

THE CHRISTIAN ULTIMATUM: SELF-DEFENSE, MARTYRDOM, OR BOTH?

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Introduction

God, who loves infinitely, created mankind in His image and likeness. Because of this, we are divinely designed to love ourselves. This alone seems to establish the intrinsic value of life, and therefore the moral right to defend one's own life and the lives of others. Yet, the Ten Commandments state "You shall not kill"¹ and Jesus commands "You shall love your neighbor as yourself,"² "Offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well,"³ and "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you."⁴ As a devout Catholic, how could I, in good conscience, accept this seemingly obvious contradiction on the right of self-defense? Is self-defense morally permissible, and how can it be reconciled with the commands of Jesus and with martyrdom, an exceptional witness to the death of Christ?

Although this seems to be a contradiction, I found that the Church offers a consistent ethic and interpretation of the Bible that proves that the command to not kill and the command to love one's enemies are still

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¹ New American Bible, Revised Edition, Exodus 20:13.

² NAB, Mark 12:31.

³ NAB, Matthew 5:38.

⁴ NAB, Matthew 5:44.

compatible with self-defense. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states "Love toward oneself remains a fundamental principle of morality. Therefore it is legitimate to insist on respect for one's own right to life. Someone who defends his life is not guilty of murder even if he is forced to deal his aggressor a lethal blow."⁵ Thomas Aquinas is the main proponent of the Church's position on self-defense. Along with an analysis of the passions and virtues, I will appeal to his text as the defender of Church doctrine. Aquinas emphasizes the importance of proper intention of one's actions, and argues that in the case of self-defense, "this act, since one's intention is to save one's own life, is not unlawful, seeing that it is natural to everything to keep itself in 'being,' as far as possible...[it is not] necessary for salvation that a man omit the act of moderate self-defense in order to avoid killing the other man, since one is bound to take more care of one's own life than of another's."⁶ The Thomistic understanding of self-defense is that mankind has a God-given natural inclination to preserve the self. As long as any forceful actions are taken with the intent of self-preservation, these actions must be morally permissible.

Despite the obvious value of the human person and the natural inclination to preserve the self, there are several scriptural passages that call into question the right of

⁵ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2264. Accessed through Vatican.va.

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. The Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 1947. Accessed through Sacred-Texts.com, Part II.II, Question 64, Article 7.

self-defense. Is the concept of self-defense compatible with the Gospel message? Many Christians believe that, due to Jesus' commands, they must be pacifists in order to live out the Gospel. Pacifists such as the contemporary thinker Lisa Cahill believe that self-defense is contrary to the nonviolent stance one ought to take as a Christian. She argues that any interpretation of the Gospel that allows for self-defense "has a way of insidiously shifting the foundation of the discussion to a different view of the moral life than that embodied in the Gospel."⁷ Using Saint Augustine's teachings on the matter, Cahill argues that allowing a right to defend the self and others forces "the foundation of moral reflection [to become], not a discipleship of love and the cross, but self-assertion and the *limitation* of the obligations to include, to love, to forgive, to serve."⁸ Are Christians to believe that self-preservation is not truly living out the Gospel?

How we understand the intrinsic value of the human person also raises questions about the role martyrdom plays in the Christian life. Superficially, martyrdom seems to be an act of suicide, which is something contrary to our natural inclination to preserve the self, and is therefore regarded as a grave sin. However, martyrs are regarded to be examples of perfect discipleship and witnesses to the faith. In fact, their martyrdom and supreme witness to God helped to build and grow the Church. Can our duty to self and our duty to God be reconciled?

The purpose of this thesis is to argue that a careful, extensive interpretation of scripture confirms that the commands of the Old and New Testaments are not contradictory, and that they morally justify, and sometimes even command, actions of self-defense. Further, self-defense and martyrdom are proven to be near parallels of one

another in principle and intent. Contrary to pacifistic belief, any statement that places acts of martyrdom against acts of self-defense in order to establish one as the opposite of the other creates a false dilemma. One can live out the Gospel and still protect his own life and the lives of others, and still be a martyr to the faith.

CHAPTER ONE

The Bible

Exodus 20 contains the first reference to the Ten Commandments which are given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. Exodus 20:13 identifies the Fifth Commandment, which states "You shall not kill."⁹ Although the commandment itself is simple in its formulation, some interpretation is required in order to follow it properly. A closer look at the original Hebrew reveals that the Commandment is better translated "You shall not murder." The difference between the two words is significant. "Murder" implies premeditation, intention, and motivation, whereas "kill" does not. For example, if God simply commanded people not to kill, it would be unclear as to whether people could kill animals or even plants as sustenance. Thus, it is necessary to understand the implications of each translation.

Different arguments have been offered to help clarify the proper translation of the Commandment. In his essay, "Killing in the Name of God," William Cavanaugh argues that the root verb used in Exodus 20:13 as well as Deuteronomy 5:17, a replication of the Ten Commandments, is *ratsach*, which is used as the root verb in several other passages to mean "unintentional killing" and "putting someone to

⁷ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Love Your Enemies* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994), 239.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ NAB, Exodus 20:13.

death according to the Law” among others.¹⁰ He argues that the translation of the Fifth Commandment, due to the widely varied use of its root, *ratsach*, “evades simple translation.” However, his reasoning is flawed. The examples he offers to prove that the Commandment cannot be translated, at least not easily, all employ verbs other than the one that is used in the Commandment in Exodus 20:13.¹¹ The fact that two words have the same root does not imply that they have the same meaning or that the meaning of the word itself is identical to that of its root. In contrast with Cavanaugh’s view, Rabbi Dovid Bendory explains that although there are a few instances of the root *ratsach* meaning “accidental murder” in the Old Testament, “by far the most common use of R-Tz-Ch [*ratsach*] is to describe a murderer who kills [with pre-meditation] or with malice...and thus the Sixth Commandment is clearly rendered into English as ‘do not MURDER.’”¹²

In order to further assure that the Commandment in Exodus 20:13 is to be properly translated from Hebrew into English as “murder,” I interviewed Erwin Froman who is both a Rabbi at the Agudath B’nai Israel Synagogue and a Holocaust survivor.¹³ I read him the excerpt from Cavanaugh’s essay discussing that Exodus 20:13 is untranslatable from the root verb *ratsach*. I also listed all of the passages that Cavanaugh used as proof for his argument. Rabbi Froman was quite disgruntled at the incorrect interpretation of the passage and was quick to correct Cavanaugh’s assess-

ment. He argued that the verb used in Exodus 20:13 and repeated in Deuteronomy 5:17 are the only places where that verb is used. That verb is correctly and simply translated in to English as “murder,” not “kill” or “unintentionally kill.” Further, Froman affirmed that the word “murder” implies that the murderer’s actions are intentional and premeditated which differs from someone who accidentally kills without premeditation or intention. Thus, a more careful interpretation of the Fifth Commandment allows some killing in certain situations as long as it is unaccompanied by certain elements of murder such as intention, hatred, or malice. Therefore, because of its more clearly explicit implications, “You shall not murder,” is the superior translation of the Fifth Commandment.¹⁴ It is important to establish this as the correct translation to ensure its proper application when considering other biblical passages.

Although Cavanaugh’s assessment of the Fifth Commandment and the root verb *ratsach* is questionable, his examples of the “cities of refuge” offer insight into other questions. There are several instances in the Old Testament where the “cities of refuge” are described. These are places where those who have killed without intention, forethought and malice could seek refuge from the secular justice system. In accordance with the Fifth Commandment, it is potentially permissible to kill another and it not be considered murder. That is why these cities are made for those who have accidentally killed another. Deuteronomy 4:41-42 states, “Then Moses set apart on the east side of the Jordan three cities to which a homicide could flee, someone who unintentionally kills another person, the two not having been at enmity before; the homicide could flee to

¹⁰ William T. Cavanaugh, “Killing in the Name of God,” *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 85, No. 999 (September 2004), 513-514.

¹¹ See Appendix.

¹² Rabbi Dovid Bendory, “The Ten Commandments, Killing, and Murder: A Detailed Commentary,” 2012. Accessed through jpfo.org.

¹³ Personal interview with Holocaust survivor and Rabbi Erwin Froman, Rabbi at Agudath B’nai Israel Synagogue in Lorain, Ohio on February 2, 2016.

¹⁴ The New Interpreter’s Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha, Exodus 20:13.

one of these cities and live.”¹⁵ Those who have killed without premeditation or intent are not to be punished. Their actions were not motivated by hatred and therefore, they are not murderers. Yet, this seems to introduce a contradiction between several of Jesus commands in the New Testament.

Jesus, after delivering the Sermon on the Mount to his disciples, says “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”¹⁶ In context, this passage comes after the teaching of the Beatitudes which is intended to be a completion or fulfillment of God’s divine law. The teaching of loving one’s enemies is one of many in a strand of fulfillments of several of God’s commandments found throughout the Bible. However, in this passage’s case, the Torah never commands one to hate his enemies or condones hatred of another person in any way.¹⁷ In fact, Leviticus 19:17-18 states, “You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”¹⁸ Therefore, the question is left unanswered as to where one would have heard the commandment to “hate your enemies.”

Many have pondered the origin of such a phrase as “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” As mentioned before, this is not commanded anywhere in the Torah. Because of this, many have speculated that such a commandment was an invention of the Jewish authorities at the

time.¹⁹ A major theme throughout the Gospel of Matthew is the denouncement of the actions of the Jewish authorities by Jesus. One reason for this is that Matthew was writing to an audience composed of mainly Jewish-Christians who were trying to break from their Jewish heritage. Many of the scribes and Pharisees were corrupted in their thinking and were skewing the true intent of God’s will and law. Jesus comes in order to fulfill, not abolish, the law. He tells the disciples that “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”²⁰ Therefore, it is quite possible that the Jewish leaders were teaching such a command possibly for their own benefit or in order to remove the guilt of a wrongdoing.

There are many references to hatred in the Old Testament, but none of them condone or command hatred of one’s enemies. Psalm 45 exclaims, “Your throne, oh God, endures forever and ever. Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity; you love righteousness and hate wickedness.”²¹ Psalm 119 says, “Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way... Truly I direct my steps by all your precepts; I hate every false way.”²² Proverbs 8:13 states, “The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.”²³ Psalm 97 states, “the Lord loves those who hate evil.”²⁴ These are a few among many examples of hatred in the Old Testament. Clearly, this hatred is all directed at wickedness and evil acts. They do not command one to hate a person, but show that it is acceptable to hate wickedness and evil as

¹⁵ NIB, Deuteronomy 4:41-42. See Appendix for more Biblical instances of the refuge cities.

¹⁶ NIB, Matthew 5:43-44.

¹⁷ The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Matthew Chapter 5,” commentary. Accessed through USCCB.org.

¹⁸ New Revised Standard Version Bible, Leviticus 19:17-18.

¹⁹ David B. Curtis, “Did Yeshua Really Teach That? (Part 2).” Berean Bible Church. The Berean Bible Church, Chesapeake, VA. July 21, 2013. Sermon.

²⁰ NRSV, Matthew 5:20.

²¹ NRSV, Psalms 45:6.

²² NRSV, Psalms 119:104, 128.

²³ NRSV, Proverbs 8:13.

²⁴ NRSV, Psalms 97:10.

God does. These passages seem to say that hatred of evil itself is good.

The closest passage to the hatred of the actual enemy is found in Psalm 139. In a plea to God, the poet exclaims “O that you would kill the wicked, O God, and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me – those who speak of you maliciously, and lift themselves up against you for evil! Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies.”²⁵ This is in no way a divine commandment to hate one’s enemies, but it is certainly a disturbing curse against evil-doers. This passage comes at the end of a psalm that discusses the intimate nature in which God knows the poet, and therefore all individuals. The poet states “for it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb...my frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret...in your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them yet existed.”²⁶

This plea for violence seems to be a very human response to the existence of evil persons. Because the poet states that God knows all so intimately from even before conception, and that He is omnipotent and knowing of all that will occur, God should stop the wicked possibly even before being conceived. The poet argues that “God formed the very embryos of such wicked persons and brought them to birth, and God is surely present with them as they devise evil and carry it out. Nothing is hidden from God, and yet evildoers continue to destroy God’s earth. That is intolerable; surely God must know that it is.”²⁷ This kind of direct hatred of the enemy seems to be exactly what Jesus teaches against. However, the poet stands strongly against God’s enemies as his own and considers this to be a “perfect hatred.”

²⁵ NRSV, Psalms 139:19-22.

²⁶ NSRV, Psalms 139: 13, 15, 16.

²⁷ NRSV, footnotes, 883.

This leads one to question whether or not hatred is permissible and if so, what is a perfect hatred?

According to Thomas Aquinas, the presence or the awareness of evil is the cause of hatred.²⁸ Humans, under the law of nature dictated by God’s eternal law, always seek the greatest good and avoid evil.²⁹ Natural love comes from our apprehension and desire for the good, thus it is said that man loves what is good and therefore hates what is evil.³⁰ Because of this, evil is the object at which hatred is always directed. However, Aquinas also argues that there is a curious dependency relationship between love and hate. He explains that because hatred is an emotion of the soul, it is caused by love.³¹ This seems quite paradoxical because hatred is known to be an antonym of love. However, hatred is not properly the opposite of love, but rather, they are logically consequent to each other. Love must precede hatred and “nothing is hated, save through being contrary to a suitable thing which is loved.” Logically, then, one can conclude that love is a stronger, passionate force, than hatred because “it is impossible for an effect to be stronger than its cause.”³²

²⁸ ST II.I.29.1.

²⁹ ST II.I.94.2. “Since, however, good has the nature of an end, and evil, the nature of a contrary, hence it is that all those things to which man has a natural inclination, are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil, and objects of avoidance.”

³⁰ ST II.I.29.1. Since good and evil are contraries, so too are love and hatred, insofar as love and hatred are responses to the apprehension of their object: “Now, just as whatever is suitable, as such, bears the aspect of good; so whatever is repugnant, as such, bears the aspect of evil. And therefore, just as good is the object of love, so evil is the object of hatred.”

³¹ ST II.I.29.2.

³² ST II.I.29.3. “It is impossible for an effect to be stronger than its cause. Now every hatred arises from some love as its cause, as above stated [ST II.I.29.1]. Therefore it is impossible for hatred to be stronger than love absolutely.”

One can also conclude that the greater the love, the stronger the hatred and the stronger the hatred, the more the passion causes one to act.

With this in mind, consider Jesus' command, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."³³ Who exactly does the word "neighbor" include? In the parable of the Good Samaritan, a lawyer questions Jesus on the commandment to love one's neighbor as one would love oneself.³⁴ The lawyer asks "And who is my neighbor?" The text states that he does this in an attempt to justify himself, his feelings, and his actions. Jesus answers him with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus states "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead." The action of "stripping" a person could symbolize the stripping of one's identity, whether it be one's nationality or one's social status. This seems to be purposefully ambiguous and suggests that he is to be unidentifiable as neither a friend nor a foe. A Levite and a priest pass the injured man without a reason or motive for doing so. However, very unexpectedly, a Samaritan stops to help the injured man and goes out of his way to assist the man and aid him back to health. At this time, the Samaritans and the Jews shared a great animosity toward each other. There were great tensions between the neighboring regions and they were each other's enemies. Therefore, it is even more outstanding that a Samaritan, considered to be an enemy of the Jews, would be the focal point and moral example in Jesus' parable. The Samaritan helps without any personal or social motive. He helps simply for the sake of helping a fellow human being who was in need. Jesus then commands to "Go and do likewise," as the Samaritan acted as a neighbor to this man.

³³ NRSV, Matthew 22:39.

³⁴ NRSV, Luke 10, 25-37.

One can then infer that a neighbor includes everyone regardless of who they are and regardless of whether they are a friend or an enemy. We are to indiscriminately love all as we love ourselves. We are also called to love all as we love God for Jesus says "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."³⁵ We are all children of God, made in His image, and because of this, we are all brothers and sisters with a common nature designed by God. Humans have the unique ability to reason which sets us apart from all other species in nature.³⁶ As mentioned before, man always seeks the good and avoids what is evil. Because man is of a rational nature, man is naturally inclined to seek the good by being able to seek the truth, to know God, and to live in a society of people.

Humans naturally strive for what is good and avoid what is evil in order to perfect themselves and achieve human flourishing. This may seem like a selfish motive, but is it not particularly selfish because human perfection and flourishing are common goals of all mankind and unite us in a common end.³⁷ One works toward perfection through the acquisition and development of virtues such as patience, charity, and prudence. One, cannot develop virtues while in solitude. Therefore, in order for one to continue the process of self-perfection, one must develop those virtues with and alongside others who are striving toward the same, universal goal. This is why one of the goods of the rational nature is that humans should live in community with one another. As one strives to perfect himself, he is an example to others in the community, which aids others in their individual perfection

³⁵ NRSV, Matthew 25:40.

³⁶ ST II.I.94.2.

³⁷ ST II.I.90.2. Aquinas states, "Moreover, since every part is ordained to the whole, as imperfect to perfect; and since one man is a part of the perfect community, the law must needs regard properly the relationship to universal happiness."

process and, as a result, raises society as a whole. If Christians are to love their enemies and develop together in a society, is there a proper use for hatred?

As mentioned before, there are several references to hatred throughout the Bible. Many passages, especially in the Old Testament, are examples of God's hatred and man's hatred in conjunction with God's hatred towards evil. Therefore, at times, hatred is permissible. Because it is natural to seek the good, which is both a love of the self, and a love of God through the principles of His creation, hatred of an evil is sometimes a good.³⁸ Clearly, this could cause and, in fact, has caused great confusion as to whether or not hatred is permissible. There is a very apparent contradiction between a passage such as Psalm 97 which states "the Lord loves those who hate evil"³⁹ and 1 John 3:15 which states "All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them."⁴⁰ A resolution to this perceived conflict is found in the distinction between hatred of an evil and hatred of an evildoer.

As mentioned before, it is natural to hate what is contrary to one's being and nature. The object of all hatred is evil, but the cause of all hatred is love. One must love something before one can hate, since hatred is a recognition of a privation in or destruction of that which one loves. God is love and because He is love, He loves us unconditionally and has imprinted love in our nature, which causes all of our desires, passions, and emotions.⁴¹ Because we are naturally designed to love ourselves, as we are made in the image of Him who loves us infinitely, we hate all that He hates because everything that He hates is contrary to our nature and His will. Jesus calls us to love

our neighbors, including enemies, as ourselves. It is naturally impossible for one to hate himself, properly speaking.⁴² It is simply impossible for it is not in God's blueprint of humanity. Even one who commits suicide, a deeply grave sin, is still seeking the good and one who commits such an act has wrongly, but still naturally, ranked the possible goods and has chosen what they perceive to be the greatest good. Because of this, we must always love our neighbors and we can never hate them just as we can never hate ourselves. We can never morally hate another human being because that would be to hate the very same nature that exists within us.

That being said, it is a form of love to hate the evil that another person commits and the evil that persuades his will. Thomas Aquinas clarifies stating, "love is due to our neighbor in respect of what he holds of God, i.e. in respect of nature and grace, but not in respect of what he has of himself and from the devil, i.e. in respect of sin and lack of justice."⁴³ Man is to love in his neighbor what he naturally shares in common with him. However one is not to love that which another individually has of himself in regards to evil. Aquinas continues stating that, "it is lawful to hate the sin in one's brother, and whatever pertains to the defect of Divine justice, but we cannot hate our brother's nature and grace without sin. Now it is a part of our love for our brother that we hate the fault and the lack of good in him, since desire for another's good is equivalent to hatred of his evil."⁴⁴ It is human nature to seek community and to form a loving soci-

³⁸ ST II.I.29.1.

³⁹ NRSV, Psalms 97:10.

⁴⁰ NRSV, 1 John 3:15.

⁴¹ ST I.20.1.

⁴² ST II.I.29.4. Aquinas admits in this article that one can hate himself accidentally, but this is an improper way of speaking. For one can either will the wrong good, or desire that which is contrary to reason. "And in both these ways, "he that loveth iniquity hateth" not only "his own soul," [Ps. 10:6] but also himself." Yet this is still, properly speaking, the person desiring some good.

⁴³ ST II.II.34.3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

ety with others in pursuit of the universal, common good. Jesus commands the love of one's neighbors, including enemies, without abolishing the loving desire to hatefully oppose the presence of a corrupting evil. Hatred of an evil that is contrary to the common good of all is the "first of the soul's passions" just as one loves that which is good.⁴⁵

1 John 2:6 states "whoever says, 'I abide in him,' ought to walk just as he walked."⁴⁶ We are called to imitate Jesus and try to show perfect love just as God does. As mentioned before, God is love and He unconditionally and infinitely loves each and every individual.⁴⁷ In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus commands all to "Be perfect...as your heavenly Father is perfect."⁴⁸ If we were to only be required to love those who were easy to love, "what reward [would we] have?"⁴⁹ God has nothing but love for every person, including those who have sinned or have committed evil. Because Jesus calls us to be perfect like God and love in such a perfect way, we must not hate the being of any person.

However, God hates with perfect hatred those things that are evil in themselves, such as sin, which separate His children from His love. We are then also called to hate evil with a perfect hatred as well. We can never hate one's nature, but we are to hate that which is contrary to our nature and the nature of others and that which causes one to do evil. Aquinas states that "men are not opposed to us in respect of the goods which they have received from God:" namely our nature, "wherefore in this respect, we should love them. But they are opposed to us, in so far as they show hostility towards us, and this is sinful in them. On this respect we should hate them,

for we should hate in them the fact that they are hostile to us."⁵⁰ We can hate the fact that some evil has perverted their will and has caused them to hate us. Psalm 101, a psalm of David, states, "I hate the work of those who hate me."⁵¹ We are able to hate "the work" of the evildoer, but not the evildoer himself.

Hatred that stems from a love of the good, a love of self, a love of neighbor, and a love of God is hatred with a moral and just cause. Jesus states "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you... 'They hated me without a cause.'"⁵² Hatred of a person and hatred that is out of a perverted and misguided love is hatred without cause and it is unjust and immoral. The issue that Psalm 139 creates is still unresolved. Proper hatred, or "perfect hatred," leads us to hate the evil that our enemies do and the fact that they hate us. However, we cannot hate them personally or hate their nature. The poet seems to say that the enemies of God are therefore also his enemies. One who directs hatred towards us or does evil can still be considered an enemy. We can hate with a "perfect hatred" the evil that they do and the evil that has corrupted their soul.

However, Jesus commands that we must still love our enemies and pray for them, as God does. Jesus teaches that God "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous."⁵³ Because we are called to love as He does, we are to love even our enemies indiscriminately, unconditionally, and with a hope and prayer that their hearts will be unhardened. In this same way, we are called to hate the evil that God hates for God is love and all that is against Him is evil. Thus, Christians love to hate what is evil and what is contrary to God's will and

⁴⁵ ST II.II.34.5.

⁴⁶ NRSV, 1 John 2:6.

⁴⁷ NRSV, 1 John 4:8.

⁴⁸ NRSV, Matthew 5:48.

⁴⁹ NRSV, Matthew 5:46.

⁵⁰ ST II.II.34.3.ad.3.

⁵¹ NRSV, Psalms 101:3.

⁵² NRSV, John 15:18, 25.

⁵³ NRSV, Matthew 5:45.

human nature. Yet, Christians hate with a perfect hatred by hating the evil that an enemy does, yet loving the enemy with the infinite love of God. Because of this distinction, it is consistent and possible for one to kill an enemy without hating the enemy himself. This is because one can hate, not the evildoer, but the evil that they do. The command for the love of one's enemy does not bar him from acting out of a natural love.

Yet, can Christians really hate with a perfect hatred? Can a Christian positively act to eliminate evil when they see it? The words of Jesus appear to demand us to qualify this distinction even further. Jesus states, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also."⁵⁴ The original law, found in Exodus, states "if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."⁵⁵ This law was actually intended to be a restriction of disproportional revenge for wrongs done to an individual. Augustine, in the *Catena Aurea*⁵⁶, states,

This law, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, was enacted to repress the flames of mutual hate, and to be a check on their undisciplined spirits. For who when he would take revenge, was ever content to return just so much harm as he had received? Do we not see men who have suffered some trifling hurt, straightway plot murder, thirst for

blood, and hardly find evil enough that they can do to their enemies for the satisfying of their rage? To this immeasured and cruel fury the Law puts bounds when it enacts a lex talionis; that is, that whatever wrong or hurt any man has done to another, he should suffer just the same in return. This is not to encourage but to check rage; for it does not rekindle what was extinguished, but hinders the flames already kindled from further spread. It enacts a just retaliation, properly due to him who has suffered the wrong.⁵⁷

The law was a limitation of revenge. Augustine continues saying, "You shall not take unequal retaliation; But I say to you, You shall not retaliate; this is a completion of the Law, if in these words something is added to the Law which was wanting to it; yea, rather that which the Law sought to do, namely, to put an end to unequal revenge, is more safely secured when there is no revenge at all."⁵⁸ Therefore, Jesus saying "do not resist an evildoer" is essentially a precaution to prevent any disproportionate action fueled by revenge by simply not allowing the chance for revenge to motivate one's actions in pursuing justice. Revenge is not a just cause for one to act violently against another. However, this then means that acts of violence for the sake of something other than revenge, such as self-defense, are possible, and not strictly forbidden.

Augustine himself argues, "that retribution which tends to correction is not here forbidden, for such is indeed a part of mercy; nor does such intention hinder that he, who seeks to correct another, is not at the same time ready himself to take more at

⁵⁴ NIB, Matthew 5:38-39.

⁵⁵ NIB, Exodus 21:23-25.

⁵⁶ The *Catena Aurea*, the Golden Chain, is massive Biblical commentary that consists of the commentaries of several prominent Church Fathers on each verse of the Gospels. The *Catena Aurea* was assembled by Thomas Aquinas.

⁵⁷ *Catena Aurea*, Matthew 5. Accessed through The Dominican House of Studies – Priory of the Immaculate Conception at DHSProry.com.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

his hands.”⁵⁹ Any violent actions for the sake of a just cause, untainted by vengeance and hatred are, in fact, not forbidden in this passage. He continues,

But it is required that he should inflict the punishment to whom the power is given by the course of things, and with such a mind as the father has to a child in correcting him whom it is impossible he should hate. And holy men have punished some sins with death, in order that a wholesome fear might be struck into the living, and so that not his death, but the likelihood of increase of his sin had he lived, was the hurt of the criminal. Thus Elias punished many with death, and when the disciples would take example from him, they were rebuked by the Lord, who did not censure this example of the Prophet, but their ignorant use of it, seeing them to desire the punishment not for correction's sake, but angry hate.⁶⁰

Acting for just causes, such as the preservation of the self, is not a punishable offense. He argues “For all wickedness comes of a sickness of the mind; nothing is more innocent than he who is sound and of perfect health in virtue.”⁶¹ The passion of hatred is closely connected to the desire for revenge, and it can easily lead one to take vengeful actions. Actions that are induced by hatred will not be rational which is why Augustine states that “the mind swollen with rage seeks such assuagements.”⁶² However, not all actions are affected by hatred and revenge. Therefore, only those that are out of anger or lust for vengeance are immoral.

Thomas Aquinas offers some insight saying, “our Lord said with reference to the perfection of Christian life: *I say to you not to resist evil; but if one strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him also the other*, which is inconsistent with the duties of a soldier.”⁶³ Aquinas, citing Ambrose, praises the just and courageous defense of one’s nation or of the victims of crime. It is just to defend innocent victims. Aquinas “insists that although it may be more perfect not to resist evil done to oneself, it may even be a matter of vice if one refrains from acting, ‘tolerating patiently the wrongs done to others.’”⁶⁴ There “is a moral obligation to redress injustice even if so doing requires the violent coercion of the aggressor.”⁶⁵ To neglect the defense of the innocent and those who are persecuted is not a virtue, but a vice. There are times when our moral obligations to others require action. Yet, hatred so easily infects the human response to injury and because of this, it is necessary for Christians to suppress any emotions of hatred or vengeance through prayer and preparation. Augustine states, “Therefore in this kind of injuries which are wont to rouse vengeance Christians will observe such a mean, that hate shall not be caused by the injuries they may receive.”⁶⁶

When analyzed and qualified in this way, Jesus’ commandments are not incompatible with the realities of human life. Further, careful interpretation reveals that there is a consistency between the Old Testament and New Testament “commandments” discussed above. The Law, an “eye for an eye” and a “tooth for a tooth” was intended to be a limitation on revenge and hatred of evildoers. Jesus’ words do not contradict this, as He himself qualifies, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Cited in Cahill, 88.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Catena Aurea*, Matthew 5.

but to fulfill.”⁶⁷ His commands are not intended to forbid all violence, including self-defense and protection of the innocent, and force His believers to simply submit to all violence and allow themselves to be killed. Rather, He is trying to establish that hatred must not fuel our actions and we must not be led to revenge. In fact, Augustine clearly argues this stating,

Some object that this command of Christ is altogether inconsistent with civil life in Commonwealths; Who, say they, would suffer, when he could hinder it, the pillage of his estate by an enemy; or would not repay the evil suffered by a plundered province of Rome on the plunderers according to the rights of war? But these precepts of patience are to be observed in readiness of the heart, and that mercy, not to return evil for evil, must be always fulfilled by the will. Yet must we often use a merciful sharpness in dealing with the headstrong. And in this way, if the earthly commonwealth will keep the Christian commandments, even war will not be waged without good charities, to the establishing among the vanquished peaceful harmony of godliness and righteousness. For that victory is beneficial to him from whom it snatches license to sin; since nothing is more unfortunate for sinners, than the good fortune of their sins, which nourishes an impunity that brings punishment after it, and an evil will is strengthened, as it were some internal enemy.⁶⁸

Jesus warns His followers, “You will be hated by all because of my name.”⁶⁹ Yet, we are called to love our enemies, forgive them,

and pray for them. We are called to turn the other cheek by not falling into the pattern of hatred and revenge. Christians are to control emotions of hatred of the enemy and avoid actions taken for revenge. Jesus did not command His followers to endure suffering, pain, and even death, nor the defense of others by his instruction to not resist evil-doers. Rather, He is providing a way for His people to remain “as innocent as doves” by preventing acts of justice from being tainted by hatred and revenge.⁷⁰

CHAPTER TWO

Pacifism

The tradition of “pacifism” can be traced back to the Christians in the centuries after Jesus. Saint Augustine of Hippo, a Father of the Church, is sometimes taken to be an example of one who does not allow for killing in self-defense. However, a closer look at the teachings of Augustine prove that there must be an allowance for some violent engagement in certain situations, including the obligation to act violently at times.

Before considering the views of some contemporary pacifists, a distinction should be made between “pacifism” and “pacific-ism.” Pacifism is defined as an “absolute rejection of violence” while “pacific-ism” is understood to be a “commitment to peace and peacefulness that is not strictly opposed to war.”⁷¹ Here, it is recognized that there is a distinction between a complete rejection of violence in all situations, and “simple” nonviolence, where one seeks to use violence only when absolutely necessary. As Christians, we are called to be non-violent, but that does not mean that violence is absolutely condemned, or can never result

⁶⁷ NIB, Matthew 5:17.

⁶⁸ *Catena Aurea*, Matthew 5.

⁶⁹ NIB, Matthew 10:22.

⁷⁰ NIB, Matthew 10:16

⁷¹ Andrew Fiala, “Pacifism,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2014 Edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 1.

in great goods. Reinhold Niebuhr, in his essay “Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist,” makes clear these distinctions.

Some pacifists argue that “peace can result from submission to power; and war can end with unconditional surrender.”⁷² However, pacifists “might claim that absolute rule and absolute submission produce a sort of peace. But this is peace conjoined with injustice.” Niebuhr takes strong offense to pacifists who believe that an unjust peace is somehow morally superior to a just war that results in a just peace. He argues that “the pacifists do not know human nature well enough to be concerned about the contradictions between the law of love and the sin of man, until sin has conceived and brought forth death. They do not see that sin introduces an element of conflict into the world and that even the most loving relationships are not free of it.”⁷³ He continues stating that “the refusal to recognize that sin introduces an element of conflict into the world invariably means that a morally perverse preference is given to tyranny over anarchy (war).”⁷⁴

Niebuhr argues that “tyranny is not war. It is peace, but it is a peace which has nothing to do with the kingdom of God. It is a peace which results from one will establishing a complete dominion over other wills and reducing them to acquiescence.”⁷⁵ He states,

One is persuaded to thank God in such times as these that the common people maintain a degree of “common sense,” that they preserve an uncorrupted ability to react against injustice and the cruelty of racial bigotry. This ability has been lost among some Christian idealists who

preach the law of love but forget that they, as well as all other men, are involved in the violation of the law; and who must (in order to obscure this glaring defect in their theory) eliminate all relative distinctions in history and praise the peace of tyranny as if it were nearer to the peace of the Kingdom of God than war...*A theology which fails to come to grips with this tragic factor of sin is heretical*, both from the standpoint of the gospel and in terms of its blindness to obvious facts of human experience in every realm and on every level of moral goodness.⁷⁶

An example of the perversion that absolute pacifism can cause is found in the reasoning of Michael Allen Fox.⁷⁷ He states that war can never be consistent with morality and is contrary to the wellbeing of mankind. He concludes by arguing that “even military action aimed at protecting people against acute and systematic human-rights violations cannot be justified.”⁷⁸ Clearly, a peace created by the passive allowance and neglect for those who are victims of oppressive violence is not the peace of the Kingdom of God. Because submission and passivity to an oppressor or aggressor creates an unjust peace, “it is clear that the sort of peace that is worth pursuing is peace that is also linked to justice.”⁷⁹ This is defended in the Church’s tradition of just war.

⁷² Fiala, 4.

⁷³ Reinhold Niebuhr, “Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist,” *Christianity and Power Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1940), 14-15.

⁷⁴ Niebuhr, 15.

⁷⁵ Niebuhr, 16.

⁷⁶ Niebuhr, 17-18 (my emphasis).

⁷⁷ Dr. Michael Allen Fox is currently an adjunct professor at the University of New England. He has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in philosophy at other schools such as Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Aside from publically speaking at many events around the world, he has also written a number of books focusing on nineteenth century European philosophy, existentialism, animal ethics and the philosophy of peace.

⁷⁸ Fiala, 7.

⁷⁹ Fiala, 4.

For the Church, “the idea of justice is at the heart of the just war tradition, which claims that we are entitled to fight back against injustice.”⁸⁰ This tradition seeks to establish peace, minimize harm, and achieve great goods even if that necessarily involves violence to do so. Even many pacifists would argue that “pacifism” still requires action and cannot actually be absolute pacifism. Pacifists who hold these beliefs are called contingent or conditional pacifists because they believe that there are conditions where inaction is not acceptable.⁸¹ Dorothy Day described the difference well when she argued that there is a distinction “between true and false pacifism, the former using traditional spiritual weapons like prayer and reception of the sacraments to actively resist evil. ‘If we are not going to use our spiritual weapons,’ she conceded, ‘let us by all means arm and prepare.’”⁸² Rather than advocating for absolute pacifism, Day is advocating for what she calls “true pacifism” because it seeks to achieve some sort of change whereas complete or false pacifism seems to be inactive endurance. When it comes to understanding the position of the Church, however, the Church does not claim to be pacifistic, and certainly not absolutely pacifistic. Rather, the Church advocates for non-violent activism. Yet, when all other non-violent attempts at securing peace have been exhausted, violence is permissible and morally justified. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states,

The fifth commandment forbids the intentional destruction of human life. Because of the evils and injustices that accompany all war, the Church

insistently urges everyone to prayer and to action so that the divine Goodness may free us from the ancient bondage of war. All citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war. However, “as long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed”...Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others. The defense of the common good requires that an unjust aggressor be rendered unable to cause harm. For this reason, those who legitimately hold authority also have the right to use arms to repel aggressors against the civil community entrusted to their responsibility.⁸³

If violence can never be used, even in the defense of innocent victims and those who are persecuted, very great evil can occur with no chance for great good to be achieved.

An example of a great warrior saint of the Church is Joan of Arc. At thirteen years of age, it is believed that Saint Michael the Archangel visited her several times.⁸⁴ She reported that Saint Michael told her that “I, Joan, must go away and that I must come to France...The voice told me that I should go to France and I could not bear to stay where I was. The voice told me that I should raise the siege laid to the city of Orléans.”⁸⁵ Saint Michael is the patron saint

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Fiala, 9.

⁸² Anne Klejment and Nancy L. Roberts, eds. *American Catholic Pacifism: The Influence of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 24.

⁸³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2307, 2308, 2265.

⁸⁴ Régine Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, trans. Edward Hyams (Lanham: Scarborough House, 1994), 16.

⁸⁵ The battles that she took part in were part of the Hundred Years’ War.

of soldiers, warriors, and law enforcement officials. She said “Saint Michael, when he came to me, told me that Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret would come to me and that I should act by their advice, that they were bidden to lead me in what I had to do and that I should believe in what they would say to me and that is was by God’s order.”⁸⁶ She had great faith and obedience to God’s call. She stated that “Although I would have rather remained spinning at my mother’s side, for it is not my condition, yet must I go and must I do this thing, for my Lord wills that I do so.”⁸⁷ A friend, Henri Le Royer, recalled Joan’s tremendous trust in God and courage before her departure from her hometown of Domrémy, France. He said, “When she sought to go, she was asked how she would do it, when there were so many men-at-arms everywhere.”⁸⁸ Joan “answered that she feared not men-at-arms for her way was open, and if there were men-at-arms in the road, she had God, her Lord, who would clear the way for her to go to the lord Dauphin, and that she had been born to do this.”⁸⁹

As a woman in 1428, Joan was initially denied the opportunity to fight by Robert de Baudricourt, the local magistrate.⁹⁰ Yet, she persisted and attracted “a small band of followers” who believed that she was the virgin destined to save France.⁹¹ Against the advice given to the Dauphin by his counselors and generals, he granted her request for an army “to lead to Orléans, then

under siege from the English.”⁹² She eventually led several victories including several assaults against the English “driving the Anglo-Burgundians from their bastion and forcing them to retreat across the Loire River.”⁹³ Following her divine orders to assure the coronation of Charles VII, “she and her followers escorted Charles across enemy territory to Reims, taking towns that resisted by force,” enabling him to be crowned king in 1429.⁹⁴ One of several other battles led by Joan was to “confront a Burgundian assault” on the town of Compiègne.⁹⁵ She did so in order to “defend the town and its inhabitants.”⁹⁶ As seen in the case of Joan of Arc, the charge that she was given by God proves that violence can be morally permissible, and sometimes even obligatory, particularly when the end cannot be accomplished in any other way.

With a clearer understanding of pacifism, it brings one to wonder whether Jesus was a pacifist. Some defenders of pacifism take an unconventional stance when judging the life of Jesus. Richard Gregg, in his book *The Power of Non-Violence*, argues for pacifism calling it the “best method of defeating your foe, particularly the best method of breaking his morale.”⁹⁷ Gregg suggests that Jesus was crucified, however, because He had not completely mastered the “technique of nonviolence.”⁹⁸ Although Christ essentially failed, He paved the pathway for Gandhi who Gregg considers to be the physical embodiment of perfect pacifism. In this light, Jesus must be judged as inferior to Gandhi. According to Gregg, Jesus was certainly a pacifist, yet He was not pacifistic enough.

More traditional interpretations of Jesus claim that he was the epitome of paci-

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Pernoud, 21.

⁸⁸ Pernoud, 22.

⁸⁹ Charles VII was the future heir to the throne of France. “Dauphin” was his title until his coronation. Joan was instructed by Saint Michael, Saint Catherine, and Saint Margaret to defeat the English and to insure that Charles VII was crowned king.

⁹⁰ “Joan of Arc,” *History*, A&E Television Networks, LLC. Accessed through History.com.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* According to “popular prophesy”, it was believed that there would be a virgin who would be destined to save France.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.* The town of Orléans was on the Loire River.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Cited in Niebuhr, 10-11.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

fism and see the crucifixion as the greatest example of his nonviolent resistance to injury. Contemporary thinkers such as John Howard Yoder and Lisa Cahill believe that Jesus was a pacifist and his pacifistic example is one that all should live by.⁹⁹ Cahill, in the concluding remarks of her book *Love Your Enemies*, points out something that she calls all Christians to take seriously and proposes her idea of the “fragility of the Bible.”¹⁰⁰ She argues that treating the right to violence,

...even when exercised on behalf of an innocent victim, as the point of departure has a way of insidiously shifting the foundation of the discussion to a different view of the moral life than that embodied in the gospel. The foundation of moral reflection becomes, not a discipleship of love

⁹⁹ David Cramer, Jenny Howell, Paul Martens, and Jonathan Tran, “Theology and Misconduct: The Case of John Howard Yoder,” *The Christian Century*, August 04, 2014. Accessed through ChristianCentury.org. The authors of this article state “Yoder is probably the best known and most influential advocate in the 20th century for Christian pacifism. Yoder’s Christological pacifism disallowed the use of force even to protect society’s most vulnerable people.”

John Dear, “John Howard Yoder’s Political Jesus,” *National Catholic Reporter*, October 18, 2011. Accessed through NROnline.org. John Howard Yoder was a Mennonite theologian who is known for being one of the strongest defenders of Christian pacifism. In his book *The Politics of Jesus*, Yoder himself writes “What is wrong with the world is most fundamentally that people respond to evil with evil and thereby aggravate the spiral of violence. The key to the good news is that we are freed from prolonging the chain of evil causes engendering evil effects by action and reaction in kind. By refusing to extend the chain of vengeance, we break into the world with good news. This one key opened the door to a restructuring of the entire universe of Christian life and thought.”

¹⁰⁰ Cahill, 239.

and the cross, but self-assertion and the *limitation* of the obligations to include, to love, to forgive, and to serve.¹⁰¹

She argues that the Bible is “fragile” and when one allows for the right to violence, it opens up the door for an individual to abuse and misunderstand the Gospel and what it instructs all to do. Violence in the form of war or even self-defense can distort or darken the Gospel if accidentally interpreted too broadly. For Cahill, the “discipleship of love and the cross” implies a very strong commitment to pacifism.¹⁰²

Reinhold Niebuhr also agrees that Jesus was the greatest exemplar of pacifism. Yet, in his essay “Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist,” Niebuhr argues that “the failure of the Church to espouse pacifism is not apostasy, but is derived from an understanding of the Christian Gospel which refuses simply to equate the Gospel with the ‘law of love.’ Christianity is not simply a new law, namely, the law of love.”¹⁰³ He continues stating that “the good news of the gospel is not the law that we ought to love one another. The good news of the gospel is that there is a resource of divine mercy which is able to overcome a contradiction within our own souls, which we cannot ourselves overcome.”¹⁰⁴

In contrast with these positions, I believe that Jesus is not a pacifist and although it is the popular idea of the times, there are several instances where it is made clear that Jesus is not a pacifist. As explained in the first chapter, what the Church offers is an ethic that is consistent throughout both the Old and New Testaments and throughout all of Church history. **First**, a clear example is Jesus’ cleansing and clearing of the temple. John 2:13-16 states,

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Niebuhr, 1-2.

¹⁰⁴ Niebuhr, 2.

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the moneychangers seated at their tables. Making a whip out of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"¹⁰⁵

The commentary of the Fathers of the Church makes clear that Jesus' actions were violent, yet justified and resulted in great goods.

Saint Augustine comments forcefully on this passage, saying "He who was to be scourged by them, was first of all the scourger; and when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple."¹⁰⁶ Augustine calls Jesus the "the first of all the scourger" which demonstrates that Jesus was, in fact, physically violent and proves that violence could be used for the sake of a great good. Origen expands on Augustine's thoughts when he argues,

Should it appear something out of the order of things, that the Son of God should make a scourge of small cords, to drive them out of the temple? We have one answer in which some take refuge, viz. the divine power of Jesus, Who, when He pleased, could extinguish the wrath of His enemies however innumerable, and quiet the tumult of their minds: The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to nought. This act indeed exhibits no less power, than His more positive

miracles; nay rather, more than the miracle by which water was converted into wine: in that there the subject-matter was inanimate, here, the minds of so many thousands of men are overcome.¹⁰⁷

The power of Jesus' actions opened the eyes of many. Violence, although seen as negative, was still considered to be a miracle by Origen and it was necessary to demonstrate the malfeasance of their actions. Saint John Chrysostom also helps to clarify the meaning and purpose of Jesus' actions. He states,

*But why did Christ use such violence? He was about to heal on the Sabbath day, and to do many things which appeared to them transgressions of the Law. That He might not appear therefore to be acting contrary to God, He did this at His own peril; and thus gave them to understand, that He who exposed Himself to such peril to defend the decency of the house, did not despise the Lord of that house. For the same reason, to show His agreement with God, He said not, the Holy house, but, My Father's house.*¹⁰⁸

This makes clear that the Fathers of the Church definitely interpreted Jesus' actions as violent, involving some use of force. Yet, they also carefully explain that these actions were not in disagreement with God's will and were taken for the preservation of the good and for the sake of the people. This foreshadows Jesus' warning to His disciples of the coming persecutions and that He, and therefore His followers, would be "numbered with the transgressors."¹⁰⁹

Second, in Matthew 10, Jesus states,

¹⁰⁵ NIB, John 2:13-16.

¹⁰⁶ *Catena Aurea*, John 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid* (my emphasis).

¹⁰⁹ NIB, Isaiah 53:12.

See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles...and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.¹¹⁰

Jesus is telling His followers that they must not be paralyzed in fear, nor unnecessarily risk their lives for His sake. Rather, they must flee from city to city while retaining their innocence. Their innocence is threatened by the risk of hating their persecutors because their persecutors hate them due to their connection with Jesus. Gregory of Nazianzus agrees with this stating, “for prevention whereof we ought to consider that we are sent as sheep among wolves, whose innocence we ought to preserve, not having the tooth of malice.”¹¹¹ This does not forbid the right of self-defense, contrary to the belief of many absolute and contingent pacifists. It does not deny that Jesus’ followers can defend themselves, but further, they are not to risk their lives unnecessarily. This is quite important when comparing it to Jesus’ words from Matthew 5:38-39.¹¹² Those who do not lose faith in Him nor deny their connection with Him will be saved.

¹¹⁰ NIB, Matthew 10:16-18, 22-23.

¹¹¹ *Catena Aurea*, Matthew 10.

¹¹² NIB, Matthew 5:38-39. “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.”

Third, another example of what seems to be the permissibility of violence is seen in Luke 22:35-38 which states,

He said to them, “When I sent you out without a purse, a bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “No, not a thing.” He said to them, “But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has not sword must sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, ‘And he was counted among the lawless’; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled.” They said, “Lord, look, here are two swords.” He replied, “It is enough.”¹¹³

Many Fathers and Doctors of the Church have commented on this passage. The overarching interpretation that they offer is not one of pacifism at all.¹¹⁴ For example, Theophylact of Ohrid explains that, “while they were contending among themselves above concerning priority, He said, It is not a time of dignities, but rather of danger and slaughter. Behold I even your Master am led to a disgraceful death, to be reckoned with the transgressors. For these things which are prophesied of Me have an end, that is, a fulfillment.”¹¹⁵ He continues, “Wishing then to hint at a violent attack, He made mention of a sword, not altogether revealing it, lest they should be seized with dismay, nor did He entirely provide that they should not be

¹¹³ NIB, Luke 22:35-38.

¹¹⁴ Some other biblical commentators argue that Jesus’ statement “It is enough” should actually be interpreted to say something like “Enough of this!” as if to say that Jesus was disgusted with the disciples for misunderstanding His teaching by taking it literally. However, it is charitable to assume that Jesus was not contradicting Himself when he said “But now...the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one.”

¹¹⁵ *Catena Aurea*, Luke 22.

shaken by these sudden attacks, but that afterwards recovering, they might marvel how He gave Himself up to the Passion, a ransom for the salvation of men.”¹¹⁶

St. Bede argues similarly and discusses the passage from a different angle, explaining “for He does not train His disciples in the same rule of life, in time of persecution, as in the time of peace. When He sent them to preach, He ordered them to take nothing in the way, ordaining in truth, that He who preaches the Gospel should live by the Gospel.”¹¹⁷ Bede continues, “But when the crisis of death was at hand, and the whole nation persecuted both the shepherd and the Hock, He proposes a law adapted to the time, allowing them to take the necessities of life, until the rage of the persecutors was abated, and the time of preaching the Gospel had returned.”¹¹⁸ Jesus “leaves us also an example, that at times when a just reason urges, we may intermit without blame somewhat of the strictness of our determination.” Due to the coming persecutions, St. Bede explains that Jesus is preparing His followers for different elements of earthly life. Due to the fall of mankind, violence necessarily exists and because of this, Jesus prepares his followers.

Fourth, Jesus states, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword.”¹¹⁹ This is closely linked to the third example and specifically to the explanation offered by St. Bede. John Chrysostom states that Jesus said this “as it were comforting His disciples, as much as to say, Be not troubled as though these things fell upon you unexpectedly; for this cause I came that I might send war upon the earth - nay He says not ‘war,’ but what is yet harder, ‘a sword.’”¹²⁰ Jesus “sought by sharpness of

speech so to rouse their attention, that they should not fall off in time of trial and difficulty; or say that He had told them smooth things, and had hid the difficulties.”¹²¹ He tries to warn them that His actions will not lead to peace amongst the people, but chaos. Another commentator, St. Hilary of Poitiers, states that “Mystically, a sword is the sharpest of all weapons, and thence it is the emblem of the right of authority, the impartiality of justice, the correction of offenders. The word of God, we may remember, is likened to a sword; so here the sword that is sent upon the earth is His preaching poured into the heart of man.”¹²² The hearts of many had been hardened and Jesus’ teachings and mere presence were threats to the scribes and Pharisees’ corrupted ways. Because of this, there was bound to be tumult, but it was intended by God. The tumult would lead to Jesus’ crucifixion and the persecution of Christians for centuries. But, through the strife and violence, great good was achieved. The Good News of the Gospel was spread to the world and salvation was made available to all mankind.

Fifth, Jesus states, in John 18:36, “my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”¹²³ This seems to justify fighting, which one could assume to be violent, for the sake of another, especially the sake of the innocent. Jesus does say that “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”¹²⁴ If his followers would not have feared death, they would have risked their lives to defend Jesus. The defense of others, especially the innocent, seems to me a moral, courageous, and virtuous act.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ NIB, Matthew 10:34.

¹²⁰ *Catena Aurea*, Matthew 10.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ NIB, John 18:36.

¹²⁴ NIB, John 15:13

Sixth, yet another example of Jesus implying the permissibility of violence in certain situations can be found in Matthew 26:53-54. In the garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus is being arrested, one of His apostles, discovered in the Gospel of John to be Peter, cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave. However, Jesus quickly heals the slave and rebukes Peter stating, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?"¹²⁵ In this situation, Jesus appears to be suggesting that violence would have been permissible for His protection, were the situation quite different. However, as Jesus elaborates, that moment in the garden is not one of those times, for the scriptures reveal a different purpose, namely Jesus' arrest and death.

These passages, among others, demonstrate that nonviolence is not the only true Christian response. Violence can be morally permissible at times for the sake of the self and especially for the sake of others. This makes clear that there are times for nonviolence and times for violence. The Church's teaching on just war and defense are in no way inconsistent with Jesus' teachings. Without an understanding that violence may be morally permissible, an inconsistent, selective, and broken approach to the Gospel, and the Bible as a whole, results. The Bible is something that must be considered to take into account the fallen reality of humanity and the chaos of human life. The belief that Jesus preached only nonviolence and is therefore a pacifist is simply incorrect and a great misunderstanding of the Gospel. Christians are all called to love all others, even those who are considered to be enemies. Yet, we are called to stand up for the innocent even if that means violence and putting our lives at risk.

¹²⁵ NIB, Matthew 26:53-54.

We are justified by God to avoid the perils of death for our own sake and for the sake of others, but we must not lose faith in Him nor allow hatred to fill our hearts.

CHAPTER THREE

Self-Defense

In the preceding chapters, a case was made to show that Jesus was not a pacifist. Using the Fathers of the Church, along with some contemporary analysis of the concept of pacifism, it can be seen that a careful interpretation of many passages in scripture allow for the use of violence. These interpretations are not in conflict with the commandments of God in the Old Testament or the words of Jesus in the New Testament. When one examines the concept of self-defense from a philosophical perspective, the biblical interpretations are even more meaningful. To do this, an outline of Aquinas' analysis of the Natural Law is necessary.

According to Aquinas, the divine, eternal law is the law by which God rules over the universe.¹²⁶ The natural law is the uniquely human way of participating in that eternal law. He states that natural law becomes known to humans through the exercise of both speculative and practical reason. In agreement with Aristotle, Aquinas explains that all actions are done for the sake of an end, so when a human acts, he applies his knowledge to that act to bring about a certain end, namely the attainment of some good.¹²⁷ This natural law is a law of morality of practical living and behaving that is self-evident in human nature, and therefore is universally found in every human being.¹²⁸ Because of this, all men are bound by it.

¹²⁶ ST II.I.91.1.

¹²⁷ As opposed to some evil. See footnote 29.

¹²⁸ ST II.I.94.4. "Consequently we must say that the natural law, as to general principles, is the same

The central principle of natural law is the fundamental element of natural law on which all other precepts and natural inclinations are founded, which is that “*good is to be done and pursued, and evil avoided...* Whatever the practical reason naturally apprehends as man’s good (or evil) belongs to the precepts of the natural law as something to be done or avoided.”¹²⁹ Mankind naturally seeks the good and avoids evil in all aspects of life. Since the greatest good in life is happiness and because man always seeks what is good, one naturally seeks happiness.¹³⁰ Thus, “happiness is man’s supreme perfection.”¹³¹ This supreme perfection, rooted in the natural and eternal law, entails the completion of human nature, which is called *human flourishing*. Everything that man does is so that he can flourish and continue to flourish.

There are three natural inclinations of human beings, called precepts of the natural law, which are necessary for the seeking of the good and for a human to flourish.¹³² First, it is human nature to *preserve one’s own being*. Self-preservation is a natural good that humans share in common with all of nature. If one is unable to preserve oneself, he will not be able to flourish. Second, human beings are inclined to *fulfill their bodily needs*. For example, humans cannot flourish if they are not given ade-

quate food, shelter or medical care. Third, human beings alone possess the ability to reason, so there is the inclination or precept to *fulfill the goods of the rational nature*. Humans do not simply act on instinct. Rather, they also apply reason to each situation they encounter. The goods of the rational nature of human beings are the abilities to know the truth – particularly about God – and to live in community with others. Aquinas states that these inclinations lead one to “shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding [the goods of the rational nature].” In seeking the good, man wants to lift others in society. In elevating the society as a whole, he elevates himself as well.

According to the Fifth Commandment, the murder of another person is a sin because it is both contrary to justice – a justice that only one in public authority has moral permission to carry out – and opposed to the charity that one ought to have towards himself and others.¹³³ Further, man is to love *himself* because he is created in the image and likeness of God as well as being naturally inclined to preserve the self.¹³⁴ Jesus commands us to love others as we want to be loved; He even goes so far as to say that we should love our enemies.¹³⁵ Because of this, Christians believe that both suicide and homicide are grave sins. However, contrary to killing, “murder” includes intent. As discussed in Chapter One, there is an important distinction between killing and murder which is made apparent by the Hebrew translation of the commandment forbidding murder specifically.¹³⁶

One defining element of murder that differentiates it from killing is the intention of the agent. When discussing the issue of self-defense, Aquinas provides a complex

for all [humans], both as to rectitude and as to knowledge.”

¹²⁹ ST II.I.94.2 (my emphasis). As Aquinas continues, “Since, however, good has the nature of an end, and evil, the nature of a contrary, hence it is that all those things to which man has a natural inclination, are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil, and objects of avoidance. Wherefore according to the order of natural inclinations, is the *order* of the precepts of the natural law.” This order or principle is sometimes called the *Synderesis* principle by moral philosophers.

¹³⁰ ST II.I.5.1.

¹³¹ ST II.I.3.2.

¹³² ST II.I.94.2.

¹³³ ST II.II.64.5.

¹³⁴ Genesis 1:27; ST II.I.94.2.

¹³⁵ Luke 6:31; Matt 5:44

¹³⁶ Exodus 20:13.

but systematic analysis of the nature of an intention. Aquinas' argument is as follows:

Nothing hinders one act from having two effects, only one of which is intended, while the other is beside the intention. Now moral acts take their species according to what is intended, and not according to what is beside the intention, since this is accidental...Accordingly the act of self-defense may have two effects, one is the saving of one's life, the other is the slaying of the aggressor. Therefore this act, since one's intention is to save one's own life, is not unlawful, seeing that it is natural to everything to keep itself in "being," as far as possible. And yet, though proceeding from a good intention, an act may be rendered unlawful, if it be out of proportion to the end. Wherefore if a man, in self-defense, uses more than necessary violence, it will be unlawful: whereas if he repel force with moderation his defense will be lawful, because according to the jurists, "it is lawful to repel force by force, provided one does not exceed the limits of a blameless defense." Nor is it necessary for salvation that a man omit the act of moderate self-defense in order to avoid killing the other man, since one is bound to take more care of one's own life than of another's.¹³⁷

In these situations, one effect is directly intended while the other is accidental, consequential, and unintended. The conditions Aquinas outlines above are referred to as the doctrine of double-effect. A light-hearted example would be the picking of a flower. If one picks a flower with the intent of giving it to a gloomy friend, the unintended effect

is that the flower will eventually wilt and die. The intent was to brighten someone's day and not to destroy wildlife. The nature of the consequence or end does matter, however. Even if the intention is good, if the ways of brightening another person's day are out of proportion to the end, an action, "proceeding from a good intention...may be rendered unlawful." This could be seen if one trespassed to pick flowers out of a neighbor's yard, or picked an extreme number of flowers, thereby destroying the garden. Further yet, if one picks flowers simply for the sake of killing and destroying them, the intent is unlawful. If the intent is to commit an immoral action for the sake of something immoral, then the action is not morally permissible. The doctrine of double-effect has many applications, a significant one pertaining to self-defense, and an analysis can present a compelling argument for how killing in self-defense can be considered morally permissible.

As Aquinas' text reveals, the four conditions of the doctrine of double-effect are:

1. The act must not be evil by itself (that is, it must be either good in itself or indifferent).
2. The good effect(s) and not the evil effect(s) must be intended.
3. The good effect(s) must not be achieved by means of evil effect(s).
4. The good effect(s) must outweigh the evil effect(s).¹³⁸

The conditions of double-effect can be applied to the flower example explained above. First, picking flowers in itself is not bad. Second, the good effect of picking flowers is to help a friend. The evil or unintended effect is that the flower dies. Third, the means of helping a friend is picking the flower. The intended end is that

¹³⁷ ST II.II.64.7.

¹³⁸ ST II.II.64.2.

the friend is helped and the unintended end is that the flower dies. Fourth, the wellbeing of a human is more important than the wellbeing of a flower. As long as a prudent number of flowers is picked, proportionality is maintained. Similarly, as Aquinas explains, double-effect can be applied to self-defense and the defense of the community.

First, Aquinas argues that one is able to kill from a place of public authority for the sake of the whole. He states, “Therefore if a man be dangerous and infectious to the community, on some account of sin, it is praiseworthy and advantageous that he be killed in order to safeguard the common good, since ‘a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump.’”¹³⁹ He also argues, “Although it be evil in itself to kill a man so long as he preserve his dignity, yet it may be good to kill a man who has sinned, even as it is to kill a beast. For a bad man is worse than a beast, and is more harmful, the Philosopher states.”¹⁴⁰ Both Aquinas and Augustine are very clear that the role of those in public authority is to protect and preserve the common good.¹⁴¹ Because of this, it is not evil in itself to kill another.¹⁴² Second, the good effect is that one is able to protect the community or protect one’s self from harm, which is the first precept of natural law. The unintended effect is that the aggressor is

injured or killed. Third, the means in which one protects the self is physical force. The intended end is that the victim or victims are protected while the unintended effect is that the aggressor is injured or killed. Fourth, the situation becomes a 1:1 ratio which is different than the flower example. A person is equal to another person. Yet, it is permissible due to another aspect of the natural law, the principle of forfeiture.

Since the natural law is inherent in human beings, all men are bound by it.¹⁴³ If two individuals come into conflict, where one individual is attempting to harm or diminish the life and wellbeing of another, the aggressor is clearly inhibiting the other person from flourishing.¹⁴⁴ Further, the third precept of the natural law recommends living in community with others, so as to build them up and lead them to flourish and recognize their final end in God. Because of this, the one who attacks another is effectively demonstrating that they no longer wish to participate in the end or purpose of the society which is operating under the will of God. To reject the law is to reject one’s claim to the final end of membership in that community. The aggressor has essentially forfeited their own authority and right to act in accordance with the natural law, including the first natural inclination to preserve the self. They no longer possess the right or moral ability to demand their own life, though their life is still of value. If one violates another’s right to life, as a consequence, he loses his own; he has forfeited it. They have rejected the community’s final end. The innocent person, however, does not die due to the fact that he has not taken himself out of society. Thus, Aquinas concludes that it is “not necessary for salvation that a man omit the act of moderate self-defense in order to avoid killing the other man, since one is bound to take more care of one’s own

¹³⁹ ST II.II.64.2.

¹⁴⁰ ST II.II.64.7.ad.3. When Aquinas refers to the “Philosopher,” he is identifying Aristotle.

¹⁴¹ Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, XXII.75. Accessed through NewAdvent.org. Augustine states, “A great deal depends on the causes for which men undertake wars, and on the authority they have for doing so; for the natural order which seeks the peace of mankind, ordains that the monarch should have the power of undertaking war if he thinks it advisable, and that the soldiers should perform their military duties in behalf of the peace and safety of the community. When war is undertaken in obedience to God...it must be allowed to be a righteous war.”

¹⁴² It is not evil in itself to kill others intentionally from a place of public authority and it is not evil itself to accidentally kill another in self-defense as long as the intention was not to kill.

¹⁴³ ST II.I.94.4.

¹⁴⁴ C.E. Harris, Jr., *Applying Moral Theories*, 5th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub., 1986), 95-96.

life than of another's."¹⁴⁵ Therefore, one is morally justified to act in defense of the self and preserve his life.

In a self-defense situation, the intent is to protect one's life, the first precept of the natural law, as participation in God's eternal law. It is "natural to everything to keep itself in 'being,' as far as possible" and because of this, it is morally permissible to act with the intent of preserving one's own life.¹⁴⁶ Although it is lawful to protect oneself with the intent of self-preservation, it is still necessary that the concept of proportionality be applied. Aquinas states that "if a man, in self-defense, uses more than necessary violence, it will be unlawful: whereas if he repel force with moderation his defense will be lawful."¹⁴⁷ One is to attempt to defend himself to the best of his ability without killing the aggressor. However, if while acting with the intent of self-defense one kills the aggressor, it is still morally permissible for it is "not necessary for salvation that a man omit the act of moderate self-defense in order to avoid killing the other man, since one is bound to take more care of one's own life than of another's."¹⁴⁸ One, by no means, can intend to kill an aggressor in self-defense unless one is in a position of public authority.

There are elements of natural law dictating the actions of one who morally kills in self-defense. In the moment that one is attacked, the mind must immediately rank the goods that may result from different actions. In the case of self-preservation against an assailant, the assaulted person ranks the good that will result from fighting back over the preservation of the assailant's life. There are several exterior elements that one must take into consideration in such a situation. Regardless, if a person counterattacks with the intent of preservation, he will not be

morally responsible for an assailant's death as it is an unintended and accidental effect of the action. One, as a participant in God's eternal law, is morally permitted to act in self-defense.

This moral permission, however, elevates to the level of an obligation when the person being attacked has responsibilities outside of simply caring for himself. For example, one may have the responsibility of caring for a family as a parent, or the well-being of a town as a mayor. These responsibilities take absolute precedence over non-aggression towards an assailant. The permission to kill in self-defense becomes a duty when one is responsible not only for his own life, but also the lives of those he has sworn to protect and care for.¹⁴⁹

Acting in self-defense can only be out of the natural inclination to care for the self or others. Killing an aggressor cannot be out of hatred towards that person, or "private animosity," because hatred of a neighbor, including enemies, is always a sin.¹⁵⁰ In fact, as followers of Christ, Christians are commanded to love one's enemies even as they are being attacked.¹⁵¹ However, out of love stems hatred of the sin that tears the aggressor away from God.¹⁵² Hatred of evil is essentially commanded, but it is forbidden to hate the evildoer. Thus, one who is in a situation where self-defense is morally permissible must not fight back with hatred of

¹⁴⁵ ST II.II.64.7.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ ST II.II.64.7 (my emphasis). Aquinas goes so far as to explain that the intent to kill in these instances is directly lawful: "But as it is unlawful to take a man's life, except for the public authority acting for the common good, as stated above (A[3]), it is not lawful for a man to intend killing a man in self-defense, except for such as have public authority, who while intending to kill a man in self-defense, refer this to the public good, as in the case of a soldier fighting against the foe, and in the minister of the judge struggling with robbers, although even these sin if they be moved by private animosity."

¹⁵⁰ ST II.II.34.3.

¹⁵¹ Matt 5:44

¹⁵² ST II.I.29.2.

the assailant. Rather, they must act out of the natural inclination to preserve the self, and love of the good and the avoidance of evil.

Those who have public authority and are entrusted to protect the commonwealth must abide by their sworn duty to the people as their caregiver and protector. They are the ones who have accepted such a position of authority and because of this, they have also accepted the moral responsibilities that accompany it. They alone are able to inflict punishment upon those who pose a danger to the community. It is true that “it belongs to God alone to pronounce the sentence of death and life, according to Deuteronomy 32:39, ‘I will kill and I will make to live.’”¹⁵³ However, Aquinas also quotes Romans 13:4 stating, “He bareth not the sword in vain: for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.”¹⁵⁴

Aquinas states that the punishment of wrongdoers can only be morally carried out by public authority.¹⁵⁵ Only those who are responsible for the public good and the protection of the commonwealth are able to actually intend to kill someone. Because of this, the private individual is not given moral permission to carry out justice and intend to kill someone.¹⁵⁶ This, however, does not establish that the private individual cannot ever kill unintentionally. Similarly, the cleric and those of the religious order are not morally justified in intending to kill another.¹⁵⁷ It is neither the place nor the job of the cleric to carry out justice. However, clerics, like private individuals, could be morally justified in unintentionally killing especially if it is for the sake of others. This means even those who are devoted to the religious life may be justified or even obligated to act out of self-defense especially

when innocent lives are threatened. In situations such as these, one is still seeking to achieve the greatest good and avoid evil.

Lisa Cahill, in her book *Love Your Enemies*, adopts a strict interpretation of Augustine’s teaching on self-defense as her position on the issue.¹⁵⁸ She argues that Augustine relegates the “hard sayings” of Jesus such as the command to love enemies and turn the other cheek to each Christian’s personal affairs, “there excluding killing in self-defense. To kill to save one’s own life represents an inordinate attachment to a personal temporal good rather than to God’s will.”¹⁵⁹ However, “Augustine was willing to commend the use of violence if undertaken at the behest of a legitimate civil authority (understood to have authority from God), if necessary to punish crime or to uphold the peace, and if the combatants intended to establish justice rather than hatefully to inflict suffering on their enemies ...to kill selflessly for the common good may be justified because the good of all is greater than that of one.”¹⁶⁰ Throughout her book, she leaves out the discussion of “double effect” and intention and almost completely leaves out Aquinas’ teachings on self-defense, even though his teachings on the matter are those which have been adopted by the Catholic Church, her church.

Cahill attempts to ignore the imperative element of intention and does so successfully throughout her book when discussing self-defense. Yet, by her use of Augustine’s teachings, she unintentionally forces intent into the spotlight. Cahill argues that “Augustine was willing to commend the use of violence if undertaken at the behest of a legitimate civil authority (understood to have authority from God), if necessary to punish crime or to uphold the peace, and if the combatants *intended* to establish justice rather than hatefully to inflict suffering on

¹⁵³ ST II.II.64.5.

¹⁵⁴ ST II.II.40.1.

¹⁵⁵ ST II.II.64.2-3.

¹⁵⁶ ST II.II.64.3.

¹⁵⁷ ST II.II.64.4.

¹⁵⁸ Cahill, 58.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

their enemies...to kill selflessly for the common good may be justified because the good of all is greater than that of one.”¹⁶¹ This observation makes it clear that one cannot exclude the concept of intent completely without doing an injustice to Augustine. Because she mentions intent, it reveals that she is aware of the need to qualify intent, even though she spends almost no effort to do so in regards to self-defense. She describes the morally justified intent of one who kills due to his public authority – the intent to establish justice with no intent to “hatefully inflict suffering.” However, she leaves intention out of the self-defense discussion.

It is at this point where Aquinas explicitly tries to clarify Augustine’s teachings on self-defense, and to demonstrate the consistency between their views. First, in the objections to *Summa Theologica* II.II.64.7, Aquinas quotes Augustine:

Objection 1: “I do not agree with the opinion that one may kill a man lest one be killed by him; unless one be a soldier, exercise public office, so that one does it not for oneself but for others, having the power to do so, provided it be in keeping with one’s person.” Now he who kills a man in self-defense, kills him lest he be killed by him. Therefore this would seem to be unlawful...”

Objection 2: “How are they free from sin in sight of Divine providence, who are guilty of taking a man’s life for the sake of these contemptible things?” Now among contemptible things [could be] “those which men may forfeit unwillingly” ...and the chief of these is the life of the body. Therefore it is unlawful for

any man to take another’s life for the sake of the life of his own body.”¹⁶²

In his replies to these objections, rather than refuting Augustine outright, Aquinas clarifies Augustine’s statement saying “the words quoted from Augustine refer to the case when one man intends to kill another to save himself from death...Hence he says pointedly, ‘for the sake of these things,’ whereby he indicates the intention.”¹⁶³ Essentially, Aquinas agrees with Augustine that it is morally unacceptable to ever *intend* to kill another unless from a place of public authority.¹⁶⁴ It is never morally justified to *intend* injury of a neighbor. However, if the intent is simply to preserve the self, a God-given natural inclination, it is morally acceptable to act on that inclination. Aquinas emphasizes the importance of intention in every situation. To determine whether or not someone was morally justified in acting a certain way in any situation, the inner motivations and intentions must be examined.

Because there is such a great emphasis on intention, Catholics are not to be consequentialists and are not to judge solely on the outcome of a situation to determine its morality.¹⁶⁵ Imagine a person who starts to be attacked by an aggressor for no seemingly obvious reason. That person is then filled with confusion, anger, hatred, and fear and so he violently fights back with the intent of killing the other person for the sake of retribution. The aggressor attacked for no reason and because of that, deserves to be killed. They find a shovel and violently kill the aggressor. Now, imagine another person who is, again, randomly attacked by an unknown aggressor. That person, filled with confusion and fear, does not understand why he is being attacked and feels sorrow because his aggressor must have made some

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² ST II.II.64.7.obj1-2.

¹⁶³ ST II.II.64.7.ad.1-2.

¹⁶⁴ See Footnote 141 and 142.

¹⁶⁵ Fiala, 20.

terrible mistake. Out of fear for his own life, he begins to fight back for the sake of himself, acting solely out of the natural inclination to preserve the self. He is growing desperate and all attempts to escape have failed. He grabs a shovel and accidentally kills the other person. On the outside, these two situations have the same outcome. A consequentialist would say that the two situations were either both morally acceptable or both morally unacceptable. However, Aquinas stresses that it is not the consequence alone, but the intent that must be examined primarily. It is clear that the first person intended to kill the aggressor, while the second person clearly did not and, in fact, only intended to protect his own life. This illustration clarifies the distinction between situations and the importance that intent holds in moral judgment.

In opposition to this, Cahill claims that “to kill to save one’s own life represents an inordinate attachment to a personal temporal good rather than to God’s will.”¹⁶⁶ Aquinas’ supposed opposition, who uses Augustine states, “How are they free from sin in sight of Divine providence, who are guilty of taking a man’s life for the sake of these contemptible things?” Now among contemptible things [could be] ‘those which men may forfeit unwillingly’...and the chief of these is the life of the body. Therefore it is unlawful for any man to take another’s life for the sake of the life of his own body.”¹⁶⁷ Cahill uses this quote of Augustine to argue further that one does not have the moral right to self-defense. She seems to claim that the body is a lesser good and any personal defense for the sake of the body is acting against the will of God. Yet, this is another instance where Cahill fails to understand the reasoning behind the Catholic stance. She states, “Augustine focuses on punishment rather than on self-defense in his discussion of war, because defense to the

death of finite goods, which are eventually to be lost anyway is intrinsically suspect as the motive of a Christian.”¹⁶⁸ Again, she believes that to protect one’s own life is to have an “inordinate attachment to a personal temporal good rather than to God’s will.”¹⁶⁹ However, temporal life is not to be regarded as disposable. It is part of God’s eternal law that nature preserve its own being and because humans participate in God’s eternal law through natural law, to preserve one’s own being is to do God’s will. Martyrdom is another place where these goods are weighted and brought into question.

CHAPTER FOUR

Martyrdom

Central to an understanding of the natural law is a recognition of a person’s duty to both himself and others. Because it is part of the natural law to preserve one’s own being, humans have a grave responsibility to determine the conditions under which they live out these duties. This is why Christians believe that both homicide and suicide are grave sins. Yet with this understanding of natural law, what are we to say about martyrdom? One might question why martyrdom is claimed to be morally acceptable – and even revered – in the Christian tradition, since it seems to go against the dictates of the natural and eternal law. In fact, because Jesus tells us to offer no resistance to injury, and to lay down our lives for our friends, martyrdom appears to be a duty that outweighs the philosophical principle to preserve one’s own being, particularly in the face of danger. Is the challenge of martyrdom a refutation of natural law?

According to the natural law tradition, an argument can be made to show both martyrdom and self-defense are quite similar

¹⁶⁶ Cahill, 58.

¹⁶⁷ ST II.II.64.7.obj2.

¹⁶⁸ Cahill, 73.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

in their possible outcomes, based on what will bring about the greatest good.¹⁷⁰ In principle, both stem from the first precept of natural law which is to preserve the self. If a Christian is to stand before an assailant and is forced to either deny his belief in God or suffer death, under ideal conditions, he should reason through the consequences of denying God which will be judged in the next life. Given this specific condition, the victim can weigh the possible goods and determine what is best. Martyrdom and the refusal to deny one's faith is a true act of self-preservation, for one should rank the goodness of salvation and unity with God in Heaven over the denial of God, which is a great evil. Any goodness that would come of continued earthly existence would be outweighed by the consequence of the corruption of the soul and a destruction of the relationship with God. Yet, it still requires a great amount virtue, moral conditioning, and readiness of mind in order for one to, in full knowledge, accept the call to martyrdom.

Martyrdom is the "supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude" at the hands of one who acts out of a hatred of the faith.¹⁷¹ Martyrs possess many virtues that assist them in upholding the faith. Yet, as human beings, they are subject to the same extreme emotional strain that any person would experience in such a situation. Through devotion, prayer, and moral preparation, the threat of one's actions being guided by emotion is decreased.

The Beatitudes, examples of supreme blessedness and happiness, and their rewards are explained in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel. Aquinas

¹⁷⁰ ST II.I.94.2.4.

¹⁷¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2473.

argues that a reward that results from a beatitude is only given if that act is an act of virtue.¹⁷² Matthew 5:10 states "Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."¹⁷³ One would certainly consider the devout and unwavering profession of and faith in God to be a righteous cause. Therefore, those who are persecuted for this sake will be rewarded. Thus, martyrdom is considered to be an act of virtue because it "consists essentially in standing firmly to truth and justice against the assaults of persecution."¹⁷⁴

Aquinas claims that the act of martyrdom is a great act of virtue, requiring many qualities such as faith, charity, and patience.¹⁷⁵ Of greatest necessity are the qualities of outstanding courage and fortitude. Fortitude strengthens an individual's soul in order to form and maintain a great faith in Jesus Christ. Abundant charity is the "chief and motive cause" that commands one to be a martyr, but courage is what brings forth the quality of charity.¹⁷⁶ The patience to endure such great suffering that accompanies martyrdom is the "chief act" of fortitude.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, martyrdom is an act of the virtue of fortitude, the inner strength of a person's soul when facing danger courageously.

It is possible that one may perform an act of bravery or fortitude without possessing the actual virtue.¹⁷⁸ In such a situation, fortitude could be considered a passion. One may tend towards a great difficulty as though it were not difficult due to ignorance of the actual amount of danger, hopefulness that the good will be able to overcome the evil, or the belief that one has enough

¹⁷² ST II.II.124.1.

¹⁷³ NAB, Matthew 5:10.

¹⁷⁴ ST II.II.124.1.

¹⁷⁵ ST II.II.124.2.

¹⁷⁶ ST II.II.124.2.ad.2.

¹⁷⁷ ST II.II.124.2.ad.3.

¹⁷⁸ ST II.II.123.1.

experience through training and that that excellence in a particular skill is enough to overcome the impending danger. One may also tend toward danger as an “impulse of a passion, whether of sorrow that he wishes to cast off, or...of anger.”¹⁷⁹ Another way is for one to charge into difficulty with the belief that doing so will result in some sort of “temporal advantage” such as honor and glory, or that some temporal disadvantage will be avoided such as blame, pain, or some sort of loss.

However, martyrdom is an act of genuine, virtuous fortitude and one who is a martyr must, in fact possess this virtue. The aforementioned martyrdom as an act of self-preservation is not just an act of exterior, shallow fortitude, for a martyr’s actions are not performed for the sake of temporal advantages for the self, but for the sake of divine and heavenly advantages for the self and to provide a temporal example for others. To fully possess the virtue of fortitude, one must be fully aware of an action’s dangers and difficulties.¹⁸⁰ Otherwise, one could be acting out of ignorance or arrogance – fortitude as a passion – rather than out of virtue. Fear results from the belief that good will not be able to overcome evil. A fortitudinous person still feels fear because he is fully aware of an impending evil. However, the fortitude that a martyr possesses allows them to suppress the fear of death enough to allow them to endure difficulties, and to not withdraw out of “fear of bodily evil.”¹⁸¹ The passion of fear is inspired by that of a future evil and is difficult to withstand, yet nearly impossible to resist or avoid.¹⁸² This is either because of the overwhelming greatness of the impending evil or because of the weakness of the individual.¹⁸³ For martyrs who have the

moral readiness of mind and the virtue of fortitude, it is certainly the overwhelming greatness of the evil of death to come that instills great fear and terror within them.

Aquinas, quoting Aristotle, states that “‘the most terrible of all things is death,’ which is an evil of nature.”¹⁸⁴ Death is certain, yet its exact details are unknowable. Because of this, it is feared most of all evils. Aquinas explains that,

Wherefore if it be an evil to suffer something for a certain length of time, we should reckon the evil doubled, if it be suffered for twice that length of time. And accordingly, to suffer the same thing for an infinite amount of time, i.e. for ever, implies, so to speak, an infinite increase. Now those evils which, after they have come, cannot be remedied at all, or at least not easily, are considered as lasting for ever or for a long time: for which reason they inspire the greatest fear.¹⁸⁵

Therefore, for martyrs, fear occurs due to the overwhelming evil of death. It is certain to occur, yet its physical, emotional, and chronological components are unknowable and unpredictable. Even if an individual has much time to prepare for his death, death has no remedy, thus “[inspiring] the greatest fear.”¹⁸⁶

Fear, including the fear of death, arises “from the imagination of a future evil.”¹⁸⁷ One can attempt to escape the nearly inescapable passion of fear only by persuading the imagination that the impending evil is “remote and far off,” or by believing that the evil is already present.¹⁸⁸ To persuade oneself that an evil is “remote

¹⁷⁹ ST II.II.123.1.ad.2.

¹⁸⁰ ST II.II.123.3.

¹⁸¹ ST II.II.123.4.

¹⁸² ST II.I.41.2.

¹⁸³ ST II.I.42.5.

¹⁸⁴ ST II.I.42.2.

¹⁸⁵ ST II.I.42.6.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ ST II.I.42.2.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

and far off” is to use the passion of fortitude rather than the virtue of fortitude. Therefore, this is not how martyrs are to handle the unavoidable fear of death. Martyrs can, however, control the fear of a future evil by believing it is already present through mental preparation. Aquinas states that “a future evil is considered as though it were not to be, on account of its being inevitable, wherefore we look upon it as already present.”¹⁸⁹ Through moral training and readiness of mind, the “fear of a future evil is diminished by thinking about it beforehand.”¹⁹⁰ Through prayer and devotion to God, martyrs are able to use the thought of those experiences to “[increase] a man’s power of action, therefore, as it increases hope, so does it diminish fear.”¹⁹¹

Aquinas does not believe that fear causes inaction but rather, quoting Philippians 2:12, states “‘With fear and trembling work out your salvation’: and [the Apostle] would not say this if fear were a hindrance to a good work. Therefore fear does not hinder a good action.”¹⁹² He explains that “on the part of the bodily instruments, fear, considered in itself, is always apt to hinder exterior action” due to the fact that fear causes trembling.¹⁹³ But, “on the part of the soul,” prepared through moral training, “if the fear be moderate, without much disturbance of the reason, it conduces to working well, in so far as it causes a certain solicitude, and makes a man take counsel [in God] and work with greater attention.”¹⁹⁴ Martyrs are in this precise situation. However, even though fear has been suppressed by readiness of mind, fear is of a future evil, so by believing that some evil exists in the present, this still-

existent fear becomes extreme sorrow experienced by the sufferer.

Sorrow and pain result from the knowledge of a present evil.¹⁹⁵ Sorrow in itself is an evil simply because it causes one to be “uneasy” about a present evil.¹⁹⁶ However, sorrow for a present evil is a good because one feels pain for and acknowledges the current existence of an evil, just as “shame” can be considered to be a good because it signifies that one is ashamed and acknowledges that he has done something wrong. In this same way, the cause of an evil is what causes the sorrow, not the person who feels this sorrow. In fact, Aquinas argues that “whatever merit the reward of eternal life is virtuous. But such is sorrow; as it evident from Matt 5:15: ‘Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.’ Therefore sorrow is a virtuous good.”¹⁹⁷ Further, he states that “the wise man seeks only that which is useful” and quotes Ecclesiastes 7:5 stating “the heart of the wise is where there is mourning, and the heart of fools where there is mirth.”¹⁹⁸ Therefore, the passion of sorrow is useful. Sorrow causes a twofold movement in one’s desires. First, it causes the appetite to acknowledge the present evil and second, to avoid or eliminate the “saddening evil.”¹⁹⁹ Sorrow is useful specifically because it causes one to act on the central principle of the natural law.

Outward pain and inner sorrow are both evils that are repugnant to the nature of a person. However, inner sorrow is more difficult to endure than outer pain. External pain is caused by something that is “repugnant to the appetite through being repugnant to the body.”²⁰⁰ The pain inflicted indirectly affects the person’s soul through

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ ST II.I.42.5.

¹⁹¹ ST II.I.42.5.ad.1.

¹⁹² ST II.I.44.4. By “Apostle,” Aquinas is referring to Saint Paul.

¹⁹³ ST II.I.44.4, 3.

¹⁹⁴ ST II.I.44.4.

¹⁹⁵ ST II.I.36.1.

¹⁹⁶ ST II.I.39.1.

¹⁹⁷ ST II.I.39.2.

¹⁹⁸ ST II.I.39.3.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ ST II.I.35.7.

an assault to the physical body, whereas inner sorrow is caused by something that is revolting to human nature in itself. It directly attacks the subject's desire of pursuing the good. Inner sorrow is more painful to the individual and it is a greater desire to avoid inner pain than outer pain. Aquinas states that this is evidenced by the fact that "one willingly undergoes outward pain in order to avoid inward pain: and in so far as outward pain is not repugnant to the interior appetite, it becomes in a manner pleasant and agreeable by way of inward joy."²⁰¹ There are situations, however, where an outer assault causes inner pain as well, and since they both affect the soul either directly or indirectly, one experiences both physical pain and inner pain. Inner sorrow, the greater of the two, and its effects are experienced even more. Therefore, it is human nature to seek what will bring about the most good and to avoid what will bring about the most evil.

However, martyrs are able to overcome sorrow and pain through the two elements of the central principle of the natural law: to always seek the greatest good and to avoid the greatest evil. Aquinas argues that the desire for pleasure is stronger than the "shunning of evil."²⁰² The cause of pleasure is a good of human nature and because of this, it is sought for its own sake. Conversely, the cause of sorrow and pain is an evil and is repugnant to mankind, yet is only "shunned as being a privation of good...that which is by reason of itself is stronger than that which is by reason of something else."²⁰³ The greatest good is unification with God and therefore, it is of greatest desire to seek that unification. This desire is superior and influences the soul more than the avoidance of death, even though it is the greatest bodily evil.

Martyrs, through personal prayer and devotion, and the strength of God, are mentally conditioned and strengthened in order to endure and overcome sorrow and pain. Aquinas emphasizes again that "it is evident that sensible pain above all draws the soul's attention to itself; because it is natural for each thing to tend wholly to repel whatever is contrary to it, as may be observed even in natural things."²⁰⁴ If one, particularly one who has sworn to dedicate his life to God, were to deny the faith in order to protect himself, the inner pain and sorrow that would result from such an utter rejection of and thus a separation from God would be much more severe than any outer suffering. Death of the body, the loss of one's physical body, is the greatest physical, outer evil. Death of one's inner nature, the loss of one's soul, is the greatest inner evil because it is completely opposite to one's final end. Hence, the inner evil is greater than outer evil.²⁰⁵ Therefore, the death caused by the deliberate denial of God, and a separation from Him who is goodness, happiness, and love itself, would be the greatest evil of all.

It is important to understand the elements of fear, pain, and sorrow that accompany martyrdom because it makes clear its similarities with self-defense. Moral readiness of mind is necessary not just for martyrs, but for those who must defend themselves against an aggressor as well. In such a situation, it is very difficult to think rationally, reason through all possible outcomes, and ensure that one's intent is morally acceptable. Because of this, it is imperative for all Christians to make ready their hearts and minds and prepare for the possibility of a situation where self-defense is needed, or one that involves the call to martyrdom.

Moral training is necessary to retain levelheadedness in such a strenuous situation because fear can cause rash actions and emotions or even paralysis. However, if

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² ST II.I.35.6.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ ST II.I.37.1.

²⁰⁵ ST II.I.35.7.

mentally prepared, fear can project one to a higher purpose with great action. If fear is able to be suppressed, it is felt as sorrow by the individual due to the belief of a present evil. For martyrs, the inner pain that would be experienced by a severed relationship with God through the denial of faith would be much greater than the outer pain of death. However, in a situation where one is faced with the necessity to defend his life, outer pain due to inaction would be much greater than any inner sorrow that would be experienced. Martyrdom and self-defense thus share in the same intention to do the good, as well as the same desire for self-preservation. Their difference is revealed in the recognition of the level of goods being presented by the circumstances in which they find themselves.

It is understandable for one feel sorrow after accidentally killing another in pursuit of self-preservation, but that sorrow is essentially misplaced. It would not be right to feel joy or rival in the death of another, but the actions taken were morally justified. It is a result of The Fall that humans feel great sorrow for doing what is right and just. The Fall causes man to be confused and to incorrectly rank goods. Because of this, human emotions and feelings are not to be the absolute guide of our decisions otherwise we will always fall short of the most justified and reasonable decision. This is why martyrs must overcome their emotions in order to retain the level-headedness needed in such a situation. Likewise, those who are in a situation where they must defend themselves need mental preparation to ward off feelings of anger and hatred and allow their forethought and reason to guide their actions.

Christians are called to be compassionate towards others. Yet, our compassion should not allow us to be passive. For example, if one member of a family is addicted to drugs, the compassion of the other members of the family would not lead

them to allow his behavior to continue. Rather, it calls them to action. As mentioned before, if fear is properly managed, it can propel an individual to great action which can then produce great goods. This applies in both the cases of martyrdom and self-defense. For martyrs, if fear consumes both the body and the soul, they may act out of passion rather than virtue, or they may feel anger and hatred towards their persecutor. However, if fear is suppressed by the power of a morally conditioned mind, martyrs will offer the ultimate sacrifice, becoming an example of perfect discipleship and a physical display of the full meaning of the Christian faith. For those who are faced with a situation in which they must defend themselves, an individual can act on the God-given inclination to preserve the self for his sake and the sake of those for whom he is responsible. Through moral readiness of mind, one can morally and justifiably defend himself while warding off feelings of hatred or vengefulness. He can retain levelheadedness and defend himself against the violence of another using the least amount of force necessary. This is only possible with proper moral training beforehand.

With Aquinas' discussion of fear in mind, one may question Cahill's reasoning in her rejection of self-defense. She believes that mercy and compassion cannot survive any type of violence and argues that "the practical meaning of discipleship [has become] distorted. What is needed today is a way to move away from the focus on the atypical and back to the foundational Christian moral sensibility – unity with and in Christ."²⁰⁶ She states that,

Treating the right of self-defense, even when exercised on behalf of an innocent victim, as the point of departure has a way of insidiously shifting the foundation of the discus-

²⁰⁶ Cahill, 239.

sion to a different view of the moral life than that embodied in the Gospel. The foundation of moral reflection becomes, not a discipleship of love and the cross, but self-assertion and the *limitation* of the obligations to include, to love, to forgive, to serve.²⁰⁷

She proposes the “fragility of the Gospel” and argues that when one focuses on “the atypical,” it opens the door for us to abuse and misunderstand what the Gospel instructs.²⁰⁸ It darkens, distorts, and overwhelms what the Gospel says.

However, Cahill’s conclusion is itself “atypical,” and is simply untrue. The Gospel itself opens the door for us to realize that there is a compatibility between the commands “to include, to love, to forgive, to serve” *and* self-defense. Mankind is called to act in accordance with the nature in which God created it. Therefore, Jesus’ commands are not incompatible with our nature. For example, Jesus called for us to feed the hungry. Yet, that does not mean that we are to starve ourselves to death in order to follow the His commandment. The same applies to the right to defend the self. The question is whether acting in self-defense is a *limitation* of the obligation to love, as Cahill believes, or if in self-defense, the ability to love is *tested* and conditioned by other situations where one is required to love. If we interpret Jesus’ commandment to love one another as an absolute ban on self-defense, all actions become actions out of fear of doing something wrong rather than the obligation to love. This limitation, rather than protecting us from harm, can actually prevent great goods from being obtained.

Through careful consideration, it is made clear that self-defense is biblically, philosophically, and theologically justifiable. This is why Cahill cannot establish

with complete certainty that self-defense is immoral. She is only able to “warn” the reader of the danger that is accompanied with difficult moral situations and state that it “has a way of insidiously shifting the foundation of the discussion to a different view of the moral life than that embodied in the gospel.”²⁰⁹ It is the central principle of the natural law to seek the truth, the good, and to avoid error, the evil. However, she closes the door on the chance to seek the good out of the fear of error. Her intent is to prevent a wrong, whereas Christianity is called to protect or obtain a good. It is not out of prudence that she makes these claims, but rather fear.

Cahill argues out of the fear of making a moral mistake and treats mankind’s free will as dangerous, and therefore something that is better left untested. All actions are then out of fear of doing something wrong rather than the actual obligation to love, minimize harm, and achieve great goods. Aquinas argues “as Augustine says (De Lib. Arb. i, 5,6), human law cannot punish or forbid all evil deeds: since while aiming at doing away with all evils, it would do away with many good things, and would hinder the advance of the common good, which is necessary for human intercourse. In order, therefore, that no evil might remain unforbidden and unpunished, it was necessary for the Divine law to supervene, whereby all sins are forbidden.”²¹⁰ Christians are already aware that every moral decision carries with it the risk of error and evil. However, we are not afraid of doing evil so much that we are paralyzed with fear and worry. Rather, through readiness of mind and the strength of God, one can walk the razor’s edge in hopes of achieving great goods.

Cahill believes that the Gospel is “fragile” and that it is very easily skewed, leading to abuse. However, it is actually the

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ ST II.I.91.4.

human person, not the Gospel, that is fragile. In Genesis, all Satan must do is persuade Eve to question whether God is a loving creator or a tyrant to cause the fall of all humanity. To the human mind, there is only a fine line that separates good and evil. Because of this, it further highlights the need for moral conditioning and strengthening through reason. It must be understood that all moral activity opens the door for abuse, but this is why Christianity and all its duties are so complex. It is necessary to look at every situation from several angles and under the conditions of real, human life.

Because any moral decision is dangerous, the intention of an agent is the central aspect of moral judgment and responsibility. The will is always seeking the good and it will always desire happiness which is the ultimate end.²¹¹ The intent of an agent is always directed towards some sort of end or goal, which is to influence the will to act. A specific intention is not always explicitly directed towards the final end, self-perfection, but it is, nonetheless, always striving towards some sort of intermediary goal of goodness or happiness on the way towards the final end. An individual can intend more than just one thing, because they can intend both intermediary ends, and the final purpose or completion of a situation.²¹² Reason is required to evaluate these ends, and determine which ones should be sought, and how to influence the will to act. This applies to all aspects of living, as well as the natural inclination to preserve the self.

The intended effect of one who kills in self-defense is to protect oneself from an assailant, and to fulfill a duty to one's family or other dependents. The unintended effect is that the aggressor will be injured, if not killed. Therefore, the intent of one who kills in self-defense is to preserve the self, which is an act that is naturally, and therefore morally, inclined. The intention of a martyr

is no different. Those who are to give up their lives as martyrs are still human and they are still affected by the inclinations of natural law. Their intention is also one of self-preservation, since the thing they are attempting to preserve is their relationship with God. To not "fight against this" would essentially be an attack against the self, which is obviously against human nature.

It is the goal of all to become their perfect selves. However, if one is not preserved, it is impossible for one to continue towards that universal goal. Therefore, martyrs, through their fortitude, dedication, faith, trust, moral training and divine strength have perfected themselves to the best of their abilities on this earth. In order to continue their pursuit of perfection, they willingly give up their lives as a refusal to deny God in order to become a perfect disciple of Jesus Christ and as witness and example to all mankind as to how important the faith really is. They are willing to die in order to show the world that God and their faith in Him are of absolute value. Aquinas states that "happiness must consist in man's last act."²¹³ Martyrs understand that their mission on earth is completed through this challenge, and that eternal happiness in the next life will ensue. With the possession of the virtue of fortitude, no threat of death will deter them from their pursuit of perfection.

In both self-defense and martyrdom, the last intent of the will is to attain human perfection. As Aquinas argues, individuals have different intermediary ends that they pursue on the way to achieving the greatest good. One ranks potential outcomes and chooses to intend the one that will result in the greatest good. When one is attacked by an assailant, it is morally acceptable to preserve the self because it is the way in which humans participate in God's eternal law where he wishes all of us the greatest good.²¹⁴ It is not necessary for salvation that

²¹¹ ST II.I.82.2.

²¹² ST II.I.82.3.

²¹³ ST II.I.3.2.

²¹⁴ ST I.20.1.

one renounce the right to self-preservation.²¹⁵ Nor “is it contrary to the perfection of martyrdom if in certain cases it be necessary for salvation to suffer martyrdom, since there are cases when it is not necessary for salvation to suffer martyrdom,” including the case of self-defense.²¹⁶

However, all are called to work towards the required readiness of mind if ever there were a time when one was to be called to defend the faith because, then, one is to obediently accept the call to perfect discipleship. Because it is a call to defend the faith at the cost of one’s life, “martyrdom embraces the highest possible degree of obedience, namely obedience unto death... Hence it is evident that martyrdom is of itself more perfect than obedience considered absolutely.”²¹⁷

There are great similarities between defending the self and martyrdom. Superficially, they seem to be opposites of each other, but they each follow the same process. They both face fear and they are both in need of moral preparation and thought before the situation occurs. In both situations, a person is at risk of acting on hatred, fear, and malice. However, they only intend to preserve the self. They both are able to suppress fear of evil enough to propel them towards great goods. The intent of the martyr and the intent of one who defends himself are the same. They both intend to preserve themselves and they share the intended end of seeking good and avoiding evil. Where they differ is in the end result.

Aquinas continues stating that “the endurance of death is not praiseworthy in itself, but only in so far as it is directed to some good consisting in an act of virtue, such as faith or the love of God, so that this act of virtue being the end is better.”²¹⁸ The martyr intends to preserve the self by a

refusal to deny the faith. Their end is the glorification of God and to be an example of perfect discipleship. Martyrdom is a testament to the importance of the Christian faith. It is of such utmost importance that it is worth the price of one’s life. As with all moral judgments, the danger of evil and error is always present. One could be martyred and do it for the sake of his own, personal glorification. This would be an unjustified intent. One could simply be acting out of fear and passivity such as one who allows himself and his friends to die without coming to their defense and laying down his own life for their sake. A father could allow his wife and children to be killed by a persecutor due to the paralysis of fear. This is not true martyrdom. On the outside, these people could be regarded as martyrs. Yet internally, their intentions are fatally immoral. However, there have been countless witnesses to the faith who are regarded as Saints. There is always a risk for great evil. However, it is wrong to allow that fear of error to eliminate the possibility for the achievement of great goods.

Those who are attacked and must defend themselves intend to preserve their own lives as well as the lives of those for whom they are responsible. The end is the protection of the innocent and the minimization of harm. There is no obligation to refuse the right to defend the self. Therefore, the defense of the individual self is morally permissible. When other innocent people are involved or would be affected by the death of the attacked, permissibility becomes an obligation. One who does not act on these duties would be held morally responsible if he did not act. In these situations, “the endurance of death is not praiseworthy in itself.”²¹⁹ It is not virtuous to allow others to be killed for the sake of pacifism. It is also not virtuous to disregard the obligations that one has to oneself and others for the sake of pacifism.

²¹⁵ ST II.II.64.7.

²¹⁶ ST II.II.124.3.ad.1.

²¹⁷ ST II.II.124.3.ad.2.

²¹⁸ ST II.II.124.3.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Cahill states that “nonviolence flows from this life, and it is hard to say that it is in relation to it a dispensable component, for an unwillingness to harm seeks virtually required by the essential Christian virtues.”²²⁰ It is true that an unwillingness to harm is a centerpiece of Christianity. However, it is specifically the unwillingness to harm *unjustifiably* that clarifies the ambiguity of “harm.” Some harms are necessary because of humanity’s fallen nature. Some harms do, in fact, have value. A family who sends a drug-addicted family member to rehabilitation does not do this for the sake of causing harm. However, harm must always be the unintended consequence of one’s morally intended and proper actions regardless of whether or not harm is being endured or inflicted. Cahill lists all the reasons why harming is wrong, but she fails to see that, with proper intent, harmful actions can be justified.

It is essential to understand that great goods may come from certain actions even though harm is involved. Before His arrest, Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane and asks God the Father, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done.”²²¹ When Jesus is arrested in the garden before He is sentenced to death, Peter draws his sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest’s slave. Jesus’s intended end had been misunderstood by His disciples. Jesus then says to Peter, “Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?”²²² They did not understand that great good can come out of great harm, even the brutal crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Peter and the other apostles did not seek a bad end because they wanted to defend Jesus. But, Peter allowed fear to consume him causing violence out of fear and hatred. This is the same fear that led him to deny Jesus.

Martyrdom is an example of a Christ-like death and a visible sign of the faith and virtue of Christianity. Saint Ignatius of Antioch wrote several letters to early Christian churches on the road to his death.²²³ In his letter to the church in Rome, he begs them to not interfere or save him from his death. He tells them that “by [the persecutors’] injustices, I am becoming a better disciple...Let me imitate the Passion of my God...The prince of this world wants to kidnap me and pervert my godly purpose. None of you, then, who will be there, must abet him. Rather, be on my side – that is, on God’s.”²²⁴ He warns them not to fight to protect him because his intended end is the glorification of God. They must understand that a great good can come out of harm. In Ignatius’ letter to the Ephesian church, he considers martyrdom to be “Christian perfection” and to be an example to all.²²⁵ In his letter to the Smyrnaeans, he states that his martyrdom “must all be in the name of Jesus Christ. To share in his Passion I go through everything, for he who became the perfect man gives me the strength.”²²⁶ Ignatius intends the preservation of his soul from the temptations of the prince of the world, Satan. Throughout his letters, it is clear that he doubts himself and fears that he is not yet courageous enough. In his letter to the Philadelphians, he admits “being a prisoner for this cause makes me the more fearful that I am still far from being perfect. Yet your prayers to God will make me perfect so that I may gain that fate.”²²⁷ Ignatius, as a human being, is not immune to feelings of fear. Yet, through faith, fortitude, and strength from God, he was able to be an example of perfect discipleship and fortitude.

²²³ Cyril C. Richardson ed., *Early Christian Fathers* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1953), 74.

²²⁴ Richardson, 104-105

²²⁵ Richardson 88.

²²⁶ Richardson, 113-114.

²²⁷ Richardson, 109.

²²⁰ Cahill, 239.

²²¹ NIB, Luke 22:42.

²²² NIB, John 18:11

Saint Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna in the second century, has been a profound example of a true witness of Christ through his life and martyrdom.²²⁸ It was a time of widespread persecution of Christians. Polycarp, as a bishop, led his church through the tumultuous time by comforting them and strengthening them. He reminded them of Jesus' teaching, saying "'Judge not, that you be not judged; forgive, and you will be forgiven; be merciful, that you may be shown mercy; the measure you give will be the measure you get'; and 'blessed are the poor and those persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.'"²²⁹ He also told them "Let us, then, hold steadfastly and unceasingly to our Hope and to the Pledge of our righteousness... Therefore, let us be imitators of his patient endurance, and if we suffer for the sake of his name, let us glorify him."²³⁰

Unlike the Montanists, who encouraged voluntary martyrdom, the leaders of the church stressed that martyrdom was not to be voluntary.²³¹ Polycarp stressed this fact greatly as evidenced by his own martyrdom. While the Roman proconsul commanded a search for Polycarp and a call for his execution, he had a vision three days before his arrest and "saw his pillow blazing with fire, and turning to those who were with him he said, 'I must be burned alive.'"²³² In the meantime, the execution of Christians continued. The crowd shouted "away with the atheists!" because those they called 'atheists' were those who did not believe in the

pagan gods, namely Christians.²³³ A Phrygian, a follower of Montanus, "named Quintus...took fright when he saw the wild beasts [in the arena]. In fact, he was the one who had forced himself and others to come forward voluntarily."²³⁴ Because Quintus among others sought out martyrdom and were passionately fortitudinous, he was easily consumed by fear and persuaded by the proconsul to deny his faith in God and offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. For this exact reason, "we do not praise those who come forward of their own accord, since the Gospel does not command us so to do."²³⁵

As Polycarp "waited to be betrayed, just as the Lord did, to the end that we also might be imitators of him, 'not looking only to that which concerns ourselves, but also to that which concerns our neighbors.' For it is a mark of true and steadfast love for one not only to desire to be saved oneself, but all the brethren also."²³⁶ Once arrested, Polycarp was brought before the proconsul and was commanded to "swear by the fortune of Caesar...[and] say, 'Away with the atheists!'"²³⁷ Polycarp then looked around the arena at the "whole crowd of lawless heathen."²³⁸ He realized that they had truly fallen so far from God. He then "motioned to them with his hand. Then, groaning and looking up to heaven, he said 'Away with the atheists!'"²³⁹ The proconsul "was insistent and said: 'Take the oath, and I shall release you. Curse Christ.'"²⁴⁰ With Polycarp's moral preparation and strength from God, he said,

'Eighty-six years I have served him, and he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who

²²⁸ Richardson, 121.

²²⁹ Richardson, 132.

²³⁰ Richardson, 134-135.

²³¹ Richardson, 142. – The Montanists, also known as "Phrygians," were a heretical group started by Montanus in the 2nd Century. Montanus claimed that he was the prophet of God and that the Paraclete spoke through him as if he were possessed by God. His assistants, Priscilla and Maximilla, claimed that they had experienced similar possession events.

²³² Richardson, 151.

²³³ Richardson, 150.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Richardson, 149.

²³⁷ Richardson, 152.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

saved me?...If you vainly suppose that I shall swear by the fortune of Caesar, as you say, and pretend that you do not know who I am, listen plainly: I am a Christian. But if you desire to learn the teaching of Christianity, appoint a day and give me a hearing.’ The proconsul said, ‘Try to persuade the people.’ But Polycarp said, ‘You, I should deem worthy of an account; for we have been taught to render honor, as is befitting, to rulers and authorities appointed by God so far as it does us no harm; but as for these [the people of the crowd], I do not consider them worthy that I should make a defense to them.’²⁴¹

Polycarp was then burned at the stake. However, the “fire made the shape of a vaulted chamber...and made a wall around the body of the martyr.”²⁴² The story of his martyrdom continued to spread and it was known that “he was not only a noble teacher, but also a distinguished martyr, whose martyrdom all desire to imitate as one according to the Gospel of Christ.”²⁴³ The martyrdom of Polycarp proves that martyrdom is not to be sought out and it must not be of one’s own accord. It was not for the sake of himself or for the sake of his persecutors that he accepted the call to martyrdom. Rather, Polycarp knew that his martyrdom would be for the glorification of God as a witness to the “Catholic Church around the world” and as an example of perfect faith and discipleship.

It is not necessary for one to be considered a martyr to refuse the right to defend the self. Because of this, not all martyrs have refused the right of self-defense, and some have attempted to escape while being held in captivity. An example is

Joan of Arc, who was captured on several occasions while in battle. However, she escaped on almost every occasion and, in fact, “many persons, deceived by her, firmly believed that her saintliness had enabled her to escape.”²⁴⁴ At one point, she had jumped from a prison tower in order to escape. She was questioned whether she had done so to kill herself and she responded, “No, in leaping, I commended myself to God, and I thought in making that leap to escape so that I should not be delivered over to the English.”²⁴⁵ “It was thought a miracle that she had not been killed” from her leap.²⁴⁶

These examples of holy men and women who were martyred for their faith are Saints of the Church. Their actions demonstrate the importance of intention while making moral decisions. Ignatius wrote letters to several churches to show them what the faith calls all to prepare for and to demonstrate that martyrdom truly is an example of perfect discipleship. His death was for the preservation of the faith and the glorification of God. He provided a physical witness to the people of Christ by his death. He asked the Church to “pray that I may have strength of soul and body so that I may not only talk [about martyrdom], but really want it” because it is necessary that martyrs be essentially unwilling and forced into martyrdom.²⁴⁷

Polycarp’s death was not for the sake of himself or for the sake of the executioner. Rather, his martyrdom was for the sake of the faith and the body of the Church. He denied himself the right of self-defense for the sake of his people. This is why he stated Christians are “not looking only to that which concerns ourselves, but also to that which concerns our neighbors.’ For it is a

²⁴¹ Richardson, 152-153.

²⁴² Richardson, 155.

²⁴³ Richardson, 156.

²⁴⁴ Pernoud, 255.

²⁴⁵ Pernoud, 165.

²⁴⁶ W.P. Barrett, trans., “Saint Joan of Arc, Virgin.,” *Trial of Jeanne d’Arc*, 1932. Accessed from the Eternal Word Television Network.

²⁴⁷ Richardson, 104.

mark of true and steadfast love for one not only to desire to be saved oneself, but all the brethren also.”²⁴⁸ Joan of Arc was following God’s command to fight for France. She tried to escape multiple times and intended to preserve herself for the sake of her country, and the people for whom God had commanded her to fight. All of their intentions were out of self-preservation, both physically and spiritually. Either they use their right to defend the self, or they deny themselves that right for the preservation of others and the faith. To deny the faith is to sever one’s relationship with God. Therefore, they did not, even when faced with execution, deny their faith in God. These people were forced unwillingly into martyrdom and their fate was not sought out. They are essentially involuntary volunteers. Their intention is the same as those who are in a situation where they must preserve themselves from an aggressor. However, in the case of martyrdom, the end result is different.

Those who are in a self-defense situation intend to preserve themselves. One who is attacked and fights back because there are many people who are sustained by him fights in self-defense. His intended end is to achieve the greatest good and to avoid evil. One who attacks an aggressor for the protection of others acts out of the obligation to protect others. He risks his life for the sake of others, giving up his right to self-defense because it is an obligation, but also because it protects the integrity of his soul. His intended end is that the greatest possible good is achieved and evil is avoided. If the attempts made in self-defense are successful, great goods result from their efforts as well as the avoidance of great evil.

Both those who successfully defend themselves and martyrs act with the same intent. They intend to preserve themselves or deny themselves the right to self-defense for some greater good, such as the preserva-

tion of others or the glorification of God. The intended end in both situations is to seek the greatest good and to avoid evil. It is possible for one act on their natural inclination to preserve the self and still be martyred. It is not necessary that one give up the right of self-defense to achieve salvation, nor is it necessary for one to be martyred in order to achieve salvation. One who acts out of self-preservation can still be considered a martyr. If a family is attacked for their Christian beliefs and the father of the family successfully defends his family, he is a successful survivor and a hero. If he is unsuccessful in his efforts, he is a martyr. The principles in which he acts remain the same in both situations. The difference is only in the end result.

CONCLUSION

We, by our nature, are designed by God to seek the good and avoid evil. To do so, we are naturally inclined to preserve our being, fulfill our needs, and to live in a community with others. We, as humans, are gifted our rational nature and are given the ability to reason through our actions in pursuit of the truth, which is ultimately God. Our ultimate end is perfection in heaven where we are united with God, our creator. In this earthly life, we are to live out the Gospels by actively participating in God’s eternal law.

To redeem Peter after his three denials, Jesus said to Simon Peter,

“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He then said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He

²⁴⁸ Richardson, 149.

said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” [Jesus] said to him, “Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.”²⁴⁹

Peter’s martyrdom was not sought out. Likewise, situations where one must defend his life are not sought out either. A refusal to unjustly inflict or endure harm *is* a tenet of the Christian faith. However, it is an unfortunate reality of human life that justified harm must occur for the sake of great goods and the avoidance of a greater evil. Every moral decision is accompanied by the danger of wrongdoing. Yet, we should not fear the evil that may occur, but rather desire the great goods that can result from our actions. Fear and peril are involved in both self-defense and martyrdom. Neither is an ideal situation. Christians must not let emotions of fear and hatred cause inaction or revenge. Rather, Christians strive to have their emotions tempered by fortitude. We must ready ourselves if there ever is a situation where our ability to love is tested.

Isaiah 41:10-13 states,

Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious

right hand. Yes, all who are incensed against you shall be shamed and disgraced; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish. You shall seek those who contend with you, but you will not find them; those who war against you shall be nothing at all. For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, “Do not fear, I will help you.”²⁵⁰

Christians are called to trust God and He will provide us strength and fortitude. Outstanding courage is necessary when faced with death. Readiness of mind and preparation of heart help to ensure our just intent and our intended end of achieving great goods. The avoidance of evil is part of the central principle of our nature. Yet, Jesus does not command that it be our focus in our moral actions. We must not allow the fear of wrongdoing to frighten us away from the great good we can achieve. Self-defense and martyrdom are not “either, or” situations. One is not forced to choose between preserving the self, and preserving God and the relationship with him. Rather, they are “both, and” situations where one can choose both to love the self and to love God.

²⁴⁹ NAB, John 21:15-19.

²⁵⁰ NIB, Isaiah 41:10-13.

Appendix

NIB:

Exodus 20:13 – “You shall not murder”

Deuteronomy 5:17 – “You shall not murder”

Deuteronomy 4:42 – “...to which a homicide could flee, someone who unintentionally kills another person, the two not having enmity before; the homicide could flee to one of these cities and live...”

Deuteronomy 19:4 – “Now this is the case of a homicide who might flee there and live, that is, someone who has killed another person unintentionally when the two had not been at enmity before...”

Numbers 35:15 – “These six cities shall serve as refuge for the Israelites, for the resident or transient alien among them, so that anyone who kills a person without intent may flee there.”

Joshua 20:3 – “...so that anyone who kills a person without intent or by mistake may flee there; they shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood.”

Exodus 20:13	{	s	trə-ṣāh.	lō			
Deuteronomy 5:17		ס .	:תִּרְצַח	לֹא			
		-	do murder	not			
			Verb	Adv			
Deuteronomy 4:42	{	da-'at,	biḇ-li-	rê-'ê-hū	'et-	yir-ṣah	
		דַּעַת	בְּבַלִּי-	רֵעֵהוּ	אֶת-	יִרְצַח	
		unawares	his neighbor	-	should kill	
		Noun	Subst	Noun	Acc	Verb	

Deuteronomy 19:4

yak·keh	'ā-šer	wā-hāy;	šām·māh	yā-nūs	'ā-šer-	hā-rō-šē-ah,	də-ḅar	wə-zeh
יָכָה	אֲשֶׁר	-	וְהָיָה	שָׁמָּה	יָנוּס	אֲשֶׁר-	הַרְצֵחַ	דְּבַר
kills	whoever	that he may live	there	shall flee	that	of the slayer	[is] the case	And this
Verb	Prt	Verb	Adv	Verb	Prt	Verb	Noun	Pro
šil-šōm.	mit-te-mōl	lōw	šō-nē	lō-	wə-hū	ḡa-'at,	biḅ-li-	rē-'ē-hū
שְׁלֹשִׁים:	מִתְּמֹל	לוֹ	שָׂנֵא	לֹא-	וְהוּא	דַּעַת	בְּבַלִּי-	רֵעֵהוּ
in time	previously	to him	do hated	not	and whom he	unintentionally	not	his neighbor
Adv	Adv	Prep	Verb	Adv	Pro	Noun	Subst	Noun

Numbers 35:15

biš·gā·gāh.	ne-ḡeš	mak·kēh-
בְּשִׁגְגָה:	נֶפֶשׁ	מַכֵּה
unawares	any person	that kills
Noun	Noun	Verb

Joshua 20:3

ḡa-'at,	biḅ-li-	biš·gā·gāh	ne-ḡeš	mak·kēh-
דַּעַת	בְּבַלִּי-	בְּשִׁגְגָה	נֶפֶשׁ	מַכֵּה
premeditation	outside	unawares	[any] person	that kills
Noun	Subst	Noun	Noun	Verb

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