PEACE AND JUSTICE

BOOKS FROM AFTER JESUS' LIFE, THE NEW TESTAMENT: NT

BOOKS FROM BEFORE JESUS' LIFE, THE OLD TESTAMENT: OT

<u>WAR</u>

On the one hand, some Christians think that war is always wrong. They might quote the Bible when Jesus said, 'those who live by the sword will die by the sword' (Matthew 26:52, NT). Jesus said 'Love your enemies and pray for those who treat you badly' (Matthew 5:44, NT) and these Christians may argue that you cannot love your enemies if you are at war with them. Jesus also said, 'God blesses those who work for peace' (Matthew 5:9, NT). These Christians would probably be *conscientious objectors* in a war.

On the other hand, some Christians support war that defends against evil. Jesus said, 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:31, NT) and some Christians might apply this where people need defending, or if there is some greater good that can be achieved by war. In the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25: 31-46, NT) Jesus taught that people should help those in need. Sometimes war is used to defend those in need.

In the Old Testament part of the Bible, God is shown directing people to war. For example, he tells Joshua to attack many cities. E.g. 'Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land.' (Joshua 8:1, OT). It also says in the Bible that 'There is a time for everything… **a time to kill** and a time to heal' (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3; OT)

VIOLENCE AND PACIFISM

On the one hand, some Christians think violence is sometimes right. In the Old Testament of the Bible it says, 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured.' (Leviticus 24:20) This suggests that if someone has violence against them, then it is right for them to respond violently. The Bible says Jesus reacted angrily and violently when he discovered the money-changers in the temple. He drove them and the animals that were being sold for sacrifice away with a whip and tipped over their stalls. He said, 'Take these things away! My Father's house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.' (John 2: 13-16, NT). These Christians might also point out that in the Old Testament God directs people to act violently by instructing them to go to war (see section on WAR above).

On the other hand, some Christians think violence is never right. Jesus said, 'You have heard that it was said, "eye for eye, and tooth for tooth." But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.' (Matthew 5:39, NT) This seems to go against what was said in the Old Testament. Jesus also said, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who treat you badly.' (Matthew 5:44, NT) Jesus also said, 'God blesses those who work for peace' (Matthew 5:9, NT). People who oppose all violence are called *pacifists*.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

All Christians agree that criminals should be punished. This is so that people in society are protected from the criminals. There are many laws, such as the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-21, OT) given in the Old Testament of the Bible, as well as discussion of the punishments for different crimes.

On the one hand, some Christians might talk about criminals getting payback for the bad things they've done. 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured.' (Leviticus 24:20, OT) They might also talk about the times in the Bible that God punishes people who have done wrong. For example, Noah's Flood (Genesis 6-8, OT) or the ten plagues God sends on the Egyptians (Exodus 7-12, OT). In these stories the punished are killed.

On the other hand, many Christians talk about love and forgiveness for criminals. Jesus said, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:31, NT) and Christians believe criminals are their neighbours. Jesus also said, 'pray for those who treat you badly.' (Matthew 5:44, NT). In the Lord's Prayer that Christians repeat often and that Jesus taught, it says, 'Forgive us our sins, and help us also forgive everyone who sins against us.' (Luke 11:4, NT) Following Jesus, Christians might try not to look down on criminals and think too highly of themselves.   Jesus said, 'How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye," when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?' (Luke 6:42) When Jesus came across some people who were about to stone a woman to death for sleeping with someone other than her husband, Jesus said, 'Let the person without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' (John 8:7) These comments might help to remind Christians that they too do bad things and that if they care for themselves, they should also care for others who do bad things.

INJUSTICE

All Christians agree that injustice – when some people in society are not given the rights and privileges of others (unfairness) – is wrong. Christians think that everyone should be treated equally as God created everyone in His image (Genesis 1:27, NT). It also says in the New Testament that everyone is equal: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3:28, NT). Jesus said to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12: 31, NT) and it seems impossible to love someone as yourself if you treat them as having fewer rights than you.

The Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25: 31-46, NT) tells Christians that they should help those in need; those who are not given equal rights as everyone else are seen as in need.

People who might be seen as suffering injustice in our society include ethnic minorities, women, disabled people, homosexuals and poorer people. In the Bible, it says 'Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?' (James 2:2-4, NT)

There may be some debate between Christians whether it is ever right to use violence to overcome injustice.

For exam answers it should be noted that Christians have not always lived up to their own ideals. An example of Christians bringing about injustice would be the many Christians in the past involved in the slave-trade and in owning slaves.