

Capital Punishment Is God-Ordained Function

Federal legislation has been introduced to abolish capital punishment and to exchange it for 25-year prison sentences followed by a life-time parole. Solicitor General Warren Allmand said "that we are faced with the choice of two evils, the evil of a long sentence or the evil of an execution.

Justice Minister Ron Basford said that though the proposed capital punishment bill will be dealt with in the House of Commons as a free vote, "our feeling at the moment is that the bill will pass." The Solicitor General, who is a strong abolitionist, emphasized at a press conference: "In a society that places such high value on the individual, the use of the death penalty must be viewed as an unacceptable and essentially purposeless form of punishment.

"I have great respect for Mr. Allmand's honesty and stand, but I must disagree with his assertions. If society places such a high value of the individual then capital punishment should be retained.

A discussion on capital punishment is no simple matter. Consider the case of Adolf Eichmann. The supreme court of Israel, when they condemned him to death, said: "He carried out his unspeakable horrible crimes with genuine joy and enthusiasm, to his own gratification and the satisfaction of all his superiors." It has been rightly said that for a man who committed so many crimes the death penalty is not sufficient. No punishment for this man could probably be called just or begin to fit the awful crimes of which he was guilty.

On what basis should we have., our discussion on crime and punishment?
Contemporary efforts to abolish capital punishment are based on a non-Christian view of man and a low estimate of the value of life. We are caught in the secularization process. There is very little awareness of the fact that justice is an attempt to make the measure of punishment correspond to the measure of the crime. The low estimation of humanity is seen in modern penology that generally views criminal law solely for the purpose of rehabilitation. According to this theory not only capital punishment should be abolished, but all forms of punishment as well. Justice and punishment are spurned as "irrational vengeance."

What are our norms for deciding whether or not capital punishment ought to be abolished? We should never forget that a man's ethics are always based on his perspective of life. As a Christian I must ask the question: "What does the Bible say?" In the Bible you find that capital punishment is mentioned both in the Old and the New Testament. In Genesis 9:6-6 we read: "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man." Murder is to be punished by death because of the sanctity of human life. Man is of unique and intrinsic value,

therefore the severity of the punishment. When a man is murdered, an image bearer of God is killed. Modern man views man as no more than a machine or a thing. Feuerbach wrote: "A man is what he eats." When man is considered just to be one of the animal world; when he is no longer viewed as created in the image of God, there is no longer any reason to see murder as different from any other crime.

The penalty of murder is death and the instrument for execution is clearly indicated: "by man shall his blood be shed." God gave the right of capital punishment to human government. (Romans 13:1-7). It is intended to be used wisely, justly and carefully, but it is meant to be used.

The Biblical purpose of the death penalty is the punishment of those who do evil and the promotion of justice by the civil government; therefore the government cannot be abolitionist. To order the execution of a murderer is a grave thing, but to refuse to inflict capital punishment is graver still. Should capital punishment be maintained? On the basis of Biblical principles I maintain that our government should keep capital punishment as a means to carry out its God-ordained function.

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