

Implications of assisted dying taken too lightly

SIR - Perhaps Lord Carey and his so-called religious colleagues ("Choosing to die", Letters, August 15) would like to volunteer to give the lethal injections.

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SIR - The ministers of religion who write in support of the physician-assisted suicide Bill are the exception who prove the rule.

The prohibition on intentionally killing patients, or helping them to kill themselves, is a bedrock principle of the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is also a foundational principle of law and of professional medical ethics.

They write that there is "nothing sacred about suffering". Whoever said there was? Suffering is an evil, which explains why so many hospitals and hospices around the world were founded by religious people to relieve suffering and make natural death as comfortable as possible. However, there is a world of difference between killing pain and killing patients.

The ministers support the right of

individuals who are "terminally ill" to hand back the "precious gift" of life. Leaving aside the propriety of handing back precious gifts, why should this supposed right be denied to those with conditions such as severe arthritis, who may face many years of suffering?

The Bill they support is simply a foot in the door.

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SIR - I can understand why some bishops, priests and rabbis consider that assisting a suicide may be an act of mercy.

What astounded me was the wording of the letter. How could any Christian, never mind a bishop, say: "There is nothing sacred about suffering, nothing holy about agony"? What exactly do they believe happened on Good Friday?

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