

ARE SUICIDES MORALLY RESPONSIBLE?

Question. – Please give the correct idea as to the end of one who commits suicide. Will he be punished for it? Or is death his punishment?

Answer. – The theory that suicides are hopelessly lost was formulated during the Dark Ages. The thought was that self-murder, being a sin committed as a *last act*, indicated a mind and heart out of accord with God's arrangement to the last moment of life. The thought that death ends all hope clinched the theory that eternal torment is the wages of suicide. This, we believe, is thoroughly wrong in every way. The proper view according to the Bible is this:

(1) Adam was disobedient, was sentenced to death. Thus his race was born under unfavorable conditions, mental, moral and physical; in degeneracy, some more, some less; some in very poor physical health, some of very low moral status, some with very weak mental powers. A suicide often has all three of these inducing causes as provocations to such an act. Surely he was either mentally weak or uninformed, ignorant; else he would not take his own life. His trouble, then, was weakness of mind and judgment caused by Adam's transgression. He was a sharer of Adam's penalty – the death penalty; and when he died – no matter how – he came fully under the effect of that penalty – *nothing more*. Eternal torment is not in any way intimated in the death penalty. "The soul that sinneth, it shall *die*."

(2) God had mercy upon Adam, not in the way of abrogating the decision of the Divine Court and clearing the guilty one, but in another way – by providing redemption through the death of Christ. Jesus' death, by Divine appointment, is to cover the sin of Adam – not only his original transgression and its penalty, but all the

transgressions of his children, the world, which have resulted from his mental, moral and physical impairment.

(3) This provision of God includes not only mental sickness, but moral sickness and physical sickness. All mankind are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

(4) The redemption of the world implies its eventual release from the condemnation of death. The time Divinely appointed for the release of all is the thousand years of Christ's Reign – the Millennium. All mankind will then be liberated from the original condemnation, and will be granted a full opportunity for the recovery of all that was lost. The mentally sick, the morally sick, and the physically decrepit – all will have opportunity for a full return to human perfection.

(5) The only exceptions to this rule of restoration to Adam's original perfection will be those who during this Gospel Age – from the death of Christ to His Second Coming – are called out of the world, invited to become New Creatures in Christ, and made associates with Jesus, sharers in His exaltation to the Divine nature and in His office. These are justified (reckoned perfect) by faith in Christ's redemptive sacrifice, and then given the opportunity to present themselves as living sacrifices. – Romans 12:1.

(6) As Christians, during this Gospel Age, might sin wilfully and thus forfeit all relationship to God and die the Second Death, so in the coming Age, during the Millennium, the world in general, after having been brought to an accurate knowledge of the Truth, may by wilful sin forfeit all relationship to God, and die the Second Death.

(7) In thus declaring that not only the sins of the Church class, but the sins of the whole world, are covered by God's arrangement through the sacrifice of Christ, we are not to be understood as meaning that the sinner is exempted from all punishment. On the

contrary, each one has a responsibility for his own actions, even if he has but imperfect knowledge. His responsibility, as Jesus pointed out, is in proportion to his knowledge.

The Master declared that he that knows his Master's will, and does it not, shall be punished with many stripes – severe punishment; and he who knows less of his Master's will, and does it not, shall be punished with fewer stripes – less punishment. Sometimes those stripes, or punishments, come in the present life. With the Church class it is uniformly so. But often the punishments are not meted out in the present life; however, they will be administered justly in the life to come. So the Apostle declares, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some they follow after." – I Timothy 5:24.

(8) Along the above lines, we would not be inclined to hope that any suicide could be a member of the glorified Church of Christ, but, at most, a part of the world – to have trial with the remainder of the world for life or death everlasting under the favorable conditions of Messiah's Kingdom. However, even upon this point we may not dogmatize, remembering that some, apparently saintly, have been permitted of the Lord to lose their reason to a greater extent than some of the world who have committed suicide.

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STILL THERE IS ROOM

Day is declining and the sun is low;
The shadows lengthen, light makes haste to go;
Room, room, still room! Oh, enter *now!*

The bridal hall is filling for the feast;
Pass in, pass in, and be the Bridegroom's guest.
Room, room, still room! Oh, enter now!

It fills, it fills, that hall of jubilee!
Make haste, make haste; 'tis not *too full* for *thee*.
Room, room, still room! Oh, enter now!

Pass in, pass in! That banquet is for thee;
That cup of everlasting Love is free.
Room, room, still room! Oh, enter now!

Louder and sweeter sounds the loving call –
Come, lingerer, come; enter that festal hall!
Room, room, still room! Oh, enter now!

– *H. Bonar*

