

Religious Extremism

Extremism: Holding aggressive political or religious views. Recently, extreme views have led to terrorist actions, however Jesus taught that 'those who take up the sword, die by the sword' and therefore discouraged such actions.

Extremism within Christianity:

One of the earliest examples of extremism within Christianity is the famous **Gunpowder Plot** in 1605, where Guy Fawkes attempted to assassinate King James I and to blow up the government buildings.

Today, **Fundamentalist** schools are teaching girls that they should obey men, that homosexuality is "unnatural" and that the account of creation in Genesis is the only true account. This is because of a specific type of interpretation of Biblical texts. For example, in Genesis Eve was created 'as a helper' for Adam, and therefore these schools teach women to obey and be of service to men. The Bible also states how God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their constant sinning against God. Fundamentalists believe this 'vice' to be a metaphor for homosexuality and bestiality.



Creationism is usually taught alongside scientific theories such as the Big Bang and Evolution. However, some schools explicitly only teach Creationism (creation according to the Bible), presenting this as fact. This has resulted in many extreme Christians rejecting science completely.

From 1865, the **Ku Klux Klan** (Protestant-led) beat, burned, raped and killed African Americans, Jews, Roman Catholics and any other minority group. Their goal was to re-establish Protestant Christian values in America by any means necessary, and believed that Jesus was the first 'Klansmen'. From 1915 onward, Klansmen conducted cross-burnings not only to intimidate targets, but also to demonstrate their respect and reverence for Jesus Christ, and the ritual of lighting crosses was steeped in Christian symbolism, including prayer and singing hymns.



Christians Against Extremism:



- Christian **charities** have been set up to reconcile different Christian groups and bring an end to violence and conflict, e.g. **Corrymeela** in Northern Ireland work to bring Roman Catholics and Protestants together as part of one community.
- Jesus said, "*those who live by the sword, die by the sword*". This means that violence and extreme action will only ever result in bloodshed. Nothing good can come of it. Jesus was a pacifist and believed that Love would be the answer. In the **Parable of the Good Samaritan**, Jesus showed the importance of '*loving thy neighbour*', regardless of who they are or where they are from. Christians believe that they "*are all one in Christ Jesus.*"
- **Martin Luther King** famously stood up against racism and injustice in a non-violent and peaceful way. As a result of his protests, e.g. the bus boycott, he was able to change the segregation laws that saw white people take priority over black people. This was a victory for Christian peacemakers everywhere. Jesus called all people to be peacemakers.
- On 1st October 2016, the **World Council of Churches** (WCC) came together in interfaith dialogue (different religions coming together to talk about their faith). This resulted in peace-building and a breakdown of misunderstanding and intolerance. They agreed that, "*religion should never be used to justify violence.*" The people who claim to be acting in the name of religion when they shed blood are using religion incorrectly, to justify their own, selfish desires.

Questions:

1. What is extremism?
2. What was one of the earliest examples of extremism within Christianity?
3. What three things are Fundamentalist schools teaching children?
4. Which group believed that Jesus was the first 'Klansmen'?
5. What do Corrymeela do?
6. Jesus said, "*those who live by the sword, die by the sword.*" What does this mean?
7. How did Martin Luther King stand up against extremist action?
8. On October 1st 2016, what did the World Council of Churches agree?

