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QUALIFY FOR THE FUTURE WORLD
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Scholarship 2021 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.

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

Question	Score
Analysis and critical thinking	
Integration, synthesis, understanding	
Development, precision, clarity	
TOTAL	

ASSESSOR'S USE ONLY

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

INSTRUCTIONS

Write an essay about religious diversity 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

"Bless our beautiful land, O Lord, with its wonderful variety of people, of races, cultures and languages. May we be a nation of ... peace and unity, of compassion, caring and sharing." (Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

"... [Islam] recognizes all [people] as believers. It accepts all human beings as equal before God, and as equal members in the Human Family of Mankind." (Malcolm X)

There are many passages from the sacred texts and other authoritative sources of the world's religions that can be interpreted to support inter-religious harmony and 'love of your neighbours'. Why then might some groups, both religious and secular, have difficulty finding commonality and harmonious coexistence?

Examine this question in light of the knowledge and insights you have gained from studying religious diversity.

OR: QUESTION TWO

"I truly believe the only way we can create global peace is through not only educating our minds, but our hearts and souls." (Malala Yousafzai)

"It is time to break these habits of hate and create new habits: habits of the heart that will awake within us the causeless love of redemption and peace." (Rabbi Rami Shapiro)

It might be argued that it is both challenging and fulfilling enough for a person to find their own purpose and life direction within their own faith tradition. Is it possible for a person to come to appreciate and live alongside people from other faith traditions without threat or compromise to their own faith?

YES
Examine this question in light of the knowledge and insights you have gained from studying religious diversity.

NO.

because of after
faith freedom

What does that mean?

Is the implication we should find
fulfilment in other faith traditions

PLANNING

~~MYTHIC~~ ETHICAL EXPERIMENTAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONAL MATERIAL and DOCTRINAL.

Quots:

1. George MacDonald "Augustine..."
2. Thomas Merton "Meditation..."
3. Augustine "A christian has a mind through which Christ thinks..."
4. Thomas Aquinas "Dogma & Science"
5. Thomas Aquinas "Placed an appetite for the truth..."
6. Lesslie Newbigin "Word of God creation..."

Is it possible for people to live alongside other faith traditions without threat or compromise to their own faith?

What is religion? \Rightarrow how is this enacted in the real world (evangelism, proclamation of faith) \Rightarrow ABRAHAM KUYPER, Socratic method \Rightarrow real life examples? \Rightarrow why does this occur? \Rightarrow comes BACK to the concept of TRUTH
 \Rightarrow pluralist society vs. inclusivist society vs. exclusivist society \Rightarrow Lesslie Newbigin "let faith out, because in time it will." \Rightarrow one could argue Western society has done this But in very broken form.

T

\hookrightarrow So is it possible? Yes, but not without threat to own faith (Bible passage).

Select (✓) ONE essay question to answer.

Question One

Question Two

2021, at least in Western society, has reached the point where multiculturalism is the norm of the game. Diversity of race, sexuality, philosophy and beliefs is commonplace among major countries and societies around the world. And with that comes a significant challenge, particularly to those who hold fast to beliefs or faiths that leave little room for others. Multiculturalism brings with its many benefits and pros the subsequent clash and conflict when seemingly opposing doctrines enter into the same town. But is this a necessary occurrence? Do exclusivist Christians have to impose or antagonise equally exclusivist Muslims simply because of a religious divide? This essay will explore the outcomes of a religiously diverse community, why it should indeed continue as a way of living, and how for the individual of a particular faith, threat and/or compromise will be inevitable once placed in such an environment.

What is religion? In order to explore such a broad topic outlined above, a concrete understanding of what religion actually is is vital to gain meaningful analysis in the future. Religion is a narrative, put simply. It is a narrative that provides (or at least should provide) meaning and purpose to existence and life. This narrative is and has to be faith-based, and within this there can be found 6 key principles of any religion that give a framework to its underlying purpose. These are the ethical, punitive, social, organizational and material (or artistic) aspects that create a doctrine.

or philosophy, which shapes said religion into what it is. Each of these provide an invaluable function and dimension to the wider narrative in its pursuit for ultimate spiritual truth. The ethics of a religion give it boundaries and focus. The emotive dimension keeps philosophy and doctrine grounded and connected to the individual, the human follower. Likewise the material or artistic aspect of any religion provides a mirror and opportunity for meaningful worship and praise to their own deity, or deities. The social and organisational functions as a way of creating ~~meaningful~~
change and influence to the non-believers among them, again a critical part of any true faith, and finally the doctrine, spiritually inspired is the foundation, the cornerstone for followers to embrace, follow and meditate on. The Gospels, the Vedas, the Quran - all these doctrinal works give the "rulebook" and inspiration for continuing on in their faith journey //

Already we can see then that fulfillment is waiting within these fundamentals of religion for any would-be follower. The potency and yearning for finding truth and doctrine that isn't our own but God-given, and ultimately true, is one that all share within our hearts. As Thomas Aquinas says, "God has placed within us an appetite for discovering ~~truth~~ what is true - but the appetite to devote study and thought to it is lacking." In other words ~~our~~ our drive for finding meaning to our lives is strong, but the ~~area~~ to an ~~an~~ unearth said meaning will, wane over time. Religion as a whole offers a succinct and compelling answer to these struggles. This is where the challenge and fulfillment of one's

own faith tradition is achieved - in the exploration and meditation on one's own doctrine, which as Aquinas rightly says is not an inward inclination, and in the discovery and acceptance of finding meaning and purpose within the wider narrative which sits deep within us. //

The natural progression of this discovery leads to sharing, distributing and evangelising to those around you. All religions hold this to be important, and naturally one who discovers what they hold to be true, and ultimately true would want to share this with those around them who do not yet know this. And in a multicultural, religiously diverse society within moments there is a mess of voices being shared, promoted and started from the street corners, each of them claiming to be and hold the one true narrative that promises true meaning. And if one isn't careful, this melting pot of varying narratives, varying religions will overflow and boil. When one is compelled to believe their narrative is ~~the~~ an ultimate truth, all other narratives should be questioned and challenged so that others will not fall into false idols and doctrines. //

At least, that is one perspective for someone within a faith tradition - and quite a pervasive perspective. However, over time challenges to this radical evangelism have arisen, and instead the promotion of thinking and philosophy regarding religions has taken place. Key thinkers like Abraham Kuyper who argued in essence for a

pluralist society which he claimed was not only possible but (as a Christian) but vital in facilitating a religiously diverse society. His view essentially an affirmation of Mahatma Tagore's quote that we should EDUCATE our hearts and souls. A Socratic way of discussion was promoted where ideas (or in the case faith-based narratives) are put forward, weighed, explored and critiqued and then left for the individual to determine truth. Kuyper's claim of logic from a Christian perspective is that ~~while this~~ ultimate truth in time will out, but that it won't emerge from a monotheistic culture where discussion is disregarded as it may not align with core doctrinal beliefs one's own faith contains. Leslie Newbigin puts it concisely - when the message of God is spread through coercion, then that message becomes corrupted. This is a fundamental truth for any religion, particularly those claiming love and peace as cornerstones of their narrative - faith shouldn't require coercion to emerge as just that - faith. Therefore this should naturally lead to an admission and acceptance of potentially opposing narratives into a discussion, where each is fairly examined.

And, in part, this has been achieved to a certain extent, at least in Western culture. There remains around the world countries and societies where singular narratives remain dominant and powerful enough to exclude others, as is the refusal inclination as was discussed previously. Western society however has seen

in a limited capacity the distribution of narratives and doctrines, and seen them discussed in a Socratic-like environment where it is left for the individual to determine their position. Where this has failed is when fair discussion is ~~left~~ corrupted for individual gain, and we see the emergence of populist agendas where faith-based narratives are taken and used for ~~reaching~~ ^{reaching} ~~populist~~ ^{populist} ends other than given ~~its~~ its purpose. Most often, it can be twisted to gain popular support of a dangerous kind, which often conservates and distorts the original faith into something now rejected by initially impartial onlookers. (American politics in recent years is the prime example.) And this in particular holds much damage for the individual seeking to appreciate and live in alongside other faith traditions, when either their own faith or another's is twisted and corrupted by more powerful forces. All of a sudden they have switched from a society where discussion of ~~very~~ ^{very} truths is now being used for most often malignant gain. This is now commonplace because these religion and faith obviously holds huge importance to many individuals, and if that can be tapped into and seemingly used to garner support or popularity, this particular doctrine is not only associated with clearly manipulative individuals, it is serving its wrong purpose. This is where the Western Society has failed in promoting the vision Kuyper and Newbigin had for their own culture - faith-based narratives remain too unreachable from external forces to be easily discussed and viewed rationally for the undecided.

~~After all, it is because of this, in particular, that the absence~~
~~present of /~~

However, is this very structure in itself a viable way of ensuring that faith-based narratives continue to thrive? After all each claim to be ultimately true and yet ~~therefore~~ be a society that allows the individual to determine what is true is dangerously close to a post-modernist society which is arguably one of the biggest threats to religions as a feature of humanity. //

Post-modernism claims that truth is relative and varies from individual to individual, and that due to an overwhelming presence of biases and life experiences there can't possibly be an ultimate truth to discover and share. This is obviously a threat to the role of evangelism and proclamation of faith to religions as a whole, as now in a post-modernist society their faith is only meaningful to them, and meaningless to everyone else. //

What post-modernism fails to accept is that an embracement of relative truth is not only paradoxical, it holds no sway in allowing meaning and fulfillment to be found, for anyone. It goes back to Aquinas' observation of that inner yearning within all of us, an inner yearning that pushes the individual into something greater than themselves so that they can be participants, not founders of their own relative truth. If, as a society we are left with relative truth, then we are in essence left with nothing. //

Which is yet another challenge the individual has

in concert clay culture. It can be fairly argued now that the initial, pluralistic society gravitated on free discussion but predicated on the assurance that ultimate truth would be found ~~and~~ has morphed into a society where each truth is not only equally valuable, but equally valid. This is an incredibly dangerous scenario for anyone to be thinking in if the concept of ultimate truth is indeed a valid ^{opposite} hypothesis. ~~Abstraction~~ because if so the continual promotion of all narratives is slowly deviating away from "the" singular narrative. ~~Abstraction~~ ~~exists~~ ~~exists~~ In some sense, however, one could acknowledge that this new and undoubtedly radical post-modern culture offers a unique avenue for people of varying ~~religions~~ religions to unite under a common theme, which is, that they would under no circumstances ever admit to all other religions holding an equally valid claim to ultimate truth. There is a new shared commonality amongst Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and others in today's culture. They remain one of the last vestiges in that will not admit to the other being equally valid. John 1 ^{"in the beginning there was THE Word"} "In ~~many~~ ~~their~~ ~~bodies~~ ~~the~~ ~~Word~~ ~~dwelt~~" This can be equally applicable to the ~~or~~ sum up the perspective of all major religions. There may be room for discussion, but no room for the claim on ultimate truth, the ultimate narrative. There is just the one true Word. JK

So where does this leave the individual? Where does this leave the person attempting to "appreciate and live alongside people from other faith traditions?" We've established a

point of commonality, but at the same acknowledged that this singular point of commonality is essentially "one is right, the other is wrong, and it will always be that way." Additionally, today finds those person living on in a community with the other narratives that are compelling, till that voice of yearning Agninos observed and wide-spread across culture. Finally, the Western society of 2021 is arguably one of the most difficult for traditional doctrines to flourish, as they are surrounded by a broader philosophy of relative truth which directly opposes attempts of evangelism and proclamation of faith.

This statement can be broken into 2 parts. The first is simply whether or not people of differing faith traditions can (critically) appreciate the other. The previously mentioned point of shared opinion highlights that this initial (but considerable) hurdle can indeed be passed. There can and should be appreciation of varying faith-based religions as it actively promotes deeper discussion and exploration of their respective narratives. Augustine of Hippo, for example, was one of the most prominent influences of the Christian faith would never have even been compelled to such activity had he not been regularly challenged and called for explanation by a probably pagan culture at the time. So indeed initial appreciation can be reached.

However Part 2 of this statement is where doubt arises.
"... without threat or compromise to their own faith." A religiously diverse community intrinsically brings with it

wider threat to all faith-based narratives, and on occasion the temptation to compromise. Not only is there a plethora of new roles, concepts, doctrines and practises emerging, some of which would be deeply appealing to the individual, it critically establishes within the community a new differing "ultimate" narrative, which has to be reviewed. A religiously diverse community is a natural platform for clash and conflict, and this has been witnessed time and time again.

Within all of this however is one key word "faith". A faith-based tradition and narrative is not beholden to rationalism or even reason. Therefore when an opposing narrative is brought into the same vicinity, the individual's faith, which by extension solidifies all aspect of their religion, should and will hold them to account and keep them grounded to their own narrative. Because religions are a faith commitment, a new ~~narrative~~ narrative that provides meaning and purpose should realistically hold no threat at an individual level for the person. This is shown by the provided quote by Rabbi Rami Shapiro who painted in such philosophically broad strokes, because he is undoubtedly aware of the unique opportunity a faith diverse culture of religions have, an opportunity that sets in motion the "ceaseless love of redemption and peace." By being aware as an individual of the shared beliefs and common ground available to people of varied faith-based narratives, room can grow for Shapiro's explicit desire, the pursuit of peace and love.

There is however a significant obstacle in achieving this optimistic but unlikely goal set out by Shapira. If we take religions back to the 6 key aspects that make up these wider narratives - the ethical, experimental, social, organizational, material, and doctrinal - some of these hold no room for compromise or even to some extent acceptance of other beliefs. For example Jewish old covenant teachings of kosher, and/or clean and unclean holds direct contradictions with Peter's new covenant vision where God commands him to call nothing that he has made unclean. Such a dichotomy that would and has emerged in a ~~multicultural~~ religiously diverse society is a stumbling block towards appreciation, and specifically a threat to the "ethical" and "doctrinal" aspects of the wider Christian / Baha'i / Jewish narratives. In particular, it is a threat for compromise. There is almost a paradox at play here where if we take this specific example there are two options - either an acceptance and appreciation of the other's doctrine which goes a long way in validating it (because appreciation requires some value to be found in it), this leading to a culture where compromise towards the other's belief set is warranted. Or two, a refusal to acknowledge the other's ethical, doctrinal standpoint as being valid and thus zero appreciation for what is a significant part of their religion and by extension themselves as a person. This tension found within clashing aspects of the broader religion is a primary threat to compromise or even a roadblock in ensuring that appreciation for the other person can be reached. //

Another key threat to the final context whereby acceptance

and harmonious religiously diverse living outcome is the core doctrine of evangelism, which has already been discussed briefly. Evangelism hinges (as does everything else in a religious belief) on the assumption that one's faith and belief is ultimately true, and ultimately leads to salvation or escape from damnation. Coupled with the belief that humans have value, and there is an inherent desire to distribute and share your own faith with the world so to speak. The end of Matthew's Gospel ends in the "Great Commission", and ~~reduces~~ Jesus' final words on earth to the Christian followers. Evangelism, therefore, is a vital part of ~~the Great Commission~~ religious (also proclamation of faith is also labelled one of the 5 pillars of Islam; so this concept is clearly not linked to just Christianity.) The process of evangelism is where a threat to one's own faith occurs. This is because in a religiously diverse culture this concept will be occurring on a regular basis, and will reinforce the plethora of new ideas and narratives a person is forced to confront. Legitimate evangelism as well as proclamation of faith will bring with it also a challenging of your own ideas and beliefs, and at the very least question the validity of your own faith. Now, it was previously mentioned how the concept of a 'faith commitment' means that challenges to one's belief can and should be refuted without a need for compromise. However this isn't taking into account a now continual, daily challenging of said faith, a faith placed in a deeply secular culture which demands one to accept all faiths as valid (thanks to decades of pervasive post-modernism.) Whether or not the individual's beliefs do end up becoming

Compromised or even abandoned, it can be fairly said that the process and critical practice of evangelism or proclamation of faith constitutes a meaningful threat to one's beliefs.

Is this a negative reality though? Is something to shrink back from, or a reason to abandon the very concept of religious diversity in a community? Although phrases like "threat to one's own faith" may appear negative and harmful, such an environment should and is celebrated regularly by religious followers across the world. The Apostle Paul commands the church in Corinth to "rejoice when you suffer," and the scenario laid out above of continual challenging and questioning and indeed threats to one's faith must undoubtedly be classified as a form of suffering. Now obviously masochism is not Paul's intention here - indeed he is acknowledging the critical importance of suffering and threats in one's own faith journey, as being vital in growing (in this context) as a follower of Christ. ~~In the same token, that's possible of the God~~ Therefore in order for religion to function as just that, there needs to be persuasive, persistent and ever pervasive opposition and threats against them collectively and them the individual in order that their faith mindset can be actively strengthened over time. That was forefront in the minds of Newbigin and Kuyper when they promoted a culture of religious diversity where each was questioned, explored, challenged and discussed in the expectation that not only world faith emerge, in time faith would remain strong. In some sense then, while there are undoubtedly threats and the urge for compromise present in a religiously diverse

setting, there is also the reality that such threats are in a way an opportunity for the individual to grow and develop their faith and thus by extension reduce the threat of postmodernism, opposing evangelism and opposing doctrines down to the chance for ~~rejecting~~ ~~resisting~~ in their suffering and flaws.

↳ growing in their own spiritual journey //

Therefore, we come to the understanding that postmodernist ~~possible~~ while it is unlikely for a person living in a diverse society to appreciate and live alongside other faith based traditions without (at the very least) threats, ~~they return~~ ~~return~~ back to their own faith, this is in fact not only a healthy ~~resistant~~ form of culture from a religious perspective, it is arguably a necessary form of living. This is because if firstly, as has been discussed, provides a legitimate avenue for one's faith to be strengthened and spiritual journey enriched as they go through trial and tribulation, and that this is something to be celebrated by most if not all religions (indeed, Buddhism is founded upon the notion that all life is suffering and the acceptance of that is vital to growing in the faith.)

Secondly, it allows for a meaningful and healthy way to oppose other narratives and question them in a stable environment. In the past, differing beliefs that claim ultimate truth are a predictor to violence and unhealthy conflict because the other is deemed either too blasphemous to exist or quite simply a threat. However in the scenario being explored we've established that normally opposing doctrines now occupy the same culture, and not only that experience points of commonality never before seen in history. A religiously diverse society provides the arena for proximity and subsequently understanding to take place, which

is the first reason why such an environment can and should occur to the fullest extent. Understanding of other beliefs is vital to growing in one's faith but also strengthening bonds of appreciation for the other religion, an attitude not normally seen and in effect the catalyst for Christ's parable of the Good Samaritan to take hold in society. In that context Jesus was illustrating the reality of "a neighbor", something that transcends culture or even faith. In the context being discussed, we see understanding emerge within a diverse society because of repeated interaction and discussion which leads to appreciation which leads to the end goal of what Christ saw as a neighbor. Such an outcome should be pursued ceaselessly, just as Rumi Shapiro implores.

Overall, then, one can say that it is not possible for a religiously diverse society to exist without threat to one's own faith tradition. This is due to the very nature of a diverse society that brings with it opposition of ideas, active attempts of conversion and even appealing ~~to~~ to one's doctrines that can threaten one's faith. However, this isn't something to bemoan - after all one can and should be seen as an opportunity to deepen your own understanding of what it means to believe in your religion, gain allies against religion's greatest threats of populist regimes and postmodernism, and in time grow to appreciate ~~other~~ people of other religious traditions so that you form neighbors, and true neighbors at that. So while threats may come as a result of a diverse community, these threats can be seen less as ~~the~~ a danger and more as an opportunity to grow in your own faith and awake in heart of redemption, love, and peace.

ESSAY PLAN //

1. What is religion? Define and explore.
 - ↳ What does this look like then? Real life examples.
2. Break down the question in its many facets. Life direction, fulfillment, and the existence of a diverse religious community.
3. Introduce the Abraham Kuyper, Leslie Newbigin factor, or Socratic method of sorts that embodies phase 1 of this question. Thomas Aquinas' appetite.
 - ↳ Pluralism, exclusivism, inclusivism
 - ↳ Is post modernism a threat here? -----.
4. Where does all of that fall down (explore the West as an example...)
 - ↳ How does this tie back to the very concept of truth?
 - ↳ "where does this leave the individual?"
5. So is it possible?
 - ↳ ~~More emphasis on~~ Arel from a religious and rational standpoint if shouldn't because of key word threat.
 - ↳ Compromise is inevitable but not to be endorsed.
 - ↳ Influence of the secular worldview - again, the West.)
 - ↳ But threats to one's own faith are inevitable and essential
 - ↳ Apostle Paul rejoice in suffering.
 - ↳ Christ himself was threatened and challenged. Religions need to be in order for faith as a concept to exist.

So YES to PART 1 NO to PART 2