

The Origins of War: A Catholic Perspective. Matthew A. Shadle.
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Shadle's inquiry into the causes of war stems from his belief that Catholic theology has failed to provide an adequate explanation. By adopting modern assumptions of the state and human relations, Shadle contends Catholic theologians have been prevented from utilizing the insights of earlier Catholic teaching that can provide insight on war's origin. Unfortunately, Shadle deliberately avoids providing his own answer to the cause or causes of war. Instead, he surveys the intellectual landscape to help scholars think more critically and reflectively on the assumptions that inform their understanding of states and their relations in the hope of avoiding dead ends. In this way, he redirects inquiry towards answers more consistent with Catholic teaching.

Shadle opens the book with a splendid review of the scriptural and church perspectives on the origins of war up to and including the Medieval ages. While Protestants may wish for a more thorough treatment of Scripture, Shadle's synopsis is worth reading. Chapter 2 surveys secular views of the state and the origin of war through the opinions of influential people such as Machiavelli, Kant, Hobbes, Marx and others. Chapter 3 connects the themes raised in chapter 2 to contemporary political theories, such as Classical Realism, Neorealism, Liberalism, Neoliberalism, and Marxism. Shadle describes each view and provides a thoughtful, but brief, critique of each from both a practical and theological perspective.

Chapter 4, Constructivism, constitutes the intellectual hinge of the book. He repeatedly argues that alternative understandings of human nature and the nature of the state (assumed by realism, liberalism, and Marxism) fail to understand that states are motivated by more interests than simply money and power. Shadle believes that Constructivism provides a more balanced and thorough intellectual model to explain the causes of war because it takes acknowledges that morality and rationality are culturally-mediated. In addition, Constructivism recognizes that a state's identity not only influences the international community but it is also influenced by that same community. I should point out that Shadle is not a moral relativist, nor has he completely jettisoned the role of natural law. What he believes, however, is that our sense of right and wrong is

influenced by the culture and therefore both warring states may consider their belligerence to be justified on the basis of their moral outlook even though such a notion would be considered illogical by a disinterested outsider.

In chapter 5, Shadle reviews the origins of war from the perspective of broad themes important in the Catholic tradition in an attempt to show how Constructivism is a compatible tool to engage these themes synthetically. In short, he contends that just as Catholicism has begun to accept the cultural and historical limitations have on our understanding of our faith, so also Constructivism acknowledges the historical and cultural limitations of knowledge and morality. Ultimately, recognition of the limitations of knowledge creates room for theologians to reconsider/recapture earlier Catholic insights on war's origins.

In chapters 6 through 9, readers are led on an exploration of the political thought of significant catholic thinkers from the Twentieth century to contemporary times. Due attention is given to the teachings of Pope's and Catholic theologians of differing wings of the church. Shadle is generous in his treatment of their ideas, but nevertheless explains that each one failed to integrate Catholic teaching on humanity's historical conditionedness, sinfulness, the sinfulness of human institutions, and humanity's nature and destiny in one way or another. He concludes the book by summarizing his major critiques of contemporary views and providing some parameters that would be useful for reframing the inquiry.

I found the book to be helpful in articulating the importance that national/cultural values and norms play in the creation of war or peace. Shadle's attention to the impact that sin has on the individual as well as the state and international governing bodies was properly placed and provides a devastating critique of realist and liberal theories of international relations. Aside from my disappointment over Shadle's refusal to provide a positive answer to the question of war's origins, I would've liked to have seen greater development of his argument that rationality and ethics are culturally mediated. I think a few examples would have been helpful in explaining how a Constructivist view of reason and ethics does not necessarily lead or require adoption of moral or intellectual relativism. Nevertheless, the work is a worthy read for its explanation of various theories and thoughtful assessments. Political science professors will find much material useful for their students.

This text will be helpful to anyone struggling against the simplistic notion that education or dialogue are sufficient to end wars between ideologically opposed viewpoints. Shadle properly explains that

negotiations and dialogue are typically only useful in situations peripheral to national norms and ideals. His recognition of religions role in influencing and molding cultural and national values should encourage all Christians to redouble their missionary efforts as such efforts will help the cause of peace. For after all, cultural values are either supportive of justice and peace or they are not.