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Introduction

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Question 3

3* Assess the view that Mary Daly’s theology proves that Christianity is sexist.

Exemplar 1

AO1 Level 6, 16 marks  AO2 Level 6, 22 marks  Total 38 marks

Mary Daly considered herself as a radical lesbian feminist, her views regarding sexism in Christianity were objective in the sense that she believed that Christianity was fundamentally sexist and therefore she claimed, unlike Rieger, that a reformation to accommodate women is impossible. Daly’s convincing view is that prevailing themes of sexism and oppression of women in the Bible and in Christian life, rightly praise that Christianity is sexist.

An extremely credible and convincing view which Daly held is that “if God is male, then male is God”. This would infer that because Christianity use male pronouns in reference to God, such as ‘father’ and ‘him’, human males are put on a pedestal and seen as greater than women. Daly’s view is reinforced by many of the ‘Fathers’ of Christianity whom hold sexist beliefs; for example Augustine claimed that ‘Eve and females are not made in God’s image’. Daly viewed this as further confirmation that due to sexism being so fundamentally injected into Christian thought, women will be viewed as inferior to males who wrongly believe that only they are made in the image of God. However, Simon Chan unconvincingly argues against Daly stating that male language in reference to God such as ‘The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’ refer more to a symbol of unity rather than an expression.
Exemplar Candidate Work

A Level Religious Studies

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... oppression. Although Chen's argument is valid as perhaps male pronouns were only used to symbolise a liberator and messiah as Beutler claimed, many biblical extracts such as 'A woman should be subject to her husband' (Matthew) support Daly's view that because God is male, all women and wives will always be seen as subordinate to husbands and men, therefore Daly's view of patriarchy throughout the Bible proves that Christianity is sexist.

Many feminists including Daly convincingly argue that the idea concept of motherhood, which is strongly promoted by Christianity, is repressive and restrictive. Daly claims that motherhood is a tool for husbands to oppress their wives, disallowing them from leaving them and living their own lives. Daphne Hampson supports this theory and argues that motherhood forces women to 'crush their personalities and tend to others'. This can be seen as convincing because motherhood does mean that women must halt their social lives and jobs to tend for their child while men get no negative impact. Therefore it is strongly arguable that rather than because Christianity promotes motherhood, believing it is a woman's purpose then it is oppression and sexism. However, Pope John Paul II responds to claims that Christianity is sexist. Through a letter called 'Mulieris Dignitatem' (On the Dignity of Women), to he claims through it, that women have special virtues and elements which make them innate mothers. He also argues that just because men and women have different roles doesn't mean women are inferior. This view has the potential to be convincing, however in a modern society women should not be made to feel as though their purpose is motherhood as the Mulieris Dignitatem states. Furthermore, the idea that a
Woman’s purpose is motherhood, widens men’s vision to have children who are infertile or have no way or means to have children. Therefore, as Daly rightly argues, motherhood is a restriction and gain oppression for women and Christianity enforces on it makes it a sexist religion.

Daly’s view on patriarchy and religion could be summed up by what she called ‘The Unholy Trinity’ rape, genocide and war. She rightly claimed that ‘even the incarnation of Jesus through the virgin Mary promoted rape as Jesus was born through non-consensual means; this supports the idea that sexism and oppression is women through motherhood is prevailing in Christianity but also suggests that women are but a means to an end for male greatness. The Misericordia Dignitum advocates that it is only through a woman that Jesus was born, attempting to signify the importance of women but Daly would rightly argue that the birth of Jesus actually exemplifies the condoning of rape in Christianity. Furthermore, Daly speaks of genocide and war as being extensions white stem from patriarchal Christian belief. She used an extreme comparison of the Nazi party and the Catholic church to signify this. She said ‘both nazis and catholics focus on femeness and view difference as ‘other’, illustrating men’s outlooks on women when they are in power. Although Daly has been criticized for this view as she is suggesting that Jesus is responsible for their own genocide, the superficial reasoning movement did argue that anti-Semitism played a role in the Holocaust and hence Daly’s view is not entirely invalid. So, although critics have argued that the view of the ‘Unholy Trinity’ is extreme, it is not entirely so as and Daly is correct in interpreting the idea of Jesus’ incarnation as a means to oppress women through
Examiner commentary

The opening paragraph works very well as an introduction. The argument is set up clearly and acknowledges the need to look at Daly and at sexism within Christianity. Unsurprisingly, Ruether was the most common contrasting view explored this year as it is certainly always possible to do well simply from the material on the specification, learnt well and engaged with in detail.

The first main paragraph considers Daly’s argument that if God is male then the male is God and evaluates the validity of the claim. This is presented skilfully because the candidate does not try to bite off too much of the apple to chew but spends time on one point, analysing it in detail. By the end of the paragraph, one feels that the candidate has fully engaged with the issue of motherhood and has fairly reached a conclusion which is then related directly to the question set.

The next paragraph looks at the Unholy Trinity, which is well understood and not explained in over-zealous detail as in other essays seen this year. The candidate convincingly captures the scholarship around this issue.

At AO1, the depth of the material selected contrasts with other excellent essays that show breadth, but this is excellent in a different way. The application of the material on motherhood (technically from a slightly different part of the specification, which does not matter, of course) is well-judged. There is no reason not to award all the marks in Level 6.

At AO2, the style and approach of the candidate immediately sets the examiner’s mind in Level 6. The essay is authoritative, scholarly and holistic. However, the candidate misses opportunities in place really to develop the points put forward and the conclusion is rather abrupt, so the mark sits at the bottom of the level.

Exemplar 2  
AO1 Level 5, 11 marks  AO2 Level 4, 16 marks  Total 27 marks
rather effectively. This is because she uses the unholy trinity of war, genocide, and rape to suggest that female oppression is the result of cultural and religious influences. The unholy trinity contributes to female oppression because war leads to military, and military leads to oppression of the people and men feeling empowered thus using women. However, Daly’s view of view could be considered rather extreme as many other things may contribute to oppression. It is also unfair to assume that because many wars outbreack from religious beliefs and turbulences that the whole of Christianity should be blamed. Elaine Pagels partly supports Daly as she recognises the misogyny within Christianity but also recognises that Christianity isn’t fully misogynistic as Daly suggests. This is because figures such as the Virgin Mary are highly valued and given the utmost respect which could instead imply that Christianity is not as sexist as Daly perceives it to be. However, just because some women are worshipped within the Bible, it doesn’t mean sexism is not prevalent within Christianity. Daly suggests that Christianity and the Bible were created by males and thus made women inferior to man. The Muleris Dignitatem carries a sexist theme in which motherhood is seen to be the female potential and sole
purpose. This suggests that Daly is fair to consider Christianity as sexist as multiple sources prove her point.

Furthermore, Mary K. Daly’s theology proves that Christianity is sexist. This is because the Bible is written in male terms. Daly suggests that the maleness of God, specifically in the Bible, must be castrated. The maleness of God implies that because God is a man, males are closer to God and more superior. Daly proposed that Therefore, language in the Bible should change.

However, Daly fails to recognise that just because God is a male, females can also be more valued. This is because men are usually similiar to God, whereas women can possess God’s positive qualities more effectively than sharing the same gender. Many Daly’s view could be considered unrealistic as the “castrating God” and removing his maleness would be unlikely to hinder any of the sexist teachings that may be in the Bible. God would still be God so if God was a female, would this create hatred between women? Ruethe also shares Daly’s view in that Christianity should remove the maleness of God. However, she instead suggests maleness should be removed as God is genderless, nor man nor woman. This seems fair as it would lessen inequalities between
the sexes if God is part of everyone rather than just males. This view is similar to Judith Baxter who suggests gender is fluid but Christianity made gender binary. To oppose this, Simon Gain suggests that Christianity should resist the temptation to attach moral language for God. He suggests that moral language for God doesn’t mean anything and creates no moral qualities for God.

Alternatively, some consider that Mary Daly’s view of Christianity being sexist is false. Haman Nualge states that Christianity and feminism are compatible but Christianity needs to embrace feminism. This suggests that if Christianity is not purposely sexist but needs to learn how to meet the needs of equality. This view seems odd as if Christianity was truly sexist, it wouldn’t need to change as it would feature equality in the first place. Daphne Hampson instead suggests that Christianity and feminism are not compatible, thus agreeing with Daly. Christianity is misogynistic and doesn’t allow room for equality between the sexes.

Overall, Mary Daly’s theology is good at proving Christianity is sexist. This is because her extreme examples outline the prejudice and oppression
Examiner commentary

The introduction serves as a summary of Daly’s thought, rather than a summary of the argument in the essay. However, the second paragraph starts with an argument, which is promising. There is knowledge of the Unholy Trinity and this is not over-done with the candidate understanding that its point is to talk about female oppression (though perhaps missing an opportunity to explore the characteristics of the male). The discussion within this paragraph is characterised by short sentences which develop the argument but move on rather quickly and it perhaps covers too much ground, leaving analysis in its wake in places.

In the next main paragraph, the idea of God needing to be castrated is explored. Some examples might have developed the point further and the offered analysis is simplistic in places. However, the discussion shows a good writing framework behind the structure.

There is an underdeveloped paragraph before the conclusion, which provides a useful slant but is, again, underdeveloped. The conclusion is a statement, rather than the conclusion of an argument.

At AO1, the essay shows good knowledge and understanding. There is well-deployed material, used appropriately and the level of accuracy is good. There is reasonable breadth (bullet point 3, Level 4). In this particular session, the essay was judged to fulfil all of the requirements of Level 4 and it edged into Level 5 for its breadth.

At AO2, the analysis shows success for the most part (‘generally’ – bullet point 2 of Level 4) and the development and justification is certainly closer to ‘some’ (Level 4), rather than ‘coherently’ (Level 5). The essay sits securely in Level 4 for this AO, in this case gaining all 16 marks.
Question 4

‘Secularism does not pose a threat to Christianity.’ Discuss.

Exemplar 1

AO1 Level 6, 16 marks  AO2 Level 6, 24 marks

Total 40 marks

Secularism is an ever-growing trend in 21st century Western society and has been increasing since
the era of rationalism and scientific reasoning through his belief in secular positivism—civilised societies move from
an infantile theological view of the world... to a metaphysical one and finally to a scientific, rational one. This essay
will be exploring key proponents of secularism and, ultimately, be arguing
that it does not pose a large threat to
Christianity but a little threat due to
the Church’s decline in society compared
to its major role in the preceding centuries.

Secularism poses a healthy challenge
to Christianity and too atheism has
existed throughout history. Yet
Christianity has remained a key
religion.

Dawkins is a programmatic secularist
and so does not think Christianity
should play any role in the world. He
argues Christianity is both irrational
and a form of child abuse. Irrational
because evolution has disproved
creationism and a form of child abuse
as children from a young age are
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<th>Exemplar Candidate Work</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Being given the opportunity to choose what they believe. He also cites Hell Houses in the USA which terrify children into thinking they will go to hell if they sin.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Whilst Dawkins' views do hold some ground, I do not think persecution poses too much of a threat to Christianity as regards how few horror stories about hell between and other violent examples, many find comfort in the examples of love and peace shown throughout Jesus Christ. and McGrath has pointed out that the complexity of the universe points to an intelligent designer, and would NNTA highlight the difficulty/possibility of using the rational and scientific evidence when postulating the existence/non-existence of God. In this way, whilst Dawkins most definitely does pose a great challenge to Christianity, many of the major arguments can be refuted meaning Christianity holds its place in society due to such ambiguity.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Furthermore, Taylor has argued that</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>People have not just suddenly realized God does not exist but that Western society is out of sync with the rest of history so it is merely a case of returning to religion which can offer a much more fulfilling life. In a similar vein,</td>
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Noel has criticised Freud by arguing that he is far too reductionist. He does not focus on the many spiritual experiences people have had, instead only focuses on material matter; his argument that religion is a psychological neurosis does not disprove people's true claims. In this way, I do not think secularism can ever pose a threat to Christianity as people experience inexplicable spiritual religious experiences. Every day which secularism cannot disprove:

What is more, I think procedural secularism poses the least threat to Christianity as it gives no special status to any values in society. If anything, retaining a moderate form of secularism in society actually serves to prevent religious extremism and fundamentalism - both a totally secular society and a theocracy are both anti-democratic.

4 4 as a limited amount of values are being represented. what from an overly secular society, Christian or religious, one can create extremism. Indeed, Eagleton argued 9/11 was borne out of hatred but fear of secularism. So, whilst secularism may ostensibly seem to undermine Christianity, it can also keep in check religious fanatics and fundamentalists. And, a society that represents many viewpoints is both more democratic, more diverse and healthy.
Examiner commentary

The essay begins with a clear statement of the issue with secularism, followed by an equally-clear statement of the candidate’s line of argument.

The first key point is an exploration of Dawkins. The candidate understands that the AO1 marks can be picked up through saying ‘just enough’ rather than over-developing points and this is illustrated well in the section introducing Dawkins. The next paragraph then gives a clear rejection of Dawkins, while acknowledging that Dawkins has challenged Christianity.

The candidate goes on to explore the idea of Taylor’s view that our society has not just discovered that God exists, which is a lovely point, and which is explored and developed through the idea of Ward criticising Freud. The candidate demonstrates control of the material through their choice not to explore Freud in too much detail, in contrast to some lower ability essays seen this year, which gave very long accounts of different aspects of Freud’s thought.

The next paragraph provides good balance in the way that it makes the point that Christianity does well to be slightly threatened by
Examiner commentary continued

Secularism in that secularism moderate send possibility of extremism.

As the essay moves towards the conclusion it shows that it is possible to gain very high marks indeed using simply the material that has come from textbooks. By the end of the essay the candidate has not explored every possible aspect of the topic that has answered question clearly and coherently for the whole essay following their line of argument.

At AO1, it fulfils the bullet points quite clearly. The skill shown in the selection of material is a valid interpretation of the idea of a nuanced approach as in the third bullet point at AO1. At AO2, the candidate's argument is clearly a coherent evaluation of arguments for and against secularism throughout the essay and so, the candidate has clearly achieved all the marks in Level 6.

Exemplar 2

AO1 Level 5, 13 marks  AO2 Level 5, 20 marks  Total 33 marks

<table>
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<th>04</th>
<th>Secularism is the belief that all religious beliefs should not play a part in state affairs. Many people argue that secularism should not dictate our society’s norms. However, some argue for religion to play a role in society.</th>
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<td></td>
<td>On one hand secularism does pose a threat to society, as it calls for evil Christians to be removed from places where it could adversely affect the masses; for instance, in England religion played a huge part in establishing government, the Queen is still head of the Church of England, and the Bishop of London.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Church of England is still a major force in society, and a removal of these bishops would mean that the views of Christians would not be taken into consideration. New decisions are made. Another aspect is which Christianity is threatened, it might be religious schools. Some argue that religious schools are damaging to young children as it isolates them from normal thought, but argue that this is a forming child, and help their development. In addition, to this many argue that religious schools could have a bane or hinder the education of...</td>
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Children due to their belief. This would be bad for fundamentalist groups who teach things like the Bible should be taken literally. The removal of these institutions and their values could pose a huge threat to Christianity as it removes their influence and reach. Some may argue that the main role of Christianity is to try to reach as many people possible and spread the word of God. By removing Christian aspects from places of influence, it could be argued that this would severely limit the outreach of Christianity and could result in fewer believing in the religion.

Secularism poses a threat because it limits the reach of Christianity and at the same time undermines its authority.

However, some may argue that secularism poses a threat to some things but Christianity as a religion would remain relatively fine. Secularism does not call for the complete abolition of religion in the majority of cases, instead, it calls for the separation of religion from the state of the State & So in this sense, Christianity would remain intact. It would just have less of a role in State affairs. For instance, America and India have secular societies yet religious followers, Christianity especially in America, Christians also argue that things like faith schools would prove we threat to secularism as faith schools are a minority and a minority less than one third of faith schools exist in the UK so people aren't being forced to attend. Faith schools areas are considered by some Christians to have a better outcome and diverting them regular schools. Overall, Christianity would not be too negatively affected by secularism. The religion itself would still exist and the rush to join it or not, the religion itself would still
exist in society and so the US shows could potentially flourish under a secular state.

Darwinism and Freud however could argue that religion should be totally removed from all major aspects of state and society. Darwinism
was especially central of religious thinking that belief in God was ‘infantile and the “belief that somebody “gave your life a purpose” is absurd.’ He further claimed that religion is actually abusive and indoctrinates a child into an limited way of thinking and deletes them the concept of discovery. He also is critical as it states that religion is the cause of most conflicts throughout history and continuing religious wars for senseless discovery to be thwarted due to conflicting views. However, he does not acknowledge the positive that religion brings in the sense that it brings relief and comfort to those who believe in. Freud also believed religion to be a human creation; a result of the religious complexes between men and their future and create a fictional father figure (God) to make up for the guilt they bear for creating their father. Freud then claimed religion was reach fulfillment and a society where religion was not seen would benefit humanity more as it requires less suffering.

Theaorists such as Darwinism and Freud do imply that Secularism posed a threat to Christianity as it seems to remove all influence it had over the general public. Darwinism is especially critical as it is in the form of abuse where children are forced into religion through schools.

In conclusion Secularism does not pose a threat to Christianity in itself. Christianity as a religion has many good aspects and will continue as a religion if the state becomes more secular. Secularism however does limit the search and
Examiner commentary

The introduction explores the idea of secularism accurately, although perhaps without the focus on the question that one might expect because of the lack of exploration of the idea of ‘threat’.

The first main paragraph does, however, engage directly with the question. The point of the paragraph is stated in that it explores the possibility that secularism requires the removal of Christian institutions, which is certainly one possible interpretation of secularism. There is clear statement of which aspects of English establishment have direct links to Christianity, showing accurate AO1 and development in the realisation that removal of the bishops would mean that Christian views would not be taken into consideration in the House of Lords. The point is further explored, perhaps slightly tangentially, in the exploration of schools being damaging to young children, with support from this view from Dawkins, though this is not developed. This point is developed to explore the nature of ‘fundamentalist schools’ and the reason for raising this issue is explained in the clarification that some Christians might feel it necessary to reach as many people as possible and so removing Christianity from institutions might therefore impact negatively on Christianity. There is a return to the question at the end of the paragraph. Thus, the paragraph contains two points about Christianity being threatened by secularism, although these are juxtaposed and perhaps not fully evaluated themselves.

The essay moves on to another main paragraph, which explores the question from a different perspective. It acknowledges that there are different views or definitions of secularism and suggests that the religion would remain ‘relatively fine’. The examples of America and France are cited and the essay then explores the idea of choice.

The next paragraph looks at the two scholars named on the specification and explores the views of Dawkins and Freud in developed detail. It states these views accurately and explores how they contribute to a response to the question.

The essay then concludes by stating that Christianity is not threatened by secularism because it withstands well the challenges posed.

At AO1, the essay gains 13 marks. It focuses precisely on the question and presents a very good selection of material. The material has decent breadth and depth although it does not explore the topic in the multi-layered approach that would move it into the top level. It wouldn’t be necessary for there to be any other scholars mentioned because the relevant parts of the specification can always bring a candidate to full marks but it might be useful to see more engagement with the thinking of Freud and Dawkins.

At AO2, the essay certainly ‘ticks the boxes’ for Level 4. It is rather AO1-heavy: the candidate is able to select appropriate information very well (AO1) and develops this information into analysis on several occasions through the essay. There is the start of a line of argument that is visible through the essay, which is ‘mostly successful’ (Level 5, first bullet point).
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