

## Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

Euthanasia, assisted suicide, or both are now legal in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Switzerland, and attempts to legalise them are active in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. These threats are potentiated by economic recession and demographic shift and will increase in Europe in the coming decade. What are the biblical principles that should guide us on these issues? What are the major arguments for and against euthanasia and how are they best articulated? How can evangelical Christians work most effectively with others to counter these growing threats?

**Peter Saunders** originally trained as a general surgeon in New Zealand before serving with the Africa Inland Mission in Kenya then completing a diploma in missiology (ANCC) and an MA in Bioethics (SMUC) in the UK. Since 1992 he has served full-time with Christian Medical Fellowship, a UK-based organisation with 4,500 UK doctors and 1,000 medical students as members, first as Head of Student Ministries, and since 1999 as Chief Executive. His current work involves leadership training, teaching evangelism and ethics, medical mission, writing, editing and media work. He has been a member of the ICMDA (International Christian Medical and Dental Association) Board since 2003, Campaign Director of the Care Not Killing Alliance since 2005, chair of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition of Europe (EPCE) steering group since 2013 and was a founder member of the ELF steering group in 2001. His wife Kirsty is a community pediatrician and they have three sons, Christopher, Benjamin and Jonathan. They are members of Spicer Street Church, St Albans. [www.cmf.org.uk](http://www.cmf.org.uk); [www.carenokilling.org.uk](http://www.carenokilling.org.uk); <http://pjsaunders.blogspot.com/>

### I. Review of Recent Events

A. A European doctor's testimony

B. Lessons from the Nazi Holocaust

1. Binding and Hoche, 'I accuse' and Tiergartenstrasse 4 (T4)
2. The Children's and Adults' euthanasia programmes
3. The Death Camps
4. Nuremberg and the four ingredients of a holocaust

C. Codes of Medical Ethics

1. Hippocratic Oath (600 BC)
2. Declaration of Geneva (1948)
3. International Code of Medical Ethics (1949)
4. Statement of Marbella (1992)

## **II. Definitions**

- A. Euthanasia
- B. Assisted Suicide
- C. Common misconceptions
  - 1. Withdrawal of Treatment
  - 2. Morphine and Double Effect
  - 3. Refusal of Treatment

## **III. Overview of Europe Today**

- A. Netherlands
- B. Belgium
- C. Luxembourg
- D. Switzerland
- E. United Kingdom
- F. Other pressure points
- G. Economic Recession and demographic shift

## **IV. Biblical Principles**

- A. Abimelech (Judges 9:54-57) and Saul (2 Samuel 1:1-16)
- B. The image of God (Gen 1:26, 27, 9:5, 6)
- C. Evil and the Fall of Man (Gen 3:1-24; Rom 3:9-20)

Human beings are capable of great evil... so laws are needed to instruct, convict and protect the innocent

D. The meaning of the sixth commandment (Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17)

1. 'The intentional killing of an innocent human being'(Ex 21:12-14; Lev 24:17-21; Nu 35:16-31; Dt 19:4-13)

2. The cases of manslaughter, holy war, capital punishment and self-defence

E. Judgement and the resurrection body (Heb 9:27; 2 Cor 4:1-5:10)

F. Faith (Heb 11:1,6; Rom 5:1-11), Hope (1 Thes 4:13-18) and Love (Jn 13:34-35; 1 Cor 11:1; Eph 5:1,2; 1 Jn 2:6; Phil 2:5)

G. The 'Third Way' of redemptive love (John 8:1-11; Gal 6:2)

## **V. Pitfalls for evangelicals**

A. Situation Ethics: 'All that matters is love'

B. Cheap grace: 'We are not under law but grace'

C. Diversity: 'Ethics is a secondary issue over which Christians may disagree'

D. Personal pietism: 'The world's not our problem. We shouldn't impose our morality'

## **VI. The Arguments**

A. Arguments for Euthanasia

1. Compassion

2. Autonomy

3. Economics

B. Arguments against Euthanasia

1. Dangerous

- a. Pressure to end life
- b. Incremental extension
- c. The unworkability of ‘safeguards’

2. Unnecessary – Palliative Care

3. The best laws balance justice and mercy

**VII. Effective Responses**

A. The four key battlegrounds

- 1. Parliament
- 2. The institutions
- 3. The courts
- 4. The media/public opinion

B. Educating Christians

C. Inspiring stories

D. Organised opposition

E. Cobelligerent alliances

*Peter Saunders*  
[pjs@cmf.org.uk](mailto:pjs@cmf.org.uk)

***Suggested Reading***

*Care Not Killing* – [www.carenotkilling.org.uk](http://www.carenotkilling.org.uk)  
*Euthanasia Prevention Coalition Europe* - <http://www.epce.eu/>  
*Euthanasia (CMF File 22)* - <http://bit.ly/1hm5771>  
*Alexander L. Medical Science under dictatorship. NEJM* , 14 July, 1949.