

He cocked the piece. Then went over and set down on the unoccupied bed, looked at the girl, aimed the pistol, and fired a bullet through his right temple.

-A PERFECT DAY FOR BANANAFISH
(Sallinger 1981:18)

"I sometimes think almighty Godd tests me to the edge of my endurance, to see if I will commit the mortal sin of taking my own life to remove the pain."

-THE SCORPIO ILLUSION
(Ludlum 1993:600)

ADD REFERENCE SOMETHERE TO POSSIBILITY THAT SUICIDE IS EQUIVALENT TO THE BAD CHOICE IN THE PE THAT RESULTED IN EXPULSION OF SATAN ET AL. Only way to get off greased rail through phases during mortality.

LATER: (variation on a theme) also refer to how suicide may be the equivalent of re-casting the council decision, which might explain, in part, why it is such a serious matter for us.

33. OBESITY, ALCOHOLISM AND SUICIDE

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INTRODUCTION:

Suicide is a bad deal for everyone involved. Why? Does this model offer an answer? We believe it does. It is perhaps the most satisfying explanation we've heard. We are obviously objective, detached observers. Let's look at this topic for a while.^{1}

Doctrinally SMD endorses this concept that suicide is bad.^{2} But, as usual, there is little explanation for just why that is so.^{3} However, when one considers the effects and consequences of

¹ A propos this topic, we find it interesting that the existentialist Camus stated that the only interesting philosophical question is whether or not to commit suicide. That reflects a belief in a future of nothing. If I believed that way, I too, would consider that to be the only interesting question. And would probably only even consider it after a riot of abandoned dissipation.

Alan Watts disagrees with Camus, however. He states that the fact of death is actually an affirmation of its opposite, i.e. life. Eastern Religions like Buddhism include as a fundamental tenet the concept that opposites define each other, that the presence of one condition connotes the opposite. That is why their concept of perfection, Nirvana, is voidness or nothingness. There, there is NO happiness or joy because their presence would entail unhappiness and dis-joy.

We don't agree with either. However, we like the Buddhist concept because it is a notational variant of the OPPOSITION CONDITION. Nice that the concept pops up in other religions, even if disguised.

² Isn't this interesting? After looking at this sentence for years, I finally figured that I better confirm that suicide is, in fact, spoken of negatively in the canon. Guess what? It ain't. Nary a citation about it. None. Nada. Zero. Zilch. The heading of SUICIDE in the LDS Topical Guide refers to "Blood, the shedding of", and "Murder".

So where have I come up with the idea that suicide is doctrinally disparaged? Probably from sermons and contemporary society. But the canon is silent as far as the issue of "shedding one's OWN blood". This is curious and puzzles us, especially since shedding OTHER'S blood is verboten. As you will see in this chapter, this model implies that there is a profound difference between suicide and murder. Decide for yourself.

Parenthetically -how much more parenthetical can we get that these irritating footnotes- one asks whether murder is as bad as the canon DOES in fact opine. The reason for this quibblesome comment is the fact that if the Lord commands it, as in the OT, then it's OK. Doesn't that sound like the case of multiple wives? It seems to us to beg the question of what the underlying principles are, and what the laws of heaven are that are involved.

We also throw in the issue of wars. Holy Wars, Jihads?, have been ordered by the Lord. They always terminate a bunch of lives. That sounds like murder. On a mass scale. Is that really much different that the centuries old wars between the Hutus and Tutsis, or the Muslims and Christians, the Khmer Rouge and Cambodians, Hitler and the Jews, etc. So how is that taken into account? Doesn't seem fair that we can't do it but He can. I know. The bible scholar will assure me that the Lord can do anything He wishes, and I will agree. (Sigh and shrug of the shoulders. Can't ever beat that one.) But He, too, can't act outside parameters defined by the eternal priesthood which predated Him (without damaging Himself). So we suspect that somewhere there are higher principles that we don't know -yet- which will explain these contradictory-appearing dimensions to the POS and life.

³ I want to look at Camus again. Camus did not endorse the concept of a post-mortal life, wrestled with pain and evil and the like. Given his lack of hope for a future, it is not surprising that his philosophy distilled down into a succinct question, repeated by Alan Watts:

"If it were not so I should probably commit suicide, for, as Camus so bluntly suggested, the only serious philosophical problem is whether or not to commit suicide." (1972:6)

I have no difficulty comprehending Camus' point of view. I, too, would consider suicide as a legitimate means of dealing with the pain and suffering of my life, had I not a hope for some sort of future existence, in which suicide figures negatively. In fact, I suspect that most adults -and regrettably today many teenagers- will admit to harboring the hope, during moments of major stress and pain, of being killed "accidentally" in a car crash, etc. Is that not a suicide wish? Yes it is.

But I also want to note Watts' further comment about why he believed Camus was wrong:

"(Ultimately, of course, he is wrong, for to be or not to be is not the question, since the two states manifest each other. How would you know that you are alive unless you had once been dead?)" (1972:6)

Camus had not hope of a future life, and Watts' repeats here the Zen Buddhist concept that opposites make each other real. The present life only is real because there is somewhere the opposite. (Note the role of opposites. So Camus' desolation is unjustified because the present state 'proves' that there is another state. This is comparable, in a limited way, to the SMD concept of opposites.)

Finally, a propos Camus, I have unrestrained admiration for him. In the face of the hopelessness he felt, he nonetheless believed that living a principled life was proper. There wasn't an abandonment of living by a moral system. That is impressive. Too many Christians, at least, live 'good' lives either out of fear

suicide from the perspective of the present model, an explanation becomes apparent:

Premature, willful termination of ones sojourn in this phase has profound consequences on one's spirit and its metamorphosis.

We will explain why this is so, hopefully persuading you.^{4}

NEAR-DEATH VIEW:

Start in the near-death literature. There is word BACK FROM THE BEYOND that suicide is, indeed, the worst way for a mortal life to end. People who were -fortunately- unsuccessful in their attempts returned chastened, understanding that they nearly committed a major mistake.

Look at Moody's LIFE AFTER LIFE for a minute^{5}. Unsuccessful suicides whom he interviewed, uniformly reported that they could tell, after they were in the next "world"^{6}, that they had made a

of punishment, or for the purpose of earning a reward.

Both are unsatisfactory motivations for living rightly. Doing good is the way to find peace and harmony, which may, though it may not, ultimately have consequences for one's future state. The reason I say may here is that the Buddhist believes that perfection is nothingness, in which case there will be no reward. But the Christian believes there will be a reward for right living. Take your pick. I am personally becoming more convinced that the Buddhist (and Navaho) concept of living in harmony with the universe is the real intention of Christ's doctrine. At least I say this when I recall Him saying to do good deeds in private, so that the Father can reward us openly. The problem for a Buddhist with this statement is that a reward suggests the opposite and nirvana or nothingness is nothingness, neither reward nor punishment.

4

We like Hyde's tying together suicide with the question of why we are here:

"Tim laughed, 'I'm not sure what you're getting at.'
 'What I'm saying is, you won't save your father by killing yourself.'
 'I'm not sure that's why I came here...to save my father.'
 'It'll take the rest of your life to figure out why you came here. In the end, let me warn you, the answer will be as selfish as hell.'"
 (Hyde CHINA LAKE 1992:293)

We agree.

5

Moody and LIFE AFTER LIFE is as good as any source from this genre for details of these reports. Persuasive to us. The other messages these unsuccessful suicides return with is that 1) they should love everyone unconditionally, and 2) that they should gain as much knowledge as possible during this life which is a gift to be used wisely. We obviously like the second reason a great deal. Rationalization for these mind gymnastics that we are engaging in.

6

Where is the "location"? It sounds, based on Moody's description, like it is a condition "between" mortality and post-mortality. This is suggested by the fact that some near-dead reported that there was some type of a visible barrier in front of them that they knew represented the 'line in the sand', the point of no-return. If they crossed this barrier, they would not be able to return to earth. Since they didn't report being in the hospital room or at the scene of the accident, etc., it seems they may have moved in some manner to an intermediate location between the two phases. We're somehow tired of suggesting a different dimensioned world as this intermediate location, though that could be the case.

We make a different suggestion. Perhaps the location referred to in the near death literature is actually not a location different from the post-mortal world. Perhaps the inference that there is an intermediate location is merely an artifact or by product of mortal language that is inadequate to describe such an extraordinary experience for which there would be no vocabulary. This would be particularly true if the descriptions were made by people without any sophistication about, or insight into, these matters. A person who had such insight might otherwise understand that the location is not a location at all, rather the difference is actually a condition of their spirits. Specifically, a spirit that had not undergone the death-rebirth ordinance sequence that formally transfers a spirit from mortality into post-mortality, but whose mortal body had 'let go' of the spirit, would probably continue in a state of veiled-ness. In this condition, it would be unable to visualize the new surroundings because it lacked powers or perception because they were either still veiled or perhaps not provided. (There IS a difference.)

most serious mistake. They understood that they should not have done that, that taking one's own life is one of the most worst things one can do. But, one asks again, why is it so serious?

STRANGULATION:

It is obvious that during mortality, a person has the right and the power to determine for himself whether to terminate his experience before it would otherwise be terminated. This means that we all confront this choice at all times. Free agency is everywhere operative during mortality, so a person who has suffered as much as he believes s/he can may use whatever instrumentality s/he wishes to terminate his experiment. If s/he wishes.

As a hospital risk manager, I've seen some remarkably grotesque techniques for accomplishing this end. The most shocking was the one where a young man elected to strangle himself. Strangulation is a shocking thing for the rest of us to consider because of the manifest intention and prolonged consciousness the individual experiences before unconsciousness sets in. What made this particular suicide so stunning was the fact that he took his pajama bottoms and tied the legs around the leg of his bed. Then he laid down on the floor and placed his head through this loop, and then. He twisted his body around and around until the loop had been drawn tightly around his neck like a tourniquet. When he was found, he was dead.

For an individual to go to those lengths, being cognizant for the majority of the gesture of what needs to be done, how to do it and to then actually accomplish it, reflects the degree of their pain. This is not a flippant gesture. So what does this mean within this model?

CHRISTIAN STRICTURE:

Recall that we are placed down here in a probationary, experimental state with certain objectives or assignments or both. While we are given free agency, nowhere in the revealed plan is there any indication that we are empowered or allowed to make our own decision about when we have had enough, about when we think it's time to go home. The Christian canon does not specifically even proscribe suicide, as noted above, a rather curious omission, given the impact of such a procedure, when compared to the other varieties of sin that are on the black list. We must bear with the

In this situation, the transactions reported by Moody's folk could occur when the spirits were 'in' post-mortality, but unable to perceive it. The barrier would be a metaphorical expression of the death/birth sequence that would unalterably move the spirit forward into the next testing phase. This would explain why the descriptions of the barrier vary: it would be interpreted on the basis of each individual's experiences and beliefs.

We can't end here. So we ask a question that can be asked about the termination of the PE as well: what is death? How does a spirit know it's time to leave? There must be a variety of conditions that must be satisfied for the separation of bodies to occur during mortality, though we can't guess about the PE experience.

pain until someone else, or something else, decides the experiment should end. Only then can we "legally" withdraw from this life, and obviously, we have no choice of the time or the method.

Keep the purpose of this experiment in mind because that explains why we can't withdraw on our own schedule. If we were to try to decide for ourselves that we were ready to leave the test, we may not have accomplished all of the objectives or assignments. If we were to pick the time, we would be saying, "I give up", a profoundly significant decision because it would be tantamount to saying that one doesn't really care about the test, or about the overall plan. Or, worse, it would be the ultimate in brazen denial of the value, in spite of the terrible pain, of this life. The impact of such a decision on the substance of the spirit must be profound.

SUICIDE IN PRE-EXISTENCE?

Going back in our metamorphosis, one asks whether it was possible to suicide from the pre-existence. As far as we know, we had no physical body there, so perhaps it would not be possible to suicide. But this depends on what constitutes the actual death from the pre-existence. If it is a process that allows free agency to be exercised in some way to select for ourselves the "time" we undergo the death and move into mortality, then we could suicide. If suicide is possible, then perhaps we actually see the product of such suicides during this life -assuming that they would be allowed to proceed to the next stage.^{7} But, given the fact that death there is the front end of the mortal birth process, it is difficult to see whether suicide is possible or not.

INDIRECT INTENTIONAL SUICIDE:

To return to the title of this article, we ask whether there are behaviors and/or life-styles that constitute suicide, albeit unintentionally or unwittingly. An example of such these life is smoking. It is statistically linked with a host of health hazards, in particular with premature death. Does persistence in smoking then represent a type of suicide?

This is a difficult question. Obviously, one might argue that only single, major events that take our life qualify as suicide. That is the primary difference, at least in regards to mechanism, between holding a gun to one's head and smoking or alcoholism. But we wonder if there isn't some cost to the individual who knows s/he's engaging in high-risk behaviors and persists. Isn't that a form of "passive" suicide?

7

But what they would look like is a mystery. I obviously would suggest that whatever they are, they will be profoundly disabled in some way, physical or mental, etc. But don't get carried away trying to decide that particular mental or physical conditions seen around us are these types of spirits.

DEPRESSIVE SUICIDE:

Let's take an intermediate type of high-risk behavior. Take a person who is significantly depressed who has a latent wish to die, though s/he lacks the resolve, or is not depressed enough, to develop and execute a plan. Then have this person consciously refuse to use seat belts, with the knowledge that such a failure could result in death if s/he is involved in an accident. Then add to this, a semi-conscious wish to be involved in an accident. Now, let's allow him to be struck head-on at 60 MPH on a freeway. And let him die as a result of the impact.

Does his death represent a true suicide? It has most of the earmarks of the gun-to-the-head type, the primary difference being that he just didn't select the time or the exact weapon in this case. Does that really make it different? He knew he should wear a belt because he would be more likely to survive an accident. If we add into this mixture, some failure to obey speedlimits or some reckless driving which lead to the accident, we then are suspiciously close to a clear cut case.

OBESITY AS SUICIDE:

Regarding obesity, and a host of life style issues, the 89th Section defines a low-risk life style yet few LDS live it completely.^{8} Getting up early, eating little meat, etc. are not things that most of us do willingly.^{9} Obesity, so common in the US, strains the heart, joints and spine. It can lead to premature death. Does this failure to live a low-risk life style count as suicide? It is a form of self-destructive behavior.

There are a host of other behaviors that fall into this category and one wonders whether they are problems or not. How about the 55 year old man with occluded coronaries who persists in smoking and high cholesterol diets after the cardiologist specifically advises him to desist? After he dies, can not one claim that he committed suicide?

MEDICAL SUICIDES:

The current emphasis in the US on self-determination in medical settings poses another question. Does one's decision to not allow physicians and caregivers to administer cardiac drugs and ventilators, or to refuse to undergo surgeries, constitute a form

⁸ Indeed, as noted already, there is nit-picking about caffeine, which is a non-issue, while sleep and diet are major ones that deserve greater attention than they receive.

⁹ Is today any different than bygone days? Farm life with its unrelenting demands for chores of various types didn't allow much sleeping in. But: does that mean those people CHOSE to get up, or were they forced to. And would they sleep in today if they had the opportunity?

of suicide? If the person is clearly informed that failure to accept these cares will inevitably result in death, then the competent person who refuses them is selecting the time when s/he wishes to die^{10}.

What about situations like Socrates drinking the hemlock voluntarily? He knew it would take his life^{11}. He held the bowl to his mouth and drank. Then waited for death by describing the gradually ascending numbness for those who sat with him. Had he been injected (not possible obviously) with hemlock, there wouldn't be a question of suicide. But when he exercised his free agency to take the cup voluntarily, the event acquired an aspect of intentionality, even though we know he would have been killed another way if he hadn't consented to assist.

ALTRUISTIC SUICIDES:

In addition to these problematical types of deaths just mentioned, there are others types to consider within the context of this discussion. The significant characteristic of this next group of quasi-suicides, which differ greatly from the foregoing ones, is that of altruism. In these deaths, the person is in a situation where there are several options open, one of which is to preserve him/herself, but s/he chooses an alternate path of action which s/he knows will result in death. S/he knowingly, purposefully with full cognition of the process and intentionally acts in such a way that death is inevitable. But the important quality of these deaths is the fact that the choices to die are made for and on behalf of other people.^{12}

One example that quickly comes to mind is the "captain going down with his ship". That behavior is applauded in the literature of bygone eras, as if it demonstrated a commitment to duty, or a sacrifice on behalf of others.^{13} It is even regarded as heroic and commendable. But isn't it also a form of suicide, the black-

10 Personally, I endorse self determination, and I have told my family that if I, a 51 year old, experience a heart attack, I do not want '911' to be called, nor do I want CPR to be performed. So when I raise these questions, I am not suggesting that I believe that answers should point to a verdict of suicide in all cases. I really don't know what the answer is. But I do know that I have had enough of this life, so will willingly move on, BUT only on the condition that the event be unpredictable and unexpected.

Dr. Kevorkian does not fit easily into my personal value system. But I do not judge him either. I just don't know the answer.

11 He is the logical precursor of Thoreau's civil disobedience, with the exception that he extended his behavior to the extent that civil laws were violated which required the sacrifice of his own life. He willingly participated in the final scene, offering his life as a testimony of his conviction in his beliefs. Impressive, isn't it.

12 I am not sure whether or not choosing a course in some sort of a battle that leads to one's death, in order to bring glory on one's country, fits into this category of altruistic suicides, so I will exclude these military or para-military deaths to the side for another day.

13 This is actually the same sort of ritual suicide practiced by samurai who have been shamed, thereby being obligated to cleanse -preserve?- his honor by sacrificing himself. Westerners typically won't see this relationship.

listed act? A more germane example is the sacrifice of self made by parents on behalf of their offspring.

If a parent in some sort of disaster returns to the scene to retrieve another child, knowing that the situation is out of control, and his/her death is likely, and s/he then does die as a result of that act, is it not suicide? S/he knew of the likelihood of death. Since altruism -probably- drove the decision, perhaps this death which appears to be a suicide comes to represent a form of sacrifice a la the Cross.

ESKIMO SUICIDE:

There is at least one other general category of suicides, those which we term 'ritualistic'. These suicides arise from religious systems or moral codes, and may have practical advantages to the group at large. One example of ritualistic suicides was those practiced among pre-modern Eskimos. It occupied a well-established place within in the social and moral system of the tribe. There were even well-defined roles for the members of the tribe in assisting in the suicide. Depending on one's perspective, the affair became a combination suicide/murder, participated in by as many people as were present at the time it occurred. Freuchen, in his remarkable book relates:

"Fear of death is unknown to them, they know only love of life. The Eskimos are themselves unaware of the difficulty of their existence, they always enjoy life with an enviable intensity, and they believe themselves to be the happiest people on earth living in the most beautiful country there is. When an old man sees the young men go out hunting and cannot himself go along, he is sorry. When he has to ask other people for skins for his clothing, when he cannot ever again be the one to invite the neighbors to eat his game, life is of no value to him. Rheumatism and other ills may plague him, and he wants to die. This has been done in different ways in different tribes, but everywhere it is held that if a man feels himself to be a nuisance, his love for his kin, coupled with the sorrow of not being able to take part in the things which are worthwhile, impels him to die.

In some tribes, an old man wants his oldest son or favorite daughter to be the one to put the string around his neck and hoist him to his death. This was always done at the height of a party where good things were being eaten, where everyone --including the one who was about to die-- felt happy and gay and which would end with the angakok [ed: shaman] conjuring and dancing to chase out the evil spirits. At the end of his performance, he would give a special rope made of seal and walrus skin to the 'executioner,' who then placed it over the beam in the roof of the house and fastened it around the neck of the old man. Then the two rubbed noses, and the

young man pulled the rope. Everybody in the house either helped or sat on the end of the rope so as to have the honor of bringing the old suffering one to the Happy Hunting Grounds where there would always be light and plenty of game of all kinds."

(1961:145-6){¹⁴}

While that sounds gruesome to one who has not read the entire book -nor contemplated the varieties of behaviors that may or may not constitute suicide- rest assured that there is no cruelty here. The savageness of the environment, with the commensurate burden created by an individual who could no longer contribute to the welfare of the tribe, was the context within which this startling passage must be evaluated. Indeed, a debilitated individual could become such a burden that his needs could contribute to death by starvation of many more members of the tribe than simply himself{¹⁵}.

Within that context, one finds it possible to admire the strength of the individual who willingly asks to be assisted to his death, in order that the remainder of his family and tribe not be made to suffer by his presence. We find it admirable that the remainder of the society was capable of participating in a way which enabled the man to take his leave with a feeling of love of those around him{¹⁶}.

The foregoing paragraph will grate badly on SMD nerves, but we will not be surprised if in the grand scheme of things, the Lord accepts the offering of life given in this manner, just as He will accept the sacrifice of a parent who tears himself away from bystanders to rush back into an inferno, thereby perishing in an attempt to pull out another child. What is really the difference? The only real difference is that in the latter case, society attempted to restrain the person while in the former it aided. But both people undertake actions that they know will (probably) lead to their death.

METAMORPHIC HIATUS:

Such an exit from this phase of our metamorphosis would be comparable to what happens when one opens a chrysalis of a moth

¹⁴ If you are interested in an in-depth description of how elders were allowed to give up their life on the trail, read pp.146-54. The wish of an old mother to die is described in heart-rending detail, which illuminates a remarkable heroism of this group of people.

¹⁵ In comes the B of M concept that it is better that one man perish than that a whole nation perish in unbelief. That is the justification that Nephi gave for committing murder. And is it really any different that a wo/man committing suicide to save others from near certain death?

¹⁶ In fact, this type of ritualistic suicide, which has significant benefit for the remainder of the group, could be compared to the sacrifice of the Savior. An individual gives his life that others may live. Perhaps this isn't a valid way to view this set of suicides, but we at least note this possible interpretation.

before it has completed its development. In this situation, even if the chrysalis is closed, the pupa becomes malformed and may even die before its usual time of emerging from the chrysalis. Notably, there is no way to resuscitate it, once the covering has been opened. I've tried to tape the chrysalis up to reseal it, but the individual has been irreparably injured and its development interrupted, resulting in its death. This is what I believe suicide accomplishes for us. We are essentially creating a 'stillbirth' of our soul into the next testing phase. The consequences will be serious.

We cannot guess at any particulars of how this stillbirth will actually affect our experience in the post-mortal phase, but if the moth example is comparable, the consequences will be profoundly bad. I do not believe that our spirit life is also terminated, because it won't be. Spirit matter -intelligence- is eternal. But we will have created such a severely deformed or maladjusted spirit body through suicide, that it will scarcely be able to participate in any meaningful manner in the testing of the next phase.

In the moth example, if a moth does hatch after such a disruption of its development, it will have deformed wings or will be unable to expand them, so it will crawl around on the ground until it dies or is found by a bird or cat. It simply cannot even begin to perform the things it was meant to perform here, nor to participate in any interactions with its environment. That's how a suicided spirit will interact with the post-mortal life. It won't.

It will be secured in spirit-prison, and I suspect that the limitations placed on it, through its OWN actions, will be so profoundly severe that it may well spend its time in a single "location". It will be a "juvenile" or immature body that will not have the capacities that even other spirit prison inmates will have. In comparison, they will doubtless appear free and even well-off.

Then when the resurrection occurs, these incomplete spirits will be unable to fully partake of the experience. If the mortal body is truly resurrected^{17}, then one wonders whether these spirits might not actually be denied that body because they chose to cast it off. By this I do not suggest a vengefulness on the part of God, rather suggest that if both bodies are involved in resurrection, perhaps there is some important chemistry that holds between our mortal bodies and spirit bodies that requires us to remain together during our mortal experiment until someone else terminates the association.

DEGREE OF GLORY OR OUTER DARKNESS OR NOTHING?

If suicided spirits don't have bodies, then which degree of

¹⁷ which -I am tired of saying and you are tired of hearing- I am skeptical about. See the chapter 44. RESURRECTION AND THE METALLURGY.

heaven do they fit in? It doesn't sound like they would qualify for outer darkness because they would not have sinned against the Holy Ghost, but they hardly deserve the glory that will be available to even the telestial types. Or is it possible that they will get a resurrected body but that the body will actually be deformed, the only deformities in "heaven"? The latter doesn't seem likely either because post-resurrection heaven sounds like it will contain only complete spirits.^{18}

CONCLUSION:

Whatever the case, the bottom line within this model is that suicide is a disaster for our spirit as it progresses through its metamorphosis. This is emphatically NOT simply because the Lord has arbitrarily made up His mind that He does not want us to do it. The consequence is a mechanical one, based on how the laws of heaven and principles of righteousness interact with spirit matter that willfully disfigures itself.^{19}

We think the reality is that of all the things we can do wrong down here, suicide is second only to sinning against the light.^{20} Therefore, of all other sins, suicide is the one that will cause the greatest, most everlasting pain. The Father will only feel compassion for us and will share our grief and pain forever. This is because we willfully created a stillbirth of our spirit that irrevocably interrupted its journey to some type of glory in the post-resurrection world. This effect can not ever be reversed, hence its seriousness^{21}.

18 However, there obviously will be differences between spirits because there will be three major kingdoms. Part of the differences will be externally manifested in some manner we believe.

19 The interesting question now: does the exercise of free agency to choose suicide by itself disfigure its own spirit substance? Or does that act trigger some laws of heaven that inflict punishment or alter the spirit substance? Functionally, there is no difference. The outcome is the same, but the mechanism is different, and each possibility entails further questions.

20 Though that is based on the canon's statement, not personal conviction.

21 We must offer a dissenting view here. SMD, and Christianity at large, categorically decries suicide. There is no allowance made for it. There is no situation in which it is viewed even marginally as a less-than-horrible thing. But we wonder.

The suicide described above where a man used his pajama bottoms on the leg of a bed to suffocate himself is shocking in its purposefulness. It is that purposefulness that suggests the loophole, two loopholes, really. In one case, the person may be viewed as being so deranged mentally and emotionally, that he is no longer competent. Within SMD, incompetence IS a defense for sins. An individual who commits sin without comprehension of what he does, is not guilty of it. So if a person kills himself while he is incompetent, then by this doctrine, he should not be guilty of a sin.

The other loophole is related to, but distinct from, the first. In this case, the person may not be incompetent, (though some may argue that attempted/successful suicide is proof of incompetence), but suffers from profound depression. The extent of the pain is so great that the person is incapable of living with it any longer, so he develops a plan and instrumentality, and performs the act. Our suspicion, which is totally unsupported in the canon, is that the Lord may view such a suicide sympathetically. This seems less likely than the first possibility, but we wonder because a person who attempts suicide is experiencing inordinately severe pain and depression that we cannot comprehend. And perhaps the Father will be sympathetic.

If you have difficulty accepting the latter possibility, and hold to a rigid interpretation of Christian law, please remember Abraham and the concubines and consider him and them within the context of New Testament morality. The two are diametrically opposed. Either Abraham was a lecher, or Christ was a prude. But the two cannot be reconciled (outside of the appeal to authority, "The Lord said it was to be.").

If this question doesn't unsettle you, then take the stricture against murder, and consider the murders

The unanswered questions revolve around the definition of suicide: it seems that intentional self-destruction as a means of escaping the pain of this world is the underlying thread that runs through the suicides. This would encompass obesity, alcoholism and any other behaviors that were intentionally acted out.

that the Lord ostensibly commanded His people to commit on other people. How can those two positions be reconciled? I don't know really, but I am compelled to believe that they must be (if the sacred writings are correct). This leads me to situational ethics and to variable interpretations of things. So I can conceive of a Father whose heart will ache so much for His children who themselves ached so badly that *in extremis* they took their own lives.

The Father may well condone such things if the facts of the case persuade Him of whatever it is that He must be persuaded of in order to not condemn them.