

Theme D– Religion, Peace and Conflict

1

Key Terms

- **Justice** is making right, or fair, a situation that has been unfair or unjust.
- **Peace** includes the absence of conflict but it is more than this. It is about living in harmony and without fear.
- **Forgiveness** means accepting someone who has done wrong to us and not holding it against them.
- **Reconciliation** is the coming together of people or groups who have been in conflict. It means bringing the two opposing sides together and helping them to deal with the issues that have caused conflict.

Protest, Violence & Terrorism

Human beings seem to be prone to conflict and violence. Within a society, governments try to limit violence and help keep the peace through the processes of law and order, through police and the courts.

However, sometimes people object to what governments, or other powerful groups, are doing, and in most 'free and democratic' countries people have the right to protest.

- Sadly, sometimes peaceful protests can turn violent. When a protest becomes violent it turns into a riot.
- This may happen because the protestors decide to use violence or because police become heavy handed and the protestors react and retaliate.

Note: there is peaceful protest (like that of Martin Luther King) and there is violent protest.

Most religions would agree with the right to peaceful protest but would be against the use of violence as a form of protest.

- **Protest** – a demonstration of disapproval often in a public group
- **Violence** – using actions that threaten or cause actual harm to a person
- **Riot** – a form of civil disorder when a group uses violence against authority, property or people.
- **War** – fighting, usually between nations, to resolve conflicts and issues between them.
- **Terrorism** is an act of violence that is intended to create fear.
- **A terrorist** is someone who carries out acts of terrorism.

Terrorism

Reasons why terrorists do what they do?

- Fighting against injustice (unfairness)
 - Fighting in reaction to what they perceive as the oppression and violence against their country, culture or people.
 - Fighting to assert their religious beliefs, or their claim to land.
- Some people believe that terrorism can never be justified but others believe that violence may be the only way to get noticed when all other



• **Nelson Mandela** - well-known as a statesman who fought for the rights of black people in South Africa, was imprisoned for 23 Years but then came out to lead his nation into peace and reconciliation. In his youth he has believed in using violence



• **Martin McGuinness** – he was a politician who took part in the Northern Ireland peace process, rejecting the use of violence. But earlier he had been a member of the IRA, a terrorist organisation respon-

War

2

What are the causes of war?

Greed - to gain more land, power, resources, e.g. oil

Self-defence - To protect yourself or another country from war Sometimes self-defence becomes disproportionate and so turns into aggression. Countries can also fight to defend other countries also (as in WW2).

Retaliation/revenge - to get someone back for what they have done -the problem with this as a reason is that it can easily escalate

War

- In many cases, religion gets dragged into fights which are really about power, land and culture. The conflict between Israel and Palestine is an issue over land and power but gets defined as Jew vs Muslim.
- Religion may be involved in war but that does not mean it has caused the war - Jews and Muslims in Palestine; Sunni Muslims and Shi'a Muslims in Syria; it is also about culture and competition over political power.
- Some might think they are fighting for religion when it is really about the power of the religious leaders.



Examples of recent wars

WWI 1914-8
WWII 1939-45
Vietnam: 1965-75
Falklands: 1982
First Gulf War: 1990-1991
Afghanistan War 2001-2014
Iraq Insurgency: 2004 - 2015
Syrian Civil War: 2011-

Do religions help stop war?

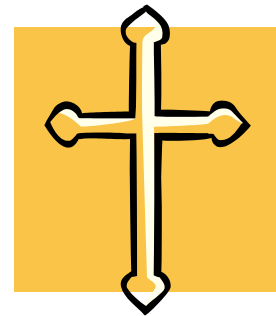
- Many religious people campaign against war and are pacifists.
- They also help victims of war and work in conflict zones to try to act as peace-makers.
- Religious leaders often take a lead in calling for an end to conflict e.g. Pope Francis about Syria.

Holy War and Just (Fair) War

3

What is a 'Holy War'?

- **Holy war** is fighting a war for a religious cause or in the name of God.
- **Jihad** is a term from Islam and means 'struggle.' It refers mainly to a Muslim's struggle to live out their faith but also refers to the struggle to defend Islam.



Religious beliefs about Holy Wars and Just Wars

- In the Old Testament, there are many examples of wars fought in the name of God.
- One example is when Joshua led the Israelites against the city of Jericho (Joshua 6). The soldiers believed God was on their side and would help them to win the battles because their enemies were the enemies of God.
- Other Christians believe that the coming of Jesus and the writing of the New Testament changes things and that he now teaches us to love our enemies - so any idea of holy war is no longer justified.
- For Muslims a **holy war** is a **just war**.
- They believe that in a conflict with another nation, if talking does not sort out the problem then war is a religious duty for a Muslim.
- **Greater jihad** refers to the personal struggle that every Muslim has with sin and to follow Allah.
- **Lesser jihad** is a holy war in defence of Islam.
- There are rules for how Muslims should fight wars; these are written in the Qur'an and were written in more details by one of the caliphs.

Some rules of war:

- The opponent must always have started the fighting.
- It must not be fought to gain territory.
- It must be fought to bring about good - something that Allah will approve of.
- Every other way of solving the problem must be tried before resorting to war.
- Innocent people should not be killed.
- Women, children, or old people should not be killed or hurt.
- Women must not be raped.
- Enemies must be treated with justice.
- Wounded enemy soldiers must be treated in exactly the same way as one's own soldiers.
- The war must stop as soon as the enemy asks for peace.

Religious views that support war

•Christians may support the limited use of violence in some cases to force change for the common good.

'But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!' (Amos 5:24)

'An eye for an eye' (Old Testament, Bible)

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Religious views against war

•Jesus seems to teach non-violence - he said blessed are the peacemakers (New Testament Matthew 5:9) and that we should love our enemies (New Testament, Matthew 5:43-44).

•He also said that those who live by the sword will die by the sword (New Testament).

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. (New Testament, Romans 12:17-18)

'Turn the other cheek' (New Testament, Matt.5:39)

'Paradise is for...those who curb their anger and forgive their fellow men.' (Qur'an 3.134)

"who so kills a soul... it shall be as if he had killed all mankind; and he who saves a life, it shall be as if he had given life to all mankind." (Qur'an 5:53)

•Muslims greet each other with the words 'salaam alaikum' which means 'peace be upon you.'



Nuclear Weapons

Key terms:

Nuclear weapons are weapons that work by a nuclear reaction; they destroy huge areas

WMD (weapons of mass destruction): weapons that can cause huge damage or kill many people

Chemical weapons: weapons that use chemicals to poison

Biological weapons: weapons that use living bacteria that can lead to disease or death

The first nuclear weapon was dropped at the end of the Second World War in 1945. Since then, many countries, including the UK, have researched and developed even more powerful nuclear weapons. There is enough nuclear power in the world now to destroy the planet 5 times over.

Why do they exist? They usual justification is that they 'prevent war' because countries fear the results of nuclear wars. This means they make an extra effort to get on with each other and not go to war.

Why might people oppose them? The main Christian belief is that only God can take a life, so we must NOT KILL (10 Commandments). Any weapons that have the ability to kill huge numbers of innocent people can never be justified.

Consequences of War

Even when the causes of a war seem to be just, the consequences of any war are still really negative.

They include:

- Death and/or injury to combatants (fighters) and non-combatants (civilians)
- Destruction of a country's economy, and the misery that brings to people, especially the poor.
- Damage to a country's culture and infrastructure (roads, water supplies, energy etc.)
- Disease and starvation when fresh water supplies are seriously damaged
- Homelessness, refugees and mass migration
- Waste of money - £100 million per hour is spent on war worldwide; money which could be spent on solving problems like disease and world poverty.

What should people do to help?

- It is an aspect of all religions that they believe in helping those in trouble and defending those who cannot defend themselves.
- Many religious charities help victims of war as part of their work for helping the poor and those in need.



Key terms:

•**Infrastructure** - the basic equipment and structures (e.g. roads) that enable a country or region to function.

•**Refugee** - a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

•**Migration** - migration is the movement of people from one place to another (can be either internal or international migration).

•All religions teach a version of the Golden Rule - do to others as you would want them to do to you.

•Jesus taught people to love their neighbour, and identified their neighbour was anyone who needed their help in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

•One Muslim scholar summarised an Islamic tradition as "None of you has faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."



Pacifism and Peacekeeping



Key terms:

Pacifist : someone who believes in peace, who doesn't support wars

A pacifist is a person who believes that war and violence can rarely be justified. Conflicts should be settled in a peaceful way.

Not all Christians are pacifists; some think war can be justified on some occasions



Pacifists believe that the best thing you can do is work hard to prevent war becoming a possibility.

Jesus was a pacifist; he said '*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God*'



There were people who refused to fight in the First and Second World Wars.

They were called 'Conscientious Objectors' because they objected to the war because their conscience told them it was wrong.

Religion isn't
the cause of
wars, it's the
excuse.

Jasper Fforde