

implanted it there, and we can annihilate ourselves, as easily as root out this affection for ourselves. It is the first and strongest principle in our nature; Blackstone calls it "the primary canon in the law of nature." That precept of our holy religion, which commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, doth not command us to love our neighbor better than ourselves, or so well; no christian divine hath given this interpretation. The precept enjoins, that our benevolence to our fellow men should be as real and sincere as our affections to ourselves, not that it should be as great in degree. A man is authorized, therefore, by common sense, and the laws of England, as well as those of nature, to love himself better than his fellow subject; if two persons are cast away at sea, and get on a plank (a case put by Sir Francis Bacon), and the plank is insufficient to hold them both, the one hath a right to push the other off to save himself. The rules of the common law, therefore, which authorize a man to preserve his own life at the expense of another's are not contradicted by any divine or moral law. We talk of liberty and property, but, if we cut up the law of self-defense, we cut up the foundation of both, and if we give up this, the rest is of very little value; and, therefore, this principle must be strictly attended to, for whatsoever the law pronounces in the case of these eight soldiers will be the law to other persons and after ages. It would have been better if all the persons that have slain mankind in this country, from the beginning to this day, had been acquitted, than that a wrong rule and precedent should be established.

I shall now read to you a few authorities on this subject of self-defense. Foster, in his Crown Law, says, in the case of justifiable self-defense, the injured party may repel force with force, in defense of his person, habitation, or property, against one who manifestly intendeth and endeavoreth, with violence or surprise, to commit a known felony upon either. In these cases, he is not obliged to retreat, but may pursue his adversary, till he findeth himself out of danger, and if in a conflict between them he happeneth to kill, such killing