

War and Peace

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson is going to talk about war and peace. You will look at the three different approaches to war. You will also delve into the history of the just war and pacifism. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. [Three Approaches to War](#)
2. [Christianity and Just War](#)
3. [Pacifism](#)
4. [Contradictions](#)

1. Three Approaches to War

There are three basic categories from which we can approach the history of war and peace. The first one is the **just war** theory, which has to do with the idea that there is a legitimate justification for war.

The second category is called realism, and that has to do with an approach that really considers the decision to go to war on a very pragmatic basis where morality and absolutes are not a part of the equation. It's really more of a civil concern and not a religious issue.

The third approach opts for a nonviolent approach, a pacifist approach, where war is avoided. There are many justifications and support for this type of ideology.



TERM TO KNOW

Just War

A theory developed in the first millennium of Christianity regarding the justifiable use of military force by Christians.

2. Christianity and Just War

Early in its history, Christianity became very mixed with the interest of the state, the Roman Empire, and the power of the first Christian emperor, Constantine. In these early centuries of Christianity, Saint Augustine developed a theory of just war, which centered on the belief that one had earthly civil duties and responsibilities in conjunction with one's duties and responsibilities to God.

This theory was appropriated in the name of Christ to advance the interest of the Roman Empire. Constantine was largely behind this motivating force. Many examples were used from the Bible to justify this. In the Old Testament, it says: "A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace." Many examples from the Old and New Testaments were reduced to justify war.

The theory of just war was used extensively in the Middle Ages and was given the work through with the scholastics, particularly Saint Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas stated that any motivation for war had to ultimately be for peace. This is a central element of the just war theory.

3. Pacifism

With the Protestant Reformation later in the 16th century, there were many denominations and sub-denominations of Protestantism that broke off and didn't agree with this ideology. Many peace churches developed.

The idea of non-violence and **pacifism** became very popular with certain branches of Protestantism, most notably those from the Anabaptist tradition: the Mennonites, the Amish, and the Quakers. These are three groups that are steadfastly opposed to war. Nonviolence and pacifism are some of their central tenets and beliefs.



TERM TO KNOW

Pacifism

The belief that the use of military force is never ethically or morally justified.

4. Contradictions

Other religions struggled with contradictions, too. In Islam, there's a tradition of just war that has some similarities to the one developed by Christian theologians. There are, however, many perspectives under that general category, and there are many different ideas about how to justify it.



DID YOU KNOW

The Arabic word "jihad" literally means "striving" or "struggle." Islam teaches that there is both an inner struggle for righteousness and an outer struggle for justice. The latter meaning has sometimes been used to justify acts of war, but many Muslims believe that the inner struggle is the "greater jihad."

An apparent contradiction can be found in feudal Japan, which is a period of time that roughly corresponds to the Middle Ages in western Europe. These were violent times everywhere, and Japan was no exception. At that

time, different schools in Buddhism were vying for political power and to strengthen their particular Buddhist school.



DID YOU KNOW

Buddhist warrior monks, known as sohei, were often the principal figures behind this call to arms. The contradiction is the violence on the one hand and the teaching of Buddhism that prohibits taking the life of any sentient being on the other. At the same time, the sohei followed a code of ethics called bushido, and this included honesty, respect, and other moral commitments.



SUMMARY

There are **three approaches to war**: just war, realism, and pacifism. **Christianity and just war** have a long history. Arguments have been made to either justify war or to abstain from and avoid war. Some religions choose to practice **pacifism**. Finally, you looked briefly at feudal Japan as an example of the apparent **contradictions** that come to the surface in terms of ideology, practice, and religious commitment.

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TERMS TO KNOW

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