

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

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BICOG Publication

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published by the British-Israel Church of God.]**

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The Penal system in the Western world thinks that they are more righteous than God Almighty! They feel that their way of dealing with criminals is what they call “Humane.” The “Divine” way is barbaric to them. But has the penal system served mankind in a good way? Or, is the way which we call “humane” really the barbaric way to deal with crime, and God’s way the real and best way for an ordered and safe society? Let’s look at the facts!

Latest Statistics

What are the statistics on crime in our western countries? Some in the media say that crime is actually decreasing. Stats-Can reports, “The national crime rate has been falling steadily for the past 20 years and is now at its lowest level since 1973. The Crime Severity Index has reached its lowest point nationally (82.7) since 1998, the first year for which CSI data are available. (*The crime rate excludes Criminal Code traffic offences, drug offences and other federal statute offences, as well as provincial statute offences.*)

“Police reported nearly 2.1 million Criminal Code incidents (excluding traffic) in 2010, about 77,000 fewer than in 2009. Four property crimes accounted for most of the decline: theft under \$5,000, mischief, motor vehicle theft, and break and enter.

“Many other offences also decreased, including homicide, attempted murder, serious assaults and robbery. However, some offences did increase, including sexual assault, use/discharge of a firearm, criminal harassment and child pornography. The rate of drug offences increased 10% in 2010, continuing a general upward trend that began in the early 1990s.

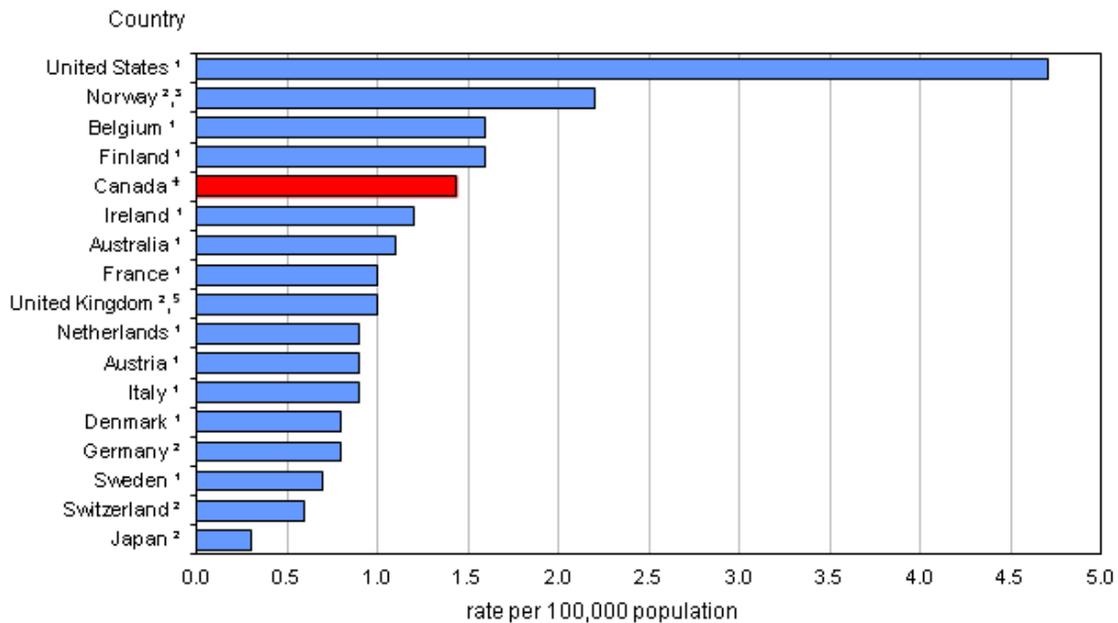
“Police reported just over 437,000 violent incidents in 2010, about 7,200 fewer than in the previous year. Violent crimes accounted for just over 1 in 5 offences. The violent CSI declined for a fourth consecutive year. The national rate of 1.62 homicides per 100,000 people in 2010 was the lowest since 1966. The number of attempted murders also declined, falling to the lowest rate in over 30 years.

“Similar to previous years, most crimes (79%) reported by police in 2010 were non-violent. Theft under \$5,000, mischief and break-ins accounted for close to two-thirds of the almost 1.7 million non-violent offences, as the non-violent CSI fell for a seventh consecutive year. In 2010, the rate of break-ins continued its steady decline since the early 1990s peak, dropping 6% from 2009. The rate of motor vehicles reported stolen dropped 15%, continuing the downtrend seen since the mid-1990s. The national rate of impaired driving fell 6% and has generally been declining since 1981.” (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/>). Encouraging, but, numbers are high *nonetheless*. “437,000 violent incidents in 2010.” “2.1 million Criminal Code incidents (excluding traffic) in 2010.” Even though they fluctuate up and down 5-10,000 the numbers for the nation of Canada of 34 million people is still very high.

What of the United States? “...the United States continued to have a homicide rate higher than other peer countries. In 2013, the homicide rate in the United States (4.7 per 100,000) was about three times higher than that of Canada.” (ibid).

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Text box 1 chart
Homicides, by peer countries, most recent year



1. Figures reflect 2012 data.

2. Figures reflect 2011 data.

3. Includes homicides committed during the Utoya Island mass shooting in July 2011. From 2001 to 2010, Norway's annual homicide rate fluctuated between 0.6 and 1.1 per 100,000 population.

4. Figures reflect 2013 data.

5. Includes England and Wales.

Note: Peer countries were determined using a methodology developed by the Conference Board of Canada. The Conference Board of Canada began by selecting countries deemed "high income" by the World Bank, then eliminated countries with a population less than one million, as well as countries smaller than 10,000 square kilometres. Of the remaining countries, the Conference Board of Canada used a five-year average of real income per capita and eliminated any countries that fell below the mean. Based on these criteria, a total of 17 countries remained.

Source: Statistics Canada and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

| United States of America | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Crime rates (2011 / 2013) | |
| Crime type | Rate |
| Homicide: | 4.7 / 4.7 |
| Forcible rape: | 27.0 / 26.9 |
| Robbery: | 113.9 / 112.9 |

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Aggravated assault: | 241.5 / 242.3 |
| Total Violent crime: | 387.1 / 386.9 |
| Burglary: | 701.3 / 670.2 |
| Larceny-theft: | 1,974.1 / 1,959.3 |
| Motor vehicle theft: | 230.0 / 229.7 |
| Total Property crime: | 2,905.4 / 2,859.2 |
| Notes | |
| * Number of reported crimes per 100,000 population. | |
| Population of the U.S. reported as 313,914,040 as of July 1, 2012. | |
| Source: Crime in the United States by Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 1993–2012 (Table 1) (FBI) | |

Now why do the statistics show that crime is dropping? One simple reason, “The problem is that the majority of crime (approximately half of violent crimes and 40 percent of property crimes) are not reported to law enforcement agencies.

“Crimes are not reported because victims see the event as a personal matter (a fight between friends or family members) or a theft that the victim considers minor or the victim’s belief that law enforcement cannot resolve the issue (a theft where the likelihood of getting property back or resulting in the arrest of the offender is unlikely).” (Article; Violent and Property Crime in the US—Crime in America).

Another reason they say, “ ‘These estimates suggest *that legalized abortion is a primary explanation for the large drops in murder, property crime, and violent crime that our nation has experienced over the last decade,* ’ they wrote, arguing that the 1973 US Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* helped preclude thousands of *unwanted* fetuses from being born into less-than-ideal environments. *‘Indeed, legalized abortion may account for as much as one-half of overall crime reduction.’*” (Article; US crime rate at lowest point in decades. Why America is safer now by Daniel B. Wood, emphasis added). Can you believe they use *murder* (killing unborn babies) to justify low crime rates? *Pre-Judging* innocent unborn children, when *no* crime had been committed by them!

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Even though crime rates are down, “The U.S. incarceration rate is among the highest in the world.” (Article; Crime Rates Are Down -- But Why? Diane Diamond). The numbers although down are still staggering, and crime continues to happen. Can it be stopped completely?

How much does Crime Cost the Taxpayer?

The two points Diane Diamond makes for the reason why crime is down in the USA are:

“The U.S. incarceration rate is among the highest in the world. Plainly put, we have taken record numbers of criminals off the street.

“The increased number of police on the beat and pro-active policing. Bottom line, it is now harder to commit a crime. Citizens are more alert these days and their calls to 911 bring immediate help. Also, surveillance cameras are everywhere, and they are believed to be a real deterrent.” (ibid). *But really is that justice?* Crime still roams the streets of our nations. The taxpayer pays an incredible amount of money to sustain all these programs, police enforcement, jails just for a tiny decrease in crime. Our prison system *forces the victims to pay twice*: First by the criminal and then by a government that taxes them to pay for the housing, feeding, clothing and entertainment of the murderers, rapists and thieves who *victimised* them.

Notice what this source says, “While in 1998 Canada spent over \$42.4 billion on crime—\$15.5 billion on what we think of as the direct cost of crime and the remainder on the less easily measured consequences for the victims—*today’s estimates reveal that Canadians spend over \$85 billion being victimized by, catching, and punishing crime. Victims’ losses through criminal acts committed against them amount to over \$47 billion, more than half of the total. The current cost of crime is over 5% of our national product and this is an underestimate.*

“The crime rate has been falling since the early 1990s and there is a paradox here since in many dimensions the cost of crime has risen, not fallen. At the same time as crime is declining, the cost of dealing with crime by the police, the courts, and the prisons has become greater. At least part of the reason for this increase has been the requirements of the justice system itself. To safeguard the rights of Canadians, the Supreme Court of Canada has imposed a set of evolving requirements on the police and prosecution that make it manifestly more expensive to capture and prosecute. This is not to argue that the courts should not impose these requirements. It is, however, important to understand their consequences and, of course, there are other contributors to the increasing costs.

“Over the decade from 2002 to 2012 the crime rate has fallen by roughly 27%: from 7,700 to 5,600 crimes per 100,000 of the population. *Nonetheless, the cost of dealing with crime by the justice system has risen by 35%. The greatest increases have been in policing (44%) followed by corrections at (33%).* One of the puzzles has been that the *incarceration rate has changed little since 1978* while the crime rate fluctuated from a 1991 peak of over 10,000 per 100,000 to 5,600 today.” (Article; Cost of Crime in Canada, by fraserinstitute.org, emphasis added).

What of the USA? “The the annual cost of crime in the United States for one year is now about \$3.2 trillion dollars, which is roughly the combined cost of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

from 2001 to 2011,” Anderson says. “We spend \$2.7 trillion a year on health care. The burden of crime exceeds that by half a trillion dollars.” (*New Study Estimates the Annual Cost of Crime to be \$3.2 Trillion “The Cost of Crime,” a new study by David A. Anderson, Centre College’s Paul G. Blazer Professor of Economics, quantifies the burden of crime by estimating the annual cost of crime in the United States; Danville, KY. (PRWEB) September 28, 2012*). Is this justice that the victims of crime pay all this money, to keep the criminals off the streets, and in turn the criminals really do not receive punishment for their crimes, but a place to live, eat, and be clothed till the serve their sentence, which most times they do not serve, and are let out? Once out most likely they are a repeat offender, and victimized another person family etc... and the process starts all over again. Is this justice? Is this really solving the crime problem? Incarceration rates are up. Spending is up. For what? A little dip in the reported crime rate?

The Curse of Crime on a Nation

What effect does crime have on the country? The United Nations says, “As economic development is *threatened* by transnational organized crime and illicit drugs, countering crime must form part of the development agenda, and social and economic development approaches need to form part of our response to organized crime. If we are to ensure that the MDGs are achieved, we must strengthen strategies to deliver these goals, including stepping up efforts to address issues such as money laundering, corruption and trafficking in wildlife, people and arms, and drugs. *Organized crime and drugs impact every economy, in every country*, but they are particularly devastating in weak and vulnerable countries. Weak and fragile countries are particularly vulnerable to the effects of transnational organized crime. These countries, some devastated by war, others making the complex journey towards democracy, are preyed upon by crime. *As a result, organized crime flourishes, successes in development are reversed, and opportunities for social and economic advancement are lost. Corruption, a facilitator of organized crime and drug trafficking, is a serious impediment to the rule of law and sustainable development*. It can be a dominant factor driving fragile countries towards failure. It is estimated that up to US\$40 billion annually is lost through corruption in developing countries.

“*Drugs and crime undermine development by eroding social and human capital. This degrades quality of life and can force skilled workers to leave, while the direct impacts of victimization, as well as fear of crime, may impede the development of those that remain. By limiting movement, crime impedes access to possible employment and educational opportunities, and it discourages the accumulation of assets*. Crime is also more ‘expensive’ for poor people in poor countries and disadvantaged households may struggle to cope with the shock of victimization. *Drugs and crime also undermine development by driving away business. Both foreign and domestic investors see crime as a sign of social instability, and crime drives up the cost of doing business*. Tourism is a sector especially sensitive to crime issues. Drugs and crime, moreover, undermine the ability of the state to *promote development by destroying the trust relationship between the people and the state, and undermining democracy and confidence in the criminal justice system. When people lose confidence in the criminal justice system, they may engage in vigilantism, which further undermines the state.*” (Thematic Debate of the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Drugs and Crime as a Threat to Development On the occasion of the UN International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 26 June 2012 – New York, emphasis added). Crime can destroy our whole way of life, our economy, education,

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Prices at the stores due to theft etc.... The impact of crime is enormous.

On a personal level the effects of crime can afflict a person on many ways, “Dr. Morton Bard, co-author of *The Crime Victim’s Book*, has described a victim’s reaction to crime as the crisis reaction. Victims will react differently depending upon the level of personal violation they experience and their state of equilibrium at the time of victimization. Victims of non-violent crimes -- such as theft -- may experience less of a personal violation than victims of violent crimes, however, that is not always the case. Homicide is the ultimate violation for a crime victim, and leaves behind the victim’s survivors to experience the personal violation. All people have their own ‘normal’ state of equilibrium. This normal state is influenced by everyday stressors such as illness, moving, changes in employment, and family issues. *When any one of these changes occurs, equilibrium will be altered*, but should eventually return to normal. *When people experience common stressors and are then victimized, they are susceptible to more extreme crisis reactions.* There are certain common underlying reactions that a victim will undergo either in the immediate hours or days after the crime. *Frequent responses to a criminal victimization include, but are not limited to: shock; numbness; denial; disbelief; anger; and, finally, recovery.*” (The Trauma of Victimization, victimsofcrime.org, emphasis added).

“White Collar” crimes

Millions of crimes which never make the F.B.I. “Index” are just as serious as those that do. In fact, all seven F.B.I. Index crimes commonly occur among families, friends, and business associates of “good” people, and they routinely go unpunished. Many years ago, sociologist Edwin Sutherland dubbed these crimes “white collar.”

Not all “white-collar” crimes are perpetrated by the proverbial button-down gray-flannel-suited white-collared corporate executive. “White collar” is more a state of mind than a state of dress. It refers to serious crime committed under the veil of “respectability.” It reflects human nature’s desire to be (or be thought of) as “good,” but to actually partake in evil. All such “white-collar” crimes are psychologically justified by the perpetrator as “good” or “necessary.”

Not only is such white-collar crime growing *rapidly*, it is also outpacing the more widely publicized “crime in the streets” (or should it be called “blue-collar crime”?). Fraud and embezzlement cost the U.S. Billions of dollars annually. The Global Financial crisis of 2007-2008 and the collapse of Lehman Brothers were white collar crimes that cause the meltdown of our financial system. This source says, “...the crime they committed was taking advantage of homeowners in order to increase their own profits. In other words, ‘Main Street was exploited in order to benefit Wall Street.’ Only under regulatory law is there a way to investigate these financial institutions and address the crimes they have gotten away with... What investors, bankers, and brokers did was make irresponsible deals that benefitted them at the expense of others. The set of core beliefs that can define what should and shouldn’t be defined as criminal is known by Emile Durkheim as the collective conscience (1893)... By being dishonest and reckless, banks committed a moral crime that goes against our collective conscience... Most of the people involved in scamming homeowners were white and in white-collar jobs...” (*The Financial Crisis of 2008: Getting away with white collar crime, Posted on July 21, 2013 by Sayda Morales under Sociology*).

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Other common “white-collar” crimes include tax evasion (costing the “honest” taxpayers billions of dollars each year), false corporate auditing, secret stock deals, forgeries, mail fraud, political “influence peddling,” secret campaign contributions, wire-tapping, and many crimes of omission: failing to meet health standards, disregarding housing standards, using shoddy building materials, and policemen accepting payoffs for “not looking.” The most subtle crime of omission is plea bargaining, in which a more serious crime (such as rape) will not be prosecuted if the criminal pleads guilty to a smaller crime (theft).

Perhaps if a modern-day prophet clamored against “falsifying the balance,” “treading upon the poor,” “robbing the widow,” or making the product too small and the profit too great, the average citizens would snicker at his naiveté and return to “business as usual.” Nevertheless, such warnings are found in the Holy Bible; they apply to today, and people are doing precisely that- snickering at them. What if a modern prophet proclaimed that God was against those who “take a bribe,” “ignore the orphan,” “turn aside the stranger,” “take increase,” “withhold the pledge,” “take away the wealth of the righteous,” or “turn aside the poor in the gate from their right”?

Those warnings are in the Bible!

The biblical prophets warned more about white-collar crimes than about all “crime in the street,” “felonies,” and F.B.I. “Index” crimes put together! And they knew what they were talking about- such crimes by the strong and rich against the poor and weak were more pervasive then, and are more costly today, than all the blatant, obvious crimes of passion. It is time for “good” people to reexamine their behavior in light of these prophetic warnings.

Poverty does NOT Cause Crime

Many have the notion that poverty is directly linked with crime. Many people believe that crime is caused by “desperation brought on by joblessness, poverty and community disintegration.” Many still claimed that crime multiplies when “individuals feel that stealing, mugging or selling dope is an acceptable means of survival.” So an affluent society, a cruel, exploitative, upper-class society which possesses only indifference to its “marginal and disadvantaged people” is to blame. How utterly strange, and how totally contradictory to the known facts.

One example is Egypt. Egypt is a very poor nation. Millions of poverty stricken, jobless, hopeless people jammed together in squalid slums, existing amid human and animal excrement, without sanitary facilities of any kind, present such a pitiful sight to a visitor from the affluent United States & Canada that it is almost impossible to believe.

Strangely, though stricken with huge economic problems, Egypt has a very low crime rate. It is much safer to walk on the streets of Cairo wearing your watch and carrying your wallet than on the streets of most major U.S. cities, including the nation’s capital.

Conversely, study the crime patterns of some of the totally socialized nations of Scandinavia, where Living standards and personal affluence have soared. So has the crime rate!

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Studies into the personal lives of those convicted of serious crimes simply do not bear out the conclusion that poverty causes crime. Only a small percentage of convicted criminals behind bars come from a poverty-level background. Repeatedly, police are amazed to see vicious crimes being committed by the so-called “good guys” in society-the “quiet kid next door” who comes from a middle class, or upper class home.

Drug-related crimes are said to amount to approximately 40% of crimes involving profit (burglary, Bunco, etc.), and a very significant percentage of drug users come from a social background well above the poverty level.

Crime in the United States has risen almost exactly proportionate to affluence! During the poverty stricken years of the Great Depression-When the unemployment rate hovered at the 25% level-the American crime rate *declined steadily* in spite of adverse economic conditions. There was crime, yes, but more on the order of the sensationalized gangland crimes of Capone, “Pretty Boy” Floyd, “Machine Gun Kelly” and others.

Being “poor” is not synonymous with being “crooked.” Just as poor people can keep clean, so the “disadvantaged” classes can remain morally responsible. Crime is not a disease. It is the result of a nation turning its collective and individual back on the most basic of all laws, the Ten Commandments-laws that say, among other things, “Thou shalt not steal,” and “Thou shalt not kill”!

Cause of Crime

So if the cause of crime is not poverty, then what is?

What is wrong is clear. Most criminologists, sociologists and other officials are fighting crime at the wrong end of the problem.

Many blame lack of police, the easy availability of guns, the overburdened and crippled criminal justice system, or drug abuse, underemployment, violent entertainment or poverty. These situations *contribute* to the crime problem, but they are not the fundamental *cause*.

The cause of crime is the lack of right character! It is the failure of individuals to grasp right values and recognize and resist evil, whatever its source. The roots of juvenile crime develop when children rich, poor or middle class- *choose* to think criminal thoughts or develop unsocial or criminal attitudes in their character.

In the beginning of Children’s lives, they minds are like an empty piece of paper, or a blank computer screen, which needs to be filled with information in order for the computer program to work. Information is fed, different codes, and language is written.

During the time of the Israelites, when the generation of the Exodus sinned against God, and they were not allowed to enter into the Promise Land, God told Israel, “Moreover your *little ones*, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, *which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil*, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.”

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

(Deut 1:39; Numbers 14:31). Like Adam and Eve, they had no knowledge of Good and evil and were given a choice as God told them, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen 2:17). They chose *their* way, and not *God’s* way which is, “tree of life” (Gen 2:9). God did not forbid them to partake of that tree, only the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil.

This source says, “Reference to ‘the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ is in a context concerned with the fall. In Genesis 3:3 the tree is designated as ‘the tree which is in the midst of the garden.’ Eating from the tree *brought* the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:5, 22). One of many trees in the garden, this tree alone was forbidden to mankind under the penalty of death (Gen. 2:17).

“The tree of knowledge was Adam and Eve’s opportunity to *demonstrate obedience and loyalty to God*, but the serpent used it to tempt Eve to eat and to become like God ‘knowing good and evil’ (Gen. 3:5). When Adam joined Eve in eating the forbidden fruit, the result was shame, guilt, exclusion from the garden, and separation from the tree of life and from God.” (Holman Bible Dictionary under “Tree of Knowledge” emphasis added).

Because of man’s *choice*, man’s mind was continually doing evil instead of good until eventually it was, “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil *continually*.” (Gen 6:5). This is human nature as we now know it. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” (Rom 8:7). Human nature is continually choosing evil and not subject to God’s law of righteousness. Man’s problems on this earth have to do with the spiritual *not* the physical condition.

God told Israel to teach his laws to those “little ones” who were going to enter into Canaan, “...diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” (Deut 6:7). Framing their character-But *again* it was their choice. God told them “choose life” (Deut 30:19). This is the same choice God gave to Adam and Eve. They chose the way of evil, and so did Israel which brought death and destruction.

Juvenile Delinquency

God prophesied in this end time that, “the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient...*As for* my people, children *are* their oppressors...” (Isaiah 3:5, 12). Juvenile crime would be rampant in this end time.

Dr. David Abrahamsen, writer of volumes on the psychology of criminals (Psychology of Crime, 1960; and Our Violent Society, 1970) concludes: “A real answer to the problem of violence we have today must come from within the family and the way we raise our children. There is no mass solution — not in our schools, [or in] our jails...” Absolutely true!

Decades ago, Judge Rodney S. Eielson of Darien, Connecticut, also pinpointed the reason for criminal behavior: “I am sick and tired of spanking someone else’s children in court. This has to be done at home. It’s at home where the moral fiber of a young person is woven, and the process

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

starts with the earliest ages. By the time a teenager gets to my court, he is often beyond help. His character has been formed.... Until we place the responsibility where it lies, with the parents, our country will continue to see a rising incidence among teenagers of larceny and theft, reckless driving and intoxication, pregnancy among unwed high school girls, and other legal and moral crimes, including homosexual experimentation and the use of narcotics.... Inability to administer discipline with love is equally harmful... [Without that] you won't convince a youngster that you really love him or are interested in his welfare" (McCall's, January, 1965). If Parents continue to chose these ineffective ways to raise their children, outside of the laws of God, then this is what we should expect. The effects are Juvenile crimes, youth gangs etc...

Criminals are *not* born.

Any child taught to respect the laws of God will have little difficulty respecting the laws of man. But the destruction of the home throughout much of the Western world and the abrogation of high moral standards in the church , the home, and the school have given rise to morally substandard , often cruel and unfeeling young people who do not know the simple difference between right and wrong.

Until parents recognize the awesome responsibility of properly instilling in their children a sense of discipline, respect for the rights and property of others, love and sense of duty toward God, country and fellowman , our present crime situation will never go away.

The Ten Commandments of Crime

Many years ago, the Houston Police Department published and distributed some rules for rearing delinquent children. Interested parents should note the following summary of ten of these surefire ways to make a criminal:

- 1) Begin in infancy to give your child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.
- 2) Never give him any religious or spiritual training. Wait until he is 21; then he can decide on the "church of his choice," if any.
- 3) Avoid use of inhibiting words like "wrong," "illegal" or "bad." It may develop a guilt complex. Instead, assure him that society is at fault.
- 4) Pick up everything he leaves around-toys, books, clothes. Do everything for him, so he will expect the world to support him later.
- 5) Let him read any printed material he finds, or speak any words he hears. Sterilize the silverware, of course, but let his mind and mouth be "dirty."
- 6) Quarrel frequently in his presence. In this way he will see the breakup of a family and thus be more likely to break up his own later.

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

- 7) Give your child all the spending money he wants. Don't make him earn it. Why should he have things as rough as you did?
- 8) Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort. Denial may lead to inner frustration, so see that each desire is met immediately.
- 9) Take your child's part against neighbors, the police, teachers, friends, government, and the world. They're all picking on your dear child.
- 10) Prepare for a life of grief. You will be likely to suffer it.

Multiple millions of parents, especially in the post-World War Two baby boom, followed this regiment. The result was the juvenile delinquency wave of the 1950s, and the ensuing epidemic of street crime.

Starts at the Home

The foundation of human character is first formed in the family unit. Character development starts at an early age. Children must overcome ingrained emotional instability, destructiveness, defiance of authority or lying, in their character.

Parents, how many of you train your children in right character? The personalities of some children, maybe yours, demand more attention, guidance and discipline than others.

Parents fail their God-given responsibility if they don't set a right example in living and self-discipline. They are failing if they don't teach right and positive values, if they fail to discipline their children for indecent and inhumane attitudes. Why are so many parents distracted from this most important of human functions?

Look at the *choices* parents make in their lives. Increasingly it is because parents are not there; Divorce, desertion or separation have intervened. More frequently parents are too busy with other interests, activities or pleasures. Some parents, misled by false child psychology, excuse their children's misbehavior if discipline damages their child's "creative" abilities. What they often create is an obnoxious, undisciplined brat! Yes there are exceptions. Some single parent homes do bring up fine children. Many of these bring them up in a Christian environment. But these are clearly in a minority.

Some parents don't care what their children do as long as they stay out of their hair. Others don't conceive it's their job to train their children; it's their mate's job to carry the responsibility!

In 1963, Herbert T. Jenkins, chief of police of Atlanta, clearly answered the question of why children become delinquents. Listen to his words: "In my 30 years of experience, I have come to the conclusion that the lack of discipline and self-discipline are the major roots of all crime. If the family fails to discipline a youngster, thereby instilling in him a sense of self-discipline, then it later becomes the almost hopeless job of the courts to try to do it. For that is where this type of youngster always ends up." If parents fail in their responsibility to show affection, guidance and

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

proper discipline, it is unlikely any other institution will successfully pick up the reins. “We look for quick solutions, but *family stability* is the only long-term solution,” says Judge Seymour Gelber, Juvenile Division judge in Dade County, Florida.

Again it all comes down to *choice*. God, “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore *choose life*, that both thou and thy seed may live:” (Deut 30:19). *His* way, or *our* way? Many people decide to not rear their children the way their parents did. They decide to do it their own way. We as a nation choose to run our society our way as oppose to God’s way.

Notice this prophecy given to Ezekiel by God about how Israel reasons, trying to justify their actions, “What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge?” (Ezekiel 18:2). This means, “*How far can the moral evil of the parent be extended to his offspring? And, Are the faults and evil propensities of the parents, not only transferred to the children, but punished in them? Do parents transfer their evil nature, and are their children punished for their offenses?*” (Clarke’s Commentary, emphasis added). Isn’t this how we reason today? A person is not at fault for his or her crimes. They did not have a *choice*; it was the way they were raised. Blame the parents etc...

Today we are justifying every type of evil action. God says, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*” (Jeremiah 17:9). Today we can convince ourselves into anything type of behavior. Today we are justifying the use of marijuana, sexual immorality; even pedophiles want their rights saying they too are “born that way.” No one wants to take responsibility for their actions, so we blame it on genes, or Parents, never choice.

Parents who have children, God says they should be taught the law of God. Eventually however, they do grow up, and they have to make their own choices and decisions. This is where choice enters the picture. Many a time in the Bible we read of the Kings of Israel or priests who were righteous, and obey the laws of God. Surely these men were teaching their children the laws of God. But, when these children became adults *chose* not to obey, and became evil. One such case is Solomon, who chose to rebel in God’s sight (see 1 Kings 11). Or the high priest Eli, his two sons, “they knew not the LORD.” (1 Sam 2:12). Parents have a great responsibility to raise their children, to show them what is right and wrong, and parents are responsible to a certain degree, but when the children became adults, and old enough to make their own decisions they are responsible for their own actions.

God says, “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have *occasion* any more to use this proverb in Israel.” (Ezekiel 18:3). This will no longer be an excuse of blaming others for our own personal sins, all will take responsibility for their own actions.

God says of a righteous man, “If he beget a son *that is* a robber, a shedder of blood, and *that* doeth the like to *any* one of these *things*...shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; *his blood shall be upon him.*” (vv.10, 13). The righteous man obeyed God, but his son did not, he chose his own path. God says the son is responsible for his actions and choices. He chose to go that way. As God says in the law, “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: *every*

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

man shall be put to death for his own sin.” (Deut 24:16). Many victims of child abuse when they finally get out of the abusive relationship, say they will not do it to their children. They do not want their children to go through what they went through. They make the choice!

God goes on to say about a son who has a sinful father, “Now, lo, *if* he beget a son, that seeth all his father’s sins which he hath done, and *considereth, and doeth not such like*...hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live...*The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him*” (vv.14, 17, 20). It all comes down to personal choice. It’s up to the individual!

Everyone will be held accountable for his or her actions and attitudes. God holds parents accountable for *choosing* to teach decent and godly attitudes and values — and setting a right example. *Children are free moral agents. They can choose to respect or rebel against right parental and godly values* (see Prov 2:1-2); but God will also bring each youth into an accounting (Ecclesiastes 11:9-10). Young people need to be told this early in their lives!

Train up a Child?

Some may argue, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6). Many people take this to mean that there is no choice in the matter, and the way a child is brought up is the way he is going to act. But as noted many people brought up in abusive relationships do not continue to do it to their children. Many who were brought up being spanked as children refuse to do it to their children, and so on. Is this what the scripture is telling us? NO! The context of the scripture is not telling us that. The word “train” is “chanak” (Strong’s #2596). This word is used for “dedicate” (1 Kings 8:63; cf. the festival of dedication John 10:22). This means the child is dedicated for a specific purpose like the temple of God was dedicated for a specific purpose.

The word “child” does not necessarily mean a baby. The word is “na’ar” (Strong’s #5288) and it means: “

1) a boy, lad, servant, youth, retainer

1a) boy, lad, youth

1b) servant, retainer” (Browns-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Definitions).

A “Youth,” a “lad,” sounds more towards the age of a teen ager. Macmillan Dictionary under “youth” says, “Youth is the time of life when one is young, but often means the time between childhood and adulthood (maturity)” Today, kids in high school have to think about their careers about going to college to train to become a doctor, lawyer engineer etc...

“in the way he should go” “The Hebrew literally is, *Initiate a child in accordance with his way.*” (Pulpit Commentary, emphasis theirs). Now, “The Authorized Version, with which Ewald agrees, takes the maxim to mean that the child should be trained from the first in the right path—the path of obedience and religion. This is a very true and valuable rule, *but it is not what the author intends.*”(ibid, emphasis added). Instead it means, “His way” “future calling and

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

station,” what he wants to *dedicate* his life to do, a career choice if you will. As F.F. Bruce says, “this means that the education should fit the child, not the child to be fitted to the system (International Bible Commentary, p.679). So if a youth *chooses* to become a doctor, than that education should be taught to the child.

Then, “and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Will he or she ever forget how to do his job? No! Doing it all your life, it will be like second nature to them. This is the true biblical rendering of this passage.

Are Prisons the Biblical way to deal with crime?

Is imprisonment God’s way of dealing-with the crime problem? Why is the prison system in such chaos and crime so widespread? Where did the idea of keeping people in prison come from in the first place?

Prisons - we like to label them correctional institutions - are increasingly hotbeds of racial strife, homosexual rape, drug trafficking and violence. One prison official expressed it this way: “These aren’t ordinary people There are people in here who like to see blood - they like to hurt people. They practically foam at the mouth when they see blood.” Persons guilty of less serious offenses are frequently thrown in with hardened criminals, *where they themselves become hardened criminals*. The result of such policy is a fulfillment of the principle cited by the Apostle Paul: “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’” (1 Corinthians 15:33 NASV). Place a non-violent criminal in confinement with a violent criminal and the violent criminal is not going to be converted to the non-violent criminal’s lifestyle. Instead, the non-violent criminal is much more likely to become hardened and violent. America’s & Canada’s prisons are simply fertile training grounds for compounded criminal behavior. More often than not, the non-violent criminals become physical and sexual victims of the hardened lifers.

Penal institutions have become schools for perfecting the “art” of crime. Many consider getting caught as merely an occupational hazard.

The state of prisons is becoming more and more depressing, and no end to the misery seems in sight. The apparently inexorable decline of the prison system into near chaos is matched by the inability of the authorities involved to provide any relief. The blunt fact is that prisons can no longer cope.

In no way have Canada’s & America’s prisons proven to be institutions of rehabilitation. The extremely rare exception does not make the current penal system a viable choice for crime control in a civilized society. Wilmot Robertson summed up two of America’s prison system’s primary problems: “Long prison sentences *cause immeasurable psychological damage to inmates by wasting their lives away in useless and profitless pursuits*, while the soaring costs of prison upkeep place *a heavy financial penalty on those who observe the law.*” (Wilmot Robertson, *The Dispossessed Majority*, p. 426, emphasis added).

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Where did the idea of keeping people in prison come from anyway? One thing is certain: God is not its author.

Wilmot Robertson discoursed upon the origin of our present-day prison system:

“*Humanitarianism*, which is the extension of familial love to all mankind, was the chief architect of the present-day prison system...” (ibid, p.425-426, emphasis added). What is humane about herding men and woman into vast prison complexes like a bunch of cattle?

Prisons are promoted by those who think it is more humane to imprison a capital criminal than to put him to death. However, anyone who knows what truly goes on behind prison bars would never describe incarceration as an act of humanitarianism. King Solomon aptly described the consequences of such misguided compassion; “...the compassion of the wicked is cruel.” (Proverbs 12:10 NASV).

Humanitarianism, which is often nothing more than an extension of humanism, that is, the creation of one’s own laws and morality, was indeed the architect of Canada & America’s present day prison system. However, this same system can be traced back to an ancient culture that continues to have a profound influence upon modern culture. Incarceration, as it is found today in Canada & America, did not come from Yahweh but from Babylon!

Before Israel received its civil code from God, prisons were in use among the gentile nations. Joseph, one of the 12 patriarchs of the nation Israel, had been thrown into the dungeon where Egypt’s pharaoh kept his prisoners (Genesis 39:20).

In the book of Ezra we see Babylon’s way of dealing with criminals, “Now this *is* the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, *even* a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel... And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether *it be* unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to *imprisonment*.” (Ezra 7:11, 26).

Now the text above states that this edict was *not* issued by Yahweh, but rather by Artaxerxes, King of Babylon. Artaxerxes’ decree *intermixed God’s system with man’s system*. Man’s methodology is generally the consequence of humanism as was Artaxerxes’ leavened decree. The Prophet Habakkuk succinctly described the consequences resulting from humanism’s influence: “...the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore, justice comes out *pervverted*.” (Habakkuk 1:4).

When, as a people, we refuse God and His commandments, statutes and judgments, God warns us that He will allow others (humanists) whose “justice and authority originate in themselves” to rule over us - Habakkuk 1:5-7.

Today’s prison system is accurately identified as a penal system. It may do very little in penalizing criminals; however, it is a system by *which the victims of crime are penalized*.

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Canada's and America's prison systems initially punishes the victims by not providing satisfactory justice or restitution for the crimes committed. It likewise falls far short of providing sufficient protection from *repeat offenders*. Additionally, being forced to pay for the housing, feeding, clothing and entertainment of those who murdered, raped or plundered them or their relatives further *punishes* the victims of crime. So the Penal system forces the victim to pay *twice*. First at the hands of the criminal, and then at the hands of the government through taxes to convict, house, cloth and feed these people.

God's Penal System

What did God tell Israel about dealing with criminals? There was no *provision* for prisons in God's civil code.

Under the system God gave through Moses, suspects could be put "in ward" on a temporary basis while they awaited swift sentencing (Leviticus 24: 12; Numbers 15:34). But the short confinement itself was not the sentence. That is an important difference. "And they put *him in ward*, because it was not *declared* what should be *done* to him.... And they put him *in ward*, that the mind of the LORD might be shewed them."

For those judged guilty of criminal activity several forms of punishment were prescribed. Some crimes required "restitution" to the victim of double the amount lost. If the guilty party didn't have the means to make restitution, he became a bond servant until he worked off his debt. (see Exodus 22:1-9). Sometimes a physical punishment such as a lashing was pronounced. *For certain crimes the death penalty was mandatory.*

But Israel was to be free of jails, prisons and all their attendant problems and shortcomings. Emphasis was upon *detering* crime. The principle was simple: State the law; state the punishment; then swiftly and consistently punish any lawbreakers. The rest of the people-any who would be tempted to do wrong-would "*hear and fear*" (Deuteronomy 13:11; 17:13; 19:20). *Only the criminal pays for his crimes* as oppose to the system we have today where the victims pay. In other words, in either capital or non-capital cases the criminal is *not* imprisoned, the victim is *not* further victimized and the taxpayer is *not* additionally burdened. Instead, the criminal learns that, indeed, *crime does not pay!* And in capital cases the only prison cell such felons are entitled to is a *coffin*.

*Some consider the cities of refuge in the Old Testament a type of imprisonment. In fact these cities were a way by which the innocent were protected not the guilty. This safekeeping is indicated in the term "cities of refuge" (Numbers 35:10-28).

Eye for an Eye

God told Israel how to deal with crime. He told them, "...and he shall pay as the judges *determine*.

"And if *any* mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life,

"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

"Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe... And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.... *And the judges shall*

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

make diligent inquisition...And thine eye shall not pity; *but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.* ” (Ex 21:22-25; Deut 19:18, 20-21). God says to let the punishment suit the crime. Not to *overdue* the punishment, but execute its exact penalty.

What the criminal did to the victim is the *exact* punishment the criminal shall receive. If punishment is to make a statement about crime, the death of a murderer must not be honorable; he must die in disgrace, in contempt. If he took a life in violence, his death should be violent. We use injections to put to sleep a faithful old dog. Somehow it just doesn't seem right to put a brutal child murderer to death the same way. It may be distasteful, but is it more distasteful than the confusion and corruption of a society *that no longer condemns evil?*

Hanging is Biblical: “And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:” (Deut 21:22). It done *after* execution and it displays to people what happens to criminals when they are caught. (see ISBE under “punishments”).

Some writers and artists have succeeded in creating a loathing for the death penalty among civilized people. They have carefully developed sympathy in their readers and movie goers for the condemned man (or woman) and then painted a sordid and frightening picture of the execution. Like movies of the old West. But the old west was a world where the Old Testament was preached powerfully from the pulpits of their churches because it addressed the hard world in which these people lived.

Consequently, their attitudes matched many of the Psalms in their condemnation of evil and their rejoicing at the punishment of the wicked. Is it so wrong to celebrate the triumph of right over wrong? Consider the Psalm: “*The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.*”

“So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.” (58:10, 11).

Today in our modern world, when do we put someone to death? why do we do it in the Middle of the night with a minuscule group of witnesses? Are we ashamed of justice? All the meetings of our elected representatives, legislators, city Councils, etc. are *Public*. Why are the executions of brutal Murderers done in *private*, in the middle of the night? Justice, to be effective, should be *seen*.

What our society needs is not to see a serial killer interviewed on television, but to see his body swinging from a rope in a public square.

Executions Administered by Government only

But notice what God says, “...he shall pay as *the judges determine*.” The judges were the rulers of Israel. Only the government was allowed to put people to death! Vigilantism is condemned in the Bible!

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

God says, “Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and *they shall judge the people with just judgment.*” (Deut 16:18).

Again he says, “***For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour.***” (Ex 22:9).

James Strong & McClintock Cyclopedia under “Judge” says, “Judge (BEVIS, ‘shophet,’ usu. in the plur. ‘shophetim’, *rulers rather than magistrates,*” (p.1071, emphasis added).

Here is another example of the *government* dealing with crime in the law of God, “If there be a controversy between men, *and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.*

“And it shall be, if the wicked man *be* worthy to be beaten, ***that the judge shall cause him*** to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number.

“Forty stripes he may give him, *and* not exceed: lest, *if* he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee.” (Deut 25:1-3).

The Apostle Peter and Paul agree that only the government can execute punishment on criminals, “Let every soul be subject unto *the higher powers.* For there is no power but of God: *the powers that be are ordained of God.*

“Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

“***For 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:

“*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, ***a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.***” (Romans 13:1-4). The Apostle Paul says the rulers, those in positions of power are ordained of God for this duty to punish evil, and they are there to *protect you* from it.

Solomon said the same, “A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment... The wrath of a king *is as* messengers of death...” (Prov 16:10, 14).

The Apostle Peter agrees, “*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;*

“*Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.*” (1 Peter 2:13-14). Clearly, Christians are to be law abiding citizens, and to subject themselves to the laws of the land, and that the government only can execute punishment on criminals, and that personal vengeance is not allowed.

Notice what God says of vengeance, “*Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.*” (Lev 19:18). Here God condemns *personal* vengeance, and to love your neighbor, as Jesus said to

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

“love your enemies,” those that have wronged you. To “turn the other cheek” and to “resist the evil” of personal vengeance (see also King Solomon in Proverbs 24:17-18, 29).

The Apostle Paul said the same thing, “*Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*”

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

“Dearly beloved, *avenge not yourselves*, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:17-21).

Jesus in Matthew 5:38-39 did not contradict or abrogate the eye for an eye law. He was against the misinterpretation, and misapplication of that law. People were using that law to justify their own personal vengeance on other people, taking matters into their own hands instead of going to the judges to settle matters (*read our article Did Jesus contradict the eye for an eye law for a full study*).

The Mob Mentality

The Bible also clearly condemns the “mob” mentality as well. God says there should be a trial, sentencing, and execution by the governing body. Exodus 23:2 says, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to *do* evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest *judgment*.” This is what happened with the woman in Jesus day that got caught committing adultery (John 8:1-11).

The Apostle Peter said, “For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

“Wherein they think it strange *that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:*” (1 Peter 4:3-4, see also 2 Peter 2:13; Titus 1:6).

The mob took it upon themselves to execute judgment, and not going through the process of trial and sentencing. You see this in Islamic countries, people who stone people to death many times without trial; there are also “honor killings” and other such deeds where people are put to death without trial, or witnesses, just put to death because of some hot head father, or jealous husband that feels his wife or daughter disgraced him, and so these woman are put to death. God condemns such actions. The Salem Witch trials are another example of this. If someone wanted to get a hold of your property, they would falsely accuse you of being a witch. Knowing the mob would condemn anyone of such practices, “neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest *judgment*.” would condemn innocent people to death. Jesus almost experienced the same (see John 8:59: 10:31-32). Stephen did unfortunately (see Acts 7:54-60).

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

The Effects of Vigilantism

God knows that one cannot go around conducting his or hers own personal war, getting even for what happen to them.

Vengeance is the most powerful argument anyone can advance for the death penalty. Vengeance is the one clean rationale that stands against every argument. Why, then, do Christian people seem to feel so guilty about vengeance?

Most modern Christians feel that vengeance is an unworthy motive, and that it is wrong to exact vengeance. They base these beliefs on scriptures like Romans 12:19: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves.” They assume it is a Christian teaching that the man of God should not seek vengeance. In the Old Testament, they think, vengeance was allowed, but the Christian is to turn the other cheek.

Take the scripture cited above for example: “Thou shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.” That reads like good New Testament doctrine, doesn’t it? It is not. That verse is in the Old Testament. (Leviticus 19:18). The Old Testament teaching is the same as the New. How, then, can the death penalty be legitimate in the Old Testament and wrong in the New Testament?

As quoted above, the entire passage from Romans 12:19-13:4 shows the context in which Paul was speaking of. *Personal* vengeance is not allowed. Note that the passage begins and ends with vengeance. Why are we not to exact personal vengeance? It is not because vengeance is wrong, but because vengeance belongs to God. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says God.

Vengeance, according to Paul, is a positive good. It involves “repayment” and is the *very core of justice*. Vengeance, then, cannot be the unworthy motive it is usually painted to be. *Vengeance is the central value of justice!* What is wrong is the *personal* pursuit of vengeance? The exaction of personal vengeance will only lead to retaliation, counter-retaliation, and more vengeance. The result can be blood feuds extending over several generations of the families involved. Vengeance must be controlled, and under strict order only by the government, or God himself.

Self Defense

It is in this light that Jesus’ statements in the Sermon on the Mount should be understood. When Jesus told his disciples to “turn the other cheek,” was that taken to mean that they could not defend themselves, and their families, against a thug who is shout to assault them? Here is what he said, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: “But I say unto you, *That ye resist not evil*: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn [or “offer” Luke 6:49] to him the other also.” (Matthew 5:38-39).

Christian pacifists down through the years have believed that if a man is raping your wife, that you should do nothing to stop him. If you, or your children are assaulted on the street that you can offer no defense. But if you will notice verse 38, you will see that this is *not* about self-defense, but about *vengeance*. Jesus is essentially saying the same thing as the old proverb: “Say

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I [God] will render to the man according to his work.” (Proverbs 24:29). Turning the other cheek says that if you do that again, I still will not seek vengeance.

Insubordination in court was punished by a slap in the face. Paul experience this (Acts 23:2) as did Jesus Himself (Matthew 26:67. Mark 14:65).

Resisting or retaliating against official punishment will bring nothing but grief. This is what Jesus meant when He said that if a man compelled you to walk a mile with him, walk two. Turning the other check is *not* required while you are being assaulted by a man with a knife this is self defense *not* vengeance. But when the assault is over, and the man is no immediate threat, you may not retaliate, and take personal vengeance on him, let the authorities take care of him afterwards. God denies us the right to exact our own vengeance. God promises that he would repay. God does this by “higher powers.” i.e. rulers, governments, these are instruments of God; the he gives authority to exact vengeance on behalf of the oppressed (Romans 13:1-2). Legitimate governmental authority as Paul tells us, is derived from God. We are further told that the government is a minister of God to you *for good*.

Notice in Romans 13:4 Paul uses the word “sword.” This is an explicit reference to the death penalty. God commands His servants to avoid personal, private vengeance, but He expects the official vengeance to be executed by the state. If we are entrusted with the responsibility of administering justice, we must administer justice. Failure in this area will lead to the collapse of a society.

If the state fails to execute vengeance upon evildoers, this absence of authority leads men to administer their own justice-take their own vengeance. They fall back on family and racial solidarity with the resulting blood feuds and private wars. If government fails to exact vengeance, it opens the door to vendetta. The gang wars that exist in some cities are plain evidence of the failure of our government to execute justice. If our society is to survive in the face of violence, our government must execute justice.

Forgiveness?

The Christian dilemma arises from confusing our *personal* responsibility to forgive with the responsibility of the state to execute vengeance. Personally, we must forgive when one repents and asks, “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; *and if he repent, forgive him*.”

“And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, *saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*” (Luke 17:3-4). *But the state is under no such requirement.* In fact, the government is expressly forbidden to back down out of some misguided sense of pity: “*And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*” (Deut 19:21). Mercy, forgiveness, loving your enemies is for individuals and churches. *Justice is for governments.*

Any Christian who accepts the responsibility of government including jury duty-must faithfully execute those duties on behalf of the *oppressed*. There was a time in ancient Israel when God’s

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

people did not accept these responsibilities. Along came prophets to warn them of their mistakes. Isaiah, for example, warned Israel: “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

“Learn to do well; *seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*” (1:16-17).

Jeremiah talking to Judah warned: “O house of David, thus saith the LORD; *Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.*” (21:12).

When Israel failed to execute judgment, the result was a society not unlike our own: “For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,

“The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient,

“The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

“And I will give children *to be* their princes, and babes shall rule over them.

“And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.” (Isaiah 3:1-5).

As it happens, the Bible has much to say advocating vengeance. But the vengeance is to be exacted by legitimate authority, not by individuals. The government has the responsibility and the sole authority to avenge the poor, relieve the oppressed and protect the needy against those who harm them.

Is there never a time for the government to show mercy? Of course there is, but that mercy is extended by the judge and jury that have heard the case. *Mercy is the exception to the rule.* But those involved must *remember their responsibility to the victim whose blood may yet cry from the ground.* We can forgive and show mercy. But for the sake of the oppressed there is a time for justice—even a time for vengeance. In our world thieves are not afraid, but honest people are. When a righteous man fails to execute judgment, then good people live in fear while evil men swagger in the streets.

Both the Old and New Testaments ordain the death penalty as a judgment for, and a deterrent to, capital crime. Whether viewed from the Old Testament or New Testament perspective, Yahweh is a God of love, grace and mercy. Thus, capital punishment, conceived by a loving and merciful God, *cannot* be barbaric. Instead, God instituted capital punishment as a deterrent to criminal behavior, and it *is* a deterrent *when* it is administered according to His Word. His way preserves life, so a nation is crime free, and no evil abounds.

*Sacrifices in the Old Testament were performed to atone for the sins of the individual. These sacrifices were for sinning in ignorance or in error (Num 15:23, 24), and it was “forgiven” (v.26). But the one who sinned “presumptuously” is one who “despised” God and his word. These are the ones who were put to death (vv.30, 31, 35-36). The New Testament is the same. The blood of Jesus Cleanses the sinner who “erred” or sinned in “ignorance” (1 Tim 1:13; Heb 5:1-3). But those who are “willfully” ignorant, or those who “despise” God and are

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

subject to death (Heb 6:4-8; 10:26-30). The process is the same. Both put to death by the rulers of the nation, and in the case of the New Testament, the ruler Jesus Christ, at his judgment seat.

Avenger of the Blood

In Numbers 35:12 we read of the “revenger” or “avenger” as it should read of the “blood.” Who is this, person or even office, or position of power? Bullinger writes, “Hebrew. *Goel*, to redeem, to ransom. First occurrence is Gen 48:16; next, Ex 6:6; Ex 15:13. *Goel*, when used in this connection, means to avenge bloodshed, as here; both were the duties of the next of kin, the kinsman. Our *Goel* not only redeems us from all evil, but avenges us of all our enemies. Rom 8:31-34.” (p.233). Many believe as Bullinger does that it was a family member looking for vengeance. But as noted above, this was not the case. As cited by Bullinger, the scriptures pointed out, it was God who was the Avenger. Isaiah 41:14 God again is called “Goel.” God is *ruler*, and only he takes vengeance. The scriptures above say that the *ruler* of the nation is allowed to take vengeance for that is ordained of God “*a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*” (Romans 13:4).

God imposed this because this “shows God’s love for justice. By this means he imposed the rule of law upon the custom of blood feuds” (The New Bible Commentary, p.197). Again, people could not go around killing one another because of hot tempers. There had to be law and order. This avenger of the blood was the *state executioner*. Only that position of power, from the government can put people to death, no one else.

“And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment...*The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer:* (Num 35:12, 19). People that are charged with accidental deaths etc... were to stay in the cities of refuge to be protected from the death penalty. Blood was shed, and so there was a penalty to pay, “...for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.” (Num 35:32, 33).

Capital Punishment by Non-Christian Governments?

The opponents to the death penalty denounce it as archaic, barbaric, uncivilized, cruel and unusual punishment. They vociferously denounce the idea that capital punishment is a deterrent to future lawbreakers and demand that it should be left up to God to judge when a person should die.

They remind the proponents of capital punishment that God commands us: “Thou shalt not kill!” *Could* the capital punishment antagonists be correct?

First of all the word “kill” in Exodus 20:13 is “ra^h tsach” (Strong’s #7523). This means:

- 1) *to murder, slay, kill*
 - 1a) (Qal) to murder, slay
 - 1a1) premeditated
 - 1a2) accidental

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

- 1a3) as avenger
- 1a4) slayer (intentional) (participle)
- 1b) (Niphal) to be slain
- 1c) (Piel)
 - 1c1) *to murder, assassinate*
 - 1c2) *murderer, assassin* (participle) (substantive)
- 1d) (Pual) to be killed” (Browns-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Definitions).

It means you shall not commit “murder.” The punishment for those that do is death! “Life for life.” You kill someone your life is taken-the punishment suits the crime, executed by the government! So the Bible is consistent with its message.

Now I myself, too, stand opposed to the death penalty for the following reasons:

- 1) When *non-Christians* determine what a capital crime is and what is not.
- 2) When the verdict against a capital criminal has not been determined by the testimony of two or more witnesses.
- 3) When there is *no* judicial provision for perjurers to be put to death for false testimony in capital cases.
- 4) When the execution of a convicted capital criminal is *delayed* as a consequence of a non-Biblical appellate system.
- 5) When the method of execution is by gas chamber, electric chair or lethal injection.

Under a *non-Christian government* anything can become a capital crime. For example, under the heading “Capital Punishment,” Bouvier’s Law Dictionary reveals those crimes, at the end of the 18th Century, that was punishable by death:

“...in England, as late as [King] Geo. III. [1738-1820], there were about two hundred offences punishable by death, among which were cutting down a tree, robbing a rabbit warren, harboring an offender against the revenue acts, stealing in a dwelling-house to the amount of forty shillings, or in a shop goods to the amount of five shillings, counterfeiting the stamps that were used for the sale of perfumery, etc.” (John Bouvier, “Capital Punishment,” Bouvier’s Law Dictionary and Concise Encyclopedia of the Law (Kansas City, Missouri: Vernon Law Book Company, 1914) Volume 1, p. 420).

Moreover, it is not beyond the realm of possibility for a government to make the adherents of *descendants of any lineage subject to the death penalty*. Consider Balak, King of Moab in Numbers 22-24, Haman in the book of Esther and the Herod’s of Bible history. Asaph’s prayer stands as a warning to God’s people for all times:

“O God, do not remain quiet; do not be silent and, O God, do not be still. For, behold, Thine enemies make an uproar; and those who hate Thee have exalted themselves [into governmental positions of authority]. They make shrewd plans against Thy people, and conspire together

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

against Thy treasured ones. They have said, ‘Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.’” (Psalm 83:2-4 NASV).

Anyone who thinks that this is not a legitimate reason to be opposed to capital punishment ought to consider the parents of the Israelite baby boys under Pharaoh’s reign – (Exodus 1), Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego under Nebuchadnezzar’s reign – (Daniel 3), Daniel under Darius’ reign – (Daniel 6), John the Baptist under Herod’s reign – (Matthew 14), and Stephen under the Pharisees’ jurisdiction – (Acts 7). I guarantee *that those victims were for abolishing the death penalty under the non-Israelite and/or non-Christian governments of their day*. It is no wonder King Solomon said, “*It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.*” (Prov 16:12).

Only a Christian government founded upon the never-changing and perfect morality of God’s laws can be completely trusted with the implementation of the death penalty.

* Opponents to the death penalty often cite John 8:3-11 in which Jesus pardoned the woman caught in adultery. However, rather than repealing capital punishment, Jesus upheld it. In fact, it is often overlooked that Jesus initially declared that the woman *should* be stoned. However, in the absence of righteous men, and the required two witnesses, (v.10), Jesus could not condone the punishment, for these reasons and also for false accusers, so He let the woman go free. Had Jesus not upheld and perfectly kept His Father’s law, He would have been a sinner and could not have been our Savior.

Executions done Speedily

The antagonists to the death penalty are at times correct; capital punishment sometimes is *not* a deterrent to future criminals. The reason being, executions are not done *speedily*.

When felons, such as Ted Bundy, can postpone their execution for prolonged periods of time by means of America’s appellate system, criminals are *encouraged* in their unlawful behavior rather than *deterred*. You can almost hear the reasoning of a would-be criminal as he contemplates a life of crime:

“First, they have to catch me, and if they do, I might escape! If I don’t escape, the prison system isn’t so bad. Heck, its three square meals, a bed, as much television as I want and I don’t have to work for a living! And, what’s the likelihood of any judge or jury sentencing me to death for my crime? Even if they do, I’m sure to have some sympathetic humane group attach themselves to my cause and plead for leniency or even clemency! And, even if a judge won’t hear of it, I have the appellate courts to rely upon. And, if my case is not overturned, how many years on death row will it be until they actually execute me. By then I’ll be an old man and I won’t care anyhow! Looking at it this way, the odds are in my favor!”

And he is right! Under America’s current judicial system, the odds *are* in the criminal’s favor! Capital punishment can only be the deterrent to future potential criminals that God intends it to be, *if* the execution of a properly convicted criminal is carried out posthaste.

Many people believe that with the death penalty, people will be put to death in their thousands, even hundreds of thousands. But if done God’s way, people would rarely see the execution of

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

criminals. *This preserves life!* People would not be scared to walk the streets because criminal activity would not exist. Jean Kellaway, in *The History of Torture and Execution*, says this regarding stoning in ancient Israel: “There is a danger in viewing historic laws with modern attitudes, heightened by the risk of mistranslation and misinterpretation. In defense of ancient Israel’s laws, *it should be stressed that the courts demanded overwhelming levels of proof before pronouncing the death penalty.*” (p.17, emphasis added). It was done but not as often as people think. It was very rare for a person to be put to death. God says that you should inquire “diligently” before anyone is executed.

The Bible says for executions to take place immediately after sentencing for the greatest effect, “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; see also Deut 25:2-3). The criminals reason as quoted above. They know if they get caught that they won’t be put to death, and that it can be prolonged so their hearts are set to do evil.

Even the whole parole system is laughable to say the least.

Why are the law-abiding citizens of our country oftentimes *living in FEAR*, cowering indoors, while violent, calloused, cynical, cowardly thugs are roaming free, looking for victims?

The wimpish parole boards, defense lawyers, appellate judges, and radical left-wing civil liberties groups clearly espouse policies revealing they feel they are *more righteous than God!*

God says murderers should be put to death! The breast-beating do-gooders say, “Oh, how HARSH! How INHUMANE! Why, we would only be ‘descending to their level’ to do such a thing!” Problem is with this reasoning, the *motives* are different. One is evil; the other is executing *justice* to get rid of the evil. The immediate removal of a criminal from society is one of capital punishment’s many purposes. Another purpose is its future effect upon the masses, that is, to deter others from criminal behavior so that there will be fewer criminals and, therefore, fewer victims.

God’s method of criminal justice is completely UNFAIR to these people! What God’s Word says about rape, arson, robbery, injury, and bloody murder—the penalties God prescribes for these vicious, bestial crimes are far too harsh for these spineless jellyfish who weep for the poor criminal but seem unmoved by the oceans of tears shed by the loved ones of their victims; unmoved by the horrifying terror, agony, excruciating pain and suffering, mental and physical, endured by those who were brutally killed!

The appellate judge; the crafty defense attorney who cares nothing for truth, but cares only for his fee and his reputation; the uncaring, indifferent parole boards who release hardened criminals onto our streets are causing more harm than good. There is no deterrent, but this is actually encouraging more criminal behavior.

See if a few examples of past parole board decisions do not sicken you:

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

CASE: Carl Wayne Buntion: 11 felony convictions, 9 prison terms, serves 15 months of 15-year sentence for sexually assaulting a child, released on 6th parole. Weeks later he murders Houston police officer Jim Irby.

CASE: Samuel Barnett: 20 convictions dating from 1969, serves half of 12-year sentence for raping 9-year-old girl, released. Days later he rapes the same girl again, now 15, in the same East Oakland garage.

CASE: Alan Rose: Shoots wife, serves 7 months of 7-year sentence, out on probation in Florida. Shoots and kills his girlfriend.

CASE: Donald Leroy Evans: Long arrest record dating from 1974, serves 5 years of 15-year sentence for sexual assault, paroled. Arrested in Louisiana, claims to have killed 60 people in 10 years across 20 states.

CASE: Raymond Paul Wisecarver: Serves 4 years of 8-year sentence for voluntary manslaughter, released. Arrested in California for 60 armed robberies in a 7-month crime spree.

CASE: James Pough: Charged with manslaughter in 1971, plea-bargains to aggravated assault, serves 5 years on probation, criminal record expunged. His 1990 suicidal shooting rampage in Florida claims 9 lives.

Notice what Solomon says about people who deal with crime this way, “A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: *for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.*” He says a man of great wrath or an “evil minded man” (Apostolic Bible Polyglot) has to be punished for his crimes.

Then he says, “if thou deliver him” “by paying the penalty” (Bullinger’s Companion Bible), or “Protect them from punishment” (ERV), he will “do it again,” Or as Bullinger says “continually.”

Gill’s Commentary says, “...if he clear of one lawsuit, another will be commenced against him in a short time; if he is discharged and freed from a penalty he is justly subject to, *it must be done again and again*; he will fall into the same evil, and there is no end of appearing, for him and serving him;” Parole does not work. We see its effects in our society, and the Bible tells us it does not work. If we just continually take away the punishment for crimes, we will continually see these criminals again and again in our court system.

Such arrogant, calloused, indifferent wimps are *judged of God* as being themselves guilty of horrifying crimes! The appellate judge; the crafty defense attorney who cares nothing for truth, but cares only for his fee and his reputation; the uncaring, indifferent parole boards who release hardened criminals onto our streets are themselves the object of God’s righteous indignation, His Divine WRATH!

God says of them: “Woe unto them that draw iniquity [lawbreaking] with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope:

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

“That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it! [In other words, God has gone way off somewhere, is not concerned, and cannot intervene!] Woe unto them that call evil *good*, and good *evil*; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

“Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.... Which *justify the wicked* for reward [like defense lawyers and appellate judges who regularly “plea bargain” violent crimes into lesser offenses, allow murderers and hardened criminals to go free] and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!” (Isaiah 5:18-23).

Two or Three Witnesses

The requirement of two or more corroborating witnesses to any capital crime is clearly mandated in the Scriptures as a requisite for the death penalty: “At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that *is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.*” (Deuteronomy 17:6; see also Numbers 35:30; Deut 19:15).

If there is a false witness, God says, “If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him *that which is wrong...* And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, *if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.*” (Deut 19:16, 18-19). The judges had to make a diligent inquisition before putting anyone to death; the witnesses had to be genuine and true. If someone would testify falsely in capital cases, the false accuser in such cases was himself to be put to death, to suffer the same fate as the accused. Why such inquiry? Because, “*That innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee.*” (Deut 19:10).

Afterwards, the witnesses were involved in the execution of the criminals as well, “At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; *but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.*

“*The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.*” (Deut 17:6-7). If you told the truth, then you can walk away with a clean conscience, if not, then the blood of an innocent person was on your hands, and if found out you were put to death for shedding innocent blood which God hates, (see Proverbs 6:16-17). If, police and prosecutor conspire to fraudulently convict a man, they will suffer whatever penalty there were trying to inflict upon the innocent man. Falsifying evidence or giving false testimony meant your life. If this were the law of the land no one would ever give a false testimony, and no innocent man would die. This would also make it more difficult to convict the guilty? Yes! But it would be better that 10 guilty men go free than one innocent man be punished. It is better to put to death people we *know* are guilty. Today with capital punishment being administered as rarely as it is today, there have been numerous cases where someone has been put to death under America’s current judicial system predicated exclusively upon circumstantial evidence, falsifying evidence, and false testimony. If the law of false witnesses was applied this would not happen.

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Pulpit Commentary writes, "...a rule which would tend to prevent accusations being lightly adduced, as none would venture to witness against any one *unless so deeply convinced of his guilt that they were willing to assume the responsibility of inflicting on him the last penalty with their own hands.*" One must remember however this was all sanctioned by the government in Israel. From the trial to the execution, the "avenger of the blood" and the witnesses (today usually police) had to take part to ensure that they were telling the truth.

The Whole Congregation?

Now it also says, "...and afterward the hands of all the people." Did the people have a hand in executing the criminals? F.F. Bruce comments, "the assembly: which would be represented by the elders" (The International Bible Commentary, p.254). You are not going to have thousands of people stone a person to death.

Notice during the time of the Exodus at Passover God said, "And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening" (Ex 12:6). Then it says, "Then Moses called for all the *elders of Israel*, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your *families*, and kill the passover." (v.21). The elders represented all of Israel.

Representatives of the whole congregation today are people in government, we have people called governors, senators, and Members of Parliament etc...that all represent the people would have their hand in executing the criminal.

Notice what the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia under "Elder" says: "Among primitive peoples authority seems naturally to be invested in those who by virtue of greater age and, consequently, experience *are best fitted to govern*

"From the first the *Hebrews held this view of government, although the term 'elder' came later to be used of the idea of the authority for which, at first, age was regarded necessary.* Thus the office appears in (Ex 3:16; Ex 12:21; Ex 24:1, of the elders of the Hebrews; and of the Egyptians, Gen 50:7; Ex 17:5; Ex 18:12; Ex 19:7; Joshua 24:31, elders of Israel, or of the people. Compare the principle of selection of heads of tens, fifties, etc., Ex 18:13, seventy being selected from a previous body of elders); compare... (Num 11:16, Num 11:24). Seventy are also mentioned in Ex 24:1, while in Jdg 8:14 seventy-seven are mentioned, although this might be taken to include seven princes. Probably the number was not uniform." (emphasis added). So the Bible is consistent with its message that only the government, state sanctioned officers were allowed to execute the death penalty in Israel.

"Hear and Fear"

God's wants the governments to deal with crime *his* way. God knows how much crime can ruin a nation, economically, socially, mentally and spiritually. The point God is making when it comes to crime is, "so shalt thou put the evil away from among you." (Deut 19:19). "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people." (Prov 14:34). The "evil" as it says, "The Greek version renders this 'the wicked man,' ...The phrase is of frequent occurrence in

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Deuteronomy, and if we are to understand that in all places where it occurs ‘the evil’ is to be understood of an *individual*, and to be taken in the masculine gender...There is really no such thing as wickedness in the world apart from some wicked being or person.” (Ellicott Commentary for English readers, emphasis added).

Consequently, in order for the death penalty to be the greatest possible deterrent, so the nations “...shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.” (Deut 19:20; Deut 13:11), God made the form of execution just as bad as the crime itself, so criminals will know that what they do to people, the same is going to come back to them, and think twice, three times before doing it, *knowing* what will happen if he or she gets caught.

The Difference between Right and Wrong

God says an “eye for an eye” life for life” etc... Now some may say, “Taking one man’s sight will not restore the sight of the other, so restitution is not a factor in this law. What purpose, then, does this kind of punishment serve?” Although punishment in the biblical system acted as a deterrent, it served a purpose much *more* important than that. The biblical system of punishment served to define the difference *between right and wrong*.

If there is no punishment, then there is no perceived difference between right and wrong. The results of wrong conduct are just as beneficial or desirable as the results of good conduct. If there are no degrees of punishment, then it may be said that one crime is no worse than another—that murder is no worse than shoplifting. If a man goes to jail for a year for shoplifting, and murderers are out on the street in the same length of time, what have we said about the value of human life? We have declared that a human life is of no more value than a sweater taken from a department store, some cosmetics stolen from a drug store, or a calculator tucked away in a pocket without paying. Crime cannot be defined without punishment, and degrees of crime cannot be defined without degrees of punishment.

Punishment may act as a brake on crime, but in addition to deterrent through fear, let us add deterrence by definition. Punishment says “This is wrong,” and tells us *how wrong it is*.

Seen in this light, the death penalty is essential, because it is the only way to define the evil of murder. Any lesser penalty *diminishes* the value of human life. No it will not bring the man’s eye or life back, but it does tell people in the nation what is right and wrong, and does give victims of crime a sense of satisfaction and closure knowing that vengeance was taken on the criminal, and justice was executed for the evil that he did to them.

Prophecies about Crime

God gives us many prophecies about the state of our nations today from *within*.

The foremost authority on Roman history, Edward Gibbon, lists five chief reasons for Rome’s fall! They were:

1. The breakup of homes

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

2. Rapid increase in taxes
3. A mad, reckless craze for pleasure
4. A buildup of gigantic armaments, when the real danger was the decadence of the people from within
5. The decay of religion.

The real enemy of our nations is its own people. Rome fell because of its problems from within.

Ezekiel, a prophet who was a watchman to the house of Israel, a type of the work of the church today to warn modern Israel about the coming judgments that were to befall them wrote, “Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness ... Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.” (7:11, 23). God told Ezekiel to make a “chain.” He told him to do so, because crime touches crime; there is no end to it, and they are all connected. Then God says, “Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and *there shall be none.*” (v.25). Crime destroys a nation from *within*.

The Apostle Paul wrote of the last days, and said, “This know also, that in the *last days perilous times shall come.*”

“For men shall be *lovers of their own selves*, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

“Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

“Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;” (2 Tim 3:1-4). What is the prime motive for crime? The love of one’s self. To satisfy every urge, and to feed it. To get what they can so they can satisfy themselves. The Word of God said men would become more and more CRIMINAL in their natures, selfish, greedy, lustful, pleasure mad, crazed with vanity, filled with hatred, envy, spite, contempt for law and authority. WAKE UP! Quit “kidding” yourself! YOU KNOW THESE THINGS ARE TRUE OF A BROAD MAJORITY OF OUR PEOPLE-NOT JUST A SELECT FEW!

God said, “My people are *destroyed for lack of knowledge*: because thou hast *rejected* knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: *seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God*, I will also forget thy children.

“As they were increased, so they sinned against me: *therefore* will I change their glory into *shame*.

“They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.” (Hosea 4:6-8).

Perhaps the WORST punishment God could devise for a grasping, hate-filled, lawless generation is to FORGET them-*to leave them to themselves*, suffering the natural results of their own evils! God does not “beat around the bush” about it. He identifies this nation to which He is speaking- and describes perfectly our national crimes and sins!

Jeremiah prophesied about the crime situation of our peoples: “*Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.*”

“For among my people are found wicked *men*: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

“As a cage is full of birds, so *are* their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

“They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, *they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.*

“Shall I not visit for these *things?* saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” (5:25-29). God said through our own crime, violence, graft and lawlessness, we would finally go the way of ancient Rome!

Notice what Micah said about our judiciary: “Hear this, I pray you, you heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that *abhor judgment*, and pervert all equity! ... The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for *money*: yet will they [pretend to] lean upon the Eternal, and say, Is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us ... But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Eternal shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

“And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up the mountain of the Eternal, and unto the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of *His ways*, and we will walk in His paths; for the LAW shall go forth of Zion and the Word of the Eternal from Jerusalem.

“And He shall JUDGE among many people, and *rebuke* strong nations afar off, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

“But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and *none shall make them afraid*: For the mouth of the Eternal of hosts hath spoken it” (Micah 3:9-12; 4:1-4). God condemns those who run our governments their way, and not *God’s* way. But as the prophecy says the Kingdom of God is going to come and will virtually be 100% crime free.

Then, and not until that time, the *family* will be restored to its God ordained place! Education will be universally available, and it will be of the highest possible caliber, covering the most essential subjects, and it will include discipline, as well as truthful, broad, balanced, truly inspirational teaching!

Children will be taught to *obey their parents*, to obey the commandment which says “Honor thy father and thy mother.” Divorce will be absolutely forbidden!

There will be no such thing as “racism,” for Almighty God will settle all the races according to their “old estates,” and each nation will excel according to its own talents, gifts, and special abilities. The millennial reign of Jesus Christ is described in many chapters in your Bible—not the least of which is Isaiah 11, where a picture of global peace is presented! No wonder Jesus Christ commands His people to pray “Thy Kingdom come!”

Yes, violent crime could be stopped if today’s leaders were converted, if they would but turn to the Word of God and the laws of God as their guide. *But since they will not do this*, it is going to require the return of Jesus Christ to rule this earth with a rod of iron in order to finally stop crime!

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Appendix

1. Some may argue, “Jesus told us not to judge one another?” The implication would be that this is an absolute prohibition. One can get the impression from modern conversation that the entire verse was meant to be a condemnation of reaching a negative evaluation of anyone for anything: “If you don't want to be judged, then don't judge,” or perhaps even, “God doesn't recommend that people make judgments.” That the Christian “is warned that it is not for him to...judge the moral deserts of other persons.”

However, such judgment is something which the Bible repeatedly commands and which Moses, Jesus, and Paul regularly do. Nonetheless, the Bible stresses that judicial decree within Israel must be fair and equitable. For example, “You shall appoint judges ... and they shall judge the people with righteous Judgment” (Deut.16:18). Jesus Himself commands us to “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24)

Does “righteous judgment” include the execution of a murderer? The Bible asserts this from beginning to end, without a single demur. The sentence is set by God's law, and a judge cannot have discretion in the matter.

So what did Jesus mean, when he said, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” (Matthew 7:1-2)?

Luke's Gospel says the same thing, “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.” (6:37). But does this mean that a Christian *who is in government* is not allowed to sentence someone to death?

There is one important reason that is expounded by the apostle Paul in Romans 2. The chapter begins with the same thought as Matthew 7: 1. “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whosoever you are that judges ... *for you that judge do the same things.*” Notice how one *cannot* judge another when *he does the same things*, and believes that what his brother is doing, no matter how evil is right! How can just judgment come from this?

Jesus said the same as Paul, he told his disciples, “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, *but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*”

“Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye?

“Thou *hypocrite*, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.” (Matthew 7:3-5). Notice, Jesus said when you see clearly; spiritually speaking with “righteous judgment” then you can judge your brother rightly. Jesus is speaking of *hypocritical* judgment *not* righteous judgment.

We are to judge and discern between right and wrong, using the Bible as our guide and authority.

The word “judge” is “krino.” It means:

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

- 1) to separate, put asunder, to pick out, select, choose
- 2) to approve, esteem, to prefer
- 3) to be of opinion, deem, think, to be of opinion
- 4) to determine, resolve, decree
- 5) to judge
- 5a) *to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong*
- 5a1) *to be judged, i.e. summoned to trial that one's case may be examined and judgment passed upon it*
- 5b) to pronounce judgment, to subject to censure
- 5b1) of those who act the part of judges or arbiters in matters of common life, or pass judgment on the deeds and words of others
- 6) *to rule, govern*
- 6a) *to preside over with the power of giving judicial decisions, because it was the prerogative of kings and rulers to pass judgment*
- 7) to contend together, of warriors and combatants
- 7a) to dispute
- 7b) in a forensic sense
- 7b1) to go to law, have suit at law” (Thayer’s definitions).

Vines says the same, “primarily denotes ‘to separate, select, choose;’ hence, ‘to determine,’ and so ‘to judge, pronounce judgment.’ ‘The uses of this verb in the NT may be analyzed as follows: (a) to assume the office of a judge, Matt. 7:1; John 3:17; (b) *to undergo process of trial*, John 3:18; 16:11; 18:31; Jas. 2:12; (c) to give sentence, Acts 15:19; 16:4; 21:25; (d) to condemn, John 12:48; Acts 13:27; Rom. 2:27; (e) to execute judgment upon, 2 Thess. 2:12; Acts 7:7; (f) to be involved in a lawsuit, whether as plaintiff, Matt. 5:40; 1 Cor. 6:1; or as defendant, Acts 23:6; (g) *to administer affairs, to govern*, Matt. 19:28; cp. Judg. 3:10; (h) to form an opinion, Luke 7:43; John 7:24; Acts 4:19; Rom. 14:5; (i) to make a resolve, Acts 3:13; 20:16; 1 Cor. 2:2” (p.336, emphasis added).

The Apostle Paul said, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?” (I Cor. 6:2-3.) We have to learn to judge *righteously* now - in this life - in order to properly prepare for the Kingdom of God. To help all Christians rightly judge between right and wrong using the perfect standard of God’s Word.

As for kings and rulers who are Christian? They are allowed to judge using “righteous judgment,” God’s judgments as he says in his law to use. *Unjust* judgment is what God is against for individuals and rulers alike. If this is not executed, then no one would know the difference between right and wrong.

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

2. Methods of Punishment.

Many of the crimes for which any biblical punishment is prescribed carry the death penalty. There are *two* methods of executing criminals found in the Bible. Two *other* methods are done *after* execution.

Eye for an Eye

The first and most frequent way of punishing a criminal was, “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot...Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him *again*...And thine eye shall not pity; *but* life *shall go* for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot...he shall surely pay ox for ox...beast for beast” (Ex 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21; Ex 21:36; Lev 24:18). If a person caused a crime, whatsoever he did, it was done to him, exact penalty for the crime. God says, “And he that killeth any man, shall surely be put to death” (Lev 24:17). How did he kill the person is determined. If a person pushed another person off a cliff, then the same was done to him etc...

As God says, “according to *their way* and according to *their doings* I judged them.” (Ezekiel 36:19). God judges this way and expects our governments to do the same.

When it comes to thieves, God says, “If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore *double*” (Ex 22:4). A person knows that if he gets caught has to repay double for what he took. This would stop crime almost immediately. People would think twice, three times before stealing anything. And if he can't pay it off he has to work it off for the person he stole from. No jails, no parole, just exact restitution, the criminal has to lose. Same goes with arson (see Ex 22:6).

Stoning

Stoning was the other mode of execution (Lev. 20:2, 27, 24:16; Num. 15:35; Deut. 13:11, 17:5, 21:21, 22:21.). As the survival of *vindicta publica*, it was and remained characterized by the active participation of the whole populace represented by the Elders who were the governing body (Lev. 24:16; Num. 15:35; Deut. 17:7; et al.) – they had to pelt the guilty one with stones until he died. Stoning were presumably the standard form of *judicial* execution in biblical times (Lev. 24:23; Num. 15:36; I Kings 21:13; II Chron. 24:21). But only for certain laws as we shall see.

Burning

Burning is mentioned as a mode of judicial execution it is prescribed in respect of two offenses only (Lev. 20:14, 21:9), but it seems to have been used to aggravate the punishment of stoning, the corpse being burned *after* execution (Josh. 7:25). It is also reported as a non-Israelite (Babylonian) punishment (Dan. 3:6).

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Hanging

Hanging is reported in the Bible only as either a mode of execution of non-Israelites who presumably acted in accordance with their own laws (e.g., Egyptians: Gen. 40:22; II Sam. 21:6–12; Philistines; and Persians: Esth. 7:9), or as a non-Israelite law imported to or to be applied in Israel (Ezra 6:11), or as an extra-legal or extra-judicial measure (Josh. 8:29). However, biblical law prescribes hanging *after* execution: every person found guilty of a capital offense and put to death had to be impaled on a stake (Deut. 21:22); but the body had to be taken down the same day and buried before nightfall, “for an impaled body is an affront to God” (v. 23).

Which is more merciful, the biblical way of execution or the modern way of lethal injection, gas chamber or electric chair?

Notice what this source says. This is a paper put together by lawyers from University of Houston Law center called, “Of God’s Mercy and the Four Biblical Methods of Capital Punishment: Stoning, Burning, Beheading, and Strangulation” by Irene Merker Rosenberg and Yale L. Rosenberg. They write, “According to a popular stereotype, the Old Testament deity is a jealous and vengeful God who decrees the death penalty for a large number and variety of offenses, some apparently trivial, at least to modern sensibilities. Furthermore, the death penalties prescribed by Jewish law--stoning, burning, beheading and strangulation--appear barbaric, especially in comparison to the seemingly sanitized, quick and painless procedure of death by lethal injection, the most commonly used method of execution in Execution by injection is, however, of relatively recent origin, having been instituted in this country less than three decades ago. During much of the twentieth century, the predominant manner of execution was the electric chair, which was in turn considered a humane alternative to hanging. *Yet it was a mode of killing that was not designed with the squeamish in mind.*” (pp.1-5, emphasis added). They discovered that the modern methods of execution are not so merciful after all. They write:

“[of lethal injection]... Nonetheless, ‘executions are difficult to carry out,’ including death by lethal injection. See Arif Khan & Robin M. Leventhal, Medical Aspects of Capital Punishment Executions, 47 Forensic Sci. 847 (July 2002). This article describes how the five methods of execution used in this country, lethal injection, electrocution, hanging, shooting squad, gas chamber, are actually administered. *The authors conclude that the ‘lethal injection method consisted of the longest duration of time in the ‘death chamber.’*” Id. at 849. Furthermore, lethal injection and electrocution took about the same amount of time between the start of execution and death. Id. Finally, lethal injection is also subject to ‘botched executions;’ see also Deborah W. Denno, 63 Ohio S.L.Rev. 63 (2002)(hereinafter Denno). Professor Denno *argues that ‘lethal injection also involves unnecessary pain, the risk of such pain, and a loss of dignity. She asserts that these failures seem to be attributed to vague lethal injection statutes, uninformed prison personnel, and skeletal or inaccurate lethal injection protocols.’* Professor Denno’s article explores these issues in depth; Robert Jay Lifton & Greg Mitchell, Who Owns Death 42-69 (2002) (describing the death penalties in detail); Ian Fisher, Merits of Lethal Injection Are Questioned by Its Foes, N.Y. Times, Feb.17, 1995, sec. B at p.5 (*describing botched lethal injections, including searching the prisoner’s body for 40 minutes for a clean vein, allergic reactions to the drugs, and a tube bursting, spraying the execution fluids toward the witnesses.*)” (footnote 3, pp.2-3, emphasis added).

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

“[of the electric chair]... As the Georgia Supreme Court observed in a recent decision finding that electrocution violated the state constitution’s cruel and unusual punishment clause, The autopsy reports and autopsy photographs prepared as part of the State’s execution protocol establish that some degree of burning of the prisoner’s body is present in every electrocution. . . . *The autopsies also reference the sloughing or ‘slippage’ of a large portion of the scalp and the skin at the back of the head and also on the legs caused by the execution . . . Two of the State’s experts testified that, while cardiac functioning is affected by the electricity, the primary mechanism of death . . . is the ‘denaturing’ or cooking of the brain from the heat created by the passing of electricity through the electrical resistance of the brain tissue . . . no evidence which indicated that a Georgia execution has yet involved the sparks, flames, and smoke that have plagued executions by electrocution outside of Georgia.*”

“Dawson v. State, 554 S.E.2d 137, 142 (Ga. 2001). See also Clive Stafford-Smith, *Killing the Death Penalty with Kindness* 18, in David R. Dow & Mark Dow, *Machinery of Death* (2002)(telling of a death row inmate who gave the author the following note which was in turn given to the client by a sadistic prison guard: When the executioner throws the switch that sends the electric current through the body, *the prisoner cringes from torture, his flesh swells and his eyes pop out. In some cases I have been told the eyeballs rest on the cheeks of the condemned. His flesh is burned and smells of cooked meat. When the autopsy is performed the liver is so hot it cannot be touched by human hand.*” (ibid, p.5, footnote 8, emphasis added). Does this sound merciful?

The heathen *tortured* people because of crimes against the state. The International Standard Bible Dictionary says, “Punishments of Foreign Origin: Besides these, which are to be regarded as the ordinary capital punishments, we read of some that were either **of foreign introduction or of an irregular kind**, such as: (1) *crucifixion* (which see); (2) *drowning* (Matt 18:6 parallel); (3) *sawing asunder or crushing* (2Sam 12:31; Heb 11:37); (4) *torturing* (1Chr 20:3; Heb 11:35); (5) *precipitation* (2Ch 25:12; Luke 4:29); (6) *suffocation* (2 Macc 13:4-8). The Persians are said to have filled a high tower a great way up with ashes, and then to have thrown the criminal into it, and continually stirred up the ashes by means of a wheel till he was suffocated (Rawlinson, *Ancient Monarchy*, III, 246). See also HEROD, II, 100.” (emphasis theirs). What we do today sounds no different than the ancients and their methods of justice.

God says let the punishment suit the crime, an “eye for an eye.” Not to overdo it, but execute *exact justice* for the crime, *not torture*.

What about stoning? Why stoning? If you notice, most offences when it comes to stoning were offences against *God*. *Stoning-because you cannot not physically hurt God in anyway*, a certain method was chosen by God to punish the person for his crime.

Notice the crimes that were punished for stoning were:

Idolatry, “Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever *he be* of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth *any* of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones...A man also or woman

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood *shall be* upon them.” (Lev 20:2, 27; see also Deut 17:1-5).

Blasphemy, “And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, *and* all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name *of the LORD*, shall be put to death.” (Lev 24:11, 14, 16).

Sabbath breaking, “And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.” (Numbers 15:32, 35).

False Prophets, “And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” (Deut 13:1, 10).

The Rebellious son, “If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and *that*, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them:

“Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place;

“And they shall say unto the elders of his city, ***This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.***

“And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.” (Deut 21:18-21). What are his crimes?

He is stubborn and rebellious. This means, “***For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.*** Because thou hast *rejected* the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.” (1 Sam 15:23; see also Deut 31:27). These were crimes against God, like the others.

Marriage, “If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her,” (Deut 21:13). This means that, “If a man took a wife, and came to her, and hated her, i.e., turned against her *after gratifying his carnal desires* (like Amnon, for example, 2Sam 13:15),” (K&D Commentary, emphasis added). He did not marry for love, but lust. He then tries to get out of it by lying (vv.14).

Proof is then shown that he did not lie (vv.15-17), so the man is penalized (vv.18-19).

“But if this thing be true, *and the tokens of virginity* be not found for the damsel:

“Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: *because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father’s house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.*” (vv.20-21). She was a virgin “betrothed” to a man, and she cheated on him before her marriage (see vv.23-24). To be “betrothed” meant, “was the act of engagement for marriage in Bible times and *was as binding as marriage in the Old Testament* (Gen 19:14)” (Holman Bible Dictionary, p.176). She is committed to him for marriage. And this can apply to the man as well as the woman, if he is found out as well.

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Why so harsh for this crime? Many seem to forget that breaking their commitment in Marriage is breaking their commitment to God. “*Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.*” (Malachi 2:14). Here the Scripture tells us explicitly that marriage is a covenant to which God is a witness. Since God does not break covenants (Lev. 26:40-45), the marriage covenant is all the more binding. *This means that what we do to our marital partner we do also to the Lord.* Christian commitment and marital commitment are two sides of the same covenant. For this reason, Malachi admonishes the people, saying: “So take heed to yourselves, and let none be faithless to the wife of his youth. ‘For I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel, and covering one’s garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts’” (Mal 2:15-16). Jesus said, “what God hath joined” (Matthew 19:6). “This means that when Christian couples exchange their marital vows in the presence of witnesses, *they are in actual fact uttering their vows of mutual commitment to God Himself.* At the deepest level, marriage is a covenant between a couple and God, because God is not only the witness but also the *author* of the marriage covenant.” (The Marriage Covenant, by Samuele Bacchiocchi, chapter 1, emphasis added). So again this sin has to do with God, and breaking our commitment to him.

So stoning was done for crimes against God. Stoning was chosen because you cannot hurt God *physically* in anyway, so an “eye for an eye” was out of the question. But a punishment had to be handed down-since you cannot hurt God physically, the method had to be as quick as possible.

But first notice, these crimes were done *not* because people “erred” in judgment. Or they sinned “ignorantly.” No! These were committed by people *who hated God and his laws!*

Numbers the 15th chapter deals with this, God says, “But the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously, *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

“Because he hath *despised the word of the LORD*, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity *shall be* upon him.” (30-31). Then an example was given for one who broke the Sabbath (vv.32-36). He sinned “presumptuously.” He “despised” God. But those who sinned in “ignorance” or “erred” were forgiven (see Numbers 15:1-29). So stoning was rarely done in Israel.

But is method of stoning a *quicker* death than the other ways of execution? Rabbi Aryeh Spero, author of “Push Back: Reclaiming Our American Judeo-Christian Spirit,” says, that the Bible speaks openly about stoning; however he said that the Judeo-Christian texts differ greatly from “the procedures we see today in Islamic countries.”

Rather than burying people in the group up to their necks and then stoning them for a long period of time in an effort to embarrass them, Spero says that the death penalty described and practiced in Jewish [Israelite] culture was a bit different.

“Any Biblical death penalty procedure had to be accomplished in one *instantaneous* stroke,” he explained.

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

“For while the death penalty may have been administered, *it was not done in a way to prolong agony or suffering*, nor in a manner of public humiliation that degraded the human being created in the image of God.”

This in mind, Spero said that there was no humiliation or entertainment value imbued by the stoning process. (*Article, Does the Bible Really Condone Stoning? Billy Hallowell*). Stoning as in the case of Stephen (Acts 7) was quick as possible and not prolonged. “...stoning was relatively quick; most victims would last only minutes...” (*Sex, Sacrifice, Shame, and Smiting: Is the Bible Always Right? By Donald Kraus, p.61*). But is it possible that stoning can be done instantaneously? Actually it can!

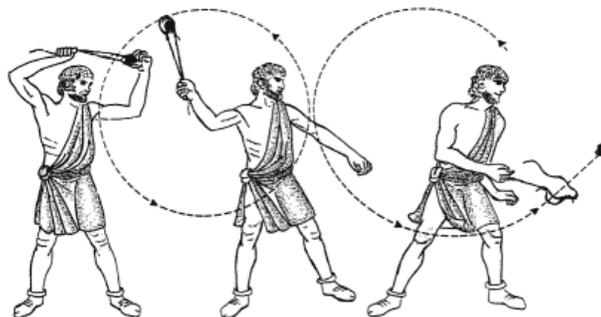
King David when he confronted Goliath, “And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five *smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd’s bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand:* and he drew near to the Philistine.” (1 Sam 17:40). Why did he choose stones? Because Goliath “defy the armies of the living God” (vv.26, 45), Blasphemy, one of the crimes against God that was punishable by stoning.

Then, “David put his hand in his bag, and *took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead;* and he fell upon his face to the earth.

“So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but *there was no sword in the hand of David*” (vv.49-50). Instantaneous death by stoning. This was like being in front of a firing squad.

Ellicott’s Commentary says, “Slinging stones had been brought among the Israelites to an *extraordinary perfection*. Many years before this time [of David] we read that in the tribe of Benjamin were ‘700 chosen men left-handed; every one could sling stones at an hair’s *breadth*, and not miss’ (Jdg 20:16)... A work by W. Vischer, on ‘Ancient Slings’ (Basel, 1866), quoted by Lange, speaks of slingers who could hit the part of the enemy’s face at which they aimed.” (emphasis theirs and ours).

“To some this has appeared perfectly improbable; *but we are assured by ancient writers that scarcely any thing could resist the force of the sling*. Diodorus Siculus, lib. v., c. 18, p. 287, edit. Bipont, says ‘The Baleares, in time of war, sling greater stones than any other people, and with such force, that they seem as if projected from a catapult’ (Clarke’s Commentary, emphasis added).



Capital Punishment is it Christian?

Slings were ancient weapons used in battle. Armies were run by the government. So was the execution of criminals. If the army used them, then so did the executioners and sling weapons seems to be a general weapon in Israel (1 Chron 3:25; 12:2; 2 Chron 26:14; Judges 20:15-16), just like the rifle today used by our governments.

In the time of the Exodus, Israel had the “weapons” for warfare (Deut 1:41) How do you think they battled Amelek? (Ex 17:8)? Now according to German archaeologist Dr Manfred Korfmann, writing in the journal *Scientific American*, the sling was in fact a very dangerous weapon that was widely used in warfare and was indispensable in many situations. It was used in Europe and the Near East from the Bronze Age until about the 17th century. So when God called for stoning, the sling was used for the execution of criminals, and Israel knew what God meant by it.

Sling stones were like firearms today. “Surprisingly, a good slinger hurled a stone as far and accurately as a good archer. Roman military texts recommended archery target practice at about 200 yards. Slingers are known to hurl their projectiles even farther, as much as 440 yards (quarter of a mile). As for accuracy, one ancient writer noted that the best slingers ‘would wound not merely the heads of their enemies but any part of the face at which they might have aimed.’ *Experiments demonstrate that missiles leave a sling in excess of 60 miles per hour.* One Roman writer noted that opponents in leather armor were in far greater danger from sling missiles than arrows. Even if the stone did not penetrate the armor, it was capable of *inflicting a fatal internal injury.*

“Unarmored bodies were easily penetrated by sling stones. In his classic medical treatise, Celsus included instructions *for extracting lead and stone sling missiles from the bodies of wounded soldiers.*

“While typical sling stones used by the Greek and Roman armies were the size of golf balls, different cultures appreciated different sizes. In fact, at some ancient Greek and Roman battle sites, archaeologists believe they can differentiate which sling stones were standard equipment for which army.”(Article; *To Sling or Not to Sling -That Was Never The Question*, by Gary Byers, emphasis added). *Ancient or modern firing squads, both are quick and instantaneous deaths.*

We read in the bible that stones were used as *weapons* in ancient times. God says about the invading armies, “They shall also bring up a company against thee, and *they shall stone thee with stones*, and thrust thee through with their swords.” (Ezekiel 16:40). Stones are projectiles. This source writes, “And, it must be further noted that technology *has not replaced stoning*, but only given us a *different form of it*, and on a much wider scale. While the biblically prescribed method of using natural stones against convicted criminals is no longer used, we now use ‘technologically advanced stones’ in everything from death penalties to total warfare. Hurling stones with the hand has been replaced *by hurling stones (bullets) through the barrel of a rifle*, or by hurling boulders (bombs) from cannons and airplanes.” (Article, *Biblical Stoning: “Barbarism,” or Righteous Punishment?* By Steve C. Halbrook, emphasis added). So stoning today can be done *by firing squad, quick and painless as possible.*

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

With these facts we can understand that death by stoning concerning the Israelites was quick and instantaneous. God cannot be harmed *physically*, so the death of a person for *crimes* against God had to be done as *quickly* as possible-this is why stoning was chosen.

The heathen way is barbaric prolonging it as much as possible humiliating the person. Other cultures used stoning not just the Israelites, “Stoning wasn’t unique to Israel. Humanists who decry stoning sanctioned by biblical law conveniently ignore stoning carried out by other ancient civilizations...[including] the Greeks” (Biblical Stoning: “Barbarism,” or Righteous Punishment? by Steve C. Halbrook). But they did it in a barbaric way, making the victim suffer excruciating pain.

What about burning? Many people believe this was burning people alive at the stake. But again this was the heathen way to execute criminals not God’s way.

Notice in the case of Judah, he said, “And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she *is* with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.” (Gen 38:24).

Bullinger says, “This was strictly in accordance with the Code of Hammurabi (157), which was then in force throughout Canaan.” (The Companion Bible, p.54). It was the law of the land of the Heathen government that was in charge, not the Hebrews.

Gill’s Commentary says, “*not that Judah can be thought to be a civil magistrate in a Canaanitish and Heathen city where he sojourned*, and as such pronounced this sentence on her at once, or even had the power of life and death in his own family; and besides Tamar was not in his, but in her own father’s house: but the sense seems to be, *that as he was a man of credit and esteem in the neighbourhood, and had an influence and interest in it*; he moved that she might be brought out of her father’s house, and take her trial before the civil magistrates, and be committed to prison until she was delivered, for it would have been barbarous, and contrary to the law and light of nature, to have burnt her when quick with child, and then indeed to be burnt to death, according to the usage of this country; ***and as we find adultery in later times was punished with this kind of death, even among Heathens, Jer 29:22***; as it was in Egypt in the times of Sesostrius the second (f); so Salaethus, prince of Croton in Italy, made a law that adulterers should be burnt alive, as Lucian (g) relates; as did also Macrinus the emperor, that those that were guilty of adultery should be burnt alive together, their bodies joined to each other (h): *and this criminal action of Tamar was judged adultery, because she was, of right, and according to a custom or law then in use...*” (emphasis added). He was just following what the law of the heathens in that city called for; it was not God’s law. Judah was just complying with what their laws said.

But burning is only used in two cases. The case of a priest’s daughter (Lev 21:9), and in case of incest (Lev 20:14). The Bible says that they “shall be burnt with fire.” *It does not say that was the means by which they died.* Another scripture reveals that people were burnt *after* execution. “And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, *after* they had stoned them with stones.” (Joshua 7:25). This was a case of Idolatry-Again a sin against God. So was the priest’s daughter playing the harlot. This does not always mean a woman sleeping around with many

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

men. In Deuteronomy, women that have sex before marriage are entitled to marry the person who they are sleeping with (see Deut 22:28-29). In this case it means idolatry since it is a priest's daughter it can mean it a religious sense. Playing the harlot in other scriptures means worshipping other Gods (see Jeremiah 2:20).

Incest just leads to degeneracy in the community, and to burn the bodies *after* execution is just and right.

3. King David, why was he not put to death?

King David was a man after God's own heart. He loved God, and his laws. But he sinned, He committed adultery, and murder with Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite. Why wasn't he put to death? Instead God spared his life.

As mentioned above crimes were punished by people who were unrepentant of their deeds. Not by those who "erred" or sinned in "ignorance." David when his sins were found out repented. Psalm 51 displays his repentant attitude, and God who knows every man's heart knew David was sorry, and he NEVER DID IT AGAIN. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me.

"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

"Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.

"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 51:1-10). Does this sound like a person who "despised the word of the Lord"? No! As I stated in this booklet above "Can courts show mercy?" Of course they can but mercy is extended to the judge and jury. God is the judge and he knew David was sorry for his sin, and repented fully of his crime. "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath *put away thy sin*; thou shalt not die." (2 Sam 12:13). God says, "for I am merciful, saith the LORD" (Jer 3:12). "and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." (Ex 33:19; 34:7).

But still because blood was spilt, David still lost something. He lost his child (v.14). This was according to David's judgment that his son died (v.5), not God's.

4. Other crimes punishable by death?

What of other crimes that do not involve physically hurting another person? One example, "And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast" (Lev 20:15). When the Bible says, "he shall surely be put to death" and specifics are *not* given like the case

Capital Punishment is it Christian?

with idolatry which commands stoning as the form of execution, then how are these people put to death? “The sword or spear as an instrument of punishment is named in the Law (Exo 19:13; Ex 32:27; Num 25:7 ff).” (ISBE under “punishments”). Your standard weapon was used to execute the death penalty. Today it would be the standard weapon of a rifle, or a revolver.