

Vatican newspaper says Nazi eugenics 'still alive'

Alessandro Speciale Religion News Service | May. 7, 2012

VATICAN CITY -- Proponents of euthanasia and aborting chronically ill fetuses use the same arguments that were once used by the Nazis to promote their eugenics program of mass extermination, according to the Vatican's semiofficial newspaper.

The article appears on the front page of Saturday's issue of *L'Osservatore Romano* and is signed by Lucetta Scaraffia, an Italian historian who is a frequent contributor to the Vatican paper.

Scaraffia's article comes in the wake of the Italian translation of a 1920 book by two German scholars, Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche, that set the ideological foundations for the Nazi program of extermination of disabled and incurably sick people.

The authors of the 1920 book (*Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Living*) proposed that the lives of the chronically ill or of the mentally and physically disabled were "unworthy of being lived" and should be given a "charitable death."

Scaraffia argues this mentality can still be seen in the "writings of many contemporary bioethicists, and of many politicians who support legislative proposals of a euthanasic type."

According to the historian, the book is "sinisterly" relevant to contemporary debates, and should "strongly embarrass those who champion euthanasia in the belief that it has nothing to do with Nazism."

"Contempt for imperfect human life, over estimation of the abilities of science" are "still firmly present in our time," she concludes, and this shows that "eugenics is still alive and has not been wiped out together with the Nazi past."

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