Religion, peace and conflict

Reasons for war	Christian Attitudes towards war	Islamic attitudes towards war	Just War Theory
There are many reasons that may decide to go to war: Greed – war is used to take the natural resources or land of another country, e.g. many people think the Iraq war (1990) occurred as Iraq wanted to secure the oil reserves of Kuwait. Christianity: "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" Islam: "God does not like arrogant, boastful people" Retaliation – some countries go to war after their citizens have been harmed so that the attackers get 'pay back', e.g. after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the USA invaded Afghanistan, looking to catch Bin Laden who masterminded the 9/11 attacks. Christianity: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil." Islam: "If you have to respond to an attack, make your response proportionate." Self-defence – Countries may go to war with an aggressor to protect their land, citizens and way of life, e.g. Great Britain fought in WWII to protect themselves against Nazi invasion which was a threat to the democratic ideals of Western Europe. Islam: "Those who have been attacked are permitted to take up arms." Ethnic hatred – Sometimes, people of different ethnic backgrounds will go to war due to longstanding disputes over ethnic or cultural differences, e.g. the war in Darfur (2003-2007) was between the government and their Arab supporters against non-Arabs groups.	There are Christian arguments for and against war. Typically, the Old Testament seems to be more supportive of war and conflict, whereas the New Testament is based around Jesus' teachings of agape and therefore promotes pacifism (peace). **Argument in favour of war** The Just War Theory of Thomas Aquinas allows war in certain circumstances (Just War theory.) St. Paul taught: "obey the state authorities", if the government declare war, Christians should accept it. The book of Exodus teaches: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"; this suggests that war is acceptable as retaliation. In the book of Numbers, God supported Moses' war against and slaughter of the Midianites as they had "led the people of Israel to sin against God" Situation Ethics is based upon the principle of agape. The most loving thing to do may be to go to war to protect the human rights of those being abused. **Arguments against war** The sanctity of life – all people are made "in the image of God" and The Ten Commandments teach "Do not kill." Jesus is seen as a PACIFIST and taught: "Love your enemies" and "blessed are the peacemakers" Jesus also stopped his disciples using violence saying "put your sword back into its place" when his disciples tried to prevent his arrest. Jesus' teachings of agape generally suggest that war should be avoided: "love thy neighbour".	Just as in Christianity, within Islam there are arguments that can be found to support war and arguments that can be found against war. **Argument in favour of war** *The principle of Lesser jihad *The prophet Muhammed was involved in conflicts such as the Battle of Badr – Allah supported these actions as He sent "a thousand angels in succession" to support Muhammed and prior to the battle stated "Those who have been attacked are permitted to take up arms." **Arguments against war** *The sanctity of life. *War inevitable causes destruction of the environment around us and as stewards (khalifahs) of God's creation, we should do all that we can avoid such destruction of the planet. *On the Day of Judgement Allah will show mercy and forgiveness to those who have shown mercy and forgiveness to others. From the Qur'an: *"If they incline to peace, make peace with them." *"Paradise is for those who curb their anger and forgive their fellow man." From the Hadith: *"Control your anger, forgive your brother."	Just War Theory is applicable to Christianity and Islam although it is stated in slightly different ways in each religion. Just War Theory states the conditions under which war is acceptable, although these conditions are very rare and Just War Theory should be considered as a theory that on the whole prevents war. **Christianity** *Developed by St. Thomas Aquinas *A just war is fought for the right reasons (jus ad bellum) and under the right conditions (jus in bello). A was is just if and can be fought if: *There is a reasonable chance of success. *The aim is to bring about peace. *It is a last resort. *The cause is just, e.g. resisting injustice. *The methods used are reasonable and fair. *Innocent civilians are not killed. **Islam** *Often referred to as Lesser jihad *Abu Bakr was responsible for devising and developing some of the rules that Muslim armies must obey. *It is fought for a just cause, e.g. to defend Islam. *It is a last resort. *It is authorised by a valid Muslim authority. *It is done in self-defence – "Fight for the sake of God those that fight against you." (Qur'an) *The minimum amount of suffering is caused. *War ends when the enemy surrender. *Innocent civilians are not attacked. *The aim is to restore peace and freedom.

Nuclear war & weapons of mass destruction	Violent protest and terrorism	Pacifism	Religious responses to victim of war
Weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) are weapons that can kill large numbers of people and devastate huge areas of land. **Nuclear weapons** are an example of a weapon of mass destruction that work by a nuclear reaction. **The benefits of WMDs** *They act as a deterrent, e.g. Cold War. *Their use ended WWII quickly – dropping nuclear bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima led to Japan surrendering. *Many people believe that possessing WMDs as a deterrent is acceptable, but their use is not. **Christian arguments against the use of weapons of mass destruction** *The sanctity of life – everyone is made in **"the image of God."** ***"Do not kill."** *Many Christians, such as Quakers, are pacifists and are therefore against their use. *Arguments based upon agape – **"love thy neighbour"; "treat others as you want to be treated."** *Stewardship – WMDs devastate large areas and therefore their use contravenes Christians' beliefs about protecting the environment (**Parable of the Talents**). **Islamic arguments against the use of weapons of mass destruction** *The sanctity of life *Lesser Jihad dictates that innocent civilians must not be killed; this is unavoidable when WMDs are used. *Stewardship – Muslims are khalifahs of Allah's creation, but WMDs cause mass destruction of large areas. *The Qur'an states: **"Fight in God's cause… but do not overstep the limits"** **Many 'Islamic countries' such as Pakistan do possess WMDs.	**Violent protest** involves expressing disapproval by using actions that threaten or harm others. **Terrorism** involves the unlawful use of violence against civilians to achieve a political goal. Christians and Muslims are against terrorism as innocent civilians are threatened, harmed or killed and this is an unacceptable way of treating God's creation. Both Christians and Muslims can cite the sanctity of life against forms of lethal terrorism such as bombings. Christians and Muslims are likely to support peaceful protests, e.g. when human rights, religious freedom or environmental protections are being demanded, however, they will not condone the use of violence that harms other people. **Christian arguments against violent protest and terrorism** *Agape – **"love thy neighbour"; "treat others as you want to be treated".** *Many liberal Christians are pacifists. *Christian leaders such as Martin Luther King (a Baptist minister) organised civil rights protests, yet he always demanded that these were done in a non-violent way. *All people deserve respect because they are all made **"in the image of God."** **Islamic arguments against violent protest and terrorism** ***"Paradise is for those who curb their anger and forgive their fellow man"** (Qur'an) and **"Control your anger, forgive your brother"** (Hadith) *The prophet taught that **"None of you truly believe until he wishes for his brothers what he wishes for himself"** *Abu Bakr taught **"Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path"** – this would rule out terrorism. *The Qur'an states: **"Fight in God's cause… but do not overstep the limits"** – this would rule out terrorism.	**Pacifism** is the belief that war and violence of any kind are wrong. **Conscientious objectors** are people who refuse to take part in a war or perform military service because they believe that war and violence are wrong. There are Christian and Islamic teachings that support pacifism; however, not all Christians and Muslims are pacifists (see arguments for war and Just War Theory above). **Christian arguments in favour of pacifism** **Many of Jesus' teachings support pacifism:** ***"Blessed are the peacemakers"** ***"Love your enemies, bless those who curse you"** ***"Forgive not seven times, but seven times seventy times"**, i.e. if someone harms you, you should forgive them rather than seek retribution. *Jesus' teaching of agape is also applicable. We do not want to be harmed ourselves, so the teaching **"treat others as you want to be treated"** supports pacifism. The Quakers base their ideology upon agape and they are therefore commonly pacifists – they believe that everyone has 'the light of Christ within them' and therefore should not be harmed. *During WWII, many Quakers were conscientious objectors. *Instead of fighting, they undertook 'work of national importance' such as farming, taking care of the sick, driving ambulances or fighting fires. **Islamic attitudes towards pacifism** Whilst Islam is a religion of peace, due to the duty of lesser jihad, it is difficult for Muslims to identify as pacifists. However, the Hadith does state: **"control your anger, forgive your brother"** and **"None of you truly believe until he wishes for his brothers what he wishes for himself"** (golden rule), suggesting that there are teachings that support a pacifism. The Qur'an also states: **"If they incline towards peace, make peace with them".**	Both Muslims and Christians believe that it is important to help the victims of war, i.e. those effected by war. For example: *Injured soldiers may need psychological support, medical help for injuries and a way of earning a living *Civilians living in a war zone may need medical help for injuries and a way of earning a living. *Family members whose loved ones are killed may need money to live on if the main wage earner is killed. *Refugees who have lost their homes and livelihoods due to war may need a safe place to live and access to food and clean water. **Christianity** *Jesus taught agape, the most loving thing to do is to help those in need: **Parable of the Sheep and Goats, "love thy neighbour", "treat others as you want to be treated".** *Jesus taught: **"Blessed are the merciful".** *There are religious organisations that help victims of war such as **Christian Aid** (https://www.christianaid.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/tackling-violence-building-peace) **Islam** *Following the Battle of Badr, Muhammed treated his prisoners with respect to avoid the problems facing victims of war. *The Qur'an says: **"Whoever saved a life, it is as if they saved the whole of mankind"** and the prophet taught **"None of you truly believe until he wishes for his brothers what he wishes for himself"** (this is the Islamic interpretation of the Golden Rule). * Islamic organisations such as **Muslim Aid** support victims of war and Muslims can support their work through zakat donations. For example, Muslim Aid have supported refugees effected by the Syrian conflict by providing free medical treatment, food, blankets and bedding.