

life that God created. In the first chapter of Genesis we discover that God created the heavens, earth and all that is in them. He created life both of animals, plants and mankind. We do not believe life is the result of a unique occurrence of spontaneous generation but rather that it was created by God and human life was created in His likeness and image for His own purposes and glory. Therefore all life belongs to God. He is the author of it and the One who has made rules governing it. It is for this reason we speak of the sanctity of life: it belongs to God and both its beginning and ending are under His care. His instruction in this command is rooted in this truth and it says very directly: "Don't take into your hands the power that belongs to God alone!"

But the command does not simply mean "don't kill." God, having the power of life and death to Himself, had already decreed certain situations in which life could be forfeited in accord with His will. He had placed a mark on Cain, after the murder of Abel, that he should not be wantonly killed by other members of the Adam family. But the Lord would make it clear that man's blood could not be shed by another man who would then expect his sin to be overlooked. To Noah (Genesis 9:5) God said: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man." This is the foundation of capital punishment. When one murders another, he places his own life in forfeiture. When the murderer is slain, that is no violation of God's law. God, in fact, calls for it.

Similarly God makes legislative pronouncements from time to time on the lives of those who have defied him. Saul was to utterly destroy the Amalekites for their defiance of God. (Exodus 17:14-17, 1 Samuel 15:1-3) Likewise Israel was given a command to exterminate the lewd and promiscuous Canaanite nations of Palestine. In these cases God, who had decreed life, now