

The Death Penalty, the Holocaust, and Euthanasia

God's commandment, "You shall not kill" protects human life. However, governments function under God's authority, and hold the power of the sword. The sword is not something with which governments caress people, but an instrument of punishment. It is not wrong in principle for a murderer to be sentenced to death, or for soldiers to take human lives while defending their country in a just war (Gn 9:6, Rm 13:1-5). Genesis 9:6 establishes the legitimacy of the death penalty. God does not want unauthorised taking of human life, because God made human beings in His own image. If anyone kills a human being, he may / will / or should (the Hebrew is ambiguous) be killed by a human being, because God made human beings like Himself. The death penalty does not contravene the principle of the sanctity of human life, but establishes it. Those who commit murder forfeit their own rights to life. This does not mean that their lives are no longer sacred, or that repentance and salvation are blocked for persons who have committed murder. They, too, can find forgiveness through Jesus' redemption. Jesus Christ kept the commandment not to murder in the place of murderers also. However, the freedom that Jesus has won does not include freedom from the consequences of sin, which may be life imprisonment, or a hangman's noose, under the law of God-ordained government.

Murder is the unauthorised taking of human life, outside of law courts and off the field of battle. Though Joab was a soldier, he was held accountable because he took the life of a civilian in peacetime. It does not follow, therefore, that, if a state legalises abortion and euthanasia, it is permissible. Abortion is, bluntly, the murder of a closest relative. No kind of "quality of life" argument can justify the taking of another, defenceless life.

However, governments often fail in their duty to protect lives, especially of minorities who cannot defend themselves. Many myths have arisen about the "holocaust" during the Second World War. It is amazing how David Irving has been persecuted because of his attempts to get at the facts. Any person who calmly challenges the alleged figure of six millions, or the existence of "gas ovens" is ostracised. Perhaps these are evidences of a racially perpetuated myth. We have recently witnessed continuing forms of "ethnic cleansing", with all their horrors. We should not be smug about the death camps in Germany during the Second World War, as though our current civilisation is free from such barbarity. No one should defend in any way a government-sponsored "ethnic cleansing." It is also a sad commentary on religion that Protestant Unionist Irish and Catholic Northern Irish have been killing one another on religious grounds. The same sort of thing has been occurring between Muslims and Christians in Lebanon. The same sort of thing has been happening in the Balkans, with three-way killing, Catholic Croats against Orthodox Yugoslavs and the other two against Muslims in Albania and Kosovo. The racist carnage in Rwanda and Burundi and the religious persecution of Christians by Moslems in the Sudan are equally deplorable. Palestinians, who have been displaced in this century from what had been their homeland since about the seventh century, both Muslim and Christian, are suffering terribly in an unequal conflict with Israelis. Hatred and resentment inspire Palestinian youths to challenge guns with stones! All political regimes ought to be protecting the lives of all their subjects, whether they are minorities or not.

During the period from 1870 the principles of Darwinism became entrenched. Many people equated race, English, French, German, or whatever "race", with genetics, and applied to race Darwin's principle of the "survival of the fittest." Germany led the world in science and technology, and scientific journals discussed how to maintain a pure "race." Many Germans maintained that the Jews were not a religious community but a "race." In Germany, circumcision was not a crime, but being Jewish was a crime.

The Nazis were not the only group that was anti-Semitic. Hitler consciously modelled his "final solution" on U.S. law. The Nuremberg laws that forbade Jews and Gentiles from marrying imitated Virginia law, which forbade blacks to marry whites. The German mass sterilisation of mental and physically defective people had, as its model, U.S. state sterilisation programs, upheld by the Supreme Court in *Buck vs. Bell* (1927).

It may come as a surprise to some people to learn that the "holocaust did not violate either German national law or international law. Concentration camps had begun in the American Civil war. The British had them during the Boer War. German courts carefully stripped victims of all legal rights before the "final solution." By 1941, when the death camp system began to operate, the Jews had no rights, and the Reich could legally treat them as it wished.

Not only Jewish people died in German concentration camps, but many Gentiles, including many Catholics. Catholics were dying in Auschwitz before any Jews did. Some have argued that higher proportions of Gypsies were killed in them than Jews. The regime targeted Jehovah's Witnesses and homosexuals as well. The tragedy in these developments was that governments failed in their duty to protect the lives of their subjects, and

many governments are doing the same today by legalising abortion.

The extermination of “racially inferior” people was not only legal, but also respectable. German scientists also used people in the camps to research such threats to health as typhus and hypothermia. After the war, much of this data came into the hands of the allies, or was quietly published by German medical journals. In fact, the saline method of abortion that has been employed for advanced pregnancies from the early 1980s had been developed in Nazi camps for use on Jews, Slavs and Poles. Doctors in many countries simply took the method over from the Nazis.

Is it, therefore, valid to compare current legal abortion with what happened during the “holocaust”? The “holocaust” developed from scientific and legal precedents in England and the U.S. Much of the advocacy for abortion today rests on economic science. Mothers do not want to give birth to another baby because the additional expense would affect their “quality of life.” It is “economic rationalism.” The advocacy for both abortion and euthanasia also rests on the psychological sciences, which support the view, that psychological harm to women is equal harm to the killing of their defenceless babies. The smart language that advocates of abortion use against a baby, like “product of conception”, “a part of the mother”, “a parasite”, and treating pregnancy as a disease, the “curing” of which receives support from Medicare, is repeating the kind of rhetoric that the Nazis used against the Jews. Babies that are unwanted are in a similar category to the “inferior races” that were not wanted at the time of the “holocaust”

People should see the parallel between German and U.S. courts’ stripping their victims of all legal rights before destroying them and the legalisation of abortion in many countries. The resulting decreased respect for the sanctity of human life, and the cheapening of human life also lie behind the advocacy of euthanasia. In both the “holocaust” and abortion, medical experimentation on victims has grown as the programs have expanded. Researchers support their work with the same rationalisations as the Nazis used.

Of course, there are differences between the Nazi “holocaust” and abortion. The Nazis felt that they had to hide the death camps to avoid general outrage. Nearly all the German camps were in Poland or Byelorussia, very few in Germany. By contrast, much of the population of modern countries like U.S. and Australia accepts and defends the practice of abortion.

A word is needed about perspective. Many more victims died during the Stalin and Mao Tse Tung eras than during the Nazi “holocaust” However, none of these three come close to the number of human lives that are terminated today by abortionists, year after year. We should not be smug about the “holocaust”, as though our governments have clean hands.