

*Capital punishment is
a relic of Jewish barbarity*



First published in *Lucifer*, Vol. VI, No. 34, June 1890, p. 335. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (CAPITAL PUNISHMENT) XII pp. 237-38. Frontispiece by Joshua Aquino.

Having read with much interest in *Theosophical Siftings*¹ the article by Dr. Franz Hartmann on “Capital Punishment,” I venture to ask your opinion on the subject. I have long been sure that it is both useless and wrong to put murderers to death — convinced by the same reasons which Dr. Hartmann puts so cogently. Moreover, I have often maintained that since two wrongs do not make a right, matters cannot be mended by killing the man who has taken the life of another. Hence I feel that should I be called to serve on a jury in such a trial, I must either declare my views at the outset, which might result in the choice of a “hanging” jurymen in my place, or serve with the intention of not convicting the accused of wilful murder, no matter how guilty he might be proved. If that course were only to result in keeping the criminal in custody for the rest of his natural life, my conscience would be clear; but, as it might easily set him again at liberty, I feel in a dilemma. Will you kindly say in your next issue what your opinion is, and help perhaps more than one.

PUZZLED STUDENT

We are equally with yourself opposed to capital punishment, so that your difficulty becomes our own. In the first place the “head” only of the jurymen has to decide whether or not the accused has committed murder, and this is all the so-called “law” requires of him. Practically, however, since the jurymen has, or ought to have, a “heart,” the law neglects an important factor in the problem, for if it punishes murder with death, the jurymen, in deciding for a verdict of guilty, of necessity becomes an accessory in a fresh murder. But the “heart” of the people is beginning to protest against this “eye for an eye” code and is refusing to render evil for evil. Capital punishment is nothing but a relic of Jewish barbarity. So that we are of opinion that this feeling should be fostered by open protest on every occasion, and by a refusal to participate in such half-human proceedings. The true physician cures the disease, and does not kill his patient. But we are afraid that the murder-doctors are in the majority for the moment, so that we can only *protest*. — [EDS.]

¹ [Vol. III, 1890-91]