

Bioethics and the Christian Mind

ELF Workshop

23 May 2022

Dr Peter Saunders

CEO of ICMDA

Biblical foundations

Human Dignity (Gen 1:26, 27; Ps 24:1)



- Michelangelo
- Sydenham



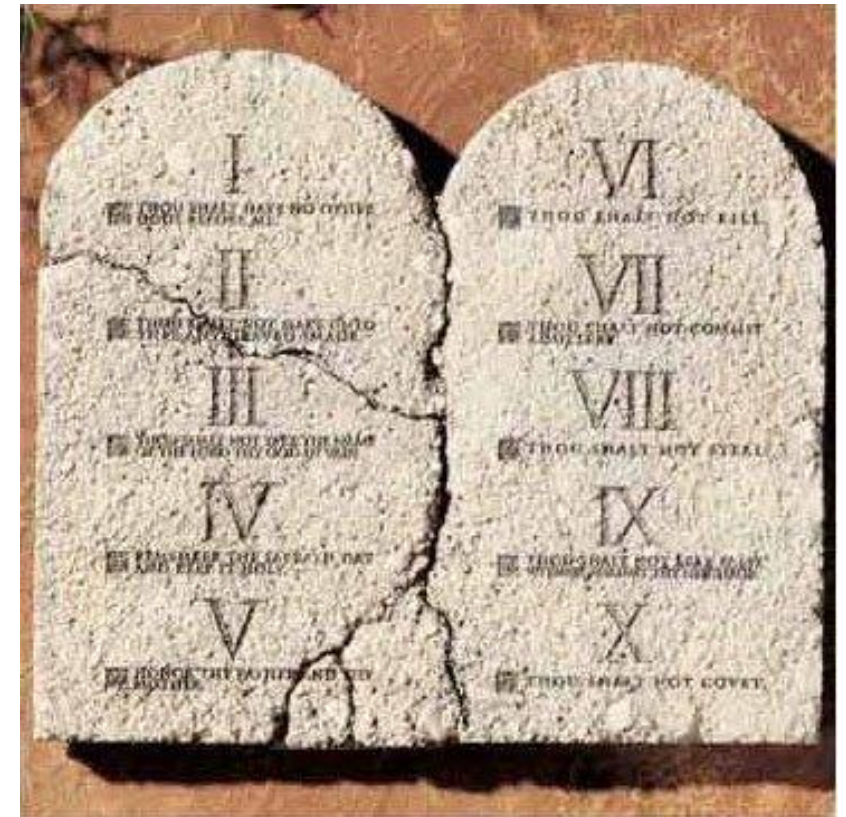
The Imago Dei and the Sanctity of Life

'So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.'

(Genesis 1:27)

'Whoever sheds human blood, by humans
shall their blood be shed;
for in the image of God has God made
mankind.'

(Genesis 9:6)



The sanctity of life

- All human beings are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)
- Taking the life of innocent human being intentionally is forbidden – even on request (Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17)
- The Bible only sanctions the killing of 'guilty' human beings in specific circumstances (capital punishment, holy war, self-defence)
- *Ratsach* and *Phoneuo* - (Exodus 21:12-14; Leviticus 24:17-21; Numbers 35:16-31; Deuteronomy 19:4-13)

The reason for the exile

'Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.'

(2 Kings 24:3,4)

A Christ-like approach

- Sharing the mind of Christ
- Holding the commands of Christ
- Displaying the character of Christ
- Carrying the cross of Christ

Christ-like mind

- Creation - *created 'image bearers'*
- Humanity - *fallen from grace (flawed masterpieces)*
- Redemption - *science, technology, God's wisdom and rebirth*
- Future hope - *resurrection into the new creation*



Christ-like obedience

- Human Dignity (*Genesis 1:27*)
 - *respect, wonder, protection, empathy*
- Complementarity of the sexes (*Genesis 1:27*)
- Stewardship and Science (*Genesis 1:28*)
- Sanctity of Life (*Exodus 20:13*)
- Marital purity (*Genesis 2:24*)
- Children as gift (*Psalms 127:3-5*)
- Confidentiality (*Exodus 34:6-7*)
- Justice and equity (*2 Chronicles 19:7*)
- Ends and means (*Romans 3:8*)

Life before birth

- Over 60 biblical references to 'conception'
- Life before birth (Is 49:1; Je 1:5; Jb 10:8-9, 18-19; Gn 25:22-23; Ps 22:9,10, 51:5, 71:6, 119:73, 139:13-16; Ec 11:5; Is 44:2,34; Ho 12:3)
- Jesus present in the womb in the first month (Mt 1:18; Lk 1:15, 41-44)
- Jesus 'became flesh' in a moment of time (John 1:14; Aorist tense) and was 'made like his brothers in every way (Hebrews 2:17)

Status of the Embryo

Flawed arguments for demeaning the embryo

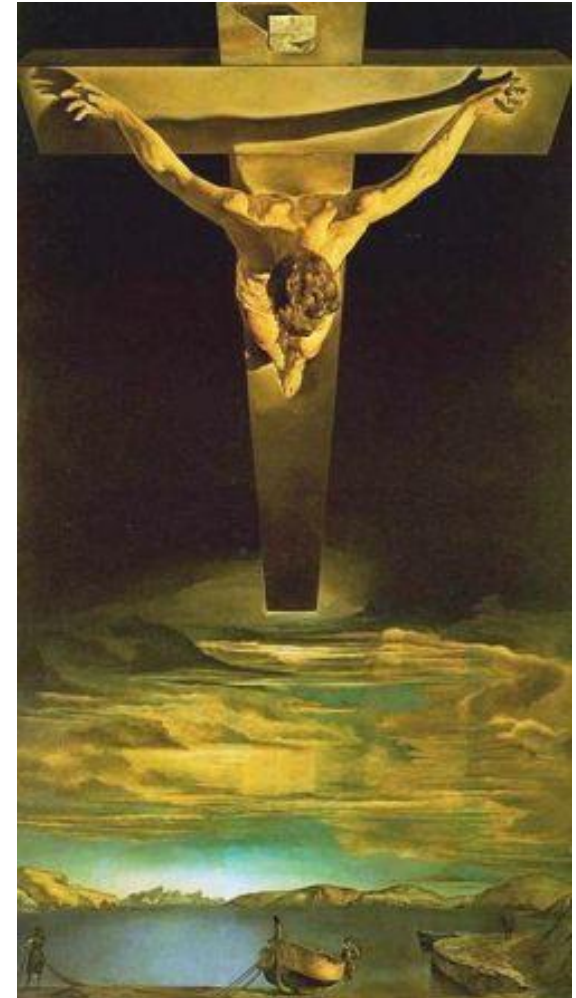
- Only potential human beings
- Not capable of independent existence
- Not rational or communicative
- High mortality
- Arguments from twinning
- Conception is a process
- 'Theological arguments'

Christ-like character

- Imitators of God (*Matthew 5:48; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1,2*)
- Character of God (*Exodus 34:6,7*)
- Fruit of the spirit (*Galatians 5:22-23*)

Christ-like cross-bearing

- John 8:1-11 and the third way
- Suffering to provide the compassionate third way
- Suffering in standing up for Christian values in the face of persecution



A changing culture

"TERRIFIC NEW BOOK."

—ROBERT P. GEORGE, Princeton University

LOVE THY BODY



Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality

NANCY R. PEARCEY

Bestselling Author of *Total Truth*

Foreword by Rod Dreher

THE RISE AND TRIUMPH of the MODERN SELF



Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism,
and the Road to Sexual Revolution

CARL R. TRUEMAN

THE GLOBAL Sexual REVOLUTION



DESTRUCTION OF FREEDOM
IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM

GABRIELE KUBY

Foreword by Robert Spaemann

Theism

God

All powerful creator

Moral good

In line with God's character

Life after death

Judgement and heaven/hell

Human beings

Beings made to worship God

Truth

Revealed by God

Atheism

God

Doesn't exist

Moral good

Determined by human beings

Life after death

Nothing

Human beings

Higher animals

Truth

Discovered by observation (or derived from ideology)

C19 challenges to Christian theism

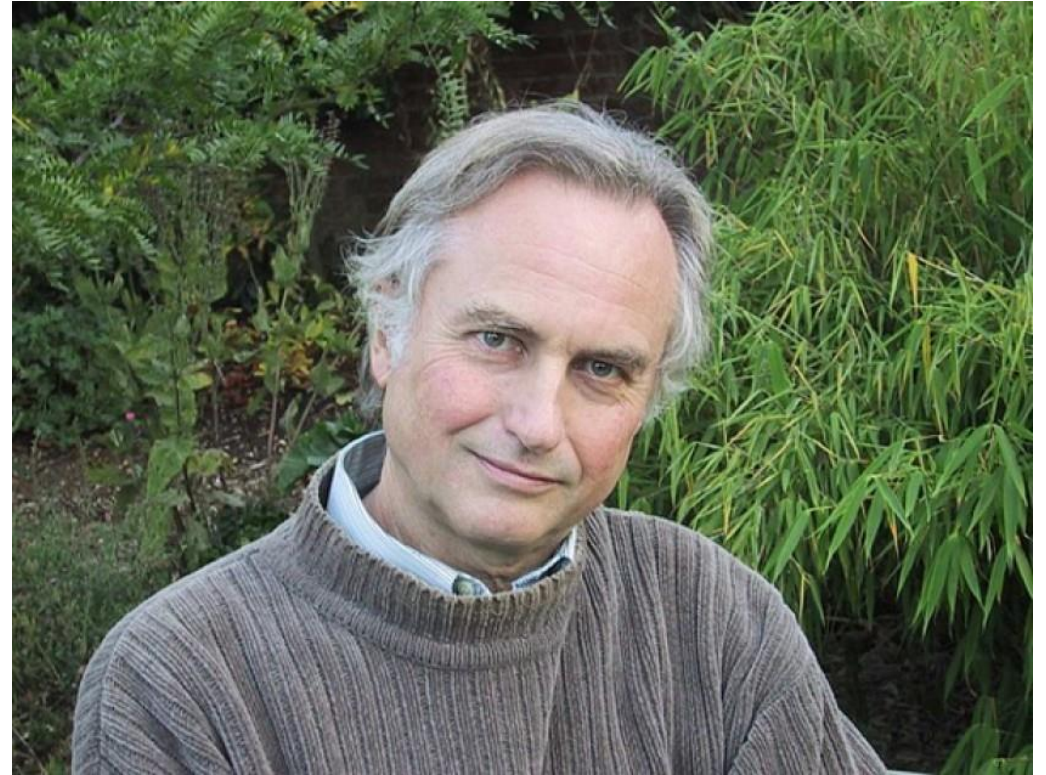
- The Enlightenment made human reason the highest authority
- Darwin's theory of evolution provided a basis for believing in a Godless universe (1859)
- Higher criticism undermined belief in biblical authority (C19)

Richard Dawkins' critique of Christianity

The theory of evolution explains
biological complexity

The Bible is unreliable

The Christian God is immoral



The politicisation of Darwinism

- Secular/Materialist

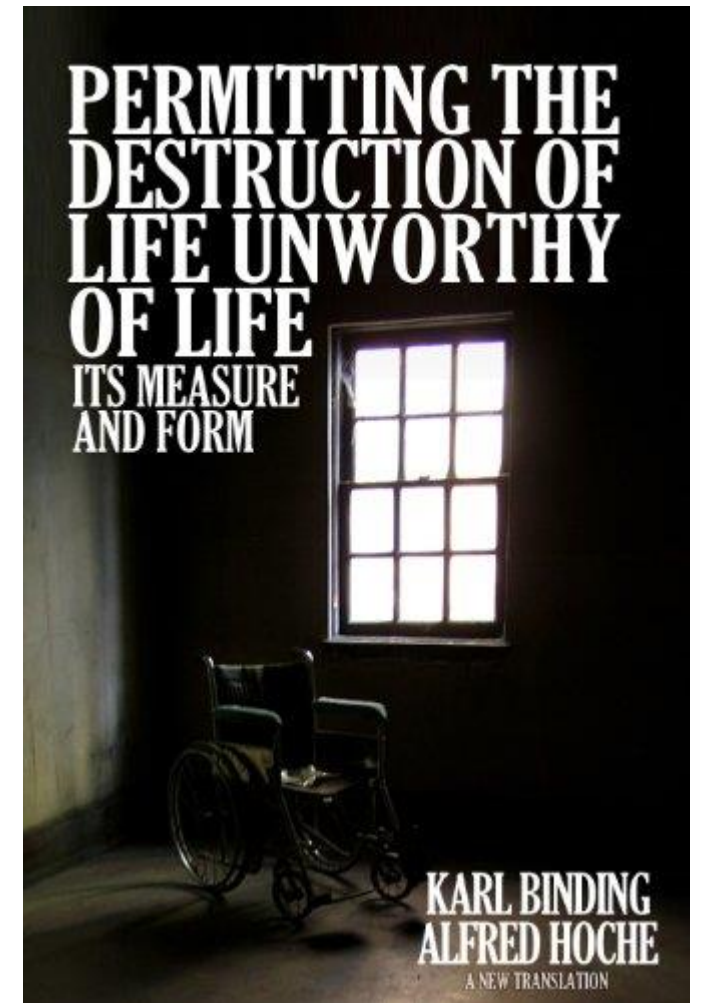
1. Humans are just one of many species and the value of human life depends on its quality
2. Only some human lives are persons worthy of respect
3. The weak should be sacrificed for the strong

- Christian/Hippocratic

1. Human beings are made in God's image and all human life is of infinite value
2. Every human life is a person worthy of respect
3. The strong should make sacrifices for the weak

Secular bioethics

- Binding and Hoche – ‘Life unworthy of life’
- Watson and Crick – infanticide
- Peter Singer – ‘Quality of Life’ and ‘Speciesism’
- Technology, autonomy and relativism



7 MOUNTAINS OF CULTURE

1. *EDUCATION*
2. *ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT*
3. *GOVERNMENT*
4. *FAMILY*
5. *RELIGION*
6. *BUSINESS*
7. *MEDIA*

Europe is an end-stage culture

- The three 'exchanges' of Romans 1:18-32 ('God gave them up' – 24, 26, 28)
 - God for idols (23)
 - Truth for lies (25)
 - Natural for unnatural (26)
- The three key markers of 'Amorite' (pagan) culture
 - Idolatry
 - Sexual immorality
 - The shedding of innocent blood (esp child sacrifice)

Camille Paglia Video on transgender and cultural collapse (2016)

The foundations are being destroyed

For look, the wicked bend their bows;
they set their arrows against the strings
to shoot from the shadows
at the upright in heart.
When the foundations are being destroyed,
what can the righteous do?'

(Psalm 11:2,3)

Destroyed Foundations

- Theism (Genesis 1:1)
- Man in God's image (Genesis 1:27)
- The binary nature of sexuality (Genesis 1:27)
- Stewardship (Genesis 1:28)
- Marriage (Genesis 2:24)
- The sanctity of life (Genesis 9:5,6)

Being advocates

'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.'

(Proverbs 31:8)

Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those
staggering toward slaughter.

(Proverbs 24:11)

The erosion of respect for human life

Hippocratic Oath – 600 BC

'I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked nor suggest such counsel'; nor in like manner will I give a woman a pessary to produce abortion'



Declaration of Geneva

- I will maintain the utmost respect for human life from the time of **conception**, even under threat, I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity;
- I will maintain the utmost respect for human life from its **beginning** even under threat and I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity;

(Changes 1948-1994)

42%

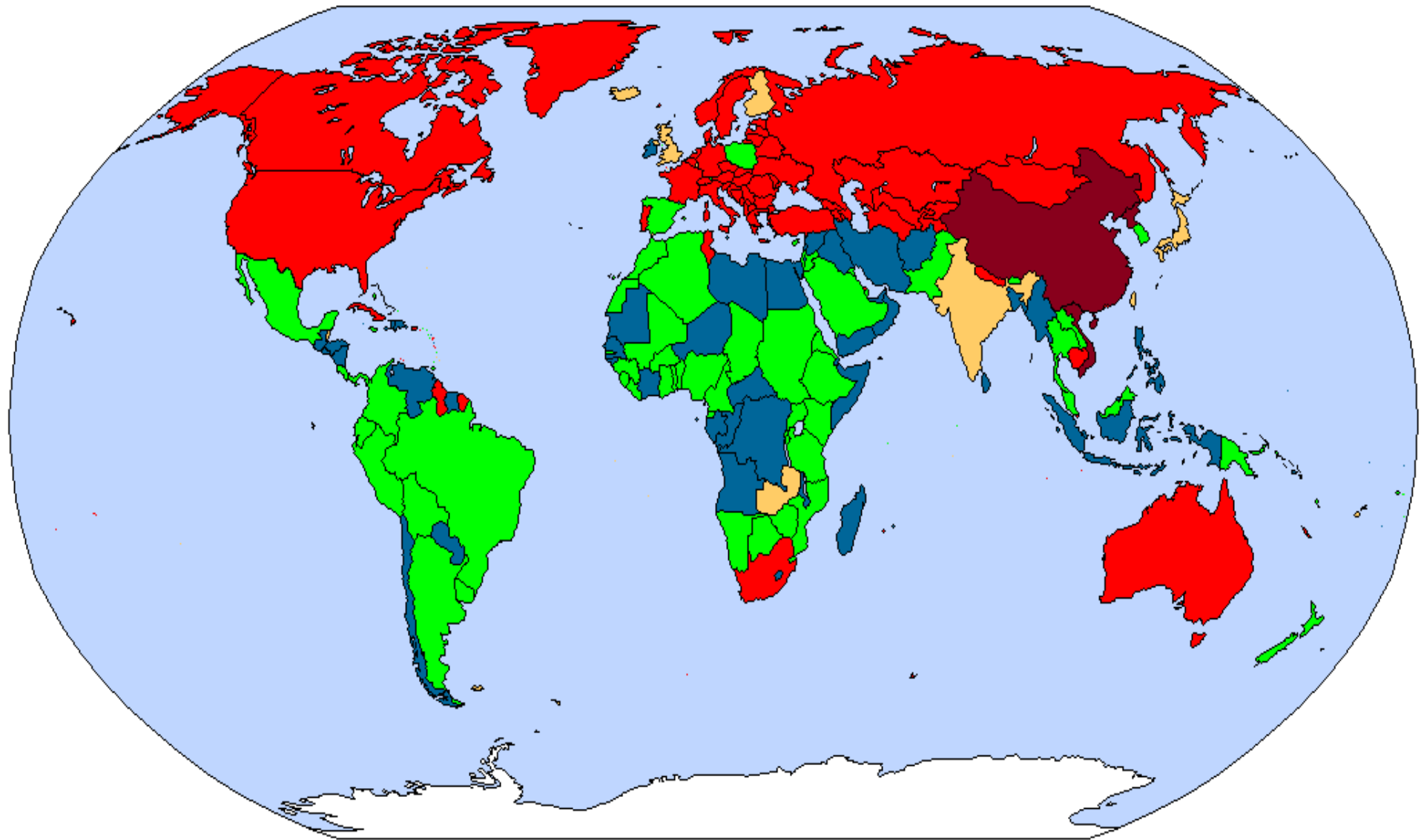
OF ALL YEARLY
DEATHS IN THE
WORLD ARE
FROM ABORTION








**A WORLDWIDE
CRISIS**

Abortion worldwide

- 43 million abortions each year
- 57 million deaths each year from *all other causes*
- 6 million deaths from COVID in 2 years
- 55 million deaths in WW2
- Abortion banned in only 26 countries
- UN/UNFPA/IPPF pushing for more legalisation



Worldwide Abortion Legislation, 2007-2011

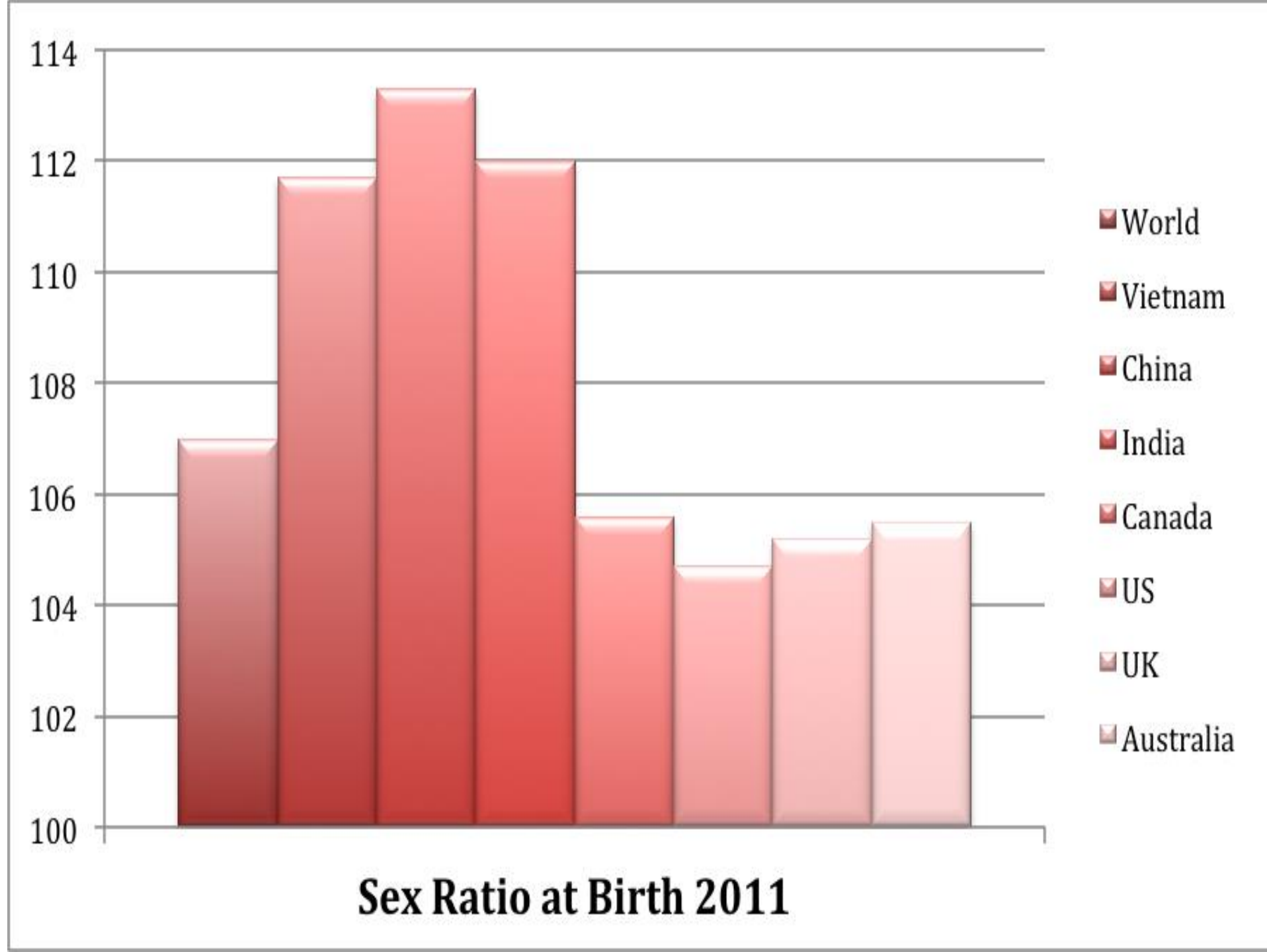
-  Abortion on demand, some forced abortion
-  Abortion on demand
-  Abortion for socioeconomic reasons
-  Abortion for some hard cases
-  Abortion banned or permitted only to save mother's life

www.johnstonsarchive.net

Abortion worldwide

- Russia tightened its abortion laws ten years ago
- 160 million missing women in China/India





Artificial reproduction

- Fuelled by delayed reproduction, STIs and fall in babies for adoption
- 5 million babies worldwide
- Sperm and egg donation
- IVF, GIFT etc
- Commercial surrogacy

Prenatal selection

- Down syndrome, spina bifida, cystic fibrosis
- 8,000 genetic diseases
- Embryo screening, chorion villus biopsy, amniocentesis and ultrasound



Contraception

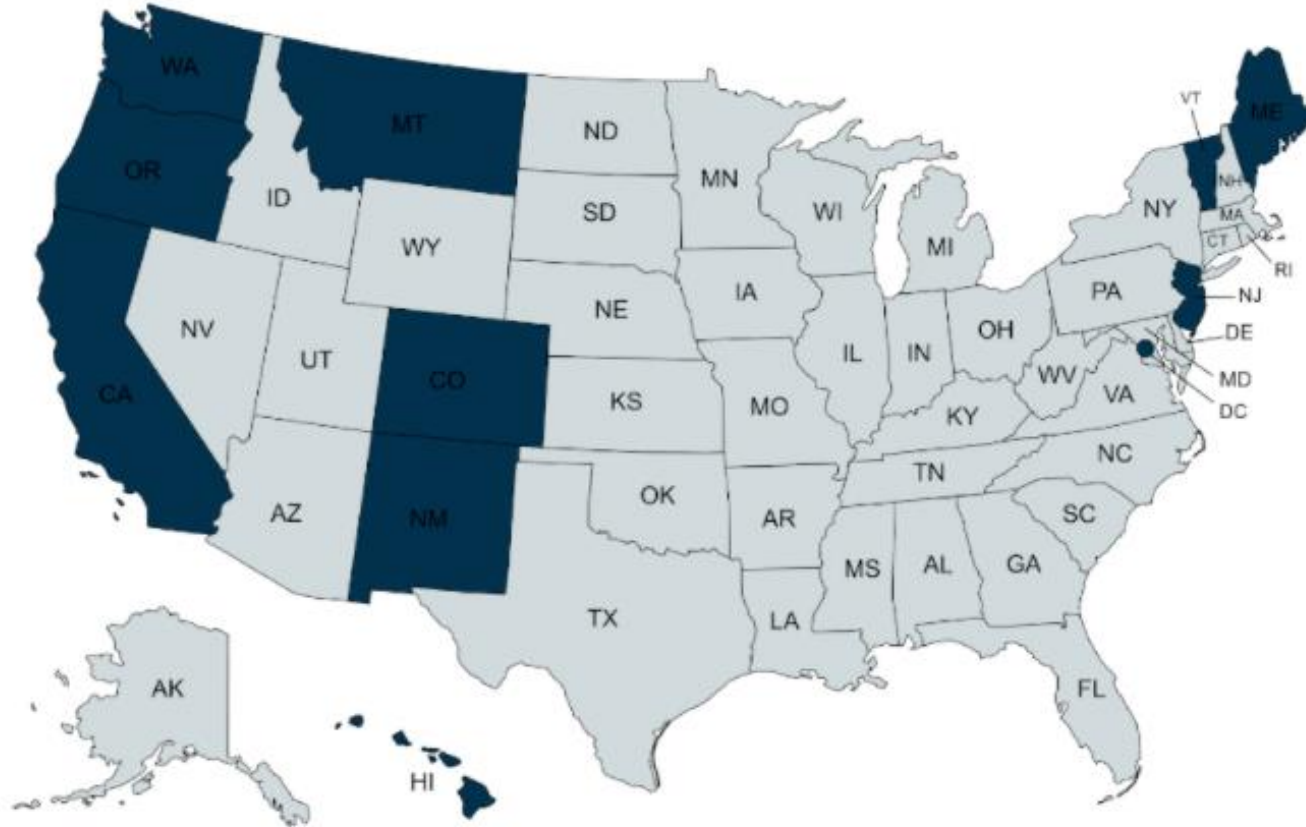
- Condoms
- Post-coital contraceptives
- 'Reproductive health services',
population control and the IPPF/UNFPA



Where is euthanasia/assisted suicide legal?

- Assisted Suicide only
 - Ten US States, Switzerland, Austria
- Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide
 - Canada, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Spain
- Euthanasia only
 - Belgium

States & DC with Legal Physician-Assisted Suicide



Countries with Legal Gay Marriage



BRITANNICA
ProCon.ORG

RELIABLE.
NONPARTISAN.
EMPOWERING.

legal gay marriage nationwide

legal gay marriage in some jurisdictions

divided with migration.

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Spain passes law allowing euthanasia

18 March 2021



Supporters of a law to legalise euthanasia held placards calling for the "right to die in peace"

Spain has passed a law to legalise euthanasia, becoming the fourth country in Europe to allow people to end their own life in some circumstances.

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New law allowing assisted suicide takes effect in Austria

🕒 1 January



A law allowing assisted suicide has taken effect in Austria.

From Saturday, adults who are terminally ill or have a permanent, debilitating condition, can opt to make provisions for an assisted death.

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Female Dutch doctor drugged a patient's coffee then asked her family to hold her down as she fought not to be killed - but did not break the country's euthanasia laws

- The case was referred to the Regional Review Committee in the Netherlands
- It concluded that the female doctor had effectively acted in good faith
- The Netherlands introduced the euthanasia law 17 years ago

By [GIULIA CROUCH FOR MAILONLINE](#)

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► 'Empathy should have no limits': Emma Watson wins first 'gender free' category as Beauty and the Beast dominates the MTV Movie & TV Awards



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Belgium authorised euthanasia of a terminally ill nine and 11-year-old in youngest cases worldwide

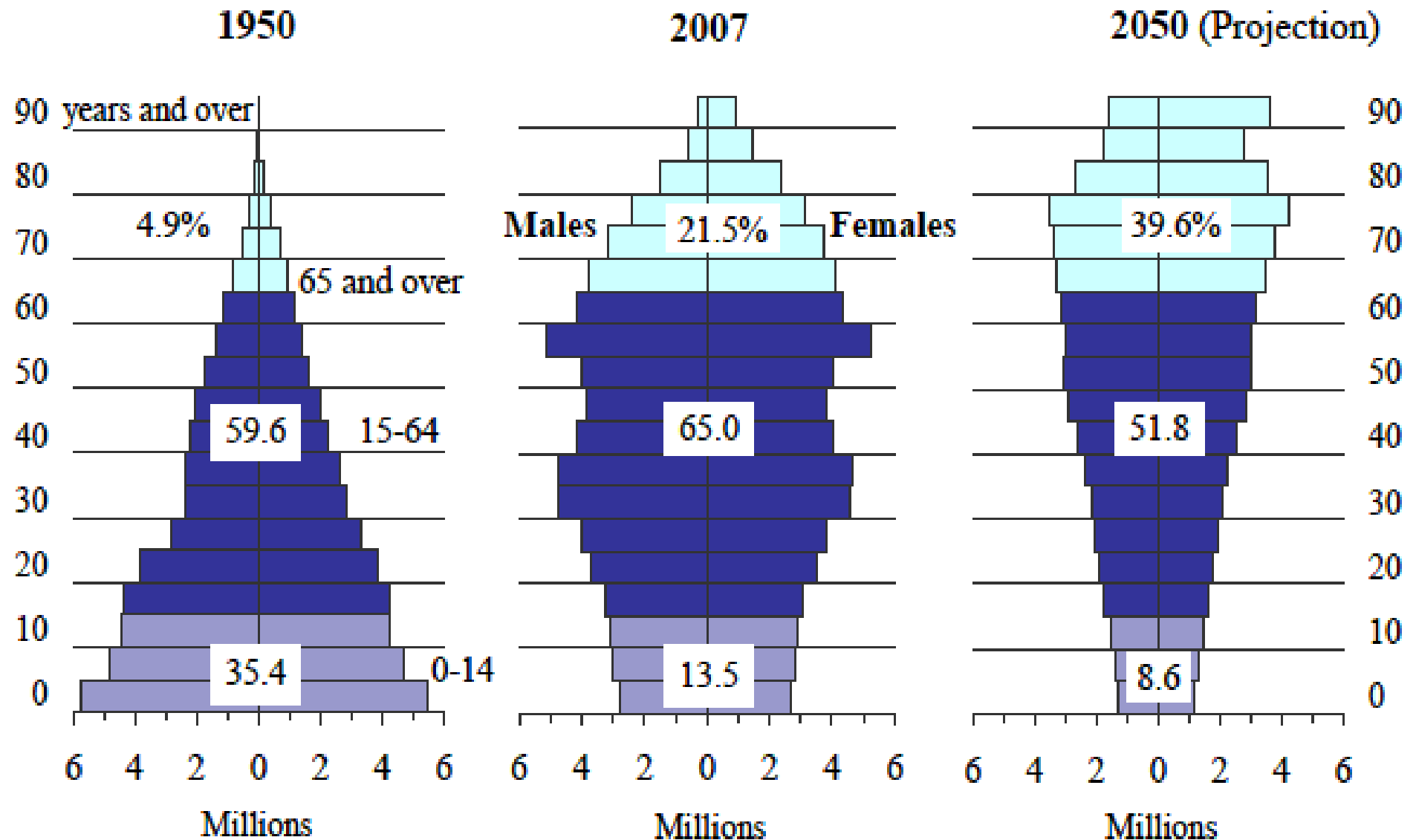


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- 1** Why did the Genoa bridge collapse - and how thousands of other structures in Italy are at risk
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- 4** Rescuers search rubble for survivors after motorway bridge collapses in Genoa, Italy leaves at...
- 5** The UK's highest paying degrees, according to graduate salary



Figure 2.3
Changes in the Population Pyramid



Source: Statistics Bureau, MIC; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

**The most effective
arguments against
legalising euthanasia**

Which battles are most easily winnable?

*Where we have secular cobelligerents and the church
has made as stand*

- Euthanasia – vulnerable people, difficulties in containment, law works
- Conversion therapy – lack of evidence, overreaching opposition, autonomy
- Transgender – ROGD, desistance, de-transitioning, feminist and LGB opposition
- Freedom of speech - autonomy
- Sexual morality - #metoo, sex abuse scandals, feminism

Co-belligerence

'A co-belligerent is a person with whom I do not agree on all sorts of vital issues, but who, for whatever reasons of their own, is on the same side in a fight for some specific issue of public justice.'

(Francis Schaeffer)

'The enemy of my enemy is my friend'



Co-belligerence

- Iraq War, Sunday trading, World poverty, Free speech, Euthanasia
- Enables joint action, pooled resources, communal work, strength in numbers, neutralises opposition, controls messaging
- Risks dilution, tension and compromise



Which battles are least easily winnable?

*Where we have few or no secular cobelligerents and
where the church is seriously compromised*

- Abortion
- Same sex marriage

The key arguments against euthanasia

- A change in the law would place vulnerable people under pressure to request early death – therefore it should not be changed for a few persistent cases
- Incremental extension is inevitable once euthanasia/PAS is allowed in any circumstances
- Requests for euthanasia are extremely rare when patients needs fully met – therefore we need good palliative care
- The current law is clear and right and works – it tempers justice with mercy

ASSISTED SUICIDE

In principle...

73%



agree with the principle of changing the law to allow assisted suicide



However, those who support it in principle change their opinion in practice

Would still support

47%

Practical consideration

People may feel pressurised to end their life so as not to burden their loved ones

Would oppose

28%

58%

There has been a steady rise in assisted suicides in places where it is legal

21%

59%

End of life care may worsen when it costs £3-4,000 a week for hospice care, but £5 for the lethal drugs

15%

63%

Major disability rights groups oppose a change in the law

12%

65%

Majority of doctors oppose it, including the BMA and Royal College of GPs.

10%

43%
support

In total...



42%

of those who support assisted suicide in principle, change their mind in response to at least one of the practical considerations



43%
oppose

Overall, this would see...

ComRes interviewed 2,055 British adults online between 11th and 13th July 2014.
Full results can be found at www.comres.co.uk

1. Vulnerable people will feel pressure

- Any change in the law to allow assisted suicide or euthanasia would place **pressure on vulnerable people** to end their lives for fear of being a **financial, emotional or care burden** upon others. This would especially affect people who are disabled, elderly, sick or depressed.
- Carers, relatives and health professionals would also feel pressure to participate

2. Incremental extension is inevitable

- Autonomy and compassion arguments can be applied widely
- Logical 'mission creep' using equality law
 - *Terminally ill to chronically ill*
 - *Adults to children*
 - *Mentally competent to mentally incompetent*
- Proposed safeguards don't work and aren't safe

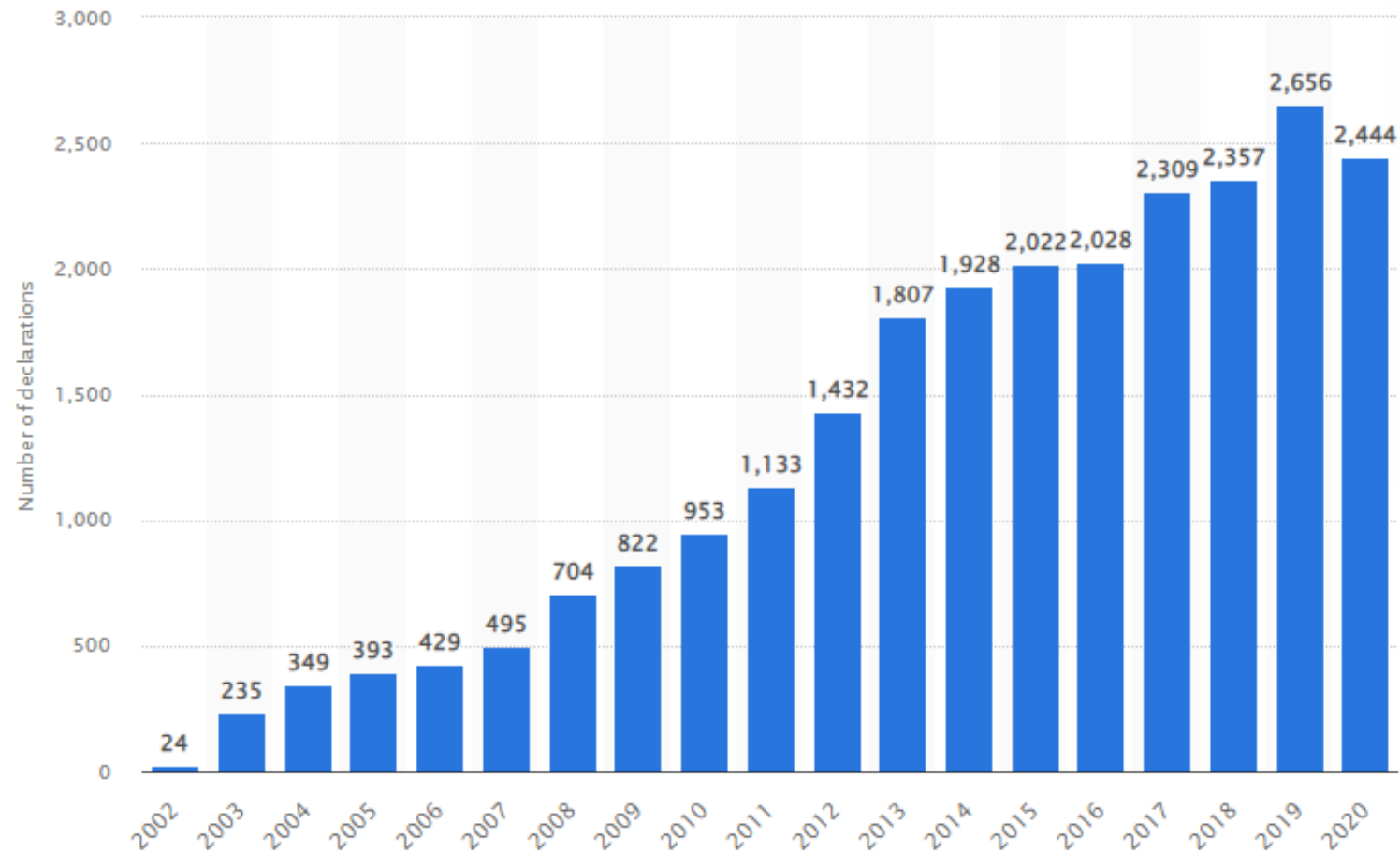
Incremental Extension

- Better to call it 'mission creep' or 'incremental extension' rather than 'slippery slope'
- We see all of the following:
 - An increase in the number of cases
 - Spread to new categories of people
 - A change in the public conscience

Proposed safeguards don't work

- 'terminally ill'
- 'mentally competent'
- 'adult'
- storage of lethal drugs
- witness statements
- record keeping

Belgium - >24,000 euthanasia deaths since legalization



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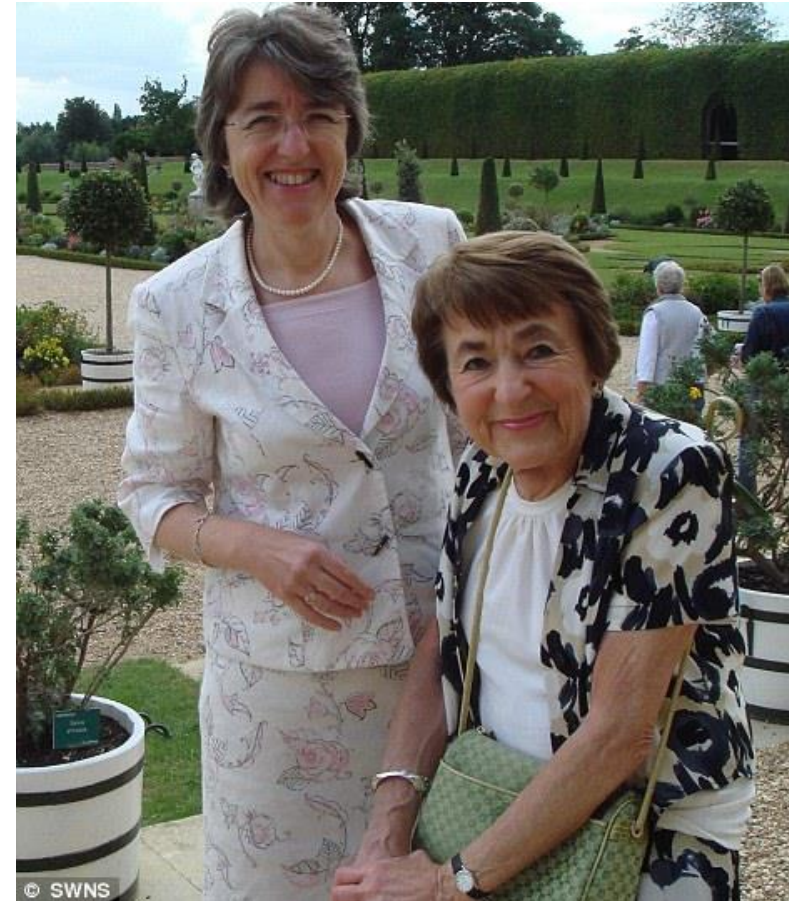
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3. Good Palliative Care is better

- Mum wanted to die, but convincing her to live gave us both a gift beyond measure...

(Baroness Ilora Finlay; *Daily Mail* 19 March 2010)



Symptoms can be relieved

- Pain, nausea and other distressing symptoms can be treated
- Less than ten in 20,000 dying patients have ongoing requests for 'assisted dying'
- It's about the person not the disease
- You can kill the pain without killing the patient

The real reasons are not medical

- In Oregon the most common reasons for wanting assisted suicide are:
 - decreasing enjoyment of life (90.1%)
 - loss of autonomy (88.7%)
 - loss of dignity (74.6%)
- We should not be providing lethal injections for what are in reality spiritual problems!

4. The current UK law works well

- Strong deterrent
- Discretion in sentencing
- Discretion in prosecuting
- 'Stern face and kind heart'



There are limits to freedom

- In a free and democratic society there are limits to personal freedom. That is why we have laws!
- We are not entitled to freedoms which endanger the reasonable freedoms of others

Mobilising a silent church

Assisted dying: Ex-Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey backs bill

12 July 2014 | Comments



Lord Carey was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1991 until 2002

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey says he will support legislation that would make it legal for terminally ill people in England and Wales to receive help to end their lives.

Christian Medical Comment

Abortion	About this blog	Apologetics	Christianity	Developing World	Economics	Embryos	Euthanasia	Global Health
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Friday, 11 July 2014

Why Lord Carey is so desperately wrong about legalising assisted suicide



Lord Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury, has surprisingly come out today in favour of Lord Falconer's *Assisted Dying Bill* which is due to have its second reading in the House of Lords on Friday 18 July.

Falconer advocates licensing doctors to dispense lethal drugs to mentally competent adults with a life expectancy of less than six months and a 'settled wish' to die, in order that they might kill themselves (Falconer calls this 'assisted dying' but, legally speaking, it is assisted suicide for a specified subset of people).

The Church of England's position on the matter is (refreshingly) unequivocal:

'The Church of England cannot support Lord Falconer's Assisted Dying Bill... Patient safety, protection of the vulnerable and respect for the integrity of the doctor-patient relationship are central to the Church of England's concerns about any proposal to change the law. Our position on the current Bill before parliament is also consistent with the approach taken by the Archbishops' Council, House of Bishops and with successive resolutions of the General Synod.'

In response to Carey, the current Archbishop, Justin Welby, has said today that legalising 'assisted dying' would be 'dangerous, abusive and mistaken'.

'Abuse, coercion and intimidation can be slow instruments in the hands of the unscrupulous, creating pressure on vulnerable people who are encouraged to 'do the decent thing,' he writes in *The Times*.

'Even where such pressure is not overt, the very presence of a law that permits assisted suicide on the terms proposed by Lord Falconer is bound to lead to sensitive individuals feeling that they ought to stop "being a burden to others".'

'What sort of society would we be creating if we were to allow this sword of Damocles to hang over the head of every vulnerable, terminally-ill person in the country?'

Lord Carey also previously held to the church's official position but for some reason, which remains a mystery to me even after reading his article today in the *Daily Mail*, he has now changed his view. I would have to say that I found his article quite unconvincing.

Carey first argues for a limited change in the law and makes reference to abuses in the Netherlands highlighted just this week in the *Daily Mail*: 'It would be outrageous if it were extended beyond the terminally ill to an ever-widening group of people, including the disabled and the depressed. Such a step would impose terrible pressures on some of the most vulnerable people in our society.'

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Kiwi, Christian and Medical

This blog deals mainly with matters at the interface of Christianity and Medicine. But I do also diverge into other subjects - especially New Zealand, rugby, economics, developing world, politics and topics of general Christian and/or medical interest. The opinions expressed here are mine and may not necessarily reflect the views of my employer or anyone else associated with me.

Most popular posts in last month



Powerful arguments advanced in UK parliament for a change in the law to ensure properly informed consent for abortion



Why Christians may eat shellfish but may not have sex outside marriage



Patients with dementia and psychiatric illnesses included as Dutch euthanasia cases rise steeply



Twelve good arguments atheists advance against Christianity



Huge increase in assisted suicide cases in Oregon and Switzerland sounds strong warning to Britain



Critics of Bible Silenced Once Again: Archaeological Discoveries Prove Old Testament to be historically accurate



Belgian twin euthanasia story is just the tip of a chilling iceberg

Four pitfalls for Christians

- Situation Ethics - 'All that matters is love'
- Cheap grace - 'We are not under law but grace '
- Diversity - 'Ethics is a secondary issue over which Christians may disagree'
- Personal pietism - 'The world is not our problem and we should not impose our morality'

Situation Ethics

- Situation ethics says, 'All that matters is love' (Joseph Fletcher)
- It's true that love sums up the law (Mt 22:37-40; Gal 5:6, 14)
- But love goes beyond the law (Mt 5:20, 23:23; 1 Cor 4:16, 11:1; Eph 5:1,2; 1 Jn 2:6)
- And the law against killing is upheld in the NT (Mt 5:21-22; Rom 13:9,10; Jas 2:8-11; Rev 21:8,22:15)

Cheap grace

- Cheap grace says, 'We are not under law but grace '
- It's true that we are saved by grace through faith and not by good works (Rom 5:1,2; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8,9)
- But genuine faith is evidenced by repentance (turning from sin) and a changed life (Gal 5:16-26; Eph 2:10; Jas 2:14-26)
- The disobedient will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9,10; Gal 5:19-21; Rev 21:8, 22:15)

Diversity

- Diversity says, 'Ethics is a secondary issue over which Christians may disagree'
- It's true that there are secondary issues over which Christians may legitimately disagree (Rom 14; 1 Cor 8:1-13, 10:23-33)
- But this is nowhere taught about the shedding of innocent blood (Mt 5:21-22; Rom 13:9-14; Jas 2:8-11; Rev 21:8,22:15)

Personal Pietism

- Personal pietism says, 'The world is not our problem and we should not impose our morality'
- It is true that we are not of this world but citizens of God's Kingdom (Heb 11:16; 1 Pet 2:9,10)
- But as aliens and exiles we are to seek the good of the city in which we are placed (1 Pet 2:11-17; Je 29:7) and have a duty to seek justice (Mi 6:8; Amos 5:14,15,24; Pr 31:8,9)

Questions and discussion



