

Justification for War

The Just War Theories

- There are three main parts to 'just war' theories, they are all major philosophical ideas.
- **Jus ad Bellum** – This is the consideration of whether it is right to go to war and Thomas Aquinas was the philosopher who founded the theory. The theory was called 'jus ad bellum' (it was later expanded upon by the Catholic Church) and laid out 5 conditions for a war to be valid:
 - **The war must be started by a proper authority such as a government or monarch.**
 - **The reason to go to war must be just, such as to protect people or claim land for God.**
 - **Everything must be done to make sure good instead of evil results from a war.**
 - **The war must be the last resort, every other method must have been tried and have failed.**
 - **The force used must be no more than is necessary, for example children must not be targeted.**
- **Jus in Bello** – This concerns the actions taken within a war, and whether or not the correct conduct is followed. It says that a war needs to follow three conditions to be appropriate:
 - **Civilians shouldn't be harmed in any way shape or form.**
 - **Only appropriate force should be used (occupation rather than slaughter).**
 - **Internationally agreed conventions regulating war must be followed and obeyed.**
- **Jus post Bellum** – This part of the theory refers to actions taken after the war, to help countries move from war to peace in a positive and safe way and includes:
 - **Punishing war criminals in international courts of justice, or leaving them to the people's will.**
 - **Helping to retrain police and military in countries where war has taken place.**
 - **Helping to rebuild/newly build infrastructure such as hospitals and other essentials.**

Holy Wars

- Holy Wars are wars that are allowed to happen because of a need to defend religion, the causes of a holy war may include claiming land for a religion or preventing discrimination against believers.
- Holy Wars have three elements that make them unique from other conflicts:

- **The achievement of a religious goal (i.e. reclaiming of Jerusalem for Christianity/Judaism).**
- **The authorisation of a religious leader (i.e. The Pope).**
- **The promise of a spiritual reward for those who take part (i.e. they will go to heaven).**
- Although a religious leader like the Pope may initially call the war, it is believed by many Christians that the war is favoured by God because it has been called by that religious leader who is a channel.
- One example of a holy war directly commanded by God can be found in the book of Joshua, in which God tells Joshua to send spies out to survey the land for battle. The land belongs to others (the Hittites) but God tells them to take the land anyway and promises victory over the enemy.

Christian Attitudes to Conventional Warfare

- Christians do not believe war can be justified by just anyone, if it meets all the criteria of a 'just war' then sometimes leaders will accept it, but many would still question it regardless.
- The Bible does teach that war can bring peace and justice but should do nothing else. The St Augustine actually said that some wars can be peaceful acts if they oppose evil.
- All churches teach that peace should be achieved by the global community altogether, as a major political force the Catholic Church teaches that peace is built on truth, justice and love.

Modern Day Holy Wars

- Modern Day Holy Wars are controversial because it is no longer the case that most countries are one religion, many have no state religion (like France) or have a variety of religions (Britain or Germany) even if they are based on a specific religion in their culture. Many of the soldiers fighting are not going to be of the same religion as the leader and so it invalidates it as a 'just' war.
- In the Modern Day the church no longer supports war unless it is completely necessary against explicit evils. However, some Christians have argued that God is on their side on war.
- The clearest example of a claimed 'holy war' would be the Iraq War that began in 2003. It was waged by the UK and US against Iraq, a largely Islamic country. It has been justified because both the UK and US believed the country to be hiding weapons of mass destruction, although several reviews since this have suggested that it was due to massive oil supplies in the area.
- The country was at the time ruled by Saddam Hussein who had been criticised for his attitudes to his own people, favouring dictatorship-like rule over democratic rule. However, until tensions soured it was reported that the relationship between the west and Iraq was relatively good.
- It has been reported by the media that George Bush's war brief at the time was aided by the Bible with videos of Saddam Hussein speaking to large crowds and in the background the following verse:

‘It is God’s will that by doing good you will silence the ignorant talk of foolish men’ – 1 Peter 2:15

- Fundamentalist Christians have argued that this is good justification for going to war, but it troubled much of the political and military establishment of the US that they were going to war ‘for God’.
 - Bush also seems to have claimed several times that he was told by God to invade Iraq.
 - To combat this, the Reverend Barry Lynn showed the view of much of the evangelical American community by saying that ‘US soldiers are not crusaders and should not be depicted as such’.
 - This view argues that Bush’s interpretation shows America as a Christian country trying to overthrow an Islamic state and change its government which was not the case.
 - Neither the Anglican (English Protestant) nor the Catholic churches have called upon soldiers to fight in wars since the time of the Crusades in the Middle East during the Middle Ages.
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Christian Attitudes to Behaviour During War

- For much of the world, behaviour during war is regulated by large international agreements such as the Geneva Conventions, established in 1949 after WW2 to prevent such horrific things happening again. It is difficult to regulate this even though most countries have signed the agreement.
 - Generally, the ‘laws’ in the Geneva Convention seek to protect civilians in war, therefore it forbids the use of biological and chemical weapons which are usually used on large populations of people.
 - However, while weapon laws may be easier to follow, some countries like the US choose not to follow other laws like the one against torture because it greatly disadvantages them. Other countries including the UK also use torture despite it being against our human rights.
 - The laws also take on Christian perspectives of mercy, they say that a surrendering soldier can expect mercy and a wounded one can expect medical aid. Soldiers become civilians after battle.
 - Many people who go to war are killed, but the enemy is not then put on trial for murder. Instead, British armed forces leave it up to soldiers to decide what is moral and what is not. Christians would say that unless every other option has been exhausted, killing the enemy is unacceptable.
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Christian Attitudes to Technological Warfare

- **Technological Warfare** – The use of technological developments to increase a nation’s ability in war, including the development of weapons and means of engaging in war.
- One big example of technological warfare at the minute is drones, they are unmanned aircraft that usually carry missiles designed to specifically take out certain targets, they are used in assassination-like attacks on targets in the middle-east but often kill other civilians as well.

- Since drones are remotely used, there are concerns by some Christians that this will cause soldiers who operate such drones to become desensitised to killing people, they also say that it is unfair that we have such weapons and that our soldiers don't risk their lives while the enemy does just by going outside in public where they could be shot by a drone.
 - There are many concerns by Christians that drones result in far too many civilian deaths.
 - Some Christians would argue that the use of drones themselves is not against the Just War Theory, but rather that left unregulated they could make it easier to go to war and reduce the human capacity to judge an enemy's strength, which would invalidate it as a Just War.
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Peace and Peacemaking

- **'Blessed are the peacemakers'** – Jesus, Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:9
 - Christians believe that peace is not only a command by God when there is nothing defying him, but that it positively impacts all aspects of culture and society because of its nature.
 - They say that peace is good because it reduces the effects of war including poverty, homelessness and the number of broken families.
 - While not a Christian, the Dalai Lama believes that peace comes through compassion for all.
 - The Bible speaks of a time when absolute peace will be achieved, it says in Isaiah: **'They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks'**.
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Pacifism

- Pacifists are people who believe that violence is wrong, therefore, in order to achieve peace we must oppose such violence in an effort to prevent the negative effects of war.
- This doesn't mean that pacifists will tolerate violence and aggression, but that by using other methods of expressing themselves such as protests and sanctions they can achieve the same results without going to war and losing so many lives.
- Absolute pacifism is the belief that there should never be a use of military force, whether or not the cause is just; Christians hold this belief because Jesus said **'love your enemies'**.
- When faced with his enemies, Jesus allows himself to die. When Peter slices off a Roman's ear in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus puts it back on and heals him, criticising Peter for doing such a thing.
- Paul also teaches that people should follow their god-appointed leaders, such as the Romans, and that any act of rebellion against the state is an act of rebellion against God as a result.
- The Amish and the Quakers both argue that all Christians should be pacifists as Jesus was, because he took all the hardships prior to his crucifixion so should we.
- Some Christians believe in 'Conditional Pacifism', this is the view that if the effects of war are lesser than if the war didn't occur, then there is a duty to go to war, as is the protection of life.
- Both the Catholic and Anglican churches oppose war, but see it as a necessary step in some conflicts in the case of self-defence. In these cases they would apply the Just War Theory and

take arguments that way. They would also work with forces like the UN to protect civilians at all costs.

- All the churches argue that they must seek to establish absolute peace eventually.
 - Christians work for peace in many ways, because God blesses peacemakers, they seek to establish peace through non-violent methods such as protests, boycotts and negotiations.
 - Some Christians throughout history have argued that violence sometimes becomes a necessary step to achieve peace, which reflects the Just War approach to things. This may include acts of terrorism and assassination attempts. In Hebrews it says '**Make every effort to live in peace with everyone**'.
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Nuclear Weapons

- The CND or the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is an organisation in the UK that argues for unilateral nuclear disarmament by the UK, it wants the UK to get rid of its nukes, even if other countries such as the US, Russia and China have not yet done so.
 - The CND also wants nuclear disarmament in other countries but is based in the UK.
 - There is a Christian wing of the CND called the CCND, this allows Christians to fight against the use of and maintenance of weapons of mass destruction on the basis of their faith. It does this through conferences, peaceful protests, petitions and church services at military sites.
 - Pax Christi is an international Catholic movement which works to reflect the peace of Christ in the life of everyday people. It holds public debates on the morality of nuclear weapons and regularly criticises the governments ambitions for defence and nuclear weapons.
 - They also holds days of prayer and fasting to pray for peace in troubled parts of the world.
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Working for Peace as a Christian

- Peace is obviously a central teaching in Christianity, Jesus told his followers when he ascended that what he left with them was his peace, that they might be at peace with all.
- The Christian teaching on salvation demonstrates that God brings a peace with the Holy Spirit that 'surpasses all human understanding' which has an eternal effect on Christians as people.
- Those in a relationship with God will live at peace eternally in Heaven after they die.
- Christians argue that living in the way that Jesus commanded them to is in itself campaigning for peace, and so therefore evangelism is the most important part of Christianity because they bring peace to the rest of the world, as commanded in the Great Commission to the disciples.
- Other Christians hold the more assertive view that only they as the people can stop war, it is not through prayer and evangelism that war is stopped, but through direct action. These are the people who actively campaign for peace around the world through protests and conferences.

- These Christians would also say that by caring for the poor and helping the injured as Jesus commanded and did himself, then they too would be able to bring peace to the rest of the world.