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93603A



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## SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

### Scholarship 2025 Religious Studies

Time allowed: Three hours

### ANSWER BOOKLET

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

Answer ONE question from Question Booklet 93603Q, and write your answer 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 the margins (///). This area will be cut off when the booklet is marked.

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

### DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND EQUITY IN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

#### INSTRUCTIONS

Write an essay about diversity, inclusion, and equity in religious traditions, in response to ONE of the questions below. Space for planning your answer is provided below.

#### ***EITHER: QUESTION ONE***

"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

– Adapted from Article 2, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

"There is diversity among human beings as there is variety in gender, color, language and multiplicity of races and tribes. This diversity is considered natural and are indicative of God's creative power and wisdom."

– Dr Asma Abdullah, interculturalist

There has been dispute, in both secular and religious groups, about the establishment and enforceability of guidelines and practices around diversity, inclusion, and equity.

What is the nature of the dispute about the demands of diversity, inclusion, and equity in the religious tradition(s) you have studied? Evaluate the tradition's responses to such demands, particularly in terms of its own principles and measures of accountability.

#### ***OR: QUESTION TWO***

"We are called to be people of conviction, not conformity; of moral nobility, not solid respectability."

– Dr Martin Luther King Jr, Baptist minister and civil rights leader

"The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity."

– George Bernard Shaw

There has often been dispute within religious traditions about whether certain beliefs and practices might need to be changed in order for the tradition to maintain its authenticity and relevance.

What kinds of changes have been or could be introduced in the religious tradition(s) you have studied? Evaluate the responses of voices from within the tradition(s) to the calls to honour diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Select ONE essay question to answer: Question Two ▾

## PLANNING

## EXTENDED RESPONSE

Type your essay in the space below.

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There has often been dispute within religious traditions about whether certain beliefs and practices might need to be changed in order for the tradition to maintain its authenticity and relevance.

What kinds of changes have been or could be introduced in the religious tradition(s) you have studied? Evaluate the responses of voices from within the tradition(s) to the calls to honour diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Since the dawn of the Catholic Church, the role of women has been the topic of deep questioning. With the rise of feminism in the 20th century, the Churches apparent exclusion of women, and the 'indifference' often offered towards their voices has been a source of deep hurt for half of the Church's body. In current times, as the intellectual capacities of women are enabled to be put to use within society, the question of a lack of female leadership has been a stumbling block towards faith, with many women and groups encouraging the change of religious tradition. Within the Catholic Church in New Zealand, 61% of church attendees are women, with only 39% men. However, in the broader church two thirds of Gen Z women feel as though "churches do not treat women with equity". Prompting an exodus of women out of a religion they view as 'restrictive' and 'sexist'. With a clear problem facing modern christianity, at the very least, an open discussion must be held to determine what must change for women to be recognised within tradition, and what must be upheld to maintain the dignity and honesty of the faith.

This discussion is not an easy one, nor is it one where a conclusion can be flippantly came to. It is one that women and the church have and likley will wrestle with for the rest of their time on earth. On a personal level, I dont wish to oversimplify this issue, nor to remove nuance in order to make it easier to grapple with. Instead, all perspectives must be recognised, evaluated and brought into the bigger picture, where an evaluation can be made on how the Church might best honour women in the way that God intended.

### Section One: The scripture that has influenced the Church

"The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity."  
– George Bernard Shaw

To begin to understand the extent of changes that must be made to Church teaching, it must first be understood what the root of the percived injustices and 'sin' are. To understand what Scripture sasy about the role of women, specifically, the words and events that have led to deep feelings of ostracisation and 'inhumanity'. Without this basis, no true understanding of Catholic teaching can be formed.

The first references to female and male roles are found in genesis, with the creation story of humanity, which is referenced later in the bible in pauls episcopal letters and within the catechism of the Church. In genesis 1:27, God makes humanity in "his image. Male and female he created them". Already this splits humanity into two distinct groups. Notably, other distinctions within humanity such as race are not mentioned, placing particular and intentional importance on the difference between men and women. The "imago Dei" however, places both in equal value, where they are both in the image and likeness of God. This challenges other ancient ideas of women and Men such as ancient greek ideas that women were a mutilated or "deformed man".

In Gensis, God creates adam first and then eve, from his side. Aquinas notes that women was not born from adams "head such to rule him" nor was she born of his "foot to be beneath him" but from his "rib" (side in other translations) so as to rule "beside him", meaning that no clear establishment of heirarchy is born from that particular passage. Eve is created as a helper for adam. In the original texts the hebrew word is "ezer" which is a term that God is called by in later texts, as a helper, placing her purpose within adam. Further on, after the fall, genesis 3:16 states the curse that was placed upon women where they will "desire for [her] husband. But he shall rule over [her]". Notably the hebrew word in place of "for" is often translated as "against". later in gensis it is used to describe the desire of sin to control, yet in song of songs it is used to describe the desire of a husband for his wife. A level of confusion then arises as to wether sin will cause a woman to desire to lead, and yet her husband is given that role. Or wether it refers to a woman loving her husband, and yet him desiring to have dominion over her.

Even within these foundational texts, a frustration already arises. In the perspective of many modern feminist writers, men are defined in gensis as humanity itself, women defined by men. Unlike men who are born within the context of Gods desire to create humanity, women are created within adam's desire to not be alone. This immediatley places women in a 'secondary' role, where their purpose is centred on the other sex, in a way that is not directly stated to be reciporical. This feeling of being 'secondary' is further perpetuated by the patriarchal structures present in the old testament. With few exeptions, the central figures of the bible are men, with humanity and even God refered to using male pronouns. Women are often found within the context of their role towards men (for example leah, rachel, sarah), leading to the question - What is the purpose of women to God, outside of men?

However, other scholars will counter this, showing how God meets women in the old testament, and upholds their value. For instance when abraham mistreats hagar, God meets her in the desert and blesses her. Although this doesnt completely defend against the claims of sex based inequality, it does show that God is not 'indifferent' towards women in the bible. Moreover, God appoints deborah, a women, as a judge of Isreal. Showing that at least in some instances, female leadership has its place. The Character of Ester, defies the 'dominion' of her husband over her, risking her life in order to save her people, something which is presented as a holy action. Still, women in the old testament are generally considered as taking a more passive and less central role when compared to the actions of men.

This tension comes to somewhat of a head in the New testament, where female roles are both reinstated and redefined. Ancient judaism at the time of Jesus was a heavily patricarchal society, beyond that, it could considered outright mysoginistic. One jewish prayer at the time outlines the attitudes that jewish society had towards women in a three scentence thanksgiving, where the male gives thanks that he is not 1. A gentile 2. A Woman 3. An ignoramus. The temple arrangements at the time also reflected the value of women during this time. As proximity to the temple centre represented proximity to the holiest of holys, groups were segregated by stairs in their closeness to the temple. At the bottom was the gentile court, 5 steps up was the womens court and 15 steps further was the jewish males court. Women were not to learn torah nor were they to pray blessings over food. Women due to old testament purity laws, were periodically ritually unclean, and were the centre of exclusion during this time, not to be touched. It is worth noting that these injustices were not soley the result of pharisitical additions to Gods word, but also were the cultral product of a history of women being subjugated by men in the tradtions of isreal given by God (for that specific time period)

However Jesus periodically flew in the face of this treatment of women. Firstly, he is born of a woman - Mary. He allowed the ritually unclean bleeding woman to touch him. He talked to the Samaritan women, who was both an adulteress and female, encouraging her to be a missionary to the Samaritans. He had female followers - referred to in the Gospel as 'the women'. He affirmed the intellectual capabilities of women, in the Gospel of Luke's story of Martha and Mary. He chose to have the first witnesses of his resurrection be women - an action that defied the ideas that women could not testify. Scholars note that Jesus' treatment of women was "radical" with some going as far as calling it "feminist". And yet, he still chose to have all twelve of his disciples be men. Although he affirmed that women were not lesser, he didn't frequently place them in positions of leadership. While many women feel uplifted by Jesus' acknowledgement of women, and his willingness to engage with them, others feel as though it is still not quite sufficient to quell this idea that women are secondary to men in some areas.

After the Gospels, Paul's letters to the churches continue to confuse and clarify what the role of women in the Church is. In Galatians 3:28 he says that "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female. For you are all one in Jesus Christ". This seems to align itself with a more egalitarian view of women, where their sex becomes secondary to their humanity, and their role becomes equal to that of men. However in 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians, Paul goes on to command silence from women in Church, along with their submission once again under men. This seems to contrast when he later speaks of women as "prophesying" in Church. These "contradictions" have been the source of much confusion and much tribulation in the Church to uncover the truth. Feminist Catholic scholars appeal to feminist hermeneutics, where they argue that Paul is speaking to specific churches and addressing cultural issues that are relevant to specific contexts. However, patriarchal scholars point to Paul's appeal to creation order in several of these tricky sections, indicating a greater truth about male female relationships that extends culture.

## **Section two: How the Church has interpreted scripture throughout history.**

In any case, I think it has been made clear, that the history of scripture surrounding the role of women is deeply complex, multifaceted and still the topic of much debate. From scripture, three general schools of thought surrounding women's roles have formed. I will be using their modern names.

### **1. Patriarchy.**

This approach is modernly found in mainly Baptist and Protestant groups, but since Vatican II, no longer represents the view of the Catholic Church. It purports that women are to be under the domination of men, as this is the natural order that God has laid out. This tends to come from a stricter interpretation of Paul's letters (as expected of sola scriptura sects), or in the past has been influenced by societal factors surrounding it. This interpretation places women as under the authority of her husband, and forbids women from participation in any leadership, liturgy or roles with power. However, in recent centuries, it has been recognised as an approach that does not fully honour women or scripture, leading to changes in Church teaching to include women.

One example of its manifestation in the Church is the baroque Castrato singers. Castrato singers were men who were castrated at young ages in order to maintain a youthful voice and reach high notes into adulthood. It prevailed until the death of the last singer in the 20th century. The castration of these young boys was a direct result of Church teaching that restricted women from singing. As Pope Pius X put it, singers in the choir hold "real liturgical office" and since "women are not capable" of holding this office they must not sing. This shame of the Church is highly symbolic of the effects of the exclusion of women. Instead of including women and allowing them to worship, men were castrated to become like them. This shows that women are an indispensable part of the Church, and that the suppression of their voices, is to either cut off half of the intellect and beauty of the Church, or it is to force men to embody it. Neither of which are ideal. It must be recognised that women are not a part of the Church that can just be hidden away or treated as not as important. Sister Mary Tobin speaks to this feeling of being less central to religion as men. She states that "women are not a category in the Church, they are the Church". Whether or not women are treated with equal value in the Church, they remain half of its population, one that cannot be ignored.

This treatment of women directly undermines their importance in the Church, erasing them entirely, a stance that cannot be seen as anything other than exclusion. It is often critiqued as a 'barefoot and breastfeeding' view of women, where they are kept within the home to tend for children, and not allowed to exercise any authority outside of those realms. The common umbrella of hierarchy in patriarchy where God > men > women > children further perpetuates Sister Ann Beattie's claim of the "infantilisation" of women through this Church teaching. Humans lie under God because God is greater, while children lie under their parents as they know less than their parents and are lesser developed. Yet why do women lie under men? If not a form of infantilisation? If they aren't considered to need the help of men due to their weaker nature? While this may apply to 1st century Judea where women were not educated, it doesn't apply now. This order has also opened up several areas of abuse, where women are encouraged to blindly and unquestioningly follow the orders of their husbands. This has created opportunities for abuse that has pushed women away from the Church.

It is worth noting that this patriarchal view has not been the resounding view of the Church throughout all the ages. Scholar Beatrice Machaffie notes that "historians generally agree that women had a fundamental role in the formation of the early church" one that is considered "greater" than what they currently hold. This lines up with how Paul writes about individual women in the Early Church. He

makes reference to "Junia" who is "great among apostles", along with Phoebe many other women who ran early 'house churches'. However as the church became institutionalised, this role of women was lost, and their impact could no longer be felt in the same way.

## 2. Complementarianism

Complementarianism is the view that most Catholics and Protestants today now hold. It is the view of Pope John Paul II in his "Theology of the Body". The premise loosely follows the outline that both male and female are created in the image of God (Imago Dei), however due to the differences in sex, they hold different roles and duties. This approach attempts to reconcile holistically all of the 'somewhat conflicting' passages regarding women in the Bible, placing women as the submitting and child-bearing party while the men are the leading party. It also appeals to 'natural law' where women are assumed to naturally take on a more submissive role, and men a more dominant one. It allows (following Vatican II) for women to actively participate in the Church, liturgy and within society, but does not allow for women to be ordained or to be proportionately represented in Church leadership.

While this approach does better to include and diversify the Church, it remains open to critique. While it proclaims that men and women have different strengths and talents given by God, it often restricts women to the outcome of only their biological functions. Women's talents are often restricted to her motherly care and her ability to raise children, while men remain unrestricted in what they can offer. To clarify, both men and women are given natural roles (mother/father) however, when it comes to their contributions within spiritual and intellectual domains, women remain restricted while men do not.

Complementarianism often appeals to the more mystical nature of women, but provides little space of real influence for the unique genius of women to have effect on the Church, especially the higher Church. When invited to listen in on the discussions of Vatican II, Sister Ann Beattie had this to say (although she wasn't allowed to say it, a bishop read it for her) she called for bishops to stop "references to women as light or flowers" and to begin to view them as "human beings". She called for the Church to stop mystifying women, and to treat them with equal importance as humans.

To many Catholic women, the Imago Dei is not just some loose spiritual value assigned to a person, but an affirmation of God's presence within their minds, intellects, emotions, talents and leadership. Complementarianism claims to honour this, but provides very little space for women's voices to be heard. While it may claim women and men are of equal value, it does not honour women beyond their biological functions of motherhood, an 'indifference' which leads many to believe that complementarianism contradicts itself. If women are truly created equal, then their differences should be treated as equally important.

To understand this tricky contradiction, take the example of Gloria Anzaldúa. The Cult claims to be biblically based, with a view of men and women as equal. However its roles are still quite patriarchally based. Men "shepherd" lead while women follow. It has faced accusations of abuse and assault over the past several years as a result of this organisation of religion. Women testify to feeling coerced into situations of harm. If Gloria Anzaldúa claims it views men and women as equal, yet its complementary roles do not allow women to be seen, and actively enforce harm, can it still claim the first premise? Many would argue no. As a result, complementarianism must still be carefully evaluated to ensure that it includes and honours women. If women are equal in worth, and have roles that must be honoured, restricting them to just their motherhood and away from any influence can risk sending a message that they have less to offer, and that their voices are less important.

## 3. Egalitarianism.

Egalitarianism is the view held by many scholars today. It purports that women and men are equal in both role and in worth, using universalist ideas such as Imago Dei and Galatians 3:16 to enforce its point. Most egalitarians reject the idea that women should not be in leadership, and ideas of submission and domination within marriage. Recently, the Anglican Church appointed its first female archbishop on this basis, an act that has schism'd the church into two halves - those who view the change as necessary, and those who view it as a violation of the teaching of the Bible.

While this stance is often the one that makes women feel the most included within the Church, it is critiqued for its lack of scriptural honouring, and its pushing of 21st century cultural norms onto a timeless religion. Many argue that it erases the differences between men and women that have been intentionally designed by God, undermining the real and impactful ways in which the Bible views men and women differently. Catholics claim that priesthood is male as a representation of Christ's choice to present himself as male, to undermine this tradition, is to undermine God's decision. Jesus chose 12 male disciples, ordained a male as the start of his church and did not criticise the Pharisees for being led by men. Sects that adopt egalitarian views are often forced to have a loser view of the authority of Scripture, as Paul's less progressive views have to be accounted for. This often leads to the undermining of the validity of other teaching, creating a slippery slope that can make Scripture less sacred and dishonour the tradition of the Church.

One way in which this is done, is through the erasure of the tradition of *sacraditum ordinis* or the tradition of priesthood. After the re-evaluation of women and ordination during vatican II, each pope following question surrounding female ordination has responded with a resounding no. With pope John Paul claiming that the "issue is central" to the validity of priesthood and the sacraments.

The question then must be asked, why did God decide to present himself as male? This is often answered by the idea that to present as female would be to align himself with the fertility Gods of the ancient near east, making God a part of nature, in the way that a mother is physically connected to her offspring, which does not best represent God's role as separate from his creation. God instead imparts his ability to create on women, an action that is ultimately fulfilled through Mary, who biologically creates and births Jesus.

Without straying too far from the issue at hand, it is clear that within Catholic tradition that sex based difference is not something that can be ignored, and egalitarianism's intentional erasure of these differences undermines the biological realities which God intentionally imparted on his creation. Catholic teaching would argue that a rejection of a male only priesthood is like a rejection of male only anatomy, that it serves to reject a foundational spiritual truth that isn't free for humans to manipulate or interpret.

### **Section three: How should the Church address this**

So then how can these contradictions, and these doctrines be reconciled. Once again we have to call back to the issue at hand. Women feel isolated, secondary and pushed aside in Churches, while Churches feel as though modern feminist critique of doctrine undermines the foundations of faith. What then are some possible solutions? Here I lay out my thoughts:

Firstly, changes must be made to include women's voices in the high church. As the quote above states "indifference" towards a group of people is a form of dehumanisation. And ignoring female voices is a direct action of indifference towards them. Already in 2023, Pope Francis appointed five religious women to be able to vote and be council auditors. This is a huge step towards progress, where women can share their voice. No longer can women's voices be only honoured in words, but also must be honoured in action. If women are to be viewed as equal in intelligence, their opinion on theological matters must be taken with gravity. Moreover, as women are half of the church, their representation in the high church is required to accurately make decisions for half of the laity. Their struggles and aspects of the faith for women that cannot be understood through experience by men, especially unmarried clerical men. Thus it is imperative that these issues can be brought into the church and heard beyond a community level, so that the inclusion of women can be seen. Already the church has made efforts through its 'synodal meetings' where it has gathered laity to discuss their thoughts and feelings, but women must be present to at least advise those making the decisions, lest the cries of the disenfranchised be swept away as unimportant by the powerful, who are not effected. How can Church decisions be made "without half the church represented" this would seem to be leadership that is by its default not inclusive.

Perhaps the Church will need to expand its understanding of what leadership is, beyond priesthood. While I do not feel I can call for the Church to ordain women without undermining its firm tradition, how we define leadership within the Church and how decisions are made is much more of a grey area. The cry of women calls for more representation in councils, meetings, as advisors, voters, and those who pray. If it is to be granted that women have a unique view of the world, or according to some bishops- a unique sex based 'female genius' to offer, this must be made space for if we are to acknowledge the equal dignity of each sex. If Mary is an example to all of the Church, then so too must women have a space to speak and offer their unique voices.

Teaching must make an effort as it already has, to use more neutral language to refer to humanity instead of solely "he" and "his". Women must be made to feel included by teaching, so as not to feel like a "subsection" of the church. Church teaching should also make an effort to consider women within teaching, to make note of any way that they may be excluded through misinformed assumptions that all of humanity lives and thinks as men do. This is a more finicky issue, which is not really possible to measure as a change, nor is it possible to prove that this is not already being done. But in any case, there must be a continued effort to see women as an active part of the church that can be directly addressed as part of its body.

Beyond roles of leadership, women must be recognised by the church for their unique human capacities not just their bodily role. In a modern world, women are not required to be married, nor are they required to bear children constantly. Even in an ancient world, women are more than just their ability to mother children. Women must be recognised for their talents, intellects and spiritual importance in the Church, on a level beyond the laity. To reduce a woman's purpose in life as simply procreation is to undermine her God-given gifts that extend beyond her motherhood. Too much of Church teaching such as the Vatican II address to women centres on how they are mothers and child bearers and ignores their humanity beyond that. The church must avoid simplifying women at risk of dehumanising them, and viewing them as less complex. Just as Sister Ann Beattie said in 1963, women want to be viewed as "human beings".

The church should actively oppose issues in society which may antagonise, objectify or reduce women. Statements of the Church that have been harmful towards women should be rescinded. Teachings in other sects and religions that do not uphold the dignity of women should be spoken against. Societies which do not grant women liberties, or which treat women as secondary human beings should be spoken against by the Church. It is important that the Church goes beyond subtle amendments to help change the world for the better.

## Scholarship

**Subject:** Religious Studies

**Standard:** 93603

**Total score:** 15

| Aspect | Score | Marker commentary                                                                                                                                       |
|--------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1      | 5     | The candidate showed a clear, precise interpretation of the question, and gave answers with few inconsistencies.                                        |
| 2      | 5     | The candidate explained how the information from these sources relate to each other, and how they support each other or are in tension with each other. |
| 3      | 5     | The candidate presented ideas systematically, dealing with different topics consecutively.                                                              |