

Living in the world as it is... while hoping for one that's better.

The war in Ukraine poses a challenge to absolute pacifism that would condemn any military action, or at least refrain from supporting it.



I never met my uncle Martin. If he were alive today, he would be in his 90s, but he died when he was three years old, victim of what would today be a minor infection. However, before the development of antibiotics there was no such thing as a minor infection. Had Martin caught that infection two decades later, he probably would not have died. He was a victim of the not-yet that living when he did imposed upon him and his family. That is the problem with living in time rather than some sort of timeless eternity. The past puts limits on us in the present while the future only tantalizes us with hopes and possibilities that may happen but will themselves be limited by constraints handed on from and through our time. There is no such thing as "starting from scratch." We cannot erase the past and start anew. We must build on what the past presents to us, advancing the good and ameliorating the bad. But we cannot start over

Our action or inaction occurs in a context that shapes it and forces a response that falls short of any ideal. And so, my grandparents could only watch, weep and pray as their little boy suffered and died. Jesus lived with the same limitations. The Incarnation means that he, though God the Son, was hemmed in by his time, his culture, his language, his religion, his education, his society and much else. He transcended many aspects of it. But there was much he could not do. He and we can only live in the world we inherit and inhabit. That is why searching Scripture for simple answers to modern challenges is seldom of use. WWJD (what would Jesus do?) today is unknowable because he did not have to "Do" what we must do. That is one of the reasons that Christian doctrine and practice have evolved over the millennia: they must re-do their "Do" in every new age. That uncomfortable truth faces us as we gaze horrified at Russia's war against Ukraine.

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