

GOD AND DYING: THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN DEATH

JESUS'S STATEMENT ON DEATH:

"In my Father's house there are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF; so that where I am, you may be also."

A proposal being persistently put before us these days is that humans should not be allowed to suffer but to 'die with dignity'. The suggested method of achieving this is to give medical doctors the power to kill people with impunity. This is a far cry from the Hippocratic Oath on which the practice of modern medicine was founded. And it is disturbing that it is no longer obligatory for graduating doctors to take this oath and the phrase "Doctors do not kill" has been removed from the Australian Medical Code of Ethics recently!

What is more disturbing is the general attitude amongst seniors, even Christian seniors, that euthanasia is preferable to suffering from Alzheimer's syndrome, dementia or pain! How does all of this relate to what Jesus has said about dying (above) and what should our attitude be to these matters?

The Paraclete Institute affirms that deliberate suicide is a bad choice in the face of Jesus's promise that He Himself would come to take us home. Despite pain, despite everything, we should wait for His coming. He knows the best time for us to leave this old planet and he knows the way to the place where we are going!

FRAIL-CARE SALVATION (WHY EUTHENASIA IS A BAD CHOICE)

When you enter a frail-care centre you have to knock to get in. Later you find that you have to know the combination of the security lock to get out! Patients are advised that this is for their own protection. "We can't have you wandering about outside on your own, can we?" laughs a cheerful frail-care superintendent. As you pass through the lounge, you notice that most people are sitting or lying motionless in chairs. Some have their eyes shut. Others sit with eyes open staring at nothing in particular. No one is watching the TV blaring in the background. There is no light in anybody's eyes. These are the faces of the living dead. Whether it is drugs, demons or natural causes that bring on dementia is not certain. Most people think that, if they are going to finish up like a zombie, it is a good thing that they are in a place where they will be well looked after. Be assured, once you enter a frail care centre, even your excretory functions are managed by well trained, competent and caring staff!

When the family visits their relative they find them incoherent. This leads them to talk to the patient in a loud voice and whisper to each other. When they leave, the grandchildren say, "We are never going to do that again. We want to remember our grand-dad the way he was." The adults wish that they could do the same but their sense of familial responsibility stops them from saying it aloud. They face the reality that, at least occasionally, they are going to have to waste time visiting a person who no longer knows them.

As time passes, the patient's body, kept active by a vast network of technological support, seems likely to survive forever while their mind and spirit drift in a sea of nothingness. Suddenly, and strangely, some of them exhibit a deep stirring deep within. This becomes noticeable as an acute restlessness brought on because the patient initially resists what it identifies as an invasion. But the force they are dealing with is irresistible. The battle becomes tangible. flowing out into the corridors and felt throughout the whole frail-care centre. Experienced workers know the signs. It happens in every geriatric institution - that restlessness that

heralds the death of yet another patient The struggle lasts for about three days. As suddenly as it comes, it ceases. There is silence and rest again throughout the centre. The patient is still in body, mind and spirit but in a few days they quietly slip away.

AN EXPLANATION

It seems that the saving power of God exceeds even the fondest hope of even devout Christians. This restlessness is nothing more than God taking possession of what belongs to Him - a human soul. Jesus said it this way: 'My Father and I will come to you and be with you' (John 14:17). Being ignorant of the work of the Holy Spirit, we sometimes fail to teach people that the individual can know God, or as Paul reminds us, can be known by God (Gal.4:9). Though Paul the apostle made it plain 2000 years ago, many modern church-goers remain ignorant of the mystery of the ages, that Christ in us is the hope of Glory (Col.1:26-27), that by God's grace, the human soul may be born again (John 3:3) - the Holy Spirit taking up residence in the human spirit located in the *koilia*, i.e. the belly region (John 7:38-39).

But if one is to experience the Kingdom (government) of God at an inner as well as an outer level the Holy Spirit must be invited, encouraged, fanned up to flow through the veil, to wash the emotions and renew the human mind (John 3:5, Titus 3:5). Sadly, many 'born-again' Christians miss this second stage, despite a lifetime in church and the hearing of a thousand sermons. It is to these dear ones that the Holy Spirit comes in power in the frail-care centre! For our God is not slow to save to the uttermost all those who trust in Him! Rather, every human soul being is valuable in His sight, and in the last extremity of life the Lord exercises a divine prerogative - to take the soul to Himself. There is a struggle - the human participant, being ignorant of the ways of God, finds the process unnatural and frightening and is unwilling to give up their independence. But the battle is unequal; it is God Who wins. Once the veil is broken, the Lord the Spirit is free to fill the soul with His love, joy and peace. Thus for a few days, the dying patient experiences what God planned for them to experience over a lifetime - His *eudomenia*, His *shalom* within. The love affair continues until the patient is ready to fly away with the bridegroom.

The devilish purpose of euthanasia is to abort God's opportunity in death. It is an option for those who have abandoned hope in God. Sadly, many nominal Christians walk in this reality; in the spirit of the age, they look to science as their saviour from the jaws of suffering. They accept the needle to avoid the pain, not knowing that beyond the grave they will enter an eternity of lost-ness. Located in a sea of unorganised energy (a lake of fire) their soul will remain unclothed. Receiving no new body at the general resurrection (II Cor.5:1-11) they will find themselves locked out of fixture participation in the affairs of God and men.

The task of carers of the suffering is to steer the patient past the euthanasia alternative. When pain is strong we are all capable of making 'quick-fix' choices. Those around us need to hold us steady on the path of deliverance into the hands of the Master Carer. For He can not only save us from pain but deliver us faultless before His Father's throne of Grace.

Like Paul, knowing the terror of the Lord, we exhort all men to turn to Him. For it has been committed to us to not fall away into distortions and lies but to preach the reality that God is in the business of saving souls even at the extremity of life in the frail-care centre. Besides there is a host of people ready to care for us as we await His timing!



This Fact Sheet has been written by Dr John Potter, August 2003

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