

8. In your opinion, does the news media tend to promote national loyalty?

**DR. KUHN**

In more recent times, Yes. There was a period (in the late 'sixties) in which the media gave unconscionable and senseless publicity to those determined to undermine our nation. Self-declared advocates of violence received at that time an undeserved rostrum for the spread of their venom against the United States, frequently under circumstances which lent credibility to their outpourings of irrational hate. In more recent times, these are being left by the media to the oblivion to which their lack of any reasoned program entitles them.

**MR. ANGGELIS**

There were times in recent years when the thought disturbed me that some of the news media were more interested in sensationalism than in national loyalty or an intelligent and fair presentation of the news. I believe that the American people need to be very alert in their acceptance of interpretations of the news, and they must be outspoken to all the news media about any alleged misrepresentation of the news, especially on such vital matters as national security and loyalty.

**DR. SEAMANDS**

Taken as a whole, yes.

### **GENERAL TOPIC: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**

1. Would you approve legislation to reinstate capital punishment?

**DR. KUHN**

With my heart, I am opposed to capital punishment. For a number of years my head has followed this opposition, particularly as the data showed that most executions were those of one of three classes, the black, the poor, or the friendless—or a combination of these. The exposure of the uneven application of this penalty caused a reaction in our public attitudes which is not only understandable, but laudable.

Meanwhile trends have developed which make me pause. Life imprisonment is now almost a joke; those with such sentences are eligible for parole after a very few years—usually seven or eight. The amount of repetition of criminal behavior, and the number of cases of those who have killed wantonly and senselessly, and who are now under “life sentence” make us wonder: will Sirhan Sirhan (a professed hater) and Richard Speck (murderer of eight nurses) shortly be out on parole?

What of the men who recently killed six persons, three in Lexington (Kentucky) and three in Falmouth? These were, if I understand correctly, **already** subject to life imprisonment for former offenses. As of now, the murder of these six (or of another dozen!) could add nothing to the penalty assessed against them.

I have come, reluctantly, to the position that, apart from any possible deterrent effect of the possibility of capital punishment, the safety of society seems to demand that certain types of persons will need to be eliminated permanently from society. This will continue to be the case, **until and if** our present penal system (based upon incarceration alone) becomes serious about placing safeguards against the assaults upon society which lurk as potential so long as selected and violence-prone persons are eligible for release after short terms.

MR. ANGELIS

As much as I regret to admit it, yes. It appears to me that capital punishment is necessary for certain specified high crimes. I do not recall ever reading anywhere in the scriptures either in the Old or the New Testament that God has told us there should not be government, that there should not be prisons, that there should not be courts, that there should not be punishment for violent actions against humanity.

DR. SEAMANDS

Yes.

2. If so, should the death penalty be given for crimes other than wilful murder?

DR. KUHN

I assume that by "wilful" the questioner intends premeditated murder, usually classed legally as "first degree murder". To this list, I would reluctantly add the following: for kidnapping leading to a serious threat upon the victim for purposes of extortion; the highjacking of a passenger airline; and clearly-demonstrated acts of treason.

MR. ANGELIS

Yes. Murder is not in and of itself the worst crime that a person can commit against another. There are such things as rape, severely beating to the point of death, forcibly entering a man's house and committing a serious felony, etc.

DR. SEAMANDS

Yes, kidnapping, hi-jacking (because of heavy risk to lives); new forms of crime may arise, like the latter, which would need it.

3. Is the threat of capital punishment a deterrent to crime?

DR. KUHN

The data at this point are inconclusive and can be used either way. In general, I doubt whether crime statistics, taken over a short period of time or within (say) a state, yield much evidence either way. The variables are too many. But viewing the question psychologically, I would judge that the possibility of capital punishment ought to deter relatively sane persons, capable of forethought, from certain kinds of crimes. Certainly the criminal already subject of "life" imprisonment feels no deterrent in present practice, since even multiple murder cannot materially affect the penalties to which he will be subject.

MR. ANGELIS

I believe that it is. This does not mean that it would eliminate serious crime, but I do believe that punishment commensurate with the act, if it is carried out and adhered to, would be a deterrent in an overwhelming majority of the cases. There are some violent acts committed by persons who are not mentally responsible. However, in these instances, incarceration for treatment is appropriate.

DR. SEAMANDS

Yes, I think the problem now cannot be isolated from the whole breakdown of our courts.

4. Does capital punishment constitute "cruel and unusual" punishment?

DR. KUHN

It is not possible to avoid the possibility of **cruelty** in the punishment, of any kind, for crime. Certainly **serious** life imprisonment is cruel; certainly solitary confinement is cruel. Apparently the intent the framers of our Constitution had in mind was not the forbidding of punishments which produce discomfort; what was intended was the prevention of types of physical torture typical of dictatorial lands—or of the lynching band.

The term "unusual" is ambiguous; any punishment is "unusual" when it has not been employed for a time. While I have personally no stomach for the execution of any person, however criminal, (and I may be accused of gross inconsistency here) I doubt whether capital punishment as employed in civilized lands falls within this category — although any measure intended to terminate a human life involves inevitable violence upon his person.

MR. ANGELIS

No. I believe that cruel and inhuman punishment is taking into

custody the body of a person who has been convicted of crimes and abusing the body and mind of that person during his lifetime. Incarceration and capital punishment are not cruel and inhuman treatment.

DR. SEAMANDS

No.

5. What major insights does your profession give you concerning the question of capital punishment?

DR. KUHN

A specialized aspect of my profession is the study of Social Ethics. In this discipline-within-a-discipline, I am exposed to many and varied points of view and have access to sociological studies germane to the question of capital punishment. As an ethicist, I am committed to the proposition that God is Lord of Life and Lord of Death, and that the New Testament does not offer a clear mandate to capital punishment, nor a clear denial of its legitimacy. I feel it is one of the questions which the Almighty has left open to the (frightening) power of human choice, and that the issue must be settled upon the grounds of mingled compassion for the offender and compassion for society when violent men place its security in jeopardy.

MR. ANGGELIS

My experience in dealing with many hardened criminals convinces me that capital punishment effects their thinking and actions. These hardened criminals have said to me that "life is very precious to me". Therefore, the fact that they realize that capital punishment will not be met has naturally influenced their actions.

DR. SEAMANDS

Nothing special from my profession.

### **GENERAL TOPIC: ABORTION**

1. Is the practice of abortion compatible with the general Christian concern for reverence for life?

DR. KUHN

If we accept the position that human life is sacred, then we must agree that human life ought to be protected. We believe, further, that human life ought to be protected at the times at which it is most vulnerable. Among these times are: in old age, during women's pregnancy, and in pre-natal life. If the Christian conscience is exercised to protect the