

The following article addresses itself to one of the most agonizing ethical dilemmas ever faced by man. Rabbi Maurice Lamm is the spiritual leader of the Floral Park Jewish Center. A prolific writer, he is Editor of *Chavrusa*, published by the Rabbinic Alumni of Yeshiva University. In view of the controversial nature of the perplexing issues involved, TRADITION has invited two distinguished members of its Editorial Board to comment on Rabbi Lamm's thesis. None of the views expressed in this symposium reflects official editorial policy of this journal. Rabbi Jakobovits is rabbi of the Fifth Avenue Synagogue and Department Editor of TRADITION's "Review of Halakhic Periodic Literature." Professor Michael Wyschogrod of the Department of Philosophy at Hunter College has made extensive contributions to philosophical literature.

"RED OR DEAD?"

An Attempt at Formulating a Jewish Attitude

The problems that confront humanity today are both radically new and immeasurably more consequential than any others in recorded history. Before the atomic era, "war or peace" was a reasonable choice. Political or economic aims could be achieved by means of war. Now, however, the development of weapons that can destroy continents and annihilate whole populations has ended the reasonableness of this choice. It has eliminated the distinction between the military and civilian, for its devastation knows no bounds. It has nullified the possibility of victory, and even the possibility of truce after war, for nothing can remain save rubble and bones.

The unprecedented degree of annihilation of which the human race is now capable has clouded our spiritual and psychological horizons with perplexities that arise anew every day and defy

TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

definitive solution. These questions are in large part religious for they concern the goals of existence, the worth of life, the fear of death, and the values by which men will continue to live, or by which they will come to their abrupt end. They are problems that science has magnified and politics has complicated but which, at the core, are religious in nature and require religious solutions.

Unfortunately, however, organized Religion has not come forth with possible solutions, and, what is worse, aside from some pious but meaningless pronouncements, has not even attempted to investigate the problems. It would seem natural that an institution which has spanned all the centuries of our civilization and has had experience with man both in the depths of his depravity and in the heights of his exaltation, should have some judgment to make, and should offer to shed light and dissipate the black clouds of fear and despair.

With Tolstoy we are astonished to find that the opinions of the "wise men were only clear and exact where they do not deal with the direct questions of life."¹ Can Religion allow itself to become a dependent variable, always reacting but never originating, always criticizing but never constructing?

The scarcity of religious thinking on the problems of the Nuclear Age is even more depressing when we consider Judaism. The Jew has faced similar problems throughout the ages, and Judaism, a religion that embraces the totality of existence, has much to say about life and death, war and peace. Yet the only published thinking on the matter² has been several statements declaring nuclear war insane, which is, after all, flogging a dead horse. The layman instinctively assumes that a Sinaitic faith can have but tangential or peripheral relevance to interplanetary excursions and radioactive fallout. While he correctly realizes that explicit statements directly concerned with contemporary problems cannot be found in our tradition, he ignores the attitudes and spirit of the tradition implicit in the laws and lore of Israel.

Another reason why Jews remain mute in an age which cries out for answers is an oversimplified notion of the Jewish attitude to war. A tendency to make quick, off-hand judgments

"Red or Dead?"

on ethical and moral problems prevents a true grasp of the ideas that are present but not visible. It is easily asserted, for example, that Judaism is uncompromisingly a religion of peace, and that the sanctity of human life and the value of living are the highest value in Jewish life.

In truth, no disquisition on Jewish morality could be complete without recognizing the relentless search for peace that characterizes most of the history of the Jews. The prophetic denunciations of war are household expressions,³ and the longing for peace by Isaiah and Micah⁴ have ploughshared the minds of men and sowed seeds of hope and peace for tens of generations. The Talmud is replete with preachments against the folly of war and the bearing and production of arms.⁵ The Talmud not only repudiates future wars, it has all but spiritualized the very real military heroes of the biblical past, and has transformed reputed physical prowess into religious qualities. Thus, for instance, David's might is rarely glorified, but there are numerous references to his scholarship and judicial rulings. He is not the mighty King, but the Sweet Singer of Israel.

But this drive for peace is not the sole consideration in Jewish thought. Although God is referred to as *Shalom*, "Peace," He is also called *Ish Milchamah*, the "Lord of War." Although Isaiah and Micah ask that swords be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, Joel, in bitter irony, cautions the nations to transform ploughshares into swords and pruning hooks into spears. For despite all the prayerful yearnings for peace, neither the Prophets nor the Sages of the Talmud were pacifists. If war is reprehensible, an unjust peace is immoral.

Pacifism, the pursuit of peace at any and every cost, was never an authoritative Jewish religious teaching. Tolstoy, for example, rejects all violent resistance to the social order, regardless of the cause and the circumstance, because an active revolution must fight evil with another evil, namely violence. Tolstoy's teaching, in the latter half of his life, regards passive, individual resistance as the only permissible form of battle, and is derived from Matthew (5:38-9), "Resist not evil."

Judaism did not turn its cheek. The dominant note in regard

TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

to evil is not non-resistance, but “thou shalt remove the evil from the midst of thee.”⁶ As pacifism was not a religious virtue for individuals, so it was not a policy of state, as it was for Ghandi. If Jews did not struggle to achieve independence through war for thousands of years, it was not that they believed all war to be immoral, but that the practical situation compelled them to view the resulting human loss as outweighing, by far, the good they sought. “The Lord,” it was then affirmed, would “fight our war and defeat the aggressors.”

As Jewish tradition urged peace, but was not pacifist, so it sanctioned military action but was never militarist. Although war was regarded as evil, there were wars that were considered just, because they were, unfortunately, the only means for removing the evil. The existence of categories of authorized war that fulfilled commandments of God (*milchamot mitzvah*) indicate the rejection of pacifism as a policy of state, and the approval of certain military actions. There is ample proof from history and from Halakhah that war, as such, is not immoral, but that only an unjust war is immoral. The Prophets denounce those who cry “‘Peace’ when there is no peace.” The greatest desire for peace cannot, by itself, avert war. “The watchman,” Ezekiel cries, “who sees the sword come, and blows not the horn” so that the people may be forewarned for battle, and someone thereby dies in the vain hope of peace, “his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.”⁷

But Israel could never be accused of militarism. Rarely was prominence given to military training, nor was the art of war glorified, as in almost all of the histories of ancient and modern peoples. Unlike their neighbors, the Jews never had very much of a standing army. The fact that aggressive wars required the specific permission of a religious court, the Sanhedrin, indicates the rejection of militarism as a policy of state.⁸

It is, therefore, unwise to dismiss the perplexities of the times with a glib reference to this sentence from Scripture or that statement of the rabbis in support of peace or against war, as so many are wont to do. It is also being unfaithful to the universal, life-embracing spirit of the Torah to presume such

"Red or Dead?"

a shallowness of Judaism by implying that it can offer us no guidelines in these days of apocalyptic cataclysm.

"RED OR DEAD?"

Whole civilizations must choose today between existence and annihilation — to be or not to be. It is not the question of lose or win, becoming captive or conqueror; our major concern is with existence itself. Whether we like to think so or not, we stand today at the high plateau of scientific civilization looking down into the deep crevice of catastrophe, and if our knees buckle it is only because we realize the infinite distance that separates the two alternatives: on the one hand, the impenetrable blackness of annihilation, the emasculation of humanity, the disemboweling of a planet; and on the other hand, a new dawn of unimaginable beauty, a glorious symphony of social and scientific creativity, a new world of progress and plenty, of peace and prosperity.

Yet many philosophers, historians, and scientists announce that a dismal choice confronts nations and individuals: "Red or Dead?" It is the choice between immediate unilateral disarmament to assure continued life, at the risk of surrender to Communism, or continued nuclear buildup to deter Communist domination at the risk of possible cosmic disaster. *Red* — shall we risk surrender and secure continued life? Or *Dead* — shall we risk death and secure continued freedom? The problems of war and peace were never so crucial and complicated. They involve attitudes of pacifism and militarism, attitudes to life and living, to death and dying. The debate has occupied the vital interest of thinking men in the free nations.⁹

The opposing views agree on three fundamentals:

A — Totalitarian Communism is an inherently evil form of government. Democracy should be preserved as the best form of government presently feasible.

B — Nuclear war will destroy much of the western world either immediately, in direct-hit areas, or gradually, as a result of radio-active fallout in non-direct-hit areas. As Mr. Khrushchev says, "Everything alive can be wiped out in the conflagration of nuclear explosions." The majority of those not annihilated

TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

physically may be shattered psychologically as a result of traumatic neuroses from sudden and total terror, and from severe social restrictions placed upon the individual as minimal conditions for personal survival.¹⁰ (There do exist other theories as to the extent of devastation and the number of survivors. Herman Kahn, in his *On Thermonuclear War*, argues for the probability that humanity will continue to function and thrive after nuclear attack. Ostensibly, the United States government has taken a similar position as is evident from its booklet on fallout shelters published in December, 1961.)

C — Constant negotiations between the atomic powers must continue in order to probe new possibilities of peacefully settling the differences between East and West.

The major disagreement between the two views of Red and Dead revolves upon which value is to be considered the "chief value," for which everything else must be sacrificed. Following is a brief description and explanation of the respective viewpoints:

"RED:"

This position has generally been identified with Bertrand Russell¹¹ in England and with H. Stuart Hughes, C. Wright Mills, and others in the United States. It postulates the following propositions:

A — If the United States continues to concentrate on the development of ever more efficient means of destruction, with Russia guaranteed to keep brisk pace, civilization as we know it today will be destroyed. Enormous nuclear stockpiles in the hands of the two great powers, and in the possession of many other nations, will serve as a stimulus for planned, intentional war, and provide a greater likelihood of an irrevocable accident.

B — If we disarm, even unilaterally, the possibility of total destruction by nuclear bombs is completely eliminated, although we do run the risk of being overrun by the Soviet Union. Communist invasion is, however, only a possibility, and in any case, were we to be deprived thereby of most of our western values, a basic moral code would still exist. And at the worst, as Russell

"Red or Dead?"

maintains, we would have another Dark Age for several hundreds years, and mankind would emerge from it as it has emerged in the past.

C — The dominant concern of all men is, and should be, the preservation of life. Death is the end of all values and striving. The breath of life is thus to be valued above all other beliefs and ideals such as liberty and democracy, but if we continue the arms race we are sure to die, by intention or by accident. It follows therefore, that we must risk being Red to avoid being Dead.

D — Therefore, our first course of action must be to dismantle our rockets, neutralize our bombs, and expend all our available energy in negotiating the best possible settlement of the conflicts. In that way we may finally emerge neither Red nor Dead.

"DEAD:"

This position is held by top government officials, and, in the intellectual world, most prominently by Sidney Hook. Its line of reasoning proceeds as follows:

A — If the United States continues to develop sophisticated and powerful nuclear weapons to serve as a second-strike force, to retaliate against bombings initiated by the enemy, it will greatly reduce the possibility of war. By making war absurd, the Russians will have no reason to attack. While there is an obvious risk in keeping the stockpiles, their service as deterrents is of prime significance in keeping the peace.

B — If we disarm unilaterally we will surely be invaded by the Soviet Union, in keeping with its ambitions for world-wide Communism.

C — The major value in life is not continued physical existence, but living in the framework of a moral code and of western values as we know them. Existence in a totalitarian regime, deprived of the liberty and the freedom to think and act as we please, is a state worse than physical death. All other values and considerations, including the basic value of being alive, should be subordinated to this ideal. If by unilaterally disarm-

TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

ing we surely invite Red conquest which will exclude the possibility of the moral life, it follows that we must risk even death to avoid becoming Red.

D — Therefore, our first course of action must be to develop our deterrent power and negotiate from strength for the best settlement of a moral, respectable, and enduring peace. By following this course of action we will be neither Red nor Dead.

Naturally, the dismal alternatives of Red or Dead are not exclusive, and a third alternative is hoped for by the supporters of both positions. Whether the third alternative will prevail as a result of a sudden surge of sanity, from multi-lateral controlled disarmament, or from a possible cancellation of Communist strength as a result of Sino-Soviet conflicts, it will be the first step toward universal peace. The fact that this alternative cannot now be agreed upon or even conceived, however, attests to the moral bankruptcy of our times, a bankruptcy enhanced by Religion's failure to bring to bear its rich heritage of moral teachings to the mundane concerns of man.

TOWARD A SOLUTION

Crito vs. Socrates:

The problem of "Red or Dead?" is elucidated by a discussion that Plato¹² reports between Socrates and his student, Crito, in the prison cell one day before Socrates is to be executed by the Athenians for teaching doctrines contrary to State and Society. Socrates has rejected Crito's suggestion that the authorities be bribed so as to permit his escape that night, and Crito tries to convince his mentor with several cogent arguments. Socrates, he says, will have a refuge in Thessaly, where they will "value and protect you." He argues that his refusal to escape will constitute a desertion of his children whom he will not be able to train, and that he is actually "choosing the easier part, not the better and manlier," by allowing himself to be killed.

Socrates replies, "I am certain not to agree with you; no, not even if the power of the multitude could inflict many more imprisonments, confiscations, deaths, frightening us like chil-

"Red or Dead?"

dren with hobgoblin terrors."

"Could we live, having an evil and corrupted body?" Socrates asks. "Certainly not" is Crito's reply. "And will life be worth having if that higher part of man is destroyed?" Is it not true that "not life, but a good life, is to be chiefly valued? . . . And that a good life is equivalent to a just and honorable one?"

There is a remarkable coincidence in the fact that Jewish literature concerned itself with a similar problem. The Talmud¹³ records a conversation between Rabbi Akiva and Papus ben Judah regarding the Roman decree banning the study of the Torah. Rabbi Akiva defied the decree and organized public study groups. "Are you not afraid of the government?" Papus asked. Rabbi Akiva answered him with the parable of the fox who saw the fish dashing to and fro. The fox asked why they rushed so, and the fish replied that they wanted to escape the nets of the fishermen. "Would you like to come ashore and live with me as our ancestors did?" asked the wily fox. The fish replied that the fox was not wise but foolish: "If it is true that in a place where we can live we are afraid of being caught, how much more so in a place where we cannot live?" "So too," concluded Rabbi Akiva, "now that we sit and busy ourselves with Torah, as it says, 'for it is thy life, and the length of thy days,' we fear being seized, how much more so if we ignore it." Shortly after, Rabbi Akiva was imprisoned, and next to him he found Papus, who bewailed the fact that he had not been seized while engaged in the study of Torah.

Both Socrates and Rabbi Akiva were jailed and executed for refusing to forsake the "good life," i.e., Socrates, his philosophy, and Rabbi Akiva, his study of Torah.

Their value judgment is the central point of debate in the problem of "Red or Dead." Which stands on the higher plane, physical existence or a moral life? The advocates of Red rather than Dead may well argue, with Crito, that even under Red subjugation there will be a minimum moral standard where our humanity "will be valued," that to build up nuclear stock-piles constitutes a desertion of our children and the welfare of many generations, and that, in fact, it is the less heroic alternative to choose death. The advocates of Dead rather than Red

TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

may reply, with Socrates, that under no circumstances may we surrender the *good life* for the saving of *life*.

Individuals, especially in these troubled times, must have a personal philosophy toward the larger problems of life and death, war and peace, Red or Dead. With the proper reading of the Jewish tradition and an understanding of the nature of the aggressor, we may find some guidance toward a solution of these problems.

The guidelines we look for, however, will be those concerning the Jew in the free society. It is not the intention of this paper to offer advice or suggest a panacea to the competing nations of the world. In addition to the perplexities that gnaw at the citizens of today's world, the Jew is faced with problems of loyalty to the Jewish tradition and to Jews on both sides of the Iron Curtain. It is to the specific Jewish problems to which this paper addresses itself.

BASIC MORAL CONDITIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS

The Halakhah provides clearly delineated criteria governing the individual's decision whether to submit to martyrdom or surrender, whether to choose *life* or the *good life*. In determining the relevance of these criteria to our problem, we must first define what we mean by *good life*. Law, by its nature, cannot permit a vague expression such as *good* to be a determining factor in specific circumstances; in this it is unlike philosophy which operates in general terms. Socrates,¹⁴ for example, can define *good life* as "equivalent to a just and honourable one . . . from these premises I proceed to argue the question whether I ought or ought not try to escape . . ." The Halakhah must define *good* in the detailed terms of practical reality. To achieve a clear definition it divides the *good life* into two categories, what I should like to call the *High Moral Life* and the *Basic Moral Life*.

We may thus discern a gradation of three conditions of survival, rather than only the two of *life* and *good life*! Consideration of these three categories will yield an understanding of the Jewish value placed on each.

1. *Life*: Living, physical existence, is one of the highest

"Red or Dead?"

values of Jewish thinking. The breath of Adam is a gift of God. No man has a right to willingly snuff out this sacred God-given life. Suicide is thus one of the gravest crimes, and "length of days", one of the finest blessings. Klausner, in *From Jesus to Paul*¹⁵, writes of Schopenhauer's hate for Judaism and Jews and maintains that it arose from the fact that he could not forgive Judaism for its affirmation of life.

But no matter how much life is affirmed and declared sacred, if it is to be emptied of morality, of meaning and significance, it cannot, by itself, be considered worthy. "The wicked, during their lifetime, are called dead." The record of Jewish history is clear on this matter. Thousands of Jews could have saved their lives by accepting baptism or by bowing to a statue or a man but, impelled by their law and by their history, they surrendered their physical existence rather than their basic moral life.

2. *High Moral Life*: This encompasses ideal conditions for full observance of the precepts of God, and for the possibility of developing perfect human relations. An appropriate description of the High Moral Life can be found in Leviticus 18:5. "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and Mine ordinances, which, if a man do, he shall live by them. I am the Lord." When high personal morality, devoted relationship to God, social justice, and advanced ethics¹⁶ are sought, and achieved, man will realize the fullness of life. R. David Hoffman¹⁷ remarks,

"Man, in his excellence, who strives to be faithful to his purpose, must fulfill these divine ordinances — 'He shall live by them.' Only through these will he achieve true living, not only, as Onkelos says, 'in the world to come,' but indeed, also in this world."

Although the Bible and the Halakhah made the principles and rules of the High Moral Life incumbent upon every Jew, they were not to be considered the "chief value." One was not permitted to endanger life in order to live the High Moral Life.¹⁸ The Rabbis deduce this law from the verse, "He shall live by them, but not die because of them."¹⁹ The reasoning of the Rabbis is clarified in the statement of R. Simeon B. Menassya: "Desecrate one Sabbath, so that you may be able to observe

TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

many Sabbaths.”²⁰ Maimonides thus decrees that one is not permitted to sacrifice his life for the sake of observing one of the *mitzvot* of the Torah, and if he nevertheless does so, he is considered not a martyr, but guilty of a capital offense. Although there is disagreement among the earlier commentaries as to whether such death is considered suicide, all authorities agreed that life was more sacred than the observance of the statutes and ordinances of the High Moral Life.

Indeed, it was the consensus that one was not permitted to observe a *mitzvah* if there was only a possibility of a resultant loss of life. On the question of whether one is permitted to endanger his own life even to save another's, there is a well-known dispute between Rabbi Joseph Karo and *Radvaz*. Karo²¹ maintains that one is obligated to save a man, although he thereby risks the possibility of his own death. *Radvaz* and almost all other commentaries disagree, and it is in their favor that the law is decided. Karo, in his later and most authoritative work, the *Shulchan Arukh*, does not make mention of this thesis. The ideals of personal morality, righteousness, and social justice that constitute the High Moral Life had to be foregone in order to preserve life.

3. *Basic Moral Life*: This category concerns the observance of the rudiments of moral life, the fundamental precepts of the good life, but not the full observance of the detailed statutes and ordinances. The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 74a) clearly establishes three uncompromising minimal principles of morality, as constituting the basic laws of moral, ethical, and religious behavior. If one is ordered to kill, commit a forbidden sexual act, or bow to an idol, he should prefer death to violating these rudimentary commandments. Whereas submitting to death for the sake of observing the commandments of the High Moral Life is considered by Maimonides as suicide, dying for the keeping of the three rules of Basic Moral Life he considers *Kiddush Ha-Shem* (martyrdom).

Applying this yardstick then, one need not offer one's own life for the saving of another's life, as this is not one of the three fundamentals of the minimal Basic Moral Life but rather an aspect of the High Moral Life. One may ask, "What impels

"Red or Dead?"

you to say that the blood of my friend is redder? Perhaps my blood is redder?"²² So, it is interesting that while the Jew was not instructed to sacrifice himself to prevent another's death, he was commanded to give up his life rather than commit sexual immorality, murder, or idolatry.

The sacrifice of life was demanded not only from those who were forced to violate basic commandments in a manner which under normal circumstances would bring the death penalty, such as the actual worshipping of idols or adultery. It was demanded even in the event that the violation of precepts pertaining to sexual immorality, bloodshed, and idolatry would not entail the death penalty. Thus, the Talmud (*Sanhedrin, l.c.*), declares that in the case of a man who desired a certain woman, (where no adultery or incest is involved) and doctors testified that the man would assuredly die if his desire was not fulfilled, that the man should suffer death rather than violate the woman. The very same is true in the case of idolatry. *Radvaz*²³ maintains that life must be sacrificed even if one is compelled (although privately and not under governmental duress) to declare that the Torah of Moses is not true, or that the Torah is now changed, or that God did not command us, or that the command was temporary and only under special circumstances but is not binding today — obnoxious statements, but certainly not capital crimes.

It is obvious that what are here involved are the bases for all moral existence: duty to God, to fellow man, and to personal purity. Violation of these principles would drain the very humanity from human beings. In short, the Halakhah requires that man sacrifice his life only for the Basic Moral Code but not for the High Moral Life.

AN ILLUSTRATION

The Talmud provides a classic illustration of the dilemma in regard to the sacrifice of life. In *Bava Metzia, (62a)* a story is related of two men, *A* and *B*, who were traveling in the desert. *A* had water in a jug sufficient to last until he reached a settlement where he could obtain fresh water. If both *A* and *B*

drank of the water they would both surely die. "Ben Patura expounded, 'It would be better that both should drink and die than that one should look on at the death of his friend,' until Rabbi Akiva appeared and taught: 'And thy brother shall live with *thee*; thy life takes precedence over thy friend's.'"

It appears certain that *A*, who possesses the jug of water, is not violating any of the precepts of the Basic Moral Code. He has taken nothing from *B*. He does not kill *B* to save himself. He is saved, but he cannot save *B*. He is acting within the law. *B*'s death is caused by his own insufficiency. *A* is acting within legal bounds, but not in accordance with the higher values of the good life, with the loving of one's neighbor.

The dispute between Rabbi Akiva and Ben Patura revolves on the question of whether Judaism demands that a man martyr himself for the higher, altruistic, and religious ideals of "the good life."

In the *Sifra* version of this incident, Ben Patura quotes the very proof-text of Rabbi Akiva, but with a different emphasis. "Thy brother shall live *with thee*," means you must both live together. If there is to be no "with," there can be no "thee." If men cannot live and die united, they cannot live at all.

Rabbi Akiva, who was later to sacrifice his own life for Torah, interprets the same text differently: "*Thy* life takes precedence over thy colleague's." Life itself, to Rabbi Akiva, is more important than the demands of the High Moral Life. Rabbi Kook states,²⁴ in regard to this controversy, that the saving of any life is of paramount importance; that the phrase cited previously, "and he shall live by them," is a *general* rule, and since one life has the same value as another. *A* could, therefore, elect to give all his water to *B*, so that one, (*B*), not both, should drink, so that only *A* should die.

No decision was rendered in this dispute by any of the compilers of the law — Alfasi, Maimonides, or Karo. This is interesting in view of the fact that in disputes involving Rabbi Akiva and a colleague, the law is generally decided in favor of Rabbi Akiva. Was there no resolution to this very important problem?

It would appear, on a closer reading of the text, that there is

"Red or Dead?"

no real disagreement in law. In reality, Ben Patura was exhorting his fellow Jews to consider the higher values of life, but only until the legal decision was rendered by Rabbi Akiva. Ben Patura would agree that Judaism did not legally demand martyrdom in this case, but he believed that it should inculcate the striving for the higher values of the *good life*. This may be why Alfasi quotes the incident anonymously, with no mention of Rabbi Akiva or Ben Patura.

This thesis finds some justification in the textual treatment of the respective opinions. Ben Patura "expounded," using the general recommendation, "it would be better." Rabbi Akiva "instructed," ruling decisively. Ben Patura, citing the case as an illustration in ethical values, uses the third person, "it would be better that he should not see." Rabbi Akiva, in deciding an actual case, uses the direct, second person, "thy life takes precedence." The halakhic conclusion is obviously that one does not sacrifice one's life for the more highly developed religious values.

RED OR DEAD: THE INDIVIDUAL'S DECISION

The Halakhah has thus provided clear directives as to the problem of life under Communist domination. If living under Communist domination will cause him to violate the fundamental laws of the Basic Moral Life the Jew must choose martyrdom. If, however, he will be forced to violate only the laws and ordinances of the High Moral Life then he must not risk his life by rebelling.

If we are to evaluate soberly the moral life of the individual in the Soviet Union, we cannot be swayed by the tyranny of its oppressive rule and the suppression of religious worship. Historically, Jews have lived under every variety of political government and economic system. They have lived in persecution and freedom, in golden age and dark age. The individual Jew, when personally faced with the alternatives of Red or Dead, cannot concern himself with the niceties of economic systems or political theories. He must consider only whether he is capable of observing the fundamentals of the Basic Moral Life, or

TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

whether he must violate them in order to survive.

There is no question but that the precepts of the High Moral Life cannot be observed, certainly not by Jews, in the Soviet Union. Numerous are the requests for prayer shawls to be used not in prayer, but in the burial of the dead. But, unlike life under the Nazis, there Jews are not coerced to kill or to commit acts of immorality. While the Jew is not openly permitted to observe his religion, he is not forced to bow to other gods or to deny his own. Under such circumstances the individual must consider the inherent sanctity of life itself: Better Red than Dead.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE PUBLIC

While the individual is provided with clear categories for determining when he is required to sacrifice his life, it cannot simply be deduced that the public must follow the same directives. The public, perforce, has larger concerns than do individuals, and it must operate on a grander scale. The admonition to "live by them" cannot serve as a criterion for the public. If, for example, an individual jeopardized his life in pursuit of greater wealth he would be guilty of a grievous sin. If he lost his life in this pursuit, Maimondies would consider him a heinous suicide. Yet, in war for the purpose of conquering neighboring territories, thousands of lives are placed in jeopardy and sacrificed. That which is forbidden to an individual becomes under certain conditions obligatory when the individual acts in the service of the public.

This difference between private individual and citizen in regard to the conditions for self-sacrifice should not be taken to signify a cleavage between private and public morality. Such is generally the view of Hegel:²⁵ "States are not private persons, but completely autonomous totalities in themselves, and so the relation between them differs from a moral relation . . . Now since there is no power in existence which decides in the face of the state what is right in principle and actualizes this decision, it follows that so far as international relations are concerned we can never get beyond an 'ought.' "

