

Murder

Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Partial translation



Murder

*"... should anyone deliberately take another's life, him also shall ye put to death... Should ye condemn the arsonist and the murderer to life imprisonment, it would be permissible according to the provisions of the Book. He, verily, hath power to ordain whatsoever He pleaseth."*¹

"As to the question regarding the soul of a murderer, and what his punishment would be, the answer given was that the murderer must expiate his crime: that is, if they put the murderer to death, his death is his atonement for his crime, and following the death, God in His justice will impose no second penalty upon him, for divine justice would not allow this."²

"Moses lived in the wilderness of Sinai where crime necessitated direct punishment. There were no penitentiaries or penalties of imprisonment. Therefore, according to the exigency of the time and place it was a law of God that an eye should be given for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It would not be practicable to enforce this law at the present time--for instance, to blind a man who accidentally blinded you. In the Torah there are many commands concerning the punishment of a murderer. It would not be allowable or possible to carry out these ordinances today. *Human conditions and exigencies are such that even the question of capital punishment--the one penalty which most nations have continued to enforce for murder--is now under discussion by wise men who are debating its advisability.* In fact, laws for the ordinary conditions of life are only valid temporarily. The exigencies of the time of Moses justified cutting off a man's hand for theft, but such a penalty is not allowable now."³

"...merely the fundamental principles of the punishments for murder ... given in the Kitab-i-Aqdas. Willful murder is to be punished either by capital punishment or life imprisonment. Such matters as degrees of offense and whether any extenuating circumstances are to be taken into account, and which of the two prescribed punishments is to be the norm are left to the Universal House of Justice to decide in light of prevailing conditions when the law is in operation..."⁴

1. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 62

2. Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, sec. 152, pp. 179

3. Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 365

4. Universal House of Justice, Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-86



"Bahá'u'lláh states that the determination of the degree of penalty, in accordance with the seriousness of the offence, rests with the House of Justice (Q and A 49). The punishments for theft are intended for a future condition of society, when they will be supplemented and applied by the Universal House of Justice." ⁵

"In the Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh has given death as the penalty for murder. However, He has permitted life imprisonment as an alternative. Both practices would be in accordance with His Laws. Some of us may not be able to grasp the wisdom of this when it disagrees with our own limited vision; but we must accept it, knowing His Wisdom, His Mercy and His Justice are perfect and for the salvation of the entire world. If a man were falsely condemned to die, can we not believe Almighty God would compensate him a thousandfold, in the next world, for this human injustice? You cannot give up a salutary law just because on rare occasions the innocent may be punished." ⁶



Babi Dispensation

The Bab forbade killing any soul. Condemned not only those who killed but also those who supported it, approved it, remained silent when they could have prevented it. Killer to pay eleven thousand gold mithqals to the heirs of the one who was killed. Killer will enter Hell after his death, and God will never forgive him. But if he follows these divine limits, the punishment destined for him will be lightened ⁷



Islamic Dispensation

"On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. Then although there came to them Our messengers with clear signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land." ⁸

"And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell wherein shall he abide forever, and Allah's wrath shall be on him and He curses him and prepares for him a mighty punishment." ⁹

⁵. Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 70

⁶. Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 86

⁷. See Arabic Bayan, Wahid XI, Chapter XVI

⁸. The Holy Qur'an, The Holy Qur'an, Al Ma'idah 5:32

⁹. The Holy Qur'an, Al-Nisa 4:93

“O you who have believed, prescribed for you is legal retribution for those murdered – the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But whoever overlooks from his brother anything, then there should be a suitable follow-up and payment to him with good conduct. This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. But whoever transgresses after that will have a painful punishment.”¹⁰



Christian & Jewish Dispensation

“Thou shalt not kill”¹¹

“Whoever takes a human life surely be put to death”¹²

“Anyone who {intentionally} strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death.”¹³



¹⁰. The Holy Qur'an, The Holy Qur'an, Al Baqarah 2:178

¹¹. The Holy Bible, Exodus 20:13

¹². The Holy Bible, Leviticus 24:17

¹³. The Holy Bible, Exodus 21:12-14