

Capital Punishment Shows Respect for Life

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Now that we've executed the 1000th murderer since 1976, during which time 600,000 murders have been committed, according to the Justice Department, a few comments on the subject are in order. I support capital punishment out of respect for human life. Sounds kind of weird, doesn't it? Yet that's the very reason it was instituted: "Whosoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For [here's the reason] in the image of God He made man."

If man didn't bear God's image, it would be no big deal to take his life, as famous social Darwinists, who don't have their own system of morality, hold. As the famous atheist evolutionist Robert Ingersoll, who believed that nothing was inherently immoral, wrote: "Morality is born of the instinct of self-preservation. Murder will be regarded as a bad thing as long as the majority object to be murdered." (1) It would be just as bad to take the life of an animal as a human, as PETA holds, but if we respect the divine image in human life, we must appreciate the foundation of the death penalty—respect for human life.

Many say it's not a deterrent, and I agree, the way we practice it. Out of every 1000 murders in Texas, let's say that 600 of the perpetrators are apprehended, 200 reject a plea bargain and go to trial, 100 are found guilty, and 20 are actually sentenced to death. After all the appeals, 14-24 years later, 5 of them are actually executed. By then, the victim's family and the witnesses are dead, and the witnesses, judge and jury are all in nursing homes. Nobody remembers who the perpetrator was. Nope, not much deterrence.

But what if the punishment was much closer to the crime? One reliable source said, "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil." You don't have to believe the Bible to believe this. When you're on a trip and see warnings to reduce speed in a construction area, what does every single driver do when they see a patrolman parked on the shoulder with the engine running? Even dim morons slow down, don't they? They know if they blow on through the area at high speed, the punishment will be swift and sure! There is a deterrent value to speedy punishment! The same thing is true of capital punishment. If carried out swiftly, the deterrent value will return.

When I lived in Washington State, one murderer, Mitchell Rupe, who stabbed mother and daughter bank employees to death in front of many witnesses. After he was caught with the blood still dripping from his hunting knife, he was found guilty and was duly sentenced to death by hanging. Rupe then used his commissary privileges to buy Twinkies and soon raised his weight to 400 pounds, at which point his lawyer successfully argued that hanging such an obese man would result in his decapitation, which was surely cruel and unusual punishment. The Twinkie Defense worked, and decades later, Rupe is still alive, and the state is stymied! I couldn't resist, and wrote the local liberal rag, and suggested the following \$25 solution:

"Out of respect for human life, particularly that of Mitchell Rupe's victims, and because our criminal justice system seems to be outwitted by Rupe's weight-gaining ploy, I submit the following economical solution for hanging obese death row inmates."

"Instead of having Rupe stand on the trapdoor underneath the large eyebolt in the ceiling, simply let him stand beside the trap door with the noose around his neck. Have the rope go up over a large pulley attached to the eyebolt, then down to a 250-pound weight (sand would do nicely) resting on the trap door. The executioner could open the trapdoor as before, and regardless of Rupe's weight, he would be hung as a 250-pound man. Same executioner, same rope, same eyebolt, same trapdoor, same price, except for the \$25 pulley. I imagine we could even find a citizen to supply that to the state."

Of course, Seattle Pravda wouldn't publish that one, and the resulting delay in his execution hasn't resulted in much deterrence to others. On the other hand, it shows no more respect for

the life of that mother and daughter than if they had been feral cats. I'm betting my solution would fly in Amarillo. Every physicist at Pantex would vouch for the mechanics of it. The Twinkie Defense wouldn't get far in Texas.

When I retired and came back to the Panhandle, all my friends teased, "How come you're leaving God's Country and moving back to Satan's Sandbox?" For one reason among many, it's so nice to be back where common sense still exists.

(1) Ingersoll, Robert, Works, VII, p. 211
