

Emmaus Correspondence School
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Capital Punishment

Capital Punishment—Scriptural?

To my mind and heart there is no doubt. Man was not heir to physical death at the time of creation —see Genesis 2:9, 16, 17, 25; 3:22, 24. He was created innocent, and was commanded to remain in that state (Gen. 2:16, 17). Failure to obey was to result in physical death (verse 17), and separation (spiritual) from the presence of God (Gen.3:10). Man's disobedience of God resulted in pronouncement of physical death. See Genesis 3:19 and Romans 6:23. Note also Romans 5:12-21 carefully.

The opposite of government is anarchy. Its characteristic is absence of regulating power in any sphere -- disorder, confusion, lawlessness, utter negation of order, chaos. Before the flood, when man was governed by conscience alone (Gen. 3:7), corruption and violence filled the earth (Gen. 6). God brought the flood of death upon man as judgment, but Noah found grace (Gen. 6:8). After the flood God ordained human civil government as a bolster or help for man's conscience. Its jurisdiction is not governed by God, but it is confined with certain limitations by Him. His command was stringent, “Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed” (Gen. 9:6). The highest function of government is the judicial taking of life. Now, who are to be the executioners or dispensers of justice? The people of God alone? Read Daniel 4:17. The representative of human government is “God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” “He does not bear the sword in vain” (Rom. 13:4). God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33), and the Noahic Covenant of Genesis 9:1-6 has never been abrogated and modified. It is still in full force, as the Magna Charter of Human Government. Romans 13 is our confirmation today, as is Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13, 14. Liberal sociologists disagree. Law enforcers know where just penalties are not enforced, violent crimes increase.

During Old Testament times, God used war as an instrument of judgment against ungodliness. Humanly speaking, nations “take the law into their own hands” by means of war, whether mistakenly or otherwise. And God takes some home early, via physical death, as a judgment (1 Cor. 11:29-31; 1 Jn 5:16, 17).