

“Women In Abrahamic Religions”

To start off, I believe that any event that is as important to cultural understanding as this was, should be congratulated and appreciated to the extent it deserves. So on behalf of those that were able to get to the college to watch this great insight into Abrahamic studies in relation to women I dearly thank you Professor Ko on giving us this great event.

It only makes sense to begin chronologically. Judaism has often been a fascination with me. You see on the news the Hasidic community breaking the mold of what is usually culturally acceptable from time to time with the strict natures of their communities, but you rarely see the reforming church and how they interact with the community. In fact most of American's would categorize Jewish parishioners with the common categorical definitions of payot's, yarmulke's, tichel's etc... In fact most American's are ignorant to what any certain religion is outside of Christianity to an almost zealot face but this conference was designed to introduce us, and women in general to disregard the set of confines that our culture tries to hold us morally obligatory to and break into intelligence.

I have to be honest with you however, the first speaker dealing with Judaism wasn't the greatest. She was haphazard in her directions and often skipped around the years until she finally settled into a groove. Once a pattern of the ages was established and cultural references were established on women who the Jewish faith adhered to, the lecture became less frazzled and much more put together. When she was going through the classic names in the Bible and the traditional roles of women, a lot of them clicked for many of us. Whether you're dealing with Mary to Zelophehad's

Daughter's most of the names were recognizable to those of us Christians who at one time branched out of catechism to actually look at other religions enough to understand what was going on around us. However, upon the drop of names such as Regina Jonas and her struggles up until her death in Auschwitz it gave us a different view of women struggling for their own voice in a clearly male dominated religion. From the austerity of such a male dominated religion it took over 2,000 years for women to find their own voice and bring to light their own designs to bring faith to the people. This is nothing new, but the way that paved their path was arduous at best and vastly against them in a world where women were culturally limited and designed to "protect *men's* purity" they finally found their own voice.

In all truthfulness I really regret that this semester was so short. I had planned to make it down to Temple B'Nai (and I still will) but I've been plagued with zero time with my kids and work schedules ramping up for spring. It is still something I'd like to experience, especially since my faith is nonexistent at the moment but this conference gave me a chance to take a very small peek into a religion that holds many important historical nods in our country and current political affairs it is only right to deem it with respect. Rabbi Werber had a tough go of being the first speaker but she pulled it out with admirable efforts and great conveyance of facts.

Pastor Carson was a very refreshing speaker. She brought an attention span back to the lectures and brought a direct point she drove towards over the more erratic speaker before her. She wasn't focused so much on the past like Rabbi Werber was, but instead focused on where the church has headed in the last 30 years and what happened outside of the scope of the Bible.

Carson was very involved with bringing a tame light towards women's struggles within the Christian religion by bringing us to familiar names that we wouldn't commonly associate with Christianity but rather slavery and the underground railroad. Bringing the plights of Harriet Tubman,

Sojourner Truth and others around that time-period she shed light on a group of women who indeed brought religious freedoms to a great many and were able to spread their beliefs along to the freed slaves as well as fighting their own battles to stay alive.

Her lecture ended on the notes not of Catholicism, but of Protestantism in general and how much more advanced the feminist movement had taken hold within their church rather the Catholics. Since the 1850's, when Reverend Antoinette Brown graduated from Oberlin College and soon became the first woman Reverend in Protestantism, the feminist movement slowly gained traction and even now we have many reverends along with 3 female Bishop's!

The unfortunate bit about the lecture by a Christian is I felt what possibly many had felt, that the material used here was common info that we'd heard regurgitated through the press over the last decade. While I might be a tad more in touch with politics and religion than the common man, the lesson's brought to light were more a reminder than an unveiling and the message is sometimes construed haphazardly by someone without the design to hear something new rather than the same material they've heard most their lives. In truth she brought a tone to the lecture that was both surprising and clear and was the perfect speaker to bridge the gap into the grand finale.

I've often thought of Islam as a religion I'd want nothing to do with. In fact, it's more because the cultures who follow it abuse it's design so much that the prose and language is sometimes lost within the hatred and anger of indignant beings. Alas, like many American's I've put it out of sight and out of mind when we have to stay utterly focused on it, as it's one of the fastest growing religions in the world, not just the United States.

Doctor Shearson, I believe she is a doctorate recipient from the amount of schooling she mentioned, but honestly I cannot remember, for I sat stunned that a woman with this much education sat before us, humble in her views and was willing to bring her views to a group of people such as we!

Anyways, back to topic, Doctor Shearson was a drink of cool water, as she brought tone, functionality, understanding and possibly even a soothing calm towards a religion and message that I think many were intrigued by within the room and many also harbored ill will. She didn't hit on any tenet that wasn't well known, but instead tried to dispel some of the animosity that exists towards Muslims today, and shed light on a subject that most in that room didn't understand.

She didn't focus on the past, or on individuals for the most part, but instead rather, focused on dispelling the stereotypes of Islamophobia. She highlighted that the Middle Eastern countries weren't the dominant purveyors of the religion, and that there were many, many more around us than we could think (150,000 in Ohio alone). She brought an entertaining way of delivering a well informed message, that she was even able to incorporate a few jokes within the lecture to bring levity to the situation at hand.

Honestly the information she provided was intense. It took me a day to absorb it all and I was utterly fascinated by both her arguments and her nature towards schooling us in those arguments. I much would have rather had a three hour long lecture from her on Islam than the other religions, but she brought a nice rounded argument to finish out the balance of Abrahamic religions.

Unfortunately this is a few days late. Last week Monday I tore my rotator cuff playing with my son. Such a funny way to something so, heinous and painful, but it happened none-the-less. On getting diagnosed and undergoing a cortisone shot on Thursday, I fell into what the doctor referred to as a pain coma of sorts, in that the pain of the shoulder caused me to experience an intractable migraine. This was explained to me as a headache that refused to go away more or less. I was unable to meet my deadline as I was in the hospital up through Saturday and I was able to return to school today. If you'd like the doctor's note, I am happy to provide you with a scan or an in-person deliverance of it.

Thankfully the episode is behind me that I can get a surgery diagnosis but I wanted to make sure this was turned in immediately for you. Thank you so much for giving us the chance to experience the wonderful lecture of all three women, it was really incredible.