

principle with long and wide historical support, the right of self-defense is not certain.

The Christian just war theory (*Justum Bellum*) was built not upon a principle of self-defense, but upon that of defense of another. Accordingly, force may be Lawfully wielded by the Christian citizen authorized by the state, or by the private citizen authorized as it were by God (and in fact most states of the United States) for the purpose of protecting a neighbor from harm.

Both Augustine and Ambrose in formulating a just war theory predicated the doctrine upon a "responsibility for public protection with an utter denial that under ANY circumstances he ever has any right of private self-defense." [Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1950), p. 172] The duty to prefer another's life for one's own is expressed in Ambrose's comments on a passage from Cicero regarding the case of a shipwrecked man, an incompetent fellow water treader, and a plank of wood in the water. Ought the moral man to take the plank away from the ignorant fellow and thus save himself? (Yes such questions were raised even before situation ethics guru Joseph Fletcher came on the 20th century scene.) Ambrose answers the question:

*Although it seems better for the common good that a wise man rather than a fool should escape from shipwreck, yet I do not think that a Christian, a just and wise man, ought to save his own life by the death of another; just as when he meets with an armed robber he cannot return his blows, lest in defending his life he should stain his love toward his neighbor. [Ambrose, *The Duties Of The Clergy*, III, iv, 27 (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Scribners, 1908, Second series, vol. X), quoted in Ramsey, p. 173]*

Paul Ramsey reckons these giants among the church fathers to be "too extreme in excluding private self-defense as in every case unjustified for the Christian." He counts Martin Luther among those divines who would demur, but hastens to note that he supported self-defense cautiously, "surrounding the exercise of any right of personal self-defense with extreme caution." [Ibid., p. 176] Ramsey summarizes historical theology of self-defense thusly:

*Christian ethics from Ambrose to Tolstoy has always, quite correctly, looked upon self-defensiveness and any other form of selfish preferential love with profound suspicion. [Ibid., p. 177]*

It is useful, in examining the historic doctrine of the ethical use of force, to consider a profound contrast between early Christian thought on self-defense and modern pacifism. The non-Christian influence upon modern pacifism is evident. Ramsey, again: