

The death penalty: a necessary evil

Law, Capital Punishment



The Death Penalty: a Necessary Evil Life is the most wonderful gift that God gives us. He also gives us the power to do what we wish with that life. We can keep it and guard it, or we can take it away. It follows that murder is the worst crime anyone could ever commit. It is a crime that no one can ever make right because once you take a life away you can never give it back. Penalties exacted from criminals are made to fit the crimes committed. The worst crime possible should therefore receive the worst penalty possible. That penalty is the death penalty. Take, for example, the case of a man who is caught shoplifting. He does not deserve the same punishment as someone who is convicted of assault and battery. Most people would have no problem agreeing with this. Yet many of these same people believe that a cold blooded killer deserves the same life sentence as a convicted kidnapper who did not kill his prisoner. Granted these are both serious offenses, but our system of law works by degrees of seriousness. The mental damage done to that prisoner can be turned around, but the life taken away by the murderer can never be given back. They should therefore be given a harsher punishment than life in prison. In terms of justice, we should all get what we deserve. One argument against the death penalty is that the bible tells us not to murder. If this includes all people it should include the government. However, the death penalty is not quite the same as murder. It is an exacting of justice. Consequently, the Bible also says, An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. So it could also say a life for a life as well. The government also has rights that we as citizens do not have. As Mayor Ed Koch says in his essay on the death penalty, The execution of a lawfully condemned killer is no more an act of murder than is legal imprisonment an act of kidnapping.

S(Koch, p. 318) People who are convicted of murder more often than not have more crimes than just that one murder under their belt. Their mental state allows them to commit horrible acts and not feel guilty about them. There is not much proof than anyone can change this mind set. Say, for instance, that one of these said murderers is charged with life in prison. In jail they make the effort to have a good behavior. Within twelve years they are out on the streets only to kill again. Or maybe even worse, someone has been charged with multiple life sentences and there is no possible way to get out of prison. Because this is the worse punishment they can have they are in effect given a license to kill whomever they can get their hands on in prison. The death penalty needs to be around as an option for those cases in which the criminally is likely to kill again if ever given the chance. The death penalty also has the potential to become a very powerful deterrent against acts of murder. Life in prison is almost better than some of the lives that these criminals lead. At least they are fed and kept out of the rain. Death, however, is a real punishment no matter how you look at it. And even if someone wanted to die, there are easier ways of doing that than being put on death row. The problem is that not enough of these executions occur to be of any real use as a deterrent. In fact, there was one year in which more people were executed in Florida than in any other state and there homicide rate went up while in the rest of America it went down (Bruck, p. 319). Obviously with the numbers of executions actually taking place (in Florida it was eight people), they can not do much to stop people from killing. The chance of them getting the death penalty is far too unlikely. There is finally the problem of innocent people getting executed. No one will say that this

does not happen because it does. It does not occur very often, but even one innocent person who is executed is a terrible tragedy. However, there are most likely people serving a life sentence who are innocent as well. It is true that these people have more time to prove themselves innocent, but this does not always happen. Our system of law is an imperfect one. Bad judgements are made all the time, but they cannot be helped. It is better to run the risk of executing an innocent person than to abolish the death penalty and run the risk of so many more people being murdered by those who get out of jail or kill inside the prisons. Death in any form is a horrible thing. Executions are not in any way exempt from this statement. Anyone who witnesses an execution will tell you that it is horrible, but sometimes we are forced to choose between two evils. When these times occur we have to do our best to choose the lesser evil. The death penalty is such an evil. There is an obvious purpose for its existence and until we can find a better substitute, one that is an even lesser evil, we need to keep the death penalty alive.