



# Suicide:

## *Some biblical, ethical, pastoral lines*

### **Introduction**

At times we are faced with the whole issue of suicide,<sup>1</sup> either because one of our church or family members has committed suicide, or because a loved one of one of the church members has done so. When confronted with suicide, we feel perplexed and guilty. We wonder: 'What could I have done to prevent this?' It always seems as if we could have done more. In this article, however, I do not intend to pronounce judgments in this regard. Instead I intend to make some suggestions, along Biblical, ethical and pastoral lines.

Many questions surround the complex topic of suicide. Who knows what is going on inside a person, except the person's own spirit? (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:11). Moreover, who knows his own heart? Who knows his own motives? Is every person not more than once a riddle to himself? And those who have died by suicide lie in the grave and do not speak. There is a dark veil lying over their death.<sup>2</sup>

### **Terminology**

Although there appears to be "*little agreement on a formal definition*,"<sup>3</sup> I take the word suicide to mean self-murder or self-destruction. It is the deliberate or intentional taking of one's own life. It is to be distinguished from the willing surrender of one's life, often called self-surrender.<sup>4</sup>

### **Reasons for suicide**

We are being told that most suicides and suicide attempts are reactions to intense feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, helplessness, depression, etc. At the same time, it is important to note that many people cause their own deaths without making a conscious decision to commit suicide. People who drive recklessly, abuse alcohol or other drugs, or ignore serious illnesses often do so because they have the same feelings as those who consciously commit suicide. We are being told that the process of a crisis which leads to suicide begins with a sudden, hazardous event, such as the loss of a loved one through death, or the loss of a loved one through divorce, or the loss of a job (demotion at work), or financial loss, etc.<sup>5</sup>

### **Scriptural lines for practice**

The following are simply some lines and do not pretend to be exhaustive.

#### ***a. The sovereignty of God***

Scripture proclaims the reality of the Sovereign Lord over all of creation and from whom all value and meaning flow (Genesis 1, 2). The world we live in is a world under God. Scripture pictures all that exists as having value and meaning as a gift and favour from God. For this reason value and meaning are not intrinsic to any person or thing as such, but neither is the life in this world devoid of meaning and value. Rather life is bestowed upon all creatures by God as His gift. Because of this, God calls upon society and each member of society to recognize Him and His Word and to recognize the value and meaning which God has given to them. In this worldview, a cosmos under God, we are not in a position to argue intrinsic rights, such as, for instance, the right to self-determination.

Scripture describes life as a gift from God (Genesis 1, 2). With Him is the fountain of life (Psalm 36:9). God did not need human life, for He in Himself is life. But He was pleased to create human life, outside of Himself, yet entirely in dependence upon Him, although He gave human life a measure of freedom. He gave human life a place on this earth and in a community of other human beings. This is how God ordained it and how He wants it to be lived. This is all involved in man bearing the image of God (Genesis 1:27; 9:6).

Man is not the author of his life. Parents are not the authors of the lives of their children, even though the Lord made use of them as His instruments. Neither is man the absolute owner of his life or of his children. Therefore, he may not do with his life nor the life of others as he pleases.

Life is also a favour of the Lord. After all, sin came into the world (Genesis 3). Through sin man rejected God's sovereignty and deprived himself of life. After all, *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). Nevertheless God intervened and promised him life. Eve is called *"the mother of all living"* (Genesis 3:20). From her the Son of God was born many centuries later. However, He had to lay down His life. Through Him God has given man His favour to live for Him and in love to one another.

Still death is a reality in this world. As a result of sin there is sickness, suffering, and death. Hezekiah's sickness, narrated in Scripture, may serve as illustration at this point. One day he *"was sick unto death"* (Isaiah 38:1). His life was ebbing away. He expressed the implication of death in these words: *"I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living; I shall not behold man again with the inhabitants of the world"* (Isaiah 38:11). Life is more than just breathing, eating and drinking, working and relaxing, being awake and asleep, more than thinking and having pleasures. Life is living in the fellowship with the LORD on this earth and in the companionship of man. That is the biblical meaning of life here on the earth, as a favour of the Lord.

On his sickbed Hezekiah learned to see the high value of life as a gift from God and as a favour from the LORD. In the Isaiah 38 passage he refers to his sins (verse 17). The LORD did not only confront him with death but also with his sins. Then he called upon the LORD. The LORD heard his prayer and granted him another fifteen years of life, as a gift and favour of the Lord, which had to be purchased by Jesus Christ on the cross. There He was forsaken of God and of men. This latter reference is crucial. Sinful man is in need of redemption. Redemption involves suffering, the substitutionary suffering of Jesus Christ.

This Christological line that Scripture spells out throughout its pages is of crucial significance. Suicide is not to be considered an option simply because of the sanctity of life which flows from Scripture's teaching of God as Sovereign Creator and manmade in His image. After all, in God's eyes every man, on account of his sin, is worthy of death.

Nevertheless *"God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."*

(John 3:17)

Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and He suffered and died. He tasted death *"for every man"* (Hebrews 2:9). The implication of this, for one thing, is that suicide is not only sin against God the Creator but also sin against God the Redeemer.

### ***b. The comfort of the Holy Spirit***

Scripture refers to the Holy Spirit as the Comforter of Christians and Jesus their Comfort. The Holy Spirit *"assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready"* to live for Christ.<sup>6</sup> He does this also in times of suffering and dying. To be sure, suffering is not the only means the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier uses in God's process of sanctification. Yet, *"suffering is an essential"* mechanism in His hands. Amundsen puts it like this: God *"works through suffering when the believer is left in his affliction without healing or comfort, is tried and tested by it, and is strengthened by the Holy Spirit in and through this refining process."*<sup>7</sup> When we become ill unto death and are no longer able to play what we and others consider to be a significant role in society, the Holy Spirit brings to mind the Word of the Lord that He considers our life here as His gift and

favour, even when it seems there is no more significance to our life. We as human beings are more important than our work, more important than any contribution we can make to society. It may well be that I do not understand my extreme way of suffering.

But *"Jesus is my Sovereign. He has bought me with His blood. I have been called into a fellowship of suffering with Him."* From Psalm 116:15 we know that the deaths of God's people touch Him deeply: *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones."* It may be that in my dying *"my comprehension of His marvelously condescending love will be enriched when ... the Holy Spirit will be my Comforter and Jesus my Comfort."*<sup>8</sup>

Reference needs to be made to the role of faith.<sup>9</sup> The Holy Spirit works faith in the heart. The Bible points out various aspects of faith. By faith we become partakers of Christ and all His benefits.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the comfort which is to be obtained by the knowledge of God's providence is a comfort which is obtained only by faith. It is by faith that we can also live and overcome the world.<sup>11</sup> It is by faith that we can fulfill whatever God's purposes are for us: subdue kingdoms, work righteousness.<sup>12</sup> But it is also by faith that we can suffer, endure the things that come at us. The grace of faith is just as powerful and victorious if we have to suffer. We will be sustained.<sup>13</sup>

### **c. Scripture and suicide**

There are people who say that there are passages in Scripture that only report reality and do not contain morality, that is, moral judgment.<sup>14</sup> First of all, it must be said that so-called 'biblical silence' at this point does not mean that Scripture approves of suicide or is indifferent to it.<sup>15</sup> Second, whereas Samson's death may be *"an example of self-sacrifice out of fidelity to God,"* the deaths of Saul and his armour-bearer, Ahithophel, and Judas are clearly cases of self murder.<sup>16</sup> Third, it is striking that in several cases they are *"the consequence of extremely grave sin, for example, in the case of the traitors Ahithophel and Judas."*<sup>17</sup> Ahithophel refused to acknowledge David as God's anointed king. He took offence at God giving David a place on the throne. Judas stumbled over the same stone of God's good pleasure. He rejected the Lord Jesus and despised the grace of God in Him. Similarly king Saul's self-murder was the culmination of a life in which he took issue with the sovereignty of God.<sup>18</sup>

Scripture does not suggest anywhere that suffering might justify the taking of human life.<sup>19</sup> Job in his suffering did long for death, but he expressed it to God. He did not think of taking his own life (Job 3, 6, 7, 14). In 2 Corinthians 1:4 Paul blesses God for comforting *"us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."* He goes on to write about *"the sufferings of Christ"* abounding in us, *"that our consolation also abounds by Christ"* (verse 5). In these passages *"the Bible seems to define a way of life in suffering."* Secular standards of love and mercy value medicine not only to fight suffering but also to help die without suffering by suicide. Scripture, indeed, teaches that God gives us medicine to combat suffering but prohibits taking one's life. According to Scripture, *"we may never take our lives, even at death's door,"*<sup>20</sup> but we must learn to come to terms with this encounter with suffering in a Christian way. Christ never taught His disciples to escape from suffering in death but rather taught them to take up their cross and follow Him (Luke 9:23).

In view of the fact that Christians belong to Jesus (Romans 14:8-9; John 10:27-30), *"they should not fear physical death."*<sup>21</sup>

*"The sting of death has been removed; the fear of death has been vitiated."* Paul's *"supreme ambition ... was that 'Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death'"*

(Phil. 1:20).<sup>22</sup>

There is the comfort of the Lord's abiding presence, as Psalm 23 describes it. We enter into the dark valley of pain and trial, remembering God's gracious promise, *"I will not leave you nor forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5). The words, *"Thou art with me"* (Psalm 23:4), express not only divine companionship but also divine compassion. The Good Shepherd loves and cares for His sheep. *"Death is both our enemy and friend. This paradox of death, like the paradox of suffering, no*

*Christian can escape. Nor should we want to.*<sup>123</sup> Those who believe in Jesus know even that one day their *"broken mortal bodies shall be raised up like ... (Christ's) glorious body."*<sup>124</sup>

To commit suicide is disobedience to the Lord, *"a failure of love and a breach of trust."*<sup>125</sup>

## **Suicide and early Christian values**

Suicide was not a problem for the early Christian community. There is no shred of evidence of suicide by Christians for the first 250 years of the Christian era. We know of no Christian in that period of time under any circumstances committing suicide for any reason, unless one should argue that Judas is the one exception. It was so inherently contrary to Christian values and priorities that it was not considered a viable option for Christians.<sup>26</sup>

According to Amundsen, *"some modern scholars" have made "highly distorted conclusions about early Christian attitudes toward suicide."*<sup>27</sup> They argue that the early Christians were morbidly obsessed with death and believed that life on earth was important only as a preparation for the hereafter; their supreme duty was to avoid sin, which would result in perpetual punishment. They argue that many early Christians committed suicide for fear of falling before temptation.<sup>28</sup>

They blame Augustine for being the architect of the Christian condemnation of suicide and argue that Augustine's position was not authentically Christian. Their position is mistaken.

Augustine *"clarified and provided a theologically cogent explanation of and justification for the position held by earlier and contemporary Christian sources."*<sup>29</sup>

It is remarkable that toward the end of the Patristic era some sources<sup>30</sup> did approve of one form of suicide, that is, suicide by women to preserve their chastity. For the rest, it must be said that to many early Christian spiritual life took precedence over physical life. *"The Christian was frequently urged to give his life willingly as a martyr if the only alternative was denying Christ."* In case of sickness, the Christian was urged to *"seek healing"* but not to *"cling desperately to life,"* for his sickness was *"potentially the God-given vehicle for his 'home-going.'"*<sup>31</sup>

## **Suicide and Reformed values**

In general the Reformers of the sixteenth century and the Reformers of the so-called Second Reformation strongly condemn suicide. Calvin, for instance, in a sermon on 1 Samuel 31:1-6 calls suicide an appalling and abominable crime before God. According to Calvin, we must learn to be ready for death when God orders it. But in the meanwhile we ought to wait for the time when He Who as sovereign Commander has placed us in this world, calls us home. According to some, King Saul was courageous and steadfast to end his own life rather than having to fall into the hands of his enemies. Calvin strongly disagrees. Truly Christian courage and steadfastness calls for us to take our place here till God calls us away from it. Similar views were held by other Reformed theologians and pastors. The Dutch theologian, K. Exalto refers to men such as Jeremias Bastingius (1551-1595), Wilhelmus á Brakel (1635-1711), William Ames (1576-1633), Johannes á Marck (1656-1731), Willem Teelinck (1579-1629). By way of summary, Exalto writes: *"All their fingers pointed to the words sin, guilt, God's judgment. In this regard there has been no disagreement in the Christian tradition."*<sup>32</sup>

## **Uncompromising and yet compassionate**

K. Exalto writes: *"The Gospel teaches us to hate sin and to love the sinner. It is so easy to fall into extremes at this point. On the one hand, we can so abhor the sin, particularly in this instance the sin of suicide, that we can no longer properly judge the sinner. On the other hand, we can show so much compassion and sympathy for the person who committed suicide that we no longer disapprove of their action. Both extremes are incorrect."*<sup>33</sup> In these words Exalto expresses a tension which stands out throughout his book. While he resolutely rejects suicide, he at the same time compassionately reminds himself of the complex motives for suicide, is gentle in his feeling

toward the persons who committed suicide, and pastorally reaches out to those who are struggling with the issue.

Exalto shows that the Christian theologians and pastors, who in the course of the centuries have dealt with the issue and the persons involved, in general, have kept themselves from making a judgment as to the eternal destiny of those who have committed suicide. Luther compared those who committed suicide with persons who, while travelling through a forest, were murdered by highwaymen. They do not commit the crime of suicide voluntarily but rather because they have been overpowered by Satan. In one of his *Tabletalks*, he said:

*"I do not share the opinion that self-murderers are surely lost. Nevertheless one should not hold up such a pronouncement to the common people, for then Satan is easily given opportunity to cause people to commit suicide."*

So he, as it were, opens the door only 'a crack,' in order that no one will abuse this compassion and in order that no person in affliction will give in to the evil impulses of the devil on him or her. So Luther fully condemns suicide but compassionately thinks of and speaks about the afflicted person who dies by his or her own hands. Many others thought along the same lines. Calvin, for instance, refused to pass a final judgment on king Saul. He refrained from making a general pronouncement along the lines of *"all self-murders perish in hell."*

Pastors such as John Bunyan (1628-1688), Wilhelmus á Brakel (1635-1711) and possibly also Bernardus Smytegelt (1665-1739) did believe and say that self-murderers surely are lost and are in hell.<sup>34</sup> But many other theologians<sup>35</sup> and pastors from the Reformation, such as Martin Luther (1483-1546), John Calvin (1509-1564), William Perkins (1558-1602); and from the Second Reformation, such as Gisbertus Voetius (1588-1676), William Ames (1576-1633), Samuel Maresius (1599-1673), Godefridus Comelisz Udemans (1580-1649), Petrus de Witte (1622-1669), and Simon Oomius (1630-1707), and many other refused to pronounce a judgment.<sup>36</sup>

Who are we to make a judgment about self-murderers? Who can suspect what all goes on in a person's soul before he dies by his own hands?<sup>37</sup> We must leave the judgment with regard to a self-murderer to God. J. Douma refers to G. Voetius who distinguished between those who directly and of their own choice kill themselves and those who accidentally and in ignorance<sup>38</sup> kill themselves. How sick or deranged was the woman's mind when she jumped off the 10th floor? What went on in the heart of the man who hanged himself from the shower? To be sure, there is the commandment not to kill, but the judgment with respect to the man or woman who committed suicide belongs to God. Even so, we need to emphasize that the act of self-murder is a serious violation of the commandment of God.

W. H. Velema argues that we should not play down the seriousness of the sin of suicide, as if it is of the same category as other sins for which we need to ask for forgiveness every day. In self murder a person says 'no' to the gift of life and the grace of God for life. The sin of suicide is different from all other sins, in that it can be committed only once. He who commits suicide cannot ask for forgiveness after the act, unless in the very final moment there is still a cry for mercy for Christ's sake. Indeed, it doesn't say anywhere in the Bible or in our creedal statements that self-murder equals the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which according to Matthew 12:31 *"shall not be forgiven."* Still, we may not conclude from these words of the Lord Jesus that, therefore, the sin of suicide is pardonable.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, I would not dare say that every self-murderer surely is lost and in hell forever.<sup>40</sup>

### **The weapon against suicide**

The weapon against suicide is the believing confession that one may not and need not commit suicide. Paul writes to the church of God in Corinth that *"God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God's faithfulness in Christ is a compelling reason to reject suicide, even in the most distressing situation. Whatever increasing temptation<sup>41</sup> there may come to commit suicide, there is hope in Jesus Christ. He is our Hope. Christian Hope is given to us particularly in the miracle of Christ's resurrection from the dead. From this miracle there is the way which leads not to death but rather to life.

## **Prevention**

We may not give any assistance to commit suicide. We must precisely do our best to prevent suicide. At the same time we must realize that even with the best prevention suicide sometimes cannot be prevented.

I wish to bring out three types of prevention.

### ***1. General prevention***

Just as information about proper nutrition can prevent all sorts of diseases, or just as warnings against use of alcohol and drugs can prevent addiction, so also it is possible to provide some general prevention with respect to suicide.

From a Scriptural point of view this requires us to point to the need for coming to know Christ, to live with Christ, and to find redemption from sin and also from suicide. The Gospel is the best prevention from despair.

This, however, is not sufficient. The Gospel must be a message within a communion (community) of saints. True communion of saints fights the virus of suicide — loneliness. I believe that fresh emphasis needs to be given to the importance of Christian marriage life and Christian family life, where the communion is nurtured. Likewise in the Christian school scene this true communion needs to be nurtured. Similarly, in the congregation.

Whenever the topic of death comes up, we must pay critical attention to current ideas about death, in which death is viewed not only as an enemy but also as a friend and in which one argues in favour of suicide as man's free decision.

### ***2. Medical and psychiatric prevention***

By this I mean medical and psychiatric help to those persons who are at a greater risk with regard to suicide or attempted suicide. Then we should not merely say to them: "You think way too much; instead you should get to work and keep busy," etc. Also the opinion that those who talk about suicide most likely will not commit it is a dangerous misunderstanding. When loved ones are giving indication of thinking of committing suicide, please telephone their physician and possibly arrange for hospitalization.

By saying this, I do not mean to say that they do not need any pastoral and other nonmedical help. On the contrary, a regular appointment with them, an encouraging smile, a question that reflects sympathy, patiently listening to someone who wants to pour out his heart can relieve depression.

Lack in love to them can be disastrous. A girl of 13 years of age committed suicide and in a note that she left in her bedroom she wrote among other things: 'I had everything I wished for except for one thing: love.'

In brief, spending prime time with someone in love and medical therapy need to go hand in hand.

### ***3. Prevention after attempt to suicide***

I am referring to prevention of the case of those who have attempted suicide but whose attempt was aborted (unsuccessful). Also in this case medical expertise is necessary, but also again intensive attempts from within the congregation as a communion of saints to encourage someone. If the attempt to suicide has been a 'cry for help,' we need to ask: "where have I failed in my

Christian life as husband or wife, where have we failed in our Christian love as family and as congregation?" and we need to show what love is. At the same time I should say that there is no need to find the reason for the attempt to suicide within the community.

### **Pastoral help to those bereaved by a suicide**

If a loved one has committed suicide, then the bereaved loved ones need help. The process of their mourning is different from other bereavement. They may well be struggling with questions such as: 'Am I (are we) to be blamed for his or her death? Can we ever get over this terrible happening in my (our) life (lives)?'

Painful and smarting happenings such as these need to be worked through and should not be simply shoved aside or repressed. Also if there are feelings of guilt on the part of the bereaved loved ones, they need to be taken seriously. Not every guilt-feeling goes back to true guilt, but if there is guilt, it needs to be addressed. However, the final word should not be to the guilt, but rather to grace, which is in Christ Jesus. It alone can truly heal and save.

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<sup>1</sup> Suicide has reached alarming proportions in many countries. Cf. "Statistics Canada, Health Statistics Division, 1994." I found in my files a booklet published in 1979 which states that about 30,000 deaths were attributed to suicide each year in the USA. Seven years later statistics showed that suicide was the second leading cause of death for Americans between ages fifteen and nineteen. Surveys indicate that an alarming number of young people consider suicide a viable solution to life's problems. When I was pastor in Ermelo, The Netherlands, at the psychiatric hospital there, with 780 beds, there were several cases every year of suicide and attempts to suicide (in 1983, 11 cases of suicide and 44 attempts to suicide).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. H. Bout, "Overwegingen rondom Suicide," *Theologia Reformata* XXI:4, (December 1978), 287.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Pabst Battin, "Suicide," in Lawrence C. Becker, ed. *Encyclopedia of Ethics* II (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), 1215.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. B. Harris, "Suicide," in David J. Atkinson and David H. Field, eds. *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 825. Cf. Francis Beckwith and Norman L. Geisler, *Matters of Life and Death* (Grand Rapids: Baker Bookhouse, 1991), 155f. Cf. J. Douma, *The Ten Commandments: Manual for the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing), 223f.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Paul D. Meier, Frank B. Minirth, Frank Wichern, eds. *Introduction to Psychology & Counseling: Christian Perspectives and Applications* (Grand Rapids: Baker Bookhouse, 1990), 259. Cf. Various materials made available to local crisis centres.

<sup>6</sup> *The Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's day 1, Answer 1.

<sup>7</sup> Darrel W. Amundsen, "Suffering and the Sovereignty of God: One Evangelical's Perspective on Doctor-Assisted Suicide," *Christian Bioethics*, 1995, Vol. 1, No. 3, 292.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit. Vol. 1, No. 3, 305.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Eberhard Bethge ed. Trans. by Neville Horton Smith (New York: MacMillan Company, 1965): "It is because there is a living God that suicide is wrongful as a sin of lack of faith ... (which) takes no account of God," 168.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. John 1: 12, 13; *The Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day 7, Answer 20.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. 1 John 5:4.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the first part of Hebrews 11.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Hebrews 11:32-38.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. H. Kuitert, *Suicide: wat is er tegen? Zelfdoding in moreel perspectief* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1994), 139f; A. Alvarez, "The Historical Background," in *Suicide: The Philosophical Issues*, ed. M. P. Battin and D. J. May (New York: St. Martin's, 1980), 25; M. P. Battin, *Ethical Issues in Suicide* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1982), 29, 72-73.

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- <sup>15</sup> Cf. Robert N. Wennberg, *Terminal Choices: Euthanasia, Suicide, and the Right to Die*, 46. K. Exalto, who acknowledges that these Scripture passages do not add "as a moral to the story" an explicit condemnation of suicide, states that Scripture does implicitly condemn it. Death is always the wages of sin, particularly so in the case of suicide, *Geen hand aan uzelf. Gedachten over zelfmoord* (Reformatie reeks 6) (Kampen: Kok, 1982), chapter 1.
- <sup>16</sup> Cf. Donald G. Bloesch, *Freedom for Obedience: Evangelical Ethics for Contemporary Times*, 22., note 30.
- <sup>17</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 169; Cf. Robert N. Wennberg, *Terminal Choices: Euthanasia, Suicide, and the Right to Die*, 47.
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3: *The Doctrine of Creation*, Pt. 4, 409; Robert N. Wennberg, *Terminal Choices: Euthanasia, Suicide, and the Right to Die*, 47, 48.
- <sup>19</sup> Dewey J. Hoitenga, Jr., "Death's Door," *The Banner*, 25 January, 1993, 10.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. Dewey J. Hoitenga, Jr. does not use this phrase, "According to Scripture" but rather: "God seems to tell us clearly..." Hoitenga rejects "active euthanasia."
- <sup>21</sup> Darrel W. Amundsen, "Suffering and the Sovereignty of God: One Evangelical's Perspective on Doctor-Assisted Suicide," *Christian Bioethics*, 1995, Vol. 1, No. 3, 290.
- <sup>22</sup> Darrel W. Amundsen, "Suffering and the Sovereignty of God: One Evangelical's Perspective on Doctor-Assisted Suicide," *Christian Bioethics*, 1995, Vol. 1, No. 3, 291.
- <sup>23</sup> Hoitenga, "Death's Door" (1993), 11.
- <sup>24</sup> Cameron, *The New Medicine* (1991), 37.
- <sup>25</sup> Darrel W. Amundsen, "Suffering and the Sovereignty of God: One Evangelical's Perspective on Doctor-Assisted Suicide," *Christian Bioethics*, 1995, Vol. 1, No. 3, 305.
- <sup>26</sup> Darrel W. Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 71.
- <sup>27</sup> Darrel W. Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 72f.
- <sup>28</sup> False perceptions of historical opinions need to be corrected. In his article "Did Early Christians Lust After Death," Darrel W. Amundsen with reference to Dr. Kevorkian cites the instance of the Michigan Circuit Court Judge Richard C. Kaufman, who relied on Alfred Alvarez's claim that the church's opposition to suicide was a late development. Amundsen gives detailed evidence of how Judge Kaufman's historical and theological perceptions were flawed through adopting Alvarez' definition of suicide given by Durkheim, "whose broad sociological definition of suicide glosses over and distorts ethical, theological, and historical issues." Darrel W. Amundsen, "Did Early Christians 'Lust After Death'? A New Wrinkle in the Doctor Assisted Suicide debate," *Christian Research Journal* Vol. 18, no. 4, Spring 1996, 12, 18.
- <sup>29</sup> Amundsen shows that earlier church fathers condemned suicide. He refers to Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165), Clement of Alexandria (ca. 155-220), Tertullian (ca. 160-220), John Chrysostom (349-407), and others, *Medicine, Society, and Faith in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 70-126.
- <sup>30</sup> Such as Ambrose and Jerome. Darrel W. Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 99.
- <sup>31</sup> Darrel W. Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 77.
- <sup>32</sup> K. Exalto, *Geen hand aan uzelf. Gedachten over zelfmoord* (reformatie reeks 6) (Kampen: Kok, 1982), 61.
- <sup>33</sup> *Op. cit.*, 91.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> Also Aurelius Augustine (354-430).
- <sup>36</sup> Cf. K. Exalto, *Geen hand aan uzelf. Gedachten over zelfmoord* (Reformatie reeks 6) (Kampen: Kok, 1982), the second chapter.
- <sup>37</sup> W. H. Velema, "De Waarde van het leven: over zelfmoord," *Contact* 37, (January 1985), 11.
- <sup>38</sup> Such as maniacs, those who are mentally deranged, small children and epileptics, "Zelfdoding," in *Rondom de dood* (Kampen: Kok, 1984), 61-115.
- <sup>39</sup> After I spoke on this topic to Office-bearers in Ontario on March 28, someone responded to this point: It is conceivable that in some cases, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit could be a part of suicide.
- <sup>40</sup> W. H. Velema, "De Waarde van het leven: over zelfmoord," *Contact* 37, (January 1985), 11.
- <sup>41</sup> "Temptation here may be used in the sense of temptation to sin, but it seems to have the broader sense of 'testing,' and to include trials of every kind," Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 144.