**Explain the main ethical principles of the religion you have studied in relation to war. (25)**

The ethical principles of Christianity stem from the Bible and from Church doctrine and these are also the origins of the just war theory. The just war theory attempts to reconcile three fundamental ethical principles; taking human life is seriously wrong; states have a duty to defend their citizens, and defend justice; protecting innocent human life and defending important moral values sometimes requires willingness to use force and violence. The development of Christian thought shows how these are reconciled.

The ethical principles from the Old Testament laws demonstrate this dichotomy. The Pentateuch shows that it is unlawful to murder (exodus 20:12), that “The Lord is a warrior” (Exodus 15:3) as well as that fact that God will “wipe out those who hate me” (Psalm 18:39). Lastly, God calls for a “holy war, call your troops to arms.” (Joel 3:9) thus showing that this process of reconciliation between not killing, defending citizens and the use of force had not found a resolution in the Old Testament.

The ethical principles found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5) focus on the desire to maintain peace and defend justice as Jesus states “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God”. Peace in this sense is much more than simply an absence of hostility; it also embraced wholeness, harmony, completeness and health. It was seen as the outcome of righteousness and a deep commitment to the work of justice. Therefore, Jesus’ view seems consistent with the underlying principles of the Just War Theory but again have not reconciled these with the necessary use of force.

By the fourth century AD there was a brand new notion of Christendom (Christ’s domain). This notion of a greater whole that was sacred meant that people started to comprehend that it may be threatened either internally or externally. Therefore, the need to reconcile the defence of the citizens with the use of violence became more apparent. To this end St Augustine of Hippo distinguished between private retaliation (not justified in Christianity) and war pursued against those who are a threat to peace (sometimes justified). Thus providing the first real attempt to reconcile these ideas.

St Thomas of Aquinas developed this Christian doctrine into what has become known as the Just War Theory. He laid out the following conditions: war must be declared by the sovereign; war must have a just cause (those attacked should deserve this) and a right intention (the advancement of good or avoidance of evil). However, this does not mean that war was justified if it ticked these boxes as Aquinas’ aim was to encourage restraint, the preservation of life and lasting peace. Or in terms of Aquinas’ natural moral law, the aim of the just war theory is to preserve innocent life. This gives Christianity the ethical basis on which they have reconciled killing with the defence of citizens and the use of violence.

The contemporary Just War Theory is therefore laid on these foundations and is divided into three parts; Jus ad bellum: whether it is right to go to war; Jus in bello: the correct conduct during war; and Jus post bellum: conduct after the war. Jus ad bellum includes conditions such as; There must be a just cause for going to war; only a legitimate authority (like the Prime Minister) can start a war; and a war must be fought for the right intention (not for land or money). Jus in bello includes; Innocent civilians must not be harmed during the war and minimum force should be used to limit unnecessary death and destruction. Jus post bellum includes there should be a just cause to end the war i.e. one side surrenders, no-one is winning, the evil has been stopped; and the victor should limit any punishment to those who were responsible. This shows how the initial ethical principles expressed in the Bible view have evolved into an ethical theory which is able to reconcile the abhorrence of taking a life with defending citizens and justice with the need for the use of violence.

However, it must be noted that Christianity still maintains that war is always bad. A just war is only permissible because it's a lesser evil, but it's still an evil. This is especially so for the Quakers.