

Violence & violent protest Theme D: Religion, peace & conflict

Christianity teaches non-violence, as Jesus said *"Blessed are the peacemakers"* and told others to turn the other cheek in the face of violence. Christians are told to love their enemies and love each other. However, God gave humans **free will** and choice and sometimes non-violent protest is ignored, so violence may be used to force change for the common good.

Islam means **peace** and Muslims should act in a peaceful manner, but violence may be used in self-defence. Muslims have a duty to protest about anything unfair and in the UK we have seen protests over wars and issues in the Middle East, what is perceived as **Islamophobia, terrorism** and **racism** issues.

Just War & Holy war

Holy war = it is right to fight in the name of God
Just war = It is right to fight in the interests of justice & the greater good

For **Muslims** a holy war is a just war. There are rules for how Muslims should fight a war in the Qur'an. A jihad may only be fought as a last resort and must never be against a Muslim nation.

St Paul said Christians should obey their rulers, who had been given power by God. St Augustine was the first to try to write a set of rules regarding this, and eventually the just war rules were written in detail by St Thomas Aquinas. *Sometimes if you do not fight, you allow a greater evil to happen than a war would have caused, so you have to fight.*

Peace & justice

Justice = fairness; **Peace** = to live in harmony & without fear
Christians will fight for justice under the conditions of **The just war theory**. Whilst God desires peace, He also desires that humans should live in justice and freedom.

Forgiveness & reconciliation

Reconciliation = making up between two groups after a disagreement
"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you" ~ C.S. Lewis
"Forgive seventy times seven" ~ Jesus
"Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" ~ Jesus

Pacifism

Pacifists believe that all violence is morally wrong. They will not participate in any war, regardless of the reasons for that war. An example of a pacifist Christian group is **The Quakers**.
Conscientious objectors are people who refuse to participate directly in fighting wars on the grounds of conscience. However they will assist in non-military ways such as medics, relief work and mediators. Many believe they have a peace-keeping role.
The Church of England accepts the **just war theory** and sees wars as **necessary** in certain conditions, especially in situations where wars are waged to fight injustice.
Buddhism is a pacifistic religion. **The Five precepts** demand a pacifistic approach to life. **The Dalai Lama** said that *"Peace can exist if everyone respects all others"*.

WMD

Weapons of mass destruction are capable of killing & maiming large groups of people. These weapons are considered unjust because they kill civilians. Some religious believers accept the existence of nuclear weapons as a deterrent.

The Roman Catholic Church does not agree with the use of WMD but thinks they are acceptable as a deterrent.

The Quaker Society **utterly condemn** WMD. They are pacifists, and no outward weapons are acceptable. WMD are indiscriminate and beyond control.

Religion & peace making

Christianity teaches to *"love your neighbour"* and Islam means **peace** if both of these teachings were adhered to then there would be peace. Religious groups are regularly involved in peace-keeping in war torn areas and in negotiations to prevent wars happening.

On occasions people have claimed that religion is the cause of war. For example, some fundamentalist groups such as ISIS believe that an Islamic State needs to be created.

Sometimes even with all the best efforts, religion cannot keep peace because there are overriding factors, such as the craving for power, the need to react or attack or to join allies to protect others.

"Mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith"