

Catholicism and the death penalty

For nearly all of its history, the Catholic Church commanded and encouraged the state to execute people in the name of God such as heretics and witches. If the Church is the continuation of Judaism it follows it is to blame for the murders by stoning of idolaters and heretics and adulterers and kidnappers. God commanded such to be destroyed and threatened Israel with retribution and death if it did not comply. The Church associates herself with all those crimes but can be evasive about it. The Church is clear that the Bible is written by God and men and so has no errors.

The Bible gives no hint that the laws of God commanding the killing of murderers, homosexuals and adulterers etc in the Old Testament were temporary civil laws. It does not say they were only state laws. If they are moral laws then they are still valid for today's Christians.

Read what Peter, Jesus' apostle said in the Acts of the Apostles. The context is how Jesus was supposedly murdered as a result of Jewish scheming. "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.'" Peter adds the command about being cut off to that text. In the Law, it does not appear beside that command but it does appear in relation to other subjects such as sabbath breakers. Cutting off appears in the Law of Moses which apparently refers to somebody being thrown out of the community and left to die in the wilderness. Most authorities regard it as referring to direct execution. Peter refers to a complete cut off which is clearly a euphemism for murdering them. Peter is endorsing Moses as commanding that those who turn to Jesus and then away from him must be executed. The method would have usually been stoning. Jesus referred to that verse about the prophet too. Peter by saying Moses and Jesus are both to be obeyed totally is indicating that both want rebel Christians put to death. He does not say it can be done but that it must be aimed for and done when possible. No sect ever claims it can just go out and execute as if the government was not there.

The Bible which God supposedly wrote says the killing must go on. The murderous laws are still scripturally valid.

Christian tradition definitely said they were valid today. Christian emperors such as Justinian ordered that a man who take a boy by force for sex is to be executed. Later Valentinian II decreed that men who have anal sex with men are to be burned to death, "All persons who have the shameful custom of condemning a man's body, acting the part of a woman's to the suffrance of an alien sex (for they appear not to be different from women), shall expiate a crime of this kind in avenging flames in the sight of the people".

A writer says, "There seems little doubt that the legislation of Justinian was strongly influenced by his Christian beliefs" (page 17, Sex, Priests and Secret Codes, The Catholic Church's 2,000 Year Paper Trail of Sexual Abuse. Thomas P Doyle. AWR Sipe. Patrick J Wall).

A man nailed to a cross told Jesus he deserved to die that way for his crimes. Jesus didn't sympathise but told him he would go to paradise that day. That was not an example of forgiveness. If you pay your price and are then blessed that is not forgiveness. Jesus gave him paradise for admitting he should have been crucified, See the Luke gospel 23.

The Bible says the person who sins shall die and Paul says sin earns death. Jesus said nobody will be saved from sin and death for it is impossible. But he softened this by saying it is impossible for man but if God helps then it is possible. So we deserve death and need mercy.

It is fanaticism to accept the Bible teaching that we all deserve to die by divine verdict and that God has sentenced us all to death.

Such a doctrine means if your faith becomes so weak and you want to kill somebody you will feel less disgusted about doing it for the only thing that would normally hold you back is the view that God must decide when life is to end. So it is the timing that is the problem not the killing.

When you murder a person you owe that person the punishment you deserve if you are really accountable for what you do and you are not driven by inner forces. You owe that person your death if you have free will. But life is an absolute value,

that is keeping alive is the main concern in life even above happiness, meaning that the concept of deserving is evil. Yet deserving is the basis of why we are supposed to need Jesus to save us. He had to save us for we deserved eternal death and eternal suffering.

Deserving suffering denies the absolute value of human life. You are more alive the happier you are. If human life is so precious every moment should be happy. Deserving undermines this for it implies you should suffer for the evil you did in the past. Deserving then contradicts the absolute value of life this way too. An obvious problem is that we can't let everybody get away with doing wrong. But we ought to for the reason that they deserve only happiness for what they are. However, we are unable to do this for we need to protect the innocent from the attacks of evildoers. What the evildoers deserve is not important. The doctrines of eternal punishing and us deserving it say it is so we reject these doctrines as doctrines of hate. The Church teaches that man not God causes sin and death and evil by misusing his free will. When life is the absolute value it is obvious that the main concern about free will is that it give you the chance to do something to avoid dying young or tragically for though life is an absolute value your life is the most absolute value to yourself because you experience it and are totally sure you exist while you are a bit less sure that the people around you are conscious beings for you are not them. Babies don't have this chance meaning that the free will excuse discriminates against them and insults them. It implies they are not persons or as valuable as other people. As long as the Church holds these tenets we see it as a force for inhumanity.

Recent developments

In 1952, Pope Pius XII went, "Even when there is question of a person condemned to death, the state does not take away the *right* of the individual to life. It is then reserved to the public authority to deprive the condemned person of the benefit of life in expiation for his guilt, after he himself, by his crime, has already deprived himself of his right to life. (Acta Apostolicae Sedis XLIV (1952), p. 787)

The infallible Council of Trent decreed: "[well founded is] the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty."

Catholicism warns that the death penalty is wrong if the country never invites the criminal to repentance before God or let him have access to believers to help him reach repentance. How the Church can expect anybody to think it believes in separation of Church and state with a teaching like that is beyond the wisest of us. The Church says that the death penalty may be imprudent in any particular nation but the fact remains that it is Catholic doctrine that the state has the right to exercise the death penalty in principle. When the Church condemns it is concerned about abuses of the principle. Pius XII declared: "Even in the question of the execution of a man condemned to death, the state does not dispose of the individual's right to life. It then falls to the public authority to deprive the condemned man of the good of life in expiation of his fault after he, by his crime, has already deprived himself of his right to life."