# ALTRUISM IN NATURE AS MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE *ENERGEIA*

### *by Charlene P. E. Burns*

*Abstract*. Christian theological attempts to integrate scientific claims about altruism in nature have not been completely successful largely because Western theologies—particularly some Protestant versions—lack a theologically grounded ontological basis for speech about altruism, agape, and other forms of love. Patristic theologies of divine essence, *energeia* and *logoi*, most fully developed in Eastern Orthodox thought, provide just such an ontological basis upon which Christian thought can stand in order to demonstrate that altruism in nature does not challenge religious claims that moral behavior has transcendent meaning but rather suggests that it is itself a manifestation of the divine will.

*Keywords:* agape; altruism; deification; divine energies; participation.

Colin Grant, in his book *Altruism and Christian Ethics*, argues that without a theological basis altruism ends up looking either "naively idealistic" or "arrogantly self-sufficient" (2001, xiii). It is, he says, only in the context of religious ideals (read Christian agape) that claims for the reality of genuine self-giving love make sense.

I agree that a theological basis is crucial to discussions of altruism, but I do not think that focusing theological reflection on the concept of agape in and of itself is sufficient. Stephen G. Post has asked, "Can we say that agape has its origins in the deepest foundations of the universe and that all the building blocks for this leap in human love suggest a telos?" (2002, 59). I say that we most certainly can, and in what follows I offer the outlines of a theology of nature to demonstrate how we might proceed.

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This is not a natural theology; if it were, scientific claims about altruism would be given priority over the theological. In a theology of nature, however, theology is primary: I take the claim “God is love” as my starting point and allow the findings of science to illuminate, not prove, this claim (Barbour 1990).

Theologies of altruism developed thus far are somewhat unsatisfactory, in large part because of the gap between nature and grace that evolved in Western thought as a result of Augustine’s fifth-century conflict with Pelagius over freedom of the will. In his efforts to preserve divine transcendence Augustine emphasized the corruption of human nature to such an extent that by the time of the Protestant Reformation in the West the gap between corrupted humanity and perfect divinity was so wide that thinkers after Luther could not imagine humanity as internally graced. Grace became an external reality available to us only through imputation. This existence was said to be so corrupt that grace and, by extension, the capacity to do the good, can only ever be an “overlay” and not something found within nature (human or otherwise) itself. Salvation became a juridical process, and participation in God happened only by means of the will, not in any ontological sense. Grace in the West became a somewhat static created reality rather than something constitutive of creation.

Without a strong ontological basis for assertions about grace and love, attempts to integrate scientific and theological claims about altruism cannot succeed. The language for a more adequate Christian theological interpretation of altruism in nature has existed at least since the fourth century, but to my knowledge it has not yet been employed in this way, likely because attempts to dialogue with science on this subject have been made primarily by Western Christians.

In what follows I appeal to the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of salvation as deification and teachings on the distinction between God’s essence and energies to outline one possible way to do a theology of nature in conversation with scientific theories of altruism. Because the divine essence and energies are not distinguished in Western theology—the essence seems to be itself the energy—real differences in interpretation have arisen. For one, Western thinkers often have misunderstood deification to mean that the Eastern Church thinks we literally become God through salvation. To give another example, in Thomas Aquinas the divine essence *is* the energy, which led him to teach that our participation in God can only be intentional—by willing—and not an ontological category.

This is not to claim that Western theology is devoid of resources for moving in the desired direction. In fact, themes of participation in God and salvation as deification appear in Augustine’s writings (Bonner 1986), even though his most widely accepted teachings lead away from a strong ontological interpretation of the relation between nature and grace. More recently, there are important new interpretations of Martin Luther’s writings that reveal themes of deification in his theology as well. Scholars of the so-called Finnish School of Luther interpretation convincingly argue that, when read without the lens of neo-Kantianism, Luther's theology is clearly that of a "real-ontic" relation between God and humanity by which we are justified through deification (Mannermaa [1980] 2005; Kärkkäinen 2002; Braaten and Jenson 1998). But these themes are only now being uncovered in the context of dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox churches, for which the ideas are ancient and continuous; Orthodox theology serves as the template through which deification is read, wherever it is found in Christian thought. Also, although the Finnish School is convincing in its claim that Luther has been misread, this does not change the fact that subsequent Lutheranisms and other forms of Protestantism that evolved did develop a wide gap between God and world.

Others in Western theology, especially since the twentieth century, have used science in ways that help to bridge the gap between God and creation. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and those who adapted Alfred North Whitehead's Process philosophy come to mind. These theologies offer important correctives but have received extensive criticism. In Teilhard's case the major criticisms have been that he wrote romanticized poetic science, not scientific theology, and attributed to evolution an inaccurately optimistic teleology. In the case of Process thought, its wholesale incorporation into Christian theology has been found to create some insurmountable problems, issues such as the complex terminology, the way the system subsumes God to the process of Creativity, the necessity that evil is intensified in the evolution of the universe, and the problem of how to speak of incarnation since the system precludes divine influence beyond the level of persuasion. In spite of these problems, theologians have successfully incorporated aspects of Process thinking. Some recent Wesleyan thinkers, for example, have integrated Process themes with John Wesley's teachings on love as the basic reality and with his belief that there is continuity between God, humanity, and other forms of sentient life (Wynkoop 1972; Lodahl 2003). Even so, and while many of these recent attempts are illuminating, Eastern Orthodox theology has distinct advantages to offer. It is based in the language of the Bible, has solid grounding in the theological tradition, and has been subjected to nearly two thousand years of examination by many great theological minds. There is no need to reinvent the theological wheel here.

## SALVATION AS DEIFICATION

Carefully elaborated resources for the needed ontological grounding exist today within Eastern Orthodox theology. In Orthodox thought, there is no such thing as created grace. As a manifestation of God's own self, grace can only ever be uncreated. Unlike most Western theologies, Orthodox theology does not interpret original sin to have destroyed the image of God in humanity. The Genesis narrative tells us that all of creation is good, so the consequences of the first sin do not destroy but only impair the *imago dei*. Also unlike most Western interpretations, the Orthodox teach that in the Garden prior to the Fall, perfection existed as potential, not reality, in the first humans (Ware 1997). In other words, the first fall was not a very long one, and many Orthodox theologians distinguish between the "image" and "likeness" of God: creation in the image of God refers to our potential for participation in the divine, whereas to be in the likeness of God refers to realization of the potential (Ware 2002). Although damaged, we remain in the image. Becoming the likeness of God is the goal of existence, made possible through the process of salvation known as deification, or becoming like God. Nature and grace are "one continuous unfolding process of two different but not contradicting entities": our ontological nature as made by God, with its potentials that are energized by grace, and the gift of the divine Logos. Nature in Eastern thought is not an abstract universal but refers to an existing being and its potential for fulfilling God's plan for it, which includes salvation by deification (Maloney 1978, 22–24). Grace is an uncreated cause of salvation, not an effect of it.

Although the idea is found much earlier in Christian thought, Maximus the Confessor (580 C.E.–662 C.E.) was perhaps the first to fully elaborate the meaning of salvation as deification. In his theology, creation participates in God by means of perichoresis, or mutual permeation. This is a dynamic movement that begins in God, moves out to creation, and returns again to God. Within the process of deification perichoresis is a "union without confusion" that is ours as a gift of grace (Thunberg 1995). All humanity—in fact all of creation, since in the final consummation all will become divinized—is capable of receiving this gift, but no creature has the ability to achieve deification autonomously: "All that God is, except for an identity in *ousia*, one becomes when one is deified by grace" (Maximus 1974, 267). We have an innate tendency toward adoption into divinity, which fulfills rather than alters human nature.

The Logos of God is the deifying presence of Christ expressed in the world as the divine energies or *logoi*, intentions or wills. The created can never encounter the Creator in essence, but it can know God immanently through the divine energies. The *logoi* are the preexistent expression of God's plan for creation, summed up in the Logos/Christ. The aim, goal, or direction for each created thing, expressed in the divine energies, is achieved to the degree that the creature lives consistently with God's *logoi*: "The definition of all nature is the *logos* of its essential activity" (Maximus 1969b, 102). All of nature is in motion toward the goal but is also always free in willing to move toward or away from God. The universe is not, in spite of the presence of the divine *logoi*, a predetermined one. We are free to conform to God's intentions or not. This is a necessary corollary to having been made in God's image: "if the divine nature is free, so is the image" (Maximus 1969a, 104). Human free will is a reality, albeit a restricted one.

Salvation is a double movement of God toward humanity and of humanity toward God united hypostatically in the Incarnation. In Jesus there are two natures, human and divine. His human "free" or "deliberative" will was in conformity with God's will, and so his humanity was in conformity with his divinity. Just as Jesus had two wills, divine and human, we are two-willed in our one hypostasis of personhood, although our wills are both human. We have a natural will, which is the freedom to respond to the divine *logoi*, and a deliberative will that came into being as a result of sin. Before the first sin of Adam and Eve, the human natural will freely and unfailingly moved in conformity with God's desires, but since then sin has become a fundamental reality at the level of the deliberative will or personal choice. The good news is that the natural will, which is kinetic and responsive to the eternal *logoi*, was restored through the Incarnation. This means that, because of the Incarnation, we are inclined toward the divine in a movement that seeks perichoretic completion. In this way the divine energies sustain the created order.

Central to the idea of deification is the Orthodox distinction between the divine essence (the unknowable God in God's self) and God's uncreated energies, *logoi*, intentions, or will (God in action, so to speak) manifested in creation. This distinction is found in earliest theology and based in the language of the New Testament. According to scripture, the energies of God are manifestations of God's own self in the world. For example, in 1 Corinthians 12:6–11 Paul writes that there are different kinds of *energematon* (energies, operations, activities) but the same God *energeon* (energizing, operating, activating) "all things in all." The miracles and other gifts of the Spirit are the *energemata* of the Spirit. In Philippians 2:13, all the spiritual *energei* are from the one Spirit: "For God is the one *energon* in you both to will and to *energein* on behalf of his good pleasure." The fourteenth-century elaboration of these concepts by Gregory Palamas (1296–1358) is foundational for Orthodox theology: "Since one can participate in God and since the superessential essence of God is absolutely above participation, there exists something between [the essence and created reality]. . . . Thus He makes Himself present to all things by His manifestation and by His creative and providential energies" (Palamas 1988b, 2 § 24). Attributes such as goodness and wisdom and agape are not parts of God: "Possessing in Himself each of these energies, He reveals Himself wholly in each by His presence and His action" (1988a, 121). It is through the uncreated energies, like agape, that the gulf between humanity and God is bridged: "as an energy having no independent existence of its own, [divine energy] exists as a function of the three divine hypostases insofar as they enact the divine essence, and *it exists gratuitously in created hypostases* which are given the privilege of 'acting' the divine essence" (*Triads* 3.1.9, 3.1.18; emphasis added).

The Trinitarian concept of *enhypostasis* might help to further clarify things here. Enhypostasis refers to "that which is possessed, used, manifested by a person" (Hussey 1974, 24). Gregory uses the term to describe the divine light experienced in hesychastic prayer and defines it as "something which is contemplated not in itself, not in an essence, but in a person." When communicated to us, the uncreated energies of God are enhypostasized in us as well: the divine energy "becomes an enhypostaton of our persons and can only be known through its personal use" (Hussey 1974, 27). We can only know agape in the living of it. The personal reality of God as Trinity is a mutual indwelling of perichoretic self-giving love—Agape/Altruism Itself, in other words.

In learning the proper use of our senses and by living in compassionate relation to creation we discover God in the world. Human beings are "created matter" that has been organized theologically as the image of God. We are microcosms of creation and as such are mediators between God and world; in this way individual salvation through deification becomes a link in cosmic redemption. The essence of the human is found not in the stuff out of which we are formed but in the archetype toward which we are called by the divine energies. And "it is precisely for this reason that, in the patristic treatment" of human origins "the theory of evolution does not create a problem. . . . As the truth of an icon lies in the person it represents, so the truth of [humanity] lies in [the] archetype . . . the ontological truth" of human existence is not exhausted by the "category of biological existence. . . . [Our] ontology is iconic" (Nellas 1997, 31–34).

Salvation is then in some sense ontological, as is our participation in God. Deification is actually a social, not an individual, process that is grounded in the imperative to love and in the idea of humanity as an image of the trinitarian God. The doctrine of God as Trinity is meant to convey the absolute relationality of God: "Just as the three persons of the Trinity 'dwell' in one another in an unceasing movement of love, so we humans . . . are called to 'dwell' in the Trinitarian God" and in creation (Ware 1997, 231–32). Altruism, understood as an enhypostasized energy of God, encompasses the internal relations of the Trinity and all forms of other-directed behavior found in creation.

## COSMIC *SYMPATHEIA* AND ALTRUISM IN NATURE

Basil of Caesarea (c. 329–379 C.E.) said that God has united "the whole cosmos . . . by an unbroken law of love into one communion and concord, so that things . . . appear to be united through a universal affinity, that is *sympatheia*" (*Hexameron 2.2* qtd. in Torchia 1996). As microcosm and mediator of this universal *sympatheia*, humanity shares ontologically, not by imputation, in the divine energies. To paraphrase Palamas, the divine energy of altruism exists gratuitously in the created order, and we have been given the privilege of enacting the divine Agape essence.

*Agape* and *altruism* have much in common, both in terms of what they mean and in terms of disagreement generated by attempts to define them. Theologically, much of the problem stems from confusion about whether one is using the terms in reference to God or to humanity. This is particularly true regarding agape. In the case of altruism, things are complicated further by the tendency to use the term *evolutionary altruism* in a way that confuses biological interpretations with philosophical and psychological ones. A full treatment of these debates is beyond the scope of this essay, but it is important to clarify how I am using the terms here.

*Agape* is a theocentric term that designates unqualified, radically self-giving love. In this discussion, ethical categories such as concerns about fairness and claims of the self in relation to others do not apply, because the term is not "a rational, anthropocentric concept. It represents the divine extravagance of giving that does not take the self into account" (Grant 1996, 19). Again and again in scripture we read that God is agape. The Apostle Paul's attempt to unpack this term in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8a illuminates its character as a divine reality that becomes the ideal basis for life. In trying to express what agape is Paul uses about fifteen descriptive words or phrases that are difficult to accurately translate into English. This is because he uses the verb form for some words that function only as adjectives or nouns in English. The verb form tells us that agape is not a thing to be sought; it is action, a way of being in the world that manifests the divine: Agape protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres with the other in patience, kindness, selflessness, humility, equanimity, forgivingness. This is what God is and what we are to work toward. There is no expectation in scripture that we can be fully successful. In fact, Paul bemoans his own inability to do the things he knows he ought to do (Romans 7:15) and writes at length of the need for God's grace if we are to even come close. The Christian God *is* agape; this reality challenges us to live it as best we can. Ethical concerns like those mentioned above are important, but they do not justify rewriting the biblical understanding of agape to make it compatible with modern thought. Ethics flows from rather than defines the term.

Insofar as altruism is concerned, it too is interpreted here primarily in theocentric terms (more fully developed below). As in the case of agape, this theocentric lens is driven by the scriptural record, in part because the most distinct term used to describe Jesus in Greek is *splanchnizesthai*, "to be moved from the viscera—or the heart—to have compassion" (Hodgson 1971, 168). Karl Barth said the meaning of *splanchnizesthai* is much stronger than that implied by "compassion" or "sympathy" or "pity." Jesus was not just moved by the sufferings of those around him, "but it went right into his heart, into himself, so that it was now his misery. It was more his than that of those who suffered it." It was in this visceral response to and participation in the sufferings of humanity to the point of giving up his own life that "[Jesus] was the kingdom of God come on earth" (Barth 1958, 185–87). Since for the Christian Jesus is paradigmatic, self-sacrificial love is "an intrinsic value, rooted in the fundamental character of reality" (Hefner 1993, 209).

At the biological level, a behavior is altruistic if it increases the fitness/survivability of others while decreasing the fitness/survivability of the actor. In its strictest interpretation, the outcome is measured in terms of reproductive fitness, because gene survival is the driving mechanism. When speaking in biological terms motivation is not a factor, in spite of the anthropomorphized image of the "selfish gene" (Dawkins 1976). For biology, altruism is a two-dimensional "subset of group-advantageous traits" involving only benefits to others and costs to self (Sober and Wilson 1998, 30).

Biologists have long recognized that many creatures physiologically entrain to others and to their environments. Entrainment is an innate biological response by which organisms, from the simplest to the most complex, enter into harmony with the environment and with other creatures. Examples include the primitive response of a plant that turns toward sunlight, the circadian rhythm, and the elegant synchrony underlying human conversation. All of life entrains with the environment and other living beings; it is vital to survival. Through this well-documented physiological process we "are organizationally linked with and part of the universe in which we evolved . . . naturally receptive to the structure of the universe" (Condon 1984, 48, 52).

Creatures long thought to operate out of a selfish drive for individual survival exhibit surprisingly collaborative behaviors that bear striking resemblance to human altruistic behavior. Ethologists and biologists have documented cooperation to the point of risking injury and death in order to ensure the survival of other members of the same species. Anecdotal evidence exists of such risks taken by nonhuman creatures on behalf of members of different species. Even so, some biologists continue to argue that altruism makes sense only in the context of a drive for survival of genetic material. In their paradigm, altruism is nothing more than gene selfishness, explained in terms of either reciprocity (self-sacrificial action done in the context of the expectation of some future "payback"), kinship (wherein one is inclined to behave self-sacrificially on behalf of one's closest genetic relatives), or group selection (wherein one acts for the well-being of one's group). But even Richard Dawkins noted a tendency in nature that cannot be explained in this selfish-gene framework: "As Darwinians we start pessimistically by assuming deep selfishness, pitiless indifference to suffering, ruthless heed to individual success. And yet, from such warped beginnings, something . . . close to amicable brotherhood and sisterhood can come" (Dawkins 1984, ix).

When we move to the level of human psychology, things become more complex. Now motivation does play a vital role in definition. Psychological altruism is defined in terms of motivation. Some theorists insist that human actions done at risk to one's own well-being for the benefit of others are actually motivated by selfish (egoistic) ultimate desires. This theory is similar to the biological selfish-gene approach in that, if we are motivated only by egoism, altruism is a meaningless concept that masks the basic selfishness of all human behavior; just as our genes are selfish, so are our psychological motives. According to psychological egoism, even Jesus' death was selfish, because he would at the very least have been motivated by the egoistic desire to be seen as obedient to God. But a significant body of research supports the claim that human beings are at least sometimes capable of acts that have only the well-being of the other as the ultimate motivation. In fact, many evolutionary psychologists now agree that, because of the evolutionary influence of culture, human "individuals are capable of true altruism and yet achieve high fitness benefits from doing so not because they have 'overcome' our [*sic*] genes, but because true cooperation was originally to their benefit" (Barrett, Dunbar, and Lycett 2002, 91). Psychologically speaking, although cooperation has evolved as a survival strategy, this does not eliminate the possibility that we might have "irreducible other-directed ends" in mind when we act on behalf of others (Sober and Wilson 1998, 228). Natural selection in combination with human cultures has led to the existence of creatures who are sometimes capable of genuine altruism. This is so because we are influenced by the mechanism of social structures that work to overcome the "intrinsic genetic drag" of the so-called selfish gene (Barrett, Dunbar, and Lycettet 2002, 375). So at the human level it is helpful to examine altruism in terms of multilevel selection and motivational pluralism (Sober 2002; Sober and Wilson 1998).

Altruism in humans is linked to the capacity for empathy (Eisenberg 1986). Developmental psychology has demonstrated that the ability to entrain with and attune to other human beings is foundational for the experience of empathy and is necessary for the development of healthy human selves. Empathic ability alone does not account for truly altruistic action on the part of human beings, but studies show that it is influential in the process leading to risking one's own well-being for the sake of another. Although there are to my knowledge no studies directly linking entrainment with the capacity for altruism in nature, it is quite likely that a link exists. Without the ability to enter into shared reality at least at some basic level, there can be no recognition of need on the part of an other. I have examined elsewhere the possibility that a connection exists between entrainment and altruism in nonhuman forms of life that mirrors the correlation drawn through my analysis of the human capacity for sharing in the life-world of others (Burns 2002). I do not mean to imply that there is no difference between altruism displayed by humans and self-sacrificial behaviors found in nature. It is clear that as we move along the evolutionary trail toward the human community, altruism becomes a more complex concept interwoven with psychology and cultural evolution.

Human beings may be creation's first potentially truly ethical creatures. We certainly are subject to genetic influence but apparently are less so than any other extant species. We form cultural groupings that seem to be more successful as survival strategies than the selfish drive of a single genome. In the choices we make and the institutions we create, we can and sometimes do transcend biology: "Natural selection based on cultural variation has produced adaptations that have nothing to do with genes" (Sober and Wilson 1998, 337). We can choose to engage one another in compassionate action, even in genuine altruistic love. Human beings are linked to others and to existence by virtue of our capacity for intersubjective participation. Participation is a multilevel process, crucial to the development of healthy human selves, through which we are able to entrain with, attune to, and sympathize and empathize with others (Burns 2002, 17). And nature entrains and engages in similar processes. There is a "ratchet in the works" of evolution (Watson 1997, 85) that drives nature in the direction of genuine altruism.

On the basis of the theology outlined here, we can say that this "ratchet" is an *energeia*, a manifestation of God's own self. According to Eastern Orthodox thought, the cosmos is a boundless system of discrete but interrelated parts that are harmonized through a universal affinity that has its origin in God. The uncreated *energeia* of altruism is enhypostasized in the unending divine dance of perichoresis throughout creation. The unity of the cosmos in divine love is the kinship or harmony of all creation. God is deeply connected to the world process in and through the divine energies that work to bring about *synergeia* between grace and human freedom. Describing God's presence in the world in this way allows us to consider God's impact at all levels, from the most basic rhythms of life to the most sophisticated of cognitive and moral acts. In other words, the universe is united through divine participation, made known to us in the *energeia* of altruism at all levels of biological existence.

Perhaps it is not trivial to note here that Jesus' self-sacrifice meets the multilevel definitional criteria for altruism in such a way as to transcend all human categories of analysis. At the biological level, to be altruistic an act must decrease the fitness of the actor while increasing the fitness of others. In a literal biological sense, Jesus' self-sacrifice was performed at the cost of his own physical survival, whereas its impact on the recipients of his altruism extends beyond the biological. Although his self-sacrifice did not increase the biological fitness of others, in his death and resurrection enhanced spiritual fitness as "eternal survivability" for others was made a reality. At the level of psychological analysis, Christianity teaches that as the Incarnation of Divine Agape, Jesus' ultimate motivation was "the divine extravagance of giving that does not take the self into account" (Grant 1996, 19). In the union of the hypostases of his divine and human natures altruism has transcended the mental and material human reality to encompass the cosmic.

To summarize, evolutionary biology and theories of altruism in combination with developmental psychology allow for a theological anthropology based in the human capacity for empathic participation and altruism. Biological entrainment in nature has been extensively documented and is the basis for empathy in humans. Empathy is, in turn, constitutive of healthy human selfhood. Incarnation can, in this framework, be rethought in terms of the deifying energy of genuine altruism scattered like seeds throughout creation, offering the possibility of union with the divine. The rudimentary forms of divine self-giving love manifested in group and kinship selection and reciprocal altruism evolve with the complexification of all life into the wider imperatives toward genuine altruism that we sometimes find among human beings.

In this interpretation, arguments claiming that altruism is a meaningless concept, because in Christianity selflessness is rewarded by God, lose ground.[1] It is because these wider imperatives toward self-sacrifice for the well-being of others mimic the absolutely relational, self-giving, perichoretic agape of the Trinity that they exceed our present capacities. We live in a state of motivational pluralism, sometimes capable of genuine altruistic acts but more often acting from egoism, because we live in constant tension between the desires of our natural and deliberative wills. The incentive to enact altruism to the best of our ability is an aspect of the grace of God, which helps to overcome the pull of our deliberative wills.

As we read scientific theories through the lens of Christian theology we see something like an ever-expanding altruistic impulse that begins at the genetic level, moves forward in the rudimentary responsiveness of biological life forms through entrainment to reciprocal and kinship altruism, to group and cultural selection. And now we see in human experience a drive toward the widening of cultural selection outward to the level of all humanity, other species, and the earth itself. Perhaps Teilhard was correct in his claim that as life evolves into ever more complex forms we approach the Omega Point, which is the Christification of the universe, understood not in terms of evolutionary optimism but as theological hope.[2]

## NOTES

The article is an extensive revision of my paper "Seeds of Divine Love: A Theological Interpretation of Altruism in Nature" presented to the Religion & Science Group of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) at San Antonio, 22 November 2004.

1. Altruism is "problematic when applied to religious studies because it is, in fact, a concept absent from religion . . . [since Jews, Christians and Muslims] cannot genuinely perform self-sacrificing acts because God has promised to reward every good deed" (Neusner and Chilton 2005, book jacket; *www.georgetown.edu/detail.html?id=158901655*).

2. This distinction is from Jeffrey Schloss, 2004 AAR panel on "Exploring Altruism: Science, Religion, and Love."

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