End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Paul Graham

1. Given the complexities involved in the reality of end of life questions I do not agree that a person should be able to request end of life assistance from a registered medical practitioner. This bill proposes a rupture from the legal protection given to all people from being intentionally killed.

2. The bill has no conscience clause to permit doctors and medical staff to refuse to participate in the procedures. This would become a significant moral and ethical issue in itself.

3. I am extremely unhappy about the ‘verification’ process outlined. This links into the so-called ‘safeguards’. The Abortion Bill in 1967 had safeguards and these have almost all gone by the board or are collectively ignored. Its procedures and safeguards will easily permit many vulnerable people to be killed.

4. I am shocked at the discrimination shown within the bill by identifying particular groups who can be candidates to have their lives ended. It would also create the impression that some people are right to want to die, and It will make some people feel a burden for not choosing to die.

5. It will permit children of 16 years of age to request to die. This is absurd, they cannot vote, drink in a pub or drive a car, but they can request to die!

I have also read the submission prepared by the Catholic Parliamentary Office and would agree wholeheartedly with their observations, so much so that I will repeat their concluding statement:

“The bill effectively aims at enabling people to act in a manner incompatible with the basic good of the human individual. It will strike a blow against the fundamental sanctity of human life and against human solidarity. Support of the bill would be a misguided support for those who want to exercise exaggerated control over their own lives and will sacrifice the sanctity of life in general and the protection of vulnerable people in particular. The role of the law in restraining the malicious or those of ill intent cannot be ignored because of the special pleading of those who wish absolute control over their lives. The moral law, upon which the law ultimately finds its source, ensures that the weak are not placed at the mercy of the powerful. The proposals for ‘end of life assistance’ as it is euphemistically called, is truly a path which places the weak at considerable risk to satisfy the distorted wishes of those who are most often socially powerful. It is appropriate to consider that in no way can such a law be described as compassionate. “True compassion leads to sharing another’s pain; it does not kill the person whose suffering we cannot bear”.

Paul Graham
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