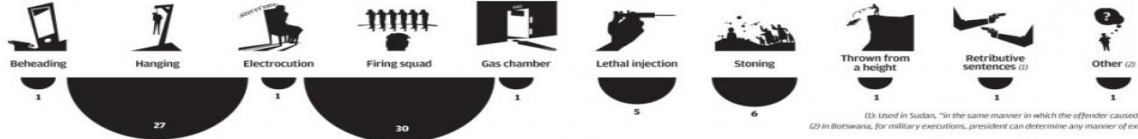


Are We Killers In Killing Killers?

By David Lee Burris

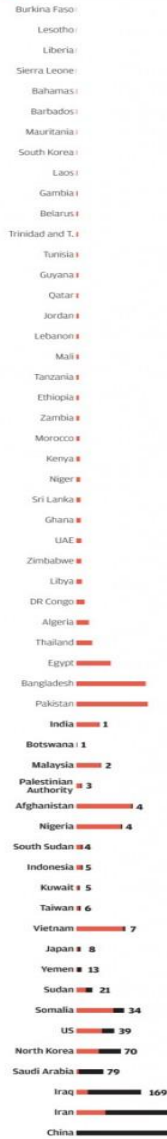
Methods of execution used and number of countries that use them



(1) Used in Sudan, "in the same manner in which the offender caused death"
(2) In Botswana, for military executions, president can determine any manner of execution

Overview in 2013

Death sentences Executions

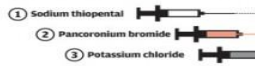


Capital punishment

China executed about 2,400 people last year, according to estimates by the US-based Dui Hua Foundation. That total is down from about 12,000 in 2000. Exact figures for China are unavailable because they are considered a state secret

Method of execution

Lethal injection and shooting are the only methods authorised by China, but it has only used lethal injections since 2009.



Execution

Police vans are sometimes used to lethally inject inmates.



1 Sodium thiopental Travels to heart, where it is pumped to brain through the body, inducing sleep

2 Pancuronium bromide Muscles relaxant, paralyses diaphragm and lungs, preventing inmate from breathing

3 Potassium chloride is a simple chemical salt. Causes cardiac arrest. Blocks electric signals inside the heart. Heart stops, then stops

* Paralysis from pancuronium bromide could leave inmate incapable of expressing pain when potassium chloride is administered

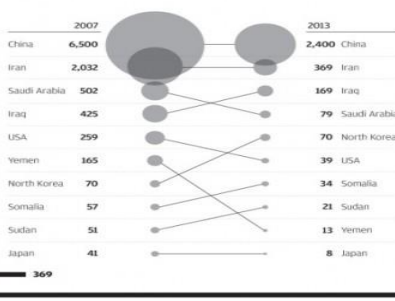
* Controversial issues

Countries with capital punishment

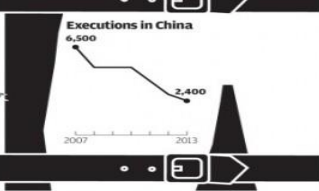
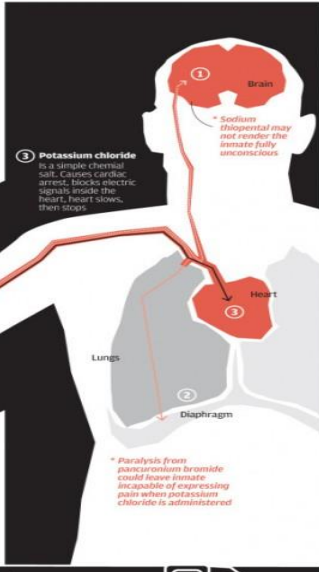
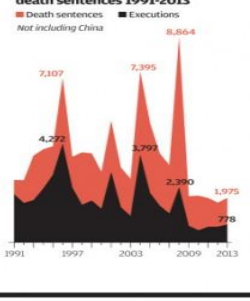
Retentionist Abolitionist de facto Without death penalty



Executions 2007-2013



Worldwide executions and death sentences 1991-2013

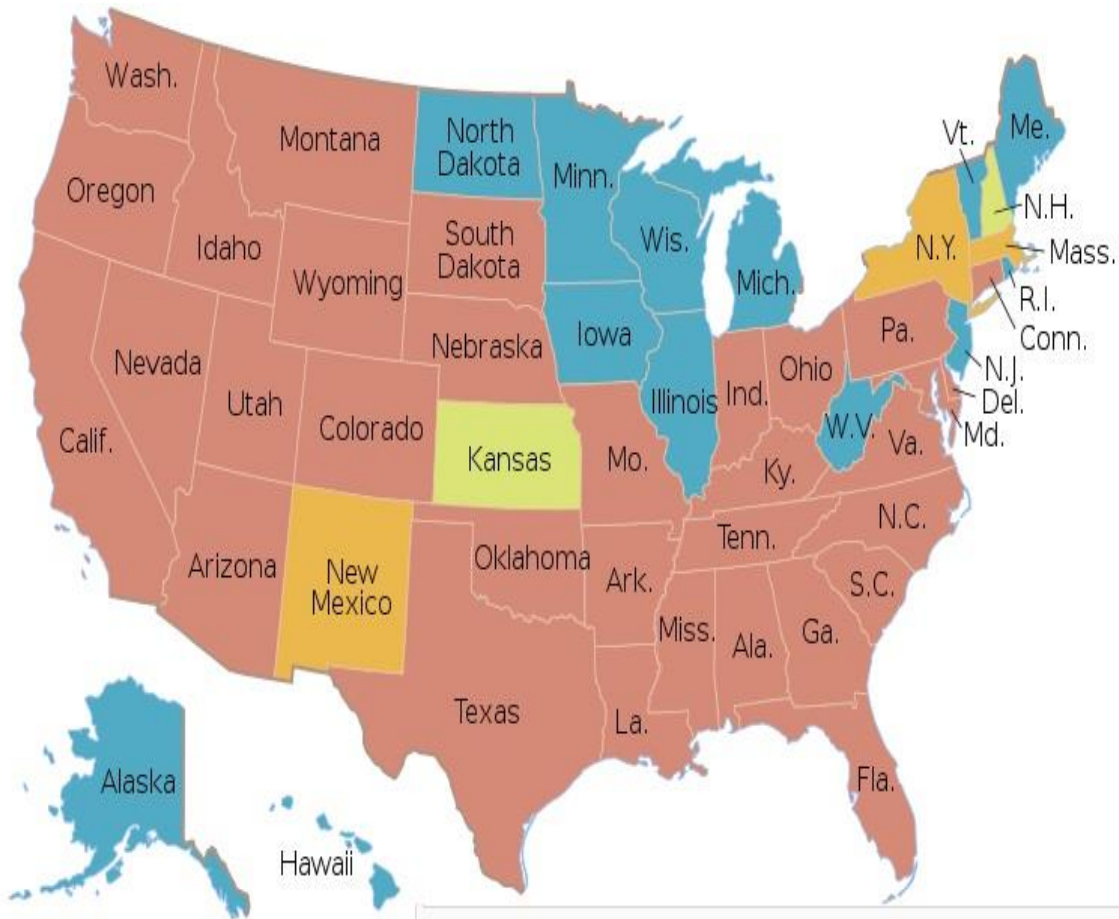


Crimes punishable by death in China

- There are 55-these are the main categories:
- Aggravated murder
 - Murder
 - Other offences resulting in death
 - Terrorism-related offences resulting in death
 - Terrorism-related offences not resulting in death
 - Rape not resulting in death
 - Rape of child not resulting in death
 - Arson not resulting in death
 - Robbery not resulting in death
 - China is considering abolishing the death penalty for these crimes:
 - Illegal fundraising
 - Counterfeiting currencies
 - Smuggling counterfeit currencies
 - Arranging prostitution
 - Forcing a person to engage in prostitution
 - Burglary not resulting in death
 - Kidnapping not resulting in death
 - Drug trafficking not resulting in death
 - Economic crimes not resulting in death
 - Treason
 - Espionage
 - Military offences not resulting in death
 - Other offences not resulting in death
 - Smuggling weapons and ammunition
 - Fabricating rumours to mislead others during wartime
 - Obstructing soldiers performing their duty
 - Smuggling nuclear materials





Sources: The Dui Hua Foundation, Cornell University Law School, Amnesty International, The Guardian, Daily Mail, SCMP research

SCMP Graphic Adolfo Arranz



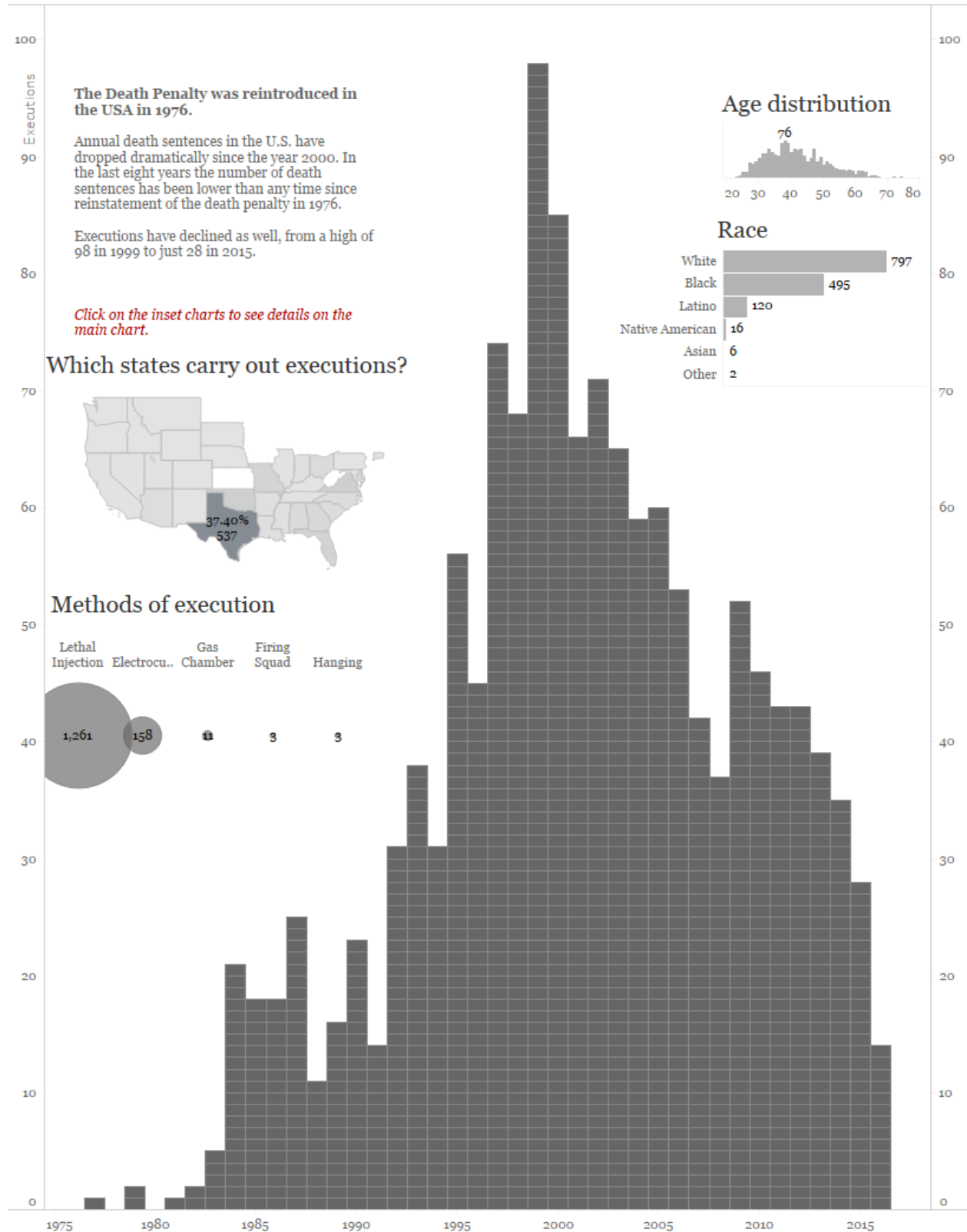
Death penalty statutes in the United States

Color key:

-  No current death penalty statute
-  Retentionist, not applied since at least 1976
-  Retentionist, has performed execution since 1976
-  Retains in law; either statute/method ruled unconstitutional, penalty abolished only prospectively, or abolition has yet to take effect

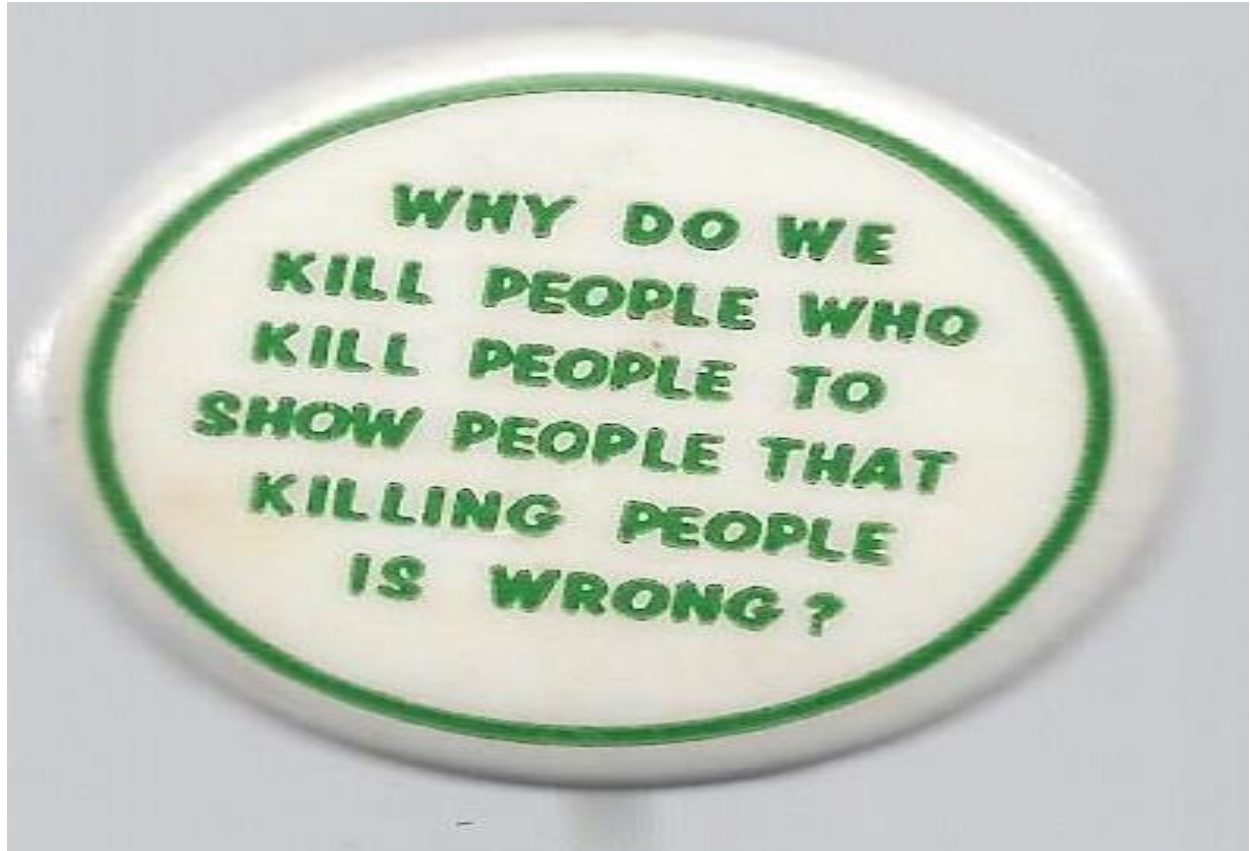
Wikipedia Map

Capital Punishment in the USA





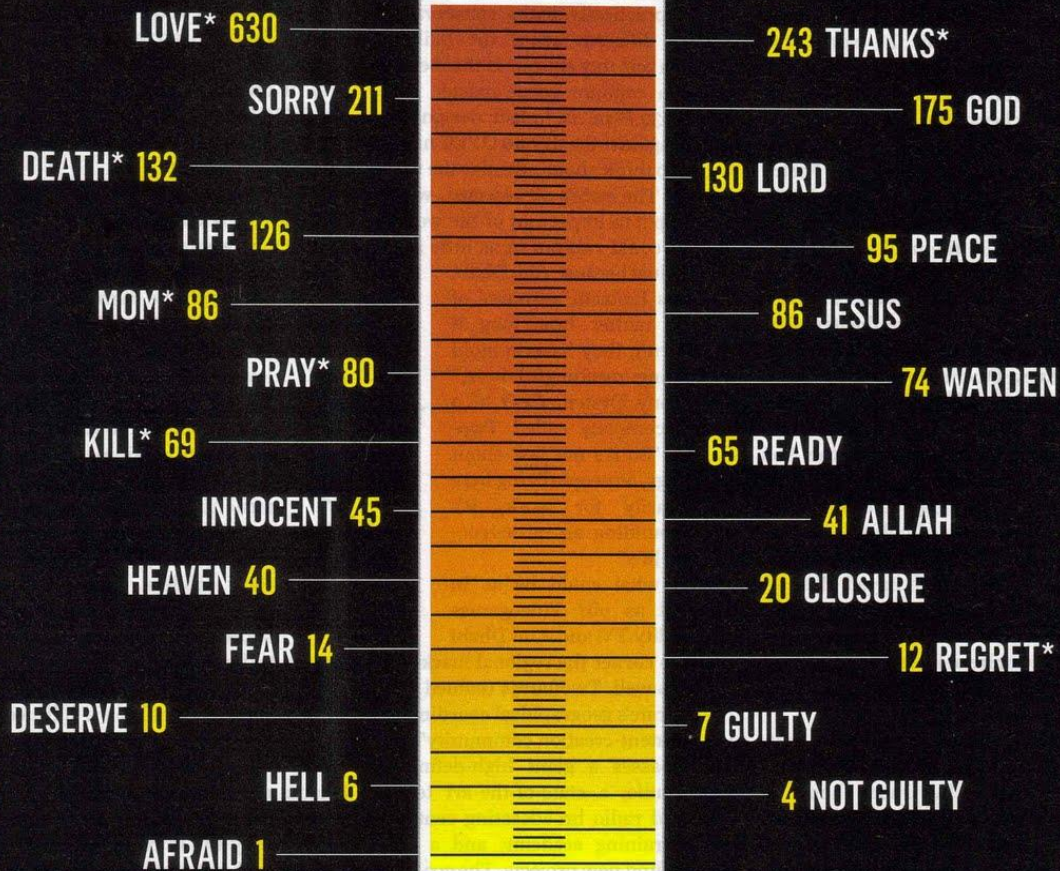
search ID: knin193



BACK STORY

WHAT'S THE LAST WORD IN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT?

An analysis of the final statements of all 446 men and women Texas has executed since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976—including two just last week—reveals, among other things, that “love” is by far the most frequently uttered word.



*Includes all forms of the word.

SOURCES: TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE, HOUSTON CHRONICLE

The Death Penalty in the Old Testament



“Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.” (Genesis 9:6)

“So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.” (Numbers 35:33)

www.confidentchristians.org

The Death Penalty in the Old Testament

1. Murder (Ex. 21:12)
2. Contemptuous act against a judge (Deut. 17:12)
3. Causing a miscarriage (Ex. 21:22-25)
4. Lying in a capital crime (Deut. 19:16-19)
5. Negligence in animal that kills people (Ex. 21:19)
6. Idolatry (Ex. 22:20)
7. Blasphemy (Lev. 24:15-16)
8. Witchcraft/sorcery (Ex. 22:18)
9. False prophet (Deut. 18:20)
10. Sabbath breaking (Ex. 31:14)
11. Homosexuality (Lev. 20:13)
12. Bestiality (Lev. 20:15-16)
13. Adultery (Lev. 20:10)
14. Rape (Deut. 22:25)
15. Apostasy (Lev. 20:2)
16. Incest (Lev. 20:11)
17. Cursing parents (Deut. 5:16)
18. Kid’s rebellion (Ex. 21:15, 17)
19. Kidnapping (Ex. 21:16)
20. Drunkenness (Lev. 10:8-9)
21. Touching temple’s holy furnishings (Num. 4:15)

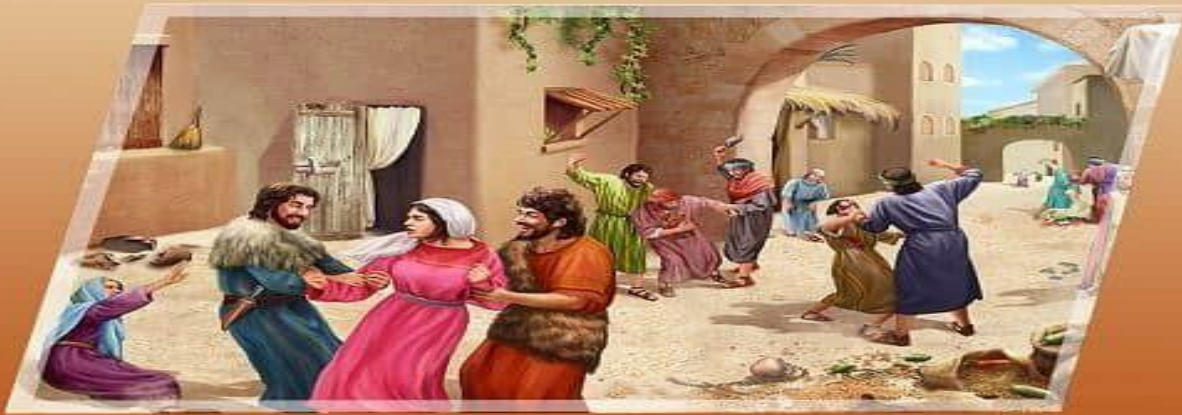


www.confidentchristians.org

In Preventative of, Resurgent Violence God Requires Execution For Murder

And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

— Genesis 6:13 —



== 'WHOEVER SHEDS THE BLOOD OF ==
MAN,
== BY MAN SHALL HIS ==
BLOOD
== BE SHED' GENESIS ==

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

The second restriction guards human life. The shedding of human blood is sternly prohibited. "Your blood of your lives." The blood which belongs to your lives, which constitutes the very life of your corporeal nature. "Will I require." I, the Lord, will find the murderer out, and exact the penalty of his crime. The very beast that causes the death of man shall be slain. The suicide and the homicide are alike accountable to God for the shedding of man's blood. The penalty of murder is here proclaimed - death for death. It is an instance of **the law of retaliation**. This is an **axiom of moral equity**. He that deprives another of any property is bound to make it good or to suffer the like loss.

The first law promulgated in Scripture was that between Creator and creature. If the creature refuse to the Creator the obedience due, he forfeits all the Creator has given him, and, therefore, his life. Hence, when Cain murdered his brother, he only displayed a new development of that sin which was in him, and, being already condemned to the extreme penalty under the first transgression, had only a minor punishment annexed to his personal crime. And so it continued to be in the antediluvian world. No civil law is on record for the restriction of crime. Cain, indeed, feared the natural vengeance which his conscience told him his sin deserved. But it was not competent in equity for the private individual to undertake the enforcement of the penalties of natural law. So long as the law was between Creator and creature, God himself was not only the sole legislator, but the sole administrator of law.

The second law is that between creature and creature, which is here introduced on the occasion of giving permission to partake of animal food, as the first was published on that of granting the use of vegetable diet. In the former case, God is the administrator of the law, as he is the immediate and sovereign party in the legal compact. In the latter case, man is, by the express appointment of the Lord of all, constituted the executive agent. **"By man shall his blood be shed." Here, then, is the formal institution of civil government.** Here the civil sword is committed to the charge of man. **The judgment of death by the executioner is solemnly delegated to man in vindication of human life.** This trust is conveyed in the most general terms. "By man." The divine legislator does not name the sovereign, define his powers, or determine the law of succession. All these practical conditions of a stable government are left open questions.

The emphasis is laid solely on "man." On man is impressively laid the obligation of instituting a civil constitution suited to his present fallen condition. On the nation as a body it is an incumbent duty to select the sovereign, to form the civil compact between prince and people, to settle the prerogative of the sovereign and the rights of the subjects, to fix the order of succession, to constitute the legislative, judicial, and administrative bodies, and to render due submission to the constituted authorities. And all these arrangements are to be made according to the principles of Scripture and the light of nature. **The reason why retribution is exacted in the case of man is here also given. "For in the image of God has he made man."** This points on the one hand to the function of the magistrate, and on the other to the claims of the violated law.

In His Image: The Sanctity of Human Life

The Role of Government in the Sanctity of Life

Donald T. Bunting*

In the role of a Bible teacher I am happy to hide from this social issue. Cultural and ethical adjustments in society can confuse and complicate moral issues. For a Bible teacher, however, moral issues are quite simple.

I feel no obligation to answer sociological, philosophical, historical or even emotional arguments relating to the sanctity of life and its preservation. I make no pretense to being qualified. Thankfully, I do not need to determine which course is most cost effective, offers the best deterrent or provides for most efficient rehabilitation. I am happy to ignore the questions of the rights of the victim, the assailant and society. Unless God addresses these matters, they are irrelevant!

Such arguments are subject to varied interpretations and judgments, and in the end offer no objective solution. It is my hope and prayer that every argument made, reason offered and point pressed will have been supplied by the Lord in scripture. There is a time and place for historical, sociological and emotional considerations, but it is not now and not here.

It is important to look at life and its value as does the Creator and Possessor of life. In Romans 1:18–32 we learn that life, when abused and perverted by sin, loses its value. We find an explanation of the need for judgment (vss. 18–20) when God is treated with contempt and profaned (vss. 21–23). This contempt is soon manifest in a disregard for self and fellow man in sin that insults, abuses, degrades, and destroys humanity (vss. 24–31). Such contempt for God and His creation earns for itself capital punishment (v. 31). Our society has become a clear example of such digression from God.

One might suggest that the death sentence here mentioned is a spiritual death. While I am inclined to agree, it is worthy of note that this list of sins (Rom. 1:26–31) is a virtual copy of the list of sins under the law of Moses that called for the death penalty. Surely we understand that spiritual death is infinitely more severe than a loss of physical life. Rather than concern for a distinction between spiritual and physical punishment in Romans 1:32, let us understand that, in the eyes of God, life has lost its value in one who has lost respect for himself and his Creator.

An ancient example of such sin and judgment is found in Genesis 6–9.

And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented Jehovah that He had made man on the earth.... And Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground.... And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. (Gen. 6:5–12)

We will find that such stiff retribution for sin and violence against man is demanded because of the relationship between man and his Creator, and because such men are of no value to God on the earth.

The Sanctity of Life

To appreciate the true value of human life, we must accept the Creator's appraisal of life's worth. God assesses human life in terms of its inherent value. Regardless of one's age, intelligence, status, race, accomplishments or failures, life itself is of immeasurable worth.

Jesus asks, "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" (Mt. 16:26). He declares in Luke 12:25 "... a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Men measure a life's worth in terms of attainments and accomplishments. God's estimation focuses on the life itself, its being and its potential. "As he came forth from his mother's womb, naked shall he go again as he came, and shall take nothing for his labor, which he may carry away in his hand" (Eccl. 5:15). We must learn to look beyond circumstances surrounding life to see the sanctity of pure life!

Man, the creation of God (Gen. 1:26–27), is brought about and sustained by His determination and power (Acts 17:26–28). Man does not belong to chance, nature, or even himself. As touching God's use of man and the value of man to Him the question is raised "shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus?" (Rom. 9:20–23). Man is created for a purposeful existence. God possesses the right to rule over His creation as a potter over his clay (Jer. 18:1–10). Almighty God, our Creator, has determined the bounds of our habitation (Acts 17:24–29), our duty before Him (Eccl. 12:13), and the manner of our walk (Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2, 15). What matters is the value of human life to Him. Whatever worth man attributes to life, his own or others, is secondary to God's estimation.

Understanding the **nature** of human life will reveal to us its sanctity. Man possesses a dual nature (Mt. 10:28). His physical life or body, resembling animal life, may be illustrated in its being "formed ... of the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7). The origin of man's spiritual life or soul, can be pictured as God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). God gave to man a spirit (Eccl. 12:7).

Man is created in the image and the likeness of God (Gen. 1:26–27). The word *image* suggests the idea of shadow or outline of a figure, and the word *likeness*, a corresponding resemblance (Spence 30). Human life stands alone in all of creation as that which compares with and corresponds to God. Man is a spiritual being, of rational intelligence, with moral capacity, and the power of self-determination. These characteristics not only separate him from all the rest of creation, but bring him into association with the Creator. "Being then the offspring of God ..." (Acts 17:28–31), all men are responsible to God, bearing in themselves an imprint of the personality of God. Even fallen man is commanded to repent. Man in sin must be restored to His image (Col. 3:10–11). There is no clearer illustration, of the sanctity of human life to God, than the price God paid to redeem man fallen and dead in sin.

One must view man and his life as the *peculiar possession* of God. The relationship between man and his Creator is so close that one cannot bless God and then curse man in His image (Jas. 3:9), or love God and hate man (1 Jn. 4:20–21). Jesus taught that "as ye did it unto one of these ... ye did it unto me" (Mt. 25:40). "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?" (Mal. 2:10).

All men are the possession of God and are, at least potentially, His servants on the earth and in heaven. Murder (including suicide) robs life and potential service both from the sinner and more importantly from God, now and forever. With no further opportunity to repent he is lost eternally. Murder, of a Christian robs God of the fellowship and praise that saint could have offered in this world. The heavenly Father speaks often of the value of faithful servants to Him in this life. One who has no respect for the image of God on earth and God's use of man on earth, committing murder, forfeits his own right to life. One who has no respect for the life of another cannot have proper respect for even his own life. Such a creature is of no value to the Creator. God says, "His blood will I require." Human life is God's treasure, it is not man's to give or take.

God's Laws Preserving the Sanctity of Life

In the time of the Patriarchs. Human life is precious to God, if not to man. It must be preserved, protected, and properly used in the service and fellowship of God. From the beginning of time, God's law, preserved, protected, and provided for life. Life needed protection from Satan's murderous deceit (Jn. 8:44), fellow-man's violent malice, and man's own folly. Laws were needed among men because of mankind's propensity for violence.

Already in Genesis 4, only the second generation of man's existence, a brother's life was judged of less value than personal satisfaction. Though warned against further sin, "Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (vs. 8). God said, "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (vs. 10). Though Cain's life was spared, his punishment was a cursing of the ground he tilled and banishment from society. Cain's sense of justice, or vengeance, caused him to fear for his life. The idea of shed blood crying for justice and the giving of life for the taking of life is an idea that persists throughout Bible history, even among those that are not God's servants (Mt. 22:7, Acts 28:4, Rev. 6:9–10).

By Genesis 6, eight generations later, the world was so filled with wickedness and violence that God regretted creating man on the earth and decided to destroy man and beast (Gen. 6:5–7, 11–12). God did this in the flood, delivering Noah, who "was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations: Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9).

We cannot account this great judgment of God as a diminishing of the value of life. As soon as Noah and his family emerge from the ark, God speaks His law to this new earth and its people. First, God affirms man's position of dominance in all creation (Gen. 9:2–3). However, even as man takes the animal for food, its life, the blood, is sanctified, i.e., not to be eaten. Blood always was and will be a symbol of life itself, in animal and man. It was reserved for service unto God (Gen. 37:20–22, Lev. 17:10–16; 2 Sam. 23:16; Acts 15:28–29).

More significantly, a premium was set on the life and blood of man. While not morally responsible, the animal that caused the death of a man was killed (Gen. 9:5). Though not punishment, this execution was a reminder of the sanctity of human life. Further, God required the life of a man at the hand of him that killed a man (Gen. 9:5). So as to clarify any misunderstanding and make emphatic His will, God further said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man" (Gen. 9:6). The penalty for murder is absolutely established by command, it is not a suggestion. The responsibility for justice is placed in the hands of men. God requires the life of the victim from the life of the murderer at the hands of men.

In the instructions given Noah and his generations God explains the reason for such harsh retribution, “for in the image of God made He man.” Murder is an attack against the image of God. Human life is *sanctified in its likeness* to God. How dare man assault God’s dearest possession? Such an utter disregard for the life of another is an expression of contempt for life itself! One cannot take life from God and not repay.

Are these commands and instructions still in force? God told Noah, “I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you ...” (Gen. 9:8ff.). The promise in this covenant, whose token is the rainbow, is still in force for the same word that destroyed the world in the flood is preserving it still for destruction by fire (2 Pet. 3:5–7). This was a covenant between God and the earth (Gen. 9:13–17). The instructions given concerning the blood of the animal killed for food were remembered both in the law given through Moses and the apostles of Christ (Lev. 17:10–16; Acts 15:28–29). We must see in these instructions a timelessness. They are enduring, first, because they rest on the nature of man, his life, and his relationship with the Creator, and second, in their repetition throughout succeeding covenants between God and man.

Under the Law of Moses. The law of Moses was prepared for a specific nation of people possessed by God. Its ordinances governed their relationship with God, their neighbors and the foreigner in the land. We divide that body of law into spiritual, social, and civil laws. They were all God’s laws.

The sanctity of human life was protected in the **law** forbidding murder: “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17). “Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbor in secret.... Cursed be he that taketh a bribe to slay an innocent person” (Deut. 27:24–25). God was preserving *all* human life in these laws for there was “one manner of law for the sojourner and the home-born” (Lev. 24:22). The cities of refuge were “for the children of Israel, and for the stranger and for the sojourner among them” (Num. 35:14–15). Laws regarding hate, vengeance and grudges applied equally to brothers and neighbors. The moral obligation of kindness included even one’s enemy (Ex. 23:4–5; Prov. 25:21–22).

The **penalty** for murder, even more than the law forbidding murder, declares the sanctity of life. The penalty for murder was death (Ex. 21:12–14; Lev. 24:17). This punishment was not a matter subject to judgment of men. Once the guilt of the murderer was determined, God said, “he shall surely be put to death.”

The execution of the murderer was never a matter of personal revenge or retaliation, such was forbidden (Prov. 24:29). Provision was made to protect against hot-headed blood revenge. In the case of accidental death, God appointed a place to which the responsible party could flee (Ex. 21:13; Deut. 4:41–42). Six strategically placed cities of refuge were provided so that “whoso killeth his neighbor unawares, and hated him not in times past ... shall flee unto one of these cities and live: lest the avenger of blood pursue the manslayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him” (Deut. 19:2–10). Execution of the murderer was an act of **divine judgment**. God required the life of the guilty. It was never to be vengeance rooted in fleshly emotion.

To insure justice, God’s law demanded that the penalty be commensurate with the crime. This justice was graphically portrayed in the statement, “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth ...” (Ex. 21:23–25; Lev. 24:17–25).

Repeatedly, congregational judgment was called for. The accused had a right to “stand before the congregation for judgment” (Num. 35:12, 24–25). A plurality of witnesses were necessary before any man could be condemned to death (Num. 35:30–31). The cities of refuge were established as refuge for the innocent and the manslayer (Josh. 20:1–3; Num. 35:9–ff.; Deut. 19:2–10).

However, when the accused was judged guilty of murder, there was no refuge (Num. 35:16–21; Deut. 19:11–12). The congregation would “deliver him into the hand of the avenger that he may die.” There was no confusion in the mind of God between a murderer and the avenger of blood. If one “in enmity smote (a man) with his hand so that he died; he that smote him shall surely be put to death; he is a murderer: the avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meeteth him” (Num. 35:16–21). There was no place for pardon: “Moreover ye shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer, that is guilty of death; but he shall surely be put to death” (Num. 35:31). There was no room for pity: “Deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the innocent blood from Israel” (Deut. 19:12–13).

The sanctity of life is illustrated further in laws incidental to our study. There was the requiring of the life of an animal that killed a person (Ex. 21:28). Care must be taken in how one’s house was built lest through carelessness an accident brings blood upon it (Deut. 22:8). Justice was demanded even in the event of fault in a miscarriage (Ex. 21:22–23). The manslayer, who simply through accident caused one’s death, was sentenced to dwell in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest (Num. 35:25–28). When a man was found slain and it was not known who committed the murder, a careful process of investigation, and sacrifice was carried out that the city not be held accountable for failing to avenge the innocent blood and bring pollution upon the land (Deut. 21:1–9).

Human life is precious in the eyes of God. Israel was held accountable for murder unpunished. The Lord warned:

So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood, it polluteth the land; and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. And thou shalt not defile the land which ye inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell: for I Jehovah dwell in the midst of the children of Israel. (Num. 35:33–34)

The sanctity of human life is seen in the vengeance demanded by God for its sacrifice (2 Kings 24:3–4; 21:16; 2 Chr. 24:20–24; Deut. 32:43; 2 Kings 9:7; Isa. 1:24; Jer. 46:10).

In the Age of Christ. The *gospel* focuses on the life of those willing to submit to Christ in His spiritual kingdom. The New Testament does not, therefore, offer much instruction concerning the working of governments or the making and enforcing of civil law. The gospel addresses these issues only as pertaining to the Christian’s conduct in this world.

New Testament teaching acknowledges the right of society to administer punishment commensurate with the crime. Jesus refers to those whose conduct is “worthy of stripes” (Lk. 12:48). The apostle Paul willingly submitted himself to the courts of men, acknowledging their right to punish him of crimes “worthy of death” (Acts 23:29; 25:11, 25; 26:31). After the Hebrew writer notes the justice of a “just recompense of reward” (Heb. 2:2), he warns of the possibility of being worthy of “much sorer punishment” than the death suffered under the law of Moses (Heb. 10:26–29).

Jesus acknowledged the law of God delivered by Moses concerning murder (Mt. 19:18; Mk. 10:19; Lk. 18:20). He taught it is “out of the heart” that murder and such sins proceed and defile a man (Mt. 15:19–20; Mk. 7:21). Jesus understood that murder made one liable before the council for judgment. Rather than loosening God’s law, He reminded men of it, saying, “every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire” (Mt. 5:21–22). In speaking of sins of the tongue, James echoed the words of Christ in James 3:9, “Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God.” The gospel considers an assault on man as an attack against God. Jesus told Peter, when Peter took a sword and sought a violent solution to his problem, “all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Mt. 26:50–53). While we might consider a series of reasons, Peter’s action was inappropriate, one reason provided by Christ was the just and violent consequence of using deadly violence.

The apostles of Christ taught all men to avoid all manner of sin. Included in this were warnings against the taking of human life. Paul wrote that the law was made “for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners ... murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers...” (1 Tim. 1:8–11). The murderous enemies of Christ and His servants are pictured in their condemnation and death in Revelation 9:21, 21:8 and 22:15. While the lawless and ungodly must be reminded, those with proper regard for life created in the image of God need not be told “thou shalt not kill.” Therefore, warnings against murder are not often found among the New Testament epistles. James uses the sin of murder to illustrate guilt under the law of Christ (Jas. 2:11). While Christians may suffer for many reasons, Peter writes that they should never “suffer as a murderer ...” (1 Pet. 4:14–15). God’s people are reminded that murderers are the enemy of God (Jas. 4:2) and that anyone who hates his brother is a murderer (1 Jn. 3:15). Not only those that are guilty of maliciousness and murder are worthy of death, but also those that consent with such (Rom. 1:29–32). While all of these warnings in the New Testament writings focus on the final judgment and spiritual condemnation of the guilty, we continue to see the abhorrence of God for those that defame life in His image. Even though citizens in the spiritual kingdom of God are not in a position to enforce moral law by force, there has been no change in the attitude or posture of God.

The Role of Government. What role, then, does civil government play in protecting the sanctity of life? The instructions given Noah concerning punishment for murder required man to shed the blood of the murderer. This implies action by society if not civil government. The law given Moses for the nation of Israel included civil law in a physical nation. God’s law for God’s nation illustrates the place of civil law and civil action in punishment of crime, i.e., murder.

Jesus affirmed the government’s right to function under God’s provision. While He claimed all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18), and had every right to do so (Eph. 1:20–21), He recognized authority given to man by God. While deciding whether or not to execute Jesus, Pilate pressed Christ with a question: “Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee?” Jesus acknowledges Pilate’s power and tells him where he received the authority: “Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above ...” (Jn. 19:10–11).

Paul teaches the right of government to rule in the affairs of man in Romans 13. He writes, “for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1). To rebel and resist the government is, therefore, to withstand the ordinance of God (vs. 2).

The purpose of government is to serve as a minister of God (Rom. 13:1–7). The capacity in which it serves is the administration of justice, praising good men and terrifying the evil. Paul illustrates these two sides of justice in his appeal to Caesar for exoneration, declaring also, that if he had done anything worthy of death he accepted the penalty (Acts 25:10–12). Capital punishment is within the authority of governmental rule. Paul declares, “But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:4). The use of the sword in punishment is execution. It is effectively wielded, in this text, by one ordained as God’s servant as an avenger. This is justice and vindication, not terrorism or barbarism.

While Romans 13:4 does not specifically identify the vile deed for which vengeance is exercised by the sword, scripture from beginning to end has identified the murderer as one worthy of death.

The Relationship of the Christian to Government

The God given right of government to rule and reward in society is the basis upon which Christians are obliged to obey. Saints are commanded to submit to and obey the governments under which they live “for conscience sake” (Rom. 13:5). We should remember, however, that “they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment” because rulers have God’s permission to execute such judgment (vss. 2–3). Faithful Christians will “be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether to the king ... or unto governors ...” (1 Pet. 2:13–17). Christians will honor and obey the king. Paul instructs Titus to remind the brethren “to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work” (Tit. 3:1). This submission to civil authorities may include occasions of suffering wrongfully at their hands, as did Christ (1 Pet. 2:19–24).

God’s people have no right to supplant the work of civil government. There is no place in God’s kingdom for personal revenge or vengeance (1 Thess. 4:6). Antagonism and revenge are condemned in Romans 12:17–21. The commandment is, rather, to shower the enemy with kindness. “Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19). This vengeance is first carried out by God’s ministering rulers (Rom. 13:1–4). Even though Christ’s kingdom is **in** this world it is not **of** this world. It will not be found competing with earthly kingdoms (Jn. 18:36). Christ’s kingdom will no more use the tactics of government than it would claim their territories.

Civil powers, however, do not always follow God’s will. Old Testament history offers examples in abundance (Ps. 33:12, 16–17; Prov. 14:34; Jer. 18:7–10; Ezek. 14:19; Hos. 8:4). There are occasions when civil authorities demand that which is in violation of God’s will. The faithful children of God can never yield to the rule of man in violation of the will of God. The cry has always been “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29; 4:19–20). The problem is that no civil government is completely compatible with Christianity, not because human government is wrong, but because humans in governments and under governments do not submit to the principles of Christ.

The degree to which they accept the principles of Christ is the degree to which they are compatible. The disciple's role is to faithfully and patiently submit as conscience allows, trusting the Lord to work in and through civil powers as He wills. While God has ordained government, He has not determined its form. Various forms of rule have their different advantages and disadvantages, depending on the men ruling, the men being ruled, and the times and circumstances of that rule. The responsibility of the Christian remains unchanged. God will, finally, set all things in order for there is a time when God will judge (Eccl. 3:16–17).

A Christian may work in or participate with civil government to the same degree and in the same way he may have part in any earthly association (1 Cor. 5:9–10). In this role, as in any other, he may not violate the law of Christ or diminish his influence for good in the cause of Christ (2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; Eph. 5:7–11).

Every child of God must remember that he is not relieved of personal responsibility in conduct simply because he is acting as the agent of another. A Christian has no more right to lie, steal, murder, dress immodestly, curse, or forsake the service of Christ for his government than he does for his employer or his spouse. Christians must remember that while God uses evil men (Judas Iscariot or Pilate) and evil nations (Assyria or first century Israel) with their sins to accomplish His purposes, these have always been held accountable for their sin and folly (Acts 3:13–19).

If a Christian takes part in politics, law enforcement, the judicial system or any government service, he must carefully guard his moral integrity. There can be no relief of responsibility for misconduct because one was merely acting as a representative of the state.

If the principle applies anywhere, it applies to the question of killing. In Scripture, God demands justice for murder. Justice can only be satisfied by taking the life of the one who has committed murder. While a Christian may possess adverse feelings about participating in an execution of a murderer, there is no unrighteousness in it. Rather, God holds those that would spare the murderer's life as guilty. However, a law enforcement agent, or anyone else, that carries a weapon places himself in a dangerous position. Warnings against the shedding of innocent blood are clear and numerous. God holds men responsible for careless and rash sins. It is contradictory to pray, "bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil" (Mt. 6:13), and then rely on an instrument that can destroy life in a moment of passion (Rom. 13:8–14).

Scripture speaks of God avenging Himself in military campaigns (Isa. 1:24; Jer. 46:10). In scripture, it was by God's judgment and direction that such punitive wars were fought and won. Working from his limited perspective, how can man determine when, where, and under what circumstances judgment of a nation should occur? The wars of men cannot be defended as an exercise in capital punishment in keeping with God's direction.

God alone possesses the ability and the right to judge among nations. God will govern and affect changes in this world according to His will. He can use evil men to accomplish His good deeds. He can judge and carry out righteous judgment at the proper time. He who sees the end from the beginning will arrange the affairs of this world. I will not be moved by men to kill another human being in the service of civil government, national pride, or a political system. The child of God must submit to rulers without compromising purity and holiness. In recognition of the sanctity of human life, may he never be put in a position to shed innocent blood.

Conclusion

“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man” (Gen. 9:6). Because man is the very image of God, he is the peculiar possession of God. Whenever human life is taken, it is taken either *from* God or *for* God. When life is taken from God, in murder, He demands restitution. May every government on earth preserve the sanctity of life by considering it the peculiar possession of God.

Selected List of Works Consulted

- Campbell, Alexander. “Is Capital Punishment Sanctioned By Divine Authority?” *The Millennial Harbinger*. 1846. Joplin: College Press, n.d. 121–52.
- . “Miscellany—Capital Punishment.” *The Millennial Harbinger*. 1846. Joplin: College Press, n.d. 705.
- . “The Design of Civil Government and the Extent of its Authority.” *The Millennial Harbinger*. 1851. Joplin: College Press. 456–60.
- Hamilton, Clinton D. *Genesis and the Law* (booklet). Rev. E. V. Srygley, Jr. Temple Terrace: Florida College Bookstore, 1972.
- McCay, Quentin. “The Controversy Concerning The Christian’s Relationship To The Civil Government.” *Their Works Do Follow Them*, Florida College Annual Lectures. Ed. Melvin D. Curry. Temple Terrace: Florida College Bookstore, 1982. 184–96.
- Spence, H. D. M. and Joseph S. Exell, eds. *The Pulpit Commentary*. 23 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977 reprint. Vol. 1.
- Smelser, Dale. “The Christian’s Relation to Civil Government and Politics.” *Thayer Street Church Of Christ Fall Meeting*, September, 1984. Akron: Thayer St. Church. 5:5–5:7
- West, David. “Restoring Reverence for Human Life.” *Bible Talk* 30 January 1994: 5–7
- . “Danny Rolling Deserves to Die!” *Bible Talk* 10 April 1994: 8–13.¹

¹ Bunting, D. T. (1995). [The Role of Government in the Sanctity of Life](#). In F. Jenkins (Ed.), *In His Image: The Implication of Creation* (pp. 211–225). Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College Bookstore.

From the Ten Commandments:



**You Shall Not
Commit
Murder**

Exodus 20:13

Knowing-Jesus.com

From The Laws & Ordinances:



Exodus 21:12 ASV

*He that smiteth a man, so that he
dieth, shall surely be put to death.*

“Harag” Versus “Ratzach”

You Can Kill, But Not Murder: The Case for the Ten Commandments



Dennis Prager

Ask almost anyone to recite the commandment in the Ten Commandments that prohibits taking a life and you will be told, "Thou Shall Not Kill."

That is the King James translation of the sixth commandment. It is a magnificent translation. But this one has led to much moral confusion.

Here is the text of commandment six -- explaining why the King James translation is wrong:

You would think that of all the Ten Commandments the one that needs the least explaining is the sixth, because it seems so clear. It is the one that the King James Bible, the most widely used English translation of the Bible, translates as, "Thou shall not kill."

Yet, the truth is the quite the opposite. This is probably the least well understood of the Ten Commandments. The reason is that the Hebrew original does not say, "Do not kill." It says, "Do not murder." Both Hebrew and English have two words for taking a life -- one is "kill" (**harag**, in Hebrew) and the other is "murder" (**ratzach** in Hebrew).

The difference between the two is enormous. Kill means:

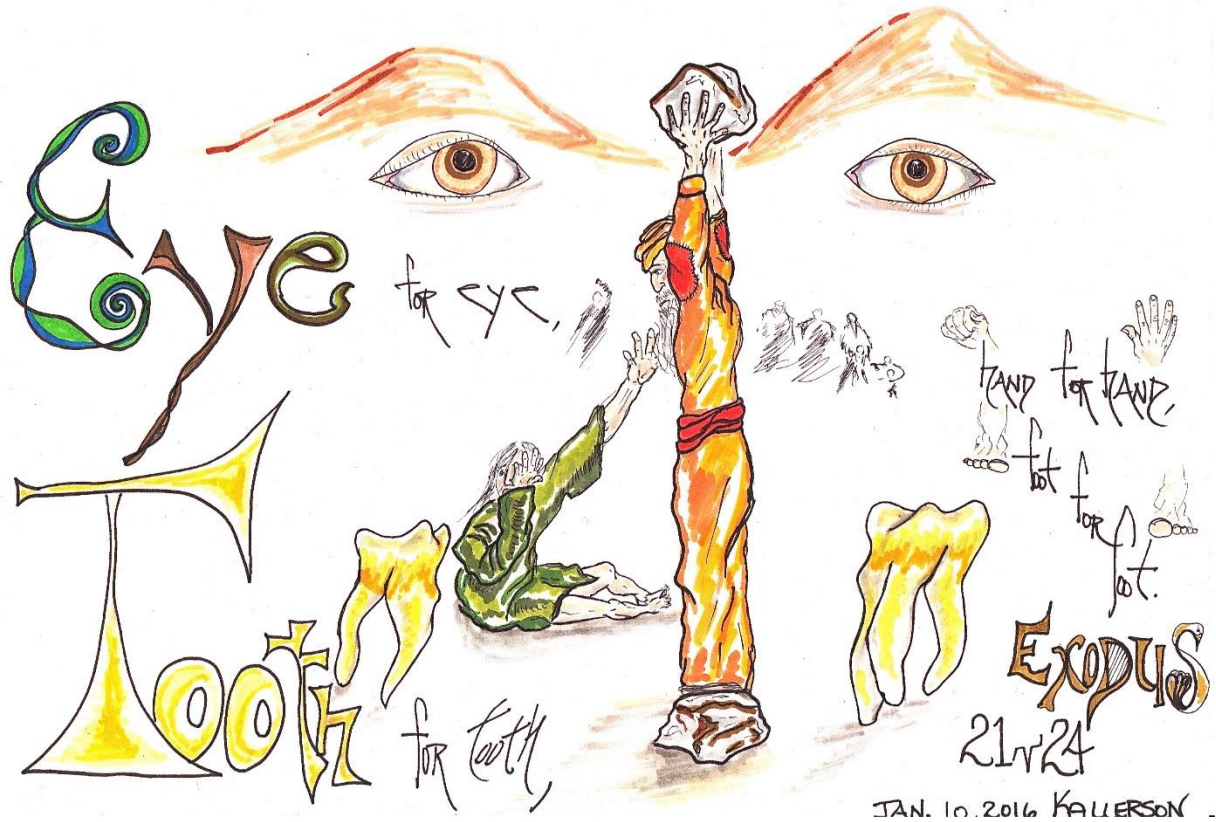
- 1) Taking any life -- whether of a human being or an animal.
- 2) Taking a human life deliberately or by accident.
- 3) Taking a human life legally or illegally, morally or immorally.

On the other hand, murder can only mean one thing: The illegal or immoral taking of a human life. That's why we say, "I killed a mosquito," not, "I murdered a mosquito." And that's why we would say that "the worker was accidentally killed," not that "the worker was accidentally murdered."

So why did the King James translation of the Bible use the word "kill" rather than "murder"? Because **400 years ago, when the translation was made, "kill" was synonymous with "murder."** As a result, some people don't realize that English has changed since 1610 and therefore think that the Ten Commandments prohibits all killing.

But, of course, it doesn't. If the Ten Commandments forbade killing, we would all have to be vegetarians, as killing animals would be prohibited. And we would all have to be pacifists -- since we could not kill even in self-defense.

However, you don't have to know how the English language has evolved to understand that the Ten Commandments could not have prohibited all killing. **The very same part of the Bible that contains the Ten Commandments -- the Five Books of Moses, the Torah as it is known by Jews -- commands the death penalty for murder, allows killing in war, prescribes animal sacrifice and allows eating meat.**



The Code of Hammurapi

- This black stele inscribed with about 300 laws claims to have been written by Babylonian King Hammurapi around 1750 Bc. Many of the laws inscribed on the stone resemble the style and, to some extent, the content of Moses' laws in the Pentateuch. For example, the law of "an eye for an eye" is found in the Code of Hammurapi and in Exodus 21:24.

Bible Overview, by Rose Publishing, page 22

For He Is God's Servant

to do you good
But if you do wrong

BE AFRAID

For he does not bear
the sword for nothing

He Is God's Servant

an agent of wrath to
bring punishment
on the wrongdoer

~ Romans 13:4 ~

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

The minister of God - The "servant" of God he is appointed by God to do his will, and to execute his purposes. "To thee." For your benefit. For good - That is, to protect you in your rights; to vindicate your name, person, or property; and to guard your liberty, and secure to you the results of your industry. The magistrate is not appointed directly to "reward" people, but they "practically" furnish a reward by protecting and defending them, and securing to them the interests of justice. If thou do that ... - That is, if any citizen should do evil. Be afraid – Fear the just vengeance of the laws.

For he beareth not the sword in vain - The "sword" is an instrument of punishment, as well as an emblem of war. Princes were accustomed to wear a sword as an emblem of their authority; and the "sword" was often used for the purpose of "beheading," or otherwise punishing the guilty. The meaning of the apostle is, that he does not wear this badge of authority as an unmeaningful show, but that it will be used to execute the laws. As this is the design of the power intrusted to him, and as he will "exercise" his authority, people should be influenced "by fear" to keep the law, even if there were no better motive.

A revenger ... - In [Romans 12:19](#), vengeance is said to belong to God. Yet he "executes" his vengeance by means of subordinate agents. It belongs to him to take vengeance by direct judgments, by the plague, famine, sickness, or earthquakes; by the appointment of magistrates; or by letting loose the passions of people to prey upon each other. When a magistrate inflicts punishment on the guilty, it is to be regarded as the act of God taking vengeance "by him;" and on this principle only is it right for a judge to condemn a man to death. It is not because one man has by nature any right over the life of another, or because "society" has any right collectively which it has not as individuals; but because "God" gave life, and because he has chosen to take it away when crime is committed by the appointment of magistrates, and not by coming forth himself visibly to execute the laws. Where "human" laws fail, however, he often takes vengeance into his own hands, and by the plague, or some signal judgments, sweeps the guilty into eternity.

To execute wrath - For an explanation of the word "wrath," see the notes at [Romans 1:18](#). It denotes here "punishment," or the just execution of the laws. **It may be remarked that this verse is an "incidental" proof of the propriety of "capital punishment." The sword was undoubtedly an instrument for this purpose, and the apostle mentions its use without any remark of "disapprobation." He enjoins subjection to those who "wear the sword," that is, to those who execute the laws "by that;" and evidently intends to speak of the magistrate "with the sword," or in inflicting capital punishment, as having received the appointment of God.** There is no humanity in suffering the murderer to live to infest society, and endanger many lives, in the place of his own, which was forfeited to justice. Far better that one murderer should die, than that he should be suffered to live, to imbrue his hands perhaps in the blood of many who are innocent. But the authority of God has settled this question [Genesis 9:5-6](#), and it is neither right nor safe for a community to disregard his solemn decisions; see "Blackstone's Commentaries," vol. iv. p. 8, (9.)

Devil Is In The Details



CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

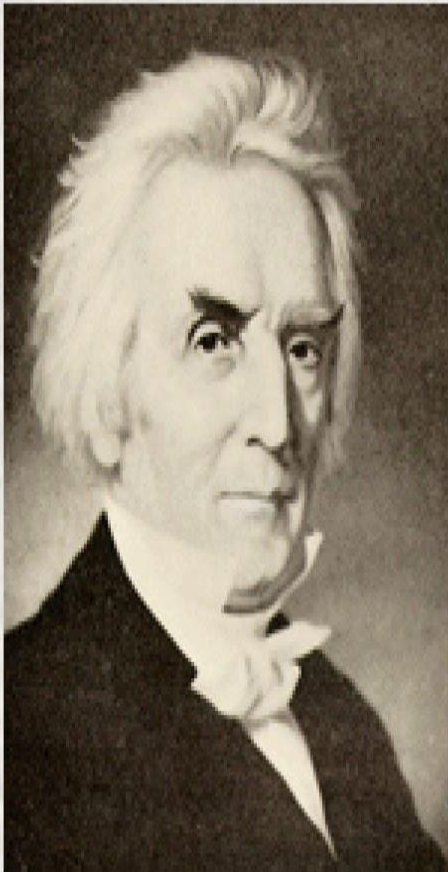
SOME time ago an excellent lady sought an interview with me, with the object, as she said, of enlisting my sympathy upon the question of "Anti-Capital Punishment." I heard the excellent reasons she urged against hanging men who had committed murder, and though they did not convince me, I did not seek to answer them. She proposed that when a man committed murder, he should be confined for life. My remark was, that a great many men who had been confined half their lives were not a bit the better for it; and as for her belief that they would necessarily be brought to repentance, I was afraid it was but a dream. "Ah!" she said, good soul as she was, "that is because we have been all wrong about punishments. We punish people because we think they deserve to be punished. Now, we ought to show them," said she, "that we love them; that we only punish to make them better." "Indeed, madam," I said, "I have heard that theory a great many times, and I have seen much fine writing upon the matter, but I am no believer in it. The design of punishment should be amendment, but the ground of punishment lies in the positive guilt of the offender. I believe that when a man does wrong, he ought to be punished for it, and that there is a guilt in sin which justly merits punishment." "Oh, no! she could not see that.

Sin was a very wrong thing, but punishment was not a proper idea. She thought that people were treated too cruelly in prison, and that they ought to be taught that we love them. If they were treated kindly in prison, and tenderly dealt with, they would grow so much better, she was sure.”

With a view of interpreting her own theory, I said, “I suppose, then, you would give criminals all sorts, of indulgences in prison. Some great vagabond, who has committed burglary dozens of times—I suppose you would let him sit in an easy chair in the evening before a nice fire, and mix him a glass of spirits and water, and give him his pipe, and make him happy, to show him how much we love him.” “Well, no, she would not give him the spirits, but still, all the rest would do him good.” I thought that was a delightful picture, certainly. It seemed to me to be the most prolific method of cultivating rogues which ingenuity could invent. I imagine that you could grow any number of thieves in that way; for it would be a special means of propagating all manner of roguery and wickedness. These very delightful theories, to such a simple mind as mine, were the source of much amusement; the idea of fondling villains, and treating their crimes as if they were the tumbles and falls of children, made me laugh heartily. I fancied I saw the Government resigning its functions to these excellent persons, and the grand results of their marvellously kind experiments. The sword of the magistrate transformed into a gruel-spoon, and the jail become a sweet retreat for injured reputations.

Little, however, did I think I should live to see this kind of stuff taught in pulpits; I had no idea that there would come out a divinity, which would bring down God’s moral government from the solemn aspect in which Scripture reveals it, to a namby-pamby sentimentalism, which adores a Deity destitute of every masculine virtue. But we never know to-day what may occur to-morrow. We have lived to see a certain sort of men—who seek to teach nowadays that God is a universal Father, and that our ideas of his dealing with the impenitent as a Judge, and not as a Father, are remnants of antiquated error. Sin, according to these men, is a disorder rather than an offence, an error rather than a crime. Love is the only attribute they can discern, and the full-orbed Deity they have not known. Some of these men push their way very far into the bogs and mire of falsehood, until they inform us that eternal punishment is ridiculed as a dream.²

² Spurgeon, C. H. (2009). [*Words of Wisdom for Daily Living*](#) (pp. 71–75). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.



In saving a murderer from death through a morbid compassion, society acts with more indiscretion than the fabled husbandman who, in commiseration, carried home to his hearth a congealed serpent, which, when warmed to life, fatally struck the children of its benefactor. In saving from the penalty of God's law a single murderer, society sins against itself, as well as against God, and occasions, or may occasion, the destruction of one or more of its citizens. If everyone convicted of murder in any of its various forms was infallibly put to death, can any intelligent citizen imagine that crimes of this sort would not rather diminish than increase? The strong probability of escape disarms every legal punishment of its terror to evil-doers.

- Alexander Campbell



“The ordinance for erecting the cities of refuge under which they were placed, like every other part of the mosaic institution, commend the wisdom justice, benevolence of the lawgiver and King of Israel. Two great objects were contemplated and secured by that institution--a refuge for the innocent, and a CAVEAT against manslaughter.

When anyone killed another by mere accident, without any malice or evil intent on the part of him that did it, he was, when admitted into anyone of these cities, legally secure against the avenger of blood. The right of avenging blood, from Adam to Moses, during the whole patriarchal age, seems to have been, with Divine approbation, conferred upon the nearest kinsman of the deceased. It is very evident, not merely from the silence of the law, but from the retention of the ancient official name that the creation of these cities created no officer in the land other than he to whom, from the beginning, the duty had belonged. The next in blood still retained the right to avenge his murdered relative. These cities were, therefore, intended to protect the innocent from rash and unjust executions. Before that time, the altar, it appears, (Ex. xxi. 14,) had been the sanctuary of refuge for the unfortunate manslayer.

But, in the second place, the cities of refuge were not unlike penitentiaries, to which even an innocent manslayer was required, at the peril of his life, to be confined until the death of that high-priest under whose administration the event had taken place. This sometimes happens to be for life. If at any time during the pontificate of the high-priest he presumed to go out of the city, it was at the hazard of his life. This was placing a new guard around human life. A wise provision, truly, against manslaughter! He that was so unfortunate as to kill any person by the veriest accident, incurred two imminent risks--that of being killed, before he got into the city of refuge, by the avenger of blood; and, if not killed, that of being confined for years--perhaps all his life -- within its walls, away from his family and home.

But in the case of murder, whether premeditated or from the rage of passion, the cities of refuge afforded no asylum whatever. On trial and conviction the criminal was, in all cases, taken from them and put to death. For the guilty murderer there was no asylum. If escaped the hand of the avenger of blood while fleeing to the city, if, perchance, he fled there for trial, he always expiated the blood that he had shed by his own.

It is scarcely necessary to remark how often and with what clearness and authority it promulged—'The murderer shall surely be put to death;' and again, "The avenger of blood himself shall kill him when he meeteth him." No one will, I presume, after a single reading of this statute, require any other evidence that capital punishment was divinely ordained during the whole period of Old Testament history--that it was an essential part of the Jewish institution, and during its continuance extended much beyond the patriarchal requisition.

But there is a reason connected with these ordinances that demands our special consideration. Like that given to Noah, it has no respect to time, place or circumstance. It belongs exclusively to no age, to no nation or people. It is a reason, too, why murder shall not be pardoned, and why the Lord so solemnly and so positively said, 'You shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer'--he must not be ransomed at any price. Does anyone ask why there should be no ransom, no commutation, no pardon? The answer, the reason, is one of fearful import. It is this:--'THE LAND CAN NOT BE CLEANSED OF THE BLOOD THAT IS SHED THEREIN BUT BY THE BLOOD OF HIM THAT SHED IT.' *Alexander Campbell*

Is It Ever Right to Kill a Person?

By Donnie V. Rader

The opponents of the death penalty (usually those on the left, “liberals,” religiously and politically) cry that we must respect human life. Ironically, respect for human life argues for capital punishment and not against it.

Sadly, there are those who are “Bible believers” who oppose the death penalty. Some would argue that being Christians, we ought to forgive the offender.

What should the Christian’s view be? Does the Bible say anything to approve of execution? If so, how can “killing” a person be right?

God’s Covenant With Noah

Following the flood, God made a covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:1-17). Included in that covenant, God said:

Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man (vv. 5-6).

From this text we learn that those who murder should die by the hand of fellow man. The reason: man is made in the image of God.

The Law Of Moses

Under the law that God gave through Moses the sentence of death was carried out for certain sins.

- The murderer was to be put death. Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not sufficient testimony against a person for the death penalty. Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death (Num. 35:30-31).
- The one who offered his descendants to Molech was to be put to death (Lev. 20:1-5). This idolater was to be stoned to death. Furthermore, any who would “hide their eyes” from the offender so that “they do not kill him” he too was to be “cut off from his people” (die).
- The one who consulted mediums and familiar spirits was to be put to death (Lev. 20:6-8, 27).
- The one who cursed father and mother was to be stoned to death (Lev. 20:9).
- The one who committed adultery was to be put to death (Lev. 20:10). In fact, both the adulterer and the adulteress were to die.
- The one guilty of incest was to die (Lev. 20:11-12, 17, 19, 20, 27).
- Homosexuals were to be put to death (Lev. 20:13).
- The polygamist was to be put to death (Lev. 20:14).
- The one guilty of bestiality was to be put to death (Lev. 20:15-16).
- If a man laid with a woman during her impurity he was to be killed (Lev. 20:18).

This did not violate the command to not kill. For the same law that forbade killing (Exod. 20) also pronounced the death penalty.

Capital Punishment In Action

As Joshua led God's people into the promised land they were defeated at Ai because Achan had taken from the accursed things when Jericho fell (Joshua 6:17-19; 7:1). When Achan was identified and confessed, Joshua and the people stoned him and his family and then burned them (Joshua 7:22-26).

In The New Testament

1. When the apostle Paul was before Festus he stated that he was willing to die if he had done anything worthy of death:

For if I am an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I do not object to dying . . . (Acts 25:11).

Paul acknowledges two things: (1) There are crimes that are worthy of death. (2) He did not object to dying. These indicate that the apostle Paul approved of capital punishment.

2. Civil government is to punish the evildoer. Peter said that the government was for the "punishment of evildoers" (1 Pet. 2:13-17). Paul stated that civil authority is a "minister of God" for "good" and it does not "bear the sword" in vain (Rom. 13:4). If it doesn't bear the sword in vain, the sword is to be used.

Conclusion

Biblical evidence shows God not only approves, but wants capital punishment to be enforced. Does it do good? Without a doubt! The guilty doesn't commit the crime again. It is a deterrent to others. If the sentence would be carried out quickly, rather than twenty years later, it would be even more effective. Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil (Ecc. 8:11).

God and Capital Punishment

by Frank Chesser, M.S.



[NOTE: The author of the following article is an A.P. board member.]

In 1984 leaders of 13 major denominational churches in Florida signed a joint document condemning capital punishment. They described the death penalty as being extremely harmful, immoral, an action that encourages violence and demonstrates disrespect for human life and is inconsistent with the love of God.¹ The conduct of these religious leaders is a classic example of refusing to think right about God. Capital punishment is a principle that is divine in origin and permanent in nature. It embraces all of time. God intends for the death penalty to be employed as an act of justice by duly authorized authorities for as long as man should inhabit the earth.

GOD AS EXECUTIONER

It is incomprehensible that anyone with even a superficial knowledge of the Bible would object to the death penalty. The Bible is replete with examples of capital punishment with God as the executioner. Was God acting immorally, exhibiting disrespect for human life, and in defiance of His own nature when he destroyed the world of Noah's day with a global flood? Can a man descend to a depth of sin and evil that he no longer deserves to live? The mind is the axis of life. The minds of the objects of God's wrath were incessantly evil. They were barren of a single good thought (Genesis 6:5). They feasted on vileness like vultures on the rot of dead flesh and filled the earth "with violence" (Genesis 6:11). Had they forfeited the right to life? Is not God sovereign over all that is? Is He not the source of life? Does He not retain the right to decide when life should end? Is it possible for God to act in a manner inconsistent with His own nature? Is a man thinking right about God when, by implication, he accuses God of acting immorally? "But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?" (Romans 9:20). **The flood alone is proof of the moral justice of capital punishment and of its complete compatibility with the whole of God's nature.**

God executed capital punishment against Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim (Genesis 19). The inhabitants of these wicked cities had perverted the very core of man's sexual being as designed by God. They were sick with sin. They coveted the unnatural and abnormal. They heaped dishonor upon "their own bodies" (Romans 1:24). They yearned after "strange flesh" (Jude 7). Their sexual passions were "vile" (Romans 1:26). They could not "cease from sin" (2 Peter 2:14). They had reached the point of no return. Did they deserve to live? God utterly destroyed these cities with burning sulphur and emblazoned the memory of them before the minds of men "for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

Was God acting improperly when He slew Er, Judah's firstborn, because he was wicked (Genesis 38:7), killed his brother Onan, because he refused to submit to the Levirate marriage law and perpetuate his brother's name in Israel (Genesis 38:8-10), or when "it came to pass at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock?" (Exodus 12:29). Does man have the right to call God into account for His actions? "Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'why have you made me like this?'" (Romans 9:20). Who is weak, frail, puny, sinful man to question the conduct of God? God destroyed the army of Egypt in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:26-28). He killed Nadab and Abihu because they "offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them" (Leviticus 10:1). He slew some in Israel who loathed the gift of manna, looked backward with longing eyes to the food provisions in Egypt, and demanded a change in diet (Numbers 11:4-34), and killed the ten spies who returned from Canaan with an evil report (Numbers 14:37). Is a man spiritually rational when he depicts such actions of God as immoral and dishonoring to human life?

God destroyed the families of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in the heart of the earth and 250 princes with fire because they rebelled against the authority of Moses and demanded access to the priesthood (Numbers 16:1-33). He then slew 14,700 in Israel who accused Moses and Aaron of killing "the people of the Lord" (Numbers 16:41). He executed capital punishment upon a large number of Israelites who expressed contempt for the leadership of Moses and God's provisions of grace in the wilderness (Numbers 21:5-6). He slew 23,000 in Israel for fornication and idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:8), commanded an additional thousand to be executed by the hands of judges (Numbers 25:1-9), and granted Joshua a victory over a coalition of five armies by killing more soldiers with hailstones than the army of Israel had slain in battle (Joshua 10:11).

God executed a host of men in Bethshemesh because of their lack of reverence for the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 6:19), killed Nabal for his wickedness (1 Samuel 25:38), and slew Uzzah for touching the ark (2 Samuel 6:7). He killed 70,000 men of Israel as an act of judgment upon David and Israel because of sin (2 Samuel 24:15), used a lion to slay a disobedient prophet from Judah (1 Kings 13:24), and slew Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom (2 Chronicles 13:20). He executed 102 soldiers in Israel who refused to honor His authority through Elijah (2 Kings 1:1-12), used an angel to kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night (2 Kings 19:35), and slew Jehoram, the fifth king of Judah, with a bodily disease (2 Chronicles 21:18-19). God killed Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-10) and slew Herod for refusing to glorify God (Acts 12:23). Is a man thinking right about God when he arrays God's love against God's holiness, justice, and wrath and depicts capital punishment as harmful, immoral, and lacking in respect for human life?

MAN AS GOD'S EXECUTIONER

God often used man to administer judgment upon men and nations whose sin and rebellion called for the cessation of life. He used the sons of Levi to slay some three thousand men who had sinned in worshiping the golden calf (Exodus 32:27-28). He used Israel to stone a man who blasphemed the name of God (Leviticus. 24:10-14) and a man who violated the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-36) and to bring judgment on His enemies (Numbers 21), and He praised and blessed Phinehas for appeasing His wrath in slaying two adulterers (Numbers 25:6-14). God's statement to Abraham, "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Genesis 15:16), points to the inevitable judgment that would befall the inhabitants of Canaan when their sin reached the full mark. At the close of his life, Moses reminded Israel of the end of God's grace, mercy, and forbearance with the seven nations in Canaan, and said, "And when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them." (Deuteronomy 7:2). God used the nation of Israel to execute judgment upon the people of Canaan for their longstanding idolatry and sin (Joshua 1-12).

God used Israel to administer capital punishment upon Achan and his family (Joshua 7). The period of the judges was a spiritually tumultuous period in Israel's history as the people "did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way" (Judges 2:19). They adopted the idolatry and wicked ways of the pagan nations. God utilized the king of Mesopotamia; Eglon, king of Moab; Jabin, king of Canaan; the Midianites, Ammonites, and Philistines to bring judgment upon them. As they manifested repentance, God would raise up judges to lead Israel in freeing the nation from the oppression of these heathen rulers and punishing them for their own idolatry and sin. **Rivers of blood flowed across the land during this chaotic period as God used men to inflict capital punishment upon other men because of their impenitent sin and rebellion.**

The Ammonites were descendants of Lot. They were pagan, idolatrous, cruel, and exceedingly corrupt. They refused to aid Israel in a time of great need and joined Moab in hiring Balaam to curse them (Deuteronomy 23:4). In the early days of Saul's reign, they threatened to gouge out the right eyes of all the men in the city of Jabesh (1 Samuel 11:2). And the "spirit of God came upon Saul" (1 Samuel 11:6), and God employed Saul and Israel to kill the Ammonites until "it happened that those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together" (1 Samuel 11:11). The Amalekites shared kinship with the Ammonites in idolatry, cruelty, and wickedness. When Israel ascended out of Egypt, the Amalekites attacked them from behind, killing the most vulnerable: the elderly, weak, and feeble (Deuteronomy 25:17-18). God reminded Saul of this act of inhumanness and said, "Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them." (1 Samuel 15:3).

David was a "man of war" (1 Chronicles 28:3). He was a sword of judgment in the hand of God to execute the penalty of death upon the enemies of God, whose corruptness of life called for their destruction. He often inquired of the Lord, seeking His will concerning battle engagements. He said of God, "He teaches my hands to make war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze." (2 Samuel 22:35). In a summary of his military victories, inspiration asserts, "And the Lord preserved David wherever he went." (2 Samuel 8:14). **God's role for David's life was for him to function as a hammer of God's judgment upon heathen nations steeped in idolatry and iniquity and to secure and bring peace to Israel, thus creating a tranquil environment for Solomon to construct the Temple.** It was this very point that David pressed upon the mind of Solomon in the closing days of his life (1 Chronicles 22:6-19).

God used Abijah, the second king of Judah, to render judgment upon Jeroboam and Israel because of their apostasy and idolatry. Five hundred thousand men of Israel perished in this conflict. Judah was victorious because “they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers” (2 Chronicles 13:18). Asa, the third king of Judah, faced an Ethiopian army of a million soldiers, the largest army mentioned in the Old Testament. He implored God for divine aid. “So the Lord struck the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah” (2 Chronicles 14:12). During the reign of Jehoshaphat, the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Edom descended upon Judah. In Jehoshaphat’s prayer before the congregation of Judah in Jerusalem, he expressed the nation’s helpless state and their total dependence upon God. **God executed judgment upon the wicked nations by turning their swords against one another** until “and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped.” (2 Chronicles 20:24).

Idolaters and enemies of God, the Syrians affirmed that God was only a local Deity with limited power (1 Kings 20:28). God employed Israel to punish Syria and they “killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers of the Syrians in one day.” (1 Kings 20:29). An additional 27 thousand were killed by the weight of a wall that fell upon them in the city of Aphek (1 Kings 20:30). God utilized Jehu to judge the wicked house of Ahab. “So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his close acquaintances and his priests, until he left him none remaining.” (2 Kings 10:11). He then killed all the worshipers of Baal until he had “destroyed Baal out of Israel” (2 Kings 10:28).

Israel descended into such depths of sin that God raised the sword of Assyria against them and destroyed their national identity in Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17:5-23). Judah emulated Israel’s conduct and God utilized Babylon to execute judgment upon them. He later used the Medes and Persians to judge Babylon. Isaiah specifies ten pagan nations who suffered the judgment of God because of their grievous sin (cf. Isaiah 13-23). The New Testament closes with God’s answer to the martyrs of Christ who cried, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6:10). God administered judgment upon the enemies of His Son and the church and declared, “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!” (Revelation 18:20).

Is a man thinking right about God when he sees all of these biblical examples, yet still declares the death penalty to be harmful, immoral, disrespectful to human life, and inconsistent with the nature of God?

DIVINE LAWS DEMANDING THE DEATH PENALTY

Following the global Flood, God reiterated the need for the increase of the human family (Genesis 9:1). Sin had changed everything, and the tranquil co-existence between man and animal had been supplanted with hostility (Genesis 9:2). The vegetarian status of both man and animals prior to sin had now been changed to allow man to consume meat (Genesis 1:29-30; 9:3).² Divine permission to eat meat was accompanied with a prohibition regarding the consumption of blood. “But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.” (Genesis 9:4), because the “life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11). Since human life reflects the image of God, the most severe possible penalty is attached to the action of murder that brings it to an end. **“Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.” (Genesis 9:6).**

This principle and penalty embraces all of time. Civil government is ordained of God (Romans 13:1). It is an expression of God's concern for man's well-being, and when functioning faithfully, it discourages lawlessness and promotes peace and serenity. Romans 13:4 describes authorized civil authorities as ministers of God, persons who do not bear "the sword in vain," and avengers divinely bound to execute "wrath on him who practices evil." The sword is a symbol of capital punishment and, when wielded by the state, is an action authorized by God. Any man who attempts to sheathe the state's sword is in rebellion to God and His will. He is resisting "the ordinance of God" (Romans 13:2). God placed the sword in the hand of the state, and no man has a right to remove it.

"He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death." (Exodus 21:12). The willful taking of life demands the life of the perpetrator. In ancient times, God granted the right of vengeance to the victim's nearest relative, designated as the "avenger of blood" who shall "put the murderer to death" (Numbers 35:19). Cities of refuge were provided for accidental slayings, allowing one to live in peace and safety whose act of killing was unintentional (Numbers 35:6-15). Moreover, the taking of life for self-defense purposes is not murder, and such action is not subject to the death penalty. The need and desire for self-preservation is divinely implanted. It is as natural and inherent to life as food and drink. It would be wholly inconsistent with the nature of God to design man with such a potent need and then refuse him the right to exercise it. Preserving one's own life or the life of any innocent victim from the murderous intent of evil doers is perfectly compatible with both the nature of God and the nature of man as designed by God. Exodus 22:2 envisions just such a case as a man kills a thief caught breaking into his home at night in defense of himself and his family and is rendered guiltless. "And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21:15). "And he who curses his father or mother shall surely be put to death." (Exodus 21:17). Mothers descend into the depths of pain and anguish in order to bring life into the world. God's mothers and fathers are heaven's gift to children. Parents functioning according to God's pattern for the home are children's first insight into the nature of God. Parents are god-like in a child's eyes. Parents who love God set the feet of their children on the road to eternal bliss. To strike or curse such a parent is an assault upon the heart. It inflicts mental and emotional pain that far exceeds physical suffering. It undermines the peace and joy of the home, the bedrock of society, and afflicts the heart of God.

"He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death." (Exodus 21:16). Kidnapping was punishable by death. Stealing a man for slave traffic invited the death penalty even when the victim was yet in the thief's possession. Robbing a man of his personal freedom was a capital offense. Exodus 21:22-23 contemplates an expectant mother's losing her life or the life of her miscarried child as she endeavored to shield her husband from an aggressor. The aggressor was to be put to death. Exodus 21:29-30 envisions the death of a man or woman by an ox known to have a violent nature. Unless the relatives of the victim agreed upon financial compensation, the owner of the ox was to suffer the death penalty. "You shall not permit a sorceress to live." (Exodus 22:18). Sorcery strikes at the very heart of the sovereignty of God. It is an attempt to circumvent God and take charge of one's own life. As are all efforts to rid man's mind and life of God and His restraining influences, it appeals to the lust of the flesh. It fosters defilement (Leviticus 19:31). The Canaanites were engrossed in every form of sorcery and it was one of the reasons God removed them from the land (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Saul's consultation with the witch of Endor is cited as one of the reasons God "killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David" (1 Chronicles 10:13-14). Sorcerers were to be put to death by stoning (Leviticus 20:27).

All forms of perverted sexual activity, such as incest (Leviticus 20:11-12,14), homosexuality (Leviticus 20:13), and bestiality (Leviticus 20:15) were subject to the death penalty. There are complexities associated with man's sexual being as designed by God that transcend human comprehension. Foolish indeed is the man who refuses to perceive this truth and proceeds to tamper with this aspect of life. Perverted sexual conduct is an egregious assault upon the very core of a man's being. There is no action of man that calls for more intense judgment. The homosexuality of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim incurred a judgment that God will not allow man to forget. It is a repetitive theme in both Testaments, a sign-post from God regarding His attitude toward this grievous sin (Jude 7), and the last book in the Bible holds it up as the epitome of sin (Revelation 11:8). A nation is doomed if it allows this sin to reach a level of national acceptance.

"The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death." (Leviticus 20:10). Heterosexual relationships outside of marriage were punishable by death. Adultery injures the marital relationship like no other sin. There is something unique about the one-flesh relationship in marriage, and there is something unique about the sin that severs it. The stringent nature of Matthew 19:9 bears witness to this truth. Relaxing the rigidity of God's marital law is to man's own peril. It is senseless to tamper with the things of God. Those who think right about God would never consider such conduct. **There is nothing that creates more excitement in the halls of hell than for man to attempt to modify God's marital laws intended to protect the sanctity of the home, the foundational unit of society.**

Idolatry was a capital punishment offense (Deuteronomy 17:2-7). This grievous evil, the source of so many sins, plagued Israel for almost the whole of their national life until their return from Babylonian captivity. False prophets aiming to lure Israel into idolatry were to be killed (Deuteronomy 13:1-5). Family members, such as one's wife, son, daughter, brother, or friend who endeavored to entice their family "secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods" (Deuteronomy 13:6) were not to be pitied, spared, or concealed but were to be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 13:8-10). Rumors concerning a city's involvement in idolatry were to be thoroughly investigated & if found to be true, the city in its entirety was to be destroyed, and even the spoil of the city was to be burned (Deuteronomy 13:12-17). Acts of rebellion against decisions made by a tribunal of priests and judges in execution of God's law were subject to the death penalty (Deuteronomy 17:8-13). Prophets who dared to speak where God had not spoken were to be slain (Deuteronomy 18:20).

A man proven to be a false witness was to be put to death if such was his intention regarding the accused (Deuteronomy 19:16-21). Capital punishment was to be inflicted upon an incorrigible son (Deuteronomy 21:18-21), a new bride who was verified to be guilty of fornication prior to marriage (Deuteronomy 22:13-21), a man who raped an engaged or married woman (Deuteronomy 22:25-27), and one who blasphemed or cursed God (Leviticus 24:10-16).

CONCLUSION

Capital punishment is ordained by God. God intends for the death penalty to occupy a permanent place in society for as long as the world stands. Opposing the death penalty is an act of defiance against God, the nature of God, and the will of God. Those who manifest aversion to capital punishment are refusing to think right about both God and sin.

Common Objections To The Death Penalty

The morality of the death penalty is examined every time an execution has media attention. Here are some common objections to the death penalty:

- Capital punishment may take innocent lives.
- Capital punishment is implemented with racial prejudice.
- Capital punishment is not a deterrent to crime.
- Capital punishment focuses on punishment and not rehabilitation.
- Capital punishment is wrong because “violence-begets-violence.”
- Capital punishment is barbaric. It has no place in a “civilized society.”
- Capital punishment is immoral; it violates the Sixth Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.”

Should Murderers Live or Die?

Are these objections valid? Should murderers live or die?

Innocent people may be executed.

Should the possibility of executing an innocent person abolish the death penalty altogether?

Advocates of this objection are inconsistent. Such reasoning would also demand that criminals should not be imprisoned, for an innocent person might be unjustly incarcerated.

The justice system distinguishes between cases of murder and manslaughter, as does the Old Testament. Therefore, it seems reasonable to withhold capital punishment in cases with mitigating circumstances.

But, where there is a **moral certainty** about the malicious, willful, and premeditated act of murder, it not only is just to enforce the ultimate penalty — **it is obligatory**.

Capital punishment executed with racial prejudice

Capital punishment supposedly is implemented with racial prejudice.

That may be true; however, this does not prove that capital punishment is immoral. The **manner** in which the American courts enforce the death penalty does not determine the ultimate moral question.

Is capital punishment a deterrent?

Anti-death penalty advocates insist that “there is no proof that capital punishment deters a crime.” It seems axiomatic that it does, but the fact of the matter is there is no measurable way to determine when just punishment deters and when it does not (i.e. How many murders were not committed last night? for what reasons?).

However, there is the documentation of this fact: the executed murderer certainly is “deterred” from **killing again**. Untold numbers of people would still be alive had repeat murderers been executed for their first capital offense.

Rehabilitation or Punishment?

Does capital punishment focus on punishment rather than rehabilitation? Yes. Human beings do not have an intrinsic, absolute right to “rehabilitation.” This elevates the life of the murderer above that of the victim’s.

The killing of another human being, with malice and forethought, is a crime against the Creator, in whose image we are made (Gen. 9:6). By committing such an act, the murderer forfeits his right to live.

Is violence a civilized response to violence?

Some believe that “violence-begets-violence,” and so we should not execute criminals.

However, many politicians and social advocates are inconsistent. Some abolitionists of the death penalty approved of the bombing of Kosovo. They cried out for justice, and could not “sit by and do nothing,” while the likes of Slobodan Milosovic, Saddam Hussein and others have committed heinous crimes against humanity.

What about the trials at Nuremberg, where criminals were convicted and sentenced to death for the atrocities of the Nazi death-camps? Would the world have been a better place by ignoring Adolf Hitler?

In order to believe that the “violence-begets-violence” argument is true, we must believe that the world would be better off, and there would be less violence in it, if murderers were not executed. How ridiculous!

We know too much about the homicidal history of mankind to believe such an incredulous thing. The opposite is true. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11).

Capital punishment is inhumane.

Some believe that capital punishment is barbaric, and it has no place in a civilized society.

However, can a society be labeled “civil,” when tens of thousands of people are murdered every year? Murders are committed by the second — **this is barbaric.**

God, the Author of human life, authorizes civil authority to execute evil doers (Rom. 13:4). Government has the **moral obligation** — not merely the right — to exercise capital punishment, if such is done justly and consistently.

Appeals to the Bible

The Sixth Commandment is no real objection to capital punishment. The commandment is a prohibition against murder.

In the next chapter, the law of Moses authorized Israel to execute the murderer (Ex. 21:12). To use the Sixth Commandment as an objection to capital punishment is a misrepresentation of Scripture. – *Jason Jackson*

**OBJECTIONS OF
CONSCIENCE TO
JURY SERVICE ON
MURDER TRIALS
TRACK CHRISTIAN
CONSCIENTIOUS
OBJECTIONS TO
PARTICIPATION IN
CARNAL WARFARE**

Capital Punishment: Governments Killing Their Own Citizens

“The earliest church prohibited Christians from participating in capital punishment, as is evident from the following pronouncements by Christian writers before the Decian Persecution of AD 249-251.

In addressing a rebellious faction in the church at Corinth, *1st Clement* recalled that when the righteous in the Old Testament were persecuted or put to death, it was only by the wicked, the unholy, and the hate-consumed. Various dated between AD 70 and AD 97, *1st Clement* is probably the oldest extant Christian document outside the New Testament. This letter was written while in the church at Rome “there were many still remaining who had personally received instructions from the apostles.” It was so highly regarded and influential that it was included in some early editions of the New Testament. It refers in passing to a recent government persecution of Christians, which means that the death penalty was not far from the author’s mind as a punishment for some acts and beliefs regarded as criminal. Around AD 177 the philosopher Athenagoras of Athens wrote a defense of Christianity, including a description of its ethics and practices. In it he dealt with and refuted pagan allegations that the Christian faith commands its adherents to murder and practice cannibalism. Athenagoras stated that Christians not only are forbidden to kill anyone, for any reason, but also that we cannot endure even to see a man put to death, though justly. We, deeming that to see a man put to death is much the same as killing him, have abjured such spectacles. How, then, when we do not even look on, lest we should contract guilt and pollution, can we put a man to death? For this reason, he said, Christians oppose even such killing sanctioned by the law as gladiatorial combats, at that time perfectly legal and promoted by the secular authorities. Tertullian was a prominent Roman lawyer prior to his conversion in middle age, which means he was probably familiar with death-penalty cases. Dating sometime between AD 198 and 220, Tertullian’s *On Idolatry* indicates that Christians could not conscientiously inflict the death penalty. This treatise considers the dangers of contributing to sin inherent in certain professions and trades. One of these was the Roman military, partly because the higher ranks participated in capital punishments. For Tertullian, killing of any sort— including the state-ordered death penalty— excluded military service as a livelihood for Christians.

In *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* Tertullian classified hangmen in the same category as lascivious women, gladiators, and priests of an idolatrous cult. Attributed to the central Italian bishop Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition* (AD 217) is similar. Even if possessing the necessary government authorization and ordered to do so, a soldier “must not execute men”. As a corollary, the church must cast out any Christian who volunteers for military service. The *Apostolic Tradition* considers such soldiers and volunteers to be in the same category as pimps, priests of idols, makers of idols, gladiators, and prostitutes. *The Book of the Laws of Regions*, also called *On Fate*, is ascribed to Bardesanes, who prior to his death in AD 222 was a friend and guest of a king of Edessa in Syria. It contains expositions of how the laws of various nations and regions differ from one another while Christians follow their own law (what we call “ethics”) no matter where they are, with this law being identical everywhere in the known world. Among the contrasts was that one particular country stoned thieves to death, with the implication that Christians did not do so anywhere, even where secular law permitted them to. Nor did Christians commit “honor killings” of wives and daughters as non-Christians practiced in another country. In short, the Christian religion forbade all its adherents to inflict the death penalty for these offenses.

In *Against Celsus*, Origen in the late AD 240s contended that if Jews were free of Roman control and constituted their own sovereign nation again, they would probably practice stoning and burning of malefactors as Moses commanded, e.g. put murderers to death. However, Origen wrote, if Christians were in government they would be restrained by the laws of their religion from doing so. In fact, he wrote that God’s purpose in destroying the Jewish state was partly to end capital punishment and other bloodshed by the people of God. Origen was dean of the world’s foremost educational institution of the era (in Alexandria, Egypt) and later established one of his own in Palestine. He was probably the most knowledgeable Christian of the first half of the third century, or at least the most able to relate the consensus of ancient Christian teaching because he was one of the most traveled, being called upon as a consultant by bishops throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

Are the above writings representative of earliest Christian belief? By default, yes. Of the hundreds of extant Christian documents I have examined from this period, these are the only authors that considered the death penalty from the viewpoint of Christian ethics, and all considered it forbidden to Christians, even where permitted by secular law, and would be so if ever Christianity constituted the government of a state. From these surviving records, it is clear that Christian writers discountenanced capital punishment in each of the first three centuries.

Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* (AD 190s) has been cited as an early Christian source in favor of state-inflicted capital punishment, because Clement applied the analogy of surgery to the death penalty: just as a surgeon excises a diseased member or organ lest it harm the whole body, so it would be good to put to death any member of society that "falls into any incurable evil." However, there are five reasons why Clement cannot be construed as justifying the death penalty. First, he considered the execution to be beneficial to the wrongdoer: "it will be for his good if he is put to death." Second, the relevant passage also declares that "it is the highest and most perfect good, when one is able to lead back anyone from the practice of evil to virtue and well-doing, which is the very function of the law." Third, the specific example Clement gave of "incurable evil" was covetousness— which was not a capital offense or a criminal offence at all in secular law. Fourth, Clement wrote the *Stromata* for pagan readers for the purpose of persuading them to embrace or think more highly of Christianity. He was the leading Christian intellectual of the AD 190s, Origen's predecessor as dean of the Christian school in Egypt, and a pioneer in making Christianity acceptable to educated pagans. Fifth, Clement's analogy that a non-Christian government justifiably inflicts the death penalty does not mean that a Christian may in good conscience be an executioner or otherwise contribute to it. What the other authors cited in this chapter were expounding was Christian morality, the ethics that were taught and practiced by Christians. Because what they were describing was specifically Christian, unlimited in geography and binding even if they attained political office, the ancients would no more have extended official Roman conduct to present-day believers than they would other objectionable practices of the Roman Empire."

Christians Acting As Agents of Civil Authority

“Christians before the mass apostasy AD 249-251 who considered Christian participation in war opposed it on ethical grounds. The Roman army contained some lukewarm Christians, but by their exceptions proved the rule. The earliest sources are mid-second century: Justin Martyr and Christian insertions into the Sibylline Oracles. Among the improvements in character & behavior noticed upon conversion to Christianity, Justin detailed that groups who used to murder each other now refrain from making war on their enemies. Justin spoke of the Roman army as if consisting wholly of pagans without any Christians being soldiers. The Sibylline Oracles was the work of a pagan prophet who had predicted the coming Christ like the Jewish ones. In its Christian version, the Sibyl puts people who make wars into the same category as those who dishonor their mothers, plot against their brothers, and betray their friends.

The pagan philosopher Celsus criticized Christians for not participating in the armed forces. He feared their pacifism would lead to barbarian conquest if too many Roman men became Christians, and destroy the Christian religion itself. Thus, even pagans of the period recognized noninvolvement in wars as standard Christian policy.

Sometime before AD 236, Bishop Hippolytus in central Italy ranked war as a sin with murder, revenge, idolatry, selling a free brother into slavery, and separating oneself from God. Dating from AD 217, his church manual *The Apostolic Tradition* sets out the livelihoods that disqualify applicants for church membership. It excludes idol-makers, prostitutes, pimps, gladiators, and pagan priests, along with military commanders. Soldiers desiring to become Christians must be taught not to kill and even to disobey if ordered to kill.

Christians already in the church who try to join the army were to be expelled, as despisers of God. Even enlisting and taking the military oath were forbidden, in addition to killing in war. Dating from Syria in the first third of the third century, another church manual likewise condemned government officials who were “defiled with wars” in the same passage as idol-makers, murderers, oppressors of the poor, false accusers, idolaters and extortionists.

Tertullian’s *De Corona* considers “whether warfare is proper at all for Christians.” His writings mentioned in this chapter date between AD 197 and 220. He asked rhetorically, implying negative answers: *Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? And shall the son of peace take part in the battle when it does not become him even to sue at law? And shall he apply the chain, and the prison, and the torture, and the punishment, who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs?* and: “how will a Christian man war, nay, how will he serve even in peace, without a sword, which the Lord which the Lord has taken away?” Tertullian declared outright that Christ “disarming Peter unbelted every soldier”.

In his reply to Celsus’ attacks, Origen in the late 240’s conceded that Christians did not serve in the armed forces. The proper defense put against the barbarian hordes, Origen wrote, was prayer. If all Roman men became Christians as Celsus had feared and Origen hoped, there would be no military or civil calamity, because Christian prayer would prevent invasion from foreign conquerors, or, if not, they themselves would become Christians and therefore pacifists.” *

Brattston, David. *Christian Peace Principles: War, Capital Punishment, Property Disputes between Christians, Abortion, Euthanasia, Violence in Sports, and Turning the Other ... Before the Middle of the Third Century AD* (Kindle Locations 375-380). St. Polycarp Publishing House. Kindle Edition.

* Conquering of Eastern Christianity & The Barbarian Sack of Rome Soon Changed Opinions.

CAN A CHRISTIAN
KILL
FOR
HIS GOVERNMENT?



BENNIE LEE FUDGE

CONCLUSION

“The Bible does not authorize the Christian to act as a punitive agent of the civil government, either as a law enforcement officer or as a soldier in the army. Instead, it forbids his doing so. This does not mean that the Christian is disloyal or is not a good citizen. The Christian is the best citizen any government can have, for he pays his taxes, obeys all laws & prays for his rulers for conscience' sake.

The government is one party; the Christian another. The Christian, by God's decree, owes the government taxes, subjection, honor, fear, and prayer; also by God's decree the government owes the Christian armed protection.

I can do anything for the government that I can do for an individual or a corporation; and, outside the things due the government by God's decree, I can do nothing for the government that I cannot do for an individual or a corporation. I can serve in the employ of the government as teacher, as doctor or first-aid worker, as agricultural worker, but I can't serve in any capacity that makes me responsible, either as legislator, judge, or executioner, for the infliction of death upon my neighbor.

Our brethren in Japan and other countries of the world are now being tried as by fire, but God in his goodness has blessed us in America with the most considerate government known to man in its respect for the conscience of its citizens. It would make no difference in our duty to God, no matter what laws the civil power passed, but our Congress has provided [an option] for non-combatant service for the conscientious objector.

Let us unceasingly thank God for our beneficent rulers, ask his wisdom to guide them, and avail ourselves of the opportunity they have so graciously provided for serving our country in a capacity that will not conflict with our nature as children of God.” Fudge, 1943

What About The State's Role?

Contradicting General Sherman's "War is Hell" statement, Philip Lawler points out: "War is not hell. Hell is hell." Commenting on this expression in the same book, Joseph P. Martino wrote: This is not just a witticism. Hell is the unrepentant sinner's final [punishment for] rejection of God, and God's eternal ratification of that rejection. The Christian who goes to war need not reject God. However, by waging war unjustly, he can do precisely that. War can become, then, not hell itself but the road to hell.

Admittedly, the "war question," as it is sometimes called, is fraught with dangers. The question of the State's right to wage war must be addressed. There are Christians who believe there is no such thing as a just war, and they are convinced that a Christian cannot participate in war-fighting without sinning. Romans 13:9 and 1 John 3:15, which command love and prohibit hate (and both in connection with murder and other such vices), have been cited by some as a refutation of all wars. Such proof-texting is wrong. Can a war be just? Yes, it can. How do I know? The Bible tells me so.

In Romans 13:1-7, we have an inspired apostle's teaching on "conscientious citizenship," as some have described it, and I believe this is an apt description of what we find in these verses. But there is another side to this coin. While making it clear citizens are obligated to submit to governing authorities, Paul gives us valuable & essential information concerning the government's responsibility to its citizens. In fact, these verses articulate the clearest teaching on the God-ordained purpose of human government to be found in the Bible.

Thus, it is most unfortunate that some think Romans 13:1-7 to be incongruent with the immediate context of Romans 12:17-21, which says: Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends upon you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The incongruists are wrong. Romans 13:1-7 explains (amplifies might be a better word) that while Christians are prohibited from executing personal vengeance, God has established civil government to be His earthly agent to see that such vengeance (i.e., justice) is meted out. Therefore, to teach Romans 12:17-21 without mentioning Romans 13:1-7 leaves not just a false impression as to what it means to be a Christian, but it also fosters a lack of appreciation for the ministerial importance of civil government. From these verses, it is reasonable to conclude that something God has ordained, like civil government and its right to use the sword, cannot be inherently evil, as some argue.

Civil government, as articulated in Romans 13:1-7, is not evil, and those who participate in it do not sin when carrying out their God-ordained duties. Therefore, those who taint the God-given duties of civil government with sin are, whether they realize it or not, demonstrating opposition to that which God Himself has ordained. This makes the war issue not just a matter of personal scruples, as many claim, but of doctrine as well. But because brethren have danced around this issue for years in the name of peace and unity, many have been influenced to think this subject something which falls solely within the realm of personal ethics.

This is evidenced by the writings of Moses Lard, a distinguished voice among the 19th century disciples of Christ: *To illustrate what I mean: it is held to be doubtful whether a Christian can go to war according to the New Testament. For myself I am candid to think he can't. But others, let me allow, with equal candor think different. Suppose now, we as a people, were equally divided on the point. Neither party could certainly force the other to accept its view. The difference should be held as a difference of opinion, and hence should be made a matter of forbearance. But should either party attempt to compel the other to accept its view, and in case of failure should separate, I shouldn't hesitate to regard the separating party as a faction, and hence as condemned by the New Testament.*

Although Lard's position—not his position on pacifism, but division over the war issue—became the de facto position in many churches of Christ, this was, in my opinion, most unfortunate. Why? Because I believe the warfare issue, and how we deal with it, is an extremely important issue that may very well determine where we'll spend an eternity. But because we have largely dealt with this issue using the Lard guidelines, many Christians haven't seriously studied it and are, therefore, unable to decide, by faith, whether or not a Christian is scripturally obligated to refrain from all war-fighting.

Of course, if pacifism is truly what being a follower of Christ requires, then it stands to reason that fellowship cannot be extended to those who serve in the armed forces of our country, for while their military prowess may be the best assurance of continued peace, it is clear that those who serve in the armed forces of our country are not pacifists. Just such a view has been expressed by a co-author of a recent debate on this subject: It should be noted that issues I am debating [have] always been a matter of faith with me ever since I became a Christian.

That is, my beliefs are not so much based on personal qualms as they are on what the Bible reveals. To me, this is a moral issue that has bearing on the fate of people's souls just as any other moral issues do. It is immaterial to me that many preachers have proverbially swept this issue under the rug, calling it a matter of personal "opinion." It is immaterial to me that many Christians do not share my views. What's important is what the Bible says about the matter. Integrity demands obedience to conscience.

Yes, I do believe the pacifist needs to change his position & I will be praying for just that, and that this study will advance that end. This tradition, as I've already pointed out, has been well represented in churches of Christ. I am convinced that such thinking was, from the beginning, and now, a terrible mistake that forces the one who holds it to extend love to aggressors but not to their victims.

My Position Clearly Stated. Personally, I would be overjoyed if every government official was a Christian. And if every policeman & soldier were a Christian, is there anyone who would not think we'd be much better off?

However, in affirming a Christian's right (and sometimes duty) to participate in the use of armed force, whether as a policeman or soldier, I do not intend to defend, nor excuse, all that professed Christians have done in these positions. Indeed, not all wars are moral, and therefore it would be wrong (i.e., unjust) for a Christian to participate in such. Secondly, although some wars are moral or just, and therefore permissible for Christians to participate, I believe certain moral restrictions must always apply to the fighting of such wars. Thus, a Christian who participates in a just war is not immune from the moral obligations that bear on his conduct.

Selectivism rests uneasily between the activism that shouts, “My country, right or wrong!” and the pacifism that would permit genocide without lifting a weapon in resistance.

The Sword Down through the centuries, most non-Christians have equated Christianity with pacifism. This is understandable, as most non-believers are hardly qualified to be scriptural exegetes of the New Testament. But it is most unfortunate that one claiming to be a New Testament Christian would think so, for such thinking has caused many to think of Christianity as “an ideal and beautiful religion” that is impractical except for a few rare individuals (viz., pacifists). This false image leads to high-sounding principles that are, after all is said and done, impossible to keep in practice. The world is fallen and full of evil, thus, Jesus, many think, demands that which is impossible.

Therefore, unless the “impossibilism” of Christ is replaced with the “possibilism” of politics (for politics, if it is anything, is certainly the art of the possible), then civilizations are destined to be overrun by tyrants and despots. Such thinking has caused many people to be corrupted, producing at least two types of individuals: (1) those who, although they profess Christianity, will not act according to its real and practical tenets, which make a distinction between the shedding of innocent blood and the shedding of any human blood, and (2) those who, although they profess nominal Christianity, would never act on what they consider to be its false and impracticable tenets, particularly the supposed tenet of pacifism. Both groups, convinced that a number of things are wicked which are not, and seeing no way to avoid wickedness being done in a fallen world, ultimately partake of a dialogue that sets no limits on warfare. However, New Testament Christianity, contrary to the false image of “pacifistic Christianity,” is quite practical.

Because it is, God has given the state the awesome responsibility of using the sword to restrain, punish and, when necessary, kill evildoers. Why? Because, although the Bible prohibits individuals from exercising revenge or vengeance, government was ordained by God for this very purpose. I honestly don't see how it is possible for anyone who is a Christian to misunderstand this point.

Thus, when officials of the state duly carry out their responsibilities to do good toward the law-abiding and visit wrath on those who do evil, it is hard for me to understand how some Christians think this to be a task only for the unregenerated. On the contrary, God calls these civil authorities His ministers who are to be "attending continually to this very thing." How can anyone be sinning by doing what God appointed him to do? Frankly, I do not think there is an answer from the pacifist to this question that is anywhere close to being Scriptural.

Nevertheless, some have cited God's use of evil nations to punish other evil nations as an answer. But God's use of an evil nation, which got that way by its own volition, to punish another evil nation is in no way parallel to the situation under discussion, and I fail to see how anyone but those grasping for straws could not understand this.

Therefore, the state, when acting in accordance with the Law above the law, is authorized to take human life for the good of those it has been ordained to protect and the punishment of those who do evil. Such God-ordained taking of life, although certainly can be described as killing, is not, as some think, unlawful killing or murder.

Consequently, an official of the state can't be sinning when he carries out this morally constituted duty, and those who so argue are clearly (and unequivocally) in violation of God's prohibition against calling good evil and evil good.

So, before we even get to the question of whether a Christian can scripturally engage in carnal warfare, the pacifists, who believe that any such lawful use of the sword is, in point of fact, murder, has some backing up to do. If one can't get this issue right, then I fail to see how he could ever be convinced from the Scriptures that a Christian has a right, and sometimes a duty, under certain circumstances, to participate in carnal warfare. Nevertheless, it is to this issue I now direct your attention.

***Living What We Believe And Vice Versa.* God never calls upon Christians to do what is impossible, impractical or unlivable. In fact, one of the strongest proofs of the validity of Christianity is that we can live what we believe and believe what we live. As a Christian, I cannot take vengeance into my own hands (I'm speaking here as an individual). To do so would be a sin. In Exodus 22:2, Moses said, "If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed." Such rests upon the probability that those who break in at night may very well have murderous intent, and that when discovered would, in order to escape, be predisposed to commit murder.**

Why then would anyone but a committed pacifist come to think this principle—a principle which would later be incorporated into Roman, English and American law—would not also be in force under the New Covenant? In fact, the New Testament continues to affirm that deadly force (i.e., the sword) is still a divinely ordained means of executing human justice. Writing of the civil authorities, Paul said, "For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil."

The state's authority to "bear not the sword in vain" implies the right to use deadly force to restrain and punish evildoers, whether they be domestic or foreign. In fact, the distinction between the soldier and the policeman is a rather recent invention. It was the armed legions of Rome that fought its wars and kept the peace. The enforcement of the law, the maintenance of order and the protection of the innocent, which today are the province of the police, were in Paul's day the sole responsibility of soldiers. How then can anyone doubt that the sword in the hand of a civil magistrate represented both the military and law enforcement obligations the state owed its citizenry? Consequently, and I believe most exegetes will agree, the state's God-given authority to administer justice, by reason of legitimate extrapolation, includes the restraint of and resistance to evildoers who are aggressors as well as those who are criminals and therefore requires the State to protect its citizens' rights when threatened from the outside as well as from within. Finally, to deny, on moral grounds, the elementary right of the state to defend itself and its citizens by war simply means to deny the legitimate existence of the state itself, which would be, in turn, contrary to the Scriptures.

***The Restraints Of War.* The main purpose of civil government is to promote, preserve and enforce justice. By now it ought to be clear there are two major aspects of justice. One is *distributive justice*, which includes protecting the rights of the innocent, and involves the right to life and the right to be free from oppression. The other is *retributive justice*, which involves the just punishment of those who deserve it due to their trampling on the rights of others. The Bible teaches us unequivocally that killing is permissible as an act of retributive justice. Therefore, murder is wrong because it is the taking of innocent life & capital punishment is right because it is just retribution against a murderer. Clearly, most wars follow this pattern.**

When one nation launches an attack against another, bent on conquest, pillage and destruction, it incurs guilt in the same way a murderer does, albeit on a much larger scale. This means that individual soldiers engaging in acts of aggression share in this guilt and are, therefore, subject to death in the interest of retributive justice. Thus, the attacked nation is morally right when it kills guilty aggressors, as such is the moral equivalence of capital punishment.

However, the main consideration when it comes to warfare is not retributive, but distributive, justice, which is, after all, the primary purpose of government ordained by God. A Romans 13 government will do its level best to serve & protect its citizens. Specifically, this involves providing them with a just, free & peaceable environment. Such a government will protect its citizens from acts of injustice, whether committed by individual criminals or aggressive nations, and the justice God requires demands it. Pacifism's "peace at any price" is not a Biblical position. Refusing to take human life when justice demands it, as the pacifist does, is a perversion not just of justice itself, but the Scriptures that demand it.

Consequently, pacifism is not the answer. But, as we've already argued, neither is activism's "My country, right or wrong," "I'll kill 'um if my country asks me to." This means it's up to selectivists, who think the why and how of war must be just, in order to set ground rules for appropriate war-fighting.

Turner, Allan. The Christian & War. Allanita Press. Kindle Edition.

Judging other People

SOME CHRISTIANS REFUSE TO serve on a jury because Jesus said “Judge not” (KJV) “Do not judge” (RSV) in Matthew 7:1 and Luke 6:37, a command restated in James 4:11–12, by Paul in Romans 14:13 and 1st Corinthians 4:5, and twice by the prominent third-century scripture scholar and preacher Origen in his *Commentary on Romans*. However, a survey of the New Testament and other Christian writings before AD 250 shows that the earliest Christians did not share this modern-day interpretation but participated in courts and trials. To them and to us “Do not judge” had a very restricted and limited message. People who first received the gospel, who could ask New Testament authors for clarification of Christ’s written and unwritten teachings, and fortunate Christians a few generations afterwards, regarded these words of Jesus to be like a parable or figure of speech in which he frequently expressed wider and less literal truths. Nevertheless, “Do not judge” does have an important meaning for Christians today.

EARLY CHRISTIANS WERE JUDGES AND JURORS

The earliest heirs of the apostles recorded that Christians in their day often served as judges (which would include jurors). This would have been an unbelievably abrupt and almost impossible departure from the Faith of only a few years earlier if the apostles and their companions had interpreted “Do not judge” literally and of blanket application. Usually these records are exhortations to “judge justly and righteously,” “judge well and rightly,”¹¹⁹ and, in particular, “judge widows and orphans justly.” For example, in describing Christians and their traits around AD 125, the Christian philosopher Aristides noted “whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly.”

CHURCH COURTS IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

Not only was judging in secular courts part of early Christian experience, but the church itself had its own system of courts and trials. Matthew 18:15–17, 1st Corinthians 6:1–5, and 2nd Corinthians 13:1 in the first century presume them to be well-established for disputes between Christians and against backsliders.

By the first half of the third century, church courts were considered routine by Origen, who was the foremost Bible scholar and teaching of the day, and could observe Christian practices in many areas because he travelled throughout the Middle East at the request of local churches as a theological consultant. They possessed a code of procedure similar to modern secular courts in the church manual called the *Didascalia*. Judging is the whole purpose of such courts.

The influence of such courts is still with us. When the Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity and made it an official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, he incorporated church courts as part of the government justice system, applying Christian teachings and principles to part of Roman law. They continued through the Reformation and were secularized and absorbed into the English judicial system, and exported to the United States and the British Commonwealth. Their approach (but not their theology) survive today for such matters as divorce and family relations.

CHRISTIANITY LATER IMPORTED INTO OTHER COURTS

Another influx of Christian principles originated in medieval England. It is not confined in subject-matter but governs all aspects of Anglo-American legal systems. Because the general law descended from Anglo-Saxon tribes was rigorous, overly technical, and frequently unjust, the leading churchmen sought to make secular law more just and equitable by introducing a parallel system of courts with authority to overrule the harsher judgments of the original court system. The new courts were not purely church institutions but part of the secular legal system. This parallel system of justice is termed "equity." The double system of laws, one originating with pagans and the other with the Christian church, was later instituted in the United States and most former British colonies, where the two systems have been merged but with the proviso that where they conflict, the principles of the courts of equity are to prevail.

Thus, a judge or juror in America and most of the Commonwealth today performs a function in one court or another ultimately of Christian foundation, quite unlike the courts of Jesus' day. A judge or juror is asked to apply the principles of equity, fair play, and impartiality that are the hallmarks of a legal system developed from a long Christian heritage.

PRIVATE JUDGMENT FORBIDDEN OUTSIDE A COURT

Matthew 7:11, Luke 6:37, Romans 14:13, 1st Corinthians 4:5, James 4:11–12 and Origen's *Commentary on Romans* 9.40 and 9.41.2 are not to be completely disregarded today. What they forbid is a Christian taking judging into his or her own hands, judging privately the actions of another without the safeguards built into courts for a full and fair hearing: the right of the person judged to know in full the accusations against him/her and to ask questions of the complainant, an opportunity to defend him/herself, the right to call witnesses to support his/her side of the story, the right to cross-examine the complainant's witnesses, the opportunity to explain his/her actions, and the right to be fully heard and judged by a neutral arbitrator, be it a church or secular court, by a judge alone or by a judge assisted by jurors. Private judgment outside a duly-constituted court, the kind of judgment Christ forbade, is like an individual taking the law into her/his own hands, which is prohibited to private citizens although allowed or even a duty of a branch of a government judicial system. After all, most believers accept that a duly-constituted court has authority to lock up offenders and keep them in distant jails, but for a private person to do so is universally regarded as abduction and kidnapping. Nobody doubts that a court can fine and seize property, but for an individual citizen to do so is theft. As Romans 13:3–5 says of secular government:

rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

CONCLUSION [AGENCY AUTHORIZED]

What Christ meant by “judge not” was judging in private situations, without authority and safeguards; this command does not apply to jurors in Anglo-American courts. The New Testament and other Christian literature before AD 250 and centuries or millennia of judicial history indicate that “Do not judge” was not understood so widely or comprehensively by the well-informed as to exclude jury duty.³

³ Brattston, D. W. T., & Ward, K. (2020). [Bible problems solved by early christians](#). Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications.

“Incidentally, under the Law of Moses, there was no substitution or alternative accepted for the execution of a murderer. If the murderer was not executed, the land was defiled according to Numbers 35: 30-33. Clearly then, the God of the Old Testament not only believed in Capital Punishment, He demanded it!

This great question really has to do with how we perceive ourselves. Humanism, which purports to exalt man, denies the existence of the Creator, along with the idea man is made in His image, and proclaims man to be merely a product of evolution and, therefore, takes a very indulgent view of murder. It has brought us to the point where we-as a nation-have indiscriminately killed millions of unborn babies, while at the same time, failing to rightfully execute those found guilty of committing monstrous crimes against their fellow human beings.”

Q: Are We Killers In Killing Killers?

A: ABSOLUTELY NOT!