

Religion, Peace and Conflict

Biblical Perspectives on Violence and Bullying

- Although many Christians take the Genesis stories to be myths they tell us a lot about human nature and our relationship with God.
- Sin and anger are part of our nature- if we do not control this it leads to violence (a rejection of what God wants in the world.)
- Bullying, although not always using physical violence, can have huge effects on an individual causing them to have low self-esteem and live in fear.

Links to Scripture and Teaching

- Genesis 4: 5-11: Cain is unable to control his anger and kills his own brother. God responds in anger to him.
- John 14:27: 'Peace I leave you with; my peace I give to you.': Peace gives us feelings of well-being and calm. It is where we lack in peace that trouble and violence break out.

Questions:

1. Define bullying.
2. How has technology affected how bullying takes place today?
3. Why do people feel the need to make use violence and bullying?

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

- There are many times in the Bible where Jesus preaches the importance of forgiveness, even in the most difficult of circumstances.
- Case Study: Gee Walker. Her son was murdered. As a Christian, she was able to follow Jesus' teachings and forgive the murderers.
- When reconciliation takes place, it allows us to become closer to God

and the people we were in conflict with. We are able to learn from our mistakes and build a more peaceful future.

- These are teachings that Pope Francis has been emphasising. He has called for reconciliation in countries that have been torn apart by conflict.

Links to Scripture and Teaching

- Luke 23:34- Jesus asks God to forgive those who had killed him.
- John 21:15-17: Jesus forgive Peter for betraying him when he denied him 3 times.
- Lord's Prayer: ask for God to forgive those that sin against us, and to forgive any sins we have committed.
- Lumen Gentium 16: The Pope preaches peace and respect between all communities and religions.

Questions

1. Gee Walker was inspired by Matthew 18:21-22, what does this teach?
2. What is reconciliation?
3. Is it easy to forgive people?
4. How can reconciliation help the wider community?

Justice

- Justice is one of the Kingdom Values- It helps to bring about the KoG here on earth today.
- Where injustice happens, people are denied their human dignity.
- Some Christians belief that in some circumstances anger can be used to help create justice.
- Cleansing the Temple- in this act of protest Jesus was against the disrespecting being shown to God in the temple.

- Violent Protest- some believe that protests need to be visible in order to stop any injustices.
- UK law is against the use of violent protest but allows peaceful protests where the police are informed 6 days before.
- It is not supported by many as they see it as ineffective and damaging to the cause.

Links to Scripture and Teaching

- Amos 5: 23-24: Establishing justice is more important than worship.
- Psalms 99:4: Describes God as loving justice and righteousness.
- Deus Caritas Est 28: Every generation should fight to establish a just society and civil order.

Questions

1. Give modern examples of times when injustice has taken place.
2. Which form of protest do you agree with violent or non-violent protest? Justify your answer.

Just War Theory

- Initially, the early Church was against the use of violence but once they became the official religion of the Roman Empire.
- Conditions of Just War;
 1. it must be fought by a legal recognised authority, e.g., a government
 2. the cause of the war must be just
 3. the war must be fought with the intention to establish good or correct evil
 4. there must be a reasonable chance of success
 5. the war must be the last resort (after all diplomatic negotiations have been tried and failed)

6. only sufficient force must be used and civilians must not be involved.

- The ultimate aim of war should be to create peace and settle disputes.
- While many do not speak about the religious approach they will still agree/disagree with war on the basis of these conditions.
- Others believe that we should try to avoid going to war in all circumstances; the United Nations encourages countries to resolve disputes peacefully.
- Others believe that Just War Theory is dangerous because it could be seen to endorse war.

Links to Scripture and Teaching

- St. Thomas Aquinas- 'We do not see peace in order to be at war, but we go to war that we may have peace.'

Questions:

1. Why would this theory be so important to Christians?
2. Do you agree with all the conditions of the Just War Theory?

Nuclear War and Weapons of Mass Destruction

- The Catholic Church stated its opposition to nuclear war and WMD first in 1963 for the following reasons.
 - Their effects are indiscriminate; they target innocents people in place where the fighting isn't taking place.
 - Their negative effects are more than the possible success in the future.
 - They have long-term effects that impacts future generations.

- The possibility of success if small. Any survivors may end up living in a state of chaos.
- The cost of building and maintaining WMD is a lot. This money could be better spend improving people's lives e.g. those who live in poverty.
- The possession of WMD increases tension and fear between countries.
- Others argue that having WMD helps deter attacks on the UK.

Links to Scripture and Teaching

- Pacem in Terris 109-116- The money used in creating and maintaining weapons could be used in helping countries that are significantly poorer than ours. Nuclear weapons should be banned. 'Nothing is lost by peace; everything may be lost by war.'

Questions:

1. What are Nuclear Weapons?
2. Find examples where nuclear weapons have been used.
3. What effects did they have?
4. Do you agree with the used of Nuclear Weapons and WMD? Justify your answer.

Consequences of Modern Warfare

- Civilian Casualties- these are people that do not fight in the war but are still injured or killed by the fighting. The Catholic Church believes that both non-combatants and soldiers should be treat with respect.
- Refugees- people are often forced to leave their homes because war has destroyed their lives and left them fearing death. The Catholic Church believes that all refugees should be welcomed and have

encouraged countries to do this in the current refugee crisis.

- Some disagree and suggest that the use of WMD will cause more casualties or environmental damage but help to end a war more quickly.
- Environmental damage- warfare can destroy huge areas of land or the
- use of chemical weapons can cause harm for decades after the war has ended e.g. the ability to grow safe crops. The Catholic Church teaches that we all have a duty to be stewards of the earth and protect God's creation.
 - Some disagree and suggest that we need to think about how many resources the UK has before we starting taking in refugees; putting more pressure on industries that do not have enough funding e.g. schools, the NHS.

Question:

1. Which approach to the consequences of warfare do you agree with? Justify your answer.

Religion as a Reason for Violence and War

- It is often suggested that the cause of war is religion. But there are many other reasons; politics, economics, self-defence, retaliation and the desire to gain territory.
- Old Testament- it describes many battles where the Israelites use war to defend their religion and right to promised land. Whereas, in other teaching it is implied that peace is the only way forward.
- Holy War- the best know example is the crusades. They took place 11th-15th Centuries; Christians were sent

to free holy places that were in the control of the Muslim Turks. They believed that if they fought for God they would go to heaven.

Links to Scripture and Teaching

- Samuel 15:1-33- God tells the Jewish people to kill all the Amalekites. Saul does not kill all the children and animals. God gets angry because his orders have not been followed.
- This story can be interpreted as reflecting a time when many disputes were ended through the use of violence.
- Isaiah 2:4: 'Nations shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.'
- Exodus 21:34: 'eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth' can be interpreted keeping the dispute between the people arguing and not extend to the rest of the community.

Questions

1. Define a Holy War?
2. Why are the Crusades no longer seen as a Holy War?
3. How can religion cause war?

Pacifism

- Early Christians were pacifists e.g. Martin of Tours resigned from the Roman Army because it contradicted his faith.
- Quakers strongly promote pacifism. Many refused to fight in the world wars but acted as stretcher-bearers in no man's land helping both sides.
- Some believe that it wrong to fight even in self-defence whereas others think that it is a better alternative to defeat.
- Whereas, others think that force is necessary to solve certain disputes.

They fear that a pacifist approach would welcome attacks from others.

Links to Scripture and Teaching

- The Beatitudes: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the Children of God.'
- Pacem in Terris 126-129: due to the development of WMD war is no longer a suitable way to create justice.
- Youcat 398: The Church strives for peace but does not support radical pacifism.

Questions

1. Define pacifism.
2. Do you think pacifism is an appropriate approach?
3. What is radical pacifism?

Role of Religion in Conflicts in the 21st Century

- Every week Pope Francis leads the crowd in the Vatican Square in prayer. Often he brings the crowds attention to conflicts and ask them to pray for peace.
- In June 2014, Pope Francis organised a prayer meeting between the presidents of Israel and Palestine
- In September 2014, Pope Francis organised an international football match to raise funds for children affected by war.
- Work of Catholic Agencies-
 - After 11 years of bitter civil war in Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002, there were many children who had been separated from their parents or kidnapped by terrorists and forced to become child soldiers. CAFOD established orphanages to rescue these children.

- In 2014, Aid to the Church in Need spent almost a million pounds providing shelter, blankets, food and medicine to those who were still in Syria and for the many who refugees who left the country.
- Many Christians and non-Christians in Britain find their own ways to provide support for the victims of war.
 - By donating money or goods to charities that provide aid to refugees and war victims.
 - Some might volunteer for these charities
 - Some might provide support through their prayers

Terrorism

- They create a feeling of terror to further their cause. They aim to undermine government and force authorities to give in their demands.
- Maccabees- may be seen to condone the use of terrorism. They were facing an oppressive government that was forcing them to give up their religion and traditions. Without a violent response the Jewish faith would not have survived.
- Modern Catholic Teaching- opposes any form of terrorism. In recent terror attacks he has spoken out in support of the victims and leading prayer for peace.
- Although it appears some terror attack are on the basis of religion these are individual who have misinterpreted and distorted the religion.

Links to Scripture and Teaching

- CCC 2297: 'Terrorism threatens, wounds, and kills indiscriminately; it is gravely against justice and charity.'
- Romans 13:1-2: Authorities are established by God- whoever fights against their authority resists what God has established.

Questions

1. Define Terrorism.
2. Why is terrorism used?

Torture, Radicalism and Martyrdom

- Torture- the Catholic Church believes that it is inhumane. Both Catholics and non-Catholics believe that it is wrong because it denies people of their human rights. Whereas, others argue that if they can get information that will prevent a greater evil then it can be justified.
- Radicalisation- this can often lead to people being unable to accept alternative views and may use violence to promote their ideas. The Catholic Church promotes mutual respect- radicalisation goes against this because it encourages tension.
- Martyrdom- Some that kill themselves in suicide bombings are martyrs for their religion and God.
- The Catholic Church has always valued martyrs. We should reject any teachings that go against the teachings of Jesus.
- Others would argue that no belief is worth dying for and there are more effective ways to challenge a person's beliefs.

Links to Scripture and Teaching

- CCC 2279- Torture goes against respect for the person and for human dignity.

- Matthew 16:24- If anyone wants to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'

Questions

1. Define torture, radicalism and martyrdom.
2. Are there any circumstances where torture can be allowed?

Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking

- St. Paul, in his letters to various communities, encourages people to live in peace with one another.
- The Church asks every person to work at a local level.
- Pax Christi- Founded after the Second World War to create peace between France and Germany. It supports groups at the local level and rejects using violence as a way to solve disputes.
- Justice and Peace Commission- Founded in 1978 and works in every diocese to help reduce tension and violence by focusing on respect for the individual and the whole of creation.
- Non-Violent Resistance- for those who want to stand up to injustice without resorting to violence. E.g. Gandhi used non-violent efforts to help gain independence for India.

Links to Scripture and Teaching

- Philippians 4:2-3: Urges two women in a community to end their dispute in peace.
- 2 Corinthians 13:11: encourages people to live in peace and love.

Exam Questions

1. Define reconciliation. (1)
2. Define **Forgiveness**. (1)
3. Define **Reconciliation**. (1)
4. Define martyrdom. (1)
5. Define pacifism. (1)

6. Give two old testament teachings about war. (2)
7. Give two examples of Catholic agencies tackling peace-making. (2)
8. Give two consequences of modern warfare. (2)
9. Give two conditions of Just War Theory. (2)
10. Explain two contrasting beliefs in contemporary British society about the use of nuclear weapons. (4)
11. Explain two ways the Church reacts to war. (4)
12. Explain two contrasting views about how we should respond to the consequence to modern warfare. (4)
13. Explain how Christian organisations can influence the process of conflict resolution. (4)
14. How does Just War theory influence attitudes towards war. (5)
15. Explain two Christian beliefs about the use of torture. (5)
16. Explain two things the Bible teaches about violence. (5)
17. Explain two Christian views about pacifism. (5)
18. Explain how St. Paul Expresses beliefs about peace-making. (5)
19. Explain 2 contrasting views about attitudes to Nuclear War and Weapons of Mass Destruction. (5)
20. 'It is impossible for Catholics to support the use of terrorism.' Evaluate this Statement. (12)
21. 'Bullying is the worst form of violence.' Evaluate this statement. (12)
22. 'No War can ever be just'. Evaluate this statement (12)
23. 'All war is caused by religion.' Evaluate this statement. (12)

24.'It is acceptable for a country to own nuclear weapons' Evaluate this Statement. (12)

25.'The greatest damage done by modern warfare is to the environment. Evaluate this statement. (12)

Create your own exam questions

- How does X influence Y? (4)
- Explain 2 ways in which.... Might influence...(4)
- Explain two contrasting views about... (4)
- Explain how expresses beliefs about..... (5)