

Saints and sinners: Is suicide always un-Christian?

The possibility of widespread germ warfare has many Americana living in a state of depression — even terror. Could this lead to the kind of paranoia that could drive a person to commit suicide?

An article in Time magazine says that six months after Sept. 11, nearly half of the people who were in the immediate vicinity of the New York and Washington air attacks will have developed a psychiatric disorder. Six years from now, survivors and family members will suffer from a post-traumatic stress disorder.

These figures are based on a study of the survivors of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. At least six people who survived that attack or lost loved ones killed themselves.

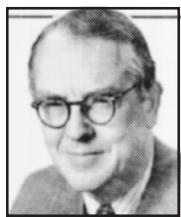
Will the fear of biochemical warfare drive up the number of suicides in the United States? Suicides presently account for more deaths

than kidney failure and cirrhosis of the liver — the 8th and 9th largest causes of death in the country.

The traditional position of Christianity regarding suicide has been that it is the same as murder, and that one who commits suicide will be condemned to hell. This hardened view has been modified greatly in most churches.

The double suicide of Dr. Henry Pitney Van Dusen, a prominent Presbyterian churchman, and his wife in the middle '70s, raised new theological questions, among them whether suicide — once considered the unbeliever's one-way ticket to hell — could be the believer's shortcut to heaven.

The Van Dusen's death note contained this statement: "Nowadays it is difficult to die." This was almost certainly a reference to modern medicine, which often keeps people alive into



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• saints & sinners

old age and infirmity.

Could the Van Dusens have been implying that because of medical science some people are living past the time allotted by God? Was an action such as theirs an attempt to readjust things according to the divine plan, in which death's role is that of a welcome visitor who will forestall the pain attendant upon old age?

Neither Van Dusen nor his wife were terminally ill. "We are both increasingly weak and

unwell and who would want to die in a nursing home?" their note read.

The 77-year-old retired president of Union Theological Seminary in New York had suffered a stroke five years before. This left him with a severe speech impediment, but he was able to walk with a cane and had little pain.

His wife, 80, suffered from crippling arthritis. But she was able to travel to England a month before her death in January 1975 from a lethal dose of sleeping pills.

While there is nothing in the Bible that expressly condemns suicide, Christian opposition to it dates from the early history of the religion.

St. Augustine, however, had to admit that there were exceptions to the rule because several persons who had taken their own lives were officially recognized as martyrs. This would indicate that, at the very beginning of the

church, suicide was not forbidden.

In Homer, the motives regarded as worthy for suicide are of a heroic nature — devotion to a high purpose, the intolerable sorrow of personal bereavement ("If I lose thee, it were better for me to go beneath the earth"), or a state of dishonor.

Later, motives of a less heroic nature (such as a desire not to live in poverty) seem to be recognized in Greek legends as worthy of suicide. The view is that man is justified in ending what he cannot mend.

Some experts contend that nearly everybody at some time or another has thought of suicide, if only fleetingly. But the instinct for self-preservation is so strong that it is the belief of some psychiatrists that anyone who takes his life must be, at least momentarily, out of his mind and unable to think rationally.

Workers freed from Afghanistan raise questions about missionary work

By Amy Green

Associated Press Writer
NASHVILLE, Tenn. — As a Roman Catholic missionary in the Islamic nation of Mauritania, Sister Claire Rheame discussed her faith only with close friends and never made the sign of the cross before meals at restaurants.

The government of the north African nation allowed missionaries to discuss their beliefs, but the nun felt it was important to be discreet.

"It wasn't denying your faith. It's the respect that you have for the country," said Rheame, who spent 15 years in Mauritania and now works in Waltham, Mass.

Missionaries like Rheame face a daunting challenge: how to share their faith without violating the laws and customs of their host nation. The case of American aid workers Dayna Curry and

Heather Mercer, jailed then freed in Afghanistan, has prompted debate about the right approach.

"Churches have to be aware that they are guests of other countries," said Kathleen Flake, a professor of American religious history at the Vanderbilt University Divinity School in Nashville.

"Just like people who come to our country, we expect them to obey the law. So also other countries seem to have a reasonable expectation that we would obey their laws."

Curry and Mercer were jailed on suspicion of breaking a Taliban law that barred them from preaching Christianity. After they were rescued in November, the women publicly acknowledged that they partially broke the law by showing a video about Jesus to an Afghan family.

Rheame fears the pair's actions will

fuel suspicion of missionaries in Muslim countries and make it difficult for them to do their work. Even those intending to share only goodwill, not their faith, may run into trouble, Flake said.

"Common sense kind of tells you this will set everybody on edge," Flake said. "To the extent other countries are suspicious of our motives, they will be more suspicious."

In their missionary training program at Antioch Community Church in Waco, Texas, the American aid workers were encouraged, to "share how the Lord has changed their lives," as part of their work overseas, pastor Jimmy Seibert said.

Curry, a Nashville native, and Mercer, of Vienna, Va., then went to work in Afghanistan for Shelter Now International, a Christian organization based in Germany. In Afghanistan, discussing religion is simply part of the culture, and

declining to do so could be offensive, said Udo Stolte, Shelter Now director.

"If you're in Afghanistan, you're invited to speak about your family and to speak about your profession, and they ask you to speak about your faith. I cannot tell them, 'Don't tell them who you are,'" Stolte said.

Other missionary organizations are more aggressive.

The Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board, the world's largest Protestant mission organization with 5,100 missionaries in 185 countries, encourages its workers to convert people, board spokesman Mark Kelly said.

The board was reorganized four years ago to direct more money and personnel toward the countries where most Muslims live. The board also publishes a guide for Southern Baptists on how to

help Muslims accept Jesus Christ as their savior.

The mission board was created "for the purpose of sending missionaries overseas for sharing the good news of God's love to whomever will listen," Kelly said.

The U.S. Catholic Mission Association, an umbrella organization for 650 groups that send 3,800 missionaries abroad, takes a more subtle approach.

Missionaries are told they can preach in countries where it is permitted, or can show the virtue of their faith by quietly doing health, education and relief work, said Sister Rosanne Rustemeyer, the association's executive director.

"We really believe that God uses our presence as witness," she said.

J. Dudley Woodberry, professor of Islamic studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., also feels Christians working in Muslim nations

should be discreet.

Aid workers and missionaries should share their faith only with close friends or those struggling with extraordinarily difficult circumstances, such as the loss of a loved one, he said. Even addressing good-natured curiosity about Christianity can be dangerous, he said.

"It varies considerably from country to country, and it varies within the same country because there's sort of a fuzzy line between proselytizing and just being a friend answering questions," said Woodberry, a Christian who has spent time in Lebanon, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.

Like Rheame and Flake, Woodberry feels the actions of the Shelter Now workers will increase Muslim suspicion of Christianity, at a time when tensions already are high because of Sept. 11 and the war on terrorism.

Bible Baptist Church

Pastor: Don Crutcher

Fifth & Broadway
899-7368

Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am

Worship Service: 10 am

Evening Service: 6:30 pm

Wednesday: Evening Bible Study: 7 pm

Calvary Gospel Church

Pastor: Rev. Steve Rains

Fourth & College • 899-3605

Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am

Morning Worship: 10:30 am

Evening Worship: 6:30 pm

Wednesday: Family Night: 7 pm

Adult Bible Study and Youth Group

Saturday: Prayer Meeting: 5-7 pm

If you would like to receive a free newsletter, please call the church office.

Church of Christ

401 Caldwell

899-6185

Sunday: Bible Study: 9:45 am

Worship Service: 10:45 am

Evening Service: 6 pm

Wednesday: Bible Study: 7 pm

Church of the Nazarene

Pastor: Matthew Delp

Third & Caldwell

899-2080 or 899-3797

Sunday: Sunday School: 9:45 am

Worship Service: 10:50 am

Evening Service: 6 pm

Wednesday: Evening Service: 7 pm

First Baptist Church

Pastor: Bud Chester

Fifth & Center • 899-3450

Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am

Morning Worship: 10:30 am

Evening Worship: 6:30 pm

Tuesday: Mens' Prayer Group: 6:00 am

Thursday: Night Bible Study: 7:00 pm

Seventh Day Adventist Church

1160 Cattletrail

Pastor: Arlin Cochran • 785-332-2888

Saturday: Sabbath School: 9:30 am

Worship Service: 11 am



St. Paul's Episcopal Church

First Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

Pastor: Loren Strait

Eighth & Arcade • 899-5233

Sunday: Worship Service: 10:30 am

Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

Activities: Junior High & High School Youth Groups,

Adult Bible Study, Choir, Men's and Women's Groups,

Devotions Study, Monthly Fellowship

Special Notice: Handicap Accessible, Hearing

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Nurseries Available

First United Methodist Church

1116 Sherman

899-3631

Pastor: Rev. Carol Moore-Ramey

Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am

Worship Service: 10:30 am

Sonrise Christian Church

Ninth & Caldwell • 899-5398

Minister: Tony Kafka

Youth Minister: Doug Bean

Sunday: Worship Service: 9:30 am

Sunday School: 10:45 am

Wednesday:

Junior/Senior High Meeting: 7 pm

Adult & Children's Classes: 7 pm

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

13th & Sherman • 899-6161

Pastor: Scott Grimshaw

Sunday: Sunday School: 8:45 am

Worship Service: 10 am

Wednesday: Confirmation: 6 pm

Kanorado

United Methodist Church

Pastor: Leonard Cox

399-2468

Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am

Worship Service: 10:15 am

Goodland Bible Church

109 Willow Road • 899-6400

Pastor:

Sunday: Sunday School: 9:45 am

Morning Worship: 11 am

Evening Worship: 6 pm

Wednesday: Call for location

Grace Fellowship Church

104 E. Hwy 24 • 899-6423

Pastor: Bob Snyder • Residence: 899-0134

Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am

Worship Service: 11 am

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

13th & Center

899-2115 or Rectory 899-2114

Priest: Father Charles Schneider

Deacon: Gretchen Talitha

Adult Forum: Sunday : 8:30 am

Morning Prayer: 9:30 am 1st & 5th Sundays

Holy Eucharist: 2nd, 3rd, & 4th Sundays: 9:30

Sr. Warden for emergencies during the week 899-2067

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

1200 15th Street • Burlington, CO • (970) 664-2470

Sacrament Meeting: 9:30 am

Sunday School: 10:45 am

Priesthood/Relief Society: 11:30 am

Word of Life Foursquare Church

223 E. 10th

899-5250

Pastor: John Coumerilh

Sunday: Worship Celebration &

Kids' Church: 10:30 am

United Methodist Church

Brewster:

Pastor:

Worship Service: 10:45 am CST

Sunday School: 9:45 am CST

Winona:

Minister: Rev. Bob Winters

Worship Service: 9 am CST

Sunday School: 10:15 am CST

Iglesia Del Dios Vivo

La Luz Del Mundo

Spanish Speaking Church

Minister: Esteban Ortiz B.

1601 Texas • 899-5275

Daily Prayer: Sunday thru

Saturday: 5 am & 6 pm

Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Pastor: Father Daryl Olmstead

307 W. 13th • 899-7205

Sacrament of Reconciliation:

4:30-5 pm Saturday or by appointment

Mass Schedule:

Saturday: 6 pm

Sunday: 8 am and 10:30 am

Spanish Mass:

1st & 3rd Sunday: 2 pm

Pleasant Home Church

Serving the rural community for over 100 years

Rt. 1, Box 180 • 694-2807 • 3190 Road 70

Pastor: Jim Cress

899-5784

Sunday: Worship Service: 9 am

Sunday School: 10 am

Evening Service: 6 pm

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