Self Defense

A Thesis Submitted to
the Teacher and Students of the Honors Apologetics Class

Department of Worldviews and Apologetics

By

Emily Nicole Shih

Sugar Land, Texas

May 2019
# Table of Contents

**Introduction**  
2

**Old Testament**  
4  
Halakhah, Jewish Law  
4  
The Sixth Commandment  
5  
Holy Wars  
7

**New Testament**  
8  
The Teachings of Jesus  
8  
James, John, and Paul  
13

**The Middle Ages**  
15  
The Knights Templar  
15  
The Crusades  
16

**Thomas Aquinas**  
19

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Case Study**  
24

**Introduction to Proof**  
27

**The Moral Argument**  
28  
Thomas Aquinas’s Five Ways  
29  
Kant and the Moral Argument  
29

**Distinctions Between Goodness**  
30  
Intrinsic Value of Life  
31  
C.S. Lewis’ Mere Christianity  
31  
Hume’s Moral Philosophy  
33

**Sermon on the Mount**  
35

**Self Defense in the Bible**  
37

**Pacifism Considered**  
40

**Justifications for Self Defense**  
41

**Conclusion**  
43

**Bibliography**  
44
Introduction

Violence has become increasingly more evident in the world, and it has been difficult for Christians to know how to respond to such violence. Christianity has been heavily modeled after what was written in the Bible as well as the teachings and actions of Jesus. However, because the Bible has been interpreted in a multitude of different ways, it can be difficult to decipher which interpretation was the most accurate to God’s intent. Self defense has been a continuously debated topic throughout history, including whether or not Christians may actively defend themselves or others with physical means.

This thesis will address the justifications of self defense and hopefully reach the conclusion that God’s commands to love one another and to not murder are compatible with self defense. First addressing the Old Testament laws and commandments, these must be examined in respect to the historical context and its original Greek translations. Because the Bible mandated that Christians should act Christ-like, this thesis must also delve into the New Testament in order to discern what Jesus taught and what actions he took. His teachings would then affect the people around him, including James, John, and Paul, who were commissioned by the Holy Spirit to do his work.

Following the New Testament, prominent examples of using violence to stop violence were demonstrated in the Middle Ages as seen through the Knights Templar and the Crusades. Seeing which instances were justified would help decipher when violence should be permissible and when to use physical means. This paper examined the reasonings behind the Knights Templar and used them to justify actions to protect the self and others who cannot defend
themselves. The ideologies of the Knights Templar trickled down into the reasonings behind the first four Crusades, and understanding the ratiocination of these wars gave further insight into this thesis.
Old Testament

Halakhah, Jewish Law

Beginning with the Old Testament, the pretext of the Jewish Law and its view on self-defense must be examined. Halakhah (which was Jewish Law from the Old Testament and was viewed as an explication or extension of the original Law given on Mount Sinai\(^1\)) recognized that there was a propensity to violence in human nature. Rather than suppressing that tendency, Halakhah sought to control and regulate this instinct,\(^2\) and because of this, it must be conceded that Judaism was not wholly confined to pacifism. In war, Israeli rabbinate faced a difficult situation when a group of soldiers were in danger. Do they let other soldiers come in to help, though it may risk their own lives? They came to the conclusion that the soldiers were permitted to enter a *safek sakana*, a possibility of danger, in order to save those who were in *vadai sakana*, a certainty of danger.\(^3\) Rabbi Yehuda Gershuni, a great talmudic scholar, set forth a rationale that simply stated that someone recklessly endangering his own life does not mean that he has forfeited God’s interest in him. Because his body was not his own and belongs to God, it was his duty as a bystander to intervene even if it may endanger his own life. The Halakhah also addressed martyrdom, which was the most problematic of all the situations that involve violence against the self. Though martyrdom was utilized because of psychological means, it was not a *mitzvah*, or commandment, of the first order, but it was rather a greater *mitzvah* to save one’s

---

\(^1\) www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/halakhah


\(^3\) Ibid; 31.
There was no record in the Torah or in any written law that it was a *mitzvah* to sacrifice one’s life for God. Though it has been suggested that Jews, at one time, substituted martyrdom for actual resistance and reverted back to active resistance in the modern age, this idea can not be accepted because the Jews have always engaged in every type of defense possible.⁵

*The Sixth Commandment*

One of the most paramount moments in Old Testament history was when Moses received the tablets on Mount Sinai which summarized the absolutes of spiritual and moral living that God intended for his people.⁶ The tablets, written by God himself, contained Ten Commandments which the Jews were to abide by. One such law was the Sixth Commandment which stated that “You shall not *kill*.” This translation utilized the word “kill,” which was not accurate to the original text as the Hebrew translation further elaborated that this commandment forbade the taking of innocent life,⁷ and therefore the command would be more accurately rendered as “You shall not *murder*.” This minor difference affected the meaning of the passage, and therefore the interpretation that self defense on the basis of physical means was not permitted is false.

After God consigned the Ten Commandments to Moses, he also gave him laws to delegate to the people. Among those laws included: “If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him, but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him. He shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.”⁸

---

⁴ Ibid; 32.
⁵ Ibid; 33.
⁶ Exodus 20 (ESV)
⁷ catholicexchange.com/the-fifth-commandment
⁸ Exodus 22:2-3 (ESV)
If the intruder was breaking in when it was dark, then it was evident that the intruder had malevolent intention, whether or not he was armed. This justified the homeowner in defending their home, even if they must strike the intruder so that he died. On the other hand, if the intruder broke in during the daylight, the homeowner can make a more sound assessment of the situation and the intruder’s intent. There were numerous instances where active resistance existed in the Bible that was not condoned by God. For example, prior to the Magi High Priest Melchizedek blessing Abraham with a Eucharistic sacrament, Abraham went to battle to rescue and defend innocents from aggressors as seen in Genesis 14:14-16 (ESV). It was because of the righteousness in this battle and the just cause that Melchizedek chose to bless Abraham. The Knights Templar Order Organization best described that passage:

“This scripture embodies the timeless principle that active pursuit, and even armed lethal force, is wholly justified for the protection of the innocent against the wrongful actions of evil-doers, and is even worthy of blessings as a Holy endeavour. Based upon this principle, the legal doctrine of “self-defense” has always inherently included the lawful justification of “defense of others.”

The Knights Templar declared that because Abraham was protecting the innocent from wrongful harm, his actions were justified. It would be the moral duty for a Christian to protect the helpless.

Another biblical account further evidenced that the active self defense and defense of others coincided with God’s message:

---

10 “When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.”
11 Genesis 14:18-20 (ESV)
12 www.knightstemplarorder.org/christian-self-defense/
“So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.”

In this passage, Nehemiah was organizing a defense against Sanballat and Tobiah, who were planning to destroy the stone wall that the Jews were building for God. Though Nehemiah’s first action was to pray to God in an earlier verse, it did not mean that they were to do nothing and used servants of God to be the wall until the stone wall was built. Nehemiah reminded the people that they were fighting to protect their families and their homes. It was in this instance that not only did God support this defense, but the purpose of that defense was to protect those who were not capable of defending themselves.

**Holy Wars**

When ruminating the justness of self defense, one must also consider the justness of wars as the theology behind both wars and self-defense are closely related. In ancient times, God mandated “holy wars” that were necessary for Israel to secure the promised land so that his redemptive plan may come to pass. Examples of “holy wars” would include the Israelites under Joshua waging war against the inhabitants of Canaan, following on the ten plagues, and

---

13 Nehemiah 4:13-14 (ESV)
14 Nehemiah 4:4-5 (ESV)
15 www.cardus.ca/comment/article/the-old-testament-holy-war-and-christian-morality/
the Exodus. Harry M. Orlinsky best described God’s punishing of other nations who violated His universal, or Noahide, laws of nature, stating:

Even a casual perusal of the crimes with which the six gentile neighbors of Israel were charged and for which God, Israel’s own God, would punish them, indicates clearly that it is universal laws that were breached.

Crimes that involved mass murder, ruthless exile, and excessive and unnatural brutality were violations to the Noahide laws of nature. These “holy wars” were justified in that they were punishments mandated by God to those who breached those Noahide laws.

New Testament

The Teachings of Jesus

Entering the New Testament, it is important to know what Jesus believed and taught concerning violence and self defense. Though many believed that Jesus taught pacifism and that Christians should therefore not perform any actions of active self defense, his actions and his message did not point toward this conclusion. The primary text that most who support nonviolence turn toward was Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount. Though Jesus addressed issues such as adultery, divorce, and oaths, this paper will focus on the issues addressed pertaining to nonviolence, such as retaliation and love for enemies.

Retaliation

“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 the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile,
go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.16

In order to fully comprehend the meaning of this text, one must also understand the context. The phrase “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” first appeared in history through Hammurabi’s Code, which was one of the earliest and most complete written legal codes, proclaimed by the Babylonian king Hammurabi, who reigned from 1792 to 1750 B. C.17 This collection of 282 rules established standards for commercial interactions, as well as set up punishments and fines for those who did not abide by those regulations. Hammurabi, a descendant of the Amorites, was the sixth king of the Babylonian dynasty. He expanded his kingdom by overthrowing other kingdoms such as Assyria, Larsa, Eshnunna, and Mari, combining his military and political advances with irrigation projects and the construction of fortifications and temples.18 Though many of his punishments may be deemed harsh, it contained one of the earliest examples of an accused person being considered innocent until proven guilty and was less of a proclamation of principles than it was a collection of legal precedents. In the prologue of his code, Hammurabi stated that he wanted "to make justice visible in the land, to destroy the wicked person and the evil-doer, that the strong might not injure the weak."19 Though his intentions seemed to correlate to what Jesus had taught, the manner of which it was carried out does not completely align with Jesus’ teachings. For example, harsh regulations, such as a penalty of death to those who commit thievery, did not align with the message of the Word. Jesus refuted “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” and

16 Matthew 5:38-42 (ESV)
17 www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/hammurabi
18 Ibid.
19 www.ushistory.org/civ/4c.asp
stated, “Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” Though this may seem like Jesus wanted his followers to react in a nonviolent way, it meant that vengeance should be left up to God rather than done by the person. In the passage, the *lex talionis*\(^{20}\) moreso limited the degree of personal vengeance that one may act upon another than acting as a lesson of what someone should do.\(^{21}\) The the Greek phrase μὴ ἀντιστῆναι τῷ πονηρῷ is more accurately interpreted as “do not resist evil,” or do not render evil for evil. Hagner wrote that the articular τῷ πονηρῷ clearly does not mean “the evil one” as in Satan but rather “the evil deed.” The first illustration that Jesus presented to the audience was someone striking the right cheek. This may be deemed as a metaphorical slap and was specified to signify that it was a slap from the back of the hand which would then make the personal insult even more serious. When interpreting “turning the other cheek” based off the time period that surrounds Jesus’s sermon, it gave instruction not about retaliation but on honor and shame. The backhanded slap would represent contempt instead of a threat, bringing relevance to the politics of that era. Peter J. Leithart, author of *Defending Constantine*, wrote, “The Roman Empire was built on a system of honor, insult and retaliation. Before Rome, Thucydides knew that wars arose from ‘fear, honor, and interest.’ Remove retaliation and defense of honor from international politics, and a fair number of the world’s wars would have been prevented. There would have been a lot of slapping but not nearly so much shooting.”\(^{22}\) Therefore, Jesus mandated the victim to turn the other cheek as a means to avoid retaliation, and he best modeled this through the passion narrative where he suffered and died for all sin.\(^{23}\) It is important to

---

\(^{20}\) Or the law of retaliation
\(^{22}\) Peter J. Leithart, *Defending Constantine*; 338.
\(^{23}\) Ibid; 131.
understand that retaliation and self defense are two different concepts, though they may seem to intertwine. Retaliation includes the voluntary action to gain vengeance whereas self defense is the involuntary reaction coming from the action of another causing potential danger.

**Love Your Enemies**

“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, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

After addressing retaliation, Jesus then talked about how to “love and pray for your enemies.” Once Jesus commanded his followers to pray for their enemies, it became revolutionary in its newness as there was no parallel in the Jewish tradition. In verse 43, “neighbor” refers to a fellow Jew and an “enemy” refers to a Gentile. When Jesus spoke about loving “enemies,” or Gentiles, this was to further God’s kingdom and produce more brothers and sisters in Christ. In this, they were called to act Christ-like because loving one’s enemies was to treat them as God treats those who have rebelled against him. This passage more so talks about furthering God’s kingdom by loving enemies and praying for them than it pertained to living a life of nonviolence. Though nonviolence was a better option in certain instances, this does not...
mean that it was always the answer; self defense was not ruled out and could still be used as a means of self preservation.

Later on in the book of Matthew, Jesus sent his twelve disciples out into Israel, instructing them to proclaim the kingdom of God. While he was speaking to them, he said, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

Though Jesus advocated for love and patience rather than hatred and revenge, this did not mean that he taught total pacifism that would forbid self defense. It was during Jesus’s time that the people needed a savior and a replacement for their sins, which was why Jesus had come to Earth. They deserved to pay for their sins through death, and so they needed Jesus to take their place on the cross to bring the kingdom of God, not a warrior to win back an earthly kingdom. That was why Jesus did not always turn to violence. It was also for this reason that Paul and Jesus’ apostles acted with nonviolence, though they still took up swords in the case that they would need to defend themselves. In Luke 22:36, Jesus was advising his disciples to take up a sword in the case that they would need to defend themselves, nothing more. The focal point was that they should not take revenge, not that they were not allowed to defend themselves.

A phrase popularized in the Christian community is “what would Jesus do?” and many pacifists have used it in support of their argument. However, there was a point where Jesus did actively stand up to wrongdoings:

**Jesus Cleanses the Temple**

“And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the...”

---

27 Matthew 10:34 (ESV)
28 “He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.”
tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”

Jesus was angered that people were perverting the temple and using it for selfish reasons. However, his anger was a righteous anger because the temple was meant to be a place of worship to God, and this would justify his violent actions when he overturned the tables and drove out those people.

Another argument was that Jesus displayed non-violent resistance in his interactions with Rome where he had refused to support the Zealots, those advocating violence to overthrow Rome. Additionally, when facing arrest, he explicitly rejected violence, commanding Peter, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword". Though Jesus went to his death without a fight, this does not give proof that he was a pacifist. Opposition to violence in one scenario does not demand condemnation of all violence. Instead, Christians must recognize that violence should be avoided whenever it would be possible. Jesus served the world by allowing himself to be martyred; this particular case did not demand a universal standard.

James and Paul

Now that the teachings of Jesus have been studied, a few of his disciples and followers must be analyzed on how they interpreted his teachings and acted by them; these included James, John, and Paul. James was part of Jesus’ innermost circle and was the first and only apostle whose martyrdom was recorded in the New Testament. He and his younger brother,

---

29 Matthew 21:12-13 (ESV)
30 Matthew 26:52 (ESV)
31 Acts 12:2 (ESV)
John, were characterized as “sons of thunder”\textsuperscript{32} after their fiery zeal. Many scholars used his words to support their idea on pacifism:

> “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.”\textsuperscript{33}

One scholar, Don Murphy, emphasized James’s usage of the words “peace” and “love” to declare that the Bible was plainly telling us that peace and love (pacifism) came from God while violence and greed (the antithesis of pacifism) sprung from the evil in one’s heart.\textsuperscript{34} However, those words did not always equate to pacifism.

Paul was a famous example that God could use the most sinful person for his plan. Originally named Saul, he persecuted Christians and was active in killing believers of Christ. That all changed when he was traveling to Damascus and the Lord blinded him. A man named Ananias was sent by the Lord to heal Saul, and something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes and he was able to see again. Paul went on to author much of the New Testament, including the book of Romans:

**Marks of a True Christian**

> “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your

\textsuperscript{32} Mark 3:17 (ESV)

\textsuperscript{33} James 3:17-4:2 (ESV)

\textsuperscript{34} opcentral.org/resources/2015/01/13/don-murphy-can-a-christian-be-a-pacifist/
own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible,

so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the
wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your
enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap
burning
coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Paul emphasized the phrase “if possible” before he wrote to “live peaceably with all,”
which did not mean that Christians should ignore others’ sins or let them remain unopposed.
The Knights Templar’s official website defended their actions when critics say they should
practice forgiveness, explaining that they would not let evil run unchallenged. Forgiveness does
not mean that it would exempt condemning sin; it is a Christian’s duty to denounce wrongdoing
of themselves and of others in order to become more Christ-like by turning away from their
wicked ways.

The Middle Ages

The Knights Templar

The legal doctrine of “self-defense” has always inherently included the lawful
justification of “defense of others.” A prime example in the Middles Ages included the Knights
Templar, which was founded to protect Christian pilgrims on the roads of Palestine following the
First Crusade; members were often called “warrior monks,” since they fought on the front line of

35 Romans 12:16-21 (ESV)
the crusades and swore oaths of chastity, poverty and obedience.\textsuperscript{36} The tradition of Sacred Activism was a foundation for this group of fierce warriors. Andrew Harvey, an Oxford scholar and visionary, believed human survival depended on it and described it as “a transforming force of compassion-in-action that is born of a fusion of deep spiritual knowledge, courage, love, and passion, with wise radical action in the world. The large-scale practice of Sacred Activism can become an essential force for preserving and healing the planet and its inhabitants,"\textsuperscript{37} meaning that love, passion, and action can coexist— supporting the view of Christian Self-Defense. The purpose of the Knights Templar was to defend Christian holy sites and pilgrims in the Middle East and elsewhere, and they later became an important element of the Crusader armies; Mark Cartwright writes that “they were motivated by a sense of religious duty to defend Christians everywhere but especially the Holy Land and its sacred sites, as a penance for sins committed, as a means to guarantee entry into heaven, or more earthly reasons such as a search for adventure, personal gain, social promotion or simply a regular income and decent meals.”\textsuperscript{38} The Knights Templar was justified to take up the sword to protect those who were defenseless. The New Testament declares in Romans 13:4-5 that “if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.” Though the context surrounding this passage was concerned with governing authorities, it can be tied to the Knights Templar because it was a Catholic military formed by a French knight named Hugues de Payens\textsuperscript{39} and recognized by the papal bull Omne datum optimum. The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Romans and stated that, when dealing with

\textsuperscript{36} www.smithsonianmag.com/history/meet-americans-following-footsteps-knights-templar-180969344/
\textsuperscript{37} andrewharvey.net/sacred-activism/
\textsuperscript{38} www.ancient.eu/Knights_Templar/
\textsuperscript{39} www.history.com/news/who-were-the-knights-templar
“enemies,” doing so “peaceably” was only a preferred option and only if possible. This meant that the first option when faced with violence should be to act peaceably, however, it did not mean that defense was not allowed; if it came to the point where violence was necessary to prevent further violence, then that would be allowed.

The Crusades

The Knights Templar was a crucial factor in the Crusades, so naturally, this paper will briefly review the lengthy history of these controversial religious wars; more specifically, the first four Crusades, and whether or not they were justified. There are numerous misconceptions that Crusaders used God’s name to justify bloodshed and violent conquests for land and power, however, this is not completely true; they truly believed that they were justified in carrying out God’s plan. After the Fall of Rome, Christianity became widespread and the influence of the Papacy grew, leading to Christianity becoming the primary religion. Before the First Crusade started, beginning in the 11th century, Islamic rulers of Jerusalem were increasingly persecuting the Christians, especially when control was transferred from the Egyptians to the Seljuk Turks. The emperor of the Byzantine Empire, Alexius I Comnenus, requested Pope Urban II for military support, which led to Pope Urban II calling for a crusade to help the Eastern Christians and recover the holy lands. One may ask, how did the Pope justify going to war if it is not Biblical? Pope Urban II declared that “Christian warriors, who continually and vainly seek pretext for war, rejoice, for you have today found a true pretext… If you are conquered, you will have the glory of dying in the very same place as Jesus Christ, and God will never forget that He found you in the holy battalions… Soldiers of Hell, become soldiers of the living God!”

this, Urban II proclaimed the First Crusade a sanctified war, and the Church would no longer condemn it. Together, they captured Nicea, the Seljuk capital in Anatolia. Christian knights began laying siege on Jerusalem for nearly seven weeks. In June of 1098, the Christians massacred thousands of soldiers and civilians, taking over the Antioch citadel. About six months later, they headed for Jerusalem, their ultimate goal, and killed tens of thousands of its occupants. In this victory, five small Christian states were set up and Muslim resistance ceased.

After their first victory, the Christian armies entered a Second Crusade when the Muslims started gaining ground in their holy war, or jihad, against the Christian Crusaders. In 1144, the Seljuk governor of Mosul, General Zangi, captured Edessa, leading to the loss of the northernmost Crusader state. Because of this loss, the Christian authorities in the West called for another Crusade, led by King Louis VII of France and King Conrad III of Germany. After Conrad’s humiliating defeat at Dorylaeum, the site of a great Christian victory during the First Crusade, the Muslims combined forces with Nur al-Din, Zangi’s successor in Mosul, to deliver the final blow and defeat the Crusaders, thus ending the Second Crusade.

After the Crusaders made numerous failed attempts to capture Egypt, Nur al-Din’s forces seized Cairo in 1169 and forced the Crusader army to evacuate. Saladin, one of the leaders of Nur al-Din’s forces, began a huge campaign against the Crusaders, destroying their army in the battle of Hattin, inspiring the Third Crusade. This time, the Crusades would be led by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, King Philip II of France, and King Richard I of England. In the battle of

---

42 [www.history.com/this-day-in-history/jerusalem-captured-in-first-crusade](http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/jerusalem-captured-in-first-crusade)
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
Arsuf, King Richard’s forces defeated Saladin’s in 1191. After, Richard I recaptured the city of Jaffa where he re-established Christian control around Jerusalem, though not in it. A year later, in 1192, Richard I and Saladin signed a peace treaty that would reestablish the Kingdom of Jerusalem, though without the actual city of Jerusalem, and ended the Third Crusade.

The Crusaders diverted their attention to removing the reigning Byzantine emperor, Alexius III, in favor of his nephew, who became Alexius IV. Much to their dismay, the new emperor attempted to submit the Byzantine church to Rome but was met with resistance. Alexius III was strangled to death in a palace coup in 1204, however, so the Crusaders responded by declaring war on Constantinople, ending the Fourth Crusade with the Fall of Constantinople.45

The intention of the Crusades was to take back Jerusalem, the land given by God to his people. Though no one may ever be certain that that was their only reason, it was their primary intent that the Jew’s land be taken back. In this case, the Jews were persecuted by the Islamic rulers of Jerusalem which led to Pope Urban II calling for a crusade to recover the holy lands. Their decision was justified on the basis that they were being persecuted first, and that their lands were taken from them.

Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas, an Italian Dominican friar, Catholic priest, and Doctor of the Church, gave tremendous insight on vast amounts of topics that were controversial or not completely addressed in the Church. Aquinas was born circa 1225 in Roccasecca, Italy, the youngest among eight siblings. Before he was born, a holy hermit gave his mother a prediction that her son

45 www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/crusades#section_4
would enter the Order of Friars Preachers, become a great learner and achieve unequaled sanctity. Following the social norms of the time period, Thomas Aquinas was sent to the Abbey of Monte Cassino to train among Benedictine monks when he was just five years old up until he turned 13. The next five years were spent completing his primary education at a Benedictine house in Naples where he studied the works of Aristotle, which would peak his interest in philosophy. In 1243, he secretly joined an order of the Dominican monks, betraying his parents’ wishes. His family then kidnapped him, holding him captive for a year, and tried to deprogram everything he had just learned. However, he retained all of his beliefs and returned to the Dominican monks following his release in 1245. During the time period, it was difficult to reconcile the relationship between theological and philosophical thought. Thomas asserted that both thoughts must come from God and were therefore compatible.

His answers to many theological and philosophical questions can be found in his extensive instructional guide, *Summa Theologica*, written from 1265 to 1274, but this paper will focus on his view of self defense specifically. He addresses five different objections on whether it is lawful to kill a man in self defense under Question 64, Article 7:

**Objection 1.**

It would seem that nobody may lawfully kill a man in self-defense. For Augustine says to Publicola (Ep. xlvii): "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 a 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.48

Objection 2.

Further, he says (De Lib. Arb. i, 5): "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 he reckons "those which men may forfeit unwillingly," as appears from the context (De Lib. Arb. i, 5): 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.49

To the first objection, Thomas Aquinas responded by saying that the quote by Augustine referred to a case where a man intended to preserve his own life even to the point where he would have to end the attacker’s life, and that the passage in the second objection was to be understood in the same way.

Objection 3.

Further, Pope Nicolas [Nicolas I, Dist. 1, can. De his clericis] says in the Decretals: "Concerning the clerics about whom you have consulted Us, those, namely, who have killed a pagan in self-defense, as to whether, after making amends by repenting, they may return to their former state, or rise to a higher degree; know that in no case is it lawful for them to kill any man under any circumstances whatever." Now clerics and laymen are alike bound to observe the moral precepts. Therefore neither is it lawful for laymen to kill anyone in self-defense.50

48 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica; 648.
49 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica; 648.
50 Ibid.
To the third objection, Aquinas said that “irregularity\textsuperscript{51} results from the act though sinless of taking a man's life, as appears in the case of a judge who justly condemns a man to death,”\textsuperscript{52} and because of this, a cleric, who has killed a man in self defense, was irregular, even though his intentions were not to kill him but defend his own life.

\textbf{Objection 4.}

Further, murder is a more grievous sin than fornication or adultery. Now nobody may lawfully commit simple fornication or adultery or any other mortal sin in order to save his own life; since the spiritual life is to be preferred to the life of the body. Therefore no man may lawfully take another's life in self-defense in order to save his own life.\textsuperscript{53}

Thomas Aquinas simply responded to the fourth objection by stating that fornication or adultery was not necessarily directed to the preservation of one’s life.

\textbf{Objection 5.}

Further, if the tree be evil, so is the fruit, according to Matthew 7:17. Now self-defense itself seems to be unlawful, according to Romans 12:19: "Not defending [Douay: 'revenging'] yourselves, my dearly beloved." Therefore its result, which is the slaying of a man, is also unlawful.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{51} A canonical impediment directly impeding the reception of tonsure and Holy orders or preventing the exercise of orders already received. It is called a \textit{canonical} impediment because introduced by ecclesiastical law, for the canons prescribe certain requisites for the licit reception of orders, e.g. moral probity, proper age, legitimate birth, knowledge proportionate to each order, integrity of body, mind, will, and faith. A defect in these qualities prescribed by church regulations is rightly called an \textit{irregularity}.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
Lastly, Aquinas shortly responded to the final objection by emphasizing that the passage pointed out only means that a person should not seek revenge, not that one can not partake in self defense.

St. Thomas Aquinas further explained that there were two effects to the actions: one that was intended and one that was not. He said that moral acts take their species\textsuperscript{55} according to what was intended and not to what was an accident. Likewise, the act of self defense may also have two effects: one was to save their own life and one was to kill the attacker. If one was attempting to save their own life, it was lawful because it was a natural instinct to preserve their own life. However, an act may be considered unlawful if it was blown out of proportion, for instance if they used more violence than necessary or they intended to kill the aggressor in self defense. Overall, Aquinas firmly distinguished the differences of intent to decide whether or not an action was deemed lawful or unlawful.

Aquinas also answered whether one was guilty of murder through killing someone by chance in Article 8. The following are its objections:

**Objection 1.**

It would seem that one is guilty of murder through killing someone by chance. For we read (Genesis 4:23-24) that Lamech slew a man in mistake for a wild beast [The text of the Bible does not say so, but this was the Jewish traditional commentary on Genesis 4:23, and that he was accounted guilty of murder. Therefore one incurs the guilt of murder through killing a man by chance.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{55} the necessary determinant of every cognitive process

\textsuperscript{56} Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*; 649.
Aquinas commented that Lamech did not take sufficient care in avoiding taking that man’s life, and was therefore unexcused for his sin of homicide.

Objection 2.

Further, it is written (Exodus 21:22): "If . . . one strike a woman with child, and she miscarry indeed . . . if her death ensue thereupon, he shall render life for life." Yet this may happen without any intention of causing her death. Therefore one is guilty of murder through killing someone by chance.57

Because striking a woman with child is intended, it would be unlawful. If that led to a miscarriage, then the blood of that child would be on the offender’s hands.

Objection 3.

Further, the Decretals [Dist. 1 contain several canons prescribing penalties for unintentional homicide. Now penalty is not due save for guilt. Therefore he who kills a man by chance, incurs the guilt of murder.58

Aquinas referred to the canons, saying that a penalty was inflicted upon those who cause death unintentionally, through an unlawful action, or failing to take sufficient care such as Lamech above.

As a whole, Thomas Aquinas declared that chance happenings were unintentional, and because all sins are intentional, then such happenings were not deemed sinful. Again, he emphasized the difference between a voluntary and an involuntary action.

57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Case Study

After a brief look at Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*, this paper will examine a case study on a man named Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a pacifist who abandoned his non-violent way of life to join a plot to kill Hitler in World War II. Termed a “pacifist and enemy of the state” by Theodor Heckel, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Protestant Lutheran Pastor, theologian, and active in the German resistance to the policies of Hitler and Nazism.\(^{59}\) Though his family was not religious, he earned a doctorate in theology at the University of Berlin and was ordained a priest at the age of 25. Since the beginning of Hitler’s reign, Bonhoeffer opposed his philosophy, criticising him on a public radio broadcast, which was cut mid-air. Later, in a 1932 address, Bonhoeffer wrote that “two modes of self-assertion have developed in modern times - passive resistance as exemplified in Gandhi’s movement, and war and technology as developed in the West.”\(^{60}\) Despite what he wrote, he still, though hesitantly, allowed for the possibility of war and the massive destruction brought by the technology. Because of this, it must be concluded that Bonhoeffer was no longer a pacifist at this moment; he had not ruled out that war was a necessary evil. Herbert Jehle discussed Dietrich’s pacifism with him and recalled that Dietrich would repeatedly distinguish between his “pacifism” and that of liberal humanism. Jehle said that the instances where Bonhoeffer would make exemptions in his pacifism were when he would reject the purely secular pacifism that neglected the notion of basic terrible conflicts in life and only dealt with matters too ideal. Furthermore, Jehle wrote that Bonhoeffer was not actively searching for an occasion to prove his faith through suffering, but that he viewed the political life

\(^{59}\) www.biographyonline.net/spiritual/dietrich-bonhoeffer.html

\(^{60}\) Larry L. Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance*; 101.
of nations, more specifically Germany, and came to the conclusion that obeying the Sermon on
the Mount would inevitably bring sacrifice.\textsuperscript{61} In 1939, Bonhoeffer feared that the Nazis would
force him to take an oath to Hitler and left to the United States. He later returned because he felt
guilty that his people were suffering without him and was not practicing what he had been
preaching. When he returned, he joined the Abwehr, the German military intelligence
agency. It was within this organization that the strongest opposition to Hitler occurred.
Bonhoeffer was well aware of various assassination plots to kill Hitler, and it was during the
darkest hours of the World War II that he began to question his pacifism, as he saw the need for
violent opposition to the Nazi regime. Bonhoeffer internally struggled with how to respond to its
evil nature.\textsuperscript{62} He was arrested in 1943 when he attempted to free some German Jews and
imprisoned at Tegel Military prison. He continued to write in prison:

“There remains an experience of incomparable value. We have for once learned to see the great events of
world history from below, from the perspective of the outcasts, the suspects, the maltreated — in short,
from the perspective of those who suffer. Mere waiting and looking on is not Christian behavior. Christians
are called to compassion and to action.” (Letters from Prison, p.16)

He realized that Christians are called to both compassion and action, meaning that they
were compatible to each other. In April of 1945, he was sentenced to hanging where he was
executed along with his fellow conspirators such as Admiral Wilhelm Canaris and Hans Oster.
Before his death, he was asked what he was thinking, and he responded that he was truthfully
praying for the fall of the Nazi regime. His sister, Emmi Bonhoeffer, was interviewed about how

\textsuperscript{61} Larry L. Rasmussen, \textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance}; 103.
\textsuperscript{62} www.biographyonline.net/spiritual/dietrich-bonhoeffer.html
her brother transitioned from a pacifist to an activist involved in a murder plot. She responded by saying that “people do what they are compelled to do out of some inner necessity.”

---

Introduction to Proof

Now shifting towards the justification of self defense of others, the proof of the Moral Argument would show that it would be immoral for Christians to allow others to be harmed because otherwise, Christians are not preserving life or saving God’s creation. This Moral Argument would feed into what the distinctions were between intrinsic and extrinsic goodness, and that would prove why it would be the Christian’s duty to preserve the intrinsic value of life.

With this foundation, looking at specific instances of self defense in the Old Testament showed how God gave distinctions between accidental and intentional killings and how the former would be lawful, and how a moral obligations has been instilled in Christians to protect those who were vulnerable to danger.

Continuing on to the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus, certain parts of the Sermon on the Mount was examined contextually to what was occuring during that time frame. Because Christians were called to be Christ-like, it was paramount to understand why Jesus did what he did and to subsequently mimic those actions.
The Moral Argument

By establishing that the moral argument has helped to prove God’s existence, this argument would also help prove that self defense has historically been based off of objective morals and values and therefore was permitted for Christians. The Moral Argument was based on two premises: (1) if God does not exist, then objective morals and values do not exist and (2) objective morals and values do exist; therefore God exists. Because this was a logically valid syllogism, the atheist, who would attempt to disprove God’s existence, would have to reject at least one of those premises. The moral argument pertained to the ultimate source of objective moral values (moral ontology), not “how people know” the difference between moral and immoral things (moral epistemology) or what was meant by good/bad and right/wrong (moral semantics). Without objective ethics, who could say that Hitler was objectively morally wrong? Most would refute the first premise because humans have an intuitive sense between right and wrong. They refuted the first premise because it held God as the perfect standard by which all else was measured. The theistic ethicist would maintain that moral values were grounded in the likeness of God and what He commanded. Philosopher William Lane Craig best described it this way:

“Duty arises in response to an imperative from a competent authority. For example, if some random person were to tell me to pull my car over, I would have absolutely no legal obligation to do so. But if a policeman were to issue such a command, I’d have a legal obligation to obey. The difference in the two cases lies in the

---

64 www.allaboutphilosophy.org/moral-argument.htm
65 Ibid.
persons who issued the commands: one is qualified to do so, while the other is not.”

There were numerous other nontheistic systems of ethics that attempt to explain moral values and duties. One of which was called utilitarianism, which was modernly popularized by Sam Harris in his book *The Moral Landscape*, where ethics were determined by what constituted the greatest happiness for the greatest number. An issue with this system was that it attempted to combine two different scales to assess the morality of an action. Utilitarians tried to maximize the utility of long term consequences, however they did not take into account the individual’s intentions. While that individual could have acted based on sincerity, if that action did not produce the most utility, then by definition of utilitarianism, the action would be deemed as less moral.

**Thomas Aquinas’s Five Ways**

In Thomas Aquinas’s “Five Ways,” he made a moral argument for the existence of God. With this proof, Christians would have a moral duty to preserve God’s creation. He started with the claim that there were gradations to qualities such as “good, true, and noble,” meaning that some things that were considered good may be better than other good things. Aquinas asserted that this standard could not just be hypothetical, but that there must be something with this quality to the maximum extent; he concluded that there must be a God who was the cause and explanation for those qualities.

---

66 Dr. William Lane Craig; *The Moral Argument.*

67 www.allaboutphilosophy.org/moral-argument.htm
Kant also produced one of the most influential versions for the moral argument. Though he famously argued that the theoretical arguments for God’s existence were unsuccessful, he also held that a rational, moral being must have willed the “highest good,” which required a belief that the causal structure of nature would be conducive to the achievement of this end by moral means.68

Distinctions Between Goodness

Previously, a distinction had been made between intrinsic and extrinsic goodness in that something intrinsically good would maintain its goodness in itself whereas something extrinsically good would receive its value from some other source. That which was intrinsically good was non derivatively good, meaning that it was good for its own sake. That which was extrinsically good was derivatively good, meaning that it was good not for its own sake but for the sake of something else that was good. Because of this, intrinsic value had a priority over that of extrinsic value.69 One of the first writers to concern himself with the question of how to ascribe the intrinsic value of something was G.E. Moore in his book *Principia Ethica*. He raised a question of whether or not intrinsic value was analyzable. His idea of being analyzable consisted of breaking down a concept into simpler component concepts. Moore answered himself in saying that the concept of intrinsic goodness was not amenable to such analysis.70 He proposed a certain type of thought-experiment in order to come to a conclusion about what was
deemed intrinsically good. Moore advised to consider what things are such that, if they existed by themselves in complete isolation, would their existence still be good? He concluded that it was absurd and could not be used to analyze intrinsic goodness. He also attacked the idea that intrinsic goodness could be analyzed in broken down concepts, where the component concepts were all purely descriptive and not evaluative. However, many philosophers have disputed the cogency of his arguments. For example, Roderick Chisholm argued that Moore’s isolation test in fact provided the basis for an analysis of intrinsic value, though Eva Bodanszky and Earl Conee have counter argued Chisholm’s proposal.

*Intrinsic Value of Life*

Now that the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic value have been clarified, an important discussion of the intrinsic value of life should be made. Christians have historically believed that every human being was created in the image of God. Nothing could negate that image or the value it instilled in every human being, not even sin; the quality of life had no impact on the value of life. Multiple instances have shown that every human has the same intrinsic value, though ironically it was through people who believed they have greater value or could assert certain values. Racists believed that their skin color made them more valuable than those of other complections, leading them to dehumanize other people because of their skin color. The status of the unborn in the womb depended on what the mother would ultimately decide to do with it—it was a human being if she let it live, but it was merely a clump of cells if she aborted it. Both of these cases have shown the incredulousness that people’s lives could have a lesser value, though it has been proven that that could not be true.
*C.S. Lewis’ Mere Christianity*

Though the point was made that the intrinsic value of human life can not be lessened or increased, it would still be permissible for a human to actively defend themselves or others by taking away the intrinsic life of another in the case of self preservation. Through the moral law, it has been stated that people had instincts to defend others and themselves, and C.S. Lewis described it in his book *Mere Christianity*. He wrote about the Law of Human Nature, which held two parts: (1) there was some sort of “Moral Law,” and (2) no one has kept it very well. Lewis anticipated some possible rebuttals to his claim, one being that the moral law was just human instinct. Lewis said that the moral law can not just be another human instinct and gave an example: “if you see a man drowning: you will, in fact, have two *instincts*—one will be to try and help him, the other will be to keep yourself safe and not risk it. And the thing is, that instinct for self-survival will be stronger than the instinct to help. But then, Lewis says, you will find within yourself *something else* telling you to *obey the weaker instinct and help the man anyway*. That “third thing” cannot be an instinct like the other two.”

Obeying instincts may sometimes be morally right or morally wrong, depending on the circumstance. The second rebuttal Lewis refuted was that perhaps the “Moral Law” was really just the product of education and that people were held to certain moral standards because they have been taught them by parents, schools, and societies. He explained that though people are taught the moral law, that did not mean that a society makes up its own moral standards.

C.S. Lewis said that obeying instincts may sometimes be morally right or wrong, based on circumstance. When people listen to their instinct of self defense, historically, their actions

---

71 C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity,* Book 1.
have been justified because of their intent of self preservation. In addition, the moral law demonstrated that defense on behalf of others, though it may injure or cause death to the attacker, was also justified because it was an instinct instilled within people by God. People were also given grounds for preserving the lives of others. The Bible clearly taught that it was an obligation to preserve life of the self and of others. A passage in the Bible stated, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”72 This signified a person’s body does not belong to them, but rather it belonged to God; the physical body is property of God.

**Hume’s Moral Philosophy**

David Hume was a Scottish philosopher who often held a unique position of intellectual thought. He held that it was unreasonable to believe testimonies of miraculous events and people should therefore not believe in religions founded on miracles; Hume even attempted to disentangle religion with philosophy. However, he gave immense insight with his moral theory, producing his most famous position that *ought* can not be derived from *is*, which was the view that statements of moral obligation cannot simply be deduced from statements of fact.73

David Hume was born in 1711 in Scotland. Growing up, he attended the Church of Scotland and was educated by his mother until he left for the University of Edinburgh at age eleven. Around the age of fifteen, he was encouraged to consider a career in law. However, philosophy peaked his interest. During his studies as a philosopher, he composed his three

---

72 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV).

73 www.iep.utm.edu/hume/
volume *Treatise of Human Nature*, which explored several topics that included space, time, casualty, external objects, the passions, free will, and morality.\textsuperscript{74}

Hume’s moral theory first appeared in the third volume of *Treatise of Human Nature* where he first introduced what moral approval was not: it was not a rational judgment about either conceptual relations or empirical facts.\textsuperscript{75} He reasoned his case by disproving Samuel Clarke’s rationalistic view of morality, which was that people judge the morality of actions based off of external laws of righteousness. Hume presented an analogy in which a young tree grew and killed its parents, paralleling to that of a young child killing their parents. He then asked “if in this instance there be wanting any relation, which is discoverable in parricide or ingratitude? Is not the one tree the cause of the other's existence; and the latter the cause of the destruction of the former, in the same manner as when a child murders his parent?”\textsuperscript{76} He thus explained that it was a “will or choice, that determined a man to kill his parent; and they were the laws of matter and motion, that determined a sapling to destroy the oak, from which it sprung.”\textsuperscript{77} He argued that moral assessments were not judgements of facts; Hume said that for any immoral action, one must “examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call *vice*. ”\textsuperscript{78} Hume emphasized his idea that statements of obligation can not be derived from statements of fact. After stating what moral approval was not, Hume theorized that it was an emotional response, not a rational one. His theory gave a distinction of three psychological parts: the moral agent, the receiver, and the moral spectator. The moral agent was the person who performed the action, the receiver was impacted by that action, and the moral spectator

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} David Hume; *Treatise of Human Nature*, 467.
\textsuperscript{77} David Hume; *Treatise of Human Nature*, 467.
\textsuperscript{78} David Hume; *Treatise of Human Nature*, 468.
observed the event. It would be the spectator who would decide whether the agent’s intent was that of vice or virtue.

**Self Defense in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, God was speaking to Moses, instructing Israel on what to do if a man was killed:

> “When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall select cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person without intent may flee there. The cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation for judgment. And the cities that you give shall be your six cities of refuge... These six cities shall be for refuge for the people of Israel, and for the stranger and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills any person without intent may flee there. But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death... The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him. But if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or hurled anything on him without lying in wait or used a stone that could cause death, and without seeing him dropped it on him, so that he died, though he was not his enemy and did not seek his harm, then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood, in accordance with these rules. And the congregation shall rescue the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he had fled, and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil.”

In this passage, God gave two classifications of killings: accidental and intentional. He illustrated that an accidental killing would be one without any intent to kill or do harm. In self defense, there would be no intention to cause harm, but rather to preserve their own life by stopping the attacker from causing imminent danger. Circling back to the idea that intent drew the line between a lawful and unlawful killing, Thomas Aquinas firmly distinguished that if one was attempting to save their own life or another’s, then it would be deemed lawful because it was a natural instinct to preserve their life. To reiterate, it was intention that decided whether or not

---

79 Numbers 35:9-25 (ESV).
the act was sinful. Aquinas said that moral acts take their species, or the necessary determinant of every cognitive process, according to what the intention was, not if it was an accident. It would be the Christian’s duty to protect others.

Psalm 82:4 even cited that there was an obligation to protect those who were in danger as it said to “rescue the weak and the needy, and to deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

As seen in Ezekiel 33:6, there were numerous passages that indicated the Christian’s duty to protect others:

“But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.”

This passage emphasized that if a person knows that danger was about to fall upon another, then they should be active in warning that person. In fact, if that person knew another was in danger and did not warn them, they would be guilty of harming the victim. However, their guiltiness did not depend on whether or not the victim takes heed of the warning, but whether or not they warned them.

To further illustrate how prominent the self was in taking another man’s life, one would be acting as his judge, jury, and executioner. Of those three roles, God only assigned his people the role of the judge, to consider a matter in the light of His definition of right and wrong, not take it into their own hands to decide. To take the matters in their own hands would presume authority that was not granted to them.

---

80 Psalm 82:4 (ESV).
81 Ezekiel 33:6 (ESV).
82 www.cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/RA/k/776/Does-Scripture-Allow-for-Self-Defense.htm
The rewards and benefits of the Old Covenant were largely focused on physical health, material wealth, and national greatness, though its purpose was to prepare the nation for the Messiah’s coming. There was a huge emphasis on the physical aspects, and it paralleled throughout the Old Testament that God would provide physical protection if the people chose to obey his commands. However, the intent of the New Covenant was to provide a personal relationship with God, leading to eternal life with Him and a more Christ-like character. Because God was willing to do whatever means necessary to take His people to whatever point he desired, he would even do so by means of taking away His protection when it served His purpose. God may allow man to suffer so that it would bring him closer to God. Under the New Covenant, God did not promise complete protection, but there would be assurance that if one was a victim to violence, then they can be assured that it was a part of God’s plan, though they may not understand it at that instance.

**Sermon on the Mount**

The Sermon on the Mount was one of the most renowned events and in the Bible; it was a sermon given by Jesus that addressed how to live a life dedicated to and pleasing to God. Spanning from Matthew 5-7, it encompassed the Beatitudes, Salt and Light, Retaliation, Love Your Enemies, The Lord’s Prayer, The Golden Rule, and many other important passages. As addressed previously in the Historical Review, this thesis will focus on the passages that people may use to object the validation of active self defense or defense for others: Anger, Retaliation, and Love Your Enemies.

---

Anger

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.”

When Jesus said “to those of old,” he probably was referring to the original recipients of the Mosaic law. He then stated the Sixth Commandment verbatim from the Old Testament, though he followed that with words not from the original Commandments emphasizing that whoever murdered would be guilty in the judgement. The beginning of the next verse, “But I say to you,” pointed to the unparalleled authority of Jesus which would overcome than the Old Testament laws. According to Jesus, anger alone was also a violation of God’s law, and though one may say that active self defense is acting out of anger, the anger described in this passage was one of malice, and acting in self defense was a reaction, mainly out of fear for one’s own life.

Retaliation

“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 the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone

---

84 Matthew 5:21-26 (ESV).
would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile,
go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.”

This passage was referred to previously in this paper, but in summary, Jesus refuted the law surrounding the time frame of Hammurabi’s Code of “an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth,” and said to leave vengeance to God. Slapping someone’s right cheek would indicate that it was a backhanded slap as it would be inferred that the attacker was right handed, which was meant as an insult to the victim. This metaphorical slap should be considered as contempt rather than a dangerous threat, and therefore does not correlate to self defense where the aggressor could cause potential physical harm. Revenge and self defense were two different concepts, in that revenge was deliberate vengeance whereas self defense was a reaction provoked by another person causing potential danger.

**Love Your Enemies**

“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, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

You

---

86 Matthew 5:38-42 (ESV).
therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.\textsuperscript{87}

This passage was also referenced to earlier in this paper and will also be briefly reviewed. During that time, the term “neighbor” referred to a Jew and the term “enemy” meant a Gentile. When Jesus emphasized that the Jews love their neighbor, he was referring to the Gentiles as a means to further God’s Kingdom, not living a life of nonviolence. Though there were certain instances where non violence would be a more beneficial response, it did not rule out all opportunities of active self defense.

**Pacifism Considered**

Though the purpose of this thesis was to justify active self defense, it must also take pacifism into consideration. In former times, pacifism was a commitment to peacefulness and opposition to violence of any sort; their beliefs emphasized the sanctity of human life. Its ideal world would consist of completely non violent, peaceful social intercourse where conflicts would be dealt through arbitration and compromise rather than violent means.\textsuperscript{88} There have been three areas of ethical investigations that came from the nature of pacifism which consisted of the absolute prohibition of war, the absolute prohibition of violence or force, and the absolute prohibition of killing, and they all overlapped. Most pacifists held an ethic that opposed violence, which underpinned their disdain for killing and war; some pacifists were nuclear pacifists in which they only accepted the use of conventional war, not nuclear war. Some pacifists have declined all validations of war, but still accepted the use of force or even killing.

\textsuperscript{87} Matthew 5:43-48 (ESV).
\textsuperscript{88} www.iep.utm.edu/pacifism/
Though there have been many takes on pacifism, they all have agreed to not approve of some from of defense.

There were instances in history where pacifism led to the most ideal outcome. One example was the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, led by Martin Luther King Jr., which was based off of peaceful protests. It brought positive changes to voting and civil rights throughout the United States and much of the world. The leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, including Martin Luther King Jr. and Bob Moses, chose the tactic of nonviolence in order to dismantle the institutionalized racial segregation, discrimination, and inequality. The Montgomery bus boycott, for instance, was a protest campaign against racial segregation on the transit system, and it proved successful as it caused them to run a huge deficit. In other events, protesters held sit-ins and marches when business refused to change their discriminative policies. One of the most famous acts during the Civil Rights Movement was the “I Have a Dream” speech given by Martin Luther King Jr. which was the largest political rally ever seen in the United States. Led by Jon Lewis and Hosea Williams, Bloody Sunday was a march that started from Selma to US Highway 80 where the police used violence to force the protestors back; this event highly exhibited the characters of pacifism as the marchers showed no form of fighting back, though the police were using brutality. Those who sought to end the violence were threatened by those who used it.

In moments in history like this, sometimes it was not wise to fight fire with fire, but rather to display nonviolence to the aggressors. Opting for nonviolence first has been proven to work, but this does not negate that self defense would still be a viable last option.

Justifications for Self Defense

This paper does not advocate for violence nor does it condemn pacifism. Its purpose was to prove that in order for defense to be justified, the intention must be to preserve one’s life. Self defense should not be the first option; in fact, it should be the last. The best option would be to cause no harm, however, because that may not always be ideal, certain instances would allow for use of violence to stop violence.

It has been justified to defend others who were vulnerable and unable to defend themselves. Justifying each act of self defense would be nearly impossible for a human to do, because it would be judged based off of their intent. As Thomas Aquinas and David Hume had written, if a person’s intent was for the preservation of another’s life, then they would have lawfully protected them. It would be justified to defend others who cannot defend themselves because it would be the Christian duty to look after others.
Conclusion

This paper briefly touched on the history of self defense starting in the Old Testament until the twenty-first century as well as a handful of important figures involved in the shaping of self defense. Starting off with Jewish law and literature, self defense was never prohibited but rather limited. As seen in the Sermon on the Mount given by Jesus, its purpose was to illustrate how to live a godly lifestyle, and though most pacifists would argue that this sermon aided their beliefs, they had interpreted it inaccurately. Instead, the Sermon on the Mount differentiated murder and killing, retaliation and self defense, and how to further God’s Kingdom.

As seen through Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, the most important factor that would deem self defense lawful would be the defender’s intention of preserving life. If a person had intended to preserve another’s life because they could not do so for themselves, then the defense would be lawful; if a person had defended themselves to preserve their own life, then the defense would be deemed lawful. The purpose of this paper was not to encourage violence, but rather prove that sometimes self defense may be necessary to use to stop the furthering of uncontrolled violence.
Bibliography


Austin, Curtis J. “On Violence and Nonviolence: The Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi.”

*On Violence and Nonviolence: The Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi | Mississippi History Now*,


Dan Jones, Kristina Krug. “Meet the Americans Following in the Footsteps of the Knights Templar.” *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 1 July 2018,


*The American Vision*, 29 Apr. 2019,


“Dietrich Bonhoeffer Biography | .” *Biography Online*,

www.biographyonline.net/spiritual/dietrich-bonhoeffer.html.
“Don Murphy: Can a Christian Be a Pacifist?” Resources, opcentral.org/resources/2015/01/13/don-murphy-can-a-christian-be-a-pacifist/.


Harvey, Andrew. “Sacred Activism | Spiritual Teaching | Author Andrew Harvey.” Andrew Harvey, andrewharvey.net/sacred-activism/.


“Jerusalem Captured in First Crusade.” History.com, A&E Television Networks, 3 Mar. 2010,


Rasmussen, Larry L. Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance. Westminster John Knox Press,

2006.


catholicexchange.com/the-fifth-commandment.

www.cardus.ca/comment/article/the-old-testament-holy-war-and-christian-morality/.


plato.stanford.edu/entries/value-intrinsic-extrinsic/.