

## Unit 2: Section C | A1 Sample Answers

### Question Overview

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### **Q1. Name a contemporary conflict where religious beliefs play a role and explain the nature of the relationship between religion and the conflict**

Tribes and religious groups have a history of intolerance and prejudice to other groups. This intolerance often leads to conflicts that are justified in the name of religion and God. Often the religious group believes God has willed for them to carry out such conflicts. I will be discussing the ongoing Protestant/Catholic conflict in Ireland.

Since the Ulster Plantations under King James the First in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, many Catholic Irishmen did not support the presence of rich Protestant men in Northern Ireland. Throughout the years there were many rebellions including the Wolfe Tonne Rebellion. These rebellions climaxed with the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. The rising led to The Government of Ireland Act 1920 that partitioned Ireland for the first time.

Ireland was divided into the Nationalist Catholic dominated South and Unionist Protestant dominated Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland consisted of 6 counties – Armagh, Tyrone, Down, Derry, Antrim and Fermanagh. The remaining 26 went to the South. The North were mainly unionist and wanted to remain a part of the UK, the South were mainly Catholic and wanted a fully united independent state.

Over the successive decades Catholics in the South achieved independence while Catholics in Northern Ireland were discriminated against over housing, jobs and health. There was also a lack of industrialisation West of the Bann while the Protestant areas were getting transport

systems, Ireland's second university, Coleraine and attracting foreign investors. The government was also largely anti-Catholic with PM Basil Brooke once claimed 'Catholics are out to destroy Ulster'. These factors fuelled bitter sectarian resentment.

The Troubles then broke out. A thirty year conflict between mainly Catholic Nationalists and Protestant Unionists in the North. More than 3,600 people died and 50,000 injured. The conflict began with a Civils Rights march on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1968, the Battle of the Bogside on August 12<sup>th</sup> 1969 and the deployment on British troops also in 1969.

The goal of the Civil Rights movement was to earn equality in the new state, as many Nationalists began to accept partition. They tried to achieve there aims politically since the IRA's failed border campaign. Terrence O'Neill introduced some moderate reforms such as a housing points system, they were too fast for Ian Paisley and other extreme loyalists and too slow for even moderates like John Hume.

In 1972 the IRA was once again revived when the Parachute Regiment killed 13 people on Bloody Sunday. The Ulster Volunteer Force used force to resist republican paramilitaries and to oppose unification. The 1973 Sunningdale Agreement that introduced the idea of powersharing failed because of Ian Paisley and a Ulster Workers Council strike.

The IRA announced a ceasefire in 1994 and cross-party talks began in the Good Friday Agreements 1996. The Ulster Unionist Party and SDLP agreed to accept power-sharing. Irish unification can only be achieved if a majority agree in a referendum held on both sides of the border.

**It is impossible to say that most Unionists weren't Protestant and most Catholics weren't Nationalists. However the conflict has its root over land and not religion.** At its heart the Protestants felt British and Catholics felt Irish. Religion enforced the 'Us Versus Them'

mentality. The perception of religious difference is what kept and still keeps the two communities in conflict with one another.

However not all Catholics were Nationalists and not all Unionists were Protestant. William Butler Yeats, the famous Irish poet was a Nationalist Protestant. Protestant Erskine Childers played an important role in the 1916 Rising and Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 There have also been Catholic Unionists. Therefore this further proves that although there deep sectarian divisions, **the wars were did not come about because of religious ideology, but patriotism and nationalism.**

Overall, Catholicism and Protestantism played a role in the conflict in terms of identity. But the root of the conflict is over land and not religion. In the resolution of the conflict, religion played no role, only the question of unity and political ideologies did.

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### Q.2 Compare the vision of salvation proposed by Islam to Christianity

All religions are deeply concerned with salvation. I will be comparing the vision of salvation proposed by Islam to the vision of salvation proposed by Christianity.

In Christianity Jesus was the manifestation of God on earth sent down to save mankind from eternal damnation. The three parts to God in Christianity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (the Trinity) is utterly rejected as Polytheistic as it is seen as contrary to the first of the six articles of faith that God is One. However, Isa (Jesus) is a respected Prophet in Islam. Islam has many of the same Prophets as the Hebrew Scriptures such as Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses). Islam believes that God communicated his will through these Prophets and that Muhammad was the greatest Messenger. 'The Seal of the Prophets' of which no other Messenger will come.

Sin is the human failure to do God's will. In Islam there is intentional and unintentional sin. Intentional sin can be major or minor. Abstaining from the Major Sins causes the Lesser Sins to be overlooked. The worst sin of all is to put someone on the same level of Allah either in your mind or heart. In Christianity there are mortal sin, like major sins in Islam or venial sins, like minor sins. Major sins in both religions are fornication, immorality, suicide and adultery.

In Christianity Man is born with Original Sin and it isn't until one is Baptised that they are cleansed from the Original Sin with which we are all born. Baptism signifies the new life and the cleansing from sin, won when Jesus rose from the dead. In Islam, everybody is born in a pure state (fitra). It isn't until Puberty that we have the ability to sin. When a child hits puberty Angels records the good and bad deeds.

In Islam, a person must confess their sin directly to Allah, This sin should be repented sincerely. The person must intend to never do it again. They should then trust in the promises of Allah's forgiveness in the Qur'an. Repentance should be proved by doing good deeds. A Christian does the Sacrament of Reconciliation that allows God's forgiveness to be sought. Belief in Jesus allows sinners to redeem. This sacrament includes: the word of God, confession of Sin, the giving of penance, a prayer of Sorrow and a prayer of Absolution.

One must go to confession to perform this sacrament and confess to the mediator that is the Priest or Clergyman, who will ask God to forgive you. This is frowned upon in Islam as it is believed that it undermined the Greatness of Allah. A Sheikh is not an intermediary between Allah. They have no ability to forgive your sins, i.e. offer absolution. It is only Allah who forgives sins and guides to the right path and no human being has that ability. Human beings are only able to guide them.

Like Christians, Muslims believe that the present life is only a preparation for the next life. The concept of The Day of Judgement are quite similar. Both believe this world is material and only temporary and testing and that a day will come when the whole universe will be destroyed. In Islam the door of repentance will shut. Both believe the dead will be resurrected for judgment by God. This day will be the beginning of a life that will never end. Good deeds will be rewarded and the evil will be punished.

Both religions come derive from Judaism. Muslims believe Islam has always existed and is now complete. In Islam the final guidance to salvation is the Qur'an. Jesus is the key to salvation in Christianity. There are many differences but there are also similarities such as the process of salvation. One must seek forgiveness or else they will not enter Paradise. There will be a Day of Judgement.

### Q.3 Describe the vision of salvation proposed by Islam

Salvation by faith alone is not enough in Islam. One must also do good deeds. The purpose of life for a Muslim is to live according to the will of Allah so that one may succeed in the Hereafter. Submission to the will of Allah is the key to salvation. The will of Allah is in the Qur'an, the word of God according to Muslims. Muslims also look to the Hadiths. There are many Hadiths and some sects deem certain Hadiths unreliable or some more reliable than others. Hadiths are a record of the traditions and sayings of Muhammad. Sunnis follow Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim mainly. Shias look to Kitab al-Kafi as their main Hadith. Muslims follow the Hadiths to try and live like the Prophet Muhammad. This is called Sunna. Muslims believe that Muhammad was the final and greatest messenger of Allah, 'The Seal of the Prophets'.

The Six Articles of Faith; Belief in One God, The Last Day, The Angels, Prophets, Holy Book, Predestination and the Five Pillars; (Belief) Shahada, (Prayer) Salat, (Fasting) Sawm, (Charity) Zakat, (Pilgrimage) Hajj are a summary of what a Muslim must believe and what a Muslim must practice respectively, in order to be go to Heaven. As the Prophet Muhammad is in Paradise, Muslims try and live the way he lived so that they too can enter Paradise. Angels record our good and bad deeds from the age of puberty and on the Day of Judgement Allah will be presented with a list of our deeds. If the good outweigh the bad deeds then one will gain access to Paradise, although the final decision is in the hands of Allah.

### Q.4 Outline two examples of the origins of interfaith dialogue

Interfaith dialogue refers to cooperative, constructive and positive interaction between people from different communities of faith. There are many examples of this on a low-key scale in recent history. However, global interfaith dialogue can be traced back to the World Parliament of Religions in the 19th Century and more recently The Global Interfaith Dialogue Conference in the 21st Century.

The World's Parliament of Religions took place from the 11th – 27th 1892 in Chicago, USA. Today it is often recognised as the birth of formal interreligious dialogue worldwide. It marks the first formal gathering of representatives of Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. Swami Vivekananda made a particularly lasting impression here as he introduced Hinduism to America and altered people's perception of the faith through dialogue and understanding, the essence of interfaith dialogue. His idea of Hinduism was that of inclusivity, which was established from the moment he began speaking as he greeted the delegates with the words 'Sisters and brothers of America'. 19 women spoke at the event, an unprecedented occurrence that highlighted inclusivity. However, Sikhs, Native Americans and the Primal Religions were not represented at all and even though Islam was represented, the only delegate was an Anglo-American convert called Muhammad Alexander Russell Webb – a religion of 91 million at the time. However the essence of interfaith dialogue was reinforced into society and it paved the way for future similar events such as its revived centenary conference in 1993 in which 8000 people attended. It will also be again in October 2015.

One of the earliest broad-based interfaith organisations is the World Congress of Faiths that was founded in 1936. This grew from the World Parliament of Religions, the Religions of Empire Conference and it is also rooted in the unusual experiences of Francis Younghusband

and his belief in the 'brotherhood of man'. Younghusband encouraged an array of distinguished people to speak including Abdullah Yusuf Ali, the Islamic scholar and Qu'ran translator, Professor Nicolas Berdieff, a Russian philosopher and Dr S N Das Gupta, author of 'A History of Indian Philosophy' – for the most part they were scholars rather than religious leaders. In general it was agreed that the aim of the Congress was not to create one new synthetic religion but to generate understanding and a sense of unity between the different religions of the world. Social intercourse at the Congress was restricted between participants as it was not residential. Discussion was carried on in a good humour and the leaders of the debate were tactically chosen. This event is yet another example of an organisation that was part of the origins of Interfaith Dialogue.

The globalisation of our modern world makes interfaith dialogue essential and the 2 examples I have given have paved the way for many similar events in our modern world such as the one that will be held this year – the 2015 Parliament of the World's Religions.

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### **Q.5 Name a contemporary conflict where religious beliefs play a role and explain the nature of the relationship between religion and the conflict**

Tribes and religious groups have a history of intolerance and prejudice to other groups. This intolerance often leads to conflicts that are justified in the name of religion and God. Often the religious group believes God has willed for them to carry out such conflicts. I will be discussing the ongoing Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

In the past, Palestine had been conquered by the Romans, Babylonians and Assyrians. During the 19th Century it was controlled by the Ottoman Empire. At the time it was 87% Muslim, 10% Christian and 3% Jewish. They all coexisted peacefully within the region. However as the idea of Zionism and Nationalism grew, tensions began to grow. The British Balfour Declaration during WWI also guaranteed the Israelis a homeland. This promise was fulfilled when the Ottoman Empire was defeated. The League of Nations gave the British a Mandate to govern Palestine. Just before the mandate's termination the British proposed a partitioning of the land was proposed – an Arab state and a Jewish state. The Arab leaders rejected the partitioning as 87% of the land was Muslim and only 3% were Jewish, therefore the proportion of land offered to such a small population was unfair. A day before the mandate expired, Israel decided to declare itself an independent state.

This declaration infuriated the Arab leaders and they sought to regain the territory and give it back to its rightful owners. They attacked the newly established so-called Jewish homeland starting the 1978 Arab-Israeli war / The Catastrophe. Israel defeated the Arabs. In 1949 Armistice Agreements established the borders between the two states. Israel now controlled

In 1967 tensions increased yet again between the Arabs and Israelis. These tensions led to the Six Day War from June 5-10 1967. Egypt, Jordan and Syria fought Israel. They were defeated. Israel began occupying the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights. Another Arab-Israeli war in 1973 broke out (Yom Kippur). UN peacekeepers were deployed and a peace treaty was reached in 1979. However only the Sinai Peninsula was returned. The ongoing occupation of Gaza, West Bank and Golan Heights is the reason many Arab leaders refuse to recognise the Israeli state today.

Many wars including two Intifadas have happened since. Many peace treaties have also failed such as the Oslo Accords. Today Palestine has non-member observer state status in the UN represented by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, however it isn't recognised by Israel or the US.

The ongoing war is a conflict over land and could be resolved through the application of international law. Recently, since 2014 Israeli-Gaza Conflict that left 2000 Palestinians dead, many people have called for Israel to be trialled in the International Court for War Crimes. This year, Palestine have formally joined the International Court making this form of resolution more possible than ever. Palestine also plans to take legal action against the illegal Israeli settlements.

Even though land is the main source of the conflict, religion fuels the conflict. Religion fuels the conflict by using faith-based values to sanctify aggression. The element of religious belief makes someone not want to deter from religious belief. Islamic groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad use the Qur'an to justify the perpetuating conflict, by stating that Jihad war is justified when it is self-defence.

The Jewish Israeli Defence Force believe that the Holy Land was given a gift from God to His chosen people, The Jews. The Holy Land is also important to Muslims, it is the direction Muhammad and his followers prayed before praying towards Mecca and Muhammad ascended to heaven from there.

Some commentators observe how religion is a barrier to resolving the conflict. Extremist activities such as that of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad that are motivated by religious ideology or extremist Zionists that are motivated by political ideology, frustrate political negotiations and sway public to oppose any peace negotiations.

For many, it is almost impossible to separate the idea of Islam and Palestine, Jew and Israel. There are things that make it even harder to separate the two. For example, any Jew in the world can claim an Israeli passport. There is a large Israeli community in America and US gives more than \$3billion a year in aid to Israel. Also the majority of countries that support Palestine are Muslim further implicate this idea.

The wars fought were largely Muslim countries versus a Jewish Israel also. These factors inextricably link religion and state. The two states that are fighting each other. This support of countries beyond the territory in dispute make it seem like not only are two states are at war, but also two religions.

Overall, Islam and Judaism play a role in the on-going conflict as it allows both sides to justify aggression against the other.

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### Q.6 Explain the part of Totem and Shaman in primal religion

All of today's world's major religions that exist today have their roots in our ancestor's primal religions. Primal religions date back to 50,000 BCE. The term religion has evolved overtime. In our ancestor's time it referred to the way in which ancient societies attached meaning to key moments in their lives. There are 3 similar characteristics that define a primal religion. All of them express the idea that there is a transcendent supernatural world that encompasses every aspect of life, all do not distinguish the secular from the sacred and all are based on oral rather than written sources or traditions. Each has their own myths, folks and legends. An example of primal religion are the Maori people of New Zealand. They erected religious structures and expressed religious practices which still have an effect on our modern world religions. The Maori people believed Gods manifested themselves in some lakes, rivers and oceans. This is not unlike Hinduism today whereby followers highlight the significance of respecting the creations of the transcendent as humans do not control he world but instead form a part of it.

Totem originated from the Algonkian word 'Dodem' meaning 'that person is a relative of mine'. Primal religions selected a significant plant or animal such as a bird that symbolised an individual or tribe in a way which connected them to their descendants. Totemism refers to the familial relation of humans and nature. There were often restrictions on whether the chosen totem could be killed, eaten or touched. The Native American Cherokee clam are one primal religion that used these. The descendants of this clan that exist today frown upon the modern misconceptions of the word. Some people in the world today choose an animal or plant which has some significant importance in their lives and call this a totem. However, the Cherokee clan claim commercialisation of the world results in the loss of the objects spiritual essence and meaning.

The Shaman nearly exists in all primal religions and still has a significant role in the world today. Shaman usually refers to an individual that has undergone intense period of fasting and prayer.

As a result, the Shaman has a good relationship with the spiritual world with due to the hard-work and training endured by the individual. The supernatural world is accessed by the Shaman by entering into a trance by becoming possessed by supernatural beings when in such a state. Once in this trance they could act as a mediator between the natural and supernatural world. Therefore this allowed them to receive supernatural guidance and are said to be able to interpret dreams and have prophecies. Some people would also ask them to bless their harvest or if a person was going on a long journey they would ask them to pray for their safety. The spirits guided the Shaman on what medicine the person seeking aid would need to cure their physical or mental illness. There are also claims that they could control the weather, divination and astral projection. In the Native American creation myth the Shaman plays an important role. He places the sun in the sky in a way that a clear path is formed for humans to live on earth. The Shaman played a vital role in primal religions and still exist within some cultures in the world today such as the Native American clans that have survived in America up until this day.

Totem, Shaman, Mana and Tabu are all concepts associated with primal religions. I have explained in my essay the concept of totemism and shamanism. Both of these concepts still exist in today's world in one form or another and in the western culture, often have a materialistic element to them that distorts the original and true meaning.