

RELIGION, PEACE AND CONFLICT

AQA GCSE THEME D – CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM

Peace and Justice

Peace:

- ✓ Peace is defined as the absence of war.
- ✓ It can also be thought of as a feeling of happiness and tranquility, Christians may feel this whilst praying, and Buddhists may feel it whilst meditating.
- ✓ The aim of war may be to create peace, but this can be hard to achieve because of the instability and destruction of war.

Christianity:

- ✓ Christians believe God will bring peace to the world.
- ✓ Jesus praised those who worked for peace: “blessed are the peacemakers”

Buddhism

- ✓ Buddhists believe that anger and violence come from the mind (anger is one of the 3 poisons). This means people must develop peace within themselves.
- ✓ Being peaceful is a way of practicing ahimsa (non-harm).

Justice:

- ✓ Justice is bringing about what’s right or fair, or making up for a wrong that has been committed.
- ✓ Justice is often linked with equality. If people don’t have the same opportunities this is seen as unfair. Everyone should be treated equally.
- ✓ If some regimes / governments cause or promote inequality then this may result in conflict.

Christianity:

- ✓ Christians believe that God is the ultimate judge and will give justice after death for those who have been good / evil (e.g., the parable of the Sheep and Goats where God punishes those who have ignored those in need).

Buddhism:

- ✓ Buddhists teach that non-violent methods should bring about justice. They also believe that acting justly follows ahimsa and created good karma.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Forgiveness:

- ✓ Defined as showing grace and mercy and pardoning someone for what they have done wrong.
- ✓ It means letting go of anger towards someone who has harmed you, and giving them a second chance.
- ✓ It does not mean that the person who caused the harm should not be punished or face justice.

Christianity:

- ✓ Believe that forgiveness is important for living peacefully.
- ✓ The wrong should be righted (justice) but once that’s happened forgiveness should follow.
- ✓ God sets the example by forgiving those who ask through faith. We should do the same.
- ✓ Christians are taught to forgive in the Lord’s prayer, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us”, and by Jesus “Seventy times seven”.

Buddhism:

- ✓ Buddhists are taught to forgive as it lets go of anger (one of the three poisons), follows ahimsa, and created good karma.

Reconciliation:

- ✓ This is a means to make up / restore a relationship after a disagreement.
- ✓ It is the second step of forgiveness.
- ✓ Reconciliation involves a conscious effort to rebuild the relationship.

Christianity:

- ✓ Christians believe that reconciliation is important. It is more than apologising. Roman Catholics go to confession to repair their relationship with God. This is the sacrament of reconciliation.

Buddhism:

- ✓ Buddhists agree with reconciliation as it lets go of anger (one of the three poisons), follows ahimsa, and created good karma.

Protest

- ✓ The right to protest is a fundamental democratic freedom.
- ✓ Protest is an expression of disapproval which is often in public.
- ✓ Protests have to be carefully planned before they go ahead.
- ✓ Police have to be informed in case they become violent.

Pacifism:

- ✓ The belief of people who refuse to fight in war that all violence is wrong.
- ✓ They believe violence can never be justified. They even believe that being violent in self-defence is wrong. They are called conscientious objectors.
- ✓ Pacifists strongly believe that it is best to work at preventing war from becoming a possibility.
- ✓ Humans lives are so valuable that nothing can justify putting them under threat.

Christianity:

- ✓ Christians do not promote violence. **‘Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called sons of God’. Matthew 9:5**
- ✓ Christian teachings generally say that violence should be avoided if possible.
- ✓ Sometimes Christians understand that violence is needed in order to stand up for injustices, however this should be proportionate and no more than necessary.
- ✓ Many pacifists take their inspiration from Jesus who taught non-violence. Include Martin Luther King, Marread Corrigan and Betty Williams, The Religions Society of Friends.

Buddhism:

- ✓ Buddhism focusses on suffering and alleviating suffering.
- ✓ Alleviating suffering may mean standing up for, or protesting against, something which you believe to be causing suffering.
- ✓ This also follows the principles of metta (loving kindness) and karuna (compassion).
- ✓ The principle of protest therefore fits comfortably within the Buddhist religion.
- ✓ However, violence breaks the first precept, ahimsa, which states do not harm.
- ✓ Any form of violent protest would therefore not be right. Pacifism is a more appropriate form of protest in Buddhism.
- ✓ Buddhist pacifists include the Dalai Lama and Tich Nhat Hanh.

TERRORISM, WEAPONS AND PACIFISM

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Terrorism

- ✓ A serious form of violence.
- ✓ Where an individual or group who share certain beliefs use violence or threat to further their cause, generally for political purposes.
- ✓ The violence is usually committed against innocent people and takes place in public.
- ✓ Terrorists believe that killing innocent people will make the rest of the population more aware of their cause and the authorities will give in to their demands.
- ✓ Suicide bombs, car bombs and gunmen shooting in public are all tactics of modern terrorism.
- ✓ **No religious tradition promotes terrorism, so you will never answer a question on why it is acceptable.**
- ✓ Terrorism has a long history:
 - Guy Fawkes and gunpowder plot.
 - The Troubles – violent conflict in Northern Ireland between 1968-1998 where Protestant and Catholic terrorist organisations targeted civilians and military personnel.
 - Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Two Islamic extremist groups that undertook attacks on the Twin Towers in September 2001 and London on 7/7.

Christianity:

- ✓ Christians believe terrorist acts are wrong as attacks do not follow the Just War principle.
- ✓ Victims are usually innocent people and it is wrong to kill innocent people.
- ✓ They believe you should use peaceful ways to resolve issues.

'Thou shall not kill'. Exodus 20:13

Buddhism:

- ✓ Buddhists would strongly argue with terrorism as it breaks the first precept, ahimsa.
- ✓ Terrorism also causes unnecessary suffering.
- ✓ The principle of karuna (compassion) states that Buddhists should care about the suffering of others, not cause it.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Nuclear Weapons

- ✓ Weapons that work by a nuclear reaction which devastate huge areas and kill large numbers of people.
- ✓ It is estimated that in 2015, nine nations had around 15,700 nuclear weapons between them.
- ✓ The usual justification for NW is that they prevent world wars from occurring due to the fear of the consequences. This is called nuclear deterrence.
- ✓ Nuclear disarmament means removing or eliminating nuclear weapons. CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) is an organisation that campaigns for this.
- ✓ The USA dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of WW2. They caused huge casualties and around 250,000 people died.

Chemical Weapons

- ✓ Weapons that contain deadly chemicals that, when released, cause many deaths.
- ✓ Chemical weapons such as mustard gas were used in WW1.
- ✓ Napalm and orange agent were used by the USA in the Vietnam war.
- ✓ President Assad was accused of using chemical weapons in the Syrian civil war.

Biological Weapons:

- ✓ Weapons containing harmful bacteria and viruses, also known as germ warfare, causing illness and death on a massive scale.

Christianity:

- ✓ Christians believe that the problem with nuclear weapons is their use rather than the device themselves. "Though shall not kill"
- ✓ It is a fundamental belief that as God is the creator only he is the one who is able to take away life.
- ✓ Some believe that nuclear weapons which kill masses of innocent can never be justified.
- ✓ Others believe that they can be used as a threat for self-defence.

Buddhism

- ✓ Buddhists would disagree with the use of weapons of mass destruction as they break the first precept, ahimsa.

Victims of war

- ✓ Casualties are unavoidable in war.

Many religions believe that you should help the victims of war after it has ended.

Christianity:

- ✓ Support organisations that help victims of war because of the belief in **'love your neighbour as yourself.' Mark 12:31**

Caritas: Catholic organisation who help serve the poor. Inspired by the teaching of Jesus and the Church. Provide a practical response to those suffering through conflict by saving lives and relieving suffering. Provide food and shelter for refugees. Provide translators and legal aid

Christian aid: Aim to bring an end to poverty. Work with the victims. Establish basic human rights and fairness in society. Support the local organisations to help deal with the issues. Raise awareness of conflict around the world. Fundraise through Christian Aid week. Distribute envelopes with a donation inside.

Buddhism:

- ✓ The principle of karuna (compassion) means that Buddhists care about the suffering of others.
- ✓ Karuna means that it is not enough to care, but they should actively try to help alleviate the suffering of others.
- ✓ For this reason Buddhists believe that the victims of war should be helped afterwards.

REASONS FOR WAR

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Retaliation:

- ✓ Retaliation is deliberately harming someone as a response of them harming you.
- ✓ Wars are sometimes fought in retaliation against a country which has done something wrong. For example, some believe that the war in Afghanistan was retaliation for the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Christianity:

- ✓ Christians are taught by Jesus not retaliate.
- ✓ Many Christians find it difficult to follow the teaching when it comes to war. 'Do not repay anyone evil for evil'. Romans 12:17

Buddhism:

- ✓ One of the four sublime states is metta. This means loving kindness and involves being kind, considerate and generous. A war started out of retaliation would not be in line with the principle of metta.

Holy War

- ✓ Fighting for a religious cause or God. Normally controlled by a religious leader.

Christianity:

- ✓ In the Old Testament there are many references to holy wars such as the Crusades.
- ✓ A holy war must be authorised by a religious leader with great authority. It should be to defend Christianity from attack.
- ✓ Those who take part will receive spiritual rewards and go straight to heaven.
- ✓ Christians will stand up for their faith but are much more likely to use the power of argument than violence.

Buddhism:

- ✓ Buddhism is a religion that teaches tolerance. The Buddha himself accepted that whilst he believed his teachings to be the truth, followers should test them for themselves. Therefore, a war started because of religion does not fit with Buddhist principles.

Self-defence:

- ✓ When a country attacks another it expects to meet resistance from the invaded country.
- ✓ Fighting in self-defence is usually considered to be morally acceptable as you are protecting the lives of the innocents that live there.

Christianity:

- ✓ Whilst there is little in the New Testament to justify the idea of fighting in self-defence an argument can be made for it.
- ✓ Christians believe it is acceptable as long as all other ways of solving the problem have been attempted and failed.

Buddhism:

- ✓ Buddhists live by the five precepts, one of which is to do no harm (ahimsa). Fighting, even out of self defence, would harm others.
- ✓ However, most Buddhists accept that if the precepts cannot be looked at only on a literal level. If it is necessary to fight out of self-defence to prevent further suffering to yourself and others then it may be justifiable.

Greed:

- ✓ War has been used to gain land or territory or regain land lost.
- ✓ It is used for countries to control resources and make countries richer and more powerful.

Christianity:

- ✓ Christianity warns against greed so a war for this reason is wrong.
- ✓ 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God'. Luke 18:25

Buddhism:

- ✓ The Buddha encouraged people to follow a middle path, and rejected his own life of luxury in the quest to ease suffering.
- ✓ The second precept tells Buddhists to refrain from taking that which is not freely given.

Just War

- ✓ Many wars are justified as a battle between Good and Evil.
- ✓ The Just War theory is a set of rules which set out when it is right to go to war.
- ✓ St Augustine set out these rules in the 4th century.
- ✓ The Just War rules are:
 1. Proper authority. War is started and controlled by the proper authority. E.g. In 1939 the UK Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, declared war against Germany.
 2. Just Cause. There is a just cause or reason for the war. E.g., self defence or to stop genocide. In WW2 the UK entered the war because Hitler had already invaded two countries and planned to invade more.
 3. Right Intention. The war must be fought to bring about good, or fight evil. Neville Chamberlain declared war on Germany as Hitler had evil intentions.
 4. Last Resort. War must be the last resort, once everything else has been tried. WW2 started after 4 years of diplomatic talks failed.
 5. Proportionality. The amount of force used must be just enough to succeed and no more. Innocent civilians must not be killed. In WW2 dropped atomic bombs on Japan killing over 200,000 civilians.
 6. Peace Restored. At the end of the war peace must be restored and the situation should be better, not worse, than before.
- ✓ All of these criteria should be met for the war to be considered Just.

Christianity:

- ✓ Most Christians accept that war is right if it meets all criteria to be just.

Buddhism:

- ✓ Most Buddhists would never accept that war is 'just' as it breaks the first precept (ahimsa).