

CATHOLICISM AND TORTURING HERETICS

<http://www.catholicintl.com/qa/2004/qa-aug-04.htm#Question%2026>

Note: The Same Source says that the Church has the right to use torture to destroy heresy. Question 41.

Christians are usually aware that the Old Testament which Jesus treated as his authority commands the murder by stoning of fortunetellers, idolaters, homosexuals, and many other classes of sinners. It is argued that God deals with those sins now by offering mercy so we don't have to practice them. It is like, "The commands are right but are just not to be practiced."

Christians have argued that God made brutal laws just because if he didn't please a brutal people he would have lost them completely. John Calvin, the great Protestant reformer, said that God had to condescend to the level of the Jews be able to manage them. He would have seen that God didn't attack polygamy or slavery and taken those as examples. Jesus said that God only let Israel have divorce because it was too stubborn to do without it. Calvin used the condescension excuse to account for the horrific parts of the Bible where God urges the people to be draconian in their administration of his Law. This excuse is used to explain why Christians do not need to keep the nasty rules. It is invalid and wholly unconvincing for there has always been and will always be nations that need the drastic treatment Israel needed. Calvin saw himself as a reformer of apostate Christianity - meaning it was worse than Israel. At least Israel was bad before the saviour came! According to Calvin, Christianity had the perfection of truth and yet the people largely spat on it. Calvin had no real answer - the answer he gave is actually an incitement to the Church to restore the malevolent rules.

The law of Moses never sees itself as a necessary evil. It sees itself as full of justice and truth. God never says the law is formulated so severely JUST because any leniency would mean the people would take advantage. The main thought is that the law is good to be so severe. It is not a regrettable necessity. It is good. However it is clear that the law does forbid lenient interpretations. God forbade any tampering even with the smallest rules.

The Psalms virtually worship the law by saying how perfect it is.

The notion that the law had to be very brutal implies that something like it will need to be put in place again when people get too out of control.

The notion that the law has to be very brutal implies that there is nothing wrong with barbaric deterrents.

The notion that the law is about justice or love more than control implies that it should not be done away and cannot be done away with.

Perhaps more importantly, the Old Testament never says that certain sinners people are to be destroyed by stoning for any other reason than that they are evil. In other words, its just right. The Law of Moses didn't make it right to kill these people. It said it only RECOGNISED that it was right. God told the people that the Law was in their mind and heart and whole being and how could it be if it didn't make sense or didn't claim to be rational?

Jesus challenged the Jews for waiving the death penalty if parents wanted a disobedient son stoned to death. Paul said gay sex deserves death. There were converted homosexuals in Corinth. But this has nothing to do with showing the death penalty was abolished by God. The law of Moses granted forgiveness to people who became members of God's people. If they engaged in gay sex or adultery afterwards then they were stoned.

If you abhor torture and murder you would be out of Christianity like a shot.

