

# The Role of Religion in Twentieth Century War Narratives

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**Delić, Leon**

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Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

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nastavnički smjer i njemačkog jezika i književnosti – nastavnički smjer

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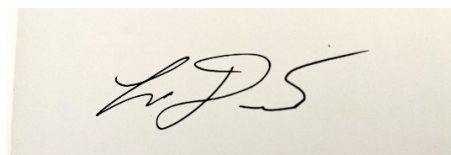
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## **Abstract**

From the earliest days of Christianity to today, battle, war, and warfare have had a longstanding and persistent alliance with religion. Throughout history, from the Battle of Rephidim in the Book of Exodus, and the Medieval Crusades, all the way to World War I, religion, or at least Christianity and war, have had an inseparable bond. Religion is key to understanding those wars – to comprehend why so many people participated in wars, and why they persisted in fighting during these wars. Early twentieth century war narratives, especially those connected to the First World War, have the presence of various religious elements, which are used to demonstrate the authors' attitudes towards religion and the role religion had in that war. This master's thesis will explore the idea of a holy war using the theoretical foundation of Philip Jenkins' book *The Great and Holy War* (2014) and analyze various religious elements present in selected World War I narratives: Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1927), Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That* (1929), and Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1957). These religious elements will then be compared to reveal their scope, function, and significance.

Keywords: religion, *The Great and Holy War*, war, World War I, Christianity, *A Farewell to Arms*, *Goodbye to All That*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*



## Introduction

From ancient times to today, religion and war share a unique bond. Many battles of immense proportions in history have had religious undertones to them, with many being driven purely by religious causes, for example the Medieval Crusades. Religion is one of the main components when it comes to understanding those wars, why people participated in them, and why they persevered despite atrocities and death. This master's thesis will explore the theory of a holy war using the theoretical foundation of Philip Jenkins' book *The Great and Holy War* (2014) and analyze various religious elements present in selected World War I narratives: Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1927), Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That* (1929), and Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1957). These religious elements will then be compared to reveal their scope, function, and significance.

In the first part of this master's thesis, the idea of a holy warfare and the connection religion has with war will be explored using the theoretical foundation of Philip Jenkins's book *The Great and Holy War*. The first part will also explore how the holy war ideology is not only limited to the Christian faith, since other religions, like Islam and Judaism, also have the presence of the holy war ideology. Furthermore, various present-day conflicts will also be explored and analyzed from a religious standpoint.

The second section of this master's thesis will encompass the three world-renowned war narratives: Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1927), Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That* (1929), and Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1957), as well as briefly present the authors who wrote them. In the second part of the second chapter, religious motifs and themes of priests, religious structures, religious attitude of the soldiers, and prayer will be excavated from the novels and explored, evaluating their role, significance, and symbolic meaning.

Finally, the thesis concludes that the most prominent religions even today, for example Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, had militaristic tendencies throughout their histories, with most of them engaging in conflict among themselves and following a similar pattern to ensure their existence. History records many instances of conflicts based on religious ideology, some even ongoing today, like the Rohingya Crisis and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Regarding World War I and the holy war theory, Philip Jenkins's book *The Great and Holy War* (2014) thoroughly analyzes and explains how the war was fueled by religious zeal and elaborates how the consequences changed religion indefinitely. Regarding the war narratives, all three novels have

religion as a secondary theme. Each author managed to present religion in a unique way, conveying his own attitude along the way, as well as the attitudes of those affected by the war. In Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, religion represents a spiritual journey of the protagonist. Graves's *Goodbye to All That* explores religion as a social construct and how severe indoctrination can lead to a false impression of reality. Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* starts with religion being an abstract place of peace and serenity, but later turns into irritation and cynicism.

## 1. Religion and War

### 1.1. Biblical Wars

From the earliest days of Christianity and the inception of religion itself, war and battle have been a prerequisite to achieving the goal of an established faith with many followers. To achieve that feat, early Christians had to fight their way against many enemies of their cause. Back then, religion was one of the main sources of identity and cohesion for groups, and strong tendencies and rhetoric of the leaders often promoted animosity towards others, prompting violence against those who do not share the same views. This may seem counterintuitive, as the goal of many, if not every religion, is peace, prosperity, and love. But, as Shailer Mathews argues, it needs no additional argument to prove that ancient religions, the religions from which the modern-day religions arose, were quite militaristic (165). For example, the Hebrew god Yahweh, according to Hebrew teachings of that time, taught his followers the use of the bow and the chariot himself, and he was also the god who was expected to fight with his armies (Mathews 165). In that sense, it can be concluded that the Christian religion, to survive and spread during those ancient times, had to have militaristic inclinations as well.

The Bible mentions many wars of religious nature and purpose. According to Southon's research,<sup>1</sup> approximately ninety instances of battle and war are mentioned in the Bible. The first of those biblical wars, or the first mention of military engagement in the Bible, occurs in Genesis *Abram Rescues Lot*. In this war, the four Mesopotamian kings of the east (Amraphel, Arioch, Kedorlaomer, and Tidal) went to war against the five kings of the south (Bera, Birsha, Shinab, Shemeber, and Zoar) (Gen. 14.2). The conflict arose because the four kings, were superior to the five southern kingdoms' kings, and to escape their dominance and cement themselves as independent regions. The four kings were victorious in the battle in the Valley of Siddim (14.9), taking hostages, confiscating all the goods of the Sodom and Gomorrah kingdoms, and leaving afterward. One of those hostages was Abram's nephew Lot. Hearing that his relative was captured, Abram called the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit (14.15). Abram won, recovered all the goods, and saved Lot together with the women and other people (14.16).

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<sup>1</sup> The full review of Biblical battles can be found in Southon, Mike. "Every Battle in the Bible." *Constantly Reforming: Biblical Theology in Action*, <https://constantlyreforming.wordpress.com/every-battle-in-the-bible/>. Accessed on 8 Aug. 2023.

One of the more famous instances of battle in the Bible, and a battle where God himself intervened, is the Escape from Egypt in the Book of Exodus. This battle is a textbook example of a biblical battle. During their escape, the Jewish people found themselves in front of the Red Sea. Moses then called upon God (Exod. 15.1-18) and God supposedly helped them, separating the Red Sea and creating a safe passage for the fleeing people. When the Egyptian army went after them, the sea passage was shut, immersing the Egyptians. Another example of a famous biblical battle is the *Battle of Jericho*, or *The Fall of Jericho* (Josh. 5.13 – 6.27). According to the Bible, the Israeli army marched around the city for seven days (Josh. 6.2-4), and on the seventh day, Joshua was instructed by God to have the whole army shout so the walls of the city would collapse: “When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in” (Josh. 6.5).

There are plenty more examples of wars in the Bible, mostly in the Old Testament, as the Old Testament is filled with ancient wars (Mathews 166). The last-mentioned war in the Bible is a war that is yet to happen, namely Armageddon, which will be elaborated later in the text.

## 1.2. The Holy War Premise

The fourth century theologian, Augustine, tried to answer why people participated in biblical wars by scrutinizing the Bible in detail. He observed three key elements of a just war in the Old Testament, and claimed:

According to the eternal law, which requires the preservation of nature and forbids the transgression of it, some actions have an indifferent character, so that men are blamed for presumption if they do them without being upon, while they are deservedly praised for them when required. The act, the agent, and the authority for the action are all of great importance in the order of nature. (qtd. in Langan 21)

The three key elements of a just war, according to Augustine, are: “the act, the agent, and the authority for the action” (qtd. in Langan 21). Of those three, Augustine deemed the last, i.e., the authority, the most important one:

Augustine points to the divine authorization for the wars of Moses and says of Moses that “in wars carried on by divine command, he showed not ferocity but obedience.” The difference here is not a matter of altering how Moses conducts

wars or the limits that he observes in the use of violence, but a difference in motivation and justification. (qtd in Langan 21)

This indicates that Augustine believed that, in the Bible, justification of the conflict and the motivation for it are very significant reasons for partaking in warfare. In that sense, war is justified as long as God is prompting and commanding, or the cause is divine. Similarly to Augustine, Samuel E. Coues's *War and Christianity* explored the connection Christianity has with war. He says that even before the advent of Christ, many influential people of ancient times, such as Seneca, Homer, and Virgil, deemed that no man, who has engaged in battle and shed blood, can be a man of religion (Coues 194). The side advocating peace, love, and prosperity cannot be related to an act so gruesome as war. Even though much older views were such, the Christian soldier was prompted to rush from the battlefield to the altars and even priests were sent to battle by the Church itself (Coues 194). Exploring this subject even further, he came upon the following excerpt from the Bible:

<sup>7</sup> And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: <sup>8</sup> But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. (qtd. in Coues 195)

Following this excerpt from the biblical Chronicles, Coues states how the Christian has assumed that he can be a man of blood yet spiritual in his heart, even though there are texts in the Bible claiming that no man who maliciously sheds the blood of another man can be a man of God (194). Considering the Bible's scripts, it is illogical for a man who considers himself a Christian to be included in the spilling of the blood of another man: "Many, who, finding no vindication for fighting in the Gospel, turn back to the Old Testament for an excuse for war" (Coues 194). The Old Testament's pages are filled with ancient wars, while in the New Testament, the focus of Christianity is on love and peace. Harming another human is against Christ's guidance, or as Coues says: "War can never be justified by the teachings of Christ" (196). Therefore, for anyone trying to prompt war, it is easier to justify the cause and motivate the soldier by using the Old Testament's content in the rhetoric. However, war is mentioned in the New Testament as well. The final book of the New Testament mentions Armageddon (Rev. 16.16), which is a place where the kings of the earth, under demonic leadership, will wage war on the forces of God at the end of history. Over time, the name of this place has become synonymous with the world's ending or apocalypse.

Christian theology teaches that human history will appropriately end with a holy war – God and his army against demonic enemies which threaten the world.

When speaking of holy warfare, it is safe to say that the medieval Crusades are the most notorious conflicts of religious nature and reasoning, at least in the Western world. The Crusades were a series of military campaigns organized by popes and Christian Western powers to take Jerusalem and the Holy Land back from Muslim control and then defend those gains. There were eight major official crusades between 1095 and 1270, and many more unofficial ones (Cartwright). Mathews mentions the following: “When one looks for the causes of wars, he finds religion oftentimes among the most potent. Mohammedanism has notoriously been a military religion, but it would not be safe to say that it has been any more pronouncedly militaristic than Christianity itself with its crusades and wars of religion” (165). Emphasizing how closely the Crusades are related to Christianity, and how religious the Crusades were in nature, Hassner and Horowitz state: “Religion permeated every aspect of the Crusades, defining its meaning and significance to participants while evolving in response to the experiences of these actors. Simply put, it is as impossible to think of the Crusades without religion as it is to think of medieval Christianity in the absence of the Crusades” (202-203). Even though the main reason for the Crusades is considered to be purely religious in nature and most scholars are comfortable enough in accepting the wars’ religious justification at their face value and stress that Christian warriors truly thought they were fighting a holy war against enemies of their fate, the Crusades had plenty of reasons beyond religious ideology, such as land, hunger, population pressure, and a desire to evade restrictive state mechanisms (Jenkins 6). It would be an oversimplification to label all wars as purely religious conquests. Explaining what a holy war is, Johnson says the following:

‘Holy war’ has been used variously to refer to war fought for God, war authorized by God either directly or through religious authorities, war fought by God, war fought for the sake of religion, war fought to impose religious law, war against unbelievers or heretics, and war fought to defend people of one religion against those of another—all conceptions with their own nuances in particular context. (561)

After examining Johnson’s description of what constitutes a holy war, it is apparent that the term is difficult to accurately define, as all the various meanings do not carry over very well from one instance to another (Johnson 561). Describing what a holy war is, Jenkins explains:

To speak of a holy war, it is not enough to find national leaders deploying a few pious rhetorical flourishes or claiming that God will see the nation to a just victory. Instead, the state involved must have an intimate if not official alliance with a particular faith tradition, and moreover, the organs of state and church should expressly and repeatedly declare the religious character of the conflict. Not incidentally, but repeatedly and centrally, official statements and propaganda declare that the war is being fought for God's cause, for his glory, and such claims pervade the media and organs of popular culture. (Jenkins 6)

One can notice similarities when comparing Jenkins' definition to Augustine's three key elements for a just war which he recognized in the Bible. Jenkins argues that to prompt a holy war (the act), the state (the agent) itself must work with the church to motivate the citizen by using the argument that the war is fought for God's (the authority) cause or His glory, thus justifying and approving the war (6). When labeling a conquest as a holy war, Johnson believes that this term is used purely to convey religious and moral superiority over any enemy, so that no additional justification is needed for using the nation's military force against the opponent (560). Then, if the propaganda is successfully placed, the citizens start identifying the state and its forces as agents or implements of God (Jenkins 6). The nation fights against an enemy that defies God, (thus representing satanic forces), and, if a soldier was to die in such a righteous war, his death represents a form of holy sacrifice, elevating him to a saintly status (Jenkins 7). Comparing this to Coues' view that the church convinces its believers in the divine nature of the war, the state used a similar propaganda by stressing the religious nature of contemporary wars to motivate the soldiers.

Putting all this in the context of medieval Crusades, the act is the holy war for the sacred regions against the Muslims, the agent is the state with its armed forces, and the authority is God Himself who speaks through the Church's representatives. According to Jenkins, the soldiers were not only driven by religious nature but also hunger, population pressure, and the evasion of restrictive state policies (6). However, these material reasons are not directly mentioned in the declaration of the cause, because rarely would anyone want to risk dying purely for the states' benefit or material gain. The addition of a higher, abstract, and divine cause creates a stronger desire to participate and win. Hassner and Horowitz argue that religious zeal was the Crusaders' driving force and how it prompted them to fight longer than they should and could have (201).

### 1.3. Holy War Rhetoric - Not Limited to Christianity

As mentioned before, many, if not all ancient religions were extremely militaristic (Mathews 165), Judaism and Christianity have a few commonalities, as the two share history and the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). According to *Britannica*, the term *Torah*, in the broadest sense, is the substance of divine revelation to Israel, the Jewish people: God's revealed teaching or guidance for humankind. This guidance provided by God is comprised of the following books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Judaism is a religion that has developed among the ancient Hebrews. In the old Hebrew religion, Yahweh was the God of battles who taught his followers how to fight (Mathews 164). Just like Christianity had to resort to militaristic tendencies to persevere and spread, so did the Hebrew religion. However, while Judaism was still developing, rabbinical Judaism experienced a catastrophic warfare failure. Particularly after the Maccabean Revolt, the Revolt Against Rome, and the Bar Kokhba Rebellion (that occurred a millennium before the Crusades), the idea of holy warfare has fallen aside (Johnson 561). After experiencing terrible losses, especially after the Bar Kokhba Rebellion, rabbinic Judaist wisdom began teaching that it is not physical acts of war that would protect Israel from its enemies, but rather concentration on spiritual righteousness and prayer (Johnson 561). Thus, it can be concluded that Judaism started to deviate from the idea of a holy war or warfare early in its history up until the early twentieth century, when extremist Zionism appeared.

The second religion, namely Islam, is a religion that has a notorious history of militaristic tendencies and is a religion that openly conveys the idea of sanctified warfare. For modern Muslims, this subject of holy warfare is of great sensitivity since Islam is accused of being no more than a flagrant warrior's cult (Firestone 99). In modern times, radical Muslim clergy and activists often cite religious justifications for bloodshed and battle, which has caused many Western people to believe Islam to be more of a militaristic doomsday cult rather than a religion (Jenkins 14). Jenkins also notes that contemporary Islamic extremists, like Christians back in 1914, portrayed the soldier as a warrior from a very romanticized past, especially in the context of the Middle Ages where both Islam and Christianity emphasized the shield and sword. Both saw (or rather presented) death in the battle as a form of martyrdom, in which killing the holy enemy is a form of recuperation for one's lost connection with God, and dying would grant access to eternal paradise (Jenkins 14). When compared side by side, Islam and Christianity share a lot of similarities regarding values and lifestyle, but the two religions have an ill-famed history of war between them, most notably the Crusades, as both religious groups back then were eager to control holy sites



which both faiths considered sacred. Regarding warfare in the holy scripts, Firestone compared the two religions' war texts from both the Bible and Quran and stated:

A comparison of biblical (primarily Deuteronomic) with qur'anic texts reveals that, despite historical, cultural, and geographic differences, scriptural justification for mass slaughter in war first appear for the purpose of defense but steadily evolves into divinely encourage even divinely encouraged and even divinely commanded offensive war. The differences in the evolving concept between the two scriptures and their exegesis can be explained by the different histories of two religious' civilizations. (Firestone 99)

Therefore, one can conclude that Christianity and Islam, at least regarding sanctified warfare, had similarities and possibly shared the same goals, but due to the cultural differences and imposed moral doctrines of their leaders during history, the two religions diverged further, cementing themselves as the religions they are today.

When talking about Islam and holy war today, most Western people experience negative connotations, especially after the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States. Nowadays, the term and the ideas of Jihad are quite prominent. Throughout the Quran, the term has two meanings: *jihād al-naḥs* (the internal, spiritual struggle against the lower self) and *jihad al-sayf* (the physical combat with the sword) (Afsaruddin). Later, jihad was focused primarily on being a fighting duty, which then became the predominant meaning of the word. Furthermore, it is important to note that in the Quran (2.190), war is forbidden, and fighting is permitted only against aggressors (Afsaruddin). Therefore, the idea of jihad serves a similar purpose as the idea of a holy war in Christianity, and as Johnson says, it is used purely to convey religious and moral superiority over any enemy, so that no additional justification is needed for using the nation's military force against the opponent, as both Christianity with the teachings of Christ in the New Testament and Islam with Mohammed in the Quran forbid and oppose bloodshed (560).

The third and final religion to be covered in this section is Hinduism. Since Mahatma Gandhi, India is known as the country where the idea of *ahimsa* or 'not killing' has been invented and implemented into the life and ideology of the people living there (Bakker 475). However, as Bakker comments, this principle had nothing to do with how warfare was conducted and conceived in the Hindu society pre-Gandhi, as war was endemic and was seen as the duty of the Hindu king (475). Similar to previously mentioned religions, any form of battle in the name of God was holy, and warfare was ritualized to an extent:

The Sanskrit literature abounds in comparisons of the (ritual) battle and the sacrifice. Battlefields are seen as sacrificial grounds and the warriors killed are the sacrificial animals (pa'sus). Like the latter, they are believed to go straight to heaven. Thus Krsna. a speaks to Arjuna: 'Either slain thou shalt gain heaven or conquering thou shalt enjoy the earth.' (Bakker 481)

In the early stages of Hinduism, the *Rig Veda* shows that the religion of the Hindus arose in a state of war and that the Hindus lived by war and worshipped gods of war (Hume 33). Nevertheless, Hindu warfare was regulated by many rules which were humane in many respects (Bakker 475). Not only has Islam fought the Christian Crusaders back in medieval times, but it also challenged northern Indian Hinduism:

From the eleventh century onwards, North India was regularly confronted, perhaps for the first time, with an enemy that did not adapt itself to Indian customs and did not 'show the same devotion in festivals in honor of the deities of the country'. Instead, that country was infested with marauding bands of Turuska warriors, after Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni had pointed the way in his raid on Somnath (Gujarat) in ad 1024–1025. (Bakker 482)

In comparison to the Crusades, which were a more defined fight in terms of religious ideology (it was a battle in which Christianity as a whole religion was fighting the whole idea of Islam and its followers for the sake of obtaining sacred grounds), Hindu battles against Islamic invaders were not as 'organized,' as Bakker comments:

One would have expected that in the face of such catastrophe, Hindu kings would have joined hands and made common cause to defend their country and their holy places. However, 'India' was not conceived as an entity to be defended and Hinduism was not organized in such a way that it could offer a framework for its own defense. Hindu kings kept fighting amongst themselves... (Bakker 482)

Christians all around Europe shared the same collective goal and created a sense of unity among them, which the Hindus of that time lacked.

In conclusion, all four religions were military-oriented in the beginning, but later shifted to a pacifist faith, preaching peace, love, prosperity, and unity. In Christianity, this started with the teachings of Jesus Christ, in Judaism, after the Bar Kokhba Revolution had failed, and in Hinduism when Gandhi started preaching a more peaceful existence and spirituality. Islam still has a

notorious connection to conflicts driven by religious reason and carries a militant connotation in the Western world today, but it is undoubtedly a religion that also promotes a pacifistic lifestyle, focusing on love, peace, and prosperity.

#### **1.4. World War I – Religious Rhetoric and Propaganda, a Holy War?**

Considering the aforementioned characteristics of a holy war, one can confidently speak of a strong and steady strain of Christian holy war ideology during World War I, because all of the main combatants (Russians, Germans, British, Austro-Hungarians, Ottomans, French, Italians, and Americans) deployed a language which is painting the image of a sanctified warfare (Jenkins 7). The obvious exception to the rule of a completely Christian war is the Ottoman Empire, as their nation was predominantly, if not exclusively Muslim. But, according to Jenkins, even the Ottoman Empire used a powerfully religious discourse, where even the sultan-caliph proclaimed the following: “Right and loyalty are on our side, and hatred and tyranny on the side of our enemies, and therefore there is no doubt that the Divine help and assistance of the just God and the moral support of our glorious prophet will be on our side to encourage us...” (Jenkins 8). Ergo, regardless of the religious predominance of a country partaking in the war, religious rhetoric was a mandatory component used to exhort the nation to participate and justify the cause. Regarding the predominantly Christian participating states and religious propaganda, Jenkins comments:

With startling literalism, visual representations in all the main participant nations placed Christ himself on the battle lines, whether in films, posters, or postcards. Jesus blessed German soldiers going into battle; Jesus comforted the dying victims of German atrocities; Jesus personally led a reluctant Kaiser to confront the consequences of his evil policies. Apart from the obvious spiritual figures – Christ and the Virgin – most combatant nations used iconography in which their cause was portrayed by that old Crusader icon Saint George, and their enemies as the dragon. (Jenkins 7)

The question arises why each nation used Christ in its propaganda, even though the teachings of Christ prohibit war and harming another human. One could argue that there is no better way to cement the religious essence of the war than by putting the son of God on the battlefield and presenting him as an ally. This idea of using Jesus in war propaganda certainly emphasizes

Augustine's most important element – the authority. Using the character of Jesus Christ in war propaganda is extremely ironic considering that Jesus's teachings are unequivocally pacifistic. Another religious symbol used in the propaganda was angels. The relatively known legend of the Angel of Mons first started as a fictional story by Arthur Machen, and after becoming known among the folk, the Angel of Mons was continually used in propaganda posters and artwork, even inspiring musical compositions (Jenkins 1). The story goes that during an Allied retreat across France in the August of 1914, a group of British soldiers made a heroic stand against advancing German troops at the village of Mons. A soldier asked Saint George for help, which resulted in the saint responding and sending an army of English archers from the fifteenth century, more precisely from the Battle of Agincourt. Soon after, Machen started meeting people who claimed to have partaken in the battle at Mons and have seen the bowmen assisting them. Machen then specified that the story was fictional, which many critics then deemed unpatriotic, and even denying his authorship. With time, the bowmen were altered into angels, and in that form, the story got its world fame (Jenkins 1). Considering the vast presence of religious propaganda and focus on the religious aspect during the war, it is not precluded that the nations involved had other interests or causes to enter the war, nor does it demand that each participant supported every goal or cause presented (Jenkins 6). World War I was not a purely religious war as the elements of religious presence may indicate, just like the Crusades were not only fought to defeat their Muslim opponents, or as Jenkins elaborates, not each nation in the war was driven the same amount of religious zeal, nor has any nation entered the war purely because of a religious cause in the sense of eradicating heretics that oppose the state (7). But in two crucial cases, namely Germany and Russia, religious motivation and state ideology and policy were so inseparably bound that it was impossible to separate them from the secular aspect (Jenkins 8). Both Germany and Russia, as Jenkins states, regarded themselves as messianic nations destined to fulfill God's will, while France or Britain initially had no such motives. However, throughout the course of the war, the holy war rhetoric became so widespread and dominated the media in every state involved (8). The United States used religious language and holy war rhetoric from the start. When they entered the conflict in 1917, Randolph McKim, Episcopal rector of Washington's Church of the Epiphany stated:

It is God who has summoned us to this war. It is his war we are fighting... This conflict is indeed a crusade. The greatest in history – the holiest. It is the profoundest and truest sense of a Holy War... Yes, it is Christ, the King of

Righteousness, who calls us to grapple in the deadly strife with this unholy and blasphemous power [Germany] (qtd. in Jenkins 10)

As Jenkins comments, American clergy produced alarming assertions of cosmic war rhetoric (10). They labeled the war a literal crusade, which emphasized the religious zeal they promoted when entering the war. American preachers accepted the exact aspects of the sacred conflict and used it in their sermons to solidify God as the authority prompting the war among the people (Jenkins 10). Newell Dwight Hillis took the holy war doctrine to a whole other level, advocating the annihilation of Satan's servants and the annihilation of the German race in his book, from which the American Liberty Committee distributed 1.5 million extracts (Jenkins 11). Therefore, it is safe to say that the Americans laid a strong emphasis on the religious aspect of the war, prompting the eradication of the enemies of God. Also, one can conclude that every nation relied on religious fervor and ironically, each nation presented themselves as the true servants of God, with the opponents serving and fighting for a demonic cause.

Recognizing the vast amount of religious unity during the incessant war years and how religious rhetoric and propaganda were almost omnipresent among the people of participating nations, can World War I be labeled a holy war? According to Jenkins, contemporary scholars use the ideological framework behind the Crusades to justify their cause, when, in fact, no such cause existed. This poses then the question, if the Crusades are a holy war, why should we deny the holy war status to the events of 1914-1918 (Jenkins 14)?

It is obvious that religion was a major driving force of the Great War and that nation leaders used religion, having a massive impact on the morale and motivation of the soldiers engaging in battle. For instance, in *Goodbye to All That*, Graves mentions how the Welsh were not as present during the early stages of the war as the chaplains held soldiering to be a sinful act, so much so that they prayed not for the safety of soldiers on the battlefield, but rather for the moral dangers that threatened the soldier back home (82). Because the chaplains were politically strong, they were the one deciding whether their men will go to war or not. However, becoming a minister of munitions, Lloyd George managed to coax the Welsh chaplains that the ongoing conflict is a crusade, which resulted in chaplains inciting their men into war. Soldiering went from being a sin to a consecrated responsibility. This example in Graves's novel alone displays how powerful religion was in the political sphere as they were the authority that decided whether the men will engage in the war or not, arguably causing the death of many Welshmen directly.

Regarding Jenkins's comparison of the medieval Crusades to World War I, there are some nuances between the two major historical events, but there are more similarities overlapping. The main difference between these historical events is that the Crusades were battles against another large spread religion, while World War I is more of a civil war regarding the religious nature in the sense that it was a war where predominantly Christian European nations clashed. The Crusades earned their holy war status as the religion of Christianity collectively fought not only for the geographical locations but also the doctrine of Islam, i.e., the conflict was one major religion against another major religion of that time. Also, a lot of religious rhetoric and propaganda was present during the medieval period to firmly strengthen the sanctified aspect of the conflict. World War I also had an ample amount of religiously inspired propaganda; each nation had presented themselves as the true servants of God and as being on the righteous side of the conflict. All these aspects, for both the Crusades and World War I, align with both Johnson's and Jenkins's descriptions of a holy war; therefore, by observing these similarities, it can be inferred that World War I can indeed fall into the category, as it possesses plenty of mechanisms which are ascribed to a holy war.

### **1.5. Modern Conflicts with Religious Undertones**

Unfortunately, even in the twenty-first century, war is still a reoccurring practice for the same reasons - politics, culture, economics, and especially religion. Examples of present-day conflicts with religious undertones are the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Rohingya crisis.

Firstly, regarding the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, the media usually focuses on the political, strategic, and economic causes of the war, rather than religious. However, both Ukraine and Russia are predominantly Orthodox, which makes this conflict similar to World War I. Namely, the same religious group is divided by national borders and is fighting among itself, each nation claiming to be the righteous one and favored by God. In his speech, President Putin alluded to the religious narratives regarding Ukrainian identity, claiming that Ukraine is "an inalienable part of [Russian] history, culture, and spiritual space"<sup>2</sup> (Putin). According to Houston and Mandeville, Putin's claim reflects an often-held interpretation of the history of Orthodox

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<sup>2</sup> Full speech available at Fisher, Max. "Putin's Case for War, Annotated". *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/24/world/europe/putin-ukraine-speech.html>. Accessed 11 Aug. 2023

Christianity in Russia, and according to this view, Russians and Ukrainians are a singular group who originated from the same Christian kingdom that existed in the tenth century. This view corresponds with both nations' histories. The issue with that, however, is that this view completely ignores Ukrainian independence since Russia claims that both nations "come from one Kievan baptismal font... and share common historical fate" (Houston and Mandeville). Once the invasion happened, the Moscow Patriarchate's Authority was severely weakened, with many Russian Orthodox Churches in Europe immediately cutting ties with the Moscow Patriarchate. This poses the question of the future of the Orthodox religion in Ukraine, with the answer depending on which nation comes out victorious. Houston and Mandeville believe that the role of religious actors in maintaining cohesion across ecumenical lines is crucial to preserving the social fabric of a unified Ukraine and that the same religious actors will play a key role in peacebuilding once the battle ends.

The roots of the second war, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, date back to the early twentieth century, with many Jewish people arriving to escape persecution. Jewish nationalists started a movement called Zionism and, according to *Britannica*, the goal of that movement was to create and support a national state in Palestine, the ancient homeland of the Jews ("Zionism"). However, while early Zionists hoped to settle in Palestine, that prospect seemed very difficult since the land was under firm Ottoman control, but after the British engaged in war with the Ottoman empire, the Zionist followers immediately supported the British imperial cause (Jenkins 176). Although not a purely religious conflict and leaning more towards a territorial and political one, this tension most definitely carries a religious component. The religious significance the conflict carries is attached to specific sacred sites, such as the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Mount Temple. The religion-based rumors spread by extremists in the media and social media about the hidden religious plans of the other side worsen these tensions (Mostafa). This war shares similarities with the medieval Crusades - two differing major religions fighting for territories they both considered sacred. Additionally, new evolving religious narratives, historical claims, and ambitions for acquiring sacred space have further fueled tensions, making it extremely difficult to find a possible solution. Galal Mostafa suggests some possible interventions, those being interfaith dialogue, the remembrance of past cooperation between Jews and Muslims, and focusing on religious texts that promote positive and tolerant values.

The third conflict is the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, which is not as prominently covered in mainstream media, and thus unfamiliar to many people. The Rohingya crisis, also labeled a genocide by many, is a conflict driven by mostly religious undertones, which are covered by

political agenda and so far, has had more than 25 000 casualties (Ellis-Petersen). The predominantly Buddhist Myanmar government with extremist tendencies persecutes the Rohingya, a Muslim minority group. Extremist nationalist trends fueled by religious identity, resembling the Nazi German government's policies, are used to exploit, marginalize, and prosecute the Rohingya population. The United Nations described the crisis as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" and even ordered the country to immediately take measures to protect the minority from genocide (Ellis-Petersen). The crisis is still ongoing, with most of the refugees stationed in Bangladesh, while others escaped to other neighboring nations, such as India and Thailand (Sengupta and Fountain). There is still no sign of a peaceful resolution, as the Myanmar government keeps denying any accounts of genocide.



## 2. Religious Elements in War Narratives

### 2.1. Books and Authors

#### 2.1.1. Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*

Ernest Miller Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois on July 21, 1899. He launched his writing career as a newspaper writer in Kansas when he was seventeen years old. After the United States entered the First World War, he joined a volunteer ambulance unit in the Italian army. Being at the frontlines, he was injured by a mortar shell on July 8, 1918, on the Austro-Italian front at Fossalta di Piave. He was decorated for his heroism by the Italian government and, during his recovery in the Milano hospital, he fell in love with a Red Cross nurse Agnes von Kurowsky, who declined his marriage proposal. After his rehabilitation, Hemingway once again started writing as a journalist for the *Toronto Star* while in Paris. Encouraged by other American writers in Paris, he began printing his work and released his first significant book, a collection of short stories *In Our Times* in 1925. In 1926 he published *The Sun Also Rises*, the first novel that granted him a worldwide acknowledgment as a writer. In 1929 he wrote his world-renowned novel *A Farewell to Arms*. The second war novel Hemingway wrote is *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, released in 1940. This novel focused on the comradeship aspect of war, while *A Farewell to Arms* emphasized the pointlessness of it. In his lifetime, Hemingway witnessed two World Wars. During World War II, Hemingway flew several missions with the British Royal Air Force and crossed the English Channel with American Troops on D-Day. Hemingway also saw a good amount of action in Normandy. Following the war in Europe, Hemingway returned to Cuba and began working as a writer again. In 1953, he received the Pulitzer Prize in fiction for his novel *The Old Man and the Sea*, one of his most renowned novels. In 1954, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. Hemingway committed suicide on July 2, 1961, in Ketchum, Idaho.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the novel *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway reached back to his experience as a young medic in Italy, developing a grim yet lyrical novel of great power, fusing the elements of a love story with a war story (Young). While serving in World War I, American Lieutenant Frederic Henry, the protagonist who represents Hemingway himself, falls in love with Catherine Barkley, who portrays real-life Agnes von Kurowsky. Later, Frederic gets injured by an Austrian mortar shell while distributing food to the soldiers in the trench. While recovering in the hospital in Milan,

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<sup>3</sup> Full autobiography on Hemingway can be found in Young, Philip. "Ernest Hemingway." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ernest-Hemingway>. Accessed 18 Jun. 2023

Catherine, who is a nurse, joins him at the hospital and nurses him back to health. During his recovery their relationship advances, becoming lovers, eventually leading to Catherine's pregnancy. Having recovered, Frederic is sent back to the front. After deserting the army after a terrible loss in a battle, losing his comrades along the way, and narrowly escaping execution, Frederic manages to find Catherine and together they escape to neutral Switzerland. At the end of the novel, during her delivery, Catherine gives birth to a stillborn. After experiencing post-delivery complications, Catherine suffers multiple hemorrhages and succumbs, leaving Henry alone in the rain.

### 2.1.2. Erich M. Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*

Born on June 22, 1898, in Osnabrück, Germany, Erich Paul Remark, today known as Erich Maria Remarque, was a German author best known for his war novel *Im Westen nichts Neues* or translated to English, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. He was baptized and raised a Catholic and educated in various Catholic schools. In 1916 he enlisted in the army and after six months of training, in June of 1917, he was drafted and sent to the trenches of the Western Front. One month later, he was badly wounded and put in a military hospital where he remained until October 1918. After the war, Remarque had various jobs, such as organist, and theater, and concert critic. In 1920, he published his first novel *Die Traumbude* or *The Dream Room*. In 1929, Remarque released his war novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which immediately made him one of the best war novelists of his time. The novel was so well received that a movie adaptation followed one year later. With the rise of national socialism in Germany, Remarque became one of the critics of the Nazi ideology and a strong advocate against the war so that he revoked his German citizenship. The embargo of many books, including *All Quiet on the Western Front*, prompted public libraries to dispose of the listed books, as they posed a threat to mainstream ideology and were considered un-German. Remarque then emigrated to the United States in 1939, where he became a naturalized citizen in 1947. In 1946, Remarque released *Arch of Triumph*, which again got him worldwide attention and praise. Erich Maria Remarque died on September 25, 1970, in Locarno, Switzerland.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Full autobiography at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Erich Maria Remarque: In Depth". *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/erich-maria-remarque-in-depth>. Accessed 11. Aug. 2023

Regarding *All Quiet on the Western Front*, some would argue that this novel is one of the best World War I novels ever written. *All Quiet on the Western Front* was unequivocally an attempt to discourage any future soldier from participating in war, illustrating the war's pointlessness, and presenting the loss and toll it has on the soldier. The novel encompasses the soldiers' lives in the trenches during World War I. Although starting very enthusiastically during training, the protagonist Paul Bäumer and his friends experience firsthand the terrible conditions in the trenches, the sorrowful life during the war, and the atrocities of the war. The title of the novel is the language of routine communication, marked by a cool, terse style, and the amorality and disconnect from patriotism was a strong contrast to the Nazi patriotic rhetoric (Lohnes). The coolness and terseness shed light of the intense horror present on the front. The novel mostly mocks the military, as many soldiers saw the tenacity of the army to parade and march as very pretentious, as well as focusing on aspects that were of no use during the war, such as polishing buttons on shirts and similar trifling things. The book begins with the following epigraph: "This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure, for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it. It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who even though they may have escaped shells, were destroyed by war" (Remarque). Such a strong disclaimer indicates that the story is not an adventurous one, but rather a story of a horrendous experience, depicting shattered bodies, graphic descriptions of injuries, screams, death, and traumatized survivors. The protagonist loses almost all friends to war, which all creates an atmosphere filled with misery and sadness. The book ends with an epilogue:

He fell in October 1918, on a day that was so quiet and still on the whole front, that the army report confined itself to the single sentence: All quiet on the Western Front. He had fallen forward and lay on the earth as though sleeping. Turning him over one saw that he could not have suffered long; his face had an expression of calm, as though almost glad the end had come. (Remarque 296)

At the end of the book, Paul was the remaining member of the initial group of seven classmates, and he too died just a few months before the war had ended. The death of the whole group hints to the idea of the Lost Generation, the group of young adults whose lives metaphorically ended due to their inability to ever recover mentally. Although Bäumer managed to escape death's claws multiple times and survived almost three years of continuous shelling and gunfire, he ironically died at the front when it was at its quietest, suggesting that his death was inevitable and that he was better off dying earlier than to endure the years of suffering in the trenches of the front.

### 2.1.3. Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That*

On July 24, 1895, Robert von Ranke Graves was born in Wimbledon near London. Going by Robert Graves in his writings, he was an English poet, novelist, critic, and scholar. His work comprises about 120 books, with the two most notable being *I, Claudius* (1934) and the world-renowned novel, *Goodbye to All That* (1929), which is also Graves's autobiography. After his time at Charterhouse School in London, young Graves enlisted in the military and served as a British officer on the Western Front during World War I. The majority of *Goodbye to All That* covers his life-changing war experience in the trenches, where he was severely wounded in the Battle of Loos in 1916. To distract himself from the traumatic experience of the war, Graves and his wife Nancy Nicholson moved to Oxford, where he started lecturing at St. John's College. Graves's early poetry mostly dealt with World War I. After meeting American poet Laura Riding in 1926, Graves's poetry underwent a significant change – he moved from his digressiveness and philosophy to terse, ironic poems based on his personal life (Day). He divorced Nancy Nicholson and moved to Majorca with Laura Riding, with whom he lived for around thirteen years. In the 1960s, Graves returned to England where he worked as a poetry professor at Oxford again. He slowly became senile and moved back to Majorca, where he died in 1985.

When it comes to his autobiographical novel *Goodbye to All That*, two-thirds of the novel are about Graves's time in the military and on the front, indicating that the war significantly marked his life. It is important to note that the book is not purely about war. The first nine chapters of the novel are more focused on the autobiographical aspect of Graves's life. The author presents his family and his school days in Charterhouse, including personal details about his homoerotic experiences, school secrets, and friendships he made and lost along the way (McCrum). Robert Graves manages to tell the incredible story of his view of the war as a young officer during World War I. He provides the reader with diary-like entries which realistically portray his life in the trenches, offering vivid and raw details of the horrors he had witnessed. The lack of patriotism illustrates the feelings the soldiers had towards the war and country, but deserting was not an option since it was punishable by death. Graves himself disliked the British government, as they did not hesitate to kill his entire generation in a war he considered was fueled by greed, bigotry, and jingoism (Boer 20). Graves deemed the war to be a pointless farce led by incredibly incompetent people responsible for the gruesome slaughter providing the reader with the horrors of trench life – rotting corpses, exposed insides, and misery (McCrum). Graves's goal was undoubtedly to discourage the reader from ever supporting or participating in warfare by realistically presenting

the circumstances. *Goodbye to All That* ends with Graves sailing to Egypt, where he became an English professor at Cairo University. In the epilogue, Graves gives the reader a short update about his life post-*Goodbye to All That*, talking about his divorce, his writings, and further war-related experiences.

## 2.2. Discrepancy of Religious Presence

It is important to note that the chosen novels have been selected purely based on popularity and the impact they had on the literary world of the early twentieth century. They were also chosen based on the selection of nations that participated in World War I, those being Germany, Britain, and the United States. Furthermore, not every book's amount of religious content corresponds to the religious stance of the nation it originated from, for example Germany had a strong surge of religious propaganda, and their political rhetoric was infused with religious doctrine, while Remarque, a German-born author, used little to no religious motifs in his novel.

When analyzing the three world-renowned war novels, one notices a difference in religious presence. For example, Graves's *Goodbye to All That* is abundant in various religious elements for he was born in a Christian family and raised by Christian values which promoted participating in holy warfare and deemed it to be "the right thing" (Graves 71). Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* does not shy away from mentioning religion either, with religion being a reoccurring topic throughout the whole novel. Hemingway, although born a congregational Protestant, abandoned his faith after the horrors of and World War I and converted to Catholicism after he married his second wife (Ewing). In the novel, Hemingway offers a realistically bitter view of wartime experience as well as the influence of religion. The novel with the least amount of religious presence is Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. This fact does not preclude that religion does not play an important role, as Remarque himself was Catholic and has been surrounded by Catholic values his entire youth. The minor role which the religious plays in Remarque's novel certainly implies the author's stance towards religion during that period and reveals a great contrast to Germany's heavily religion-oriented propaganda and rhetoric throughout the war. As Jenkins comments, among European warring nations, Germany stood out for its intensity and consistency of religious-based militarism (74). Also worth noting is that during the first months of the First World War, a phenomenon called "the spirit of 1914" occurred, which caused a sudden increase of

religious zeal in Germany, resulting in churches being fuller than ever before and almost unanimous enthusiasm for war, even in areas notorious for secularism (Verhey 442).

### **2.3. Religious Theme and Motifs - Role Analysis and Comparison**

Though religion is not the main topic in the chosen novels, it is all but insignificant. Namely, many different religious motifs are present and carry a noteworthy meaning. There are many instances of overlapping motifs such as religious structures, prayers, and religious attitudes. There are also several motifs exclusive to a single book or present in two, those being religious parents, priests, Jesus Christ, and religious conversation during mess eating, all of which will be explained and analyzed.

#### **2.3.1. Religious Structures**

Religious structures are a motif present in all three books, but each book has a different approach to describing it emphasizing its significance to the protagonist and the author himself. In Hemingway's novel, while moving through Milan, Frederick and Catherine stumble upon a cathedral, which Frederick describes as "white and wet in the mist" (133). Frederick then asks Catherine if she would like to enter, to which she says coldly "No" (133). Furthermore, when Frederick and Catherine spot the couple by the cathedral, he utters "They're like us," to which Catherine responds, "Nobody is like us" (133). Hemingway's terse, blunt, and direct writing style is noticeable when reading his literary work. His writing is straightforward, he does not exaggerate with his descriptions in this novel and writes as if he is noting his first impressions of the sights without dwelling on philosophical aspects of situations, leaving that matter to the reader. In this situation, the cathedral is described briefly as wet and white, very plain and simple, as if it is a mere building that holds no significance to the narrator. Catherine's brisk and dull response could indicate their stance as a couple, which also explains Hemingway's attitude towards the Church. They do not have any spiritual connection to it, as many people of that turbulent time had, seeking comfort inside the building. Also, the scene with the couple they saw standing near the cathedral supports this idea of how Catherine and Frederick are not religious and do not need religion in their relationship to function. The couple standing by is using the cathedral as shelter, which could

imply how the cathedral, i.e., religion in the grander scheme, serves them as a necessity and they need it for their relationship to function, while Catherine's line "Nobody is like us" implies that they are the Lost Generation that severed all ties to religion, faith, God, and a higher mind. They also mention their view on marriage as a bond between people who love each other rather than a catholic bond enforced by the Church (104), meaning that they do not need Catholic approval of their love to enjoy their matrimony. To conclude, Hemingway's brief mention and dull description of the cathedral, Catherine's refusal to enter, and the couple they saw indicate Hemingway's attitude towards religion, which is, as mentioned before, critical but with a dose of respect.

Remarque also used a cathedral as a motif in his work. Although a very modest amount of religion is mentioned in his book, what is used does strongly emphasize his vision and attitude towards religion during the war years:

The parachute-lights soar upwards--and I see a picture, a summer evening, I am in the cathedral cloister and look at the tall rose trees that bloom in the middle of the little cloister garden where the monks lie buried. Around the walls are the stone carvings of the Stations of the Cross. No one is there. A great quietness rules in this blossoming quadrangle, the sun lies warm on the heavy grey stones, I place my hand upon them and feel the warmth. At the right-hand corner, the green cathedral spire ascends into the pale blue sky of the evening. Between the glowing columns of the cloister is the cool darkness that only churches have, and I stand there and wonder whether, when I am twenty, I shall have experienced the bewildering emotions of love. (Remarque 119)

In this scene in the book, Bäumer is in the trenches and briefly experiences some nostalgic, flashback memories which cause him to daydream. The daydreaming is disrupted afterward by an explosion of a star shell (119). Here, the motif of the cathedral serves as a safe space for Bäumer, as he, amidst the continuous shelling, manages to escape reality for a second and find himself in a serene, utopian environment. This indicates that Bäumer associates cathedrals or generally an environment with religious attributes as tranquil, secure, and idealistic. This also may imply Remarque's vision of cathedrals and religion as well, as he was born a catholic and raised by catholic values, meaning that Remarque himself might view a religious environment as safe and peaceful.

When it comes to Graves and his novel, the motif of a church/cathedral as a structure is also present. The old Norman church they stumbled upon was devastated by the bombings. As

Graves and his comrade Jenkins walk into the church, they find “the floor littered with rubbish, broken masonry, smashed chairs, ripped canvas pictures, (some of them looked several hundreds of years old), bits of images and crucifixes, muddied church vestments rotting in what was once the vestry” (120-121). This description may seem straightforward, but considering Graves’s religious stance during the war, an underlying attitude is present. Reading about his religious background, how he was driven by his friend Raymond to question his religious spirit at a young age (48) and further on in the book when he takes leave (207-209) and was irritated by church service, Grave’s religious stance was severely put into question during his time in the trenches, which the broken church might imply as well, i.e., the broken church symbolizes Graves and his attachment towards religion and the Church.

When comparing the same motif in three different books, each author used it fittingly to indirectly express their attitude towards the physical building, with Hemingway implying that he does not require it (*it* being religion and the relief, shelter, and harmony it is supposed to provide), Remarque indicating how it provides him with comfort and safety, and Graves expressing his religious spirit at that point of his life.

### 2.3.2. Prayer

Starting with Remarque’s novel, the topic of religion is most prominent and observable near the end of the novel in the tenth chapter (250-264). Paul and Albert find themselves injured and wounded lying in a Catholic Hospital. Every morning in the hospital, the nun nurses stand and say their prayers, calling it *Morning Devotion*, and for the patients to get a bit of it, they leave the doors to the rooms open so everyone can hear it (251). But this disturbs the patients, as their nights are turbulent and without sleep. Bäumer and his fellow roommates react very vocally against it:

No doubt it is well meant, but it gives us aches in our heads and bones. “Such an absurdity!” I say, “just when a man dropped off to sleep (...) I get furious and call out: “Be quiet out there!” A minute later a sister appears. In her black and white dress, she looks like a beautiful tea cozy. “Shut the door, will you, sister?” says someone. “We are saying prayers, that is why the door is open,” she responds. “But we want to go on sleeping— “Prayer is better than sleeping,” she stands there and smiles innocently. “And it is seven o’clock already.” Albert groans again. “Shut the



door,” I snort. She is quite disconcerted. Apparently, she cannot understand. “But we are saying prayers for you too.” (251-252)

Here, it is obvious that the wounded and exhausted soldiers could not care less about prayers, as their only concern is to get some rest. This scene may seem quite transparent and clear, that the loud morning prayers only irritate the wounded patients. But there is possibly an underlying message behind this whole scene which could be interpreted as not only Bäumer’s but also Remarque’s attitude towards religion and its doctrines during the war. Heavily indoctrinated believers, like the nun nurse who believes prayers are more beneficial to the patients than sleep, perceive the war and the toll it carries falsely. The nurse’s interpretation of praying in such heavy times and her disconcertedness regarding the actual needs of the wounded patients shows her brainwashed programming. Bäumer throws a glass bottle through the door into the corridor, producing a loud burst, which causes the nuns to stop praying (252). Symbolically, the aggressive act shows what the protagonist feels anger, frustration, and acrimony towards religious doctrine during wartime.

Hemingway’s motif of prayer is noticed only at the end of the novel in the final, forty-first chapter. Catherine and Frederick find themselves in the hospital, with Catherine in the delivery room experiencing problems and pain. The troubles escalate, leading Catherine to suffer multiple hemorrhages, causing her to lose consciousness and even threatening her life. Frederick Henry, although not an ordinary spiritual man, finds himself in a situation where he is losing all hope, and in desperation prays to prevent Catherine’s death:

I sat outside in the hall. Everything was gone inside of me. I did not think. I could not think. I knew she was going to die, and I prayed that she would not. Don’t let her die. Oh, God, please don’t let her die. I’ll do anything for you if you won’t let her die. Please, please, please, dear God, don’t let her die. Dear God, don’t let her die. Please, please, please don’t let her die. God, please make her not die. I’ll do anything you say if you don’t let her die. You took the baby but don’t let her die - that was all right but don’t let her die. Please, please, dear God, don’t let her die.  
(Hemingway 291)

Although not a conventional prayer, more a desperate begging attempt, this is the very first time we find the protagonist Frederick Henry praying. As the proverbial saying goes, “The walls of hospitals have heard more prayers than the walls of churches,” and Henry’s anaphora-filled prayer is devastatingly depressing and tragic, and when reading, the desperation and sorrow reaches the

reader through the pages, creating a miserable atmosphere. Henry, being critical of God and religion throughout the novel, finds himself falling back to prayer, as despair prevails. His prayers do not work as Catherine still dies in the end. Hemingway here used the motif of prayer to illustrate how people who are not religious will still try to reach out to God when feeling hopeless, showing how biased and cynical people can become when desperation prevails, as emotion overwhelms reason.

Graves's motif of prayer during the three-hour-long service in the nineteenth chapter undoubtedly represents his attitude towards religion at that point, as his frustration and passive-aggression is noticeable when reading that passage. Graves took leave in April 1916 and the very next morning, his parents demanded that he attend church service, which he found bothersome, but to avoid a verbal altercation, he conformed and went with it. It is important to note that Graves's parents very extremely religious, so much so they considered the First World War a holy war and took pride in their son's involvement (71). During the service, Graves was so "dreadfully bored, longing to sneak outside" (208). He grew so uninterested that he resorted to writing Latin epigrams, as that was his way of killing time "on ceremonial parades, on the dentist's chair or at night in the trenches" (209). His visible frustration came when the preacher started the sermon:

For he was now preaching a sermon about Divine Sacrifice and bellowing about the Glorious Performances of our Surns and Brethren in Furnce today. I decided to ask him afterwards why, if he felt like that, he wasn't himself either in Furnce or in khurki. (Graves 209).

Here, Graves's agitation is triggered by the preacher who presents fighting as a form of martyrdom. Preachers commonly used this idea of divine sacrifice to push the holy war narrative onto the indoctrinated masses and to create the impression that fighting for God and dying is considered a religious, righteous act that will grant the soldiers eternal paradise and justify their heinous acts. He also notes how the preacher was bellowing rather than preaching and mocks his speech impairment. The important thing here to notice is the irony of how the preacher is calling for divine sacrifice and is commending his people for doing so but he is not willing to participate in the war. The idiom "practice what you preach" is likely Graves's standpoint, which is supported by the fact that he wanted to ask the preacher why he was not in the trenches with the soldiers if he genuinely believed what he was saying. Graves's hatred for the church was growing stronger as the war went on and completely diverted him from Christianity.

Comparing the motif of prayer in all three novels, Remarque and Graves used it to convey a similar message, while Hemingway's approach is different. Both the British and the German author use it as a form of expressing displeasure and indignation caused by the Church and its

followers, as they feel both are disconnected from reality and are unable to understand the immense burden the soldiers carry, often ignorantly imposing their doctrine. Hemingway uses the motif to illustrate how even strong critics of the Church and God himself can become cynical in times of desperation, resorting to methods they never practiced before.

### 2.3.3. Religious Attitude of the Soldiers

The popular aphorism “there are no atheists in foxholes” conveys the idea that when facing death in war, everyone will be incited to start considering a higher, abstract power to which to turn. However, this aphorism does not align with Graves’s book, as in his novel “[in the trenches] hardly one soldier in a hundred was inspired by religious feeling of even the crudest kind” (97). This signals the religious attitude of soldiers allied to the Anglican faith. This attitude is further deepened during a conversation Graves had with a sergeant:

A regular sergeant at Montagne, a Second Battalion man, had recently told me that he did not hold with religion in time of war. (...) “And all this damn nonsense, sir — excuse me, sir — that we read in the papers, sir, about how miraculous it is that the wayside crucifixes are always getting shot at, but the figure of our Lord Jesus somehow don’t get hurt, it fairly makes me sick, sir.” This was his explanation why, when giving practice fire-orders from the hill-top, he had shouted, unaware that I stood behind him: “Seven hundred, half left, bloke on cross, five rounds, concentrate, FIRE!” (Graves 97)

The soldiers were undoubtedly agitated by the propaganda and lies in the media was serving them. Also, it is understandable why they lacked spirituality in the trenches. Facing death, witnessing the horrors, and experiencing suffering, hardly anyone could rely on God, a supposedly all-loving entity. Regarding God as an entity, Graves states that “[i]n the instructors’ mess we spoke freely of God and Gott as opposed tribal deities” (197). With this line, Graves points to the absurdity of bringing religion into war and how the indoctrinated masses each believed they were fighting against the true opponents of their God, with the irony being that each nation’s God was the same one. Describing the nations as tribes can also be interpreted as an irony - supposedly advanced nations resort to ancient, savage methods to solve a conflict.

When it comes to *A Farewell to Arms*, the various situations where the soldiers ridiculed the character of the priest indirectly demonstrate how religion was perceived by the Italian soldiers. By directly taunting the priest for his behavior and status, they also indirectly expressed how they

viewed the Catholic church – by ridiculing him, they also ridiculed the Church as an institution. Some soldiers, like the captain and the major were vocally against the Church, believing it was motivated by lucre, and declared themselves as atheists: “‘The Pope wants the Austrians to win the war,’ the major said. ‘He loves Franz Joseph. That’s where the money comes from. I am an atheist.’ ... ‘All thinking men are atheists, the major said’” (7). Most soldiers were not spiritual at all, but a few, like Henry, were likely questioning their religion. Henry’s interactions with the priest certainly suggest that he doubts his faith, but he had never resorted to ridiculing, as he was aware of the significance and profoundly respected his friend, the priest.

Analyzing *All Quiet on the Western Front*, the sheer lack of religious elements in comparison to the other two novels, and Germany being one of the most religiously driven nations participating in the First World War (Jenkins 2014), indeed implies the author’s relationship with faith. Furthermore, there is one example in Remarque’s novel that strengthens this idea that the common German soldier was spiritually disconnected and even agitated by the Church’s doctrines. As previously mentioned, when the wounded soldiers express their dissatisfaction and agitation with the morning prayer, the protagonist and other soldiers decide they have had enough:

“I’m going to count up to three. If it doesn’t stop before then I’ll let something fly.” “Me too,” says another. I count up to five. Then I take hold of a bottle, aim, and heave it through the door into the corridor. It smashes into a thousand pieces. The prayer stops. A swarm of sisters appear and reproach us in concert. “Shut the door!” we yell. (...) We have won. (Remarque 252)

The words of the soldiers convey their emotions towards the morning prayer quite clearly, and if that is not enough, the shattered bottle symbolizes their attitude towards not only the loud praying but also their faith.

Comparing the religious attitude of the German soldier to the British and Italian soldiers, a parallel can be drawn. Soldiers were questioning their spirituality, and with most of them expressing their doubt and disregarding God as a deity, the aphorism “there are no atheists in foxholes” may not hold much ground at least according to these three novels. All three authors, both directly and indirectly express the spiritual position the soldiers found themselves in after experiencing the horrors of combat, with the Italians ridiculing religion, the British losing their faith, and Germans being agitated by it.

### 2.3.4. Priests

Priests are reoccurring motif in Hemingway's and Graves's novel. Hemingway's character of the priest is continually mentioned, and Henry, the protagonist, often converses with the priest about various topics, including the war and God. As stated before, Henry was a bitter realist and a critic of the church and religion, but he still treated the priest with dignity and veneration, indicating that he does have a dose of respect for the idea of religion while having near-atheistic views. Although Henry had some form of admiration for the priest, as he considered him a good friend, the other soldiers and captains were ridiculing the priest quite often:

“Priest to-day with girls,” the captain said looking at the priest and at me. The priest smiled and blushed and shook his head. This captain baited him often. “Not true?” asked the captain. “To-day I see priest with girls.” “No,” said the priest. The other officers were amused at the baiting. “Priest every night five against one.” Everyone at the table laughed. “You understand? Priest every night five against one.” He made a gesture and laughed loudly. The priest accepted it as a joke. (Hemingway 7).

The scene during the mess eating indicates how Italian soldiers and captains, at least according to Hemingway, viewed religion and perceived the priest as a herald of God. The priest was a low-value man, not contributing to the war, and was in celibacy, therefore the soldiers did not take him seriously. The priest avoided confrontation, as he understood that most likely it all comes from built-up stress from the war and has no ill intent. Throughout the novel, many ridicule the priest and ignore him, e.g., Rocca, but not Henry (37). Henry and the priest chat quite a lot, and even after Henry disappoints the priest after not visiting his hometown, the priest and Henry remain in good relations:

He had not had it, but he understood that I had really wanted to go to the Abruzzi but had not gone and we were still friends, with many tastes alike, but with the difference between us. He had always known what I did not know and what, when I learned it, I was always able to forget. (Hemingway 13)

With this observation by Henry, it is apparent that he recognizes the priest's wisdom and knowledge, and values him as a companion. Their friendship is further strengthened and emphasized after Henry was wounded. The priest immediately visits him in the hospital and shows his sympathy and thoughtfulness by bringing gifts, such as a mosquito net, whiskey, and newspapers (63-67). The priest as a character does not play a great part in the plot's development,

but this does not suggest that his character is insignificant by any means. The priest is God's representative and as such, advises Henry to start acknowledging God. The priest also predicts that Henry will find love and peace, becoming happy rather than staying bitter, which comes to fruition later. The priest is undoubtedly a strong and important character as he does make Henry, a bitter realist, question his spirituality in a respectful, non-imposing way.

When it comes to *Goodbye to All That*, Graves too used priests throughout the book to convey a message regarding the state of religious attitude towards the Anglican church from his and his fellow soldiers' perspective. One of those examples is the Anglican chaplain from the sermon, which has been covered previously. Another example of Graves talking about priests/chaplains occurs at the end of chapter seventeen (197-199). Here, Graves compares Anglican and Roman Catholic chaplains and issues his, as well as his fellow soldiers' opinions on this matter. On the one hand, he goes on to state the issue he and his comrades have with Anglican priests they encountered:

For Anglican regimental chaplains we had little respect. If they had shown one-tenth the courage, endurance, and other human qualities that the regimental doctors showed, we agreed, the British Expeditionary Force might well have started a religious revival. But they had not, being under orders to avoid getting mixed up in the fighting and to stay behind with the transport. Soldiers could hardly respect a chaplain who obeyed these orders, and yet not one in fifty seemed sorry to obey them. Occasionally, on a quiet day in a quiet sector, the chaplain would make a daring afternoon visit to the support line and distribute a few cigarettes, before hurrying back. (...) Sometimes the colonel would summon him to come up with the rations and bury the day's dead; he would arrive, speak his lines, and shoot off again. (Graves 198)

In this passage, the message is quite transparent. Graves and most other British soldiers shared this opinion that Anglican chaplains were acting incredibly cowardly while, ironically, promoting courageous, heroic, and valiant values. The specific phrases Graves used, such as "before hurrying back" and "shoot off again," suggest the cowardly nature of the chaplains, as well as indicating that they were always eager to leave the very moment they arrived. One could argue they were not allowed to get too close, as per the order they received, and that people are afraid of dying and getting hurt, but it was most likely very annoying for the soldiers to be lectured and spiritually stimulated to fight by a person who runs away at the first sign of battle. Graves then gives a further example of how the "chaplains were remarkably out of touch with their troops" (198): "The Second

Battalion chaplain, just before the Loos fighting, had preached a violent sermon on the Battle against Sin, at which one old soldier behind me grumbled: ‘Christ, as if one bloody push wasn’t enough to worry about at a time!’” (198). Here, the idea that the chaplains “were out of touch with their soldiers,” is quite clear. It seems ridiculous to be preaching a sermon on a topic that has no benefit for the troops, almost stressing them further and morally shaking them instead of trying to unify and strengthen their spirit with an adequate sermon. Undoubtedly, Anglican chaplains were not popular among the British army, or at least among Graves’s battalion, as they viewed those chaplains with contempt. Roman Catholic priests, on the other hand, were a different story:

The colonel in one battalion I served with got rid of four new Anglican chaplains in four months; finally, he applied for a Roman Catholic, alleging a change of faith in the men under his command. For the Roman Catholic chaplains were not only permitted to visit posts of danger but definitely enjoined to be wherever fighting was, so that they could give extreme unction to the dying. And we had never heard of one who failed to do all that was expected of him and more. Jovial Father Gleeson of the Munster, when all the officers were killed or wounded at the first battle of Ypres, had stripped off his black badges and, taking command of the survivors, held the line. (Graves 198)

Graves and the men in his battalion certainly appreciated the approach the Roman Catholic chaplains had, being there where it mattered, not contradicting themselves, being gallant and tough, and practicing what they preached. Granted, they were not restricted by any orders, but their actions and Graves’s description of them certainly imply they would not obey those rules either. The sudden shift from an Anglican to a Roman Catholic chaplain surely strengthened the battalion’s spirits, as they finally had a representative of their religion living the words he spoke and even going as far as to participate in combat. Although the Roman Catholic chaplains’ words did not contradict their actions, it can be said they did contradict the Bible and the New Testament, as Jesus himself was a pacifist and strongly opposed to fighting.

In summary, both authors used the characters of priests to illustrate the state of religion during the time of the Great War. Hemingway’s depiction indicates the attitude of the Italian soldiers towards the representative of their faith. By ridiculing and slamming the priest, they also indirectly issued their stance toward their faith. Hemingway’s soldiers had a sort of contempt for the priest, but the priest did not mind it and attributed their behavior to the toll the war had on them, which shows and reinforces the priest as a strong character. It is also important to mention that, in contrast to Graves’s chaplains, Hemingway’s priest was opposed to the war. The chaplains Graves encountered advocated fighting, with the Roman Catholic ones even practicing their

preachings. By comparing the chaplains of the two very similar faiths, Graves managed to present the state the Anglican church was in and reveal its hypocrisy. The Anglican chaplains sent and encouraged their people to fight while protecting themselves from harm, oftentimes preaching inappropriate sermons which were of no help to the soldiers. The Roman Catholic priests are undoubtedly a great contrast to the Anglicans, being very in touch with the soldiers and able to adequately represent the values they were promoting, greatly uplifting the soldiers' spirits.



## Conclusion

Regarding the holy war ideology, it is safe to say that most religions throughout history were very militaristic. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism all followed a similar pattern to ensure their religion's existence. For example, the Bible alone has around ninety instances of war, with the majority being driven by religious causes. Throughout history, there are many examples of conflicts that are founded on religious causes, some even ongoing today, like the Rohingya crisis and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is important to mention that those conflicts are not purely religious, but their religious undertone is quite noticeable. Regarding World War I, Philip Jenkins's book *The Great and Holy War* excellently analyzes and explains how the war was a conflict fueled by religious zeal and goes on to directly elaborate on how World War I changed religion, and the way people perceive it forever. The philosophy behind holy warfare was investigated long before Jenkins's book, as fourth century theologian Augustine analyzed the Bible and its wars, forming the fundamentals of holy war ideology. It is also safe to say that religion and war share a bond as religious rhetoric is very common during wartime, regardless of whether the religion in question explicitly opposes war.

When it comes to war narratives, religion is a theme that is present in all three selected novels but in neither the focus. In all three novels, religion is more of an accompanying theme, but this does not prevent it from having a significant role. In Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, religion is more of a spiritual journey the protagonist explores. Hemingway also managed to exhibit the soldiers' attitude toward religion, with many of them being atheists and even going as far as to ridicule it. Also, Frederick Henry's views undoubtedly mirror Hemingway's, which are critical, but respectful. Regarding Graves's *Goodbye to All That*, religion is explored as a social construct and how severe indoctrination can lead to a false impression of reality. Graves also expressed not only his but also his fellow soldier's disappointment with religion, oftentimes questioning religion, criticizing the Anglican church, and presenting the common soldier's attitude towards faith. Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* contains the least number of religious motifs, and the theme of religion is rarely dwelled upon. However, its minuscule presence does still convey a strong message, i.e., through a handful of situations, Remarque managed to present the feeling he had towards his faith. At first, he associated it with peace and serenity, but in the end, it caused irritation and anger. All three authors managed to convey the same message, which is that religion was viewed with contempt by the common soldier and that the war not only shook

their faith but also converted many to atheism, as they were irritated by the propaganda and infuriated by the indoctrinated masses.

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