

chronically ill, from euthanasia for physical illness to euthanasia for psychological distress, and from voluntary euthanasia to non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia.”

According to the 1995 Netherlands study, in 0.7 percent of all deaths, physicians admitted they had actively ended patients’ lives without their explicit consent. In all, Hendin and his colleagues point out, the estimated number of deaths caused by physicians’ active intervention of one sort or another—euthanasia, assisted suicide, ending the life of a patient without his or her consent, and giving pain medication with the explicit intention of ending the patient’s

life—increased from 4,813 (or 3.7 percent of all deaths) in 1990 to 6,368 (or 4.7 percent) five years later.

Medical standards in the care of terminally ill patients in the Netherlands have eroded, and doctors have failed to take advantage of advances in palliative care, Hendin and his coauthors argue, as euthanasia, “intended originally for the exceptional case,” has become an accepted form of “treatment.” In one recent case, they report, a Dutch patient with cancer who had said she did not want euthanasia “had her life ended because in the physician’s words, ‘It could have taken another week before she died. I just needed this bed.’”

## *When in Rome . . .*

“Jerome and the Sham Christians of Rome” by John Curran, in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (Apr. 1997), Robinson College, Cambridge CB3 9AN, UK.

Saint Jerome (A.D. 340?–420), the learned ascetic who is especially remembered for his translation of the Bible into Latin (the Vulgate version), had little good to say about the high-living upper-class Christians of fourth-century Rome. But underneath the legendary disdain of his polemics, argues Curran, a professor of ancient history at Queens University of Belfast, Jerome was waging “a vigorous struggle for the support of the city’s elite.” He gathered about him a circle of noble Roman Christian women, mainly widows, including Paula, his most devoted disciple. “Much of the vigor of Jerome’s criticism of ‘sham’ Christians,” Curran says, “came from the uncomfortable knowledge that his friends were from, and in certain ways remained close to, this world.”

During the fourth century, Curran points out, clerics and monks drew closer to Rome’s aristocratic families, and in theological disputes in the latter part of the century, sought to win this audience over. Jerome, for example, crossed swords with a certain Helvidius, who argued in the 380s that after Christ’s birth, his mother Mary “enjoyed a full and normal married

life.” The implication for ordinary Christians was that married life was not inferior to the celibate life of a virgin. Jerome made a “skillful and tendentious rebuttal,” quoting Saint Paul and arguing that a married woman seeks to please her husband, while an unmarried virgin is able to serve the Lord.

Jerome looked askance at the active social life that some well-born Christians in Rome enjoyed, and warned against the temptations of good food and drink. He was suspicious even of such Christians’ benefactions: “Many



*Saint Jerome, with Crucifix and Bible near, as depicted by the 17th century Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck*

build churches nowadays; their walls and pillars of glowing marble, their ceilings glittering with gold, their altars studded with jewels. . . . Let us, therefore, think of His cross and we will count riches to be but dirt." Jerome was also irritated by the rich Christians' ostentatiously public charity. But Curran thinks he was too harsh. "Their outlay could be extensive and costly," he notes, and "their physical and personal patronage of sites such as that of St. Peter's basilica" helped to secure the churches as anchors of the faith.

The irascible scholar's sharp-tongued criticisms eventually led to his exile. After Pope Damasus, his patron and protector, died in December 384, an accusation of impropriety, probably in connection with his relationship with Paula, was brought against Jerome. "Although acquitted on the most serious charge, Jerome was humiliatingly invited to leave [the city]," Curran writes. He departed in bitterness and, with Paula and other disciples, made his way to the Holy Land and to Bethlehem, far from the Babylon on the Tiber.

## *The Significant Other*

In *Index on Censorship* (May–June 1997), Umberto Eco, author of *The Name of the Rose* (1983), describes his vision of the birth of a natural code of ethics.

*I am of the firm belief that even those who do not have faith in a personal and providential divinity can still experience forms of religious feeling and hence a sense of the sacred, of limits, questioning and expectation; of a communion with something that surpasses us. What you ask is what there is that is binding, compelling and irrevocable in this form of ethics. . . .*

*The ethical dimension begins when the other comes on the scene. Every law, whether moral or statutory, regulates interpersonal relationships, including those with that other who imposes it. . . .*

*How then can there be or have been cultures that approve massacre, cannibalism, the physical humiliation of others? Simply because they restrict the concept of "other humans" to the tribal community (or ethnic group) and consider the "barbarians" non-human; not even the Crusaders felt the infidel was a neighbor to be excessively loved. The fact is, the recognition of the role of others, and the need to respect in them the needs we consider essential for ourselves, has developed slowly over thousands of years. The Christian commandment of love was enunciated with great effort, and only accepted when the time was ripe.*

*But, you ask me, can this idea of the importance of the other furnish an absolute base, an immutable foundation for ethical behavior? It would be enough for me to reply that even the foundations that you define as absolute do not prevent believers from sinning in the knowledge that they sin, and the story would end there; the temptation to evil is present even in those who have a solid and revealed notion of Good.*

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

### *The Cloning Controversy*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

When the now-famous Scottish sheep named Dolly was introduced to the world earlier this year, the world responded with a giddy mixture of levity and alarm. "An udder way of making lambs" said a headline in the same issue of *Nature* (Feb. 27, 1997)

that carried the astonishing news that Ian Wilmut and his colleagues at the Roslin Institute, near Edinburgh, had cloned Dolly from the udder of a six-year-old ewe.

"We should be clear why the science of Dolly is so important," John Maddox, a for-