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Although physician assisted suicide and euthanasia captured the headlines for years under the showmanship of Jack Kevorkian, the history of our cultural preoccupation with death was launched much earlier with the legalization of abortion in 1973 and followed by the practice of infanticide publicized with the Bloomington, Indiana landmark case of Baby Doe in 1982. Derek Humphrey, President of the Hemlock Society, published the best seller *Final Exit*, designed to teach those seeking death how to commit suicide on their own terms. It remained on the New York Times best seller list for months. Our pre-9/11 culture of death was further enlarged with the legalization of physician assisted suicide in Oregon in 1998. On the cover of Time magazine, September 2000, the lead article, "Dying On Our Own Terms" greeted the reader. And as recent as the summer of 2001, newspapers carried news of the debate over the issue of whether to kill or not to kill human embryos for the purpose of stem cell research.

A turn in the road has been taken leading away from medicine and research governed by the ethics of the Hippocratic Oath for some time now. In the wake of the Supreme Court decision to permit abortion, medical schools in the 1970's began to alter, then replace, and finally to fossilize the Hippocratic Oath so that it has become, for many medical schools, merely a bow to ancient custom rather than an oath to which graduates seriously swear allegiance. The words which intended to once and for all put an end to abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia are now history and they were clear words that read,

*I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrongdoing. Neither will I administer a poison to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course. Similarly, I will not give a woman a pessary to cause abortion .*

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But Hippocratic medicine has been replaced by the ethics of the American Medical Association, Code of Ethics. The AMA Code says of itself,

*The AMA's Code of Ethics today is a constantly evolving document that serves as a contract between physicians and their patients. Responding to current trends, the code is developing new boundaries for the business of medicine.*

Some interesting speculations arise from this statement. First, that the standard of behavior cited by the AMA Code of Ethics should change according to "current trends" makes one wonder whether medicine is expected to abide by the Code or whether the Code is to abide by the



It is understandable that as Lutherans becoming involved in pro-life matters we might shy away from the moralism characteristic of Fundamentalism in dealing with these issues. We are rightly concerned with not neglecting Gospel preaching as our central message. And yet, it is in the misguided rhetoric of moral issues that the Gospel needs to be heard. The Gospel set people free from their own moralistic self-determination and lifts them out of themselves to Christ.

Let us call this patient Anna. What Anna needs is spiritual care, the cure of the soul. She needs to be helped to admit and confess to herself and to God the anger she has toward her husband. She needs to be helped to lay out her anger before God so that God can heal the direction of her self-destruction. And she needs most of all to experience God's forgiveness for her self-willed destruction in wanting to aim at her death. Finally, at some point, she needs to learn to forgive her husband, . . . which is the only way to avoid death.



show mercy.” Ethics for Christians is about the death of Jesus on the cross that transforms our lives, and it is the Holy Spirit who makes applicable in us Jesus’ death for our holy living. We are then, as Christians, holy people who live holy lives.

Paul writes,

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried with him therefore by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.[1]

How does this new ethic work? Isn’t there anything that we must do? Yes, “The righteous shall live by his faith.” Faith trusts in Jesus Christ when faced with ethical dilemmas. Faith is not passive, going with the flow, as New Age passivity invites us to consider. Faith faces and wrestles with the incongruities of living between the realities of what God as our Creator intends and what life in a fallen world has become. Living by faith is not easy. We do not hide from the

You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.[3]

The Gospel therefore addresses our Sin so that we Christians do not need to grasp at suicide or euthanasia. The Gospel is the good news that, although we are all helpless and without control