End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Mrs. Mary Margaret Treadaway

I am shocked to think that the Scottish Parliament would even consider a measure to authorise the ending of a person’s life no matter how tragic the circumstances. It seems to me that this is a line that must not be crossed. I am particularly concerned that the Bill has been presented on the basis of a hypothetical situation. While I have every sympathy for Margo Macdonald, Parkinson’s disease is notoriously difficult to predict. The person may deteriorate or the disease may not progress any further. Are we to base legislation on something that may never happen? I looked after a person with Parkinson’s for ten years and cannot see how ending that person’s life could be considered either necessary or humane or in that person’s interests. What is more, it is common knowledge that when faced with the reality of death rather than a hypothetical situation those who had begged for euthanasia often prefer to live. Just as the young cannot imagine ever being old, so most people cannot imagine the reality of death until it stares them in the face. While MSPs may be acting out of compassion do they really understand the finality of death?

Fifteen years ago I nursed my husband through terminal cancer. This was a very agonising time for him and for me but neither of us could have contemplated killing him. Human beings are worthy of better treatment than that. Every human life is of infinite value and every second of my husband’s life was precious to us both. What was needed and is still needed is better palliative care not killing. How can a civilised society allow people to die in agony when there are treatments available to help? Why is the Hospice movement under-funded so that it has to rely on voluntary efforts? It should be the right of every terminally ill person to receive care in a Hospice if they so wish. There is nothing “dignified” in having one’s life terminated artificially. By contrast, in spite of all the suffering, my husband’s death was beautiful and a memory I will treasure.

I believe that to allow euthanasia even in very limited circumstances is to open a floodgate that cannot be contained. There are no safeguards that can be 100% effective. Human nature is always open to corruption, to weakness, to mistakes and to misguided emotions. We have only to look at the scandal of MPs expenses to realise that even the most honourable amongst us are not free of weaknesses. Surely Law is best formulated on the basis of the Common Good not on the basis of individual hard cases? Since the dawn of time killing has always been seen as a heinous crime, to sanitise it now is not progress but a betrayal of true human values.

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