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A Different Kind of Holocaust: From Euthanasia to Tyranny

by

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The wholesale destruction of Jews and other ethnic minorities in Europe by Nazi Germany before and during World War II has been widely and justly condemned as a crime against humanity. Literally thousand of books and articles have been written on this particular genocide, highlighted by extensive testimony presented to the Nuremberg criminal trials after the war.

We have been conditioned since World War II to believe that such a horrible human tragedy cannot, or at least should not, happen again. Particularly in the Western World, schooled in the Judeo-Christian ethic, we believe that another Holocaust could not happen and particularly not in the United States. It cannot happen here, we say,

because we live under democratic forms of government and our U.S. Constitution guarantees us protection of our lives as a God-given right.

Until this current century, we were no doubt justified in relying on these guarantees to our human existence. But will these guarantees survive the very dangerous new trends in the Western world's regard for the protection of life? Is a new and different kind of Holocaust in the offing, not against Jews or other minorities, but a Holocaust against the elderly, the chronically ill, the terminally ill and the disabled, right here in our own country? This proposition might appear preposterous at first glance, but the issue is important enough to merit a closer look.

It is a surprising historical fact that in the United States, we are wittingly or unwittingly following the same steps that led Germany to the disastrous conclusion that some lives are "life not worthy of life" and can be legally extinguished to suit the needs of society and the desires of the family and the state. Germany progressed from the adoption of genetics theories in the last century to sterilization to abortion to euthanasia to the indiscriminate murder of ethnically and politically undesirable races and aliens. Except for timing, the United States is proceeding along the identical path, with only the legalization of euthanasia or assisted suicide, remaining before the flood gates open. Indeed, we are now facing this last and fatal step on the "slippery slope".

In January 1997, the U.S. Supreme Court began to hear, on appeal, oral arguments for *Vasco v. Quill* and *Washington v. Glucksberg*, the New York and Washington cases which struck down anti-assisted suicide laws in each state earlier in 1996.

If the U.S. Supreme Court follows the unfortunate precedent which it established in its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision in which it created with very questionable constitutional basis a new "right" to abortion, then they may now create another new "right" to assisted suicide. If this happens, we will have taken the final step toward undermining the very foundation of our American democracy in which the government has the constitutional responsibility both to protect the lives of its citizens and not destroy those lives.

Ideas do have consequences and the legalization of assisted suicide would have momentous implications for the future of American society, families, medicine and the ultimate evaluation of the worth of a human life, as well as the very foundations of our American form of

government. Ultimately, the lives of our citizens may well be subordinated to the desires and interests of the government, which will decide directly or indirectly who will live and who will die. In fact, some U.S. authorities already are beginning to talk about the future demands on the resources of Medicare and Medicaid to maintain patients who might be kept alive for many years by modern medical technology, at great public expense, unless they can be dispensed with through assisted suicide.

It is well known that in the Netherlands today, where assisted suicide is widely practiced, serious abuses are being perpetrated against people who have not given their consent. In almost one-half of the assisted suicide cases in the Netherlands, the decision is being made by third parties without consulting the patient or the family. If the state or its agents can kill targeted people at will, then democracy as we know it will have perished. The next Holocaust, if and when it comes, will thus not be of the same character as the Nazis'. But the end result will be the same, namely, the wholesale killing of undesirables whether they be unborn, partially born, old, ill, or just tired of living.

Let us review the historical steps that both Germany and the United States have passed through since Darwin's theory of evolution originated in the middle 1850s and jolted the scientific world, including scholars, philosophers and even some misguided theologians. We will see how the seeds of the Holocaust in Nazi Germany preceded the Hitler era by several generations.

Following Darwin's discoveries, the geneticists' doctrine of improving the human race through better breeding and selection was ardently embraced by scientists and medical experts in the U.S. and Germany. In fact, the famous Institute of Genetics in Berlin was assisted in its founding by financial grants from the American Rockefeller Foundation. Subsequently, as a result of the general acceptance of the genetic theories, sterilization became an accepted practice to improve the race, by preventing insane people, criminals and epileptics from reproducing their kind. The U.S. was soon to follow Germany's lead and, by 1910, thirty states in the U.S. had passed sterilization laws which were being put into practice. During the decade of the 1920s, abortion in Germany, although illegal, became widespread. Once the taking of life became morally acceptable, the practice of euthanasia began to grow throughout the 1930s in hospitals

and in public institutions. Although Jews and other undesirable races were not initially the targets of euthanasia in Germany, the philosophical groundwork was being laid for future mass killings.

It is interesting to note that Germany had little or no difficulty in recruiting physicians, nurses and others to participate in its killing programs. Nor, it should be added, is there a shortage in the U.S. for medical doctors to carry out the million abortions annually in this billion dollar industry. Once government-sponsored programs are initiated, even on a small scale, they tend to escalate into bigger programs. Euthanasia will follow the lead of abortion and there will be many agents willing to participate in assisted suicide if it should be legalized in the U.S. and actively promoted by the government.

When the concept began to be accepted in Germany that all human life was not sacred and God-given, nor entitled to unqualified protection by the State, certain German scientists and philosophers produced a book which was to have long lasting and catastrophic repercussions in Germany, and which ultimately paved the way for the Holocaust. The book, published in Leipzig in 1920, was entitled *The Release of the Destruction of Life Devoid of Value*, authored by a Doctor of Jurisprudence and Philosophy, and a Doctor of Medicine. If not for this book, the German euthanasia program might not have begun or might not have been extended by the Nazis to the killing of millions of Jews, Gypsies, and other "undesirable" races. Over the ensuing years, this influential book gradually became accepted by German scientists, philosophers, medical doctors and government bureaucrats.

Thus we see that even before the Hitler era, the seeds of the Holocaust had been laid. Euthanasia in particular taught the art of large-scale killing and accustomed the participants to the taking of human life. There followed naturally an indifference as to what lives were taken. Furthermore, the decision as to whether or not a particular life was "worthy of life" gradually passed into the hands of the all-powerful State. At that point, there were no remaining protections for the lives of innocent victims and no appeal to actions taken for the good of the State.

The way was clear, therefore, for Nazi Germany to kill any and all alien races that they deemed inimical to the interests of the State or the war effort. These undesirable races included Jews, Gypsies,

conquered Eastern Europeans and political opponents, as well as those incapacitated individuals in hospitals and institutions who were too costly to maintain since they were not economically productive individuals. All these were killed by the State as part of an ever-expanding Holocaust program.

It may be shocking to many people to observe that, except for timing, the United States is proceeding along the same "slippery slope" that Germany traversed a few generations ago. We saw earlier in this article that America had an active interest in genetics and sterilization in the late 1800s and early 1900s. America now has abortion on demand, the most liberal abortion laws in the world, as a result of which, one million innocent unborn children are killed annually without the protection of law or of our U.S. Constitution. And now comes the possibility of the even more life-threatening practice of euthanasia or assisted suicide - the premeditated killing of old people, sick people, suffering people and others deemed incurable, hopefully without the consent of the victim or family. We in America are well on our way toward acceptance of the right of the State to kill any undesirable life that it wishes to. The observation that we are proceeding on this deadly path does not mean that the terrible end result will invariably occur. We must hope that as a nation we will be deterred from our present course regarding the protection of life.

The goal of eliminating "life unworthy of life" is being achieved one small step at a time. This was the course followed in Germany as well. That we are on the same course toward the elimination of life by the State should not be in doubt.

Already in the U.S., it is reported by polls that almost one-half of the population supports the right of abortion on demand, that is, the killing of the unborn. Regrettably, national support also appears to be growing slowly for legitimizing euthanasia, initially for the terminally ill, but eventually for others who do not want to continue living or whom others want not to continue living.

Once we as a nation reach this unhappy and treacherous situation, in which the State can take a life at will, what will happen to the central underlying theme of our American republic: "Endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" ? Who or what will protect the individual from a growing, centralized, autocratic and all-powerful Washington elite?

We are proceeding along a very dangerous course in this country and it will take a major upheaval in popular thinking to avoid going down the same road as Germany did toward another Holocaust.
