
CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Ancient scriptures indicate that capital punishment is an appropriate penalty for murder. God said to Noah, "And whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for man shall not shed the blood of man" (JST Gen. 9:12). And to Moses the Lord said: "He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death" (Lev. 24:17). Thus it is clear that when the civil and religious authorities were combined, as in the days of the Old Testament prophets, capital punishment was the directed result.

In modern times with the separation of church and state, the power to take physical life is reserved to the state. Modern revelations do not oppose capital punishment, but they do not direct its imposition to civil government. In the same revelation where the Lord instructed the Prophet Joseph SMITH, "And again, I say, thou shall not kill; but he that killeth shall die," the Lord made the application of capital punishment contingent on the laws of civil government: "And it shall come to pass, that if any persons among you shall kill they shall be delivered up and dealt with according to the laws of the land . . . and it shall be proved according to the laws of the land" (D&C 42:19, 79). In a headnote to the published account of this revelation, the Prophet specified the revelation embraced "the law of the Church," which might indicate that even when capital punishment does not result from murder the murderer dies as to things pertaining to the Spirit.

The FIRST PRESIDENCY and the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES affirmed this position against murder in an official declaration dated December 12, 1889, written in response to rumors perpetrated by enemies of the Church that it taught its members that they were not bound by the laws of the United States. Included in that official declaration is the proclamation "this Church views the shedding of human blood with the utmost abhorrence" (MFP 3:183).

Church leaders have frequently made statements consistent with the scriptures and declarations quoted above. Elder Orson F. Whitney said in the October 1910 general conference, "To execute a criminal is not murder" (CR, Oct. 1910, p. 51). Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, "Mortal man is not authorized, except in imposing the requisite death penalties for crimes, to take the blood

of his fellow beings under any circumstances" (McConkie, p. 257).

In summary, capital punishment is viewed in the doctrines of the Church to be an appropriate penalty for murder, but that penalty is proper only after the offender has been found guilty in a lawful public trial by constitutionally authorized civil authorities.

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CARTHAGE JAIL

The old jail in the town of Carthage, Illinois, seat of Hancock County, was the site of the MARTYRDOM OF JOSEPH AND HYRUM SMITH on June 27, 1844, by a mob of approximately 150 men. Today it is a HISTORICAL SITE of the Church and serves as a memorial to prophets of God who suffered martyrs' deaths.

The jail was built in 1839. Constructed of native red limestone, the two-story rectangular gable-front building measures twenty-nine by thirty-five feet. Like other county jails in Illinois, Carthage Jail was built to incarcerate petty thieves and debtors and to serve as a temporary holding place for violent criminals. It housed a debtor's room in the northwest corner of the first floor, and a dungeon, or "criminal cell" on the second floor, north side. There was also a living area for the jailer's family that included a kitchen, a dining room, and bedrooms. The cells were dark and generally foul-smelling and had only meager makeshift furnishings.

Joseph SMITH, Hyrum SMITH, and several other LDS leaders were incarcerated in Carthage Jail on June 25, 1844, to answer charges stemming from the destruction of the press used to print the anti-Mormon newspaper *Nauvoo Expositor*. During their three-day confinement they sought, through letters and personal appeals—even to the governor, then in Carthage—for an impartial reso-