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Molière

I chose Molière's Tartuffe for this paper. As a topic for my discussion I chose "This play explores ideas about false piety or religious fanaticism. What might prompt some individuals to gravitate toward extremism, while others retain more balanced beliefs?"

"Piety can be defined as a devote reverence to God".¹ False piety is using religion in an untruthful way by deceiving someone under fake religious pretenses. False piety is also someone acting like or pretending to be a Christian or religious for personal gain. "The bible speaks about predators pretending to be believers but are actually wolves in sheep's clothing."² There we are warned to be watchful and wise so that we can avoid these traps. In many situations the Bible has been used out of context to enforce an agenda that's not in the will of God. Using scripture to control another human to conform to your beliefs or ways of thinking is false piety. A Christians goal is to be like Christ. A devoted Christian does not use religion or scripture to manipulate or trick people to gain wealth, clout or fame.

Religious fanaticism is when people go overboard with their religious beliefs. It's OK to be a devoted follower but it's not OK to mistreat others who don't share your beliefs. Religious fanatics want everyone to see things the

¹ www.Dictionary.com

² www.kingjamesbibleonline.org Matt. 7:15

way they do. It is extreme behavior when a religious debate turns into violence or murder. You can not make someone follow your religion or punish them for having a different point of view. God has given everyone free will. It is cultist behavior to torment someone who may look different, think differently or have a different belief.

A perfect example of false piety and religious fanaticism is Jim Jones. One of the most terrifying things that has ever happened in our history took place on November 18, 1978 in Guyana.³ Jim Jones was a Caucasian Pastor who formed a ministry called "The people's Temple". The story of Jim Jones became popular as a result of his unethical teachings. He seemed to have started out on the right track by speaking against racism and incorporating socialism in his messages. That did not last forever. Unbeknownst to his followers Jones was not who he pretended to be. Jones was able to develop a large following by portraying to be legit with heart warming sermons about faith and healing. Jonestown was a place that Jim Jones built for his followers. He promised them a peaceful environment free from the dysfunction of the world including of racism. Jones became threatened by rumors of sexual misconduct and dangerous rituals. Rather than facing all of the accusations against him, Jones took a drastic step. He convinced his followers to consume poison resulting in over 900 of his thousands of loyal followers to lose their

³ Chidester, David. □ *Salvation and Suicide : Jim Jones, The Peoples Temple, and Jonestown*. Indiana University Press, 1991. □ EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=23204&site=eds-live.

lives. This is the most troubling story I've ever read about the occult and suicide.

There are many reasons why some individuals may gravitate toward extremism. Religious extremists feel they are doing the work of God. They go
50 to drastic measures to obtain followers through threats and in some cases they use physical violence. These extremists feel that anyone who doesn't agree with them are against God. They are devoted to doing the work of God by any means necessary. In return they believe that God will reward them for their devoted faithfulness.

55 Others obtain more balanced lives because they understand that God created all of us in his image. There is no human being more elite than another one. We can not punish others who share different beliefs than we do. If God is love then we should love everyone regardless of their race, creed or color. For example as a Christian the most I can do is offer Christ to
60 someone. If they chose to be an atheist I must let them be without physical or verbal abuse. I've found that you can present people with scientific facts that God is real and they still would not believe it. I've heard people say God isn't real because they can't see him. People are dying from COVID-19. It has been labeled the invisible killer because you can't see it. I spoke to someone
65 the other day who told me that COVID-19 is not real yet he could not explain why people were dying from it. This same person also advised me that they will be wearing a mask when they go outside with the public. Why take

precautions to protect yourself from a virus you say does not exist? I really wanted to aggressively debate or argue with him but instead I decided to let
70 him find out the truth on his own. Some probably still don't believe the earth is round because they've never been to outer space.

This brings me to the story of "Tartuffe" by Molière. In the story Tartuffe appears to be a man after God's heart. Orgon does all that he can to convince his family that Tartuffe is the finest example of a Christian. Orgon
75 esteems Tartuffe so high that he puts him first and above his own family. Orgon's family on the other hand can see right through Tartuffe and know that he is a hypocrite and an impostor. Throughout the story we watch the interaction between an unsuspecting Orgon and Tartuffe. When Orgon is not present we see exactly who Tartuffe is. Orgon is so impressed with Tartuffe
80 that he tells his daughter that Tartuffe would be a better companion for her than her fiancé. The family does their best to try to convince Orgon that he is being deceived. This story seems to make fun of religious hypocrisy and skillfully shows clear examples of religious piety. Orgon is enthralled with Tartuffe that he pays more attention to him than his sick wife. His family
85 becomes enraged with Orgon's failure to see the real Tartuffe and fear the fate of their family. It's ironic that I'm experiencing this same act of piety while writing this paper. A certain minister who a church feels can do no wrong stole a monetary collection that was taken up for me. When I questioned it, I was told that she would never do anything like that. She collected the money in

90 February and never gave it to me. During a heated zoom church meeting last week she still has not explained why she held on to the money. The money is not accounted for and I still have I received it. They continue to sing her praises and concluded it's a clash of personalities and simply a misunderstanding.