Your notes

GCSE Religious Studies: revision notes

Religion, peace and conflict

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Peace, justice and reconciliation

- **Peace** is the absence of conflict and a state of harmony. **Justice** means fairness. Forgiveness and **reconciliation** restore relationships after conflict.
- Religions teach the importance of **peace**: Jesus said 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Matthew 5:9), and the word Islam is linked to salam, meaning **peace**.

Why wars happen

- Causes of war include greed (for land or resources), self-defence and **retaliation**. Religion is sometimes a cause, but many argue it is often used as an excuse for political conflicts.

Just war and holy war

- **Just War** theory, developed by Christian thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, says a war is justified only if it has a just cause, is declared by a legitimate authority, has the right intention, is a last resort, has a reasonable chance of success, and uses proportionate force that protects civilians.
- A **holy war** is fought for a religious cause, such as the Crusades. In Islam, lesser jihad has strict conditions and should be defensive.

Muslim views on peace and conflict

- Islam teaches that **peace** is the aim: the Qur'an says that if the enemy inclines towards **peace**, Muslims should too (Surah 8:61). Muslims greet each other with 'As-salamu alaykum' ('**peace** be upon you').

- The conditions for lesser jihad are like the **just war** conditions: it must be declared by a proper religious authority, be in self-defence or to protect the oppressed, and be a last resort, and it must not harm civilians, crops or the environment. The Qur'an says to fight those who fight you, but not to go beyond the limits (Surah 2:190).
- Most Muslims are not pacifists, because fighting in self-defence is allowed, but many work for **peace**, for example through Islamic Relief. Many Muslims believe **weapons of mass destruction** can never meet the conditions of lesser jihad, because they kill civilians.

Pacifism and peacemaking

- Pacifists believe war and violence are always wrong; the Quakers are a well-known pacifist Christian group. **Conscientious objectors** refuse to fight for reasons of conscience.
- Peacemakers include Martin Luther King, who used non-violent protest, and organisations such as Pax Christi. Religious charities, such as Christian Aid and Islamic Relief, help victims of war and refugees.

Weapons and terrorism

- Many believers oppose **weapons of mass destruction** (nuclear, chemical and biological), because they kill huge numbers of civilians and can never be proportionate. Some argue nuclear weapons deter war.
- **Terrorism** is the use of violence to create fear for political aims. Religious leaders widely condemn it.

Key terms

Peace	The absence of conflict, and a state of harmony.
Justice	Fairness, where everyone is treated equally.
Reconciliation	Restoring friendly relationships after conflict.
Just war	A war that meets strict conditions to be morally justified.
Holy war	A war fought for a religious cause.
Pacifism	The belief that war and violence are always wrong.
Conscientious objector	A person who refuses to fight for reasons of conscience.
Retaliation	Deliberately harming someone in return for harm done.
Terrorism	Using violence to create fear for political aims.
Weapons of mass destruction	Weapons, such as nuclear bombs, that kill huge numbers of people.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

Your notes

1. What is pacifism?
2. Which Christian group is known for pacifism?
3. Which of these is a condition of a just war?
4. Who developed the Christian Just War theory?
5. What is reconciliation?
6. What is a conscientious objector?
7. What is retaliation?
8. What is terrorism?

Answers

1. The belief that war and violence are always wrong
2. The Quakers
3. It must be a last resort
4. Thomas Aquinas
5. Restoring friendly relationships after conflict
6. Someone who refuses to fight for reasons of conscience
7. Deliberately harming someone in return
8. Using violence to create fear for political aims

What to do next

Practise 14 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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