

*Salt and Light Papers provide important information and analysis to help Christians and Churches to engage with 21<sup>st</sup> century social issues*

AA16

---

# EUTHANASIA – MY PREDICTIONS WERE WRONG, BUT THE PRESSURES ARE MOUNTING

---

Back in 2002, I was finishing my book *The Edge of Life – Dying, Death and Euthanasia*. Trying to predict the future pattern of the legalisation of euthanasia, I wrote:

‘There will be no radical law reform that permits the widespread administration of lethal injections, at least not yet. Instead, euthanasia will creep up on us, in dribs and drabs. First, there will be non-voluntary euthanasia for the incompetent, particularly those in a permanent vegetative state. This, of course, has already begun. Second, there will probably be the legal recognition of living wills, or advance directives. This is already being officially discussed. Third, legalised voluntary euthanasia, or medically-assisted suicide, will be brought in, for just a few, with alleged safeguards to prevent abuse of the many. When these three steps have been taken, and found to be increasingly acceptable to the public, then the fourth stage, a comprehensive, permissive Act will be introduced.’

‘It will be euthanasia by knee-jerk decree. It will be euthanasia by the backdoor. It will come about without extensive discussion and without the establishment of any all-embracing ethical principles, until it is too late, and then the 2008 Euthanasia Act (the date is a sheer guess on my part, but interestingly, while writing this book I have already revised it downwards, twice) will be passed, granted Royal assent, and then enacted.’

OK, I was wrong – there was no 2008 Euthanasia Act. I am certainly not disappointed about that. On the other hand, three of the four steps noted in the first paragraph above have now been taken. Here is the evidence of the mounting pressure to take the fourth.

- Lord Joffe is reported to be preparing for yet another crack, his third, at an Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill in the House of Lords.
- Margo MacDonald, MSP, is doing something similar in the Scottish Parliament.
- The high-profile case of Debbie Purdy, reminiscent of that of Mrs Diane Pretty and others, has recently challenged the provisions of the Suicide Act 1961. Her request, and her appeal,

failed and the two High Court judges maintained that any change in the law was a task for Parliament.

- The assisted suicide of the young rugby player, Daniel James, bought no prosecution of his 'assisting' parents. Of the 100 cases involving Britons who have travelled to die at the Dignitas clinic in Switzerland, none of their 'assistants' has been prosecuted. Now the new Director of Public Prosecutions, Keir Starmer, has hinted that a blind eye will be turned to this practice.
- Dignity in Dying (formerly the Voluntary Euthanasia Society) is known to be gearing up for an imminent battle.
- Two *grandes dames* of social comment, Baroness Warnock and Dame Joan Bakewell, have stated their belief that vulnerable oldies should be put down.
- MPs and peers will debate the issue as the Coroners and Justice Bill passes through both Houses of Parliament this year.
- Polls show the majority of the public favours a change in the law.
- Sky TV broadcast Craig Ewert's assisted suicide from that awful Swiss clinic.

OK, so I was wrong about 2008. What about the Euthanasia Act 2010?

Dr John R Ling

*The above was published in The Bulletin [March 2009] under the heading Euthanasia - OK I was wrong.*

**Salt and Light Papers** is a series of occasional papers on contemporary issues of social concern. It is published online by the Affinity Social Issues Team. Its purpose is to help Christians to think through questions of relevance to our place in the world around us. The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily endorsed by the Affinity Social Issues Team.

---

The Old Bank House, 17 Malpas Road, Newport, South Wales. NP20 5PA  
Telephone: 01633 893925  
Email: [office@affinity.org.uk](mailto:office@affinity.org.uk)  
Website: [www.affinity.org.uk](http://www.affinity.org.uk)

**affinity**  
gospel churches in partnership