

# **RE, Philosophy and Ethics (RPE) –**

## **Closure work for Year 7**

You've now been introduced to this topic of War, Peace and Justice and we are now going to look at Pacifism, related to the 'Peace' section of this topic.

### **Tasks:**

#### **1. Read this summary of what Pacifism is:**

There are several different sorts of pacifism, but they all include the idea that war and violence are unjustifiable, and that conflicts should be settled in a peaceful way. The word (but not the idea) is only a century old, being first used in 1902 at the 10th International Peace Conference. People are pacifists for one or some of these reasons:

- religious faith;
- non-religious belief in the sanctity of life;
- practical belief that war is wasteful and ineffective

Many believe that pacifism is more than opposition to war. They argue that it must include action to promote justice and human rights.

#### **2. Write your own, one-sentence definition of what Pacifism is, based on the summary, above.**

**3. Read the three summaries on three Pacifists. For each person:**

- a. Summarise what they think
- b. Explain how this is an example of Pacifism
- c. State something you found interesting

**4. Stretch and Challenge: Is Pacifism a viable (realistic/ possible) option in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (modern world)?**

- a. Respond to this from an 'agree' perspective
- b. Respond to this from a 'disagree' perspective

# The Quakers

Quakers are members of a group that began in the 1650s in the UK and has Christian roots. Quakers believe that there is something of God in everybody and that each human being is of unique worth. Life is sacred for Quakers. This is why they value all people equally, and oppose anything that may harm or threaten them.

One of their key beliefs about God is that he is love. This means that love is the most important principle in their lives; everything must be done for the reason and purpose of love. They also strongly believe that they need to make the world a better place by filling it with peace.

Ultimately, they believe that war or conflict of any kind, for any and every reason, is evil and never acceptable. They would say that God would never encourage or move people to fight. Quakers are absolutely committed to non-violence and pacifism, and will not accept or support any conflict.

# Martin Luther King Jr

Born in 1929, Martin Luther King Jr became a Protestant Christian pastor. He fought against racism in America and protested and rallied people together to change society for the better. King seriously studied what the best method was for doing this, e.g. violent or peaceful methods, concluding that violence was never the right option. He said violent methods caused more evil and problems in society than they solved.

In talking about war, especially in light of the development of nuclear weapons, he said, "It is no longer a choice, my friends, between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence."

"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, creating the very thing it seeks to destroy ...violence merely increases hate. So it goes... Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."

## **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

Born in Germany in 1906, Bonhoeffer was a protestant Christian. He studied theology (the study of religion and God) at university and went on to become the leader (pastor) of a Christian church.

The Nazis tried to make German churches follow and support Nazi ideas, so Bonhoeffer set up the Confessing Church which openly stood up against the Nazi regime. He strongly opposed a number of Hitler's ideas and actions, especially Hitler's treatment of the Jews. Bonhoeffer helped Jews escape from Germany and from the terrible way they were treated.

Bonhoeffer rejected extreme pacifist views. He believed that the evil of Nazism could not be overcome by peaceful methods. In fact, he believed the only way the regime would be beaten would be by violence. Hitler was the target of assassination attempts and Bonhoeffer joined groups that planned ways of assassinating him. He was arrested by the Nazis and was moved to a concentration camp. He was hanged in 1945. The Church of England remembers him as a martyr, as someone who was willing to die for doing what is good.