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Just War v. Pacifism

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

I frequently link to Mark Silk's pith blog posts. Here is a link to a more extended essay that exhibits Silk's typical flair with ideas and language, and addresses a very timely issue, the relationship of the just war tradition to the pacifist ideal at the heart of Christianity. Silk goes on to look at how the eastern Orthodox churches approach these issues. Here is a snippet that perfectly demonstrates Silk's ability to get to the heart of the matter:

The value of just war theory is that it provides a way for Christians to acknowledge what the millenarian side of their tradition cannot?that there is evidence to suggest that violence can indeed bring peace in its wake.

Would the Bosnians be better off today had NATO not intervened militarily in the 1990s to stop the genocidal behavior of the Serbs? Would Malians be better off had French troops not intervened in their country this year?

On the other hand, just war theory is designed to be able to give war makers a clean bill of moral health?and that not only runs up against Christianity?s pacifist soul, it also opens the door to a triumphalism that does no one any good.

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