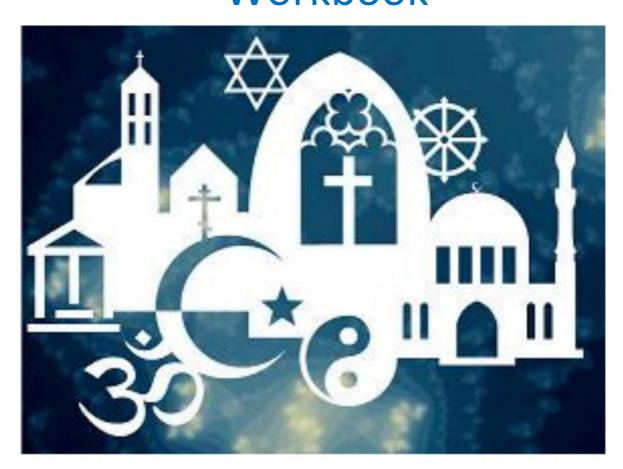


GCSE Religious Studies Religion, Peace and Conflict Workbook



Name:

Religions allowing war – holy war and just war

All religious traditions believe in peace, not war. However, most also accept that there are times when it is necessary to go to war to avoid a greater evil. Within religious teachings there are contrasting views on war and so religious believers must use their conscience in deciding if they believe a war is morally justified.



There are three possible stances a religious believer might take:

- 1. Pacifist believing that all war and killing is wrong
- 2. Holy War believing it is right to fight a war in the name of God
- 3. Just War believing it is right to fight a war in the interests of justice and the greater good

Within some religious traditions, there is clear guidance on the rules and legitimacy of wars.

Christianity

Declare a holy war, call the troops to arms (Old Testament)

Holy War

Within Christian history there was once a strong concept of holy war. In the Old Testament there are many examples of wars fought in the name of God. The soldiers believed God was on their side and indeed had influence over the outcomes of battles. For example, Joshua's army followed God's commands to blow trumpets and



bring down the walls of Jericho. The Crusades (1095 – 1291) were fought to capture control of the Holy Land. The Christian soldiers believed they were fighting for a sacred and noble cause. They believed God was with them and the Muslim Turks that they were fighting were the pagan enemies of God.

It is impossible to conceive of a just war in a nuclear age – Pope John XXIII



St Paul said Christians should obey their rulers, who had been given power by God. When those rulers demanded Christians be soldiers, a compromise had to be found. At 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. The message is clear: sometimes if you do not fight, you allow a greater evil to happen than a war would have caused, so you have to fight.

Christian Just War Rules:

War must be started and controlled by a proper authority such as a government

There must be a just cause for the war, it must not be aggression towards an enemy The war must have a clear aim to promote good and overcome evil

War must be a last resort, every effort must have been made to resolve conflict peacefully

There must be a reasonable chance of success, it would be wrong to risk lives with no chance of success

The war must be conducted fairly. Only reasonable force should be used and the risk to civilians minimised

There must be a good outcome and peace restored

Tasks:

| 1. | What is pacifism? |
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| 2. | What is the difference between a holy war and a just war? |
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| 3. | Explain in detail what Christians believe about holy war and just war. |
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| 4. | What are the Christian just war rules? |
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