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SELF-SACRIFICE TO SAVE THE LIFE OF ANOTHER IN JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS[1]

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Although both the Jewish and Christian traditions permit and even valorize self-sacrificial death for the sake of God (martyrdom), and for other people, they diverge on the issue of self-sacrificial death for the sake of a single individual. The Jewish tradition prohibits such self-sacrifice on the basis of the principles that (1) God owns the body and that (2) one cannot exchange one's life for another's. Christian ethics, in contrast, permits sacrificing one's life to save a single person based on the model of Christ's self-sacrificial love. This ethical disagreement exposes a fundamental theological disagreement between the two traditions concerning what constitutes the *imago Dei*.

I. INTRODUCTION

In contrast to Socrates who expected to attain 'the greatest blessings' after drinking the hemlock and urged everyone worthy of philosophy 'to come after me as quickly as possible' (*Phaedo* 64a, 61b), both Christians and Jews deplore the killing of oneself for any purpose.[2] Life is *sanctus* or *qādôsh* (holy), and cannot legitimately be given up for any reason. Nonetheless, in both faiths, self-sacrificial death is permissible and even valorized when one dies to honor God (martyrdom)[3] or to save the lives of other people.[4] The Jewish and Christian traditions[5] significantly diverge, however, on the question of relinquishing one's life for a single individual. In Jewish law, I will argue, this kind of self-sacrifice is not permissible. The Christian tradition, however, allows and even commends self-sacrificial death even for a single person.[6] This proposal will be argued in three parts: (1) a discussion of the theories[7] by which the Jewish and Christian traditions support their positions, (2) an application of the theories through two case studies, and (3) a concluding reflection on the root cause of the disagreement. In the conclusion I seek to show that this disagreement about self-sacrifice is a seam which, when un-sewed, reveals the inner fabric of Jewish and Christian thought.

II. THE PERMISSABILITY OF SELF-SACRIFICE FOR THE SAKE OF ANOTHER

The Jewish Tradition

Generally speaking, Jewish moral reasoning operates according to a hierarchy of values. In most cases, when an ethical person makes a moral decision, he or she chooses not between good and evil, but between two goods. When a donkey falls into a pit on the

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Sabbath,[8] the decision is between two goods: maintaining the Sabbath, or preserving property. To decide what to do in this situation, the Jews involved must choose which of the two goods they value more. They must, in other words, order the goods in a hierarchy, and decide accordingly.

A fundamental—if not *the* fundamental—good in Jewish moral reasoning is human life. Human life is sacred, inviolable,[9] and good for its own sake. Partly, this is because death is considered an evil.[10] More importantly, it is because each human being is created *b^{e}selem 'elohîm* 'in the image of God' (Genesis 1:27 NRSV).[11] Thus when a woman insults another woman, she insults God.[12] When a man murders another man, it is 'as if he destroyed an entire world.'[13] On the other hand, if one preserves the life of another, one preserves the world.

The sanctity of life in Jewish law demands that the preservation of life be 'the highest moral imperative.'[14] According to the medieval Jewish scholar Nahmanides: 'Saving life is a great *mitzvah* [commandment]. One who approaches it with alacrity is praised, one who hesitates is despicable, one who questions it is guilty of murder, and certainly so, one who despairs and does not do it.'[15] In light of this stance, 'violating provisions of Jewish law to save a life is not only permitted but required.'[16] Jewish law insists: 'You shall not stand (idly) by (*lō' t'ămōd 'al*) the blood of your neighbor' (Leviticus 19:16).[17] Practically applied, if one sees someone in life-threatening danger, one is obligated to come to the rescue.

Yet what if the cost of saving another person's life is one's own? Here the hierarchy of values is not clear-cut. Indeed, one's duty to save life, in this case, cancels itself out. If one saves another's life, one loses one's own, and so ceases to preserve life. The rescuer must then choose which life to preserve. Assuming that both lives are equal, the rescuer's choice to die for a victim would simply be a matter of exchange: his or her life for another's. Nothing lost, yet nothing gained either. The question is, does the Jewish tradition allow for this sort of exchange?

In one stream of Jewish moral reasoning, a person is allowed to die for keeping a commandment.[18] We have already seen that the duty to preserve life is a commandment. It would seem then, that a rescuer who sacrifices his or her life for a victim's is *permitted* to do so even if he or she simultaneously transgresses the command to preserve life (namely his or her own).

Such a ruling, however, is not in accord with the mainstream of Jewish tradition. Maimonides, for instance, insists that one who needlessly sacrifices one's life is guilty of a capital offense.[19] The Jewish philosopher's justification is the biblical principle that by obeying God's laws 'one shall live [and not die]' (Leviticus 18:5).

Yet perhaps with Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935) we should distinguish between (1) one's voluntary self-sacrifice to preserve the life of another, in which one is *permitted* to sacrifice one's own life (though not obligated), and (2) the performance of all the other commandments, where one is *not* permitted to sacrifice one's life.[20] Kook bases this distinction on the great medieval rabbinist Rashi (1040–1105), who interprets the biblical statement 'one shall live' to be addressed not only to the rescuer who rescues, but also to the *victim* whose life is threatened. In other words, the life of the victim is included in the 'one shall live,' and the rescuer is allowed to forgo his or her own obligation to live by the laws in order to fulfill the 'one shall live' of the one whose life is in danger.[21] Thus in the case in which either rescuer or victim is bound to die, the rescuer, who willingly gives up his or her life to save the victim, does not violate his or her obligation to 'live' and 'choose life' (Deuteronomy 30:19). The life chosen is simply not his or her own.

This reasoning might be convincing if not for one problem. Even if one does not violate the command to 'choose life' in the act of relinquishing one's life for another person, one must still ask whether one has the *right* to make this exchange—one's life for another's? In my reading of the Jewish tradition, the answer to this question is 'no.' Jewish law does not allow the rescuer to exchange his or her own life for another's for two reasons: (1) the divine ownership of the body, and (2) the indiscernability of the value of human life. We will discuss each point in turn.

According to the Jewish tradition, God owns the body.[22] God created the body, breathed into it the breath of life (Genesis 2:7; Jeremiah 38:16), and takes that breath back when he pleases (Deuteronomy 32:39). He does not allow anyone to choose one's time of death by taking one's own life. Thus, even presuming that life is not sacred and worthy of preservation, a Jewish individual does not have the authority to exchange his or her own life for another person's without divine permission. According to Jewish law, God does not grant a rescuer permission to die to save a victim's life.

The second reason why one cannot exchange one's life for another's—even for a victim in distress—is the indiscernability of the value of human life. This point is captured in the Talmudic dictum: 'Who knows that your blood [i.e., life] is redder [i.e., more important to God] than another's?'[23] This principle assumes that all lives are not equally precious in the sight of God. Some people, for instance, are more pious and have the capacity to live longer. Thus they are able to fulfill more commandments for the honoring of God's Name.[24] So when one must make a decision about whether or not to sacrifice one's life for a victim's, one is confronted with a dilemma. If one knows that the victim's life was more precious in God's sight than one's own, one might be justified in exchanging one's life for the life of the victim. *But one does not know this*. One's own life, in the end, might be more valuable to God. If one sacrifices one's life, then, one robs God of God's due honor. Therefore, because one is in ignorance about whose 'blood is redder,' one is not in a position to exchange the life of a victim for one's own.

This non-exchangeability principle is undergirded by both biblical and rabbinic sources. The Jewish scholar David Kimchi (1160–1235) pointed to the verse in Ezekiel: 'the son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father for the iniquity of the son' (Ezekiel 18:20; cf. Deuteronomy 24:16). Kimchi then reasons, '*a fortiori*, therefore, one cannot suffer for another man.'[25] This judgment accords with what God spoke to Moses when the latter asked to be blotted out of God's book (i.e., the register of life): only those who have 'sinned against me,' says the LORD, 'I will blot out of my book' (Exodus 32:33). Sin puts one in mortal danger of God's judgment; but there can be no exchange between a sinner and a righteous person. Only 'the person who sins shall die' (Ezekiel 18:20).

The principle of non-exchangeability also appears in the Mishnah (Ohalot 7:6) in a discussion of difficult birth:

> If a woman was in hard travail, the child must be cut up while it is in the womb and brought out member by member, since the life of the mother has priority over the life of the child; but if the greater part of it was already born, it may not be touched, since the claim of one life cannot override the claim of another life.[26]

The principle, 'the claim of one life cannot override the claim of another life,' is a principle which applies equally to our topic. One neither has the authority nor the requisite knowledge to exchange one's life for another's, even if another's life is in mortal danger. *Life cannot be exchanged for life*. In case anyone would remain unconvinced of this teaching, Rabbi Akiba in the second century C.E. set forth an even clearer ruling that

excludes any kind of exchange. He ruled that in the case in which there is a conflict between one's life, and the life of another, 'your life takes precedence.'[27] He bases this view on Leviticus 25:36: 'Do not take interest in advance . . . but fear your God; let them [lit. your brother] live with you.' This law assumes that the receiver of this command must be *alive* before caring for his or her brother, for otherwise he or she could not *live* with him.[28] Thus one is not permitted to lay down one's life to save the life of one other individual.

The Christian Tradition

Liebt, ihr Christen, in der Tat!	Love, ye Christians, in your doing!
Jesus stirbet für die Brüder,	Jesus dieth for his brothers,
Und sie sterben für sich wieder,	Now they're dying for each other,
Weil er sie verbunden hat.	For he doth bind them to this[29]

The tenor of the above canticle suggests that the answer to the question concerning whether the Christian tradition allows voluntary self-sacrifice to save the life of another person might be easier to answer than it was for the Jewish tradition. Nonetheless, we must note two complications. First, Christians whole-heartedly agree with Jews that life is sacred inasmuch as God created the body, owns it, and has authority over it.[30] 'God alone,' affirmed the late Pope John Paul II, 'is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end.'[31] Because human beings are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–28) 'human life is thus given a sacred and inviolable character, which reflects the inviolability of the Creator himself.'[32] Therefore 'willful self-destruction . . . [is] a supreme dishonor to the Creator,' and is, in general, strictly forbidden.[33] Second, the Christian ethic of self-sacrifice, though oft touted, is often put in vague-sounding terms, such as the following:

> . . . if my gift is not to prove a source of humiliation, I must give to others not only something that is my own, but my very self (Pope Benedict XVI).[34]

> He who sacrifices his life to achieve any purpose for an individual or for humanity is practicing life-affirmation (Albert Schweitzer).[35]

> There is no Christian truth so clearly revealed as this, that the spirit of every Christian must be a spirit of sacrifice (P. A. Sheehan).[36]

What these Christian authors mean by (self-)sacrifice may or may not imply death for one other human being. When Christians talk about death for others, they invariably turn to the story of Christ, who—according to the gospels—specifically laid down his life for others (John 10:15; Mark 10:45). This story of self-sacrifice has been called St. Paul's 'Master Story.'[37] The Apostle puts it this way[38]:

> [Christ Jesus,] though he was in the form of God,
> did not regard equality with God
> as something to be exploited,
> [7]but emptied himself,
> taking the form of a slave,
> being born in human likeness.
> And being found in human form,
> [8]he humbled himself
> and became obedient to the point of death—
> even death on a cross(Philippians 2:6–8; cf. Gal 1:3–4)

This Master Story, Michael Gorman underscores, is a story of consummate love (*agapē*).[39] *Agapē*, as defined by Christ, is neither a feeling, nor unconditional positive regard for other people. Fundamentally, it has two dimensions: '*Negatively*, it does not seek its own advantage or edification. *Positively*, it seeks the good, the advantage, the edification of others [Philippians 2:3; 1 Corinthians 10:24].'[40] The Jewish tradition, it should be noted, does not necessarily disapprove of seeking another's advantage.[41] It is only when Christians take *agapē* to its extreme (Christo-)logical implications that the Jewish tradition registers its disagreement. For the full logic of *agapē* is actually the *subordination* of the self's good to the good of other human beings.[42] Timothy Jackson puts it this way: *agapē* is 'service open to self-sacrifice for the sake of the other.'[43] In the Master Story of Christ, such openness to self-sacrifice manifested itself in death for others ('even death on a cross,' Philippians 2:8). Thus the door is opened for Christians to manifest this same sort of self-sacrifice.

The paradigmatic import of Christ's death is well established in the Christian tradition. Before the end of the first century, we read this from an ancient Christian encyclical: 'For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example (*hypogrammon*), so that you might follow in his steps' (1 Peter 2:21). An even earlier Christian tradition makes self-sacrifice part of the *imitatio Christi*: 'If any want to become my followers,' Jesus says 'let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' (Mark 8:34).[44] In Pauline theology, the *imitatio Christi* involves a mystical aspect of participation with Christ (sometimes called being 'in' Christ). Dwelling in Christ, for Paul, occasionally entails an identification with him: 'I have been crucified with Christ,' confesses the Apostle, 'and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God [NRSV margin], who loved me and gave himself for me' (Galatians 2:19b-20).[45] The mode of participation/identification with Christ Paul calls 'walking' by (or according to) the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-6:10, cf. Rom 8:4-5, 12–13).

Walking by the Spirit means that Christian ethics is not (at least not primarily) the application of certain principles to living. It is being indwelt by God (in the form of the Spirit, Romans 8:1–9) so that one can be conformed to Christ. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9). Thus those who walk in the Spirit become like Christ, who was obedient to the point of death.

Only by being pneumatologically conformed to Christ is it possible to fathom, let alone practice, self-sacrifice for the sake of another. For Maimonides, such self-sacrifice appears irrational because it is self-destructive.[46] For the Christian, however, self-sacrifice to save the life of another is truly living according to the image of God, whom the New Testament identifies with Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15). Christ insists: 'Love (*agapate*) one another as I have loved you' (John 13:34; 15:12). Christ loved unto death. He died for many others; but he is also said to have died for a single individual (Romans 14:15; 1 Corinthians 8:11).

This is a kind of love which does not fit into the hierarchy of values (or any sort of moral casuistry[47]). This is a point wherein Christian ethics methodologically diverges from the pattern of ethical reflection in Jewish law. In the words of Rabbi David Bleich, the sanctity of one's own life is a 'self-evident, undeniable, irrefutable, *a priori* cardinal value. As such, it takes precedence not only over obedience to law but over virtually all other human values'—including the life of another human being.[48] Christians cannot accept this analysis, because they do not prioritize an *a priori* cardinal value. They prioritize a self-sacrificial model exhibited in Jesus Christ.[49]

Thus Christians are not open to self-sacrifice *per se*, but only to self-sacrifice which is Christ-like. A Christ-like self-sacrifice is, first of all, voluntary, as Christ was not forced to face the cross ('I lay it [my life] down of my own accord,' John 10:18). Second, Christ-like self-sacrifice is constructive, which means purposeful, intentional, attentive to appropriate means and ends, and producing some valid effect (in Christ's case, the redemption of the world). Third, Christ-like self-sacrifice is done truly out of love. Christ sacrificed himself for the sake of others not merely to obtain immortality. Eternal life is the upshot of a life of love, not its motive.[50]

With these criteria in mind, I propose that Christian ethics would permit one to sacrifice oneself to save the life of even a single human being. In light of the example of Christ, furthermore, such a deed would probably even be considered commendable. We turn now to two brief case studies in order to make concrete the preceding theoretical discussion.

III. CASE STUDIES

Case 1

On January 3, 2007, the *New York Times* printed an article entitled 'Man is Rescued by Stranger on Subway Tracks.' The reporter, Cara Buckley, tells the story of Wesley Autrey, who witnessed a man collapse in convulsions on a New York City subway platform. The man shakily arose, but wobbled to the edge of the platform and tumbled down between the rails of the tracks. Conveniently, the headlights of the Number 1 train appeared in the tunnel, racing toward the victim. Mr. Autrey then made a 'split decision,' in his own words, by jumping down after the man. Wrapping himself over him, Mr. Autrey attempted to shield the man from the violence of the oncoming train. Mr. Autrey had left two young daughters, aged four and six, on the platform in no little distress.

Granting that Mr. Autrey was acting largely on impulse, we can still ask whether his impulsive decision would be approved by Jewish law. Even though Mr. Autrey miraculously survived this ordeal, he put himself at significant risk. Chances were high that both men would be crushed underneath the train (or simply electrocuted), and that Mr. Autrey's daughters would grow up fatherless. Since Mr. Autrey was making a 'split decision,' we can surmise that he had no well-formed notion of how he would save the victim. He simply followed his gut and leapt in after the man. Mr. Autrey also had no idea who this man was whom he was attempting to rescue. If the victim was without young children, his death would be, in a purely rational calculus, less costly than the death of a father of two little girls.

Everything in this story leads one to think that Jewish law would disapprove of Mr. Autrey's decision, despite its fortunate outcome. If God owned Mr. Autrey's body, Mr. Autrey was not overly protective of God's property. Furthermore, Mr. Autrey, who used his body to shield the victim's, made a decision he was not authorized to make—his life for another's. Yet one life for another was not even the most likely outcome. The image of God could easily have been doubly defaced by the deaths of both men. Such logic leads us to conclude that Mr. Autrey's leap onto the tracks may have been a noble impulse, but, to borrow a phrase from Luther, it was 'neither right nor safe.'

Christian ethics, on the other hand, would, in my reading, tend to absolve Mr. Autrey. God surely owns the body, and precisely because of this Christians must, in the words of Richard Hays, 'take care not to absolutize or idolize it.'[51] Rather, in their efforts to protect human life, Christians 'must also be guided, limited and defined . . . by the Lord of life.'[52]

Sometimes God may order one to be, says Karl Barth, a sacrament (or visible sign) of Christ in an act of self-sacrifice. Although from the *New York Times* article, we gather nothing about Mr. Autrey's religious beliefs, his attempt to rescue a fallen human being was a strikingly Christ-like act. In that split-second decision, Mr. Autrey acted as if the life of a stranger was more valuable than his own life, not to mention the felicity of his wife and daughters. In his act, he manifested *agapē*, which looks to the needs of others rather to the needs of oneself. Although arguably Mr. Autrey's daughters needed their father, they did not need him as much as the man lying on the tracks.

Case 2

We turn from a real case featuring a split-second decision to a hypothetical example involving calmer ethical reflection. In the Babylonian Talmud (Bava Metzia 62a) we read of two men—equal in age, health, and piety—stranded in a desert, five days' walk from civilization.[53] One has a pitcher of water, enough for only one man to make it to the nearest town. If the water is shared, both men will perish. If the owner of the water does not share it, his companion will die. In the discussion in the Talmud, an early ruling of the 'Son of Patura' (a possible reference to Jesus) directed that both men should drink and die 'rather than that one should behold his companion's death.' This is based on the principle in Leviticus 25:36: 'Your brother shall live *with* you.' However, the favored ruling was that of Rabbi Akiba, who judged that the man who owns (or at least has) the water should alone make use of it, emphasizing 'your brother shall live with *you*.' If one is dead, one cannot live with anyone. Thus Akiba reasoned, as we saw above, 'your life takes precedence.'[54] In other words, the Jewish tradition supports the saving of life, and the first life one is responsible to save is one's own.

The majority of Christian moralists, on the other hand, would probably view the act of reserving the water for oneself as an act of passive killing. In this case, it is better for the owner to die than to sin grievously.[55] Not only is it morally permissible in this dire situation for the owner to lay down his life for his fellow, it is, in light of the *imitatio Christi*, morally commendable. It is particularly morally commendable if the owner gives up his life for his enemy. According to New Testament theology, Christ died not merely for his disciples, but for his enemies (Romans 5:10), and commanded Christians to love their enemies as he loved them (Matthew 5:44; John 13:34), i.e., to the point of death.

Thus in both Jewish and Christian reasoning, one man should survive in this case (although it will be a different man). For the Christian, the survival of one man is not on the principle that 'your life takes precedence' but on the apostolic exhortation to 'regard others as better than yourselves' (Philippians 2:3).[56] This attitude sums up Christian humility.[57] Such humility is the outgrowth of Christ's 'Master Story,' wherein Christ, although equal with God, dies for the weaker party (Philippians 2:6–8; Romans 5:6).

IV. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

We wrap up this essay on self-sacrifice for the sake of another with a brief reflection on the theological factors underlying the disagreement between the Jewish and Christian traditions. The ethical disagreement, I propose, can be traced back to a disagreement about the image of God. Both traditions base their commitment to preserve life on the teaching that humanity is created in God's image. Although the church fathers were inclined to define the image of God as the soul (or mind),[58] the earliest rabbis thought of

the image as reflected in the human body.[59] If the body is the image, then this human mode of existence is inviolable. Christian theologians have been much more reluctant, however, to see the body as God's distinctive imprint. The essence of human life lies elsewhere. Thus, although Christians have great respect for the Jewish commitment to preserve life, they feel that the Jewish understanding of life as the extension of one's current physical and psychological existence rings somewhat hollow. For the Christian, to 'choose life' is ultimately to choose life eternal, who is Christ, the one who said, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life' (John 11:25; cf. 14:6).[60] Choosing 'Life' thus may require Christians to relinquish their current physical existence. But since this present life *is* life only on account of Christ's life, choosing to die to let another live is in fact the decision to 'choose Life.' For Christians, therefore, the body can be sacrificed to honor Christ.

Such an ethical disagreement ought not to be overemphasized. In the end, perhaps, both ethical systems are perhaps more alike than different. In fact, the systems of Jewish and Christian ethics converge on so many topics that they are often conflated in the phrase 'Judeo-Christian morality.' It is illuminating, nevertheless, to see where these two traditions diverge as well, since differences teach us much about the theological starting points of both faiths. Jewish law, it seems, takes more into consideration humanity's earthly situation—its weaknesses, fears, habits, and natural inclinations—than does Christian ethics. Christian ethics ultimately demands that Christians transcend the limits of their nature.[61] Its goal is to establish a training-ground for Christians' eternal existence after death. Therefore Christian ethics always has the highest expectations for its followers, and makes little room for human weaknesses. The Christian model is Christ. Since Christ is divine, Christ-like love cannot be fitted inside the confines of a purely human ethic.[62] From this perspective we might say that Jewish law fits into the range of normal human possibility ('He has shown you, O *human being*' what is good [Micah 6:8]), while Christian ethics ultimately assumes (and even demands) that its followers be 'like angels in heaven' (Matthew 22:30).

Notes

1 Special thanks to Robert Moses for proofreading this essay and offering insightful comments.

2 For the Christian condemnation of suicide, see Augustine, *City of God*, 1.20; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Pt. 2-2, q.6 a.5. The church councils of Orléans (533 C.E.), Braga (563 C.E.) and Auxerre (578 C.E.) all issued canons that denied funeral rites to suicides. These canons survived in the form of English secular law up until the 20th century (Arthur Droge and James Tabor, *A Noble Death* [New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992], pp. 5–7). Likewise, in the Jewish tradition, specific laws regarding suicide are formulated. The verse in Genesis, 'But for your own life-blood I will require an accounting' (9:5) was interpreted by Rabbi Eleazar (2nd c. C.E) as meaning 'I will require your blood if shed by your own hands' (*b.Baba Kamma* 91b). Similar to the Christian tradition, the post-Talmudic tractate *Semahot* rules, 'For a suicide no rites whatever should be observed' (2.1).

3 The laws of martyrdom in Judaism are well-defined. Though by doing the laws 'one shall live' (Leviticus 18:5), Rabbis in the time of Hadrian delineated three acts that must not be performed even at the cost of one's life: murder, fornication, and idolatry (*b.Yoma* 82a–85b, *b.Sanhedrin* 74a). Furthermore, if the intent of an ordinance is to cause Jews to violate Jewish law, or if a worldly authority requires Jews to publicly transgress (even if only for sport), then a Jew may not even 'change one shoe strap from white to black' (i.e., violate a Jewish custom; Eliot Dorff, *Matters of Life and Death: A Jewish Approach to Modern Medical Ethics* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1998], p. 31). Death, in these cases, is the only way to sanctify God's name (*Kiddush haShem*, based on Leviticus 22:32).

4 Esther, who risked her life by appearing before the Persian king ('If I perish, I perish,' Esther 4:16), is valorized for saving her nation.

5 That these two traditions contain a vast amount of internal diversity I do not wish to deny. Nevertheless, there are general trajectories of thought in Jewish and Christian ethics that can be sketched without vicious reductionism.

6 This thesis does not comprehend dying for a single individual in time of war, a context which significantly changes one's ethical obligations. Throughout this essay I have in mind self-sacrifice for another solely in times of peace.

7 'Theory' is perhaps not the best word here. What I mean is the process of ethical reasoning by means of which the two systems of thought derive their positions.

8 Cf. Matthew 12:11.

9 The implications of this principle are stated in numerous texts of the Talmud: *b.Berakhot* 3a, 8b; *Shabbath* 32a; *Pesahim* 112a; *Taanit* 5b (cited in Droge and Tabor, *A Noble Death*, p. 101).

10 Ahron Agus, apart from using androcentric language, puts it well when he says that death in the Jewish tradition 'is not merely a fearful prospect; it is the antithesis of man's essence, and the very fact of his being cries out against death' (*The Binding of Isaac and Messiah* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998], p. 5). 'For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live' (Ezekiel 18:32).

11 Although creation in God's image is a major theme neither in the Hebrew Bible nor in rabbinic literature, it has exercised considerable influence in Jewish ethical thought. See for instance Aaron L. Mackler (ed.), 'Jewish Medical Directives for Health Care,' in *Life and Death Responsibilities in Jewish Biomedical Ethics* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary Press, Finkelstein Institute, 2000), p. 367. See also Dorff, *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 18–20.

12 *Genesis Rabbah* 24.7.

13 *m.Sanhedrin* 4.5.

14 Louis Newman, quoted in Aaron Mackler, 'Jewish Medical Directives' p. 17, n. 15. Mackler also references David Bleich, 'The Obligation to Heal in the Jewish Tradition' in Fred Rosner and David Bleich (eds.), *Jewish Bioethics* (New York: Sanhedrin, 1979), p. 17. See also Dorff, *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 15–20.

15 Quoted in Mackler, 'Jewish Medical Directives,' p. 5.

16 *Ibid.*

17 This is the understanding of the verse in *Leviticus Rabbah* 24.5. The NRSV reads: 'you shall not profit by [stand against, margin] the blood of your neighbor.'

18 *Kesef Mishneh, Yesodey haTorah* 5.4, cited in Nahum Rakover, *Mesiruth Nefesh: Giving Up One to Save the Many* (Jerusalem: Library of Jewish Law, 2000), p. xxvi.

19 *Mishneh Torah*, *Yesodey haTorah* 5.4. See also 5.1. R. Isaac would seem to support Maimonides when he says that it is forbidden even 'to inflict harm on oneself even when there is a need' (Tosafot *Bava Kamma* 91b).

20 Rakover, *Mesiruth Nephesh*, pp. xxvi–xxvii.

21 *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

22 See, for example, Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 24:1.

23 *b.Sanhedrin* 74a.

24 See the opinion of Rabbi Jonah (Gerondi) cited in Yehezkel Fogel (ed.), *I Will Be Sanctified* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson Inc., 1998), pp. 173–74.

25 Quoted in Bernd Janowski & Peter Stuhlmacher (eds.), *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources* (trans. Daniel Bailey; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 458.

26 Trans. Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 660.

27 *b.Bava Metzia* 62a. One is also reminded here of the saying of Hillel, admittedly spoken in a totally different context, 'If I am not for myself, who is for me?' (*m.Avot* 1.14).

28 See Dorff, *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 16–17.

29 J. S. Bach, *Die Himmel erzhälen die Ehre Gottes* (Bach Werke Verzeichnis 76; Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler-Verlag, 1988); based on 1 John 3:13–19.

30 Richard Hays has recently claimed that '[t]he 'sacredness of life' is a sacred cow that has no basis in the New Testament' (*The Moral Vision of the New Testament* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1996], p. 454), His point is that life is not sacred because of its innate worth, but because God owns the body. Hays quotes Hauerwas to this effect: 'The Christian prohibition against taking life rests not on the assumption that human life has overriding value but on the conviction that it is not ours to take. The Christian prohibition of abortion derives not from any assumption of the inherent value of life, but rather from the understanding that as God's creatures we have no basis to claim sovereignty over life . . . The Christian respect for life is first of all a statement, not about life, but about God' (cited in *ibid.*, pp. 454–55).

31 *Evangelium Vitae* [*EV*], (New York: Random House, 1995), §66, p. 119; cf. §53, p. 94.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 95. See also *Gaudium et Spes*: *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, in Austin Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, N.Y.: Costello, 1996), p. 913.

33 *Gaudium et Spes*, p. 27.

34 *God is love: Deus Caritas Est, encyclical letter* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006), §34.

35 *Indian Thought and Its Development* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960).

36 *Mary, the Mother of God*, quoted in Martin Manser, *The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 329.

37 The term is Gorman's. See his *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 88–92.

38 The Pauline authorship of this passage is disputed. Most 20th century critical scholarship sees in this passage a pre-Pauline tradition. That the passage fits so well with Paul's theology, however, has led to a resurgence of the belief in Pauline authorship. See, for example, Gordon Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 43–46; Marcus Bockmuehl, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London; A & C Black, 1997), p. 120; Peter O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 202. Additional references in Fee, *Philippians*, pp. 192–93, n.3.

39 *Cruciformity*, pp. 164–69. Hays underscores that '[t]he content of the word 'love' is given fully and exclusively in the death of Jesus on the cross; apart from this specific narrative image, the term has no meaning' (*Moral Vision*, p. 202).

40 Gorman, *Cruciformity*, p. 223.

41 For instance, in the case wherein one person has the opportunity to do good to another, according to Abraham Bloch, this person 'demonstrates respect for [the other] man by manifesting a deferential regard for his dignity and a consideration of his rights. In the event of a conflict between one's own rights and the rights of other people, an ethical person will defer to his neighbors. This principle is in keeping with the rabbinic dictum: 'Yield your will to the will of your friend'' (*Derech Eretz Zuta* 1, cited in Abraham Bloch, *A Book of Jewish Ethical Concepts: Biblical and Postbiblical* [New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1984], p. 256).

42 Thus Timothy Jackson's second characteristic of *agapē*, namely 'equal regard for their [other people's] well-being' understates the nature of *agapē* (*The Priority of Love: Christian Charity and Social Justice* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003], p. 10). *Agapē* is actually a *higher* regard for another's well-being.

43 *Ibid.* This is Jackson's third characteristic of love. Cf. John Paul II, *EV* §96, p. 170.

44 '[T]o imitate Christ,' according to Victor Furnish, '. . . means to be conformed to Christ's suffering and death in the giving of one's self over to the service of others' (*Theology and Ethics in Paul* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1968], p. 223). Later Furnish defines *imitatio Christi* as the giving of 'one's self in love for others as he [Christ] gave himself' (*ibid.*, p. 235).

45 For a recent discussion of participation in Christ, see Gorman, *Cruciformity*, pp. 31–49.

46 *Mishneh Torah*, 40b.

47 Hays defines casuistry as 'the attempt to specify ahead of time how general moral principles apply to various specific situations' (*Moral Vision*, p. 231).

48 Fred Rosner and David Bleich (eds.), *Jewish Bioethics* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 2000), p. xxi.

49 Thus we can say in reference to Jackson's work that love has priority in Christian ethics only because *Christ* has priority.

50 For these criteria, see Jackson, *Priority of Love*, p. 55.

51 *Moral Vision*, p. 230.

52 G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance (eds.), *Church Dogmatics* III/4*: The Doctrine of Creation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), p. 398.

53 Cf. the case of the two shipwrecked wise men with only one plank between them (Cicero, *De officiis* 3.23.90).

54 *b.Bava Metzia* 62a.

55 The Jewish tradition too recognizes the principle of letting oneself be killed to avoid killing another. R. Meir rules that 'in any instance in which someone says, 'Give him [your companion] to me, and if not, I will kill *you*,' he should be killed rather than surrender the other person, because he should not push him away [i.e., give him over] on his own behalf' (cited in Fogel, *I Will Be Sanctified*, p. 130). Another tradition puts it more forcefully: 'One must rather be slain than commit murder . . . And how do we know this of murder itself?—It is common sense. Even as one who came before Raba and said to him, 'The governor of my town has ordered me, 'Go and kill so and so; if not, I will slay thee.'' He answered him, 'Let him rather slay you than that you should commit murder; who knows that your blood is redder. Perhaps his blood is redder'' (*b.Sanhedrin* 74b).

56 This statement ought not to be misinterpreted. It does not actually say that one person's life *is* more valuable than another's. It says that in humility, a Christian ought to *consider* another's blood as 'redder' than his or her own. To maintain this attitude is to have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:5: *agapē* 'does not insist on its own way [lit. seek its own interests].'

57 The *Rule of St. Benedict* asserts that a necessary step of humility is that a person 'not only admit with his tongue but [be] also convinced in his heart that he is inferior to all and of less value, humbling himself and saying with the Prophet: *I am truly a worm, and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people* [Psalm 22:7] . . .' (Timothy Fry, O.S.B [ed.], *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict*. Abridged Edition [Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1981], 7.51–54, pp. 47–49.

58 Augustine summed up the tradition when he wrote, 'Where is the image of God? In the mind, in the intellect' (*Tractates on the Gospel of John* 3.4.2). Since the original image of God is Christ, the incorporeal Logos, the image in humanity does not contain a corporeal aspect. See on this point Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 2.19.102.6); Origen of Alexandria (*Homilies on Genesis* 1.13); Basil the Great (*Epistle* 233.1). All these fathers found support in the text of Colossians: clothe 'yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in *knowledge* according to the image of its creator' (3:10). Irenaeus, however, includes the body as part of God's image, but only as it is combined with the soul and the spirit (*Against Heresies* 5.6).

59 For this idea, and the texts associated with it, see Alon Goshen-Gottstein, 'The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature', *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994), pp. 171–95, who suggests that the bodily meaning of *selem* (image) in the rabbinic literature is in fact the *only* meaning (p. 174).

60 Contrast the saying by Rabbi Jacob: 'Better is one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than all the life of the world to come; and better is one hour of calmness of spirit in the world to come than all the life of this world' (*m.Avot* 4.22, trans. Shlomo Toperoff, reaffirmed in *Leviticus Rabbah* 3.1). By implication, earthly life is not subordinated to heavenly life.

61 This was an important emphasis of Reinhold Niebuhr: 'The ethical demands made by Jesus are incapable of fulfillment in the present existence of man. They proceed from a transcendent and divine unity of essential reality, and their final fulfillment is possible only when God transmutes the present chaos of this world into its final unity' (*An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1935), p. 35.

62 Cf. again Niebuhr: 'In Christian theology, at its best, the revelation of Christ, the God-man, is a revelation of the paradoxical relation of the eternal to history . . . Christ is thus the revelation of the very impossible possibility which the Sermon on the Mount elaborates in ethical terms' (*ibid.*, p. 73).