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SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR



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MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

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

Tick this box if you
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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

argument: religion is largely patriarchal but there is potential for progress, though such progress has so far been limited

P1: Bible

God male

female bad, sin, sexual

be celibate

absence of women's voice

Mary Daly quote

P6: conclusions

P2: institution of religion
issue of women being
ordained

P3: complementarianism, is
it still relevant today?

P4: Bible different interpretations

- de Beauvoir: religion oppresses women
- Mary Daly: Christianity is made up of patriarchal myths
- Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza new way of reading the Bible
- Rosemary Radford

P5: case study

Aloriavale

Select (✓) ONE essay question to answer.

☐ Question One

☒ Question Two

Whether religion is inherently patriarchal and fixed, is a ~~contested~~ contested historical narrative. Many thinkers believe that mainstream religion can never be free of sexism and the ordination of women serves as an issue to prove that some faiths are doomed to treat women as secondary. For others, however, discrepancies in the system of religion can open new perspectives. There have been many voices of protest and action about the systemic ~~sidelining~~ sidelining of women in the hopes of gaining a more equal footing in religious traditions, though such progress has so far been limited in most religions.

Take Christianity, for example. The Bible can be seen to define the relationship between women and religion and its misogynistic views show that religion is patriarchal to large extent. Mary Daly, a radical feminist theologian, argued that "If God in 'his' heaven is a father ruling 'his' people then it is in the 'nature' of things and according to divine plan ~~that~~ and the order of the universe that society be male-dominated." Philosophical assumptions that determined the role and value of women were woven into the very fabric of Christianity. Firstly, men are inherently favoured in the Bible. God is referred to as 'He' consistently,

thereby, granting men more power as they see themselves represented in an omniscient and omnipotent being. This automatically elevates the position of man against women as it is assumed, or rather we are conditioned to think, that men have a divinely instituted privilege. Some patristic interpretations of the ~~Genesis~~ Genesis story have been used to reinforce concepts that could be seen to limit women's roles and equality. It is evident that women are portrayed as secondary to men, with Eve being created to help in the task of procreation. Genesis 2:22 states that "For the Lord, God created women from the rib of man" which pushes patriarchal ideals as women are seemingly not their own being, but simply a derivative of man. Genesis also creates an image of women as sexual temptresses and being fundamentally inclined to the temptation of sin, thus making them inherently evil. We see this in the actions of Eve who takes the apple in the Garden of Eden and leads to the downfall of ^{Adam} (man). Presenting women in this way influences patriarchal attitudes in Christianity that women are not suited for leadership. If a religion's origin story establishes patriarchalism, subsequent teachings and beliefs are entrenched in the same ideals, forming a religion that upholds and ~~reinforces~~ reinforces a society that limits women. For example, in 1 Timothy 2:9-13 ^{men Eve} Paul states "for Adam was formed first," [so]

I will not permit a woman to teach or assume authority over a man." Patriarchalism in the Bible is also found in the absence of women's voices and perspectives. The Bible was ~~written~~ written and re-written in a patriarchal context by men. Resultingly, only 1/10 of the Bible is about women. Women are brought into the narrative in terms of their relationship ~~to~~ to men, as wives, daughters, and mothers, and play a minor role for the most part. Celibacy is also a common theme in the Bible, though such 'rules' are applied ^{more so} ~~directly~~ to women than men. The most obvious example of this is virgin Mary, whose virginty is a symbol of her purity. Promoting celibacy until marriage sends a subconscious message to adherents of Christianity that a virgin is pure and every women should strive to be so. This suggests a patriarchal influence in religion that attempts to solidify control over women and their bodily ~~autonomy~~ autonomy. Thus, theologians can see that the Bible may be used to further patriarchal ideals.

The institution of mainstream religions also reflects the role of women as one that is submissive and inferior to men. Christ was, of course, a man but some who argue for female ordination insist that his sex is irrelevant as women can act in the image and likeness of Christ just as well as a man can. More recently, there has been a push to empower women in

religion and allow for women to hold ~~more~~ ^{in Christianity} high leadership roles, like being ordained. With the waves of feminism and more progressive changes being made in society, these voices for change in religion have achieved some success with some churches and denominations enabling women to become priests. ~~This only~~ This is only a drop in the ocean, however, as recent Popes affirm that the Church ~~do~~ has "no authority" to ordain women. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "The Lord Jesus chose men to form the college of the twelve ~~ap~~ apostles," and because Jesus was a man, there is an invented belief that only a male priest can represent Jesus. The deep rooted ~~W~~ tradition of only ordaining men influences the religion for the most part. Hence, traditional religious dogma is an impediment to progress, or at least significant progress, for women ~~who want~~ ^{to get} ~~want~~ a more equal footing in religion.

Complementarianism is a theological view ~~that~~ in some religions that defines men and women as having different but complementary roles and responsibilities; a view that contributes to the patriarchal nature of religion. The Bible, for one, ~~prescribes~~ prescribes complementarianism, in which 1 Corinthians 11:3 teaches "the head of man is Christ, and the head of a wife is her

husband, and the head of Christ is God." Women may assist in decision making, but men have the ultimate authority as man is ~~at~~ at the "head" of women. The CCC adds that "God gives men and women an equal personal dignity" but the harmony of society is "dependent in part on the way in which complementarity... between the sexes is lived out." Women are, therefore, limited in their roles and are denied the opportunity to openly reach their full potential and express themselves. Secular society has made efforts to move away from such a ~~delegation~~ delegation of roles, with women entering the workforce and so forth. Inevitably, this has transpired into religion in the sense that women are not forcefully limited to the home ~~and~~ e.g., many religious women are also political leaders and CEO's. The difference, however, is that the secular world actively promotes the value of women (for the most part) and their ^{abilities} ~~capabilities~~, while religion continues to follow teachings that identify women as less than men. There are also fundamentalist Christian groups, like Gloriavale, that impose restrictions and gendered roles on women. We can, therefore, conclude that ~~there~~ an effort for change for women in religion has been made but with the prevalence of a complementarianistic viewpoint, significant progress is yet to be

achieved.

The Bible is not a neutral text. Depending on how it is read, it can reinforce sexism and misogyny, or it can be a force for change where all of Christ's followers are regarded as equally made in imago Dei (the image of God). Some Churches and denominations use the Bible to justify the concept of complementarianism against egalitarianism. This correlates with the arguments of radical feminist theologians, like Simone de Beauvoir and Mary Daly, about the inherent patriarchalism of religion. De Beauvoir's fundamental argument is that religion oppresses women. Historically, men have controlled religion and society and, de Beauvoir argues that "For the Jews, Muhammadans, and Christians, among others, man is master by divine right; the fear of God therefor represses any impulse toward revolt in the downtrodden female." In modern society, religion is used more as a tool of deception than direct control. It deceives women into thinking that they are equal to men despite their inferior status in reality. This is because most religions give subordinate, chaste women divine status, which in turn, encourages female adherents to accept their subordinate roles. The deception, de Beauvoir argues,

is in the ~~subconscious~~ psychological and status rewards that are implied for conforming to a patriarchal society. The problem with this is that women who accept their religiously sanctioned roles benefit religious institutions as they socialise them into religious beliefs, thereby reproducing power inequalities. Like de Beauvoir, Daly argues that Christianity is made up of patriarchal myths. Most religions ~~have~~ have demoted the role of women in historical records, like Mary Magdalene in Christianity who played a much larger role in the spread of Christianity than acknowledged. She adds that patriarchal religious ideology teaches that patriarchal religious institutions are bestowed by God, thus it is virtuous to accept a position of subordination for women. Imagery and language ~~that~~ in the Bible further perpetuate patriarchal ideologies ^{that assert male control and female subordination,} such as God being portrayed as male ^{"which serves to alienate women and} ~~which achieves the purpose of asserting male control and female subordination as "but it~~ places ^{them} ~~women~~ as inferior to men." On the other hand, some feminist theologians have challenged orthodox views. Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza developed a Feminist Liberationist way of ~~reading~~ interpreting the Bible involving reading "with the mind, eyes, and heart of a woman", to analyse the experiences of women and their oppression, and examining the bias of the

interpreter to question how patriarchal religion is. Is religion as patriarchal as ~~just~~^{one} makes it to be? Take ~~1 Timothy~~ Corinthians 14:34, for example, where Paul states that "Women should be silent in Church." Looking at ~~this~~ it from a Feminist Liberationist point of view, would that not mean that women were already speaking in Churches? As such, we would need to question who was trying to silence them and why. Rosemary Radford ~~Reuther~~^{Reuther} is another feminist theologian on this side of the ~~issue~~^{debate}. She says that "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." While Christian theological ideas, ~~like~~ such as those in the Bible, are interpreted through a misogynistic lens, the heart of Christianity i.e., its core ~~principle~~ principles, still hold ~~the~~ importance and have good intentions towards women. Thus, there is the potential for Christianity to be viewed in a new light to avert the patriarchal influences and be used for the greater good of women and society as a whole. This revisionist way of thinking is an indicator of the action that has been implemented to dethrone hegemonic ~~attitudes~~ attitudes and elevate the position of women in religion. Yet this has not become the mainstream interpretation and many traditions very well continue to play into

misogynistic concepts. While there are many voices of protest to this, it cannot be truthfully said that we have achieved significant progress for equality in religion.

These ideas can be specifically identified in the case study of Gloriavale. A ~~fm~~ Christian fundamentalist group in NZ, Gloriavale is known for its literalist interpretation of the Bible that drives the ~~gendered~~ gender-stereotyped lifestyle of its members and sets it apart from the rest of NZ society. Women in Gloriavale are limited to the ~~home~~ domestic sphere and the responsibilities that come with it which, in itself, puts Gloriavale years behind secular society. From a young age, girls take on gendered duties in ~~the~~ the kitchen, sewing, looking after children and this is the full extent of their future. Moreover, women are expected to birth around 12 children as it is their duty to expand the family "in accordance with God's will." Contraception and abortion is forbidden at Gloriavale. From this information, it is easy to see that Gloriavale is a heavily patriarchal ~~society~~ group that finds its roots in ~~a patriarchal religion~~ the teachings of a patriarchal religion. No matter how much protest and public outcry has occurred on the ~~discrete~~ media coverage of this extremist group,

no change or progress has been made in their attitudes on the topic of women. If we total the instances of fundamentalism in the religious tradition of Christianity, it appears that little progress, let alone significant progress, has been made towards equality for women. A contemporary and major example is also found in the religious tradition of Islam where the protest by women to wearing head coverings has spurred a movement for change but has found ^{no} real impact yet. Many sportswomen ~~At~~ that adhere to this religious tradition have chosen to play on the world stage without a head covering as a direct-action tactic. While this has garnered media attention, this ~~is~~ ~~the~~ protest has not significantly shifted the ~~the~~ ^{position} ~~level~~ of women in Islam. In fact, it has almost tightened patriarchal controls with news of athletes going missing or issuing apologies for their actions. It can be argued that these forces for change can be self-empowering for women, but the extent of empowerment that ~~reaches~~ can reach structural change to tackle sexist inequalities is debatable. Generally speaking, we have seen ~~protest~~ calls for change across different religions but the path towards equality is yet to be made.

Several conclusions can be drawn about ~~the~~ women in religion. ~~There~~ Firstly, there are

different standards for men and women, with ~~the~~ androcentrism ~~of religion~~ meaning that, like society, religion is set up to advantage men and disadvantage women. Consequently, women are systemically excluded and deleted from historical records. BUT religions do change and have changed, so equality for women is not a completely hopeless ideal. For example, in the Ancient Roman religion, some of the most powerful Gods were women (Jupiter, Venus) who were free to behave as they wanted. In Ancient Egyptian religion, ~~the goddess~~ Isis brought her husband back to life and ~~was~~ appealed to the gamut of female and male society. In Hinduism, there are a multitude of powerful goddesses (Kali, Laxmi, Saraswati) that are worshipped by men and women equally. Though all these religious traditions have/had traces of patriarchalism, they are evidence for ~~an evolution towards~~ the representation of women. Perhaps with further protest, the hierarchical structures of rigid religions, like Christianity and Islam that display clear patriarchalism, will slowly begin to fall, resulting in positive advances towards equality. ~~Feminist theologians~~ The feminist approach to theology has questioned every aspect of faith and life but solving inequalities is no small change and religions will have to

rise to the challenge and engage in further discourse. ~~the wider impact~~ In essence, while significant progress is not seen right now, it is possible that women may hold a more influential position in religion in the future. This could bring new voices and perspectives to the ~~discussion~~ table and, in targeting the problems of ~~patrio~~ patriarchy in religion, cause change to wider society as religion still holds influence in the world today.

as Mary Daly says, ultimately, ^{relying on} women need to ~~look~~ stop ~~looking~~ ~~for~~ "religion from above" and look to "spirituality from within" to liberate themselves from religious oppression. And in the wise words of Ariana Grande: God is a woman.

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/>

Scholarship Exemplar 2022

Subject	Religious Studies		Standard	93603	Total score	13
Q	Score	Annotation				
2	13	An agreement was presented which was based on the chosen question. A clear use of an example (Gloriavale) was used to support the argument. Greater clarity and engagement with counter arguments would have been needed to gain Outstanding Scholarship.				