

What Right Do You Really Believe To Have?

Synopsis

The following is an abridged version of the attached exposé. Yet, the writer does encourage the reading of the entire piece to better appreciate the seriousness of the issue under scrutiny.

Given that writer feels that religion is at the root of the problem of certain laws in this country, this particular aspect is examined at some length, ultimately leading to the substantiation as to why the writer demands amendments to the existing laws.

Preamble

Author's personal data:

Date of birth: February 9, 1944 - Heidelberg, Germany

Education: Four years of elementary school, six years of high school, three and a half year apprenticeship as precision mechanic in a research laboratory, and strict attendance at the University of Life for the past 66 years

Imagined profession during teenage years: Teaching languages and sports

Political orientation: Proponent of fundamental democracy

Religious orientation: Atheist

Chapter One

Religion as I see it

The bible is a tome of religious tales, someone said, and I agree. My postulate in relation to this statement is that one has to blindly accept, absorb, and live by what the bible tells us to believe, without questioning or analysis of the content and credibility of the tales.

I am a realist, I am a pragmatist. I do not believe carte blanche what I am told. I evaluate, I try to find sense and practical application, and in the end, I decide whether what I am told is of value to me or not. What I have learned about the bible is not sufficiently convincing that I am prepared to subscribe to it.

Furthermore, I am an individual, quite prepared to respect and obey those laws that contain value and have sensible application and that affect all for the benefit of all. Yet, I do not agree to being forced into conforming to laws by my government, when such laws are based on hearsay, superstition or any other such vagary in which I do not believe and in which I do not wish to be coerced to believe.

While I do believe in the power of the innate goodness of all people on this planet, I do not believe in the power of a storybook that pits one religion against another, one people against another. That, to me, is insanity.

Chapter Two

My opinion on some of the history of organised occidental religion

Let us look at the results of such historic insanity. Los conquistadores invaded South America, decimating indigenous peoples, who, for all I know were "created" by the same god in which the intruders believed. Do the Ten Commandments not tell us not to kill? Do the Ten Commandments specify that it is permissible to kill those who are not of "our" faith?

Then let us look at Northern Ireland during another epoch, where Catholics and Protestants killed each other. Two "Christian" factions at odds with each other to the tune of 3,700 dead bodies.

Then there was Hitler, whose obsession it was to annihilate Jews from the surface of this planet.

What about the French and the English who "took over" Canada? Children were torn away from their parents and stuffed into "residential schools." They were forbidden to speak their mother tongue and punished if they did. Of course, there is nothing in the Ten Commandments that prohibits that either, is there?

Finally, there was 9/11. Islam clashes with Christianity.

So here, in five short paragraphs you can paint your own picture as to why I do not read the bible or believe in god.

Chapter Three

The demise of religion, as I see it

Long before my time, famous figures have openly written about their opinion of religion in general and Christianity, specifically:

Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher (1844-1900)

- "In Christianity neither morality nor religion comes into contact with reality at any point."
- "The Christian resolution to find the world ugly and bad has made the world ugly and bad."
- "There are people who want to make men's lives more difficult for no other reason than the chance it provides them afterwards to offer their prescription for alleviating life; their Christianity, for instance."
- "Two great European narcotics, alcohol, and Christianity."

August Bebel, German social democrat (1840-1913)

- "Christianity is the enemy of liberty and civilization."

Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States (1743-1826)

- "I have recently been examining all the known superstitions of the world, and do not find in our particular superstition (Christianity) one redeeming feature. They are all alike founded on fables and mythology."

Kenneth Scott Latourette, an American historian (1884-1968)

- "Compared with the thousands of years in which human life has been on this planet, Christianity is a recent development."

Christian Nestell Bovee, American Author (1820-1904)

- "There is no tyrant like custom and no freedom where its edicts are not resisted."

Karl Marx, German Philosopher (1818-1883)

- Religion is the opium of the people.

Having lived in Québec for 11 years now (1999-2010) I am both amazed and encouraged to learn that this (former) bastion of the catholic faith is slowly, but surely crumbling. If it is happening here, then there are kindred spirits elsewhere. While it will be a long process, but the process has begun and will continue.

The other reason I believe in the demise of religion, is because real love ignores the colour of the skin of the other person, it ignores the spiritual orientation of the partner; it looks inside the heart and soul of the person to determine whether a fusion of the two lives is possible, not some external influence that issues a prescription. We are all flesh and blood; we are all equal.

Chapter Four

Religion and Government / Government and Religion

The preceding then leads me to the point where I question the influence of "the church" / Christianity / religion in the affairs of government. I need not tell you that, not very long ago, governments were controlled by the edicts of the church. While this power has admittedly diminished during recent times, I believe it still exists, albeit in a more clandestine way.

Politicians clamouring to be elected or re-elected will do whatever is necessary to ensure that they emerge victoriously. This includes catering to those in the riding who are known Christians and who will frown on any politician who openly declares her/his non-adherence to one of the many flavours of organised occidental religion.

This evidently carries over to the elected government's treatment of certain issues, including the passing of laws that are aligned with the prevailing cast of voters and disregards those who are of another mind.

And this is the point which leads me to the crux of the matter.

Chapter Five

The Non-religious Side of the Issue

In Charles Dickens' (1812–1870) "Oliver Twist" it is said that: "the law is an ass, an idiot." Under certain circumstances and regarding particular issues, all I can add is that truer words have never been spoken.

The law protects those who believe; those who believe that life is sacred according to the good book, no matter the suffering.

I watched my father wither away over a three and a half year period after suffering a series of strokes. In the end, the doctors decided to insert a tube through his nose leading into his stomach to nourish him and to keep this "precious" life alive.

I saw my mother dying of congestive heart failure, gasping for air for four days, until "our loving, heavenly father took her into his kingdom."

I watched my brother, with a brain disease called Lewy Body Dementia, shrinking to a nothing because he refused to eat in the end.

If those of you who are believers maintain that the law is just and that only god can take a life away, then tell me why you still believe after all the killing that has gone on during all the wars to date, and tell me why I should not wish that your god condemns you to fry in your proverbial hell for being so cruel to your fellow humans.

Chapter Six

What to Do to Effect Change?

The first option that comes to my mind is to RAISE AWARENESS. All too often, people who are unaware, are totally unaware that they are unaware. These are what I call 'status quo' people. I don't know how many times I was told "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" Or, I would hear: "We have done it this way for fifty years now. It was good then, and it's good now." How I wish I could force these ignorami to give up things like cars, indoor plumbing, and some modern conveniences such as computers and their most treasured Blackberry®. People whose heads are stuck in the past; hypocrites because they don't live the way people used to live eons ago, except for the fairytales that were brainwashed into them.

Many before me have written and talked about this issue without any success. Perhaps because pussyfooting on this issue is not enough. 2010 years of ensconced belief is not easy to eliminate.

Many cases were publicised in this country without any appreciable success as far as changing the laws of the land is concerned.

For example, the December 2004 issue of L'Actualité headlines an article entitled « La mort sur demande » ["Death on Demand"]. The sub-title is: « Pourquoi refuse-t-on aux malades le droit de mourir à l'heure de leur choix ? » ["Why are the sick refused the right to die when they want?"]

This is a prime example of journalistic excellence containing indisputable proof that there is a movement under foot in Québec to change the law. Even an ex-judge of the Supreme Court offers her opinion in this article by saying that a review of the law is required.

But, time marches on and nothing is happening to even consider an amendment to the existing laws. Members of Parliament have submitted bills asking for change. However, these attempts are doomed before they see the light of day. God is still "almighty."

Chapter Seven

Looking outside the country

Another article in the same issue of L'Actualité as cited above, dealt with a situation in Oregon, one of the United States of America where one recent president thought himself an emissary of god, and proceeded to invade a Muslim country in retaliation for 9/11 and for the oil that is there, of course. How can we blame him? God had spoken to him. Don't let my cynicism bother you. It's just that I have a problem with such infernal stupidity.

In this state, only 20% of the population is affiliated with any kind of religion. Its citizens can decide for themselves how they want to live out the end of their lives. All they have to do is fill out the required forms and then the **individual**, not the state or the church, decides on the appropriate moment to terminate its life.

Between the passing of this option for non-believers in 1997 and 2004, the date the magazine was published, 265 people had gone through the required steps and 171 have made use of this law in their state. This tells me that once religion is a non-issue, sensibility, compassion and freedom of choice replace it.

Other countries that permit, or quasi permit such freedom, are:

Uruguay!

Estonia!

Switzerland!

Belgium!

The Netherlands!

The thread that runs through all these countries is that there are non-believers who succeeded in convincing their respective governments that not everyone is attached to a given religion. Halleluiah! There is intelligent life on this planet.

Chapter Eight

Cause and Effect

In 1980, The World Federation of Right to Die Societies was founded, which consists of 44 Right to Die Organisations from 25 countries, as at July 2009. Its purpose is, and I quote:

"The Federation provides an international link for organisations working to secure or protect the rights of individuals to self-determination at the end of their lives."

1980! Twenty nine years of "obscure" existence. Obscure, because only people who want change would know that this organisation exists. Why would the believer in a faith be interested in such an outfit, since that person's rights are protected, based on the edicts of its god?

There is an organism fighting for a **cause** without it having any **effect** on the country which has adopted me and which I love.

So, what is it, I, one insignificant non-believer, can do to effect change? One way would be for me to sit on Parliament Hill, go on a hunger strike to my death and then have one of my relatives sue the government and the Pope for having caused my death, because I was protesting an arbitrary law, which restricted my freedom.

If you are tired of my deranged suggestions, let me tell you that I am tired of having to fight my fellow man for the right to die the way I want to die, not according to some religious group of ignorami.

In any case, do not count me out as far as the effect side is concerned. Maybe some religious zealot will assassinate me, as has happened with doctors who perform abortions; Christians who killed doctors who perform a service requested by women who own their bodies and should expect others to respect their wish.

In order to pre-empt silly arguments from my adversaries, let me point out that I am not talking about promiscuous women who do not have the intelligence to protect themselves against pregnancy or those who do not, due to their religious belief.

Chapter Nine

Our Rights

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms says that:

15. (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Author's comment:

If I understand well, we are all equal under the Charter, regardless of race, national, or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability, as long as we belong to a religious organisation. Atheists/agnostics are excluded and are, therefore, subject to laws that disregard any deviance from the established norms. I would love for someone to tell me that I am wrong.

24. (1) Anyone whose rights or freedoms, as guaranteed by this Charter, have been infringed or denied may apply to a court of competent jurisdiction to obtain such remedy as the court considers appropriate and just in the circumstances.

Author's comment:

Given that the Charter is not specific on the rights of non-believers, does this mean that I am not protected under same? Does the Charter tell me inconspicuously that I must belong to a religious group? If so, does this constitute a breach of an individual's right not to adhere to a religious organisation? Would this be good and sufficient grounds to challenge the Charter?

To strike a conciliatory note and bring my presentation to an end, let me point out that I commend the people who want nothing to do with suicide, assisted suicide, or euthanasia, because they are true to their convictions. I do not ridicule them for being religious people.

In return, I want, no, I demand to be given the same respect for what, and who I am.

Therefore, I call on the Canadian government to act on this issue based on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the fact that current laws are prejudicial. Laws are passed on a regular basis, without the consent of the governed. To pass a law that gives an individual the right to specify in a testament or in a mandate of inaptitude under what circumstances that person wants to die and how, will only serve to enact a right for approximately 4.8 million citizens who are not affiliated with any religion. This law is not to interfere in any way with the existing law. Simply put, if I am not able to commit suicide, I want someone, a compassionate person, or a doctor to be able to freely administer a lethal injection, or the like, with the purpose of ending my life. In doing so, the person shall be protected by law for having acted based on my instructions, and be immune from criminal prosecution of any kind whatsoever.

Chapter Ten

The question: "What Right Do You Really Believe To Have?"

The question is a double-sided sword. On the one hand, it is asking government what rights it believes to have, to pass laws that profoundly and adversely affect the lives of its citizens. On the other, it is asking you, the reader/citizen, as to what rights you believe to have to effect change.

Concerning the first question, I submit that, too frequently governments operate on the premise that, since voters have elected them into power, they now have carte blanche to act as they please. That is, in my opinion an utter misconception on the part of governments. Laws that affect the life, belief system, and freedom of a person are simply too important to be enacted on the presumptions by lawmakers that the people are or will be satisfied with them.

On the issue at hand, the rights of those Canadians who are agnostic/atheist are completely ignored. This must be changed, since the Charter guarantees everyone the right to choose.

Concerning the second question, are there issues in your life, in this country, with which you are dissatisfied, issues over which you have less control than you would like to have? Are there situations where you feel helpless, neglected, or forgotten because of existing laws? If such is the case, do you feel as though there is nothing you can do? If someone told you that you have the right to complain, why not let your dissatisfaction be known? Would you "fight" to effect change?

Being the rabble-rouser that I am, what I have done in the past, when the government intended to pass laws that would infringe on an existing right, was to write letters to the minister involved and to members of parliament. Not just one letter, but many, and until such time that assurances were given contrary to the government's intention. If more people were to do this, the government would have a good barometer as to its popularity. It would also know the preoccupations of its "subjects." Unfortunately, not enough people take either the time, or do they make the effort to do this. **In such case we do not have the right to complain, because it is our complacency that is at the root of the problem, not the government's disregard of the people's displeasure.**

Ergo, since there is tremendous power in the written word and in numbers, since you have the right to use this power, why don't you? Try it. Be sure of your argument. Research the matter. Speak to relatives, friends, neighbours and get their opinions on the matter that occupies your mind. Don't give up if at first there is little or no success. Perseverance is an important ingredient in all this.

So here we are. You and I have now come to the end of this the rocky road over which I have led you. I thank you most sincerely for having been my travel companion and for having had the indulgence, patience, and kindness to endure my ramblings.

Having said that, I now consider you kindred spirits as well, regardless of your ethnic background, your religious orientation, your nationality, the colour of your skin, your age, your sex, or your sexual orientation. A very wise woman once told me that she is a citizen of the world and that god is her religion. I will never forget this very simple, but utterly profound statement which encompasses all the ingredients required for harmonious human relations on this planet, unencumbered by religion.

On that note, I hope that some of my views and ideas will merit reflection on your part and perhaps even cause a minor adjustment in the way you have been thinking to date. Perhaps you will also consider writing a letter about whatever bothers you to your Member of Parliament, the Minister responsible for the subject of your complaint and to the Prime Minister. If I have accomplished that, I will have reached my intended goal of mobilising like minds and fulfilled my purpose of encouraging you to speak up and be heard.

May love, peace, and harmony be with you now and always.

Dedication

This exposé is dedicated to all those who are for constructive criticism and positive change.

Never hesitate to criticise if your argument is strong, and never retreat if someone of “higher authority” pushes you back.

In support of those philosophies, a quote by one of Canada’s former Auditors General:

“Question government or be its fool. If no answers are forthcoming, it is clear that there is a flaw in the government’s argument.”

Another quote that is à propos in the context of this exposé is by the French poet Jacques Prévert:

**La meilleure façon de ne pas avancer est de suivre une idée fixe.
The best way not to advance is to follow an obsession.**

May what you are about to read be informative, enlightening, cause for reflection and, hopefully, action.

May those who are in disagreement understand that we do not all think alike, and that there is not always only one way of looking at an issue.

In spite of our differences, we can all remain sisters and brothers and live in harmony and equality, if only we abandon the thought of having to have power over those who are of another mind.

What Right Do You Really Believe To Have?

Preamble

The author's abridged auto-biography

I must tell you quite frankly this is my first attempt at writing more than just a letter, about topics that are extremely provocative and controversial, at that. Such being the case, you should know a bit about me and my life first, in order to understand, and hopefully appreciate my viewpoint on the subjects under scrutiny.

I was born on February 9, 1944 in Heidelberg, Germany. My parents bestowed a first name upon me that is uncommon, even in that country. Having been an unconscious incompetent at the time, I was unable to complain. As a consequence, I was stuck with the name Detlef that would require spelling all the time, especially outside my country of origin. To circumvent this problem, I am known as Ted. This was not my invention; it was my brother's. My real first name was never legally changed; however, the government has always cashed my income tax cheques without ever questioning my identity. Money does talk, I suppose.

Since you know my date of birth, I need not tell you that I have a swastika on my birth certificate, a symbol of totalitarianism, horror, oppression, insanity, and worst of all, senseless and incomprehensible death and destruction.

During the latter years of high school in Germany I learned about the unthinkable atrocities that were committed for the "good of the fatherland," and it was at that point when my mother's innate rebellious nature came to the fore in me as well, resulting in countless arguments with fellow countrymen, who "had no idea what was happening," or who "would have been helpless anyway, had they known anything." And then there was the most despicable of all statements I would hear from people who simply hated Jews so much that they felt "more of them should have been done away with." These, on the one hand faint hearted and, on the other, utterly insane arguments caused growing disgust in me. I became so entangled in this feeling of hatred for "my" country and its inhabitants that even my father almost threw me out of the house during one of our clashes.

One should be safe in assuming that today, at the beginning of the 21st century, this incredible act of insanity would be condemned by every living human with a reasonably well functioning brain. At least I thought so.

Unfortunately, I am wrong. The following are excerpts from statements made by the British Bishop Richard Williamson, a member of the ultraconservative Society of St. Pius X during an interview broadcast on January 21, 2009. Williamson told Swedish state TV that no Jews were gassed during the Holocaust and only 200,000 to 300,000 were killed, not 6 million.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, Williamson declared in a 1989 speech that "Jews made up the Holocaust, Protestants get their orders from the devil, and the Vatican has sold its soul to liberalism." So, here we have a Catholic bishop who hates Jews, Protestants, not to forget the Vatican, for becoming too liberal. Whatever happened to "love thy neighbour, as you love thyself?"

If you care to read more of the antics of this gem of an Xtian, copy the following address into your browser and see for yourself:

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090209/ap_on_re_la_am_ca/lt_argentina_vatican_jews

Back to my story. You will learn later that my father briefly fought in the First World War, and was, therefore, exempted from being called to active duty during the second. Neither my father, nor my mother the rebel, were supporters of the Nazi party, same as many other Germans, so that it would be unfair for me to throw them all into the same pot. In fact, there were courageous people, some of them close to Hitler, who were so appalled by what they knew and saw that they risked their own lives in order to put a stop to all the lunacy that was taking place around them. Unfortunately, there were not enough of them, and some were too late, trying to salvage whatever little there was left to salvage.

A year and three months after I was born, Germany was finally defeated. My family was still in tact, in spite of the fact that my mother destroyed a draft order for my brother to join the Hitler Youth, a paramilitary organisation created by the Nazis. My brother being twelve years my senior, he would have barely been in his teens, when the brainwashing was to begin: to hate Jews, first and foremost, as well as every other human being that is not of the Aryan race. Luckily, the end of the war saved him. Had my mother's act of defiance been found out, I am safe in saying that I would not be sitting here typing today, since the whole family would have ended up in a concentration camp. Such is the M.O. of totalitarianism and fanaticism: Control, and the eradication of dissenters.

There was one member of the family I did not have the privilege of meeting, though, and that was my sister, who was born a few years after my brother. To this day I do not know why she died, although from conversations I overheard between my parents, the medical profession seems to have failed to live up to its Hippocratic Oath, said to have been written by Hippocrates, the "father of medicine," in the 4th century "Before Christ!" I make a point of mentioning this, because it will connect with one of my main arguments further on.

When one understands the mindset of the madman who was Germany's "leader" and who would speak of and write about the "human *material*" in his book *Mein Kampf*, one may easily imagine that a little girl was not of tremendous importance to the success of the imminent attempt to conquer the world. This was the pervasive mindset at the time: "We have the human material." Except that, for a mother a father, and two brothers, this little girl meant a lot. As if it were not enough for me to feel ashamed for being a native of Nazi Germany, I also felt deprived, cheated, and indescribable sadness over the loss of my unknown sister, to the point of desperation. It took me a very long time to overcome both of these gnawing feelings. It is, in fact, fair to say that these emotions haunted me.

In 1956, just prior to the Hungarian Revolution, my brother married and left for Canada. I was twelve years old at the time and not at all aware of the reasons, circumstances, and/or motivation that caused him, my only other sibling, to "abandon" me, and his parents as well, of course. I may be unfair when I say that he abandoned me, since I really did not know my brother for these first twelve years of my life, given our considerable age difference. I was still playing with toys when he started going out with girls.

Two years after my brother's departure from Germany, it was time for me to be confirmed in the local protestant church. I did not object; I would not really have known why to object at the time. My parents wanted me to attend the classes prior to the induction, so I did.

In the midst of attending a 'boys only' high school at the time, the good lord's creation called puberty was at its prime, which caused me to notice this vision of a girl, who attended the 'girls only' confirmation prep classes. I wanted her to be my missing sister, my girlfriend, my whatever. I was simply in love, for the first time in my young life. I would make it my business to know where she lived, when and where I could watch her from a distance, just so I would be able to lay my eyes on her. She had the face of an angel and walked as if on a bed of white, fluffy clouds. The memories are vivid to this day. Her name was written all over my schoolbooks, I dreamed of her during waking and sleeping hours. Well, enough of that. I am sure you get the idea. It was a glorious, enchanting, and exciting feeling to be in love for the first time.

One day, after lengthy contemplation concerning this matter and having gathered a bare minimum of gumption, I told my parents about this girl and that I would really like to meet her. "No, you are too young" was the very concise, definitive, and devastating answer. Since, at the time of my childhood, there did not exist the option of argument, discussion or compromise with parents, I had just lost another precious person in my life. Authority had once again gotten the better of me. I was distraught, I felt completely empty inside.

Walking along the river in my hometown one evening, with the moon light glistening and dancing on the water, I decided that perhaps I should jump in and drift over to the "beyond." Never having learned to swim, it would have been a quick departure. In retrospect, I am sorry I did not, since I would have spared many people much aggravation over my rants related to the often inane, destructive, and shameless abuse of perceived power and/or authority, as well as many other peevish I have developed with advancing age. All I can do now is try to help those who have had, or are having the same or similar experiences as mine, to help them liberate themselves in order to be in a position to manage their lives based on their very own convictions and not those of "other forces."

So, life went on after the destruction of my dream. Looking back, I wonder how much better I might have done in school, had my mind been more on studying, rather than trying to reconcile my unhappy life with this place of higher learning. In any case, during my six years of high school it became quite obvious to my teachers and to me that, on the one hand, I was not very useful when it came to the sciences, but on the other, I was very good with languages, music, and sports. It was not surprising, therefore, that my dream was to become a teacher. Kismet was not on my side on that one either, until I was fifty-seven years old. Better late than never they say, and I wholeheartedly agree.

Before obtaining my junior matriculation at age sixteen, I finally made a decision on my own. I was determined to leave Germany, as had my brother. This caused a logistics problem, though. If I studied to become a teacher, my education would not be recognised in Canada. What to do? Well, my earthly father, the "authority," suggested that I learn a trade, and here is why...

He secretly left home at age seventeen to voluntarily join the German army to fight for the "fatherland" during the First World War: He was captured by the French in 1915, and spent five years in a POW camp. After three failed attempts to escape, during one of which he was recaptured only a kilometre from the German border, he was finally released in 1920. Armed with this rather impressive life experience, all he could think of upon his return home was to drink and party, rather than study to become an engineer, which was the original plan. He became a precision mechanic instead, producing optical instruments and such.

Come to think of it, I referred to my mother as a 'rebel' at least twice, so far. In all fairness to her and given the above account of my father, he was not much better, was he? At the same time, it bears mentioning that, although they were strict parents, they were also loving and caring.

You have surely guessed by now what kind of apprenticeship I went through: three and a half years of trade school and practicum in precision mechanics. At the end of that, I landed a job in a research lab that produced such items as instruments for heart transplant machines and a variety of military gadgets for NATO.

Not very far into this job, I received an order to present myself at the local recruiting office. Obeying authority, as one must, I went. I was deemed fit to be with the parachute troopers and given a date for entry into "se Tscherman army!" Well hallelujah, praise the lord, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost. Wasn't this just the cat's meow. I, the arch enemy of authority, wearing a uniform and taking whatever crap the "commander" wants to dish out? Not very likely. I took the draft order to my employer, who wrote to the army requesting a postponement of the draft date, since I was working for a research lab. This tactic succeeded for the first and the second order, but not for the third, since birthrates during the early to mid-1940s were low in Germany, and they simply wanted all the "human material" that was available once again.

I have always believed in fate, kismet, predestination, or whichever other term one can use, and rightly so; here is why. On February 9, 1965, my 21st birthday, a drunk driver broadsided (my father's) car while I was driving it through a village, after partying with some friends. No, I was not drunk, the other driver was! Given the relatively slow speed, there were no injuries, but the cars were total losses. Needless to say, that this was quite a shock and I was not in very good shape. However, the upside of this unfortunate event was that I was able to request a medical re-examination by the army. A few strong cups of coffee and smoking like a chimney prior to the physical made the results look like those of an octogenarian. The draft date was pushed back, once again. To gain some additional time, I saw my own doctor who recommended that I have a tonsillectomy. When I arrived at the hospital for the operation, I was asked why the doctor was not informed that I was subject to a draft order. My response was that it was none of the doctor's business. The operation was performed, and the draft date was extended again, based on the doctor's orders.

Given that I had absolutely no interest in allowing the post-war German army to teach me the "art" of killing potential enemy forces, I quickly applied for a visum at the Canadian embassy and secretly left the country on May 15, 1965. In 1970, I became, and will forever remain a very proud Canadian.

It took me well into my thirties before I started to lose my feeling of shame for the crimes that were committed by my former countrymen, and to have been born into such a people. As fate would have it, it was my dentist in Toronto, a person of Russian Jewish background, who helped me overcome my shame by telling me that what "happened there," was between his father and mine; not between him and me. This simple explanation was very moving, and at the same time enlightening for me and I will forever be grateful to that man who helped me across this huge hurdle.

Given this account of the early part of my life, you will not be surprised if I tell you that any sort of authority, doctrine, edict, dogma, or anyone using such to abuse perceived power, is no friend of mine. In fact, I absolutely, completely, and unequivocally despise and condemn such abuse of power along with the people who employ this type of tactic for the purpose of control over others, for their personal gain, and for what they may believe to be their potential for glory in the history books.

Here endeth the auto-biography.

Chapter One

Religion as I see it

I read a quote somewhere to the effect that the bible is a tome of religious tales.

Since credit must be given where credit is due, I must admit that this document, which I barely know, is an absolutely incredible masterpiece. It provides comfort to some, while it also mesmerises and controls millions, who are afraid to let go and, therefore, steadfastly believe the tales to be true.

As you continue to read this, you may get the impression that some, if not all my arguments and solutions related to the subject are quite simplistic. If you do, you are a very perceptive person. You see, I have never attended university and am, therefore, not a very learned person. At the same time, my mind is not cluttered, as I call it, with theories. On the contrary, I am a very pragmatic person, whose goal is always to get right to the source of whatever it is that occupies my mind and to find the best possible ways and means to resolve issues or problems. This is what I have learned at the University of Life after 66 years of strict and continuous attendance.

And this is where I arrive at the crux of the matter about which I have finally decided "to put pen to paper," truthfully, keyboard to computer screen, in my old age: The abuse of power by organised occidental religion. For those of you who are now going to close the book and either take it back to the store for a refund, or perhaps set a match to it, (Hitler was very good at burning books, you recall) may your god keep you and bless you, may he bless the Queen and the Prime Minister, (to hell with all the ones who are of other faiths), and may Saint Peter welcome you in heaven with outstretched arms when your time has come. Amen.

For all those curious enough to continue on reading, let me explain what I mean by organised religion. For me it is nothing more than another example of mankind's "ingenuity" and apparent need to control and, hence, to have power over fellow human beings. What I find very astonishing is the manner in which this was done. While I am quite aware that Xtians will always have very cryptic answers to questions they are being asked to try to explain some of the stories in the bible, however unsatisfactory these answers are to me, and many like me, in the end, there exists an utter lack of logic, common sense, credibility and a total disconnect from reality, which seems to be ignored by the followers of the "faith." Scientists are speaking in terms of billions of years, when this planet was "created" and if I remember well, the history books speak of B.C. and A.D. If Hippocrates lived in the 4th century "Before Christ," what was there to create in the Anno Domini? I simply fail to understand. [*Reference to the Preamble.*]

I too was asked to believe in the father, the son, and the holy ghost/spirit. There were no explanations given as to who these entities are. There were no explanations for the fact that god's son is Jesus, but whose real father was Joseph, who fecundated Mary in an immaculate manner; that is to say, without penetrative sex. Heavens, I am touching on a subject that is taboo, didn't I? I remember my earthly father telling me "it is a sin to play with yourself!" I wished he had told me what he meant, because I certainly had no clue whatsoever. I found out later what he meant. Well, I still don't have hair growing out of the palm of my hand. Just imagine if I had been the only one

to have that happen, I would have become famous at all country fairs on this planet! "Come and see the only man alive who has hair growing out of the palm of his hand. The Almighty's punishment for masturbation!"

Ah, what the hell, since sex is, in my pagan opinion, the single most exhilarating and orgasmic experience in which humans of either or equal sex can engage, it must be good, because god manufactured us such a way as to facilitate precisely that, didn't he? Is there anyone who would argue with me on that point? If you do, you must be a really god *fearing* person. That same god that the priest/preacher/minister/etc. tells her/his congregation "*loves us.*" Do I smell contradiction here? Is it alright that there is contradiction, since we mustn't question the *good* book? No, no, I remember now: "Goeth forth and multiply" so that a powerful Catholic church dominates all other faiths, I presume.

My parents and I would occasionally travel to my cousin's home in Bavaria, a Catholic stronghold, where we met the priest of the little village inhabited by simple people: farmers, labourers, and shop owners. He was a jovial fellow who was loved by everyone, because he didn't make them feel as though he was above the "plebs." One could easily see him in the pub, making the rounds, talking to his flock, joking around, having a beer or two with them but also showing sincere interest in their lives.

And then, the unthinkable happened: his housekeeper became...you guessed it; yes, she did. Now, the villagers wanted this priest to stay with them all the same, because he did fulfill a very crucial role, which was to comfort them, to make them feel secure, to help them in case of need; something like a psycho-therapist disguised in a soutane. Unfortunately, the doctrine of the Catholic church frowns upon the contravention of its decree of priestly celibacy, and he had to go. I have often wondered whether sex between monks and nuns is permitted, since it appears to have been quite rampant in past times; maybe still is. I won't touch the subject of child molestation by, and homosexuality among those who are not permitted to partake in the joy of sex, as ordained by the Catholic church, which we all know existed, and still exists.

My mother often quoted Karl Marx who said that: "Religion is the Opium of the Masses." The modus operandi of basically any kind of flavour of religion has always been to condition (brainwash) and to control people through preaching "god's overwhelming power" and resultant fear by the flock. Yes, I am still talking about the same god who supposedly loves us. But, "we are born sinners," therefore, you had better watch out! Follow the doctrine without questioning, avoid the devil, and you may go to heaven. The picture I have in my mind here is that of a newborn. To believe that a baby, conceived through love/sex is automatically a sinner! Only an utterly deranged mind would even so much as contemplate such a ridiculous thought, much less preach it. But, for the glory of the father, the son, and the holy ghost, and to be true to the holy bible, whatever the good book says must be believed. Insanity I say, without any kind of fear of the lord or of possible repercussions, such as the devil coming to get me. These teachings are the opium, upon which religion relies, most religions in fact, to keep their followers under control.

Speaking of the devil, I must tell you about an experience I had when I was six years old. (Sorry for jumping from one epoch to another, one century to another. I told you in the beginning that I am an inexperienced writer. We all have to start somewhere, don't we? I acknowledge my shortcomings, but I am not afraid to try to improve, change,

innovate, or question the status quo, etc., etc.) As I was saying, I had this experience because my first grade teacher once said in class that, if we, the little ones, were not good, as in being disobedient, the devil would come and get us. Well, can you imagine me after that? You can't? I will tell you then.

I was born in a house, my parent's house, not a hospital where normal children are born. This house was 250 years old in 1944, when I was born. The house was built of sandstone and had a vaulted cellar where the tenants of the house and my parents would keep coal for the stoves, potatoes, preserves, and such. On occasion, my mother would ask me to go down there to fetch whatever she needed. I was never that excited about this chore in the first place, because the cellar was a bit spooky, but after the "the devil will come and get you" statement by the teacher, I refused to go. I didn't know where this bugger could hide out to nab me. But, it would surely be a dark and frightening place like this cellar. As mothers go, she naturally had to find the underlying cause for my disobedience and asked me what was wrong; so I told her. The following day my mother spoke with the teacher, evidently a god fearing person, and explained to her what she had done to me, albeit inadvertently, I'm sure. All my mother could hope for was that the teacher had learned her lesson and would not traumatise other children after that. However, in my case, the damage was done and lasted for a considerable length of time. "Little sissy," I can hear you say. That's fine, it's alright. I know who I am and, the kind of person I have become.

On I go. I was fortunate to have had parents who did not "force" me to go to church every Sunday; however, we did go, occasionally. I forgot to mention that we belonged to the Lutheran church, one of those renegade groups that doesn't kneel before its god, but still thinks that it is "the" church, as do Catholics, Baptists, Latter Day Saints, Anglicans (I used to be married to one), and Mormons, not to forget Jehovah's Witnesses. I will add, in parentheses that, this division of religion, or should I say of the churches, always created this feeling in me of being inferior to my class mates, the Catholic ones that is, who outnumbered us Protestants.

In my opinion, this is another one of the heroic achievements of most, if not all organised religions, and that is their ability to control the masses, not only through fear, but also through threats. If you stray, or marry outside of your faith, etc., etc., you will be outcast, shunned, damned forever. That would seem to be quite an effective deterrent, wouldn't it?

Well, after having been confirmed into the community of Protestants at age 14, I received a card from the minister saying that it is now my "obligation" to attend church on a regular basis and to attend bible classes. You would have been impressed to see the proverbial short hair at the back of my neck stand straight out when I read that mixture of Germanic and religious order. It was at that point that I abandoned western religion, never to return to it. In spite of that, I have become what I know without a doubt to be a loving, caring, helpful, kind, and peaceful citizen of this planet.

I must admit to having lied just now. I am no longer a pacifist when I see or feel injustice, oppression, unjustifiable control, etc. Neither am I a pacifist when I am confronted by a breach of my right to make decisions that affect only me, and when I am told that I do not have domain over my body. The aforementioned is only a sampling of the things that cause me to become militant, without a rifle of course, but armed with my ability to argue, to use logic and common sense, become insolent, if

need be, and to express my innermost convictions and feelings; and I shall do that until the bitter/sweet end.

Chapter Two

My opinion on some of the history of organised occidental religion

I scoured the internet for information related to this topic and very quickly gave up, since diverging numbers and opinions made it difficult for me to decide which of the stories to believe. The reason therefor, I believe, is the fact that each branch of occidental religion tells the story so as to minimise adverse impact on itself. Instead, what I will do is offer my very simplistic personal feelings on the matter.

One historic group very often mentioned in this connection are the Conquistadores. Since it is safe to assume that the "Ten Commandments" of the Xtian faith at the time, were the same as they are today, then "thou shalt not kill" was one of them. This fact alone is sufficient for me to indict these slaves of religion for murder. Not only was there bloodshed within Spain itself, but with the Pope's sanction and encouragement, South-American indigenous peoples, popularly called "savages," were decimated. Then there was Hitler, of course who, by his own account believed to be following god's command to kill Jews, in order to create a "pure Aryan race." Whether it was really six million Jews he killed or some other number was, and still is of very little consequence to those who through luck or circumstance survived, but have lost parents, children, other relatives, or friends during the holocaust. How insane does one have to be to argue over numbers, when one deals with the unnecessary and unjustified death of a human being? For me, the senseless and unwanted death of one human being is one too many. I underscored these two words for reasons which will become quite clear further on.

What about the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland? Two Xtian faiths full of hatred for one another to the point of warfare. In addition, this conflict had not only to do with religion, but also with social class distinction. The Protestants having thought of themselves as being better than the Catholics. "Love thy neighbour as you love yourself!"

However, it bears mentioning that they only managed to eradicate a meagre three thousand seven hundred human beings between the two factions; a figure that pales in the shadow of Hitler's "accomplishment."

Jumping right to the 21st century when Islam wreaked havoc on the United States of America, to which the American Xtians' self-appointed emissary of god, George W. Bush, responded by killing Muslims, the fanatics as well as the good ones, in the Middle East. Once again, "thou shalt not kill" rings in my ears, the ears of an atheist, doomed to eternal suffering in purgatory, according to the holy bible, I believe.

Needless to say that, it does not matter if it is the pope, the president of a country or a common labourer, who believes to have been spoken to and given certain instructions by god. The instructions must be carried out without questioning. At that point, the Ten Commandments are ignored and discarded. The thought that, perhaps, the instructions may have been the fabrication of the person's own demonic, deranged,

and/or self-serving inner voices appears to be totally impossible to many devout Xtians of any description.

This then brings me back to what I indicated in the beginning: the believers must not question god. It seems to matter very little, whether or not the perceived instructions make sense; we really want to believe that the attack must be avenged and the attackers eradicated. Whatever happened to peaceful coexistence, to turning the other cheek? Ah yes, I forgot, there is a passage somewhere in the bible where there is talk about an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, isn't there? Well, in that case, we have all the bases covered, don't we? There is an answer for every eventuality. Do we really believe that a loving god's mind really works this way, or are these rather the concoctions of human minds that orchestrated all this? I invite you to objectively and open-mindedly think about this.

Who/what is this "god" anyway? An entity simply assumed to exist, given that no-one has ever seen it, or from which a human has ever received instructions, if we are totally honest with each other. What is prayer? An opportunity for the sheep/the flock, to communicate with this entity, usually when in need, in despair, in trouble; hardly ever when things are moving along well, or when we have "managed" a windfall, at the cost of fellow humans, for instance.

I was in my thirties, living and working in Toronto when I wrote the following sentence. I do not recall the reason for my doing so, which is not really important, but it summarises my theory on the matter:

"Religion is a means of self-assurance through prayer, presumably resulting in the divine intervention by the assumed existence of a remote deity."

Now, I don't know about you but, if it were true what I have written here, then there are definitely too many vagaries in this postulate for me to be comfortable with it, much less to live by it.

Just to ease the pain, shame, fear and the discomfort you may feel reading this inflammatory repertoire of assertions, denials of the "established", the questioning of the existence of a god, and the statement of the man-made fabrication of the instruction manual, called the bible, let me emphasise that you have every right and even the obligation, based on your particular faith's requirements, to continue to believe, and to continue to practice your faith. My reason for writing is merely to open eyes, to entice the human mind not just to believe carte blanche everything that a presumed "authority" tells us to do. You alone can and should decide whether you are on the right track or not.

Forgive me for regressing in time once again, to a visit I had by a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses in my parental home in Germany. I was in my late teens at the time. I invited them in and I politely listened to their story, and their arguments as to why I should join their ranks, until they got to the point where I learned that they, the Jehovah's Witnesses, would be the only ones saved and resurrected after Armageddon. Well now, I tried to be as polite as I possibly could and asked them who the hell they thought they are, to assume to be the only chosen ones and showed them to the door.

I have had subsequent visits from members of this offshoot of occidental religion, but I no longer waste my time with them. I tell them right at the door that I am an atheist since age fourteen, that I have had a vasectomy, and that I am all for abortion, if the woman wants/needs to have one, and that I am in favour of assisted suicide and euthanasia. The general reaction is that their jaws drop to the floor, disabling speech altogether. That's when I close the door.

Just prior to writing the above passage related to Jehovah's Witnesses, I consulted the internet and came across a site which gives an account of the "History of the Jehovah's Witnesses." Feel free to consult the site at:

http://www.Catholic.com/library/History_of_the_Jehovah_Witnesses.asp

For those deciding not to view the report, let me add that it is a site called "Catholic Answers." What I learned when I read the report, was that words can be so powerful and be manipulated so subtly. Here I thought all along that only accountants were able to manipulate their work, namely numbers, to their or the bosses liking. I was wrong.

I can see it all happening now: The Catholic church will sue me for defamation, the accountants will go after me for falsely discrediting their profession, and the Jehovah's Witnesses will put a curse on me for saying rude things to their missionaries. Since I do not want to be sued, nor attempt to outdo Salman Rushdie's 'The Satanic Verses' and receive death threats, I now publicly apologise for everything I have written so far, as well as for the rest of this despicable sort of rubbish, in the hope that you will find sufficient forgiveness in your hearts, bestowed upon you by your god, to consider me a complete and utter write-off when it comes to religion and not worthy of further attention. But, I do really want you to read on. Once I have my teeth into something I rarely give up quickly and/or willingly!

I shouldn't tell too much about my personal life, and bore you, but let me just cap off this segment by pointing out that, in spite of my questions, doubts, not to mention my disdain for western organised religion, there are a couple of things which I hope you will appreciate.

The first one is the fact that I was married to a P.K. (Preacher's Kid, Anglican flavour) the first time around. Prior to "tying the noose, excuse me, the knot," I would go visit my wife to be and her family on weekends. Arrival on Saturday afternoons, overnight stay, and then church Sunday morning. What a hypocrite, I hear you say. I agree with you. But, quite frankly, the potential of having sex for the first time in my life at age 23 got the better (or worst) of me. So, what the hell, I'd go to church, because the future father-in-law preached, the wife to be sang in the choir and I refused to kneel when it came time to do so. This produced comments such as "what a self righteous boy" from my future mother-in-law. Four and a half years into this blissful marriage, I was advised by my wife that she had been having an affair for the past two and an half years. The inevitable separation and divorce ensued.

I shall not make any further comments related to this matter, but allow you to draw your own conclusions, and render your personal judgements on the case.

The other and, hopefully last story of my past life has to do with the fact that, in spite of all that you have read about me so far, I do consider myself a spiritual person.

Having grown up in Germany, I was exposed to the writings of a man named Karl May, a man after my own heart. I was always fascinated by his stories about the American Wild West. My favourite was Winnetou, one of those "savages" who did not know god, only the Kitche Manitou, the "Great Spirit" of the First Nations peoples. I hated his enemy, the white bandit Santer, who shot Winnetou's father Intschu-tschuna and his sister Nscho-tschi. I wonder today, why at this pre-puberty stage of my life, I was always on the side of Winnetou, the red man, and not the white man.

This affinity for the indigenous peoples, anywhere in the world, who were exposed to the ruthless exploits by organised religion and business interests, is still in my heart today. I am particularly close to the First Nations of Turtle Island, the place known as North America that the white man literally stole from them, where they tore children away from their parents to stick them into residential schools to turn these savages into Xtians. Others were killed by giving them smallpox infected blankets as "gifts." Treaties were signed with them, some of which have not been honoured by the "conquerors" to this day. Once again, I hear "thou shalt not kill," and "love thy neighbour as you love thyself" echoing through my white, atheist brain and I feel ashamed for all the nasty things these god fearing people have done, and are still doing to their fellow humans.

I have made friends with many of these savages: Blackfoot, Ojibwa, Algonquin, Oneida, Sault, Maliseet, Cree, Wobanaki, Mi'gmaq, Nk'Mip, and Mohawk. Every single one I have met has taught me something. Their wisdom, their respect for mother earth and for their elders is exemplary. Please do not tell me that there is the "other kind" of Indian as well. The one that sleeps on the warm air grate at the north-east corner of Queen Street West and Simcoe, in Toronto, and many other places in this country, drunk, dirty, homeless. For ten years, I walked by these people on the way to work and wondered what caused them to be this way. Could it possibly be because of the white man and his fire water? I'll leave you to ponder the answer to this question, if you feel the life of a redskin to be worthy of such consideration.

Getting back to the subject of religion, I invite you to read the "Ten Indian Commandments" I have hanging in the little "native" corner of my apartment, where I have books on the aboriginal peoples, an eagle feather, sage and sweetgrass for smudging:

TREAT THE EARTH AND ALL THAT DWELL THEREON WITH RESPECT

REMAIN CLOSE TO THE GREAT SPIRIT

SHOW GREAT RESPECT FOR YOUR FELLOW BEINGS

WORK TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL MANKIND

GIVE ASSISTANCE AND KINDNESS WHEREVER NEEDED

DO WHAT YOU KNOW TO BE RIGHT

LOOK AFTER THE WELL-BEING OF MIND AND BODY

DEDICATE A SHARE OF YOUR EFFORTS FOR THE GREATER GOOD

BE TRUTHFUL AND HONEST AT ALL TIMES

TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR ACTIONS

These are words of simplicity, words of great wisdom, words by which I live.

Now let us compare what you have just read to the Xtian 10 commandments, copied from the internet at:

<http://www.the-ten-commandments.org/the-ten-commandments.html>

The Ten Commandments Bible list — God's law of love

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:2-17 NKJV)

- 1 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.
- 2 You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My Commandments.
- 3 You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.
- 4 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.
- 5 Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.
- 6 You shall not murder.
- 7 You shall not commit adultery.
- 8 You shall not steal.
- 9 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
- 10 You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's."

I do not generally use this exclamation, but I will use it here: WOW! Talk about authority, prohibition, negativity, specificity, and dominance! Be honest now, do you not feel that the Ten Indian Commandments are "nicer," simpler, more all encompassing? I do. I suppose one of the reasons is because the Indians were never exposed to the superior, more sophisticated Xtian faith prior to the invasion of the white man. That is why the white man calls them savages.

Chapter Three

The demise of religion, as I see it

My mind is not burdened by doctrine, the fear of potential punishment due to my innermost thoughts being "read" by god. I speak freely, as I feel I have the right to do. I am not someone else's slave; I am the master of my own life. I am quite certain that these statements do not surprise you, having read thus far.

Nor will it surprise you when I say that I compare religion to a lie that is uttered. This lie, upon questioning becomes bigger and bigger to the point of explosion or implosion, depending on one's point of view. Thereafter, the pieces are assembled, compared, evaluated and the truth is revealed. We have all had such an experience in our lives; I certainly have. Sometimes we lie because we are ashamed of something we have said or done. Other times we do because we hate someone, or because we want to control a person or situation. While lying is not a very commendable thing to do at the best of times, for me the worst reason for applying this tactic is when the intent is to intimidate, denigrate or to enslave humans.

In my opinion, Xtians have lived a lie for the past 2010 years. All we need to do is look at the first commandment:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me."

None of my ancestors have ever been in the house of bondage in the land of Egypt, that I am aware. Neither have yours, probably. I shall leave it at that, and rest my case.

Even if we consider that "The DaVinci Code" is part fiction, there is absolutely no question that western religion is based on male domination. Alright, I hear you say; there are no female gods in any other religions. That is very unfortunate, is my response to you. Before Xtianity, however, there were numerous goddesses recorded in the history books. Even in "savage" First Nations societies, women had and still have a lot of power; as well they should, because the male of the species isn't always the smartest, particularly when it comes to solving problems without resorting to trickery, lies, violence and killing.

I shall refrain from going through all the Ten Commandments to prove my point, yet I do want you to read the following statements made by some well known historical figures of renown. Statements that relate to the biggest curse bestowed upon humanity since the first day of the "Year of the Lord." I have already quoted Karl Marx earlier on and now present the following:

Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher (1844-1900)

- "In Christianity neither morality nor religion comes into contact with reality at any point."
- "The Christian resolution to find the world ugly and bad has made the world ugly and bad."

- "There are people who want to make men's lives more difficult for no other reason than the chance it provides them afterwards to offer their prescription for alleviating life; their Christianity, for instance."
- "Two great European narcotics, alcohol, and Christianity."

August Bebel, German social democrat (1840-1913)

"Christianity is the enemy of liberty and civilization."

Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States (1743-1826)
(1743-1826):

- "I have recently been examining all the known superstitions of the world, and do not find in our particular superstition (Christianity) one redeeming feature. They are all alike founded on fables and mythology."

Kenneth Scott Latourette, an American historian (1884-1968)

- "Compared with the thousands of years in which human life has been on this planet, Christianity is a recent development."

Christian Nestell Bovee, Author (1820-1904)

- "There is no tyrant like custom and no freedom where its edicts are not resisted."

Karl Marx, German Philosopher (1818-1883)

- "Religion is the opium of the people."

You see that much brighter, more powerful minds than mine have found fault with religion long before my time, and they all support and underscore my sentiments.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said that "Things refuse to be mismanaged long." Now it is a matter of one's perception as to what "long" means in terms of years, decades, or millennia. However, whatever term one may agree upon, it seems that, according to him, something that is not the way it should be, will eventually come to an end. As far as religion is concerned, all I can say is 'thank God! 'No, that's not right; 'thank the more enlightened part of mankind.'

A very striking example of such "rebellion," against the Catholic faith in particular, is the province of Québec. I state this with a goodly amount of certainty, because after spending 34 years in Toronto, my (second) wife (an excommunicated Catholic for having divorced and then married me, a heathen), a native of Sherbrooke, Québec and I decided to pull up stakes and move to the enchanting Eastern Townships in 1999.

Now, this part of the country does not have exclusivity on village, town, or city names that refer to Saints, however, even if you don't know much about this province, where a foreign language is being spoken, you will surely know that there is a plethora of places named after saints here, seriously rivalling Italy, France, Spain, even Switzerland, Austria, and Germany.

Let me give you some examples of the inventiveness, and the seemingly dire need to cram as many Saints into the countryside as possible, in order to emphasise the dominance of the religion of the day:

Sainte-Clotilde-De-Horton (no relation to Tim Horton doughnuts), Saint-Cyrille-De-Wendover (the British must have snuck in the Wendover here), Sainte-Émélie-De-l'Énergie (don't ask, I do not have a good answer for this one. Maybe she was a very strong woman; a Lesbian, maybe? Oh no, here I go again), Saint-Jacques-De-Leeds (I am reasonably certain that this has nothing to do with the famous British soccer club!) One name that doesn't exist in Québec is something like Sainte-Marie-Des-Miracles-Inutiles (Saint Mary of Useless Miracles.) Alright I stop now.

You may recall that I mentioned my facility for languages at the beginning of the book and my desire to teach same. Well, I shall once again refer to my belief that our lives are pre-planned by the Great Spirit, because in 2001, at age 57 I began to teach English and German at a private language school in Sherbrooke, Québec. In spite of the fact that I do not have any papers from an institution of higher learning that certify my knowledge of the language, and my ability to teach, the kind soul of a manager at the school granted me the opportunity to prove myself. And so I did.

This leads me to the meat of the matter, which is to recount my initial experiences with Québec students, wishing to improve their English. My first class always requires the student to tell me about her/his life. This is what I hear, more often than not: "I am born to Sainte-Agathe-De-Lotbinière, for example. I go at de primary school and after I go at de secondary and after at de Cégep," etc. Then I ask whether or not the student is married. "No, I not marry." Next question: What did you do last weekend? "I go play ockey wid my childs." But you told me that you are not married, I protest. "Yes, I not marry. I ave a blonde" (the French-Canadian term for 'girlfriend'). In the beginning I was shocked when I heard that and explained that if they have a partner and they have children with that partner, why do they not call that person their husband/wife, even if they were not married in a church? "Not important," would be the answer.

I must say that the number of Quebecers I have met during the past eleven years who have simply abandoned the church, and seem quite happy without it, is quite staggering. Another sign is the number of churches sold, and turned into exclusive restaurants and art galleries, for instance. This is less true for Catholic churches, though, due to the much more solid financial base of that enterprise.

Now let's have a look at the Jehovah's Witnesses, as copied from:
<http://www.mostmerciful.com/jw%20-%20who%20are%20they.htm>

In 1872, a pastor named Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916), organized an inconspicuous Bible Study Group in Allegheny, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. USA. Less than a decade later, this study group became the Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society. Pastor Russell became its founder president. Subsequently, the Society decided to drop the word "Zion's" from its name that depicted a sort of affiliation with Israel. The movement adopted the name Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society.

Author's comment:

What was Charles Taze Russel thinking when he put the word "Zion" into the name of his sect? To imply an affiliation with Israel is simply unthinkable!

In 1961, 89 years after the founding of this Bible Study Group, it was proclaimed that blood transfusions are no longer permitted.

Here is proof, as copied from the following web site:

<http://www.ajwrb.org/>

"If you have reason to believe that a certain product contains blood or a blood fraction...if the label says that certain tablets contain haemoglobin...this is from blood...a Christian knows, without asking, that he should avoid such a preparation. - The Watchtower 11/01/1961, p. 669

Is it wrong to sustain life by administering a transfusion of blood or plasma or red cells or others of the component parts of the blood? Yes!...the prohibition includes "any blood at all." - Blood, Medicine and the Law of God, 1961, pp. 13, 14

Author's comment:

The question I have here is: What was it in 1961 that caused one or several super brains within the hierarchy to figure out that suddenly, their permutation of the conventional Xtian god forbids its members to have blood from outside sources fed into their bodies?

It appears that by 1994, twenty-six children had lost their lives because of an inane, man-made religious belief that prevented them from having blood transfusions. There was no mention of a number of adult casualties. As far as the legal community is concerned, you will find the following news report, as copied from http://www.citynews.ca/news/news_1473.aspx quite interesting:

Grieving Father Sues Jehovah's Witness Over Blood Transfusion Ban

Friday June 23, 2006
CityNews.ca Staff

It's a matter of faith.

It's a matter of medical science.

That's the dichotomy that's landed a grieving father and some lawyers in court, over a matter of life and death.

Lawrence Hughes' daughter Bethany was a devout Jehovah's Witness who came down with leukemia. Under the tenets of her religion, she refused to have a blood transfusion that her father believes could have helped save her life. She later died from the disease.

Now he wants his day in court, blaming the religious order and the two lawyers who represented her.

"I'll never give up until there's justice," a bitter Hughes relates. "What the defendants did to my daughter was despicable, cruel and criminal. If the Watchtower Society had left my daughter alone, she would have had a fighting chance to live."

The Society believes it's against God's wishes for one person to take blood from another. But Hughes is adamant the group has misinterpreted the scriptures and brainwashed his daughter into refusing a transfusion, even after it was ordered by the courts.

But he isn't legally allowed to sue them so he's going after their lawyers instead.

"If Bethany had taken a blood transfusion, she would have been shunned by her family and by all the friends that she had been allowed to have all her life," he complains. "That's a lot of pressure on a 16-year-old kid who has leukemia."

Bethany eventually received 38 transfusions, but by the time they were administered, it was too late. She died in 2002, leaving her father bitter and furious. She was only 17-years-old.

Since then, Lawrence Hughes has become a man with a mission - get justice for his daughter who he believes lost her life for nothing. He's asked the R.C.M .P. to charge the religious group's legal team with murder. But the advocates maintain they were simply following their client's orders.

"It was totally my decision, and I'm the one who enforced it," Bethany made clear in a statement before she died.

Lawyer David Gnam understands the father's loss and his wrath, but doesn't believe he has a case. "Mr. Hughes is trying to put words into the mouth of his daughter that she would never have said while she was alive," he insists. "Her position was very clear."

Hughes contends his only recourse now is to appeal the decision that prevents him from suing the Watchtower Society.

But he claims he's not alone, and has thousands of people on his side.

He's hoping most of them show up on Saturday when he holds a protest outside the Society's headquarters in Georgetown.

Author's comment.

Speaking of dichotomy, on the one hand the courts prosecute people based on existing laws because they assisted others to commit suicide, or have taken another's life out of compassion, while in this case a distraught father does not seem to have a leg on which to stand. He is not legally allowed to sue the Watchtower Society, and the daughter's lawyers claim that they simply followed their client's instructions.

Does this mean that I can refuse medical assistance with the purpose of terminating my life, but I cannot ask someone to give me a shot to terminate my life? Is all this a matter of mincing words, with the goal not to "insult" a dogma?

If you are interested in further information about this distraught father's fight against the inexplicable desire to see thousands of its followers die due to an inane edict, go to:

<http://www.watchtowernews.org/Hughes090308.htm>

So there appears to be a movement among enlightened people to question, attack and even discard this belief system. These are good people, who have uncluttered brains, and who can still be believers, who can still be spiritual, but who will also oppose insanity when they see it and experience it.

The name of one of these groups is "Associated Jehovah's Witnesses for Reform on Blood." While concessions by the mother ship seem to have been made, it also appears that there will be further pressure to arrive at a point where this idiotic rule will not only be revamped, but eradicated. Congratulations, and the best of luck to the rebels.

Following is an excerpt from the A.J.W.R.B. web site:

Jehovah's Witnesses are known for their rejection of blood transfusion, even when it is necessary to save life. The controlling organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Watchtower Society, has required that Jehovah's Witnesses reject blood transfusions since 1961. Nevertheless, in recent years the Watchtower Society has permitted Jehovah's Witnesses to accept some blood products like albumin.

The June 15, 2000 issue of The Watchtower (an official church publication) announced that Jehovah's Witnesses may now accept "fractions of any of the primary components" of blood. Previously Jehovah's Witnesses had been permitted to accept only fractions of blood plasma without facing possible expulsion from the church.

This expanded policy will permit church members to accept numerous additional blood therapies and treatments. The Watchtower specifically mentions interferons and interleukins from white cells and a wound healing factor from platelets. More importantly, the policy apparently opens the door to the use of hemoglobin based blood substitutes like "PolyHeme", that are close to obtaining FDA approval. Since hemoglobin is obtained from fractionating red cells, it would be permitted under the policy the Watchtower Society recently announced.

This is an important development since hemoglobin based blood substitutes have the potential to save many Jehovah's Witness lives that are presently being lost in cases of trauma or surgery with massive blood loss.

A.J.W.R.B. welcomes this recent development but will continue to work for further revisions in the Watchtower Society's blood policy. We believe that Jehovah's Witnesses should have a free choice in their medical treatment without controls or sanctions from the Watchtower Society that could separate them from their religious community or Jehovah's Witness family members and friends.

For complete documentation and further analysis of these developments visit the official site of the "Associated Jehovah's Witnesses for Reform on Blood."

Author's comment:

These are the words that ring like a symphony in my ears:

We believe that Jehovah's Witnesses should have a free choice in their medical treatment without controls or sanctions from the Watchtower Society that could separate them from their religious community or Jehovah's Witness family members and friends.

The point of this whole story is to indicate that the command to adhere to the faith or to suffer resultant disaster for disobedience is losing its effect on a goodly part of the flock. Unless belief systems move with the times and change their tune, they have no hope for survival, in my opinion.

Another issue is that of "same sex marriage."

According to conversations I have had with (well educated) Catholics, the official line of the church is that homosexuality is a choice. This is, of course, is as much rubbish as the current pope's assertion that the use of condoms promotes the spread of AIDS.

So here, we have another example of these people who walk around with their blinkers on, concoct cockamamie stories that fit their particular god's "wish," and likely think themselves to be rather smart. My suggestion is to just put them in an asylum for the mentally challenged.

The only difference between a homosexual and a heterosexual human being is the fact that there is a genetic variance, not a bloody choice as they are trying to make their sheep believe.

Here are The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society rules concerning gays and lesbians:

- Gays and lesbians must remain celibate.
- Bisexuals must not engage in same-sex behaviour.
- Any opposite-sex behaviour must be restricted to one man and one woman who are married to each other.
- Jesus stated that to lust after another person is to commit adultery with them in your heart. Thus they expect a gay or lesbian to suppress or distract themselves from their desire, longing, feelings of attraction, love, sexual fantasies etc. towards others of the same sex.

Let us consider the number of women and men whose lives were shattered due to no fault of their own, but caused by such ignorance and the unwavering and unquestioning belief of these religious zealots who would shun them because they don't fit their mould.

Now, let us also consider the number of women and men whose lives are fulfilled, because they can, and do openly confess and promise their love to their same sex partner in more and more places. It took a long time, but the success achieved to date will continue to grow until all of them will be free, provided there is continued willingness on the part of lawmakers to alter the books and society's willingness to abandon old, fabricated, and twisted teachings.

Next, I will look at Islam. I must admit that my knowledge of this persuasion is rather limited. However, I do recall a history lesson in high school, when the professor explained to us that the servants of this faith would shoot their arrows straight up into the air, believing that Allah will guide them toward the enemies and kill them. While I was no bright light in the science field, I did understand that such a theory was rather flawed, which further reassured me that religion is so frighteningly powerful, it will make some of its followers totally blind to reason, reality, and common sense. The latter statement not to be construed as being limited to Islam.

Given my inadequacy concerning this branch of worship, I will refer the reader to several videos featuring Wafa Sultan, an Arab-American psychiatrist who challenges hard-line Islamic clerics and their interpretation of the Qur'an. It goes without saying that this woman is being touted as an opportunist, given recent events, starting with 9/11. All I can say here is that I will support anyone who is courageous enough to attempt to open people's eyes and minds when it comes to their adherence to whatever kind of religion and the strife those religions have caused and are continuing to cause on this planet. Dr. Sultan's videos can be found at:

<http://www.google.ca/search?hl=en&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&hs=aWM&ei=jQfiSYPcNNXrIQftyMDgDg&sa=X&oi=spell&resnum=1&ct=result&cd=1&q=wafa+sultan&spell=1>

unless religion had the upper hand again and the videos were removed from the net.

Whether it be the Catholics fighting the Protestants in Ireland, Palestinians fighting the Jews, or splinter groups of any of the foregoing fighting against their own, it is my assertion that religion is at the basis of senseless and unnecessary bloodshed.

One glorious day, after an overwhelming majority of intelligent people will have come to the conclusion I arrived at decades ago, that religion is one of the major reasons for the sorry state of this planet today, there will be peace, and harmony. I will not live to see the day, but I know that grandchildren and great grandchildren will eventually inherit a peaceful planet earth.

Chapter Four

Religion and Government / Government and Religion

And this brings me to the all important question and the predominant reason for this exposé:

"What right do the courts, under pressure from the various flavours of religion, or in collusion with same, believe to have to:

- 1) Prevent people who openly and publicly state that they want to die, to do so with dignity and in peace?**
- 2) Prosecute people who, upon the request of the person wishing to die, assist the latter in fulfilling that request?**

3) Prosecute people who out of compassion and for good and sufficient reason do in fact end the life of a person who is suffering due to mental and/or physical illness?"

Before going into the details of my argument, I will pre-empt any comments from the followers of western religion by stating that I am quite aware of the seeming dichotomy of my postulate by indicating at the beginning of the book that the death of one person is one too many, and then advocating assisting in the termination, or actively terminating someone's life for good and sufficient reasons. If you do not understand the difference between the two scenarios, I will tell you that you are totally blinded by the unquestioning faith of a man-made dogma. End of story.

Those of you on "my side" surely remember the cases to which reference will be made hereafter, and so will those on the opposing side. The difference between the two factions is that the former employs logic, common sense, and compassion, while the latter quotes from the Bible, mercilessly and without compassion.

So as to preclude any possibility of being accused of "tampering with the evidence," I have copied the following section directly from the internet at:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/919-e.htm>

Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide in Canada

91-9E

Prepared by:
Marlisa Tiedemann, Dominique Valiquet
Law and Government Division
Revised 17 July 2008

Issue Definition

Because of advances in medical treatment, people are now able to live longer and to delay death. But the ability to live longer often entails a diminished quality of life for those who suffer from degenerative or incurable diseases. The desire to achieve greater control over decisions relating to life and death has been fuelled by a number of factors, including: the desire to be spared from prolonged suffering; the increased incidence of seriously debilitating diseases such as AIDS and Alzheimer's disease; and a better understanding of how medical technology can prolong life and affect the dying process. These factors fostered an interest in euthanasia and cessation of medical treatment. More recently, the focus seems to have moved to quality end-of-life care, but that is a health care issue beyond the scope of this paper.

Background and Analysis

A. Historical Background

Despite the fact that euthanasia has gained considerable media attention of late, neither the practice nor the controversy it engenders are new. While we now stress the conceptual distinctions between euthanasia, suicide and cessation of treatment, in early times euthanasia was generally equated with suicide. The tolerance for suicide that developed during the ancient classical period to some extent reflected a disdain for weakness, illness and the inability to contribute to society past a certain age. At

the same time, however, it also reflected a concern for a “worthy and good life,” something that was elusive in the presence of extensive physical decline. In classical times, the Greeks and the Romans succeeded in moving suicide out of a dark and mysterious realm into the field of public discourse and debate.

Author's comment:

I am drawing your attention to the last sentence of the above paragraph. I presume that the text speaks of the Greeks and Romans who preceded the creation of the earth in seven days. If my assumption is correct, I commend these societies for their insight and wisdom, prior to the arrival of Christianity.

An intolerance for suicide began to take hold in the second and third centuries and gained increasing momentum under the influence of Christianity. Whereas in the classical period suicide was criticized only if it was irrational or without cause, Christianity saw this act as a direct defiance of or interference with God's will; thus, suicide resulted in the denial of a Christian burial and tended to bring great shame upon family members. St. Augustine declared that “life and its sufferings are divinely ordained by God and must be borne accordingly.” In the thirteenth century, the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas epitomized the intolerance for suicide. According to him, suicide violated the biblical commandment against killing and was ultimately the most dangerous of sins because it precluded an opportunity for repentance.

Author's comment:

Contrary to the previous comment, we are now in the period of Xtianity and its pervasive influence on society. Not only would the person having committed suicide not receive a "Christian" burial, but it automatically condemned the remaining family members. If Christianity is about love, I would really need some help trying to find it here.

The impact of scientific and medical discoveries in recent times has changed the nature of the debate on suicide. The increasing ability of physicians to treat bodily ailments, and to extend life, caused the state to have a more direct interest in questions of life and death in the medical context. Strict adherence to religious principles and teachings was complicated by the advances of science and medicine. Issues such as medically assisted death and cessation of treatment, which characterize much of the contemporary debate, have their roots in this period. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the medical profession was engaging in a fair amount of discussion on euthanasia, in which philosophers and theologians joined. Much of the discourse focused on the issue of “quality of life” and on the right to determine when this quality had deteriorated to the point where it was acceptable to cease living.

In North America, the seminal case on the question of quality of life and cessation of treatment was that of Karen Ann Quinlan, a 21-year-old who had suffered permanent brain damage, and went into a coma, after an episode involving the consumption of alcohol and drugs. Ms. Quinlan's parents signed a release form to allow physicians to cease use of a respirator in the treatment of their daughter. When the hospital refused to follow the directive, her parents requested the courts to reverse the hospital's decision. In 1976, following a ruling by the New Jersey Supreme Court, the respirator was removed. Ms. Quinlan died in 1985 in a nursing home where she had remained in a coma, fed through tubes, for some ten years.

Author's comment:

While I quite understand and agree that laws are instituted to protect members of a society, no two cases are identical. Therefore, allowances have to be made, based on logic, common sense, rational thinking, compassion, and careful evaluation, rather than on theological conviction, in my very strong opinion. It would be difficult to blame the hospital staff for refusing to follow the parents' request, since the court would undoubtedly punish those in whose care this young woman was placed.

That said, I will parallel the above case with a personal experience. At age 81, my father had a series of strokes. Given the severity of his condition, he was placed in a long-term care facility.

He was in that institution for a total of three and a half years; six and a half years less than Ms. Quinlan. During that period, my mother, aged 73 at the time, travelled to the "place" by bus and subway every single day. I would go with her on weekends to shave my father, who no longer recognised us. At some point toward the end, he could not even be mouth-fed any more and a tube was inserted in his nose and down to his stomach to infuse some sort of life-sustaining liquid.

I can only imagine what Ms. Quinlan's parents went through during the ten years they saw their daughter vegetating, not living, until the bitter end. I submit to you that we demonstrate more compassion toward our pets than we do for our loved ones. What does that say for our civilised society of god fearing Xtians, I ask you.

How the Dickens can a court, a prosecutor, a judge, a jury of Xtians, presume to have the right to render judgement in cases such as these, without ever having had this kind of experience themselves? My answer to that question is that they cannot possibly have even a remote idea of what it is like to see a daughter, a father, a husband waste away like this. But Christianity knows best. It has the best Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, Baptist, etc. god, the best Ten Commandments; all for the purpose of control, nothing else. I had better stop before I blow my cork.

On we read:

In Canada, the increase in such chronic conditions as Alzheimer's disease and incurable diseases such as AIDS and some forms of cancer meant that afflicted people could see their probable future before they became incapacitated. This prompted some to lobby for more direct input into their medical care; in some cases, they sought assistance to die.

More generally, the extent to which medical technology can prolong life, quite independent of considerations about the quality of that life, has become common knowledge for most citizens. This means that many persons give active consideration to the limits they will place on their own medical treatment and that of family members.

The increasing cost of health care is another relevant consideration. Estimates indicating that individuals incur their highest health care costs in the final days of life illustrate the delicate balance between sustaining life and containing health care expenses. This fact, some health policy analysts suggest, will become increasingly apparent as more and more of the population move into the older age groups, in which health care needs and their attendant costs increase.

Author's comment:

While I cannot disagree with the preceding paragraph that deals with the financial aspect of health care expenditures related to the aging population, of which I am a part, I do find it rather interesting that this issue is brought forward. Would it not behove a Christian society to ignore such a mundane item as money, when it comes to the life of a person? I pose the question for your consideration. Or, could it be that there are subversive forces slowly undermining one of the sacred principles of the Ten Commandments?

B. Legal Issues

Although the definitions used in discussions of euthanasia and assisted suicide can vary, the following are based on the report of the Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide (*Of Life and Death*, 1995). *Euthanasia* is the deliberate act undertaken by one person with the intention of ending the life of another person in order to relieve that person's suffering. *Assisted suicide* is the act of intentionally killing oneself with the assistance of another who provides the knowledge, means or both.

Voluntary euthanasia occurs when the act is done in accordance with the wishes of a competent individual or a valid advance directive. *Non-voluntary euthanasia* occurs when the act is done without knowledge of the wishes of a competent individual or with respect to an incompetent individual. *Involuntary euthanasia*, which is indistinguishable from murder or manslaughter, occurs when the act is done against the wishes of a competent individual or a valid advance directive.

A *competent* individual is capable of understanding the nature and consequences of the decision to be made and capable of communicating this decision. An *incompetent* individual is not capable of understanding the nature and consequences of the decision to be made, and/or is not capable of communicating the decision.

1. The *Criminal Code* and Euthanasia

A number of *Criminal Code* provisions impinge upon the issues of euthanasia and cessation of treatment.

Section 14 of the Code provides that:

No person is entitled to consent to have death inflicted on him, and such consent does not affect the criminal responsibility of any person by whom death may be inflicted on the person by whom consent is given.

In the medical context, a doctor who, at a patient's request, gives the patient a lethal injection would be criminally liable.

Author's comment:

This is precisely where the problem lies. Considering that, as an individual living in a democratic country, I must have complete and absolute domain over my body and life; neither government nor the courts have the right to interfere in decisions related to the termination of my life. My life does not belong to a religious orientation, a church, or the government. It is MINE. Is that so hard to understand?

Let us assume I am advised that I have six months to live. The "usual" procedure is to undergo all sorts of treatments to kill the cause. Let us further assume that I have

absolutely no interest in submitting myself to such procedures. I sign a form, witnessed by fifteen other heathens that I want to receive a lethal injection. Who, in the name of your Heavenly Father, do you think has the right to contradict me? Your remote deity? Try to think clearly, please.

What if I am of sound mind and decide to commit suicide by taking a dose of cyanide, since I faint at the sight of blood, which precludes the slitting of my wrists? Everyone will be in the clear, but I am dead all the same. Only I will be before your Heavenly Father for prosecution, not the doctor who slipped me the cyanide since it cannot be proven that he did. How difficult is it to understand the concept? Does it not make any sense?

While a number of other provisions of the *Criminal Code* may also come into play, depending upon the circumstances; these provisions include:

- section 45 (Surgical operations);
- section 215 (Duty of persons to provide necessities);
- section 216 (Duty of persons undertaking acts dangerous to life);
- section 217 (Duty of persons undertaking acts);
- section 219 (Criminal negligence);
- section 220 (Causing death by criminal negligence);
- section 221 (Causing bodily harm by criminal negligence);
- section 222 (Homicide);
- section 229 (Murder);
- section 231 (Classification of murder);
- section 234 (Manslaughter);
- section 245 (Administering noxious thing); and
- the various assault and bodily harm provisions.

Author's comment:

Are we absolutely sure that all the bases are covered?

Don't misunderstand! I believe that life is precious, same as you do. What I am dealing with here is a life that is no longer worth living. Who better than the person consciously or unconsciously enduring a miserable life to decide to end it, or for a relative to decide to end it, as the case may be?

Theoretically, one would expect euthanasia to be prosecuted as first-degree murder, because there is an intent to cause death, which is the definition of murder, and the act is most often planned and deliberate, which is the definition of first-degree murder. However, charges of euthanasia have been influenced principally by other criteria: the fact that the primary intent is to relieve suffering; the unpredictable attitude of juries; and technical difficulties in proving the exact cause of death when a person is in any case close to death and taking considerable pain medication. Charges in Canada have ranged from administering a noxious substance, to manslaughter, to murder.

The most controversial euthanasia case in Canada occurred after Robert Latimer had killed his disabled 12-year-old daughter Tracy in 1993 by placing her in the family truck and then piping exhaust fumes into it. Evidence showed that Tracy had a severe form of cerebral palsy, and could not walk, talk or feed herself. She had suffered considerable pain; Mr. Latimer told the police that "his priority was to put her out of her pain."

Mr. Latimer was charged with first-degree murder, convicted of second-degree murder by a jury, and sentenced to life imprisonment with no possibility of parole for ten years. He subsequently lost an appeal to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. However, in February 1996, the Supreme Court of Canada agreed to hear a further appeal; and in June 1996, the original Crown prosecutor was charged with attempting to obstruct justice through jury tampering. In February 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada ordered a new trial for Mr. Latimer because of the allegations of jury tampering.

Author's comment:

Who would be insane enough to convict the man? There was absolutely no consideration given to the fact that the man told the truth, that he didn't run and hide, that he ended his daughter's life of terrible suffering out of compassion and because of the pain he suffered himself seeing her this way.

What is the matter with these learned people who decide over the life and freedom of others? I wonder if any of the experts of "justice" who create these laws and then blindly sentence people based on them, have ever experienced watching a loved one vegetate for ten years, as mentioned earlier, or suffered the pain of seeing a child, tormented by a debilitating disease. Well, if they haven't, and they still find it necessary to then inflict suffering on the person who mercifully relieved their suffering, may they fry in their god's hell, I say.

And that is not all. There is another significant aspect to such a situation. Mr. Latimer has a wife and three other children, aside from Tracy. By convicting this man, our civilised society, by way of a seemingly all knowing judiciary, tears apart the rest of family. A wife who is without a husband; three children who are without a father. Would a person with a clear head, uncluttered by religious gobbledygook not think of the effect his incarceration will have on the lives of the others, who are then being punished simply by association? What do you think?

Having said that, the verbs "to shun," "to ostracise," "to banish," "to cast out" come to mind. Words used by people who live by the law of their god. Words used for people who follow their own feelings, who question the existence and authority of a supernatural being; such loving words they are, aren't they? And such is the fabric of our western, "civilised" society. We have made progress in so many areas, such as industrialisation, communication, technology space travel; on and on the list goes. How much progress have we made when it comes to spirituality, realism, respect for the planet, and concern for the future? Has much progress been made in the Catholic church, whose CEO, the pope, still resides in a palace, travels the world to give fainthearted and ineffectual speeches and is being chauffeured around in expensive limousines? I do not see any progress there at all, because hoards of followers, their brains impregnated with religious opium, clamour to shake his hand if they are lucky, or try to at least get a glimpse of him, while standing on a balcony of his palace. I wonder if he knows about Mahatma Gandhi, a spiritual person who shrouded his body

in a piece of cloth, and who walked around barefoot not with a gilded robe and shoes donated by Gucci. (I made up the last item.)

After a new trial, Mr. Latimer was again found guilty of second-degree murder in late 1997. At the sentencing hearing, Mr. Latimer's lawyer argued that he should be given a "constitutional exemption," or that the judge should find the mandatory minimum sentence of ten years to be "cruel and unusual punishment" in the circumstances, and therefore a violation of Mr. Latimer's rights under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. On 1 December 1997, in a decision that surprised most legal commentators, the sentencing judge found that a ten-year sentence would indeed be "grossly disproportionate" to the offence. He sentenced Mr. Latimer to two years less a day, half of which would be served in a provincial jail and half on his farm.

On appeal, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal confirmed its earlier decision, and substituted the mandatory minimum sentence of ten years, noting that it is always "open to Parliament to modify the existing law by appropriate legislation that establishes sentencing criteria for 'mercy' killing."

Author's comment:

Interesting! One judge who has some common sense and a Court of Appeal that is stuck in the past. What to do? Let's pass the buck to the legislative branch; let them deal with it. We want to make sure that we go to heaven.

The Supreme Court of Canada granted Mr. Latimer leave to appeal on the grounds of whether the defence of necessity should have been left to the jury, whether the trial judge should have informed the jury that Mr. Latimer had the legal right to decide to commit suicide for his daughter as her surrogate decision-maker, and whether the minimum sentence for murder is cruel and unusual punishment in these circumstances contrary to the *Charter*. In January 2001, the Court upheld the conviction and the sentence. It did, however, note that section 749 of the *Criminal Code* provides for the royal prerogative of mercy, which is a matter for the executive, not the courts, to consider.

In February 2008, the Appeal Division of the National Parole Board granted Mr. Latimer day parole. The Board initially denied his bid for parole in December 2007. Convinced he was sentenced unjustly, Mr. Latimer now wants a new trial.

2. The *Criminal Code* and Aiding Suicide

Under section 241 of the *Criminal Code*, it is an offence to counsel or to aid suicide, although suicide itself is no longer an offence:

Author's comment:

Now that's a good one, don't you think? "Under section 241 of the Criminal Code, suicide is no longer an offence." Do these icons of justice realise how ludicrous this is? I gather that, when someone committed suicide prior to this proclamation, that person committed an offence. At that point, it was almighty god's job to look after the punishment of the person who wilfully ended its life by forwarding the culprit to Lucifer's den.

It must have been some enlightened radical who decided that suicide should no longer be considered an offence, since the person has left the earthly jurisdiction. Maybe there is hope for the future.

241. Every one who

1. counsels a person to commit suicide, or
2. aids or abets a person to commit suicide, whether suicide ensues or not, is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years.

The validity of section 241 under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was challenged in the 1992 case of Sue Rodriguez, a woman suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's disease. Ms. Rodriguez sought to have the section struck down on the grounds that it prohibits a terminally ill person from committing physician-assisted suicide. She argued that her right to "life, liberty and security of the person" – which, in her view, included the right to control the method, timing, and circumstances of death – were denied by section 241.

The British Columbia Supreme Court ruled that section 241 did not deprive Ms. Rodriguez of her right to life, liberty and security of the person, nor did it restrict her freedom of choice or affect her ability to make fundamental decisions about her life. In the court's view, it was the nature of her illness, not the legal system or the state, that deprived Ms. Rodriguez of the ability to carry out her wishes. The court also concluded that section 241 does not discriminate against persons on the grounds of physical disability.

This decision was appealed to the British Columbia Court of Appeal which, in March 1993, dismissed the appeal in a two-to-one decision. Both of the justices who favoured dismissal felt that the matter should be dealt with by Parliament rather than the courts. In deciding whether section 241 violated section 7 of the Charter, Mr. Justice Hollinrake held that, although section 241 of the *Criminal Code* might have deprived Ms. Rodriguez of her right of security of the person under section 7 of the Charter, the prohibition against physician-assisted suicide was not contrary to the principles of fundamental justice.

Author's comment:

Bloody idiot.

The Chief Justice, however, would have allowed the appeal. He concluded that section 241 violated Ms. Rodriguez's section 7 rights to liberty and security of the person and went on to state that "... any provision which imposes an indeterminate period of senseless physical and psychological suffering upon someone who is shortly to die anyway cannot conform with any principle of fundamental justice."

Author's comment:

Now there is common sense. We don't just read the words of the law, but we reflect on them, weigh their validity in relation to a specific case and act based on those considerations. How wonderful and useful would it be to make the effort to revise the laws related to the issues at hand, make them devoid of any fear of supernatural interference and/or punishment and state clearly that in such and such a situation the

act is not considered a crime. This would surely upset many Xtians, but it would make a great deal of sense to the more enlightened segment of our population.

Furthermore, it would not only do away with ambiguity; court hearings would not drag on for years, causing unnecessary suffering for all those involved and, it would reduce costs considerably! Ah, maybe this last part will trigger something! You recall a section earlier on that talked about the cost of caring for the aging population, don't you? Here is another cost saving that can be realised by way of 21st century renewal and modernisation!

Ms. Rodriguez appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, which, in a five-to-four decision, dismissed the appeal. Ms. Rodriguez had argued before the Court that section 241(b) of the *Criminal Code*, which makes it an offence to aid or abet suicide, violated sections 7, 12 and 15 of the Charter.

Author's (sarcastic) comment:

These ratios always perplex me. The court dismissed the appeal in a five-to-four decision, not eight-to-one, seven-to-two, but five-to-four. I see nine judges. They decide that: "the law must be upheld!" Four decide to vote "for," to show that there is dissent in the ranks and one of the other five votes "against," contrary to personal conviction, to keep the establishment happy. Now, how did the others get that judge to vote with the "nays?"

Please note that I made this up in my own little devious mind. I do not suggest that this is what happened here, or that this type of tampering has ever happened. Well, never is an exaggeration, as we shall see.

The majority of the Court held that, although section 241(b) deprived Sue Rodriguez of her security of the person under section 7 of the Charter, the deprivation was justified because it accorded with principles of fundamental justice. Writing for the majority, Mr. Justice Sopinka noted that respect for life is a fundamental principle upon which there is substantial consensus in Canadian society. The prohibition against assisted suicide reflects this consensus and is designed to protect the vulnerable who might be persuaded to commit suicide. To allow physician-assisted suicide, he observed, would erode the belief in the sanctity of human life and suggest that the state condones suicide. Furthermore, concerns about abuse and the difficulty in establishing safeguards to prevent abuse make it necessary to prohibit assisted suicide.

Author's comment:

What Justice Sopinka, may his god rest his soul, says in his judgement here, is "that respect for life is a fundamental principle upon which there is substantial consensus in Canadian society." Good, I say. This is the way it is supposed to be in a "civilised" society. Since the judge and I agree on that point, where do you suppose we differ? Let me tell you, if I have not made it sufficiently clear up to this point. When MY life comes to a point where I have no longer any interest in continuing on with it for whatever reason, which is and must remain MY decision, then neither state nor church is to interfere with MY decision. Period.

"The majority also refused to find that section 241(b) constituted cruel and unusual treatment under section 12 of the Charter."

Author's comment:

Another inane statement without any sort of foundation.

Ms. Rodriguez, while of sound mind, albeit not body, decided that she wants to terminate her life. Has any one of the nine judges experienced watching the body of a loved one deteriorate, disintegrate, and give way to a cruel, debilitating disease? No? Then why must insult be added to injury by stating that Section 421(b) is not cruel and unusual treatment under section 12 of the Charter? How can these people come to a judgement like this when they are utterly ignorant about the matter and blinded by religious doctrine? The word compassion evidently does not exist in their law books and, therefore, it is not in their personal vocabulary either. But, I bet you that if their dog or cat were in pain, they would go to the nearest vet to have it euthanized; such considerate, as well as hypocritical souls.

"To allow physician-assisted suicide, he observed, would erode the belief in the sanctity of human life..."

Author's comment:

The sanctity of human life! How then do we reconcile that statement with the fact that we have soldiers deployed in parts of the world, where they snuff out sacred lives? Sorry I forgot, the victims are not Xtians. But, the soldiers who are sent out to these places wrought with religious fanaticism are also killed. I wonder if parents, siblings, wives, husbands, or friends of killed soldiers ever hauled the government before the courts for their loss. I don't believe so. I suppose the government/courts decide as to the sanctity of human life based on the appropriate application of the concept.

Mr. Justice Sopinka assumed that Ms. Rodriguez's equality rights under section 15(1) of the Charter had been infringed, but concluded that the infringement was justified under section 1 of the Charter. The purpose of s. 241(b), he noted, is to protect individuals from others who may wish to control their lives. To create an exception to the prohibition against assisted suicide for some groups or individuals would create inequality and lend support to the notion that we are starting down the "slippery slope" toward full recognition of euthanasia. He considered the creation of safeguards to prevent abuse unsatisfactory and insufficient to calm fears of the likelihood of abuse. Even if an exception could be made for the terminally ill, he felt there could be no guarantee that assisted suicide could be limited to those who genuinely wished to die.

Author's comment:

"The purpose of s. 241(b), he noted, is to protect individuals from others who may wish to control their lives."

Once again, the intent of the law is commendable and acceptable. If I remember correctly, though, it was Ms. Rodriguez who was the one who pleaded for someone to terminate her life. There were no others from whom she needed protection. The system failed again, by controlling a person's destiny.

In her dissenting opinion, Madam Justice McLachlin held that section 241(b) violates section 7 of the Charter. She concluded that it would be contrary to the principles of

fundamental justice to deny Sue Rodriguez the choice available to those who are physically able, merely because of a fear that others might suffer abuse. She felt that Sue Rodriguez was being treated as a “scapegoat” for others who might be improperly persuaded to commit suicide.

Chief Justice Lamer’s dissent was based on section 15(1) of the Charter. He concluded that section 241(b) creates an inequality in that physically disabled persons unable to commit suicide without assistance are prevented from choosing that option without breaking the law; those who are capable of ending their lives unassisted, however, may commit suicide with impunity. Although the Chief Justice was concerned that the decriminalization of assisted suicide might increase the risk for those vulnerable to manipulation by others, he contended that speculation to this effect and the fear of a “slippery slope” could not justify the restriction on those who are not vulnerable and who would freely consent to suicide.

In his dissent, Mr. Justice Cory agreed with the disposition of the appeal proposed by Chief Justice Lamer for the reasons put forward by the Chief Justice and Madam Justice McLachlin. He would have given the right to die with dignity protection under s. 7 of the Charter and allowed terminally ill patients to obtain assistance to terminate their lives.

Author's comment:

I am certain I need not tell you that these dissenters are the only bright lights who give hope to someone like me, who will do whatever necessary to draw attention to the fact that the law is an ass when it comes to a person's right to have domain over her/his body, if of sound mind, such as Ms. Rodriguez, and to confer the right to decide to another person if the person in question is mentally incapacitated, as in Tracy Latimer's case.

Theoretically, I could stop here with the examples, and assume that the reader has grasped what it is I am trying to accomplish here. But, being of advanced age and having accumulated considerable experience concerning the human mind, I am not going to do that quite yet. I know from personal experience that old habits die hard.

The following article, dated March 16, 2005, written by Mel Martinez, a freshman Republican Senator from Florida can be viewed at this site:

<http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/martinez200503161444.asp>

This Friday, after a long and protracted legal struggle, a Florida woman named Terri Schiavo will be starved to death by court order.

Supplementary information partially copied below, can be found at the following site on Terri Schiavo:

<http://www.nndb.com/people/435/000026357/>

"Terri Schiavo entered a vegetative state in 1990 after adopting an "iced tea diet" (related to her bulimia), resulting in a disastrous potassium deficiency that caused irreversible brain damage."

In 1990, at the age of 27, Terri Schiavo collapsed, resulting in brain damage from a lack of oxygen. A feeding tube was inserted by doctors at that time to provide nutrition and hydration to keep her alive.

Over the last 15 years, there has been a protracted legal fight between Terri's parents, who insist that Terri wants to live and want guardianship of their daughter, and Terri's husband, who insists Terri wants to die and currently has guardianship. It has without a doubt been an emotional and drawn-out legal battle over what Terri's wishes truly were and whether or not her feeding tube should be removed.

Terri is severely brain-damaged — of that there is no question. However, many media reports have indicated that she is in a persistent vegetative state. There is evidence to the contrary.

She is not on a respirator or other 24-hour-a-day medical equipment. She responds to voices, touch, and the presence of people. She can smile, cry, and establish eye contact. She can make facial expressions. And several of Terri's caregivers and outside medical professionals feel that, with proper therapy, she may even be able to learn to eat without a feeding tube.

For years, this legal battle between Terri's parents and her husband has made its way through Florida's courts, Florida's legislature and Florida's governor's office. All legal options available in the state of Florida have been exhausted and the Schiavo case has culminated with a final court-ordered removal of the feeding tube and cessation of nutrition and hydration on March 18 — this Friday.

Last week, I introduced my first piece of legislation in the Senate: The Incapacitated Person's Legal Protection Act of 2005. This bill would ensure that incapacitated individuals — like Terri Schiavo — would have their due-process rights of habeas corpus when a court orders their death by removal of nutrition, hydration and medical treatment. My colleague from Florida, Congressman Dave Weldon has introduced identical legislation in the House of Representatives.

"Habeas Corpus" refers to the legal rights available under the 14th Amendment of the Constitution that "No State...shall deprive any person of life...without due process of law...nor to deny any person within its jurisdiction equal protections of the laws."

In essence, this legislation would give incapacitated individuals like Terri, who have been given what amounts to a death sentence by the courts, federal habeas corpus protections to ensure that she receives the same due process protections as convicted murderers given the death penalty.

This bill is very narrowly written and a balanced approach to acknowledging the rights of individuals to refuse consent to medical treatment with the right to consent to treatment to preserve life. The Incapacitated Person's Legal Protection Act would only apply when the following criteria are met:

- There is a contested judicial proceeding because of a dispute about the expressed previous wishes or best interest of a person currently incapable of making a choice about lifesaving treatment;
- There is no valid prior written directive on wishes from the now-incapacitated individual; and
- There is a court order authorizing or directing the withholding of food, fluids, or medical treatment to sustain the individual's life.

This is not a right-to-life or right-to-die issue — it is about proper legal representation for individuals with no voice for themselves. It's about giving a last avenue of legal refuge to disabled individuals when their lives hang in the balance.

This is a narrowly tailored, compassionate piece of legislation to ensure that Terri Schiavo has all legal due process available to her before following through on a court order that, in all seriousness, is a death sentence.

Author's comment:

Now, in this particular case, we have a complete reversal from the Canadian approach, by virtue of the fact that the courts decided in favour of the husband's request to allow his wife to die. This is extremely surprising, given the rather strong Xtian contingent in the U.S., including the then Governor of the state of Florida, Jeb Bush, as well as his brother, the President, both of whom tried unsuccessfully to have the court decision quashed.

What I have taken away from this case is the importance of being prepared. This has caused me to prepare a mandate in case of incapacity that forms part of my testament. The instructions are that I do not wish to be resuscitated in case of any sort of physical accident or medical condition that causes me to be physically and/or mentally incapacitated. In order to always be prepared I also carry "Directions" in my wallet (in French and English) that prohibit the person reading them, in no uncertain terms, from doing anything other than to follow my instructions. Since I am sure that the latter will not be followed, all I can hope for is that my threat to the person that it will fry in hell, will cause sufficient hesitation that I will have passed away before they can hook me up to all kinds of machinery..

3. Other Cases in Canada

In British Columbia, an inquest was held into the death of a ten-year-old girl with Rett syndrome, a rare neurological disorder that, among other symptoms, can cause severe eating disorders. At the time of her death, Katie Lynn Baker reportedly weighed only 22 pounds, was severely disabled and could not speak, being virtually non-communicative to all except her closest caregivers. According to the coroner's report, when hospitalization became the only way to save Katie, her mother had sought "the child's wishes respecting being 'hooked-up' or force fed, which [the] mother interpreted as being in the negative." To isolate Katie from the possibility of non-consensual treatment, she was moved by her mother from the family home to a new location, where she died a few days later.

The jury found that death had been caused by "severe malnutrition" as a result of "inadequate nutritional intake over a period of time caused directly or indirectly by the actions of other persons." The jury classified the death as "homicide"; however, the presiding coroner noted that "the jury's ruling of death by homicide precludes any assumption of culpability on the part of any person or agency. In the Coroner's Inquest, the term is neutral and does not imply fault or blame."

Author's comment:

I really don't care what they call it, as long as they respect the instructions/wishes of the affected person or the relatives of the latter.

On 6 May 1997, in Halifax, Dr. Nancy Morrison was arrested on a charge of first-degree murder in the death of a terminally ill cancer patient. Mr. Mills had cancer of the oesophagus, which required removing the oesophagus and repairing the gap by repositioning the stomach. All possible treatment methods were unsuccessful. By 9 November 1996, there was no hope of recovery. The patient's family was consulted and, consistent with normal and usual procedures in such circumstances, it was agreed by all those present that active life support would be discontinued.

When Mr. Mills was taken off the ventilator, pain control drugs were administered and increased several times. Mr. Mills remained in substantial distress and pain, gasping for air. One expert witness testified that the level of drugs given to Mr. Mills was in the lethal range and outside of his experience. With Mr. Mills in continuing distress, Dr. Morrison administered first nitro-glycerine and then potassium chloride by syringe. Potassium chloride, administered as it was to Mr. Mills, will stop the heart.

In February 1998, Judge Hughes Randall declined to commit Dr. Morrison to stand trial. He noted that Mr. Mills had been given extraordinary amounts of Dilaudid, morphine and other painkillers prior to Dr. Morrison's involvement. Although potentially lethal, these earlier drugs had been legally administered in an unsuccessful attempt to relieve the intense suffering that Mr. Mills appeared to be experiencing after being removed from the respirator. Judge Randall found that, whatever Dr. Morrison's intentions when she allegedly administered potassium chloride, Mr. Mills could have died from either the enormous amount of painkillers received earlier or, because the intravenous line delivering the various drugs to Mr. Mills was not working, from natural causes.

Based on these conclusions, Judge Randall found that "a jury properly instructed could not convict the accused of the offence charged, any included offence, or any other offence and therefore, she is hereby discharged."

This decision was appealed to the Nova Scotia Supreme Court. In November 1998, the appeal was dismissed. Judge Hamilton personally disagreed with the preliminary inquiry decision, and felt that there was some evidence before the Preliminary Inquiry Judge on which a reasonable jury could return a verdict of guilty by manslaughter. However, this was not sufficient to quash the decision provided that Judge Randall had acted within his jurisdiction, which the Supreme Court found he had. In December 1998, the Public Prosecution announced that it would not appeal the decision.

Author's comment:

Depending on circumstances, I will make sure that I have a female doctor looking after me, since it seems that women have more compassion and common sense than even some learned men do.

In 1998, a case arose in Manitoba which tested the boundaries of "do not resuscitate" (DNR) orders. On 25 May 1998, Andrew Sawatzky was admitted to the Riverview Health Centre in Winnipeg, suffering from Parkinson's disease and other ailments. The admitting physician, Dr. Engel, was of the view that Mr. Sawatzky was not a

candidate for resuscitation in the event that he went into arrest, but acquiesced to Mrs. Sawatzky's request and ordered resuscitation in spite of his own views.

During the summer, Dr. Engel decided that Mr. Sawatzky required a specific medical procedure, a cuffed tracheostomy tube. Mrs. Sawatzky refused to consent, and an order of supervision was applied for and granted under the Manitoba *Mental Health Act*. This had the effect of appointing the Public Trustee as guardian of the person of Mr. Sawatzky, with the authority to consent to medical treatment on his behalf.

Mr. Sawatzky's condition continued to deteriorate and in late October 1998, Dr. Engel initiated a DNR order. Mrs. Sawatzky retained legal counsel and applied for an interlocutory injunction suspending the DNR until her case could be tried. The defendant hospital opposed the application on the basis that: (1) this would order a doctor to provide medical treatment which he/she feels is not in the patient's best interests, putting her/him in conflict with the Code of Conduct of the College of Physicians and Surgeons; and (2) there is no authority in law to impose such an obligation on a doctor.

In November 1998, Justice Holly Beard granted the interlocutory injunction, on limited conditions. The DNR order was withdrawn, and the Public Trustee and the defendant hospital were each ordered to obtain an independent medical opinion as to Mr. Sawatzky's current condition and the advisability of the "do not resuscitate" order. The court described the issues of public concern as follows: (1) in what factual circumstances can a doctor or health facility issue a "do not resuscitate" order; (2) do those factual circumstances apply in this case; and (3) can a doctor in a health care facility legally issue a "do not resuscitate" order if the patient or the person entitled to consent to health care treatment for the patient refuses to consent to that order?

According to press reports, the two independent medical opinions were complete by January 1999. Both agreed that Mr. Sawatzky was not able to make or communicate informed decisions, and that the DNR order was appropriate. On 26 October 1999, Mr. Sawatzky, 79, died at Victoria General Hospital in Winnipeg. Mrs. Sawatzky had been due back in court two days later to continue her battle for the right to make his treatment decisions.

More recently, charges of assisted suicide were laid in British Columbia and Quebec. On 5 November 2004, a British Columbia court acquitted Evelyn Martens, 73, of aiding and abetting the suicide of two women in 2002. Martens was an active member of the Right to Die Society of Canada, had sent literature to the two women, and apparently admitted she was with them when they died.

On 28 September 2004, Marielle Houle was charged with aiding and abetting the suicide of her 36-year-old son, a well-known playwright. On 23 January 2006, she pled guilty to this offence and was sentenced four days later to three years' probation with conditions. Ms. Houle's counsel had submitted that a one-year conditional sentence would be appropriate; Crown counsel had emphasized the seriousness of the offence, but did not make a submission with respect to the appropriate sentence.

From the outset, the Superior Court Judge emphasized that Ms. Houle's sentence took into account the particular circumstances involved in the case, and was not to be seen as a model sentence for other cases. He also stressed that it was not the Court's role either to legislate with respect to assisted suicide or to articulate an opinion on the law; rather, it is up to legislators to determine the law, and it is up to

citizens to elect their legislators. With respect to the crime committed by Ms. Houle, he noted that the particular circumstances of the case meant that her risks of recidivism were non-existent, and that since she was not a threat to society, there was no reason to incarcerate her. The judge also concluded that her incarceration would not necessarily deter others, as it was well known that incarceration was not an effective means of deterrence.

In July 2005, André Bergeron was charged with the attempted murder of his spouse, Marielle Gagnon, who had been diagnosed with Friedreich's ataxia (a progressive disorder that mainly affects the nervous system) 25 years earlier. Mr. Bergeron contacted authorities after attempting to asphyxiate Ms. Gagnon with a plastic bag. She was unconscious when she was taken to the hospital where she died three days later. Neighbours told media that Ms. Gagnon had asked Mr. Bergeron that she not be resuscitated in the event of a heart attack. In February 2006, Mr. Bergeron's lawyer stated that his client should instead be charged with assisted suicide. On 19 October 2006, Mr. Bergeron was sentenced to three years' probation for aggravated assault.

In September 2006, 62-year-old Raymond Kirk pled guilty to aiding the suicide of his wife. Because of a back spasm, Patricia Kirk was in tremendous pain, and various specialists were unable to diagnose the problem or provide comfort. The Ontario Court of Justice suspended Mr. Kirk's sentence and imposed a sentence of three years' probation.

In May 2007, a young man from Alma, Quebec, Stéphan Dufour, was accused of helping his uncle, Chantal Maltais, hang himself. Mr. Maltais, who was 49 years old, had muscular dystrophy and was in a wheelchair. The Crown laid charges against Mr. Dufour under section 241 of the *Criminal Code* (Counselling or aiding suicide). On 21 April 2008, Mr. Dufour's lawyer asked for a trial by jury.

In June 2007, a BC court sentenced Ramesh Kumar Sharma, a general practitioner, for aiding the suicide of Ruth Wolfe, a 93-year-old woman suffering from heart problems, by prescribing her a deadly dose of drugs. The court imposed a conditional sentence of two years less a day to be served in the community. His licence was also revoked by the province's college of physicians.

Author's comment:

After 25 years of practicing medicine, the doctor's license is revoked for aiding a 93-year old person to die. How would you feel as one of his patients? Would you be afraid that he is going to kill you too at age 43 and two and a half months? Or, would you know this doctor to be not only good, but compassionate, understanding, and, in spite of not being "from here," find him trustworthy? I would, especially in view of the fact that it is virtually impossible to find a family doctor who will accept new patients; in the province of Québec, anyway.

In July 2007, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) decided not to lay charges in the assisted suicide case of Elizabeth MacDonald, a Canadian with multiple sclerosis who died in Switzerland with the assistance of the organization Dignitas. Her husband, Eric MacDonald, was with her when she died. The RCMP stated that no infraction of the *Criminal Code* was committed in Canada.

Author's comment:

So, we don't want to learn from the wisdom of others; we would rather pass the buck.

4. The Right to Refuse Medical Treatment

The common law recognizes the right of an adult, competent person to refuse medical treatment or to demand that treatment, once begun, be withdrawn or discontinued.

In a 1990 decision, the Ontario Court of Appeal held that instructions on blood transfusions issued when a patient was competent had to be followed even when she was incapable of making a decision. The Court found that a physician must follow a Jehovah's Witness's written instruction refusing all blood transfusions, even in an emergency situation where the patient was unable to give consent. However, the Court emphasized that its decision applied only to the specific case before it, and not to: situations of terminal or incurable illness where a patient seeks to reject medical treatment by way of a living will or an advance medical directive; or situations where the family of a person in a persistent vegetative state wishes to withdraw medical treatment.

Author's comment:

This means that, if I become a Jehovah's Witness, my wish to die will be respected. If I am not, it will not; lovely. Whatever the particular flavour of religion prescribes is acceptable. This kind of lawmaking is not only unacceptable, it is also blatantly discriminatory.

In the January 1992 decision in the case of Nancy B., the Quebec Superior Court ruled that a competent, adult patient suffering from an incurable disease and bedridden for life had the right to request that her doctor disconnect the respirator keeping her alive. In making his decision, Mr. Justice Dufour cited sections of the *Quebec Civil Code* which provide that the human person is inviolable and that no one can be made to undergo treatment without consent.

The case also dealt with the issue of the criminal liability of the doctor who, at Nancy B.'s request, would be required to remove her from the respirator. After referring to sections 216, 217, 45 and 219 of the *Criminal Code*, as well as the provisions dealing with homicide, the judge concluded that it was neither unreasonable nor wanton and reckless conduct for a physician, at the request of a patient, to disconnect the patient's respirator and allow the patient's disease to take its natural course. The doctor would not be aiding the patient to commit suicide or committing an act of homicide, because Nancy B.'s death would result from the underlying disease.

Author's comment:

Good thing I live in Québec. In spite of the strong Catholic influence, it seems that common sense is more prevalent here than in the Anglo part of this great country. There will be more proof of this fact later on.

5. Advance Directives

A number of provinces have sought to deal with the issue of medical treatment in the event of a patient's future incompetence. Advance directives have emerged as one method of response to the problem. Commonly known as a "living will," an advance directive is a document signed by a competent individual dealing with health care decisions to be made in the event that the person becomes incapable of making those decisions. In the *Quebec Civil Code*, an advance directive is referred to as a "mandate."

Advance directives can be divided into two categories:

- an instruction directive, in which an individual sets out *what types of treatment* he or she does not want in the event that he or she becomes incompetent; and
- a proxy directive, in which an individual sets out *who* is to make such health care decisions on his or her behalf.

A "substituted judgement" directive involves a subjective test to seek to determine what decision the incapacitated person would have made had he or she been capable of doing so. In the event of a dispute, the court might look at any opinions about terminating life-sustaining treatment that the person expressed before becoming incompetent. Some courts have adopted more relaxed evidentiary requirements and relied on distant and occasional opinions expressed by the incompetent person; still others have considered the patient's prior religious beliefs, lifestyle choices, and the opinions of family and friends as to the type of treatment he or she would have chosen.

The "best interests" test involves an examination of the benefits and burdens of continued treatment. Among the factors considered are the person's present condition, degree of pain, and prognosis as well as the risks, side effects and benefits of various forms of treatment. In some situations, the quality of life and the interests of the person's family are also taken into account.

Advance directives should not be viewed as purely a legal document. Whether a person gives too little or too much detail in their advance directive, there may well be interpretation problems, with physicians and family members sometimes disagreeing on the meaning. Most people do not keep their advance directives up to date, and family members may feel that a dated advance directive does not reflect the patient's current thinking. Sometimes, medical staff may not be aware that an advance directive exists.

Many of these problems are associated with the traditional view of advance directives as based on the principle of the patient's autonomy, whereas advance directives are increasingly seen as part of a planning and communication process that helps people prepare for death in the context of their loved ones. The preparation of an advance care directive can facilitate discussions between people and their family, and provide guidance and support for substitute decision-makers who must make the difficult decisions regarding life-sustaining treatment. If loved ones and medical professionals have engaged in a process of serious communication, the problems associated with the interpretation and application of advance directives are much less likely to arise. Advance directives ease the passage to death, raise the level of comfort, and minimize any residual guilt in the substitute caregiver.

Advance directive forms, or living wills, are now widely available. They can even be found on the Internet.

Author's comment:

This is precisely what I am advocating and this is the way it should be. The only hurdle I still see is that these rights of the individual are not enshrined in the law books across the country. There must be a feeling of comfort and assurance for the individual who wants to terminate its life, just as there must be the assurance of continuing life regardless of the person's condition, for those who adhere to religious principles. I repeat once more that, to base the law on the latter only, is discriminatory, unjust and unacceptable.

6. Guidelines and Reports

In 1983, the Law Reform Commission of Canada (the "Commission") published its report on *Euthanasia, Aiding Suicide and Cessation of Treatment* following a working paper on the subject which had been published the previous year.

The Commission noted widespread consensus in Canada on three basic principles reflected in our law:

- The protection of human life is a fundamental value.
- The patient has the right to autonomy and self-determination in making decisions about his or her medical care.
- Human life needs to be considered from a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

Subsequent to the publication of its report on euthanasia, the Commission recommended that the General Part of the *Criminal Code* contain a provision that no one has a duty to continue medical treatment that is therapeutically useless or for which consent is expressly refused or withdrawn. This recommendation, however, did not define "therapeutically useless" or set out the requirements for consent.

In November 1993, the British Columbia Ministry of the Attorney General issued guidelines for Crown Counsel with respect to charging individuals who, out of compassion for the deceased, participate in causing a death. Under the guidelines, Crown Counsel will approve a prosecution only where there is a "substantial likelihood of conviction and the public interest requires a prosecution."

Author's comment:

"...and the public interest requires prosecution." I suppose what this means is that, Robert Latimer, for example, and anyone else having been party to, or actively involved in the demise of a person, could be considered a danger to the public. What the Attorney General must realise, though, is that there was no need to hunt the "criminal," there was no denying the person's participation, active or otherwise, so that the issue of "public interest" does not even remotely enter into the matter.

In determining whether a substantial likelihood of conviction exists, Crown Counsel will be required to classify the conduct of the person involved in the death and the

resulting consequences as “active euthanasia,” “assisted suicide,” “palliative care,” or “withholding or withdrawing medical treatment.” The factors to be considered in characterizing such conduct include the provable intention of the person and, in cases involving physicians and their patients, the position of the Canadian Medical Association and expert medical opinions as to generally accepted ethical medical practices.

The public interest criterion involves a consideration of the following factors:

- society’s support of proper professional and ethical standards for health care professionals;

Author’s comment:

I, the owner of my body, indicate on a piece of paper, signed by me, and my signature is witnessed by other “kindred spirits,” that I wish to die in case of mental and/or physical incapacity, period. Neither society at large, the medical profession, professional and ethical standards, nor the church have anything to say about, much less the right to alter my decision.

- society’s interest in protecting vulnerable persons; and

Author’s comment:

Absolutely. Protect those who want to live out their lives to the bitter end. Laws for them already exist, based on religious, legislative, judicial, and medical principles.

- society’s interest in protecting the sanctity of human life, while recognizing this does not require life to be preserved at all costs.

Author’s comment:

Good. We are now approaching the level of compassion we show for our pets.

According to the guidelines, palliative care and withholding or withdrawing medical treatment will not be subject to criminal prosecution when provided or administered according to accepted ethical medical standards.

In February 1994, the Senate of Canada established a Special Committee to study the issues of euthanasia and assisted suicide. Issued in June 1995, the report of the Special Committee, entitled *Of Life and Death*, also canvassed a number of related issues including palliative care, pain control and sedation practices, withholding and withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment, and advance directives.

The Special Committee urged all levels of government in Canada to make palliative care programs a top priority and to develop national guidelines and standards for such care. The Special Committee felt that there was no moral difference between withholding and withdrawing life-sustaining treatment. In either case, the wishes of a competent patient should be respected. The report recognized that there was uncertainty on the part of the medical profession and the public as to what is legally permissible and recommended that practice in the area be clarified in law.

The question of assisted suicide was more contentious. Some Committee members favoured changes to the existing law, while others opposed such changes. A majority

of the members recommended that the provision of the *Criminal Code* that proscribes aiding and abetting suicide remain intact.

For the purposes of the report, the Special Committee defined euthanasia as “the deliberate act undertaken by one person with the intention of ending the life of another person in order to relieve that person’s suffering where that act is the cause of death.”

The report then set out three types of euthanasia, all of which are illegal under the *Criminal Code* of Canada. The three types are:

- voluntary – when euthanasia is conducted in accordance with the wishes of a competent individual;
- non-voluntary – when euthanasia is done without the actual knowledge of the wishes of the patient; and
- involuntary – when euthanasia is performed against the wishes of an individual.

The majority of the Committee members opposed voluntary euthanasia, recommending that it continue as a criminal offence, but with a less severe penalty in cases where mercy or compassion is an element. The minority recommended that the *Criminal Code* be amended to permit voluntary euthanasia for competent individuals who are physically incapable of committing assisted suicide.

Non-voluntary euthanasia would also remain a criminal offence. However, the Committee recommended that a less severe penalty be applied where compassion or mercy is an element. The Committee was unanimous in its conclusion that involuntary euthanasia continue to be treated as murder under the *Criminal Code*.

An intolerance for suicide began to take hold in the second and third centuries and gained increasing momentum under the influence of Christianity.

Author's comment:

Following is an excerpt from the June 1995 report of the above noted Special Committee, entitled Of Life and Death, available for viewing at:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/919-e.pdf>

In classical times, the Greeks and the Romans succeeded in moving suicide out of a dark and mysterious realm into the field of public discourse and debate.

Whereas in the classical period suicide was criticised only if it was irrational or without cause, Christianity saw this act as a direct defiance of or interference with God’s will; thus, suicide resulted in the denial of a Christian burial and tended to bring great shame upon family members.

St. Augustine declared that “life and its sufferings are divinely ordained by God and must be borne accordingly.” In the thirteenth century, the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas epitomised the intolerance for suicide. According to him, suicide violated the biblical commandment against killing and was ultimately the most dangerous of sins because it precluded an opportunity for repentance.

Author's comment:

This brings me back to my earlier assertion that most religions on this planet are based on fear and brainwashing. However, the interesting phenomenon is that, while Xtianity has progressed in leaps and bounds when it comes to "earthly" things, it is still mired in its religious dogma and so out of touch with current reality. It is time for concrete, clearly defined parameters that respect the individual, not laws based on fiction.

This said, I must swallow my tongue (you wish), because following are modern, up to date instructions issued directly from head office:

ROME - Roman Catholic bishops in Italy are urging the faithful to go on a high-tech fast for Lent, switching off modern appliances from cars to iPods and abstaining from surfing the Web or text messaging until Easter.

The address for this article is:

http://tech.yahoo.com/news/ap/20090304/ap_on_hi_te/eu_italy_church_hi_tech_fast

Author's comment:

Someone please enlighten me as to what benefits would be realised if one refrains from engaging in the above noted activities. Increase one's spirituality? Give us a feeling of serenity, bliss?

In November 1999, a Senate Subcommittee was established to study developments with respect to the unanimous recommendations made in *Of Life and Death* in the five years after the report was published. The Subcommittee submitted its report, entitled *Quality End-of-Life Care: The Right of Every Canadian*, in June 2000, concluding that "the principles, expertise, and medical infrastructure for the care of people facing death were evolving far too slowly" (p. 3).

Author's comment:

Hear, hear!

In November 2007, the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) made minor changes to its Policy on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide, as the association's Committee on Ethics found it unnecessary to radically alter the organization's position. The CMA's policy therefore still prohibits physician participation in either of these acts. The changes to the policy relate primarily to the definition of terms and the updating of physician concerns about the legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide in light of recent international events.

Author's comment:

Wow! Major progress on the CMA front! I wonder how much the elaboration of these groundbreaking changes has cost the CMA in terms of time and money.

Parliamentary Action

Until 1991, when private Members' bills on the subject were introduced in the House of Commons, euthanasia had received only fleeting references in the House and had never been debated there. Introduced in close succession were: Bill C-203, by Robert Wenman (Fraser Valley West), on 16 May 1991; and Bill C-261, by Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon–Clark's Crossing), on 19 June 1991. (Mr. Wenman had introduced Bill C-351 in March 1991, but it had died on the *Order Paper* with the ending of the parliamentary session.) Mr. Axworthy's bill incorporated most of Mr. Wenman's "passive euthanasia" bill but would have extended its scope to provide for "active euthanasia."

Mr. Wenman's bill, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (terminally ill persons), was designed to protect medical practitioners from possible criminal liability in three treatment scenarios: first, where the practitioner withholds or withdraws medical treatment at the request of a terminally ill patient; second, where the practitioner withholds or withdraws medical treatment from a terminally ill patient because the treatment is therapeutically useless and not in the best interests of the patient; and third, where the practitioner, to ease the suffering of the patient, provides palliative care, such as pain-relieving drugs, whose side effect might be to hasten the patient's death. In summary, the purpose of the bill was to protect medical practitioners who provide proper and ethical treatment to their terminal patients but who, by so doing, incur the possibility of violating certain sections of the *Criminal Code*.

Mr. Wenman's bill was not intended to provide for active euthanasia in any circumstances. It would have allowed passive euthanasia to be practised, however, in that a medical practitioner would not have been held criminally liable for withdrawing life-sustaining treatment by, for example, turning off a respirator at the request of a terminally ill patient.

Mr. Axworthy's bill, on the other hand, made no distinction between passive euthanasia, i.e., allowing individuals to die by withholding or withdrawing treatment, and active euthanasia, such as administering a lethal dose of a drug. This bill included the same exculpatory provisions as Mr. Wenman's but added provisions that would have legalized active euthanasia in certain conditions. The bill proposed that a person suffering from an irremediable condition could apply to a euthanasia referee for a "euthanasia certificate" giving permission for the process.

Both bills were debated in the House of Commons at second reading. Mr. Wenman's bill, which was less controversial, was referred to a legislative committee for review. Even those members who expressed reservations about the bill in the debate were nevertheless in favour of its referral to a committee, because they recognized a need to examine the issues it raised. Mr. Axworthy's bill, on the other hand, inspired very strong criticism during the debate at second reading and was dropped from the *Order Paper*.

Author's comment:

On the assumption that we do live in a democracy, would it not be in the interest of the people and the government as well, to put the issue before the people? I would wager that many practicing Xtians would be on the side of free choice regarding this issue, without necessarily abandoning their faith. Given that voting is supposed to be

free and secret, we could all listen to our own hearts rather than to a supernatural entity.

Having said that, I would feel sorry for those Xtians who had the same experience as a youngster as I had as far as the “devil is going to get you” is concerned and have been unable to get this “cross” off their backs. Would they vote based on personal conviction or fear of the devil?

Following several weeks of committee hearings, Mr. Wenman's bill also met an early demise. The legislative committee charged with reviewing the bill, after completing its hearings and without considering any amendments, decided to adjourn the proceedings *sine die*. By adjourning without assigning a further meeting date, the Committee effectively halted further parliamentary action on the bill.

In December 1992, a private Member's bill to legalize physician-assisted suicide was introduced in the House of Commons by Svend Robinson (Burnaby–Kingsway).

Three months later, in March 1993, the House of Commons defeated a motion by Ian Waddell (Port Moody–Coquitlam), calling upon the government to consider the advisability of introducing legislation on euthanasia.

In February 1994, Mr. Robinson introduced another private Member's bill to legalize physician-assisted suicide for terminally ill persons. This bill was subsequently debated and dropped from the *Order Paper*.

On 23 February 1994, the Senate passed a motion to create a special committee to examine and report on the legal, social and ethical issues relating to euthanasia and assisted suicide. The report of the Special Committee, entitled *Of Life and Death*, was issued in June 1995.

On 4 November 1997, Mr. Robinson introduced Motion M-123, calling for a special committee to be appointed to review the *Criminal Code* provisions dealing with euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide and to prepare a bill. On 25 March 1998, the motion was rejected by a considerable margin.

Author's comment:

Not surprising at all. Here is the first openly gay member of parliament fighting for “gay rights,” since gays are considered an aberration of humanity by their own choice (according to the Catholic church), and now this man wants to upset Xtianity with another annoying issue that contravenes one of the ten commandments. We can't possibly have that, can we?

In November 1999, a Senate Subcommittee was established to study developments with respect to the unanimous recommendations made in *Of Life and Death* in the five years after the report was published. The Subcommittee submitted its report, entitled *Quality End-of-Life Care: The Right of Every Canadian*, in June 2000, concluding that “the principles, expertise, and medical infrastructure for the care of people facing death were evolving far too slowly” (p. 3).

On 15 June 2005, Bill C-407, An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (Right to Die with Dignity) was introduced by Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, Quebec). It was placed on the *Order of Precedence* on 17 June 2005, and was given one hour of debate on 31 October 2005. It was anticipated that the bill would have been voted on

in December 2005, but due to the dissolution of Parliament and the call of the federal election, that vote did not take place. Bill C-407 would have amended sections 14 (Consent to Death), 222 (Homicide), and 241 (Counselling or aiding suicide) of the *Criminal Code* so that, provided that certain criteria are met, a person who assists another person to die would be neither committing a homicide nor counselling or aiding suicide. The bill would have required that the individual whose death is assisted:

- be at least 18 years old;
- be either experiencing “severe physical or mental pain without any prospect of relief” or terminally ill;
- have, while appearing to be lucid, made two requests more than 10 days apart stating his or her free and informed wish to die;
- have designated in writing someone to act for him or her “with respect to the person who aids him or her to die ... and with respect to any medical practitioner” in the event that the individual appears not be lucid.

The bill would also have required that the person who is assisting the death:

- be a medical practitioner or be assisted by a medical practitioner;
- have received confirmation of the diagnosis from one or two medical practitioners (depending on whether the person assisting the death is a medical practitioner);
- be entitled by law to provide health services or be assisted by a team of people so entitled;
- act as directed by the individual whose death is assisted; and
- provide the coroner with a copy of the diagnosis from one or two medical practitioners (depending on whether the person assisting the death is a medical practitioner).

On 12 June 2008, Ms. Lalonde introduced in the House of Commons Bill C-562, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity). The bill is more or less identical to former Bill C-407, apart from providing that only a medical practitioner may legally aid a person to die with dignity. The medical practitioner must always comply with the conditions set out in the bill.

Author's comment:

What a country, in which we live! A female, French-Canadian (Catholic?) Member of Parliament and member of a separatist party presents a Bill that attempts to convince the federal government to update the Criminal Code. It has received third reading and if things continue to go as they have in the past, it may die there. Don't misunderstand! I would consider it a great victory for Madame Lalonde and all those Canadians who welcome this kind of change, if the Bill were to make it through with flying colours.

I have attempted to find out what the current status of this Bill is, however, without any success. It is highly likely that it will suffer the same fate as Madame Lalonde's first try with Bill C-407.

Chronology

1983 - The Law Reform Commission of Canada recommended against legalizing or decriminalizing voluntary active euthanasia. It also recommended that aiding suicide not be decriminalized where assistance has been rendered to a terminally ill person.

June 1987 - The Law Reform Commission of Canada released proposals for amending the *Criminal Code*. These included the recommendation that mercy killing be treated as second-degree murder ("ordinary murder") rather than as first-degree murder ("premeditated murder"). Second-degree murder would carry no fixed or minimum jail term.

16 May 1991 - Private Member's Bill C-203, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (terminally ill persons), was read for the first time in the House of Commons.

19 June 1991 - Private Member's Bill C-261, An Act to legalize the administration of euthanasia under certain conditions, was read for the first time in the House of Commons.

10 September 1991 - In the Netherlands, the Remmelink Commission released findings from the first comprehensive study of Dutch euthanasia practices.

24 September 1991 - Bill C-203, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (terminally ill persons) received second reading and was referred to Legislative Committee H for consideration. The Committee began hearings on the bill on 29 October 1991.

24 October 1991 - Bill C-261, An Act to legalize the administration of euthanasia, was debated at second reading and dropped from the *Order Paper*.

6 January 1992 - The Quebec Superior Court ruled in the case of Nancy B., a woman suffering from an incurable disease, that turning off her respirator at her request and letting nature take its course would not be a criminal offence.

30 January 1992 - An Ontario surgeon was charged with second-degree murder in connection with the death of a seriously ill cancer patient. The patient is alleged to have died of a cardiac arrest after having been administered morphine and potassium chloride.

18 February 1992 - Legislative Committee H on Bill C-203 adjourned *sine die*.

August 1992 - Scott Mataya, a Toronto nurse who had originally been charged with first-degree murder in the mercy killing of a terminally ill patient, entered a guilty plea to a lesser charge of administering a noxious substance. He received a suspended sentence and was ordered to surrender his nursing licence.

22 March 1993 - Members of the House of Commons defeated a motion that called upon the government to consider the advisability of introducing legislation on the subject of euthanasia and ensuring that those assisting terminally ill persons who wish to die will not be subject to criminal liability.

April 1993 - An Ontario physician who gave a lethal injection to a seriously ill cancer patient was given a three-year suspended sentence after pleading guilty to a charge of administering a noxious substance to endanger life. The physician was originally charged with second-degree murder, but this charge was withdrawn.

30 September 1993 - In a five-to-four decision, the Supreme Court of Canada dismissed an appeal by Sue Rodriguez in which she challenged the validity of the *Criminal Code* prohibition on assisted suicide under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

3 November 1993 - The British Columbia Ministry of the Attorney General issued guidelines for Crown Counsel with respect to charging persons involved in cases of active euthanasia and assisted suicide.

12 February 1994 - Sue Rodriguez committed suicide with the assistance of a physician. The death was investigated by police, but no criminal charge was laid.

14 February 1994 - Justice Minister Allan Rock stated that the issues of cessation of treatment and assisted suicide should be considered by Parliament.

15 February 1994 - Prime Minister Chrétien stated that Members of Parliament would have a free vote on whether to legalize doctor-assisted suicide.

16 February 1994 - Private Member's Bill C-215, An Act to amend the *Criminal Code* (aiding suicide), was read for the first time in the House of Commons. This bill was debated and dropped from the *Order Paper* on 21 September 1994.

23 February 1994 - A Special Senate Committee was established to examine and report on the legal, social and ethical issues relating to euthanasia and assisted suicide.

November 1994 - Robert Latimer was convicted of second-degree murder in the asphyxiation death of his severely disabled 12-year-old daughter Tracy and sentenced to life in prison with no eligibility for parole for ten years.

June 1995 - The Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide issued its report entitled *Of Life and Death*.

February 1997 - The Supreme Court of Canada ordered a new trial for Robert Latimer.

May 1997 - Dr. Nancy Morrison was charged with the first-degree murder of a terminally ill patient who had been removed from active life support.

December 1997 - Robert Latimer, having again been convicted of second-degree murder, was sentenced to two years less a day, notwithstanding that the minimum sentence under the *Criminal Code* is life in prison with no possibility of parole for ten years.

February 1998 - A Nova Scotia judge found that there was not sufficient evidence for a jury to convict Dr. Nancy Morrison, and refused to commit her to trial.

November 1998 - The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal confirmed the conviction of Robert Latimer and imposed a sentence of life imprisonment with no eligibility for parole for ten years.

June 2000 - The Senate Subcommittee studying developments with respect to the unanimous recommendations made in *Of Life and Death* in 1995 submitted its report, entitled *Quality End-of-Life Care: The Right of Every Canadian*, in June 2000.

January 2001 - The Supreme Court of Canada upheld the decision of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal with regard to Robert Latimer.

September 2004 - Marielle Houle was charged with aiding and abetting the suicide of her 36-year-old son, Charles Fariala.

November 2004 - Evelyn Martens was acquitted of aiding and abetting the suicides of two women that took place in 2002.

June 2005 - Bill C-407, An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (Right to Die with Dignity) was introduced by Francine Lalonde, MP.

July 2005 - André Bergeron was charged with the attempted murder of his spouse, Marielle Gagnon, who had Friedreich's ataxia.

October 2005 - Bill C-407 was given one hour of debate in the House of Commons. It died on the *Order Paper* in November 2005 with the dissolution of Parliament.

January 2006 - Marielle Houle pled guilty to aiding and abetting the suicide of her son, and was sentenced to three years' probation.

September 2006 - Raymond Kirk pled guilty to aiding the suicide of his ailing wife. The Ontario Court of Justice sentenced him to three years' probation.

October 2006 - André Bergeron was sentenced to three years' probation for aggravated assault.

May 2007 - Stéphan Dufour was accused of helping his uncle, Chantal Maltais, hang himself. Mr. Maltais, who was 49 years old, had muscular dystrophy and was in a wheelchair.

May 2007 - A *Health Psychology* study found that 6% of patients in palliative care surveyed (22 out of a total of 379) said that they would request physician-assisted suicide if such a procedure were legally available.

June 2007 - Dr. Ramesh Kumar Sharma was sentenced for aiding the suicide of Ruth Wolfe, a 93-year-old woman who suffered from heart problems. The court imposed a sentence of two years less a day to be served in the community.

June 2007 - An Ipsos Reid survey of 1,005 Canadians found that 76% of respondents supported the right to die for patients with an incurable disease (this figure has remained unchanged for 14 years). The strongest support was in Quebec with 87%, while Alberta had the lowest, with 66%.

July 2007 - The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) decided not to lay charges in the assisted suicide case of Elizabeth MacDonald, a Canadian with multiple sclerosis who died in Switzerland with the assistance of the organization Dignitas.

November 2007 - The Canadian Medical Association's Committee on Ethics found it unnecessary to radically alter the association's position on euthanasia

and assisted suicide. The CMA's policy therefore still prohibits physician participation in either of these acts.

February 2008 - The Appeal Division of the National Parole Board granted Robert Latimer day parole.

June 2008 - MP Francine Lalonde introduces Bill C-562, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity).

Author's comment:

This chronology covers the period from 1983 to 2008. Twenty-five years of "hard labour" by the government, just because a few felt that it was time to get with "the times." Imagine the millions of dollars of tax money that were spent to put this issue through the mill, with only glimpses of change in the verdicts of individual cases, in parts of the country where there is a bit of common sense. While I have nothing against the province of Saskatchewan, or its inhabitants, the Robert Latimer case really touched me:

- November 1994 - Robert Latimer was convicted of second-degree murder
- November 1998 - The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal confirmed the conviction of Robert Latimer and imposed a sentence of life imprisonment with no eligibility for parole for ten years.
- **February 2008 - The Appeal Division of the National Parole Board granted Robert Latimer day parole.**

Author's comment:

Fourteen years passed between the conviction and the point where day parole was granted. Fourteen years that have marked the father, the mother and the three remaining children. For what, I ask? This compassionate father released his daughter from pain and suffering and all the judges could see were the words in their law books.

If you are interested in learning more about the "other side" of the story, you may want to have a look at Mr. Latimer's site at:

<http://www.robertlatimer.net/documents/page262.htm>

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*** Current Issue Review 91-9E, originally entitled *Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide*, was written by Mollie Dunsmuir, formerly of the Library of Parliament. It was first published in February 1992 and has been regularly updated since that time. This latest version focuses on the issue as it exists in Canada. A companion publication, [*Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: International Experiences*](#) (PRB 07-03E), is also available.**

To summarise the above, let me point out once again, that my ideas as to how to come to grips with this issue, may sound, and possibly be, quite simplistic. Therefore, the paramount purpose of this exercise is to juxtapose existing laws with strong religious overtones, against current reality. That “new” reality must be reflected in a re-assessment and modification of the laws with which the courts are working at present.

I emphasise that this exposé does not even remotely suggest taking any rights whatsoever away from handicapped people, who are living fulfilling lives and making amazing contributions to society, such as Terry Fox, Rick Hanson, Chantal Petitclerc, to name a few.

I remember working with one young man in Toronto who had M.S. Whenever the subject of his condition came up he would very quickly and with a broad smile educate the people around him by pointing out that M.S. stands for “Mental Superiority.” He enjoyed life, was intelligent and good looking. Properties that a lot of able-bodied persons lack!

I do not believe that anyone looking at this young man in his wheelchair next to Tracy Latimer, would have any doubts about his intention to continue living a full and

productive life. Looking at Tracy's twisted body, pain etched into her face, her brain having the capacity of a four month old baby, unable to communicate, other than through facial expressions, I would not be able to condemn this child to constant suffering such as this.

For all I know, my sister may have been like Tracy and if she was, I am now glad that she did not survive. I would have loved her all the same, had I ever met her, but I would not have wanted her to suffer like this until the end of her natural days.

Chapter Five

The Non-religious Side of the Issue

In Charles Dickens' (1812–1870) "Oliver Twist" it is said that: "the law is an ass, an idiot." (*Comment by the author: I must admit that I altered the original text by adding an "n" at the end of the two indefinite articles for the purpose of creating a liaison with the following word which begins with a vowel. That is the way we do it today and it is good this way. I am a pragmatist. I try to progress with the times. Others are caught in a time warp. I also teach English, as you recall.*)

Truer words have never been spoken. At the same time, it must be pointed out as well that, if we had laws for every possible criminal act committed in a variety of contexts and situations, etc., cases before the courts would never end, given the argumentative nature of judges and barristers alike. Come to think of it, even in the current legal system, more or less cut-and-dried as it is, cases do drag on for decades anyway.

So how might it be possible to improve the status quo you ask? A question worthy of thorough investigation, reflection, debate, and finally consensus based on simple logic, plain common sense, and superior intelligence. Since to date I have offended Xtians, the Catholic church, Jehovah's Witnesses and accountants, I might as well insult lawyers as well, and state that finding enough of them with these latter three attributes may be a daunting task.

But then, easy tasks are "only" fun to do, whereas difficult tasks present challenges that have to be overcome, and hurdles that need to be dismantled, all the while keeping a clear vision of the intended goal. There is no doubt in my mind that, if it were possible to simply erase all clutter from the brains of those charged with the task, we would end up with laws that deal with the issue at hand in a fair and sensible manner, without regard for the supernatural, "the way it always used to be" and other such cop-out arguments.

Let me attempt and illustrate my point in relation to the matter of my right, as I see it, to decide what I want to do with MY body.

You recall that I had a father who died after a series of strokes and a mother who died of congestive heart failure. I had a sister who died under mysterious circumstances. And then I "had" a brother, who in his mid-fifties got his B.A., because such was his ambition. In his late sixties, he was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia. I said that I "had" a brother, because when I would go to visit him in his "prison" near Toronto, I

could not have a conversation with him that made any sense. This affliction is similar to Alzheimer's with the added feature of hallucinations.

All this started when he and his wife lived in the state of Virginia. Letters from his wife telling of my brother's behaviour were too bizarre for me to believe and I dismissed the stories as being exaggerations. Unfortunately, I was wrong, because it was only at our "advanced" age that he and I really felt that we were brothers and that we had good times together.

Often he, Ray, and his wife would drive thirteen hours from Richmond to visit my wife and me in Toronto and after that in Sherbrooke. I would ask him if the drive isn't too long for him, which he simply brushed off. "I like driving" he would say. I admired him for that, because my occasional drives to Toronto are not that pleasurable for me. But then, we're all different.

During one of the visits one winter, of all seasons, I rented a little cottage for Ray and his wife, tucked away in the back woods of the Eastern Townships. It was not very far from our own cottage at the time, so that we could easily visit and spend time together.

On the day of their departure, I received a call saying that Ray had managed to get the car stuck in the ditch on the dirt road, before he reached the secondary road. I got him towed out and they were on their way. The thing that bothered me was that there was no good reason for him to end up in the ditch. He was trying to negotiate an incline on the dirt road, but he was unable to get to the top. He backed up and, for inexplicable reasons steered directly into the ditch.

There were other incidents, some quite frightening, about which we learned in letters from Virginia. Finally, my sister-in-law decided that she could no longer endure this situation and convinced Ray to be examined. The result was devastating.

Plans were made for me to rent an apartment for Ray in a mostly Anglophone community near Sherbrooke, since he did not speak French, fly to Richmond and drive him and his belongings back to Québec.

I had decided from the outset that I would be the driver. My older brother by twelve years did not like that at all. However, I insisted and off we went. Other than him giving me instructions as to where to turn to get to the interstate, etc., there was pregnant silence. Once on the highway north, I asked him if he is angry with me. "Yes," was the curt response. After having spent a certain length of time like this, I decided to stop at a rest area, stretch, and to give him the key to the truck.

All was well until I noticed that we would be in need of fuel before too long. Once I saw a sign, I told Ray to get off at the next ramp. He veered off onto the ramp. We were getting rather close to the top of the ramp when I told him that he will have to stop soon. He attempted to lift his foot onto the break pedal, but didn't lift it far enough. Finally I yelled "stop." Once again, he tried to find the top of the break pedal, couldn't, and instead, pushed on the gas pedal.

There were no cars circulating on the cross road, he negotiated the turn in spite of the speed, and drove into the gas station. I was wondering how and why it was that we were still alive, or that we hadn't killed some unsuspecting motorist. Needless to say

that I drove the rest of the way, until we arrived in Sherbrooke the following day. With the help of two hired hands, the contents of the truck were carried into the apartment, a nice, bright, and airy place.

I should not drag this story out any longer. Suffice it to say that the police called me twice, because Ray was wandering around on his floor trying his key on all the apartment doors, except his own one late evening, and the second time he was wandering around Sherbrooke, about ten kilometres away from his apartment, trying to find a bus to Toronto. Given that neither my wife nor I were in a position to manage this type of situation, he was placed in a long term care facility near Toronto.

You did not see me as I was writing this passage but I venture to say that you felt my pain and anguish, and that you understand his suffering, as well as mine, when I looked into his eyes, fixed on a point distant from the here and now, remote from reality, from sanity. If you don't, may your god help your poor soul.

During one of our visits, the nurse came into his room and sat down next to him on the couch. He looked over at her and said: "Why didn't I die when I was supposed to?" Her answer was: "Because it wasn't your time, Bud." Another time he said to me: "I'm fed up."

What was I to make of these comments? Did this mean that there were moments of lucidity when he became aware of his condition? Did this mean that his deranged mind tormented him to the point of resignation? Was I to ignore all that, based on the fact that neither I, nor the medical establishment could do anything to reverse his condition, except to sedate him? Or, should I have talked to all the relatives and suggested that we put an end to his and our suffering by giving him lethal dose of something?

Assume that the answer were affirmative. We would have drafted a document, or use one provided by the courts, if such existed, signed by me, his first wife, his sons, and his second wife, indicating that we want his life to be terminated, due to his condition. Is there anything that would cause even a glimmer of suspicion that there is fowl play at work? Not really, you say? Then why is it that the law in this country is still mired in antiquity and following man-made rules shrouded under the cloak called religion or god's will?

By all means, keep the old laws for the Xtians to remain happy. But also acknowledge that there are millions of people who no longer believe in fairy tales, who no longer want to be subjected to inane religious edicts. I am one of those, and I want my right to self-determination respected when it comes to my life and my body. After all, they are both mine; neither the government's nor your god's.

Chapter Six

What to Do to Effect Change?

The first option that comes to my mind is to RAISE AWARENESS. All too often, people who are unaware, are totally unaware that they are unaware. These are what I call 'status quo' people. I don't know how many times I was told "If it ain't broke, don't

fix it!" Or, I would hear: "We have done it this way for fifty years now. It was good then, and it's good now." How I wish I could force these ignorami to give up things like cars, indoor plumbing, and some mod cons such as computers and their most treasured Blackberry®. People whose heads are stuck in the past; hypocrites because they don't live the way people used to live eons ago, except for the fairytales that were brainwashed into them.

After reading the chronology of cases listed in Chapter Four, most of which relate to Anglophone Canada, one could reasonably assume that there was enough publicity to stir up some sort of reaction and subsequent action. But, no such luck in that part of the country. The courts pass the problem on to the government, and it points to the doctors, etc. Chickenshits.

As fate would have it, once again, I came across an article in the December 2004 issue of a Québec magazine called L'Actualité. The headline reads « La mort sur demande » ["Death on Demand"]. The sub-title is: « Pourquoi refuse-t-on aux malades le droit de mourir à l'heure de leur choix ? » ["Why are the sick refused the right to die when they want?"] Those of the readers who are fortunate enough to speak both official languages, can read the entire piece at:

http://www.lactualite.com/article.jsp?content=20060117_164150_2796

I photocopied the article from the magazine because I was amazed at what I read, all the while not even contemplating writing about this subject. Well, five years later in 2009, I still have the seventeen pages right here in front of me. I will attempt to condense and convey, as best I can, some of the major points made in this exposé.

Don't forget: This is Québec, a (former) bastion of Catholicism!

The first story deals with Manon Brunelle, a Québec woman, who in 2004 was in her mid 40s. Overcome by multiple sclerosis, she decided to end her suffering; not at home in her "native land," but in Switzerland. In spite of her affliction, pain, and suffering, she decided to first draw attention to the "hypocrisy of the doctors and the government" in our civilised country by contacting a journalist at Télé-Québec. She was determined to publicise her case in a documentary. At the end of which she announces that she is about to succeed with her assisted suicide. This time there will be no "charitable soul to bring me back," as has happened once before at home, when she overdosed on pills and was "saved." Staring right into the camera, she said that it will be done tomorrow. "I am very happy to be here."

And here are the most profound and compelling of her statements, as far as I am concerned:

"I am counting the number of times that are left for me to get in and out of my wheelchair. I have had enough. Oh, to no longer feel the pain." Finally, she said to the journalist, who accompanied her on her last journey:

"You know, to refuse someone to allow to die is so selfish."

Next we learn about Doris Lussier (1918-1993), an actor and TV personality advocated a gentle death. He believed in the medical profession and in the goodness of mankind. In his testament, he demanded that he be given medication so as to limit pain, even if the medication were to speed up his death. Since his notarised

testament did not have any force in law, the medical establishment rejected his request.

After his death under atrocious conditions, his son Pierre expressed his revulsion. “I don't want the reactionaries make me believe that a tube pushed through the penis into the prostate isn't the beginning of torture for a cancer stricken person in the final phase. I don't want the reformist extreme right to tell me that, being unable to evacuate excrement in the normal fashion due to intestinal blockages caused by morphine is a dignified, religious way to live one's last few days. I don't want politicians, barbarians by omission tell me that the terrible cry of pain he let go, while unconscious, reflects a medical state of “comfort.”

Claire l'Heureux-Dubé, an ex-judge of the Supreme Court remembers this letter, published in La Presse in 1993. This attack against the medical profession illustrates very clearly the problem with which doctors are faced. Due to a lack of legal protection, doctors opt for relentless therapy. “The government should meet its responsibilities and review the law,” she said. “This would take political will. Yet, the elected do not want to alienate the electorate. They know that society is divided on the issue. Therefore, they do not take any risks and pass the question they refuse to deal with, off to the courts.”

The ex-judge recalls that when she was ten years old, her mother's body was attacked by Multiple Sclerosis. The latter implored god to come and take her, but he did not. It was only her faith that kept her going until she was eighty. Her daughter, on the other hand understands those who want to abdicate. She admits that she is not certain what she would do in such a situation, but she would not commit suicide. She would, however, want to have the right to decide for herself. **“The state must not impose its decision on us related to such personal, human questions.”**

A review of the law is required, she insists. She does not want assisted suicide to simply be decriminalised, but she does suggest legal wording that is explicit as to who can end a life, when, and how. To her, the example of the Netherlands seems to be a good basis for reflection. A person wanting to die is seen by two doctors. It must be proven that the pain is intolerable and that there exists no treatment to attenuate the pain.

Contrary to the ex-judge's opinion, the church considers assisted suicide to be murder and cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte does not want the law to be touched. However, he does consider the decriminalisation of suicide to be a “good thing.”

Author's comment:

I suppose that, during a brief moment of lucidity one of the clergy came to the realisation that it is difficult to get a stiff to testify in a court of law.

The good cardinal then goes on to opine that if assisted suicide is legalised, we would move in the direction of a society where others decide for us.

Author's comment:

How he came up with this hair brain idea, I don't know. Euthanasia is not the topic here. Every sensible person talking about assisted suicide would understand that it is performed based on the afflicted person's demand. And this is exactly where the problem lies, as Madame l'Heureux-Dubé indicates. Religious dogma is still governing a goodly portion of the population and, as a consequence, the judiciary, and the government. While some members of parliament may be on side, as far as reviewing the law is concerned, most of them are evidently afraid to alienate some of the electorate and will not take a chance to be pushed aside for a candidate who either sincerely or hypocritically sides with the Xtians.

Further on in the article, the archbishop of Montréal was asked what he would do if he were faced with a request for assistance from someone close to him. "I would be unable to help," he said. "I would come to an agreement with the doctor to find out how he could stop the person's suffering, even if it would shorten the latter's life. This responsibility must be left to the doctors who know the sickness and know how to comfort their patients."

Author's comment:

I don't know about you but, is the man not saying exactly what I am advocating? The only thing that is in the way of the church promoting compassion in these extreme cases of suffering is god's will, isn't it? Ergo, we pass the buck to the doctors.

I wonder if it is god's will that religious factions fight each other and kill each other. I wonder if it is god's will that the Pope drives around in a "Pope Mobile." The current one is a custom-built two-door Mercedes ML 430 that was donated to the Vatican in 2002. Why doesn't he ride on a donkey? Would that be too ancient, too antiquated? Too "old fashioned" and not "progressive enough?" I submit that there are more important issues on which the church needs to be more progressive. This is 2010.

Then, we have Dr. Yves Dugré, president of the "Association des médecins spécialistes" [Association of Medical Specialists] who is astonished that there is thought given to leaving it to doctors so that they alone make such a decision. "We don't want to take the place of yesteryear's priests" he says. This is a responsibility shared between the patient and the doctor. Before distributing the roles, a debate with the populace is required, and it is up to Ottawa to begin same." He admits, furthermore, that doctors are divided on this question. "Everyone according to one's conscience. However, we would oppose a law that obliges doctors to act contrary to their values and their deontology."

Author's comment:

I quite understand and agree with Dr. Dugré's position, which is reasonable. This is precisely the position I take from the "afflicted" person's viewpoint. I want to die, therefore, I want a doctor with compassion and understanding to be permitted to execute my wish, without any legal consequences, same as an executrix / executor of a will is required to follow the instructions outlined by the deceased. Where is the problem?

It so happens that, as I was writing, my mother-in-law passed away at age ninety-seven, weighing seventy-five pounds. A woman who has had her knocks in life, as much as she has had good times. An intelligent woman she was, with a good business sense and a memory that was air and watertight. She drove her car until she was about ninety. And then it began. She would fall in her apartment, dragging herself to the phone to call 911 since she couldn't get up. Off to the hospital she went. This happened several times. Driving her back home after one of those episodes, I asked her if she felt secure enough, living alone in an apartment. In her sometimes rather abrupt voice she asked back: "What do you want me to do?" I knew her well enough not to answer, but just to say "nothing."

I believe to have an idea of what it must be like for such a person to eventually come to the realisation that things are no longer the way they used to be. To lose one's driver's license, one's autonomy, etc.. Having been independent for ninety years and then to have to be cared for by others, is a devastating thing.

Eventually, even she had to concede that she could no longer live alone. Both her daughters searched for a "good" place for their mom. The moving date draws near, her room is set up, and the agonising period of adjustment begins.

Before all was said and done, she had to have an operation, she contracted an annoying skin disorder, had irritable bowel syndrome and I don't know what else. Now she was a Catholic and while she and I never discussed the issue of religion, she knew very well where I stood. In spite of her faith, she would on occasion say that "this is no longer much of a life and that she's tired of living this way. But, she stuck it out until the end.

This whole story just to touch on another issue the ex-judge Madame l'Heureux-Dubé mentioned in the article in L'Actualité. "Let us stop being hypocrites," she says. "Euthanasia happens in hospitals. It is called the protocol." The dictionary tells me that a protocol is "a plan for carrying out a patient's treatment regimen." In simple words, what happened with my mother-in-law was that she was given periodic injections of a "morphine like" substance to reduce the pain she had. When the pain seemed to increase the frequency of the injections was increased. The end result of this regimen is that death is being accelerated. This is done with pure and good intentions and without any possibility of being regarded as euthanasia. The facility where my mother-in-law died was staffed with an extraordinary team of personnel; I called them angels, nurses, and orderlies alike, given their never ending patience, care, and compassion. I will let you judge whether there is a difference between one injection requested by the dying person at the outset or giving several injections over a period of time to reduce the suffering. The end result is the same, except that in one of these cases the suffering will be considerably shorter.

I will now juxtapose my philosophy and that of Danielle Blondeau, a nurse and Professor of Ethics at the Université Laval, who was also interviewed for the article in L'Actualité. She says that: "As soon as the government puts its nose into [this matter], the risks become great. To decriminalise assisted suicide, is to take a step forward to decriminalising euthanasia. There is a fine line between the two. There is a need for a third person in both cases. In the former case, the person is asking for help; in the latter, someone causes death. Therefore, there is the danger to the lives of old people who overcrowd our long-term care facilities, as well as people with deficiencies and the handicapped, who cost the country dearly."

Author's comment:

Madame Blondeau conjures up scenarios where the dying, the old, and the handicapped are simply disposed of without prior thought or regard for either the person's or the relatives' wishes. Laws exist in this country that will punish senseless, premeditated murder. Good. Now let us also have laws for people who either assist in ending or decide to end the life of a relative or friend for no other reasons than compassion and to terminate the suffering. That would be my solution. However, the good professor does not suggest such a solution. Could it be that there would be repercussions if she were to disobey god's will? Is this the real reason she is so afraid to come out with an honest answer?

Further on in the article there is yet another quote by Madame l'Heureux-Dubé, who in my opinion should "champion" this cause, which is to bring about change in Canada: "These people are alone with a sick person and they are at the end of their rope," she says. "Up to what point are they responsible? One could ask why the state does not help them."

If you want to get some other people's opinion on the sorry state of our laws, go to the following site, which headlines Sue Rodriguez' story. Scroll half way down the page. There you will read comments from other citizens who do not understand either what is happening in this country. My story is there as well. Don't forget to look at the "Agree" and the "Disagree" numbers.

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2009/02/09/f-assisted-suicide.html>

So the heading of this chapter is "What to Do to Effect Change?" After all the cases cited above, with the publication of an ex-judge's opinion on the matter, one would think that something would happen. But unfortunately, nothing is. One side is trying to create awareness, the other is condemning the movement to sanity without understanding the logic behind compassion. May all the 'nays' fry in their god's hell, I say.

Chapter eight will provide additional thoughts on this matter.

Chapter Seven

Looking outside the country

I will once again refer to another article in L'Actualité, to begin this exercise.

The headline reads: L'Oregon Bouscule l'Amérique. [Oregon Upsets America]. The sub-title is: Over a period of six years, 171 terminally ill Oregonians have legally committed suicide with the help of their doctors. The pros and cons of a unique model.

"Will you please go and get some apple sauce?" When Nora Miller heard this question, she understood that her husband had just decided that he will die that night. This was November 1999, eight months after he was diagnosed with a lightening fast form of lung cancer. Shortly after the diagnosis Rick Miller, age 53, decided that he would commit suicide with the agreement of his doctor, as permitted by law in the

state of Oregon. He had filled out the numerous necessary forms and finally he had his doctor prescribe a lethal dose of barbiturates.

The drug was stored in a cupboard in the house. It was after a trying odyssey from his bed to the bathroom that Rick suddenly made his decision that night.

“The apple sauce was to get the very bitter drug down,” relates Nora, the good looking, sporty woman in her fifties. “Rick laid down. All tension seemed to have left him. The headache, the sensation of suffocating, all that was gone. We spent part of the evening with our son. Rick was calm, almost cheerful. We quietly said our good-byes. Then he ate the apple sauce into which I had mixed the dose. He fell asleep almost immediately. Twenty minutes later it was over.”

This happened five years ago, and Nora is convinced, more than ever before, that it was a good decision. “Once the idea of his imminent death was accepted, Rick felt he needed to be the master of this situation, she said. He did not want to leave the image of a diminished man and he wanted to choose the moment and the circumstances of his death. Fortunately, this possibility was open to him.”

For the rest of the story go to the Government of Oregon “Death with Dignity Act” site: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/pas/index.shtml>

Author’s comment:

In my opinion, this story is exemplary of the freedom all those should have who subscribe to it, i.e. to chart their own path to death. It is quite obvious that the laws, as they are today, protect all those who, for their personal reasons, reject the option to take control of their fate when confronted with suffering and/or imminent death.

My question is, once again:

Who do those who deny this right, believe to be? What right does a fellow human have, to tell me that I cannot decide my own fate as far as my life and death are concerned, while with the same breath I am told to go to war to kill others? Is it my low I.Q. that prevents me from understanding this concept? Is it my damnable lack of belief that there is a loving god? Perhaps I am simply an idiot. Idiots always seem to get off the hook for any type of stupidity they commit. It certainly helps to also hold a high office, be it government, the courts, or clergy. O.K., so I may potentially be sued for defamation by all Xtian members of parliament and all Xtian judges of all the courts in the land, and the pope, once again. At age 66, do you really believe I care? Think again.

You may recall at the beginning of this book that I complained about the first name my parents gave me. I will now admit that perhaps the Universe really wanted me to have this name, since its meaning is Son of the People.

It is not terribly long ago that I came to the realisation that my mission in life is to come to the aid of others, something that is reflex-like, without thought, other than to be of assistance, without ulterior motives. I further believe that my mission is to take part in the struggle of all those who not only desire, but want change that reflects and respects not only the “ruling” majority, but also those who are on a path of compassion and enlightenment. I am only guided by my innermost convictions, by

thoughts that I know are honest and honourable. I know that I am on the right path and that I will succeed in making a difference for all those who cannot speak for themselves, who are afraid to speak for themselves, and those who need a little nudge to wake up and realise that they must always go with their own feelings and not necessarily with the way others want them to think, act and feel.

I had the privilege to interpret for a young student from the Congo during an information session for newly arrived immigrant students at a local high school. This young man of the ripe age of 14 told me that his father was killed, that he left his country with his mother when he was three, presumably because she wanted him to be safe and to have a good life. The reason I am mentioning this is that I also had the opportunity to tell this group of about 17 students from such other countries as Afghanistan, Colombia, Russia, and Somalia that they are fortunate to live in Canada now. I told them that Canada is the best country on this planet and that they can achieve whatever they want, if they really want it.

In spite of the shortcomings that this country has, I truly believe that it is the most welcoming, free, peaceful, and safe place on earth. This is what encourages me to take on this “battle” against the establishment. I will tell my foes what I tell my Francophone friends, which is that no-one prevents you from speaking French at home, at work or anywhere else where French is understood. Why do our laws insist on hampering your children’s future by preventing them from learning and speaking English? In the same vein, I tell you Xtians: “Why do you insist on preventing me from choosing the way I want to die? What is it to you? Go suffer, if your god says that you have to. I will still have compassion for you and cry at your death bed, as I did for my mother-in-law. I am not a Barbarian.” But don’t tell me that I have to subscribe to your philosophy.

What do most people want, regardless of the colour of their skin, their background, and their circumstances? I believe that most of them want the same things. They want to make a good life for themselves, be in a position to support a family, have decent shelter, and be free to manage their lives within the boundaries of good citizenship and decency.

Back to the good State of Oregon in the “land of the free and the home of the brave” we go.

According to the article, **less than twenty percent of Oregonians have religious affiliations**. Also, being an avant-garde state, they were among the first to adopt voting by correspondence. More than eighty percent of the electorate uses this manner of voting. This state has the greatest number of libertarians, who want the government to meddle as little as possible in their lives and their death. In spite of that, the Death with Dignity Act had a difficult birth. It was adopted in 1994 by a tight referendum vote of 51 to 49%. The Act was contested by the Catholic Church, certain medical associations and pro-life citizens’ groups. It came to the point where the State of Oregon subjected the question to another referendum. This time the support amounted to 60%. It was not until this point that the law was really in force.

Between the passing of this option for non-believers in 1997 and 2004, 265 people have done the necessary paperwork and 171 amongst them have made use of this law and followed through to their desired death. While none of these people have in any way, shape or form adversely affected the lives of those on the Xtian side, the

latter simply cannot come to grips with the fact that not everyone thinks the way they do. In that case, let's have laws that force everyone, Xtians and heathens to adore god, beseech god, praise god, only eat fish on Fridays, go to church at least three times a week. Why not prohibit the sale and manufacture of condoms? My former countryman Benedict XVI claims that the use of condoms increases the spread of AIDS. Since he is god's emissary, this must be true, mustn't it?

So here is my suggestion, as to how we can create peace and harmony among all humans:

Since the United States of America is the most powerful country on earth, it shall be chosen to unify all existing faiths into one, namely the Southern Baptist Faith. In other words, everyone, including Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, etc. etc., have to undergo hypnosis and be introduced to their new faith. This will result in the following improvements:

- 1) With all the other religions having been converted to the now dominant Southern Baptist Faith, it will eliminate the need for a pope. The Vatican can be turned into a hospital to help AIDS victims, regardless of whether they used condoms or not.
- 2) All real property, the pope mobile, limousines, artefacts, crowns, jewellery, paintings and any and all other valuables shall be auctioned off, and the proceeds be held in trust by a Fund that is charged with the responsibility to improve the lives of those who are needy, not the already rich or government officials. Since most of the auction items will be purchased by the egomaniacal croesi of the world, they should fetch a good "buck." Since the new owners have the financial means, they shall be taxed at the rate of, say, sixty percent of the value of each item purchased. These tax proceeds shall also be used to help the needy of the world by building hospitals to care for the sick and elderly. This Fund shall also dispatch experts to show the people of poor countries of the world how to install irrigation systems, so that crops can be grown there to make them self sufficient.
- 3) Human beings, forcefully removed by Xtians from their homeland Africa, shipped to the United States of America and sold like cattle, used and abused, cruelly punished and often killed, will finally enjoy equal status, a trend which has found its visible beginnings with the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, at long last. By the way in the 1776 declaration of Independence of the United States of America it says, and I quote: "**We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, LIBERTY, and the pursuit of happiness" etc., etc.** Beautiful words on paper, but shameless lies in reality. I will let you deal with the word slavery and imagine how you Xtians would feel in place of the "blacks."
- 4) Also, there will be some good music and joyful singing and dancing during Sunday services. This happiness will permeate humankind and eliminate the desire for irrational bickering, posturing, fighting, killing, and all other such inane and despicable activities.
- 5) There will be one exemption! The First Nations peoples of the world shall have the right to return to the land they occupied prior to the invasion of the white man who stole the land from them, thereby displacing the intruders the same way they were

displaced in the first place. Those living on Turtle Island will also be permitted to continue to believe in Kitche Manitou the as they have for thousands of years, before the intrusion of the Xtians.

I trust you realise that the above is pure fiction, concocted by my deranged brain. I am also certain that you would rebel against such arbitrary and dictatorial measures. I agree with you one hundred percent. While we need to have laws, if we wish to live in a "quasi civilised" society, it is unreasonable to impose the beliefs of one religious orientation on everyone else. And this is precisely what I am fighting against.

Back to reality I go.

The web site address shown below provides a list of countries from around the globe and their respective laws related to assisted suicide. I shall highlight those that most closely resemble what I would like to see in Canada.

http://www.assistedsuicide.org/suicide_laws.html

The list was compiled by Derek Humphry, former editor of World Right-to-Die Newsletter:

URUGAUY

This country with a population of about 3.4 million people, comprised mostly of Spanish and Italian settlers, **it is a secular country** in spite of the fact that sixty percent of the residents are Catholic. I presume that the considerable distance from head office has something to do with that. While a person having aided in the death of another must appear before the court, the "The judges are authorized to forego punishment of a person whose previous life has been honourable where he commits a homicide motivated by compassion, induced by repeated requests from the victim."

ESTONIA

Population 1.3 million. Estonia has one of the highest levels of agnostics in the world, with over **76% of the population stating no specific religious affiliation**.

After regaining its freedom from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, lawmakers decided that, since suicide is not punishable, assisting in suicide is also not punishable. Not being aware of more specific wording, this may be somewhat simplistic. However, the end result is that if a person makes it known that it wants to commit suicide, then to assist such a person is not a crime.

Following are a U.S. state (already covered above) and three countries that have specific laws on the books related to this matter:

OREGON

Population of 3.8 million; **80% agnostic/atheist**. Only physician-assisted suicide is permitted in this state since **1997**.

SWITZERLAND

Population 7.7 million; **13% agnostic/atheist**. Physician and non-physician assisted suicide is permitted since **1941**.

BELGIUM

Population 10.6 million. **27% atheist**. Although the method of euthanasia is not defined, it is permitted since **2002**.

NETHERLANDS

Population 16.5 million. **27% atheist**. Voluntary euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide are lawful since April 2002 but permitted by the courts since **1984**.

When I look at the progress other countries have made concerning this matter, I am encouraged. At the same time, I wonder what it will take for a country such as Canada to come to the realisation that it is sadly lagging behind the times with respect to an individual's right relating to life and death.

In order to demonstrate that I am really walking the walk and talking the talk, I will juxtapose a case in Great Britain that shocked me, because of its unexpected outcome.

The following is copied from the internet at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/5027916/Baby-OT-dies-after-court-rules-his-life-saving-ventilator-must-be-switched-off.html>

Baby 'OT' dies after court rules his life-saving ventilator must be switched off

A nine-month-old boy known as 'TO' has died after his parents lost a legal bid to overturn a ruling giving hospital staff the power to stop medical treatment keeping him alive, the parents' solicitor said.

Appeal judges upheld a High Court ruling that gave doctors at an unnamed NHS [National Health Service] trust powers to turn off the ventilator keeping him alive.

The parents of the seriously ill child earlier said they were "deeply distressed" by a court ruling allowing their "beautiful and beloved boy" to die.

The NHS trust had argued that the boy was suffering intolerable pain as a result of his treatment and condition and had no prospect of recovery.

Neither the baby, the trust involved in the case, nor the parents – Mr and Mrs T – can be identified.

The Court of Appeal judges refused the couple permission to challenge a decision by Mrs Justice Parker made after a 10-day hearing.

Lord Justice Ward was told the couple had decided to wait outside the courtroom while the ruling was given as they could not face hearing the decision.

He said he would like to have addressed them personally and asked their lawyers to pass on the message that it was impossible not to feel the "deepest sympathy for their predicament".

Lord Justice Ward and Lord Justice Wilson said they would give the reasons for their decision at a later date.

The case echoes the legal battle over the treatment of baby Charlotte Wyatt in 2005. She was given just a five per cent chance of survival but is still alive four years later, after her parents won the right to force doctors to resuscitate her if she fell ill.

Author's comment:

Why would a court in England disrespect the wish of the parents to keep the child on life support? Where in their law books does it say that they have the right?

Is it possible that if the parents had demanded their child be taken off life support, the court would have refused, citing that this would constitute homicide?

Once again, the state/court meddles in the affairs of the individual. A person looking for assistance to commit suicide is denied the right, because it is considered homicide. Parents wanting to keep their child on life support are denied the right. Given that it was the court's ruling, it's not homicide. If anyone can make sense of this, I would like to know.

Then there is the other side of the coin, copied from the net at:

<http://www.nrlc.org/news/2001/NRL12/brit.html>

British Law Lords Reject Euthanasia

By Jenny Nolan

NRLC Dept. of Medical Ethics

A drive to legalize euthanasia in the United Kingdom through the courts failed November 29 when the country's highest tribunal refused Diane Pretty's request that her husband be allowed to kill her. Pretty, a 42-year-old mother of two, has a motor neuron disease.

The five Law Lords ruled unanimously that human rights legislation serves to protect life and not to end it. Pretty's lawyers had argued that Britain's ban on assisted suicide obstructed her human rights and right to privacy.

A London newspaper, *The Guardian*, reported that Lord Bingham, one of the five Law Lords, explained that the European Human Rights Convention contains no guarantee for assisted suicide and pointed out that the Netherlands alone permits it in Europe. Regardless of the benefits that some people claim from the practice of euthanasia, they do not stem from or deserve protection under the European Convention right guarding the sanctity of human life, he said.

According to British news services, Pretty began her legal battle months ago when she petitioned the director of public prosecution not to charge her husband, Brian Pretty, with a crime if he helped her to take her life. The prosecutor refused and Pretty challenged the decision in high court, where she lost on October 18.

On November 1, *The Guardian* reported that Pretty's case would be heard on appeal by the five Law Lords. They reached their unanimous decision in less than a month.

Diane Pretty's condition was diagnosed in 1999 and has progressed even as she has argued for the right to be killed.

In the early stages of the legal process, *Reuters* news service reported that she was often seen smiling outside of courthouses with her husband at her side. But by the end of November she depended on a wheelchair and a feeding tube, and had no decipherable speech.

She was often unable to attend hearings. The disease is expected to move into the muscles that control her breathing, where it may cause pneumonia and eventually death by respiratory failure, reported *The Guardian*.

Lord Bingham was deeply sympathetic to Diane Pretty's plight, calling the prognosis distressing and the disease cruel in newspaper accounts of the court's decision.

"No one of ordinary sensitivity would be unmoved by the frightening ordeal which faces Ms. Pretty," he told *BBC News*, but "mercy killing is in law killing." He elaborated by expressing his concern that lifting the ban on euthanasia might convince some of Britain's elderly, who otherwise would have no desire to die, to end their lives thinking they are a "burden" to others.

The Law Lords' refusal to exempt those who kill a disabled person from punishment maintains the equal protection of the law for all citizens.

Euthanasia poses no threat to healthy, "productive" citizens, but rather to those bound by pain, lost in depression, or struggling with financial or family problems. Its allure is that euthanasia is supposedly effortless, inexpensive, and final.

If the people around the patient feel the same way, any positive alternatives become even harder to secure.

Alison Davis, who has spina bifida, knows this only too well. Fifteen years ago she tried to kill herself, driven by the departure of her husband of 10 years, who was also her caregiver.

She unfolded her story in the *Daily Express*, one of the United Kingdom's national newspapers, shortly before Diane Pretty's appeal.

Born with spina bifida, a congenital disorder that leads to an underdeveloped spine, Davis is paralyzed from the waist down and has no feeling on the right side of her body. She lives with the lung disease emphysema as well as osteoporosis.

Her bones break easily and her nerves are often trapped by her collapsing spine, pinning her body in sharp pain that she likens to slamming your fingers in a door over and over again. When it becomes too great to bear she takes morphine. Because her condition is not terminal, there is no end in sight.

Yet for all these medical problems, Davis is optimistic about her life. She reflected back on her early desperation.

"Wanting to die and actually taking steps to try to make it happen lasted about five years," she told the *Daily Telegraph*. "In the following five years I often felt as desperate, but began to realize it would hurt my friends terribly."

Those days are far behind her now. Twelve years ago Colin Harte took over as her full-time caregiver. Even in the moments that he can't take her pain away, she says it's a comfort to know that he's there with her, reassuring her that it will stop.

Davis no longer feels that death is the "solution" to desperation and views legalizing euthanasia as the mark of a society that has given up on its most vulnerable members. The answer to suffering is better training in palliative care and a framework of support for people, said Davis.

She is terrified that cases like Diane Pretty's will encourage society to react toward people like Pretty and herself as if they would be "better off dead."

"I think it's sad that Diane Pretty is surrounded by people who say she is right to feel her life has no value," she told the *Daily Telegraph*. "If you are surrounded by people who agree you would be better off dead you end up believing it."

Five years ago Davis accepted an invitation to sponsor two disabled children in India, even going so far as to travel to see them. On returning to England, she started a charity to raise money for disabled and abandoned Indian children. Just last year she opened a home for them in Southern India. She is currently in the process of funding an on-site surgical unit.

"I realize what a waste it is to want to die," she said, "even when your life is limited."

"The ultimate terror is of being all on your own and worrying how you are going to cope," she explained to the *Daily Telegraph*. "But if you are surrounded by people who make you feel as if your life has the same unfathomable value as theirs, then you are able to cope with tomorrow."

Author's comment:

Very clever, how the two cases are juxtaposed. The woman who is asking to die and denied her wish, and the woman who unsuccessfully tried to commit suicide and is now glad she is still alive.

Are both cases the same? Are the two women copies of one another? Of course not. They each have their own stories. How can anyone, other than the person in question decide? Ms. Davis tried for five years to commit suicide, without success. It was not to be. That does not mean that Ms. Pretty should not have the right to die, since she is an individual with her own value system.

The point I find incredible though, to say the least, is the incongruity of these judgements with the law and the immunity of this country's courts. Decisions are made according to the court's whim, with total disregard for the individuals involved.

Chapter Eight

Cause and Effect

It is quite clear to me that the reason we have laws that infringe upon the rights of one segment of the population and favour the other, is because of the influence of religion on the population and, therefore, on government, as pointed out, and evidenced in Chapter Four.

What, if we were to...

...set aside religious differences and resulting antagonism, and replace it with acceptance and conciliation;

...stop hatred, and replace it with living in harmony;

...eradicate superiority and power, and replace it with equality and cooperation;

...replace dominance, enslavement, oppression, and tyranny, and replace them with respect and freedom for all.

Would this be a better world?

I, having been born in Germany, an atheist, do not believe that I am superior to anyone else. Unfortunately, there are many Germans, French, Americans, Catholics, Protestants and Muslims, etc., who think they are. I do not hate Christians, Muslims, or members of a multitude of other faiths. I respect their right to practice what their parents and their societies have taught them, as long as it does not infringe on my right to freedom, my right to freely express myself, my right to fashion my life to my taste, and to do with it as I wish.

In order not to be misunderstood, let me point out that I am not talking about reasonable accommodations for immigrants here. I have left behind my country of birth for good. I am a Canadian and I am subject to Canadian law, justice, and way of life. Needless to say, I'm sure, that as far as religion is concerned, everyone should be allowed to worship according to the individual's belief. However, once outside of the home environment, or the place of worship, daggers are not allowed in schools, voting is to be done with the face uncovered, just to mention two items that readily come to mind.

Let us learn from the First Nations people, who tell us to 'treat the earth and all that dwell thereon with respect' and to 'dedicate a share of our efforts for the greater good.' Those are good ingredients for harmony. But then, the Native People are lucky! They only have the Great Spirit, also called the Great Mystery as their "supernatural being," not 52 flavours of religion.

I know that my thoughts are utopian, since humankind has developed a pattern of confrontation and destruction for the sake of power and dominance. I believe that we are a long way away from achieving harmony, because dominance must be maintained, and business interests that must be preserved at all cost, it seems. Once again, I will quote Ralph Waldo Emerson who said that "Things refuse to be mismanaged long." The question is: "Who will have the foresight, and the intestinal fortitude to set the example here in Canada?" Who will not be deterred from accomplishing the task in spite of intimidation, insult, malice, prosecution, and threat to life? Who will be the "rebel" to effect change in the face of significant religious opposition? Who will see the day?

In 1980, The World Federation of Right to Die Societies was founded, which consists of 44 Right to die organisations from 25 countries, as at July 2009. Its purpose is, and I quote:

The Federation provides an international link for organisations working to secure or protect the rights of individuals to self-determination at the end of their lives.

1980! Thirty years of “obscure” existence. Obscure, because only people who want change would know that this organisation exists. Why would the believer in a faith be interested in such an outfit, since that person’s rights are protected, based on its god’s edict?

Then what is it that makes me think that I will succeed with what I am doing here?

Firstly, you must have noticed that I do not shy away from writing things the way I see them and the way are in fact.

I have no qualms about telling you that, in my opinion, the Bible, the Q’ran, the Torah, etc., are tomes of fairy tales to enslave the masses.

I have no qualms about telling you that, in my opinion, any member of any faith in any country where that faith is prevalent and where warfare is an option to “resolve” conflict is a HYPOCRITE, because “Thou shalt not kill” is one of its God’s commandments. Whether the act of killing is passive by way of condoning or active by way of putting a bullet through a fellow human’s heart is irrelevant, as far as I am concerned. Closing the eyes so as to not see the killing that is being committed and still pretend to follow god’s commandments is hypocrisy.

Anyone telling me that my body and my life belong to God and are controlled by him, including my death, is millions of light years from the reality in which I live. Be happy with what you believe, but don’t tell me that I have to submit to you and follow you.

Secondly, I am a pest. I have mentioned this before: Once I have my teeth into something, I don’t let go easily.

Time will tell whether I will be successful in having MY rights as an atheist protected or not.

Chapter Nine

Our Rights

So what is the purpose of this litany of my honourable/horrible and visionary/contrareligious thoughts you were served here? It is simply to once again raise awareness of the fact that the dominance over humans due to religious edicts, and categorical denial of rights for non-believers to be masters of their very own end-of-life destiny, without any affect on anyone else but the individual, must finally cease.

Those who adhere to what their church, parents, and schools have taught them, already have their rights protected. Now I, and others who are like-minded, want their rights protected as well. One is not to interfere with the other, but one must accept and tolerate the other, realising all the while that we do live in a free country, where we have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In this Charter, we read that:

15. (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

(2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Author's comment:

If I understand well, we are all equal under the Charter, regardless of 'race, national, or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability,' as long as we are part of a religious orientation. Atheists/agnostics are excluded and are, therefore, subject to laws that disregard any deviance from the established norms.

Further on in the Charter, under the heading of "Enforcement," we read that:

24. (1) Anyone whose rights or freedoms, as guaranteed by this Charter, have been infringed or denied may apply to a court of competent jurisdiction to obtain such remedy as the court considers appropriate and just in the circumstances.

Author's comment:

Given that the Charter is not specific on the rights of non-believers, does this mean that I am not protected under same? Does the Charter tell me inconspicuously that I must belong to a religious group? If so, does this constitute a breach of an individual's right not to adhere to a religious organisation? Would this be good and sufficient grounds to challenge the Charter?

Perhaps the answer lies in the following section:

2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- a) Freedom of conscience and religion;
- b) Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
- c) Freedom of peaceful assembly; and
- d) Freedom of association.

Author's comment:

Being a proud Canadian and having a great deal of faith in this country, I take it that I am safe, since

- a) *I am guaranteed freedom of conscience, which in my case must permit me not to believe in the supernatural;*

b) I am guaranteed the freedom of thought and expression of same.

The question then is: what must happen to effect change? The thought that occurred to me in the beginning, was to try and have this book published by some irresponsible, renegade outfit that revels in controversy, sees the opportunity of making a name for itself by printing such inflammatory material as I have written, and then sending free copies to ALL Members of Parliament, ALL judges presiding over courts of law, and copies at the regular price to all heads of all flavours of religion in the country. I would make an exception in the case of the pope, since he is head of the richest of all faiths and charge him double the price. Once done, I would commit suicide, so as to negate the expense of millions of dollars having to be paid by Canadian taxpayers for court hearings, protracted discussions, since what I have done contravenes established and ensconced standards of western civilised society and is blasphemous to top it all off.

Then, I had second thoughts because I am, indeed, extremely serious about this issue, since it concerns the non-existence of my fundamental right to have domain over my body. I am of the firm and incontestable belief that I have the right to decide when and how I will end my life, which will neither be as my parents have died, nor my brother.

I commend the people who want nothing to do with suicide, assisted suicide, or euthanasia, because they are true to their convictions. I do not ridicule them for being religious people. In return, I want, no, I demand to be given the same respect for what, and who I am.

Given that approximately two-thirds of the Canadian population is made up of the two major occidental religions, I do not want a plebiscite, which would play right into the hands of the government, due to the foreseeable outcome. The latter could wash its hands of any obligation to honour my demand, which is also given on behalf of all my kindred spirits.

Therefore, I call on the Canadian government to act on this issue based on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the fact that current laws are prejudicial. Laws are passed on a regular basis, without the consent of the governed. To pass a law that gives an individual the right to specify in a testament or in a mandate of inaptitude under what circumstances that person wants to die and how, will only serve to enact a right for approximately 4.8 million citizens who are not affiliated with any religion. This law is not to interfere in any way with the existing law. Simply put, if I am not able to commit suicide, I want someone, a compassionate person, or a doctor to be able to freely administer a lethal injection, or the like, with the purpose of ending my life. In doing so, the person shall be protected by law for having acted, based on my instructions, and be immune from criminal prosecution of any kind whatsoever.

Chapter Ten

The question: “What Right Do You Really Believe To Have?”

The question is a double-sided sword. On the one hand, it is asking government what rights it believes to have, to pass laws that profoundly and adversely affect the lives of its citizens. On the other, it is asking you, the reader/citizen, as to what rights you believe to have to effect change.

Concerning the first question, I submit that, too frequently governments operate on the premise that, since voters have elected them into power, they now have carte blanche to act as they please. That is, in my opinion an utter misconception on the part of governments. Laws that affect the life, belief system, and freedom of a person are simply too important to be enacted on the presumptions by lawmakers that the people are or will be satisfied with them.

On the issue at hand, the rights of those Canadians who are agnostic/atheist are completely ignored. This must be changed, since the Charter guarantees everyone the right to choose.

Concerning the second question, are there issues in your life, in this country, with which you are dissatisfied, issues over which you have less control than you would like to have? Are there situations where you feel helpless, neglected, or forgotten because of existing laws? If such is the case, do you feel as though there is nothing you can do? If someone told you that you have the right to complain, why not let your dissatisfaction be known? Would you “fight” to effect change?

Being the rabble-rouser that I am, what I have done in the past, when the government intended to pass laws that would infringe on an existing right, was to write letters to the minister involved and to members of parliament. Not just one letter, but many, and until such time that assurances were given contrary to the government’s intention. If more people were to do this, the government would have a good barometer as to its popularity. It would also know the preoccupations of its “subjects.” Unfortunately, not enough people take neither the time, nor do they make the effort to do this. **In such case we do not have the right to complain, because it is our complacency that is at the root of the problem, not the government’s disregard of the people’s displeasure.**

Ergo, since there is tremendous power in the written word and in numbers, since you have the right to use this power, why don't you? Try it. Be sure of your argument. Research the matter. Speak to relatives, friends, neighbours and get their opinions on the matter that occupies your mind. Don't give up if at first there is little or no success. Perseverance is an important ingredient in all this.

So here we are. You and I have now come to the end of this the rocky road over which I have led you. I thank you most sincerely for having been my travel companion and for having had the indulgence, patience, and kindness to endure my ramblings.

Having said that, I now consider you kindred spirits as well, regardless of your ethnic background, your religious orientation, your nationality, the colour of your skin, your age, your sex, or your sexual orientation. A very wise woman once told me that she is a citizen of the world and that god is her religion. I will never forget this very simple,

but utterly profound statement which encompasses all the ingredients required for harmonious human relations on this planet.

On that note, I hope that some of my views and ideas will merit reflection on your part and perhaps even cause a minor adjustment in the way you have been thinking to date. Perhaps you will also consider writing a letter about whatever bothers you to your Member of Parliament, the Minister responsible for the subject of your complaint and to the Prime Minister. If I have accomplished that, I will have reached my intended goal of mobilising like minds and fulfilled my purpose of encouraging you to speak up and be heard.

May love, peace, and harmony be with you now and always.

Post Script

On June 22nd, 2009 my brother Klaus Reinhold (Ray) Lender passed away, five days after his 77th birthday. One of his sons was with him until he stopped breathing.

He had refused to eat, and I want to believe that he did, because in spite of his affliction, he instinctively knew that this would release him from this "life."

I was saddened by the news and happy at the same time. You understand why, I am sure.

On Sunday, November 8, 2009, my two nephews, their dear significant others and I scattered my brother's / their father's ashes near a golf course at Tremblant, Québec, because Ray loved the North of this country and he loved golf.

We spread his ashes over this great land he called home. His spirit returned to Mother Earth.

The tears of sadness I shed then will turn into tears of joy, when I join my parents, my sister, and my only brother.

I love you all.