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Religion and war

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“All armed prophets have been victorious. All unarmed prophets have been destroyed.”

Machiavelli, *The Prince*¹

Religion and war have always coexisted: loved or hated, studied or ignored – they are part of human life, part of human history, part of the past, the present and the future. The people of religion and the people of war are two clearly identifiable, uniform-wearing groups, characterized by high respect for hierarchy and discipline, adherence to rules and traditions, and compliance with the orders of superiors. Where necessary they can stoically endure hardships and sacrifice individual interests, material gains and even their own lives for higher purposes.

Religious attitudes to war

George Bernard Shaw once wrote that “there is only one religion though there are a hundred versions of it”.² Indeed, different religions are based on similar beliefs: that there are issues beyond rational scientific explanation; that the material world is secondary to an idea, a design, made and driven by an omnipotent overarching Judge/Creator. Religions promote similar values, such as respect for human beings, ethical behaviour, modesty, hope, love and assisting people in need. They would normally reject and condemn acts of killing, raping, injuring or offending in another way

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