

**Resolved: Martyrdom is Noble.**

**Affirmative: Nicholas Tonckens '16**

**Negative: Harry Rube '16**

Surely, there is virtue in a heroic death. But, what of martyrdom? What of placing principle over life? What of the possibility of redeeming a fallen world?

This week will bear witness to the mining of our various cosmologies and the role of mortality therein. Over the course of our two Christian millennia, death has been imbued with a tremendous power. Seen as markedly different from and purer than terrestrial life, the West has seen death as an agent of moral recovery. The most salient example is Christ, whose death on the cross was the only means of redeeming man's fallenness from Eden. Ever since, the martyrdom of religious figures has carried on as a testament to the power of principle and belief. Many martyrs have been beatified, either officially or informally, and serve as saintly symbols of inspiration. The nobility of martyrdom grounds us in a fight for goodness that extends over and above the mortal and the fleeting.

And yet, to revere martyrdom must also imply the depreciation of our lives on earth. What if the metric of a life well-lived is its productivity rather than contributions made to the battle between good and evil? Humans are capable of a plethora of strongly-held convictions during the course of their lives, some of which may be in diametric opposition. To cut ourselves off from continued reexamination can easily be construed as foolish and sentimental. The partisans of this idea would argue that we are responsible to ourselves and our loved ones, but that to redeem mankind through a highly symbolic death is just a wee-bit beyond the purview of our world-historical capacity.

**Please report to the Faculty Room (third floor) at 7:30pm this Thursday, November 15, ready to die for your convictions.**

This man was:

*Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!*

**What say you?**

Sincerely yours,  
The Rabbi