



A Christian Ethical Dilemma: Is the Death Penalty for Drug Dealers a Solution?

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Abstract

This study examines the Christian ethical dilemma surrounding the application of the death penalty for drug dealers in Indonesia. Although Law No. 35/2009 stipulates capital punishment for major narcotics crimes, drug abuse rates remain high, raising questions about its effectiveness. From a Christian ethical perspective, the issue is contentious—while the Old Testament supports retributive justice for grave offenses, the New Testament emphasizes love, forgiveness, and opportunities for repentance. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with normative-theological and legal frameworks, this research analyzes theological arguments, legal provisions, and moral implications of capital punishment in drug-related crimes. Findings reveal that while proponents view the death penalty as a deterrent and a means of protecting society, opponents argue it contradicts Christian values of grace and rehabilitation, risks irreversible injustice, and fails to address root causes. The study concludes that a rehabilitative and restorative justice approach, aligned with Christian principles of love and justice, offers a more holistic and humane alternative for addressing drug trafficking in Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, there are frequent cases of law violations that contradict social, religious, and legal norms. These violations include various forms of crime, ranging from criminality, deprivation of life, terrorism, drug trafficking, to murder. Each form of lawlessness has a serious impact on society, both in the fields of security, health, and morality that affect the next generation of the nation in violation of human rights.

Especially in Indonesia, drug trafficking has become a serious problem involving various layers of society, ranging from adolescents to adults. Based on data from the National Narcotics Agency (BNN), as many as 2.2 million Indonesian teenagers are involved in drug abuse, and this figure is predicted to continue to increase every year, indicating the failure of existing law

enforcement efforts¹. This shows that although law enforcement against drug trafficking has been taken seriously, it has not been effective enough in curbing drug abuse. This worsens the national situation and adds to the complexity of handling the drug problem in Indonesia. Therefore, drug trafficking not only destroys individual lives, but also threatens national security and the health of the younger generation, who are the future of the nation. The cause of this phenomenon is driven by socio-economic factors, such as poverty and lack of access to education and decent work, unemployment, which make some people, especially those from lower socio-economic groups, vulnerable to getting involved in drug trafficking as an attempt to get out of financial problems².

The negative impacts of drug trafficking include increased crime rates, the breakdown of social relationships within families, as well as huge economic losses due to reduced labor productivity of those involved in drug abuse. In addition, victims of drug abuse are often young people who are vulnerable and impressionable, worsening social conditions in Indonesia³.

To address this problem, the Indonesian government stipulated the death penalty for drug traffickers through Law No. 35/2009 on Narcotics, which is expected to provide a deterrent effect to perpetrators of this extraordinary crime. The death penalty is considered the most firm and effective solution to deal with drug trafficking, which on a large scale can cause moral and physical destruction to society. However, even though the death penalty has been implemented in Indonesia, the rate of drug abuse still has not shown a significant decrease. According to the Panel of Constitutional Judges, the death penalty does not contradict the right to life stipulated in the 1945 Constitution, taking into account the importance of protecting the public from the damaging effects of drugs. Therefore, the application of the death penalty is considered legitimate and necessary to maintain public safety and health⁴. In this case, the death penalty is often considered as a solution that can have a positive impact in reducing the number of drug crimes, namely by suppressing drug trafficking through the fear of such severe punishment. Another positive impact is the security of the community that can be better guaranteed, especially from the threat of

¹ Badan Narkotika Nasional, Laporan Statistik Penyalahgunaan Narkotika Tahun 2024 (Jakarta: BNN, 2024), hlm. 15.

² Komnas HAM, Laporan Penegakan Hak Asasi Manusia di Indonesia 2022, Komnas HAM, 2022.

³ Dewi Susanti, "Dampak Sosial dan Ekonomi dari Perdagangan Narkotika di Indonesia," *Jurnal Kriminologi Indonesia* 12, no. 2 (2023): 85.

⁴ Christofel Brayn Leonard Totomutu dkk, (Hukuman Mati dalam Tindak Pidana Narkotika Ditinjau dari Perspektif Hak Asasi Manusia (Studi Putusan Mahkamah Konstitusi Nomor 2-3/PUU-V/2007), *Jurnal Konstruksi Hukum*

narcotics that damages the younger generation. However, the application of the death penalty also raises various controversies. One of the negative impacts is the final nature of this punishment, which does not provide an opportunity for offenders to repent or undergo rehabilitation. The death penalty is also often considered ineffective in the long run, given that various studies show that the application of this penalty does not always significantly reduce the crime rate⁵. In addition, there are factors of injustice that often arise, such as social inequality that makes poor defendants more vulnerable to being sentenced to death due to a lack of access to proper legal defense.

The application of the death penalty is controversial from a Christian ethical perspective and has been the subject of much debate. On the one hand, there are those who argue that this punishment is in line with God's justice as expressed in the Old Testament, where the death penalty is applied for serious offenses. On the other hand, modern Christian views focus more on love, forgiveness, and rehabilitation, as taught in the New Testament, thus raising the question of whether the death penalty is still relevant in the context of Christ's teaching of love. This view is based on the principle that every human being has the opportunity to repent, just as Jesus showed mercy to sinners (John 8:11). This approach reflects God's Law of Grace, which provides hope and opportunity for every believer to obey Christ for the rest of his or her life⁵. This is a manifestation of God's law of grace. Therefore, churches and Christian communities in Indonesia need to consider whether the death penalty policy is in accordance with the teachings of their faith, especially in terms of providing opportunities for offenders to repent and undergo rehabilitation. In addition, this research is expected to contribute to policymakers in evaluating the effectiveness of the death penalty, both from a theological and practical perspective, in tackling drug crimes.

Previous research has examined issues on the topic of Christian views on the death penalty in narcotics cases which are related and relevant to the topic of "the death penalty for drug dealers in the context of Christian ethics", however, there are differences with other studies, namely, Togar Silaban, in his journal, concluded that even though the death penalty has been imposed, the number of narcotics cases is still high. This raises questions about whether the death penalty can really be considered a long-term solution⁶. In addition, Pranoto, in his research, compared the application

⁵ Takaliuang, Morris Phillips. "Hukuman Mati di Indonesia Menurut Perspektif Alkitab dan Relevansinya bagi Penegak Hukum." *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat* 4, no. 2 (Juli 2020): 209-222.

⁶ Togar Silaban, "Efektivitas Hukuman Mati dalam Penanggulangan Kejahatan Narkotika di Indonesia," *Jurnal Hukum dan Kriminalitas*, 2020.

of the death penalty in Indonesia with theological values in Christianity. He argues that the application of the death penalty should be reviewed based on the principles of love and justice in the teachings of Christ, which prioritize rehabilitation and forgiveness⁷. Meanwhile, the difference in this study is that it focuses on the topic of examining the death penalty for drug dealers from the perspective of Christian ethics, emphasizing moral, theological, and social impact aspects. As well as the objectives of this study are to analyze the Christian ethical perspective on the application of the death penalty for drug dealers, present theological views taken from the Old and New Testaments regarding the death penalty, and to understand how the principles of justice and love are developed in the context of Christian teachings.

From the background described above, the problem formulation of this research is to find out how the perspective of Christian ethics on the application of the death penalty for drug dealers and whether the application of the death penalty is in accordance with the principles of love, forgiveness, and justice taught in the Bible. Meanwhile, the purpose of this research is to find out the perspective of Christian ethics on the application of the death penalty for drug dealers and its handling of cases of giving death penalty to drug dealers. And the benefits of this research are to provide insight and understanding for the government and Christian society in formulating policies that are just and based on love.

RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, the author uses a qualitative research method to dig deeper into the Christian ethical dilemma related to the death penalty for drug dealers. This approach was chosen because the focus of the research is to understand various ethical and theological views, as well as to analyze the arguments underlying the opinions of Christian and legal figures related to the topic.

This type of research is qualitative descriptive research, which aims to describe and analyze various views regarding the death penalty for drug dealers, both from the perspective of Christian ethics and the legal perspective applicable in Indonesia. This research does not focus on collecting numerical data, but rather on understanding the concepts and values contained in the topic discussed, namely the Christian Ethical Dilemma regarding the death penalty for drug dealers involves various conflicting moral and legal considerations, so it is suitable to be researched using

⁷ Suryadi Pranoto, "Perspektif Hukum dan Teologi terhadap Hukuman Mati di Indonesia," *Jurnal Hukum dan Teologi*, 2020.

descriptive qualitative methods. Rusandi and Rusli state that qualitative research is used when the research problem is still dark or has not been fully revealed, which in this case refers to the dilemma that arises regarding the choice between retributive justice and restorative approaches in the view of Christian ethics. Therefore, this method will provide an opportunity to explore the various perspectives and underlying values that shape views on the death penalty, which cannot be explained by quantitative data alone⁸. The approaches used in this research are normative-theological and legal approaches. The normative-theological approach is used to explore the moral and theological views that exist in the Christian tradition regarding the death penalty, while the legal approach is used to analyze the applicable regulations in Indonesia regarding the death penalty for drug traffickers. Through this approach, the author is able to explore the ethical dimension of the issue, as well as analyze the existing legal policy from a Christian moral and theological perspective.

The data in this research was collected using a literature study technique, in which the author reads and analyzes various relevant written sources. This technique allows the author to explore the thoughts and theories of various figures as well as applicable legal regulations regarding the death penalty, particularly in the context of drug trafficking. In addition, the author also conducted document analysis to examine the ethical and theological views regarding the death penalty based on Christian teachings and existing legal views.

After the data is collected, the author will analyze it using the *content analysis* technique⁹. This technique allows the author to identify the main themes, important arguments, and relationships between the various views present in the sources read. The analysis will be conducted to distill the most relevant arguments related to the Christian ethical dilemma and whether the death penalty for drug dealers can be considered as a solution. The author will also synthesize Christian ethical theories with existing legal perspectives, as well as consider the moral and social implications of imposing the death penalty. To ensure the validity of the data, the author will use reliable sources, such as the works of prominent theologians and legal regulations recognized in

⁸ Rusandi, Muhammad Rusli "Merancang Penelitian Kualitatif Dasar/Deskriptif dan Studi Kasus," Dinas Pendidikan Luwu Timur.

⁹ Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62(1), 107-115.

Indonesia. In addition, the author will verify existing views in the literature to gain a more complete understanding of this topic.

This research has several limitations, including a limited focus on the Christian perspective on the death penalty and drug trafficking, as well as the implementation of the death penalty in Indonesia. Therefore, this research does not thoroughly discuss drug policy globally or the views of religions other than Christianity. This research is also limited to a review of existing theories and perspectives, without involving case studies or interviews with parties directly involved in the implementation of the death penalty.

Therefore, this research is expected to contribute to the understanding of Christian ethical dilemmas in legal and social contexts, as well as provide insight for readers on whether the death penalty for drug traffickers is in accordance with Christian teachings and legal policies in Indonesia. In addition, this research is expected to be a source of reflection in public debates on justice, love, and the protection of human life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of the Death Penalty in Christian Ethics

The death penalty is one of the main forms of criminal law enforcement as stipulated in Article 10 of the Criminal Code and is considered the harshest punishment. The main objective of the death penalty is to provide "reform" to correct and rehabilitate the offender so that they can contribute back to society¹⁰. In a Christian perspective, the view on the death penalty has become a controversial issue between pro and con views regarding the imposition of the death penalty for criminal acts, especially in narcotics cases. Several teachings in the Bible mention the application of the death penalty for certain crimes, especially in the Old Testament. However, this view has shifted in the New Testament, which emphasizes love, forgiveness, and rehabilitation for sinners. Thus, the death penalty in the perspective of Christian ethics is a dilemma because some parts of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, mention the death penalty as an appropriate justice for serious offenses¹¹. However, the New Testament, which focuses on the principles of love and

¹⁰ Gisella Tiara Cahyani, dkk, "Analisis Hukuman Mati di Indonesia dalam Perspektif Hak Asasi Manusia dan Alternatif Penegakan Hukum," *Al-Qisth Law Review* , vol. 7, 2023, hal 2-3.

¹¹Afrilyana Purba, dkk, "Kajian Hukuman Mati Berdasarkan Alkitab," *Jurnal Review Pendidikan dan Pengajaran* [7http://journal.universitaspahlawan.ac.id/index.php/jrpp](http://journal.universitaspahlawan.ac.id/index.php/jrpp)

forgiveness, presents a different view that emphasizes rehabilitation and justice rather than final punishment¹².

In the Old Testament, the death penalty was imposed for serious offenses such as murder, adultery, and idolatry as part of the enforcement of retributive justice. In contrast, the New Testament shows a perspective that focuses more on love and forgiveness, as shown in John 8:1-11 when Jesus forgave the adulterous woman, who should have been sentenced to death according to Old Testament law. This verse is often used as a foundation for the view that love and forgiveness are prioritized in Christian teachings, including in the treatment of criminals¹³.

Theories of the Death Penalty

The death penalty is still a hot topic that is still being discussed today. But is the death penalty right? In looking for the truth of this matter, we need to review several theories or views on capital punishment and the views of famous figures regarding the death penalty. Some of the theories of the figures include:

1. Retributive Theory

This theory emphasizes that the death penalty is a just act of retribution for perpetrators of serious crimes. In this context, retribution is seen as a form of justice that is commensurate with the crime committed. According to Aquinas, the death penalty can be justified to prevent major crimes that threaten society. The death penalty for drug traffickers is considered a form of justice, especially when their actions have the potential to damage the welfare of the public at large. This punishment not only provides a warning to other criminals but also upholds justice in society¹⁴.

2. Deterrent Effect Theory

This theory argues that the death penalty aims to deter others from committing similar crimes. In the context of drug trafficking, the death penalty is considered capable of creating a strong deterrent effect, reducing the motivation of offenders to engage in the drug trade that is damaging to society. The effectiveness of the death penalty as a means of deterrence is still

¹²Fingfing Keren Grace Wong dan Styadi Senjaya, "Prinsip-Prinsip Etika Kristen dan Implementasinya bagi Transformasi Kebijakan dan Pelayanan Publik di Indonesia," *Tumou Tou Jurnal*" hal 69.

¹³ Afrilyana Purba, dkk, "Kajian Hukuman Mati Berdasarkan Alkitab," *Jurnal Review Pendidikan dan Pengajaran 7* <http://journal.universitaspahlawan.ac.id/index.php/jrpp>

¹⁴ Holt, S. (2008). "Thomas Aquinas on Justice and the Common Good." *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 59(2), 431-448. doi:10.1093/jts/fln091.

debated, especially as data shows that drug crimes still continue to rise despite the death penalty having been implemented. Wayne R. Lafave, cited by Eddy OS Hiariej, explained that one of the purposes of punishment is to provide a *deterrence* effect, which aims to prevent criminals from repeating their actions. This objective is in line with the relative theory of special deterrence. While general deterrence aims to prevent others from committing crimes, special deterrence focuses on offenders who have been convicted, so that they do not re-offend. Overall, the ultimate goal is to protect society from the evil acts committed by the offender¹⁵.

3. Rehabilitation Theory

Based on this theory, punishment should have the purpose of correcting or rehabilitating the offender, rather than simply punishing. From the perspective of Christian theology, this theory is in line with the teachings of Jesus' love which teaches about forgiveness and restoration of sinful individuals. In this context, the death penalty is considered contrary to the principle of love which wants everyone to have the opportunity to repent and live a new life. Wayne R. Lafave, as cited by Eddy OS Hiariej in the journal *Development of Theories of the Purpose of Punishment*, distinguishes between punishment as retribution and punishment as treatment. Aquinas argues that when a state provides punishment with the aim of treatment, the punishment must include general prevention and special prevention¹⁶. John Howard Yoder, on the other hand, proposes a restorative justice approach, which emphasizes the restoration of offenders rather than severe punishment such as the death penalty. He believes that love and forgiveness are at the core of Christian teachings, and this encourages rehabilitation for offenders, including drug dealers. In this way, the approach allows them to repent and improve themselves, rather than simply being sentenced to death¹⁷.

Leaders' Views on the Death Penalty

Pope John Paul II

¹⁵ Syarif Saddam Rivanie, dkk, "Perkembangan Teori-teori Tujuan Pemidanaan," *Halu Oleo Law Review* 6, no. 2 (September 2022): 176-188.

¹⁶ Syarif Saddam Rivanie dkk "Perkembangan Teori-teori Tujuan Pemidanaan," *Halu Oleo Law Review* 6, no. 2 (September 2022): 176-188.

¹⁷ Swartley, W. M. (2000). "John Howard Yoder's Theology of Justice and Peace." *The Conrad Grebel Review*, 18(3), 36-52.

In *Evangelium Vitae*, John Paul II stated that the death penalty should be avoided as far as possible, except in very urgent situations. He believed that society can be protected through other means that allow criminals the opportunity to repent. In this context, the death penalty for drug traffickers should not be seen as a primary option¹⁸.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bonhoeffer emphasized that life is a gift from God, and only God has the absolute right to end it. Therefore, the death penalty, including for drug traffickers, is considered incompatible with God's sovereignty over human life. Bonhoeffer advocated that justice in Christianity should be based on the value of love and the protection of life¹⁹.

William Lane Craig

Craig argues that punishment in a Christian context should be oriented towards the moral and spiritual improvement of the offender, not just punishment. In his view, the death penalty provides no opportunity for reformation or repentance for drug dealers. Instead, Craig emphasizes punishment that allows offenders to improve themselves and become better members of society²⁰.

Drug Trafficking as an Extraordinary Crime

Drug trafficking is categorized as an extraordinary crime due to its destructive and far-reaching impact. At the individual level, drugs can cause physical and mental damage and create a dependency that undermines productivity and social relationships. Socially, drug trafficking increases crime, corrupts the morals of the younger generation, and threatens the economic and social stability of society. From a legal perspective, Law No. 35/2009 on Narcotics places drug traffickers as a serious threat to national security. Therefore, severe penalties, including the death penalty, are imposed to provide a deterrent effect and protect the public from greater risks. Nonetheless, some parties emphasize the importance of a rehabilitative approach to dealing with drug users, while strengthening prevention efforts against trafficking networks²¹. With its

¹⁸ Hainsworth, D. E., & Matz, B. L. (2009). "The Ethics of Life and Death in *Evangelium Vitae*." *Theological Studies*, 70(3), 583-609. doi:10.1177/004056390907000304.

¹⁹ Green, C., & DeJonge, M. J. (2013). "Bonhoeffer on Ethics and Politics." *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 26(1), 5-15. doi:10.1177/0953946812466699.

²⁰ Anderson, D. A. (2006). "Punishment and the Christian Tradition: William Lane Craig's Approach." *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 34(3), 439-456. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9795.2006.00282.

²¹ Badan Narkotika Nasional (BNN). *Laporan Tahunan: Perang terhadap Narkoba di Indonesia*. Jakarta: BNN, 2023.

devastating impact on individuals and society, drug trafficking is considered one of the most serious crimes and requires special attention in its handling.

From the theoretical review above, it is clear that the imposition of the death penalty for drug traffickers is a complex issue that involves consideration of Christian ethics as well as social impact. While there are strong arguments regarding the need for strict law enforcement against drug traffickers, it is also important to consider rehabilitative approaches that are in line with Christian teachings of love and forgiveness. It is a challenge for Christian churches and communities to evaluate such legal policies in the context of their faith values.

Death Penalty in Legal Perspective in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the death penalty is regulated in Article 10 of the Criminal Code as one of the main forms of punishment for certain crimes. In the case of narcotics crimes, the death penalty is applied to large distribution offenders, as stipulated in Articles 113, 114, and 115 of Law No. 35/2009²². This crime is considered a serious threat to public health and the younger generation. In addition, the death penalty is also imposed in terrorism cases, in accordance with Law No. 5/2018 on the Eradication of the Crime of Terrorism²³. Perpetrators who cause mass casualties or severe threats to state stability may be subject to this harshest penalty. However, the implementation of the death penalty is often controversial because it is considered to violate human rights principles, especially Article 28I paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees the right to life as a basic right that cannot be ignored under any circumstances²⁴. Critics argue that the death penalty is contrary to efforts to reform the justice system, which prioritizes rehabilitation and crime prevention with a more humane approach.

Christian Ethics and Drug Trafficking

Christian ethics is derived from the moral values enshrined in the Bible, with an emphasis on love and justice. In a Christian perspective, the death penalty creates moral problems as it relates to human life which is considered a right from God. Thomas Aquinas, in his work *Summa Theologica*, argued that the death penalty can be justified to maintain order and protect society from serious crimes. He argued that the state has the right to enforce justice in the public interest²⁵.

²² Republik Indonesia. *Undang-Undang No. 35 Tahun 2009 tentang Narkotika*.

²³ Republik Indonesia. *Undang-Undang No. 5 Tahun 2018 tentang Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Terorisme*.

²⁴ Republik Indonesia. *Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*.

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ed. Timothy McDermott (Notre Dame: Christian Classics, 1989).

On the other hand, Dietrich Bonhoeffer rejected the death penalty by arguing that life is a gift from God, so the decision to take life is beyond human limits. Bonhoeffer proposed that love be the basis for higher justice²⁶. Pope John Paul II, through *Evangelium Vitae*, also warned that the death penalty should be a last resort and only used in urgent situations when there is no other way to protect society²⁷. Even in those situations, rehabilitation and forgiveness remain at the core of Christian ethics, which emphasizes moral transformation for the offender.

Pros and Cons of the Death Penalty for Drug Dealers in Christian Ethics

The debate on the death penalty continues, giving rise to two main views among the public and the death penalty: the abolitionist group that wants to abolish the death penalty completely, as well as the retentionist group that supports its application in accordance with applicable law. Although it has been included in the National Criminal Code, the death penalty remains a controversial issue that triggers, especially regarding the incompatibility of this punishment with human rights principles because it involves the right to life of the perpetrator and is considered not in line with the purpose of punishment, namely resocialization or reintegration of offenders into society²⁸. In its implementation, the death penalty for drug traffickers raises a number of pro and con arguments, especially in the perspective of Christian ethics:

Pro-Death Penalty Arguments

Some Christian groups support the death penalty as a just measure and in line with the retributive principle in the Old Testament. They believe that the death penalty can provide a deterrent effect for serious criminals and protect society from the negative effects of drugs that damage the younger generation. Many Christian groups argue that the death penalty is in line with the principles of retributive justice found in the Old Testament. They believe that serious criminals, such as drug traffickers, should receive punishment commensurate with their actions, which have harmed many people and society as a whole. Those in favor of the death penalty, known as retentionists, argue that the death penalty should remain part of the legal system as a form of justice for serious crimes such as premeditated murder or terrorism. They argue that imprisonment or fines are not enough to provide proper justice to victims or society. Retentionists argue that the

²⁶ onhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Touchstone, 1995).

²⁷ Yohanes Paulus II, *Evangelium Vitae* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995).

²⁸ Dita Melati Putri, "Hukuman Pidana Mati dalam KUHP Baru dan Perspektif Abolisionalis serta Retensionis," *Eksekusi: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum dan Administrasi Negara*, 2024, hal 3.

death penalty serves as an effective deterrent to reduce serious criminal offenses, as the threat of very severe punishment is believed to have a deterrent effect on potential offenders. In addition, the death penalty is considered to provide maximum protection for victims and society by ensuring offenders do not have the opportunity to reoffend. Opponents of the death penalty, or abolitionists, argue that the death penalty is contrary to human rights, particularly the right to life guaranteed in the constitution. Abolitionists also highlight the flaws in the system that can lead to errors in imposing the death penalty, which cannot be corrected if an error is made. Therefore, they support the abolition of the death penalty to prevent fatal injustice. Meanwhile, conditional death sentences provide probationary time for judges to consider in more depth, providing opportunities for offenders to demonstrate behavioral change and rehabilitation. However, this probation period can also cause emotional distress for the offender and the victim's family, who may feel that they do not have legal certainty²⁹.

Arguments Against the Death Penalty

On the other hand, there is the view of abolitionists that the death penalty goes against the principles of love, forgiveness and rehabilitation taught in the New Testament. Those who oppose the death penalty argue that it does not provide an opportunity for offenders to repent and improve themselves and is not always effective in reducing crime. This opinion is based on the teachings of Jesus, who focused more on forgiveness and the opportunity to repent³⁰. Dietrich Bonhoeffer emphasized that life is a gift from God, and only God has the absolute right to end it. Therefore, the death penalty, including for drug dealers, is considered incompatible with God's sovereignty over human life. Bonhoeffer advocated that justice in Christianity should be based on the value of love and the protection of life³¹. Later, William Lane Craig argued that punishment in a Christian context should be oriented towards the moral and spiritual improvement of the offender, not just punishment. In his view, the death penalty provides no opportunity for reformation or repentance for drug dealers. Instead, Craig promotes punishment that allows offenders to improve themselves

²⁹ Dita Melati Putri, "Hukuman Pidana Mati dalam KUHP Baru dan Perspektif Abolisionalis serta Retensionis," *Eksekusi: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum dan Administrasi Negara*, 2024, hal 3.

³⁰ Dita Melati Putri, "Hukuman Pidana Mati dalam KUHP Baru dan Perspektif Abolisionalis serta Retensionis," 3.

³¹ Netty SR Naiborhu, "Pandangan Agama Kristen terhadap Pidana Mati," *Jurnal Wawasan Hukum* 33.

and become better members of society³². Those who violate the death penalty policy, or known as abolitionists, argue that the death penalty is contrary to human rights, especially the right to life guaranteed in Article 28A of the 1945 Constitution, which states that everyone has the right to live and defend his or her life. They believe that the right to life is a right that cannot be compromised, and the deprivation of life should be God's permission, not the judge's permission. In addition, abolitionists also highlight weaknesses in the penal system that can lead to errors in imposing the death penalty, such as bias, unfairness, or errors in the assessment of evidence. These errors can lead to innocent people being sentenced to death, and they cannot be corrected. Therefore, abolitionists argue that the death penalty is a necessary measure to avoid fatal injustice and to respect human rights³³.

A Christian Ethical View of the Death Penalty for Drug Dealers

In Christian moral theology, ethical decisions such as the death penalty for drug dealers are often controversial and full of moral questions. Christian ethics focus on the basic principles of love, justice, and restoration in dealing with human actions, including in the context of crime and punishment. Two main aspects that are often discussed in this regard are the relationship between justice and love and how forgiveness participates in decisions involving the death penalty.

Justice and Love

In Christian ethics, justice and love are two fundamental concepts that are often in tension, especially when dealing with issues such as capital punishment. Justice in the Bible refers not only to punishment or retribution, but also to the restoration of relationships and the repair of human character. In Psalm 89:14, justice and righteousness are referred to as the foundation of God's throne, meaning that justice is an integral part of God's character. However, God's justice is also coupled with boundless love. In Matthew 5:44, Jesus taught us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. In this case, love becomes a principle that complements justice in the context of Christianity, reflecting that every individual has the opportunity to repent and be renewed.

This view raises ethical questions regarding the application of the death penalty: Is the

³² Green, C., & DeJonge, M. J. (2013). "Bonhoeffer on Ethics and Politics." *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 26(1), 5-15. doi:10.1177/0953946812466699.

³³ Anderson, D. A. (2006). "Punishment and the Christian Tradition: William Lane Craig's Approach." *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 34(3), 439-456. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9795.2006.00282

administration of the death penalty in line with the principle of love taught by Jesus, or does it contradict the Christian call to forgive? The application of the death penalty in Christian ethics is often debated because it contradicts the concept of forgiveness and the opportunity for a person to change³⁴. These two Principles teach that God's justice must include punishment for evil but must also be in harmony with a higher love. Justice demands that every evil act be justly compensated, and this can be seen as the basis of the death penalty. However, the love principle in Christianity, which Jesus affirmed in His teachings, demands forgiveness and restoration, not revenge. In Romans 12:19, Paul reminds us not to repay evil for evil, but to leave the sacrifice to God. Thus, in the Christian view, restoration is an alternative, not only for the victim, but also for the perpetrator. This concept reflects the teachings of Christ who gave every individual the opportunity to change and improve themselves. Luke 23:34 states that Jesus begged God to forgive those who crucified Him, for they did not know what they were doing. The love taught by Christ encourages us to look beyond the evil act itself and provides room for spiritual healing for drug dealers. Other than that, the death penalty for drug traffickers can be considered a step in line with justice that demands strict action against evil. However, from the perspective of Christian moral theology, the death penalty can be seen as a denial of the opportunity for the offender to experience restoration³⁵. For God, as a just judge, may favor treatment and recovery for each individual over punishment that is final and does not provide a second chance. Taking into account the principles of love and justice, many Christian theologians argue that the death penalty does not fully reflect God's love that prioritizes forgiveness and restoration. Instead, an emphasis on rehabilitation and opportunities for encryption could be a solution that better reflects the divine character in dealing with evil³⁶.

The principles of love and forgiveness taught by Christ provide guidance to see the act of crime as an opportunity for restoration, not just as an offense to be punished by death³⁷. Thus, a Christian ethical view of the death penalty for drug traffickers leads to a decision that considers love, forgiveness, and restoration more. Therefore, it demands more depth on whether the death

³⁴ Netty SR Naiborhu, "Pandangan Agama Kristen Terhadap Pidana Mati," *Jurnal Wawasan Yuridika*, 2016, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25072/jw>.

³⁵ Andra Tri Mardhani, "Pro Kontra Komparasi Hukuman Mati untuk Pengedar Narkotika," *Jurnal Negara dan Keadilan*, vol. 10, tidak. 1 Februari 2021, hlm, 15.

³⁶ Andra Tri Mardhani, "Pro Kontra Komparasi Hukuman Mati untuk Pengedar Narkotika," 24.

³⁷ Yohanes Sukendar, "Pengampunan Menurut Kitab Suci Perjanjian Baru," *Jurnal Elektronik*.

penalty is in line with the principles of love and justice taught by Jesus Christ that love should be given to all people regardless of hair, social background, or race, because before God, all humans are equal and equal. For love overcomes all differences and limitations that exist³⁸.

Thus, the death penalty for drug traffickers poses an ethical dilemma from a Christian perspective. On the one hand, this punishment is seen as a form of justice to protect society from destructive crimes, in the hope of providing a deterrent effect and preventing greater harm. However, the teachings of love and forgiveness in Christian ethics, the importance of providing opportunities for repentance and rehabilitation, suggest that justice does not always have to be through extreme punishment.

The Application of the Death Penalty in the Context of Narcotics

The implementation of the death penalty for drug traffickers in Indonesia is part of the government's efforts to tackle the increasingly troubling drug trafficking. By referring to Law Number 35/2009 on Narcotics, the state is trying to give a firm signal that drug crimes will not be tolerated. However, although the death penalty is considered a firm solution, questions arise regarding its effectiveness in reducing the number of drug abusers³⁹. Based on data from the National Narcotics Agency (BNN), although the death penalty has been implemented, the rate of drug abuse in Indonesia still shows an alarming trend⁴⁰. This suggests that an approach that relies solely on the death penalty as a solution may not be effective enough. More comprehensive law enforcement, including education and rehabilitation, is needed to address the underlying root causes of drug trafficking⁴¹.

A Christian Ethical Perspective on the Death Penalty

In the context of Christian ethics, the application of the death penalty for drug traffickers poses a significant moral dilemma. On the one hand, there is the argument that the death penalty is in accordance with the principles of retributive justice described in the Old Testament. However, on the other hand, Jesus' teachings in the New Testament emphasize love and forgiveness, indicating that every individual has the opportunity to repent.

³⁸ Info Krisdamai,dkk, "Kajian Etika Kristen tentang Prinsip Mengasihi berdasarkan Kitab Injil dan Implikasinya bagi Orang Kristen," *Tumou Tou Jurnal Ilmiah* , [http : //dx.doi.org/10.5/tt .v8](http://dx.doi.org/10.5/tt.v8)

³⁹ Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 35 Tahun 2009 tentang Narkotika.

⁴⁰ Badan Narkotika Nasional (BNN)

⁴¹ Togar Silaban, "Hukuman Mati dalam Perspektif Hukum dan Etika," 1.

And the story of Jesus forgiving the woman arrested for adultery (John 8:1-11) is an important example in this discussion. In this context, many church leaders and theologians argue that the death penalty is not in line with the principles of love and forgiveness taught by Christ. A rehabilitative approach is considered more in line with Christian teachings, where offenders are given the opportunity to improve themselves and return to society.

Effectiveness of the Death Penalty as a Prevention Tool

One of the main arguments in favor of the death penalty is its ability to create a deterrent effect. However, research shows that the effectiveness of the death penalty in deterring crime is debatable. Some studies show that countries that apply the death penalty do not always experience a significant reduction in crime rates compared to countries that do not apply the penalty⁴². Wayne R. Lafave explained that the purpose of punishment is to provide a deterrent effect for both the offender and the public⁴³. However, if the deterrent effect is not proven effective in practice, then the argument in favor of the death penalty becomes weak⁴⁴. Therefore, it is important to re-evaluate existing legal approaches and consider alternative methods of dealing with the drug problem.

Injustice in the Application of the Death Penalty

One of the main criticisms of the application of the death penalty is the unfairness of the legal process. Research shows that individuals from poor or disadvantaged backgrounds are often more vulnerable to being sentenced to death due to a lack of access to adequate legal defense. This creates inequalities in the justice system and raises questions of social justice.

In this context, it is important to pay attention to the principles of justice and equality before the law. The application of the death penalty must be done carefully and take into account all the factors involved, including the socio-economic background of the offender. Otherwise, the application of this punishment may exacerbate social injustice and create more problems than solutions.

⁴²Togar Silaban, "The Death Penalty in Legal and Ethical Perspective," 1.

⁴³Hiariej, Eddy OS "Perkembangan Teori-teori Tujuan Pidanaaan," *Jurnal Hukum dan Pembangunan* 52, no. 2 (2020): 123-145.

⁴⁴ Craig, William Lane. *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (David C Cook, 2010).

Rehabilitative Approach as an Alternative

Faced with the ethical dilemma and the effectiveness of the death penalty, the rehabilitative approach emerged as a more humane alternative and in accordance with Christian teachings. This approach emphasizes the importance of providing opportunities for offenders to repent and improve themselves through rehabilitation programs. John Howard Yoder proposed the concept of restorative justice, which focuses on restoring individuals rather than punishing them to the extreme. In the context of drug dealers, this approach could involve rehabilitation programs that help them understand the impact of their actions as well as provide new skills to start a new life without drugs.

CONCLUSION

Discussions regarding the application of the death penalty for drug traffickers in the perspective of Christian ethics show complexity. While some arguments support the application of the death penalty as a form of retributive justice, many views also emphasize love and forgiveness as core Christian teachings. Therefore, it is important for churches and Christian communities in Indonesia to reevaluate this policy in light of their faith values as well as the effectiveness of current legal approaches. Integrating a rehabilitative approach could be a positive step towards addressing the drug problem in a more holistic and equitable manner. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to policymakers in formulating a more effective drug treatment strategy that is in line with human values and religious teachings. Be sure to include academic references where necessary to support these arguments.

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