

The Christian Contribution to Issues of War and Peace

Teachers' Pack

This lesson explores the contribution of Christian theology to issues of war and peace. By examining the major strands in Christian thinking on the issue, students will understand the historical context within which they developed, the scripture and theology that underpins them, and the ongoing influence these ideas have.

**For Edexcel A-Level Religious Studies
Paper 2: Religion and Ethics; Section 3.1: War and Peace**

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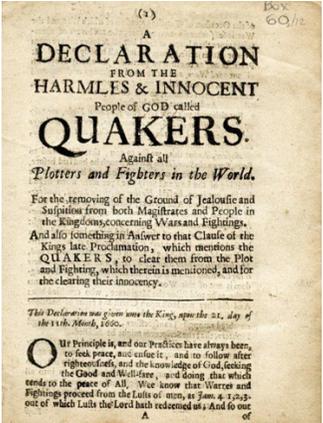


An A-Level Religious Studies Lesson by Pax Christi and Quaker Peace and Social Witness

www.paxchristi.org.uk

www.quaker.org.uk

The Christian Contribution to Issues of War and Peace

<p>Curriculum Links</p> <p>Edexcel Paper 2: Religion and Ethics; Section 3.1: War and Peace</p>		<p>This lesson explores the contribution of Christian theology to issues of war and peace.</p> <p>By examining the major strands in Christian thinking on the issue, students will understand the historical context within which they developed, the scripture and theology that underpins them, and the ongoing influence these ideas have.</p>	
<p>Starter Activity Exploring the Scriptures</p>	<p>Overview</p> <p>This activity is based on the Quaker Peace Testimony of 1660.</p> <p>Individually or in pairs students are required to identify the three pieces of scripture they would use if trying to prove that their church was a peace church.</p> <p>Bibles can be provided. Scripture references are included in the teachers pack to provide further support.</p>	<p>In detail</p> <p>[Slide 2] 1660 is a year of political and religious turmoil in England. The monarchy has been re-established after the execution of Charles I and the Interregnum – when Oliver Cromwell ruled the nation. [Slide 3] Charles’s son, King Charles II, is on the throne and there is a clampdown on religious radicals who are perceived as a threat.</p> <p>[Slide 4] The Religious Society of Friends – the Quakers – had been recently established and wanted to stress that they were no threat to the King. [Slide 5] Having often found themselves imprisoned as dissenters, the Quakers – who would go on to be known as a Peace Church – issued a declaration stressing that, as men and women of peace, they represented no threat to the King. Their argument was rooted in scripture.</p> <p>[Slide 6] Individually or in pairs: Which three pieces of scripture would you use if you wanted to prove that your Christian Church was a Peace Church? Why?</p>	<p>Resources</p> <p>Slideshow</p> <p>Bibles</p> <p>Peace in Scripture resource sheet from Teachers’ Pack</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Quaker Declaration of 1660 © Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain</p> </div>

[Slide 7] The Quakers' peace testimony is one example of Christian Pacifism, one of the four major and influential strands of Christian thinking on war and peace that developed through the history of the Christian faith.

[Slide 8] The four strands are: **Christian Pacifism, Just War, Holy War, and World Community**

The remainder of the lesson will be spent examining these in more detail.

<p>Main Activity Christian thinking on War and Peace</p>	<p>Overview</p> <p>This activity looks in detail at the four main strands of Christian thinking concerning war and peace.</p> <p>By examining the scripture and theology underpinning these ideas students will understand when and why each came to dominate thinking, how they work in practice, their shortcomings, and the ongoing relevance of these ideas.</p>	<p>In detail</p> <p>[Slide 9] The class is split into four groups</p> <p>Each group is given a handout that focusses on one of the four themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian Pacifism • Just War • Holy War • World Community <p>Using these handouts as the foundation of their research, each group will prepare a presentation on their theme to be given to the whole class.</p> <p>The presentation should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the theme is • The scripture and theology that underpins the ideas • When it was at its most dominant and why • Key examples of the ideas in practice • Their impact beyond the Church • Practical applications today 	<p>Resources</p> <p><i>Christian Thinking on War and Peace</i> – handouts from the teachers' pack.</p> <p>Bibles</p> <p>Other resources to support research (access to internet, recommended texts etc)</p>
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<p>Plenary The Christian Attitude to War</p>	<p>Overview</p> <p>Having looked in detail at the four pre-eminent Christian responses to issues of war and peace, students will assess which they consider to be the most authentic.</p>	<p>In detail</p> <p>[Slide 10] You have examined the four pre-eminent themes in the Christian understanding of war and peace.</p> <p>Whilst each of these approaches had an historical era when it was dominant, all four have been influential throughout Church history and continue to be so today.</p> <p>[Slide 11] Which of these four responses do you consider to be the most authentically Christian and why?</p>	
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More information

This Religious Studies lesson has been produced by Pax Christi and Quaker Peace and Social Witness. For more education resources exploring war, peace, and the Christian conscience see www.paxchristi.org.uk or www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/peace/peace-education

This lesson borrows many of the ideas in the book War & the Christian Conscience: Where Do You Stand? by Joseph J. Fahey (Orbis 2005).



Peace in Scripture

Situation: It is 1660 and England is in political and religious turmoil. King Charles II is on the throne and there is a clampdown on religious radicals who are perceived as a threat.

The Quakers had been recently established and wanted to stress that they were no threat to the King. Having often found themselves imprisoned as dissenters, the Quakers – who would go on to be known as a Peace Church – issued a declaration stressing that, as men and women of peace, they represented no threat to the King. Their argument was rooted in scripture.

Which THREE pieces of scripture do you think would most effectively support an argument that a Christian Church is a peace church? Why?

You may find some of the following helpful in your research:

Old Testament

Isaiah 2:2-4

Isaiah 9:6-7

Zechariah 4:6

Micah 4:1-4

New Testament

Matthew 5:1-12; 21-26; 34;
38-42; 43-48

Matthew 26:51-53

Mark 12:28-34

Luke 6:27-36

Luke 22:36

John 14:27

Romans 12:9-21

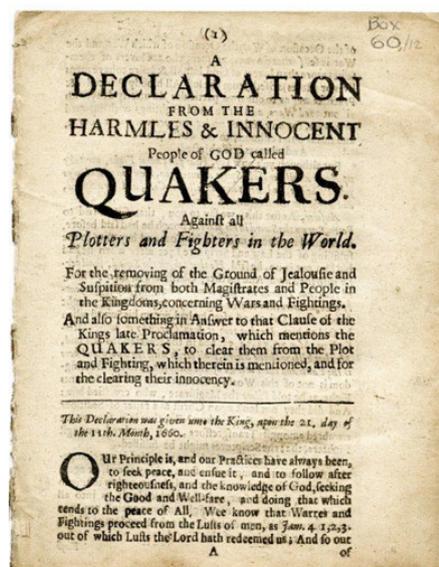
2 Corinthians 1:12

Ephesians 6:10-17

James 4:1-3

Revelation 13:10

[Note: The underlined references are the passages quoted in the Quakers' original declaration of 1660]



Quaker Declaration of 1660

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Pacifism

From the Latin **Pax** and **Facere**, meaning '**to make peace**'

Pacifism seeks to abolish war and to reconcile enemies through the power of love and social justice.

Pacifism means *to make peace*—it demands actively working for peace.

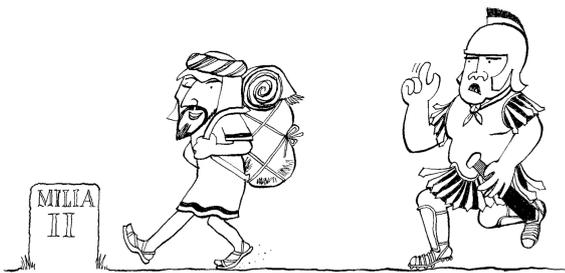
Key Scripture: Mt 5:38-42

Turn the other cheek: Robs the oppressor of the power of humiliation. “Try again! Your first blow failed. I am a human person equal in dignity. You cannot demean me.”

Give your cloak: In this debtor/creditor relationship the giving of everything—leading to nakedness—is a protest. By leaving court naked the debtor refuses to be humiliated and shines a light on the injustice in the system that led to his poverty.

Go the extra mile: Roman soldiers could force subjects to carry their pack for one mile but no more. By continuing for another mile the subject refuses to be powerless, seizes the initiative, and causes a problem for the soldier (who appears to be breaking the rules).

These examples introduce the sort of nonviolent action that is at the heart of pacifism.



Other Scripture: Mt 5:1-12; Mt 5:23-34; Mt 5:43-48; Mt 26:51-52; Eph 6:10-17

Dominant Era: The Early Church

Pacifism was the dominant Christian witness for the first few centuries after Christ's death.

Overwhelmingly Christians refused to serve in the army—or engage in violence of any form—well into the fourth century.

Pacifism was adopted for a variety of reasons—Christians in the Roman army wouldn't participate in worship of Caesar; the second coming was expected imminently; a general aversion to Rome—but the greatest reason was Christ's command to *love your enemies*.

Church Writers and Thinkers

The Lord, in disarming Peter, ungirt every soldier.

Tertullian (160-220)

I will never serve you. You can cut off my head but I will not be a soldier of this world, for I am a soldier of Christ... I will not take the badge [of the soldier]. If you insist, I will deface it. I am a Christian, and am not allowed to wear that leaden seal around my neck.

St Maximilian (274-295)

Hitherto I have served you as a soldier, let me now serve Christ... I am a soldier of Christ and it is not lawful for me to fight.

St Martin of Tours (316-397)

Christian Pacifism Today

Although Christian pacifism lost its position as the dominant Christian attitude to war during the fifth century it has remained a thread within Christian thought ever since. St Francis of Assisi during the medieval period and the growth of Peace Churches after the Reformation kept the flame alive. Today the Quakers (quaker.org.uk) are a Peace Church and peace groups such as Pax Christi (paxchristi.org.uk) champion this philosophy.

Further Reading: Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*, Fortress Press 2003

Just War

The love of enemies admits no dispensation, but does not exclude wars of mercy waged by the good.

Just War is a set of principles that define when it is acceptable to go to war, the conduct that is acceptable during war, and how the aftermath of war is to be dealt with. These principles seek to limit war and they remain the basis for many international treaties today.

Principles of Just War

Ius ad Bellum (Right to go to war)

1. There must be a **Just Cause**
2. War must be declared by a **Proper Authority**
3. War must be for the **Right Intention** (to restore peace)
4. War must be the **Last Resort**

Ius in Bello (Conduct in war)

1. War must be winnable (**Probability of success**)
2. Only combatants are legitimate targets (**Just conduct**)
3. The benefits must outweigh the consequences (**Proportionality**)

Ius post Bellum (Justice after war)

1. A conditional surrender should be negotiated (**Just Termination**)
2. Victor must repair damage to innocent people and infrastructure (**Restitution**)

Dominant Era: 5th—11th Century

By the 4th century Christianity was the official religion of the Roman Empire. Christians were no longer other-worldly, concerned only with heavenly things, but were fully immersed in this earthly realm.

Heavenly ethical systems were impractical on earth (apart from in monasteries) so a different ethical system developed to deal with the messiness of the earthly realm and the imperfection of humankind.

Wars were considered inevitable so attention turned to efforts to limit their effects. Pacifism was superseded as the dominant response by *Just War* which permitted defence of the empire and the faith by military means.

Just War in Scripture: Mk 12: 13-17;
Jn 2:13-16; Mt 10:34-39; Lk 22:35-38;
Mt 8:5-10; Jn 15:12-17

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Love does not preclude a benevolent severity, nor that correction which compassion itself dictates. No one indeed is fit to inflict punishment save the one who has first overcome hate in his heart. The love of enemies admits no dispensation, but love does not exclude wars of mercy waged by the good. **St Augustine of Hippo** [Pictured] (354-430)

In cases where it belongs to a community to provide a ruler for itself, that community can without injustice depose or restrain a king whom it has appointed, if he should abuse royal power tyrannically. **St Thomas Aquinas** (1225-1274)

Just War Today

Just War was never meant to justify war but to limit it. Some feel it is used more often to find a reason to go to war rather than a reason not to. At a Vatican conference in 2016 a call was made for the church to replace *just war* with *just peace*, partly in order to address this: www.nonviolencejustpeace.net

Further Reading: Lisa S. Cahill, *Love Your Enemies: Discipleship, Pacifism, and Just War Theory*, Augsburg 1994

Holy War

Holy War is known, outside a religious context, as Total War.

Whereas *Just War* considered war inevitable but also regrettable and avoidable, *Total War* understands human society to be in a perpetual state of war and that victory requires the annihilation of enemies. *Holy War* is God's act against a sinful humanity; God's total war against the forces of evil.

Holy War in Scripture

Holy War can be seen to be championed in both the Old and the New Testaments:

- God as a warrior fighting for His chosen people
Deut 20:1-4
- God's people may seize the lands of their enemies
Deut 20:16-18
- Enemies are to be annihilated
Deut 20:16-18; Josh 8:24-28
- God's armies will conquer evil
Rev 19:11-21
- The good are rewarded with a place in heaven; the evil are damned to hell
Rev 20:4; Rev 20:7-10

Dominant Era: 11th—20th Century

The capture of Jerusalem and holy places in Palestine by Muslim Turks in 1071 led to increased fear of Islam. Pope Urban II called for a *Holy War* in defence of Christians against these *infidels*.

These holy wars became known as the Crusades which were fought for the glory of God and approved of by the Church. Crusaders were granted several privileges including a *Papal Indulgence* which guaranteed their immediate entry into heaven should they die in battle annihilating the enemies of Christianity.

Holy War later evolved into the persecution of heretics, Jews, witches, and indigenous peoples in God's name.

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Go forward therefore, in confidence, O Knights, and with dauntless spirit drive out the enemies of the cross of Christ. Be certain that neither death nor life can divorce you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. In all danger repeat this within yourselves: "Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" [Rom 14:8]. With what happiness they die, martyrs in battle! St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) preaching the 2nd Crusade



Then you would be one of Christ's company, going to fight the unbelieving dogs who have possession of our holy place, where gentle First Truth lived and endured sufferings and death for us. You find so much satisfaction in fighting and waging war, so now I am begging you tenderly in Christ Jesus not to wage war any longer against Christians (for that offends God), but to go instead to fight the unbelievers, as God and our Holy Father decreed.

St Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) in a letter to a mercenary

Holy War Today

The response to terrorist atrocities around the world, notably the attacks on New York of 11 September 2001, can be seen to be a Total War response which has clear parallels with the Holy War of the Crusades. In both cases there is an enemy that must be annihilated by any means necessary with the ends justifying the means; a righteous cause with the intention of promoting noble ideals—truth, justice, and liberation, or freedom and democracy.

Further Reading: Joseph J. Fahey, *War and the Christian Conscience*, Orbis 2005 pp115-146

World Community

Peace is the fruit of anxious daily care to see that everyone lives in the justice that God intends.
(Populorum Progressio)

A model of global cooperation based on a democratic union of states pursuing an end to war, securing social justice, protecting human rights, and preserving the environment.

Key Scripture: Isaiah 2:2-4

In days to come
the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

Other Scripture: Isaiah 42:1-7; Lk 4:18-19;
Mt 28:19-20; Gal 3:27-29; Rom 1:13-16;
Rom 12:9-21

Dominant Era: from the 20th Century

The Papal Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, published in 1963 by Pope John XXIII, placed international cooperation and the universal common good at the heart of peacemaking.

This came after centuries of progression from the earliest suggestion that indigenous peoples had inherent rights and dignity, to the recognition that natural law gave every person inalienable human rights.

Church teaching of the 20th century set out the respective duties of citizen and state, emphasised our common humanity, and placed global interdependence and justice as the foundation of good relations between nations. Peace is based on truth, justice, freedom, and love.

John XXIII's Pacem in Terris was the first Papal Encyclical to be addressed to all people of the world—not just to Catholics.



Church Writers and Thinkers

We are hopeful that, by establishing contact with one another and by a policy of negotiation, nations will come to a better recognition of the natural ties that bind them together as human. We are hopeful, too, that they will come to a fairer realisation of one of the cardinal duties deriving from our common nature: namely, that love, not fear, must dominate the relationships between individuals and between nations. It is principally characteristic of love that it draws people together in all sorts of ways, sincerely united in the bonds of mind and matter; and this is a union from which countless blessings can flow. **Pope John XXIII** (1881-1963) in *Pacem in Terris* (#129)

Ongoing Development

A vision of World Community has seen the Church champion a number of positions that allow this community to flourish in peace. These include calls for disarmament and an end to the arms trade, support for conscientious objection, and the promotion of nonviolent conflict resolution and peace education.

Further Reading: John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, CTS 2002

Credits and Acknowledgements

This lesson has been produced by Pax Christi UK (www.paxchristi.org.uk) and Quakers in Britain (www.quaker.org.uk).

It has drawn heavily on the work of Joseph J. Fahey in War and the Christian Conscience: Where do you stand? (Orbis 2005).

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For the text of the 1660 Quaker Declaration: www.friendsjournal.org/files/1660PeaceTestimony.pdf