

**WAR AND RELIGION.  
A SOCIOLOGICAL  
STUDY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649408160

War and Religion. A Sociological Study by Eli Mayer

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**ELI MAYER**

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# WAR AND RELIGION

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

BY  
RABBI ELI MAYER

PHILADELPHIA, PA., 1918

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**TO**  
**My Inspiration, My Love, My Wife**  
**JESSIE STRAUS**

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## *Preface to War and Religion*

**T**HIS prefatory word is to serve a double purpose. It aims to furnish a general background for this work; and further, to explain the unusual amount and length of quotations.

The exposition of the background of this work involves the introduction of the personal element. The writer is an officiating minister. He was born and raised in the peaceful American atmosphere so wholly conducive to the idea that religion, above all else, must mean a reasoning relationship among men for the settlement of all difficulties. The isolation of the United States, the traditional American sentiment against entangling alliances, the genuine religious idealism pervading this land, conjured a picture of internationalism and universal arbitration that eliminated the lurid colors of warfare. The writer was not unmindful of the religious doctrine of the "God of Battles." He was generally aware of the war gods of the old national ploytheisms. But for the reasons given above, and for others of less importance, he felt that the prophetic vision of "nations not learning war any more" was most near of realization. Science had made religion adjust itself to this era of evolutionary thinking. Religion, thus newly oriented, could look for lofty ranges of spirituality from science. Religion and science seemed to have agreed that "God's in His Heaven—all's right with the world!" made winter's weary war-wastes but a passing phase to peaceful earth's eternal spring. But war stalked across the land. Where was God?

When able, earnest men of God changed their peace themes of yesterday to war themes of today, the impossible seemed to have transpired. Of course man cannot speak in absolutes; but the zeal of the ideal religionist is so proverbial, that one felt that the modern seer who said: "Thus saith the Lord of Peace" could not readily shift to "Thus saith the God of War." Conviction in religion is so intense that it would seem natural to posit as religion's best watchword: "One with God is a majority."

But when this reversal took place, it occurred to the writer to inquire whether this veering, so unlooked for, was an exception. Despite his vague impressions that religion had been caught in the net of war, he cherished the idea that it was an unwilling captive. He approached, therefore, this subject, with a certain hope, if not prejudice, that he would show a nobler record for religion than that made by her living supporters. But despite this bias, the evidence rolled in, in one steady stream, supporting full well the present-day attitude of all religionists in granting their blessings to each and every country's cause.

The question then arose as to the manner of handling the mass of evidence that was gathered. The easiest method would have been to give a summary of a few typical instances, and merely add the comment that these were characteristic of the relations of war and religion everywhere and always. But the subject is of such deep concern to the world at large, and the idea is so widespread that religion means peace and only peace, that it was feared such a method would prove unfair to all