

## *AKC Essay Competition - Coversheet*

- Complete all sections of this form and ensure it is the first page of the document you submit (either copy and paste this page into the front of your work, or begin your work on subsequent pages of this form).
- **DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON YOUR WORK.**
- Pages should be clearly numbered.

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Degree Programme (where applicable)	MSc in Public Policy and Management
Department (where applicable)	King's Business School
AKC Year (1, 2 or 3):	1

Essay question number:	<b>3</b>
Essay Title:	<b>Westminster Abbey: A pole of orientation for culture, identity and memory</b>
Deadline:	<b>23:59, Sunday 26 April 2020</b>
Date Submitted:	26 April 2020
Word Count (max 1500 words):	1057

## **DECLARATION BY STUDENT**

By submitting this essay, I declare the following:

This assignment is entirely my own work. Quotations from secondary literature are indicated by the use of inverted commas around ALL such quotations AND by reference in the text or notes to the author concerned.

ALL primary and secondary literature used in this piece of work is indicated in the bibliography placed at the end, and dependence upon ANY source used is indicated at the appropriate point in the text.

I confirm that no sources have been used other than those stated.

**I understand what is meant by plagiarism, including self-plagiarism.**

**I understand that plagiarism is a serious academic offence that will result in disciplinary action being taken and may result in my withdrawal from the AKC programme.**

**I understand that essays which do not include references and a bibliography will not be read.**

**My word count is accurately stated above and I understand that essays which are more than 10% over the word limit may not be considered by the AKC Steering Committee.**

**I AGREE**

## **Westminster Abbey: A pole of orientation for culture, identity and memory**

*'It is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn and without reflecting upon this experience it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost.'* (Gibbs, 1988)

When I think of London, it is not the Tower Bridge, the London Eye or Oxford Circus street that fascinates me, but the majestic architecture and gigantic structure of the Westminster Abbey and The Houses of Parliament draws my attention. As a foreign national, I have always wondered why is there a 'city of Westminster' and 'city of London' within the London Metropolitan Area or Greater London. The AKC series spring lecture 9 on the Westminster Abbey has helped me with basic foundations to the theoretical perspectives of the Church and the history of England. And, my visit to the Abbey helped me understand and personally feel the essence of the early Roman history magnified in the heart of London.

As discussed in the lecture by The Right Reverend Dr. Jamie Hawkey, King Edward (the Confessor) has established his royal palace on Thorney Island at the west side banks of river Thames during 1040s. Where, King Edgar and St Dunstan around 960A.D have built a monastery and this was later dedicated to St. Peter which, which today we call as 'westminster'. And, this was named 'west' to distinguish from St. Paul's Cathedral (the east minster) in the City of London (Dean and Chapter of Westminster, 2020).

I see the Abbey as a 'pole of orientation' for an epicentre for culture and politics of England. The geographical location of the Abbey next to the Houses of Parliament, lays great importance of the Church in the state affairs in the history. The metaphysical place creates a memory of the 'struggle, joy and learnings' in the early periods of the kingdom of England. The most important question I keep asking myself: "how could someone possible build such massive structures with finest finishing and design to every corner during pre-modern and technological world and why can't such structures being build these days?". Maybe, the society is either disconnected with the heritage and culture aspects or just reflect the significance from the past and glorify the present.

The Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible, surround several stories and teachings of God with fishing, boats and sea voyage (Bible Gateway, 2020) (Cachila, 2018). Therefore, Christian life is greatly associated with water, boats, fishing and sea voyage. And as I enter from the Great West Door of the Abbey, the first image that strikes to my mind was a 'boat'. As described 'the Nave' in the Westminster portal. The grand entrance of the Abbey resembles 'heavenly entrance' and some 'cosmic reality', which I believe to be reminded of God's presence and make people comfortable to find peace and solace to offer prayers and reflect upon their lives.

One of the most surprising moment during my visit was 'the Poets corner'. It was well-known that the coronations, weddings and burials of the Royal Family of Great Britain is taken place in the Abbey, but many notable poets and scholars were remembered and buried in the church to honour their works for the literature and culture of the society.

The 'Cosmati pavement', a marvellous floor design and imprint with every detail to its perfection reminds the dedication and strive for proclamation of culture in the Abbey undertaken by Henry III during 1269. The glass, marbles and stones used for the flooring were from the 'recycled/reused materials' of the remaining's of the temples in Sicily and Southern Italy.

The statues of the saints, which symbolise the 'universality of the church and multi-cultural communities of London' present the message of 'welcome, inspiration and strength'. The statues above the Great West Door present the modern Christian martyrs, which I feel to have of great significance in spreading the message of peace, hope and love to humanity. It is inspiring to memories of great personalities visibly portrayed at a great place of worship. I have also learned that these pillars in the Abbey represent and share the message from the history of victims of Nazis and the Soviet persecutions in the past, early human rights issues in the American continent, fanaticism in India, dictatorial rule in Africa, brutality on human beings during the world wars and cultural revolution in China. And, the Abbey's architecture has rightly justified the statement of a prolific Tunisian writer Tertullian says, "Blood of the martyrs is the seed of Church" (Fernandes, 2013).

I have also felt the resound and echo from the footsteps on the marble tiles of the Abbey. Not a single place is left uncarved or with no design. From The Crossing to every nuke-end corner of the Abbey, the resources are optimally utilised to present the message of culture, history and the importance of Christian faith to the generations. The 'Quire stalls' inside the Abbey, where the Choir sing resemble like House of Lords in the UK Parliament. I have attended an Evensong and Organ recital service, to experience the majestic grand music of the Harrison & Harrison instrument. The relentless flow of chords and the music not only give goose-bumps but also inspire with the rhythm and command of the time.

Finally, I reflect that 'Westminster Abbey' is an architectural marvel, where every piece of design has a history and every statue tells a story and one feels a sense of interaction and indulgence into the past. The present day society needs 'hope' and 'strength', the Abbey draws not only the history of England but also multi-cultural perspectives, legendary contributions and struggles of various unheard and notable personalities for us to learn and cherish in the future. Thus, I believe, Westminster abbey has a great significance in the lives of Londoners and promotes sustainability of environment, worship of God, memories of the history and identity of the Anglo Saxon and the Roman culture in England.

As an international student and a member of the protestant denomination of Christian faith, the Abbey taught me the symbols of 'might, humility and serenity' through the architecture and construction engineering. And, I believe, these learnings are highly vital to any individual to establish a firm and successful career in the current globalised society and rat-race world.

## **Bibliography**

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