would that be?

different women show different stages
of progress

Conclusion

significant progress
empowering women

groundwork - yes
what to do about it - no

talk about non religious, will this just be
for the religious? or will it be societal
impacts?

Select (✓) ONE essay question to answer.

☐ Question One

☒ Question Two

It is common knowledge that throughout major world religions, women are sidelined, and have been faced with limited gender roles within their respective societies. It is also apparent that world religions are showing signs of modernization, whether it be the more inclusive rhetoric used by Pope Francis, the female-led uprisings in Iran, and many smaller examples less known than these. But how fast? The key term here is "significant progress." The issue is whether world religions have come far enough to actually empower women on a global scale. To investigate this, I will analyze 3 important women in ~~world~~ ^{major} religions: Eve, Mary, mother of Jesus, and Avelah, as I believe ^{their impact in religion} ~~they~~ ^{they} provides a good indication of whether significant progress has been made in ^{especially their roles in society} each of these circumstances. I will analyze their implications for women, and whether interpretation of them shows signs of significant progress for the empowerment of women.

It is first important to define some terms. Significant progress is our "dependant variable" as such: it will need to be analyzed and quantified for each of these women and their respective faith traditions. Empowerment is the result of such change: it is generally understood to be a social phenomenon whereby women on a large scale feel that they are able to participate and do anything open to men. In this case, it is also ~~important~~ important to think of empowerment as them having an opportunity to have a place in their religious traditions. This leads to "equal footing", the end goal whereby equality is achieved, where women have equal opportunities and influence as men.

Eve is a very important figure in Christianity and ~~the~~ Judaism, and her image and legacy has had profound implications for women in these religions throughout history and to this day. Most of the ~~info~~ information surrounding Eve comes from Genesis 2 and 3: the story of Adam and Eve. This story is very important for ~~even~~ its implications for women because of how it has been interpreted. The interpretation of this story which has existed throughout history and is still widespread today has had clear negative implications for women. There are two aspects of this story and I will discuss their implications as well as weigh up whether significant progress has been made. The first comes from the passage where God takes a rib out of Adam to create Eve, to be his "helper." This has been interpreted to mean that the woman is secondary to the man: that the man is normative, and the woman is derivative. This has been used to justify the subordination of women in Christian and Jewish cultures for millennia. However, it has faced pushback in recent times, from feminists, the most notable of these being Phyllis Trible, a biblical scholar. She argued that the text itself was not sexist, but had accumulated misogyny over centuries of interpretation. She argued that ~~in the~~ the story showed a hierarchy in the order of creation: i.e. humans were created after the animals to be superior. Therefore, women being created after men did not mean she was lesser, but actually suggested the opposite based on the structure of the book. Furthermore, ~~the~~ by looking at the translations of the Hebrew words, she found that the ~~story~~ story describes the creation of a genderless human first, after which sexual differentiation occurs when another human is created. All of this pointed to Genesis 2,3 offering a liberating message. The second aspect of the ~~longstanding~~ interpretation comes from the passage where Eve is ~~told~~ convinced by the serpent to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This has been interpreted as meaning that women are responsible

for original sin (in Christian belief), and are temptresses that lead men away from the Word of God. This is much more apparent, and also much more damaging for women. We can see this sentiment in the influential writings of Tertullian, a second-century Christian author; "You are the devil's gateway; the un-sealer of that forbidden tree; the first deserter of the divine law; the one who convinced he who the devil was not worthy enough to attack." In this way, women were demonised due to the interpretation of one biblical story. Malleus Maleficarum (Hammer Against Witches) was the go-to handbook for witchcraft in the late Middle Ages all the way to the 19th century, and its misogynist characterisation of women ^{and their mass persecution} was heavily influenced by Genesis 2,3.

Phyllis Trible has also offered reinterpretations, the primary one being that instead of ~~the woman~~ Eve being gullible, simple-minded, and evil, could instead be intelligent, aware, and ~~be~~ reasonable. Why else would the serpent choose her instead of Adam? ~~However, these~~ ~~the Trible has faced opposition from rejectors~~ However, these ~~reinterpretations~~ reinterpretations haven't found much of an audience in Christianity or Judaism. Many still use the old interpretation, or opt to skirt around the ~~misogyny~~ misogyny and focus on other aspects, like original sin. One such example is the Catholic Church. The reinterpretations of Trible and other feminists are not widespread, and Eve still undoubtedly has negative implications for ~~how~~ how women are viewed in these religions. Significant progress for the empowerment of women resulting from Eve has not occurred in Christianity or Judaism, even if the groundwork has been laid. Other feminists argue that Eve cannot empower women: that the Eve-Adam story is inherently patriarchal. Many also reject Trible's interpretation, such as David Jobling, an Old Testament scholar, who concluded that "[the Eve-Adam story is] male mythology showing to deal with the complexities of social life, and in particular

with women."

Mary, mother of Jesus is venerated in Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, considered holy by Protestant denominations, and ~~can~~ revered as the greatest woman to have ever lived in Islam:

"O Mary! Verily Allah has blessed you and purified you and blessed you above ~~all~~ the women of the worlds!" - Quran 3:42

The implications Mary has had for women in these religions is much more complicated than that of Eve: it cannot be described as wholly positive or negative. Before critically evaluating whether significant progress has been made for Mary's empowerment of women, we need to first understand the starting point: how Mary was regarded up until feminists began calling for change to ~~religious~~ religions' treatment of women. Very little is written about Mary in the Gospels (in fact, the Quran mentions her more times), which is likely the result of these texts being written by men in a patriarchal society. It is therefore so surprising that she rose to such prominence, especially in Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam. In the former two, there are numerous prayers, dogmas, and feast days attributed to Mary. There are Catholic religious orders, such as the Marist Fathers (Society of Mary), ~~and~~ Marist Brothers, and Marist Sisters, all devoted to Mary, which have had a massive impact on the modern world and our history. Even in the stiflingly patriarchal Middle Ages, Mary was ~~is~~ venerated and placed up on a pedestal as the "Queen of Heaven" in Christian traditions. One explanation for why a woman who was barely described in scripture became a key tenet of faith in some religions and a prominent figure in others is that women - half of all people - could relate to her as a positive female role-model in their respective religions. Furthermore, all people, ~~for~~

both men and women, felt that they could relate to Mary as a more human and personal figure. There is evidence that, after the Council of Trent in the 15th century, which placed so much emphasis on the sacraments in Catholicism that the people weren't to celebrate them were left to watch on the sidelines, that devotion to Mary amongst Catholics grew as they searched for a more active and personal aspects of the faith. However, many critics and feminists argue that just because Mary ~~had such a prominent~~ was so prominent in these religions, it doesn't mean that she had positive implications for women and their roles in society. Simone Beauvoir, a feminist and existentialist philosopher, wrote that "For the first time in the history of the world, a mother acknowledges, of her own free will, her inferiority to her son. The supreme victory of masculinity is consummated in Mariolatry; it signifies the rehabilitation of woman through the completeness of her defeat." She argues that Mariolatry, the devotion surrounding Mary, only serves to convince women that they have no power, a power which has been stolen from them by the patriarchy. There is evidence to ~~the~~ support this: Mary is often portrayed as obedient and submissive, a silent helper for her son, who takes up the spotlight. Even her acceptance of God's plan for her ~~own~~ mirrors a wife's acceptance of marriage and childbearing. Furthermore, the two main aspects which have come to define her are her virginity (as evidenced by Catholic and Orthodox dogmas and beliefs) and motherhood, as opposed to anything else. Therefore, many Christian traditions in particular have pivoted away from the "model of womanhood", which had many negative aspects, to a "model of faith," for all people, men and women. In this way, Mary is first amongst all humans as saying "yes" to God and having faith. A quote from Pope Francis demonstrates this shift: "The Church without Mary would be like the apostolic college without the

disciples. Mary is first amongst the disciples, and the Church herself is feminine: the spouse of Christ and a mother." Whether this can be considered a ~~major~~ significant progress is up for debate. Firstly, this shift is ~~also~~ primarily occurring in the Catholic Church, where Mary already had a large presence. The Eastern Orthodox Church and Islam have emphasised this far less. While it is likely that Mary as a model of faith has inspired many highly religious women to empowerment, it is doubtful that the majority of Catholic women in this case have experienced this. While Mary as a model of faith has gained traction, it is just not widespread enough to constitute significant progress.

Andal was the only female Hindu poet-saint amongst the ~~Alvars~~ ^{Alvars and ethical} in the Tamil culture of southern India. She is credited with writing many poems and literary works which have had a profound impact on Tamil culture especially. Throughout southern India, she is often represented next to the god Vishnu ^{in temples}, who she married, and many temples have a shrine specifically for her. She is a prominent woman in southern India, and there are even festivals associated with her. There is nothing particularly negative about her implications for Hindu women, especially in southern India, and it is likely she has had a positive impact, as a strong female role-model who contributed a great deal to her culture and religion. There are also various feminist ~~interpretations~~ interpretations of her life, which will be discussed shortly. However, it is likely that she has been overshadowed and sidelined in the patriarchal Hindu tradition. I say "patriarchal," although, Hinduism is very complicated in its representation of women, their roles, and what is expected. Hindu tradition shows evidence of both patriarchy and matriarchy, ~~and~~ and it is generally ~~considered~~

considered to ~~be a source of~~ support gender equality and female empowerment more than other world religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. However, Hinduism and Indian society overall can be considered patriarchal, and the culture and time period that Andal lived in (8th century) was certainly so. Therefore, ~~she must~~ here is a starting point from which significant progress can be made, just like the other women analysed. ~~Andal likely has the greatest~~ Andal's life has been viewed through a feminist lens to support ~~empowerment~~ empowerment of women. Firstly, here is her marriage to the god Vishnu, which meant she fulfilled her obligation to be married without having to give up everything that came with that. This allowed her to remain independent throughout her life, and not be beholden to any earthly man. Furthermore, her presumed lifetime virginity can be viewed in a positive light by feminists, as it allowed her to reject ~~pregnancy~~ ^{pregnancy} and motherhood should she want to (which she did). Rather than being an aspect of a woman's body being controlled by men, her virginity could equate to autonomy, at least in that time period and context. Arvind Sharma and Katherine K. Young summarised this well in their book "Feminism and world religions"; "What Andal and other female poet-saints did by living the way they did was to negotiate a place for them in a marriage-dominated society." Andal offers a clear and unambiguous feminist message to any modern Hindu and southern Indian women. Her legacy as a successful poet-saint is evidence of this. She has inspired the creation of women's groups such as Coda Mandalis, which spread her poems and literature across the south of the continent. While she likely continues to be minimised and sidelined in a patriarchal society, her influence and the nature of that influence as a strong, capable, independent woman (perhaps as opposed to

Many, at ~~least~~ ^{least} historically) is conclusive that significant progress has been made for the empowerment of women, at least surrounding her.

It is apparent at this point that different women analysed show different stages of ~~sign~~ progress, in fact, incidentally the extent of this progress has increased as we have moved from each woman to the next. During this essay, I have only discussed what implications these women have had for those in their religions. But in our modern world, especially the western world, there are many irreligious people as well, along with great diversity of religions due to immigration and ~~as~~ these seeking refuge from turmoil. ~~Has~~ ^{Has} ~~these~~ religion (and specifically these women) made significant progress in empowering these women? The question refers to women having an equal footing in their religious traditions, so it is likely that religious women from these religions are the focus here, but it is important to remember that they do not exist in a vacuum: ~~remember~~ that the empowerment of women is a systemic, society-wide issue. To answer now whether religion has made significant progress in the empowerment of women, from the 3 analysed I think it is important to split this into two parts. Have these religions laid the groundwork for ~~any~~ progress? Yes, absolutely. It was evident across all of these women that they ^{have the potential to} could empower women or serve as an example of equality in their respective religious traditions. Have these religions made significant progress for the empowerment of ~~religious~~ women, using these three as indicators? No. Moving from our base position before the rise of feminism to now, little has changed in how world religions can relate to women. While equality has increased and women all over the world tend to have ^{seen} some level of improvement to how society treats them, this shift has been overwhelmingly secular, not religious. The ways

to move forward identical in this essay have not been implemented on a large enough scale to lead to significant empowerment. That being said, some religions ~~are~~ have made more progress than others, ~~but~~ such as Hinduism, but even Anelal is only one example amongst a vast ~~area~~ ^{and their religions} and powerful patriarchy. But the opportunities are there for all of these women, they just need to be acted on.

Acknowledgements

Material from the following sources has been adapted for use in this assessment:

Page 2

Quote from Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo: <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/584309>

Quote from Paola Garcia: <https://insidearabia.com/reclaiming-an-egalitarian-understanding-of-islam/>

Quote from Rosemary Radford Ruether: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3346484>

Quote from Canon Dr Jenny Te Paa-Daniel: <https://anglicanwomen.nz/long-awaited-and-richly-deserved-our-first-maori-woman-bishop/>

Outstanding Scholarship Exemplar 2022

Subject	Religious Studies		Standard	93603	Total score	22
Q	Score	Annotation				
2	22	<p>The analysis offered a thorough review of three different contexts. This was helpful, as it provided three different points of analysis.</p> <p>Clear terms of the argument were provided, including definitions of key aspects of the chosen question.</p> <p>A useful range of examples and their real-world applications was also provided. The candidate's argument was clear and straightforward about the question, which included progress building on key definitions.</p> <p>This was a well understood use of the example, although more could have been included in the way of counter examples to strengthen the argument.</p>				