

## **Maire McGovern (B) Year 13**

### **HOW DO DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS IN RELIGION LEAD TO CONFLICT?**

Religion has existed for thousands of years in many different forms all over the world, and with an abundance of differing views and opinions, comes conflict. These can consist of fully fledged wars such as the crusades, the conflicts in Afghanistan or Iraq, or theological conflicts in what a religion should commonly believe. In this essay I will explore the various conflicts in the history of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, and attempt to understand how they were caused and the misinterpretations in thought and scripture which may have led to conflict. A big question this initially proposes is whether religions have a correct interpretation in scripture and belief which should not be distorted, or whether they can be interpreted in a number of ways which may have conflicting implications. This also offers the implications which can occur from wrongful misinterpretations, or simply ones which disagree. Exploring whether there are absolute rules and truths in religion or in our conscience which can be misinterpreted and lead to conflict may help with this uncertainty, such as in the case of moral ruling. The amount of conflict based on the grounds of religious faiths lead some to believe that religion is the greatest cause of war, despite most religions' insistence that war and killing is against most of their teachings. In Islam, for example, it is the concept of Jihad; meaning struggle. There is the internal and external jihad, and the Prophet Muhammed is said to have agreed that the internal jihad is the greater of the two. After a battle, he said: "We are finished with the lesser jihad; now we are starting the greater jihad." The most common meaning of Jihad in recent times has been 'holy war.' In his book, 'Letters to a young muslim,' Omar Saif Ghobash explains the issues of misinterpretation of jihad, and true islam, which I will come back to later.

The book, 'David and Goliath' by Malcolm Gladwell explains how the story of David and the giant is greatly misinterpreted by its readers, and the scripture needs further thought to understand what is truly going on. This type of misinterpretation is what is happening all over the world in fundamentalism, in which religion is used and moulded to give a different message, usually something against the original teachings. The easiest way to define these teachings, I would argue, is the teachings laid down by the founder of the religion; in this case, Jesus. Christianity has the same issue which Aquinas' just war theory tries to solve; When is it God's will to go to war? In this way, the two religions approach a dispute the same way; by deciding what to do.