

Second Place Essay in the BFLW 2010 essay contest

Assisted Suicide: Should it be Legalized?

Lying on the side of the road in excruciating pain after flying through the windshield of his car, Trevor knows he will face an operation and several long months of therapy before his legs will be usable. Even then, he will probably never again walk properly. As the paramedic gently lifts him into the ambulance he pleads, “Let me die. Please, just let me die.” As the paramedics cart him into the emergency room, he asks the surgeon “Would you help me in suicide?”¹ Should the surgeon heed his plea? Should the surgeon aid him in suicide even if it was legal? Recently, assisted suicide and euthanasia have been the topics of many debates in America, and the public questions the correct viewpoint. Should Wisconsin legalize assisted suicide? No, assisted suicide is proven through history to effect people negatively, is against the purpose of the medical field and government, and is contrary to the Bible.

Hitler legalized euthanasia in October of 1939. By the end of World War 2, he was responsible for the deaths of over a hundred thousand babies, disabled adults and children, and elderly people.² Hitler’s “Aktion T-4,” the code name for his legalizing euthanasia, not only affected those with disabilities and chronic illnesses, but also later advanced to the killing of patients who were not German, did not carry a German Citizenship,³ and to the Jewish Holocaust. Hitler’s example may seem like an extreme case, but the 1991 “Rommelink Report,” a survey conducted by the Dutch government, shows that up to 1,040 of the patients who were euthanized never even granted their approval!⁴ The doctors’ excuse was that the patients were in

¹ Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 181. The idea for this scenario is from this book.

² Catherine Mary Márcias, “Aktion T4: Home Page,” www.t4holocaust.com (accessed 20 September 2010).

³ History Place, “World War II: Nazi Euthanasia,” 1996 www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/timeline/euthanasia.htm (accessed 20 September 2010).

⁴ International Task Force, “Euthanasia in the Netherlands”, <http://www.internationaltaskforce.org/fctholl.htm> (accessed 18 September 2010).

a persistent coma or helpless state. The patients were therefore beyond help, but a recent study in England, on persistent comas, concluded that many of the patients diagnosed to exist in a coma, even after several years, still have some form of mental awareness.⁵ Surveys in Canada prove that many euthanized patients did not even have euthanasia discussed with them.⁶ *The New England Journal of Medicine* performed a survey in some of Oregon's nursing homes and concluded that 18% of the people who requested a certain treatment in their "Living Will," a legal document that specifies what treatments the patient does or does not want, never obtained it.⁷ Through history, you can see the downward trend of assisted suicide as it leads to euthanasia.

Traditionally, medical doctors have quoted the Hippocratic Oath before entering into the medical field. Listen to what it says: "I will give no deadly medicines to anyone... nor suggest any such counsel..."⁸ does this not make it quite plain that assisted suicide is against the medical field's line of work? If not, listen to Thomas Jefferson: "The care of human life and happiness and not their destruction is the first and only legitimate object of good government..."⁹ Professor Luke Gormally, a previous professor of Harvard University, said, "Society's prohibition of intentional killing... is the cornerstone of law and social relationships. It protects us impartially, embodying the belief that all are created equal."¹⁰ Medical doctors Kenneth Stevens, M.D.; William Toffler, M.D.; and Charles J Bentz, M.D., F.A.C.P., all believe that euthanasia does three things: it hurts the doctor's relationship with the patient, changes the purpose of the doctor from a healer to an executioner, and endangers the human value of life

⁵ Hillary White, 4 February 2010, "'Vegetative' Patients may Retain Awareness: Study," <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2010/feb/10020403.html> (accessed 20 September 2010).

⁶ <http://www.lifesitenews.com> (accessed 18 September 2010).

⁷ www.euthanasia.com (accessed 18 September 2010).

⁸ "Quotations on Euthanasia," <http://euthanasia.com/quotationsoneuthanasia.html> (accessed 20 September 2010).

⁹ "Euthanasia.com: Home page," <http://euthanasia.com/index.html> (accessed 18 September 2010).

¹⁰ http://www.finestquotes.com/select_quote-category-Euthanasia-page-0.htm (accessed 18 September 2010).

especially to the most vulnerable.¹¹ A study done by a group of Swedish people proved that of all the people who attempt and fail at assisted suicide, 5 years later only 4% had killed themselves and 35 years later only 10.9% had killed themselves.¹²

When we hear about assisted suicide the phrase “the right to die” seems to always appear. Does the Bible say anything on this phrase? Yes, in fact, according to the Bible, we do not have the right to die. We have been “created in God’s image”¹³ and David says in Psalm 31:15, “My time is in Thy hands...” “Thy” is referring to God. In Ecclesiastes 3 Solomon tells us: “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born and a time to die...” Just as we cannot decide when we are born, so the time we die decided by God. When we attempt to take our life or the life of someone else, we interfere with God’s sovereign will. In I Samuel 31 to II Samuel 1:17, the Lord gives us an example of attempted assisted suicide. It is the final moments in Saul’s life. Wounded and pursued by the Philistines, Saul asks his faithful armor bearer to slay him, but his servant would not. A distraught Saul falls on a sword and the armor bearer follows the sin of suicide. Later an Amalekite came into David’s camp with the story that while walking through the Mountain Gilboa, he happened to come upon the wounded Saul. When Saul saw the Amalekite, he asked him to come and kill him because he was in agony. Seeing that there was no hope for Saul he slew him and brought David his crown and bracelet. David’s reaction was completely opposite to what the Amalekite was expecting. Instead of joy, David was extremely sorrowful and wrathful towards the Amalekite and killed him for killing the Lord’s anointed. This example can help us understand God’s reaction towards assisted suicide as David was a “man after God’s own heart.”

¹¹ Dr. Kenneth Stevens, Dr. William Toffler, and Dr. Charles J Bentz, “Physician-Assisted Suicide – Oregon--an anomaly; not a harbinger,” www.pccef.org/articles/art47.htm (accessed 28 September 2010).

¹² “People who Attempt Suicide Only Once,” <http://euthanasia.com//suicstud.html> (accessed 9 October 2010).

¹³ Genesis 1:27 KJV

Trevor's pleas for assisted suicide went unheeded by the surgeon, and after going through therapy, Trevor adjusted to limping. These facts show that assisted suicide is contrary to the Bible, is against the purpose of the medical field and government, and is proven through history to effect people negatively. Next time you here of people crying for assistance in suicide look at it as a cry for Biblical counsel and direction.

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