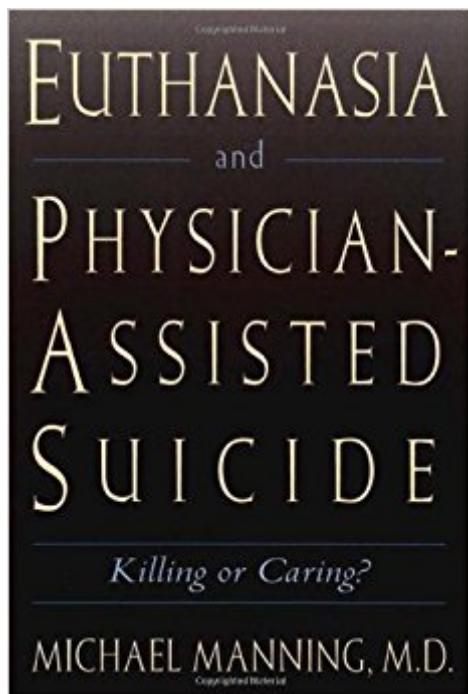


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Euthanasia And Physician-Assisted Suicide



Synopsis

A concise overview of the history and arguments surrounding euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A clear and readable overview of the issues and arguments about the euthanasia debate. -- Theological Studies A concise, clearly written book. -- Ashland Theological Journal All readers will find it a valuable reference. -- Choice Offers a thorough, accessible and up-to-date overview of crucial ethical issues. -- Catholic Library World Well-written, concise, compact. -- Calvin Theological Journal

Manning seems unable to differentiate between compassionate end-of-life assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia and the murderous genocidal regime perpetrated by the Nazis during World War 2. Almost every chapter includes a reference to the Third Reich and an attempt to dishonestly conflate murder with compassion and choice. He vilifies the concept of informed consent by trying to redefine it. According to Manning, the "consent" obtained by the Nazis by torturing and starving their prisoners is on the same level as a free, uncoerced choice by an adult at the end of life. Such utter nonsense does not belong in rational discourse. Manning begins his book with the Catholic teaching on euthanasia. According to the catechism, euthanasia includes any action or omission whose primary intent is to end life for compassionate reasons. This obviously includes withdrawing ventilators, ceasing dialysis or artificial nutrition and hydration. Yet Manning and the RCC contradict

themselves when they accept that not all life-saving measures must be taken. The only way they can evade this obvious contradiction is to concoct a non-existent difference between "ending a patient's life and letting nature take its course." To put it another way, assisted suicide is perfectly fine and dandy, but ONLY if you need a respirator or dialysis to live. Everyone else must suffer until a "natural" death. Did you break your neck but can breathe unaided? Too bad! You can't die unless you are in a country that allows you to refuse food and fluids. So much for compassionate conservatism. Yes, this is vitalism, but it is also the only reasonable conclusion of their position. The slippery slope is brought up again, as is often the case in these debates. What he does NOT mention (as an honest investigator would) is the obvious presence of involuntary euthanasia in countries that nominally prohibit it, such as Australia. Blanket prohibitions don't work. Alcohol prohibition and drug prohibition prove this beyond any doubt. The only country that has had success preventing cocaine and heroin entering their borders is Singapore, and that's only because it is an island nation. According to Manning's woefully deficient research, science was primarily responsible for the Holocaust. Despite the complicity of doctors and scientists in the actual execution of the Final Solution, the motivations behind the Nazi genocide, to say nothing of the attitudes of Polish, German and Austrian anti-Semites, was undeniably Christian at its core. Martin Luther's acerbic rant against the Jews, "On the Jews and their Lies," circulated for centuries before Hitler came to power, fomenting hatred against Jews and the establishment of ghettos in several countries. The bible itself condemns the Jews for the "deicide" of Jesus, even condemning future generations. John 5:16 - And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. Matthew 27:24-25 - "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children." The following policies of the Nazis were taken almost verbatim from Luther's masterwork of hatred and intolerance:

1. To avoid Jewish synagogues and schools and warn people against them;
2. To refuse to let Jews own houses among Christians;
3. For Jewish religious writings to be taken away;
4. For rabbis to be forbidden to preach;
5. To not offer protection for Jews on highways;
6. For usury to be prohibited, and for all silver and gold to be removed, put aside for safekeeping and given back to Jews who truly convert;
7. To give young, strong Jews flail, axe, spade, spindle, and let them earn their bread in the sweat of their noses.

The Third Reich came to power not because of moral relativism, but from

unquestioning, blind obedience to authority. The law must change to allow greater choice and protection for the vulnerable. Surely these are worthy goals we can all agree are worth fighting for.

I read this book in researching a paper on euthanasia; the author seemed, as a Christian clergyman and former gastroenterologist, to have a unique perspective. Surprisingly, given this background, Father Manning gives a date in the "BCE" and "CE" (as opposed to BC and AD) terminology, favored by those who have a negative attitude towards Christianity. More disturbing than this is the author's support for passive euthanasia - the withholding of nutrition and fluids from patients, especially those with decreased levels of consciousness (he mentions he does not like the designation of passive euthanasia - euphemisms are preferred today). Mentioned parenthetically, on page 20, is the determination that the denial of adequate medical care to novices is ethical. Forty years ago my wife was a novice nun (SND) in Chardon, Ohio; she had a pulmonary exposure at the time - not adequately treated - which has resulted in progressive and inoperable bronchiectasis, a potentially fatal lung condition. I am not sure how canon law would analyze this. Maybe we could try Luke 14 or Matthew 25:41-45.

Father Manning does a wonderful job describing the historical background of euthanasia and developing a frame of reference for the discussion of euthanasia in today's society. In exploring the concepts of self-determination, compassionate care for the dying and the important distinction between killing and allowing to die, Father Manning quickly brings the reader up to speed on the subject. The author goes further into the ethics of euthanasia by presenting the slippery slope argument and the principle of the common good. The book has an extensive bibliography and citations from varied sources that include leading ethicists, as well as Cardinal Bernadin and Pope John Paul II. Father Manning's intelligent prose draws the reader into serious contemplation of this complex topic. Filled with many points-of-departure for thought and prayer!

The author of this book launched a second career as a priest. He now serves as pastor of St. Gregory the Great Parish in Hamilton Township, NJ. Manning comments: "There's a sense of fatalism that can seize people of good will. That's why it's so important that we talk about it." Manning brings a unique and knowledgeable perspective to this crucial issue. As a physician he speaks from experience. As a priest/ethicist he brings moral/spiritual depth to the discussion. The whole issue of euthanasia brings to mind the easy accommodation that Nazi doctors reached regarding their horrendous experimentation on the "expendable" Jews and other victims in the

Holocaust. What looks like a humane issue at first glance, yields disturbing portents upon further examination. Read Manning's book !

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