

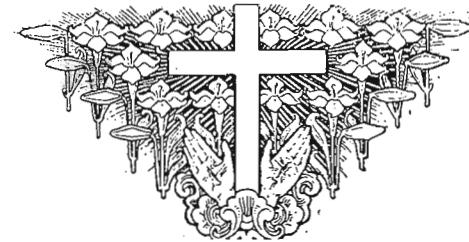
CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

In view of the great publicity that the Conciliar bishops have received for their standpoint regarding capital punishment, this booklet will only be "a voice crying in the desert" (Jn. 1, 23); yet, this short treatise had to be written in order that sincere Catholics may realize that the proposition of the Conciliar bishops does *not* follow the line of Catholic Tradition.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

A Necessary Tool To Defend The
Sanctity Of Human Life

by
Father J. Vida Elmer



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"If a man be dangerous and infectious to the community, on account of some sin, it is praiseworthy and advantageous that he be killed in order to safeguard the common good."

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Author

Father J. Vida Elmer was ordained to the Catholic priesthood in the year of 1936. He has served the true Gospel of Christ for long enough to know the difference between the pre-Vatican Catholic Church and the new post-Conciliar Church. When almost everybody was eager to be part of the "AGGIORNAMENTO," he quietly decided to remain in the service of the 1900-year-old Catholic Tradition.

His other publication, "The Smoke Of The Antichrist," is in its fourth printing.

These studies are available from:

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Christian parents have good reason not to trust the public schools. In due time, the bad tree brought forth its bad fruits. The public schools have become the hot beds of vandalism (to the tune of many millions of dollars each year), drug abuse, sex, teenage pregnancies and other moral and physical sicknesses. By the year of 1983, the disastrous fruits of this "education" reached such a proportion that a special Presidential task force had to make an investigation of the failure in public education. It is doubtful, however, that the investigators will ever find the real cause of the problem, which is the separation of public education from Christian principles.

In recent years, many of these schools had to be closed, not because of the lack of funds (school taxes have a trend of going up and up), but because of declining enrollment. Meanwhile the prisons in this country are filled beyond capacity. Hundreds of millions of dollars are needed for new prisons.

These are the fruits of an educational system which has been separated from the Church. In fact, it has been separated from God.

WHERE IS THE SOLUTION?

Pouring more money into such a system will not solve the problem. The problem is not monetary, but spiritual. A solution can only be found, when civil authorities turn to the time-proven principles of Christianity, and instead of separation, offer their cooperation in order to put these principles into the practical life of our nation.

Among the many blessings of such a new trend would be the declining need for the use of the death penalty. Christian education puts into every person a "policeman", which is his (her) conscience, and restrains that person from any action which would offend God. Thus, beside keeping on the books the law of capital punishment, this would be another avenue for decreasing the number of capital crimes and consequently the use of capital punishment. The best solution would be to instill in the minds of people the inexhaustible treasures of Christ's teaching, and through this the love of God. People who love God, and fear to offend Him, will not commit crime.

For those who cannot be motivated by the love of God, there remains a choice: the fear of the death penalty.

Educators, lawmakers, judges of this country should try this approach to the problem — let us say — for a ten-year-period. Then, they could examine the results. I am sure, the results would show a tremendous upgrading of our civilization.

P R E F A C E

Before the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the Roman Catholic Church had been regarded by friend and foe as the most respected teaching authority on moral questions. The Church conveyed to the nations the wisdom of divine revelation and the useful lessons of human experiences throughout the Old and New Testaments. Her teaching was consonant with a sound mind; it was solid and did not change according to political winds. In the course of history, millions of the members and leaders of this Church have suffered deprivations, persecution, incarceration, torture and death rather than to change anything in what was regarded as divine truth entrusted by Christ to His Church.

After the Council, however, a gradual, but fast developing change confronted the bewildered faithful. Changes, not for the better, but for the worse.

Books and periodicals which deal with this unbelievable catastrophe in the Church could fill up whole libraries.

One of the tragic results is that today the world cannot put unreserved trust in that organization which still calls itself the "Catholic Church", although after the changes it is more appropriate to call it the "Conciliar Church."¹

The leaders of this new Church moved their gaze away from the eternal truths of God, and turned it toward human fashions. By doing this, they lost the divine protection of the Holy Ghost in their teaching. Thus, there is nothing which would prevent them from falling into error. In fact, the Conciliar Bishops, in several instances, teach error.

Some of these errors can be recognized only by learned theologians, while other errors will be manifest also to the average educated Catholic.

This new phenomenon reveals to us a very important thing. Since the hierarchy of the true Catholic Church (the Pope and the Bishops in union with him), by divine privilege, cannot officially (ex cathedra) teach error in matters of faith and morals, thus, if we today recognize that practical errors are indeed proposed to the faithful by the Conciliar Bishops, it is a clear sign, that these bishops do not represent the true Catholic Church any more.

In the absence of a meaningful organized opposition to the abuses, for many millions of Catholics the only way to express their disapproval was to stop going to Church.

However, we can witness several cases of active individual protest. It happens often that educated Catholics (priests, lay people) in speeches, lectures and books express their protest when the Conciliar bishops in their

(1) The phrase was coined by the late Cardinal Benelli in 1976.

adventures of endorsing socialism, unilateral disarmament, false ecumenism, etc. insinuate they are speaking in the name of the Catholic millions.

In this category falls the energetic activity of the Conciliar bishops for the abolition of the death penalty. They try to present it as a requirement of the Catholic religion, which it is not. As the polls of public opinion show, so far, the bishops have not succeeded in winning over to their side the majority of the Catholic population. But they try hard to gain converts to their cause.

This short essay was written in view of the situation in the U.S.A. But since the abolitionists of other countries are using almost the same argument against capital punishment, the answers found in this booklet can also be used beyond the boundaries of the United States.

In this apocalyptic age when the leadership of the Church has fallen into the hands of the enemy, — it is the responsibility of the individual Catholic to search for, and find the truth in the 1900-year-old Tradition of the Church, which cannot be taken away, cannot be falsified, cannot be brainwashed. Furthermore, charity requires from you to spread the truth in a prudent way.

“The truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8,32).

Rev. J. Vida Elmer
Bethlehem, N.Y. February 1984.

If we want to live in a civilized society, religious and civil leaders should join hands to make our society really civilized. Without the transcendent values of the God given religion nobody can build a civilized society. A high rate of crime, especially homicide, is always a negative factor. The leaders of society have to apply time-proven means to eliminate negative factors, and reduce crime in society to a possible minimum.

Among the time-proven means you can recognize the following two factors: *The fear of God* and *the fear of the death penalty*, according to one's choice. Such a program— once put into practice — would save this country tens of thousands of lives and billions of dollars each year.

THE BEST PREVENTION

which prevents crime and reduces the need for the death penalty to the minimum is the God-centered religious instruction in the schools. In our days, the much misused principle of “Separation of State and Church” stands as an obstacle to religious instruction in public schools. It is an error, however, to think that religious instructions in the schools are forbidden by the Constitution of the United States. What the Constitution forbids is the establishment of a *state-religion*, and the persecution of all other religions, as it was in England at the time when our Constitution was drawn up by the Founding Fathers of America. Apart from this ban of a *state-religion*, there was no separation between state officials and religious leaders in America. We can say, there was a harmonious and fruitful cooperation between them.

Precisely, the acknowledgement and practical application of the moral values of faith in God was the spiritual force which transformed America from a British colony to the leading country of the world. In our time, however, precisely the abandonment of these spiritual values, the misuse of the concept of “Separation of State and Church” and the introduction of a secular humanist religion into the education and legislation are the causes of America's decline into an uncivilized society.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

The first schools in America were run by the Churches or private institutions. Having no interference from the civil government, they have done a good job, without requiring the citizens to pay for it through taxation. There was no such thing as “teachers' certification” by the State, either. Then, after a while, the States decided to introduce a compulsory education, and opened up the so-called “public schools”. Into them have been poured unlimited amount of money collected by heavy taxation. Religion was not taught in these schools until the time when Federal authorities sneaked into the schools their own version of “religion”, the so-called “secular humanism”. Then, they decided that this new “religion” should be for everybody. By the requirement of “teachers' certification” they wanted to make it impossible for private (church) schools to maintain their independence in education. In the “Land of the Free” Christian parents, who refused to surrender their children to the anti-Christian education, were thrown into jail (Nebraska, 1983).

to eradicate this scandal. He wrote a letter to the Christians in which he said: "I . . . have already passed sentence in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ on the man who has so acted to deliver such a one over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (I. Cor. 5, 3-5).

ST. PAUL WAS NOT A MODERNIST

He had always in his mind the final purpose of man, which is eternal salvation. The only alternative to it is eternal damnation.

The present day bishops (although, occasionally pay lip service to it) are notorious for their practical disregard of Catholic Tradition. They are stressing the "sanctity of life" of the murderers (a strange kind of "sanctity"), meanwhile they ignore the "sanctity of life" of the victims. As one defender of the criminals put it: "Victims don't have rights."

All Christians, and especially their bishops are supposed to be the "salt of the earth" (Mt. 5, 13). But when the present day bishops exhibit more compassion toward the criminals than the victims, they are in practical error; they cannot be useful contributors to the common good; rather they augment the common confusion. "If the salt loses its strength, what shall it be salted with? It is no longer of any use but to be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men" (Ibidem).

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

A better representative of Catholic Tradition was ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, the most respected theologian and philosopher of the 13th century (1226-74), and Doctor of the Church. He made a classic defense of the death penalty:

"If a man be dangerous and infectious to the community, on account of some sin, it is praiseworthy and advantageous that he be killed in order to safeguard the common good."

It is pharisaic to pretend that a civilized society can sacrifice the lives of tens of thousands of innocent people, in order to save the lives of a few criminals. St. John the Apostle in his Book of the Apocalypse conveyed to us the words of God: "He who kills by the sword, by the sword must be killed" (Apoc. 3, 10). Is this an uncivilized quotation from the Bible?

CRIMINAL CONTROL

Some people may think that gun-control would solve the problem. They are wrong, because a mechanical measure never solves moral problems. Gun control would not reduce, but rather increase the number of killings. Criminals always get guns. They will be eager to use them against disarmed citizens. The right solution is: criminal control. For this purpose the death penalty for premeditated murder has always been the most effective tool in the hands of civil authorities to safeguard the lives of innocent people.

A THORNY PROBLEM

As the plague of homicides afflicts this nation in ever increasing numbers, the search for a remedy brings the question of capital punishment into prominence. Individuals, associations, lawyers, policemen, clergymen and other leaders of society are arguing the question pro and con.

The taking of the life of a man by another is a first class moral question. The bishops of the United States felt it necessary to deal with the problem. In their public announcement on the subject (Nov. 1980), you can find several inconsistent or contradictory sentences; but at least, there is an acknowledgment (although reluctant) for the validity of three relevant factors regarding the death penalty:

- (1) The protection of society and its members must be considered while meting out punishment for violent crimes.
- (2) Reformation of criminals and their reintegration into society in certain cases may *not* be possible.
- (3) Capital punishment is *not* incompatible with Catholic Tradition.

All these factors are valid. They point toward the necessity of applying the death penalty for hardened criminals. However, the bishops disregarded the recommendation of their own intellect, accepted a resolution which gives the least protection to society, and which cannot be backed by Catholic Tradition, either. They call for the abolition of the death penalty, even in cases of brutal and repeated murders. In pursuing this goal, they drop all logic in their argumentation, even to the point of contradicting their own statements.

Wishing to avoid an apparent conflict with the traditional teaching of the Church, they approve the capital punishment in principle (see the three points above); but oppose it in practice. In other words, they pay lip service to the traditional doctrine, but in reality, they want to destroy it. By doing this, they have lost their authority to speak in the name of faithful Catholics who wish to keep the teaching of the Church in its integrity, both in principle and in practice. "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father in heaven, shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 7, 21).

This breach with Catholic Tradition surfaced only after the Second Vatican Council. By their pharisaical attitude, the Conciliar bishops are willing to sacrifice the lives of thousands of innocent people, and billions of dollars each year in order to save the lives of convicted murderers.

Frequently, hardened criminals are paroled or escape from prison (even from "maximum security" prison), and continue their killing spree. Their victims are prison guards, police officers, FBI agents and other innocent persons. If you wish, you can get statistics, books² or other documents showing the numbers of innocent lives destroyed by previously convicted murderers. For illustration, here is only a couple of short news-items: (a) Febr. 12, 1982: "Palatka, Florida (AP) — a 36-year old Wyoming prison

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- (2) One of the most informative books on this subject is: "NEITHER CRUEL NOR UNUSUAL" by Frank G. Garrington, Arlington House Publishers, New Rochelle, New York.

parolee who has led police to the bodies of three hitchhikers, and reportedly claims that he has killed at least ten people, was ordered held without bond in his first court appearance yesterday.”

(b) In January 1984, “about 100 officers from 18 states joined Louisiana police tracing the movement of two confessed killers (names supplied). They linked the men to a pair of slayings, raising to 59 the murders police are certain were committed by the drifters who have confessed to 200 killings in 17 states.”

One could fill up books with such news.

FAILURE OF THE PAROLE SYSTEM

Frequent cases of recidivism among parolees cast a shadow on the procedure of some parole boards which eagerly grant freedom to criminals who do not deserve it. These parole officers are motivated by the thought of alleviating the crowded jails rather than by protecting the public. Parole boards and officers should be held responsible for the wrongdoing of the parolees.

All those authorities and private citizens deserve the thanks of the public who are working to get the drunk driver off the road. Very often, parole officers are working in the opposite way. Police and prosecution officers take criminals out of circulation from society, but parole officers let them loose again to continue their evil deeds against innocent people. For this, parole officers do not deserve any thanks, but the indignation of the public. Car makers are often made responsible for accidents involving cars which left the manufacturing plant with some mechanical faults. Why not hold parole officers responsible for the crimes of their parolees? If a parolee commits a crime on the streets, it is logical to assume that the parole officer was negligent in letting loose an unrepentant sinner to prey upon society. Even though, a strict correlation cannot be cited between the granting of parole and the crime, yet, there is a certain connection between the two factors. The crime on the street would not have taken place without the granting of parole. Therefore, we can put it this way: the granting of parole was a necessary condition to enable the criminal to commit his new crime.

If parole officers would face jail sentences according to the gravity of the crime committed by their parolees, then, those officers would use extreme caution in their decisions as to whom they should grant parole.

Some lawmakers intend to eliminate the abuses of the parole system by proposing the abolition of the system itself.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

One of the bishops' arguments is the assertion that “the abolition of the death penalty is most consonant with the example of Jesus who both taught and practiced the forgiveness of injustice.” And “we call on you (our brothers and sisters) to contemplate the crucified Christ who set us the supreme example of forgiveness and of the triumph of compassionate love.”

In connection with the problem of abortion, the Conciliar bishops try to exploit your sympathy (that you feel toward innocent baby-victims) for shielding the criminals from due punishment. It is a distorted image of justice when these bishops do not make the necessary distinction, but lump together innocent human beings with hardened criminals. It is a twisted logic which would not allow Pro-Life people to work toward outlawing abortion, unless they demand also the outlawing of capital punishment.

EQUAL DIGNITY TO GOOD OR BAD?

The bishops assert that the life of every human being is equally precious, and should equally be spared — which is simply not true! “The unique worth and dignity of each person” will last only as long as that person maintains in himself “the image and likeness of God” — but not beyond that. When a person destroys in himself “the image and likeness of God” by behaving like a beast, that person loses also his “unique worth and dignity” as a human person. This makes the clear difference between innocent human beings and criminals. Society recognizes this difference, even if the bishops do not. In a civilized society the innocent should be protected, the criminal element should be prosecuted.

When the bishops want to give equal protection to the innocent and the criminal, they prove that their vision in this problem is a limited one. They see the evil of giving license to kill innocent babies, but they fail to see the evil (and their own responsibility in it) of giving license for criminals under life-sentence to kill prison guards, police officers, potential witnesses, etc. The abolition of capital punishment automatically provides such a license. Saving the lives of murderers is wasting the lives of the innocent.

We all wish to live in a civilized society where no premeditated murder is committed. In such a society there would be no need for capital punishment. But as of today, we are far from such a utopian society. In our days, it is impossible to provide an effective defense for the lives of innocent people without the use of the death penalty. Those who committed a capital offense, should be permanently incapacitated so as not to repeat their crime, i.e. to take another innocent life. No “maximum security prison” can provide such a protection for the lives of innocent citizenry. The deterrent effect of capital punishment is not the primary goal. It is only a fringe benefit, although, a useful one.

Nobody with an objective mind can deny that there is an element of fear in the death penalty. This wholesome fear in the psyche of a would-be killer can save many innocent lives. ST. PAUL the Apostle in his letter to the believers in Rome says the following: “Do you wish, then, not to fear authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from it. For it is God's minister to you for good. But if you do what is evil, fear, for not without reason does it carry the sword” (Rom. 13, 4).

In another part of the Scripture we can read about a specific problem of ST. PAUL. One day he got word from the City of Corinth that a man in the community was living in an incestuous relation with his stepmother. It was a great scandal, unheard of before, among Christians. ST. PAUL acted quickly

ARE WE CIVILIZED?

How can a society be called civilized where 20,000 plus homicides happen each year? People are killed sometimes under the most cruel circumstances, yet the lives of the killers are protected by law. While in prison, they get favorable treatment. In some cases, they enjoy so much freedom within the walls of the prison that some of the clever inmates (according to news reports) are able to run an illegal business operation inside, or even outside of the prison. I don't know how they do it, but evidently they can find the loopholes in prison rules to do it.

Sometimes, the timidity of law enforcement becomes a laughing stock to the murderer. In December 1983, the jury in Los Angeles had to decide the fate of a teen-ager⁴ who killed his father, stepmother and 8-year-old stepsister. Before the jury began its deliberation the young man had told them: "You people have no recourse but to give me the death penalty. I deserve to die. If you give me life, I'll laugh all day long, and I'll kill again in prison." He knew exactly that a law abolishing capital punishment would give him a license to kill.

The Conciliar bishops are lobbying for such a law. They believe in "the unique worth and dignity of each person, a creature made in the image and likeness of God." But these bishops, by lobbying for the abolition of the death penalty, are defending the "worth and dignity" of life only in the persons of murderers where it does not exist, meanwhile they reduce the "worth and dignity" of certain innocent persons to ZERO.

In view of the dark side of human nature (brought forth by original sin) we can say that abolition of the death penalty makes it very difficult, (if not impossible) to maintain a civilized standard in society.

For a civilized society it is a *must* to provide adequate defense for life and property. If this purpose requires the use of capital punishment against hardened criminals, then the government should not hesitate to apply it in certain justified cases.

It is the highest case of injustice when the government empowers a certain segment of society (the criminals under life sentence) to kill innocent persons without suffering any kind of additional punishment. It is nothing less than a license to kill.

Unfortunately, there is another segment in our society enjoying this strange privilege from the law:

THE ABORTIONISTS

An unspeakable tragedy of our society is the existence of the abortion mill. Is it civilized to destroy, every year, more than one million innocent human beings before birth? Those babies are deprived of the most basic human right: the right to live. Is that civilized?

(4) Robert Bloom, Jr. 19.

These sentences have the purpose of appealing to one's sentiment rather than to his intellect. Under the scrutiny of the intellect this statement cannot stand. Jesus has never taught that capital punishment should be outlawed. Jesus has never given forgiveness to unrepentant sinners. Actually, hell is prepared for unrepentant sinners, where there is no forgiveness ever.

The example of Christ on the Cross who forgave the penitent thief, cannot be cited for the abolition of the death penalty, but rather for the approval of it, because the forgiving love of Christ saved the man from hell but not from the execution. Actually, the acceptance of execution by the thief was one of the signs of his true repentance, as it was a condition for gaining forgiveness.

If the abolitionists wish to follow the example of Christ, they should follow the real Christ, and not a false, man-made image of Him.

SUPER-CHRISTIANITY?

Actually, what these bishops are trying to sell you is a super-Gospel, a super-Christianity — which is as phony as a three-dollar-bill. Nobody can be more Christian than Christ. Nobody can have more compassion toward sinners than Christ has. It is a dangerous deviation from truth when somebody wants to be more Christian than Christ Himself.

"No disciple is above his teacher, nor is the servant above his master.

It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and for the servant to be like his master" (Mt. 10, 24-25).

A super-disciple, a super-Christian is not the disciple of Christ. An excessive Christianity is not Christianity at all. It is an error, and therefore, a useful tool in the hands of the devil.

Deviation from the truth will always bring forth bad fruit. It is especially dangerous when high ranking personalities in the Church give bad example in this realm. The effects of their error will proliferate into the fiber of society. Then, it will bring forth lenient parents, lenient educators, lenient judges who will not discipline the evildoers, but only forgive and forgive and forgive . . . This attitude encourages crime, fills up the prisons beyond capacity, will waste the lives of innocent persons, and will send the souls of unrepentant sinners into hell. This is definitely not the practice of neighborly love.

MURDER IN THE CHAPLAIN'S OFFICE

In order to illustrate how the error of super-Christianity works, I give you a striking example from real life.

A certain convicted killer was sent to a New York State prison to serve a life-sentence for more than one brutal rape and murder. The Catholic chaplain of the prison wanted to demonstrate his super-Christianity, and therefore, requested from the superiors that the newly arrived inmate be given to him as the clerk of his office. The request was granted. A hasty forgiveness of super-Christianity was put into practice. The criminal received a great degree of freedom and privileges within the walls of the jail. The man was given access to the chaplain's office. He could see the files, he could use the telephone.

Then, came May 15, 1981, when a young female corrections officer (mother of two children) did not go home after her work-hours.

—What happened to her?

She was brutally raped and murdered within the prison walls, in the office of the chaplain. Her body was put in a garbage can, thrown into the refuse dumpster, and then into a dump-truck, which carried the body out of the prison.

After proper investigation, the police charged the privileged inmate, the clerk of the chaplain, with murder. The chaplain was not indicted, only quietly transferred to another job. (I wonder how he can sleep with a good conscience after he had to observe the fruit of his excessive Christianity.)

After a lengthy trial which cost the taxpayers more than half a million dollars, the criminal was convicted, sentenced to death; but the verdict has not yet been executed. Lawyers, bishops and other do-gooders are still working for a possible new trial.

Super-Christianity does not save souls. It endangers the lives of innocent persons.

THE REAL CHRIST DID NOT ABOLISH CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

for hardened criminals. In view of this we can readily agree with the statement of the bishops which says that capital punishment is *not incompatible* with Catholic Tradition. However, their inconsistency consists in their effort to convince the public that capital punishment would be incompatible with Catholic Tradition. Practically, they propagate error.

THE FORGOTTEN ROLE OF REPENTANCE

The best insurance of staying on the right way is to look always at the example of Christ, and follow Him in our every day decisions and actions.

Christ is the perfect example of every virtue. Therefore, it is a mistake when some people wish to be more Christian than Christ Himself. One of these super-Christian slogans says: “The more heinous the crime was, the more generous the forgiveness should be.” — Sounds good but it is an error. Something was left out of it, and because of that missing element, the whole statement remains a big error. These super-Christians left out the concept of *repentance*. They have forgotten the teaching of Christ who said:

“Unless you repent, you will all perish . . .” (Lk. 13, 3).

“If your brother repents, forgive him” (Lk. 17, 3).

“Repent and be baptized . . .” (Acts 3, 19).

“Repent therefore of this wickedness of thine, and pray to God that perhaps this thought of thy heart be forgiven thee” (Acts 8, 22).

Thus, in place of the above quoted slogan, I would suggest a modified version of it: “The more heinous the crime was, the more serious the repentance should be.” This version is indeed consonant with Catholic Tradition.

hundreds of police officers and other innocent people from becoming statistical numbers among the murder victims.³

Of course, you cannot put into statistics what did not happen. If this is the basis of the assertion that says: “We do not have scientific evidence of the deterrent effect of capital punishment,” — it is a silly assertion. It is like saying: We should not keep those traffic lights at busy intersections, because we do not have scientific evidence of how many accidents those lights might have prevented. There are empirical studies, however, which conclude that one execution will deter fifty or more homicides.

Since the Supreme Court, in 1976, reinstated the death penalty, Florida and other States carried out a few executions of convicted murderers. No execution took place in New York State, although the legislature of that State also reinstated the death penalty for certain aggravated homicides; but the Governor vetoed the bill. However, according to the published report of the Division of Criminal Justice Service, the murder cases in New York City fell 8 percent in the first half of 1983. In actual number it means that there were 60 fewer lives taken in that City during the first six months of the year in which some executions took place — outside of New York State. But some of the would-be murderers certainly got the message in New York, too.

Of course, you can expect that abolitionists would dismiss the testimony of statistics as mere coincidence — It might be. But it is an interesting coincidence.

On the other hand, the absence of capital punishment encourages killing. As a District Attorney in the State of Oklahoma said: “The abolition of the death penalty is an invitation to murder.” In case of armed robbery, e.g., a **persistent felon faces a life-sentence. If he kills the witnesses, or the pursuing police officers, his chances are greater for escape. Even if caught, he will not get more than a life-sentence.** The lives of the victims and of potential witnesses are thoroughly stripped from the defense of the law. In the same way, the lives of prison guards, police officers and other persons who have to deal with violent criminals already under life sentence, have been stripped of every protection of the law — if there is no capital punishment for murder. Can a civilized society permit such injustice to its innocent citizens?

Another element in our present judicial system which encourages free killing is the practice of imposing concurrent time-sentences, instead of consecutive ones, upon a murderer who kills more than one person. It is like the super-market promotion: Buy one, get one for free. Or the restaurant ad which says: For the price of one supper you can eat as much as you wish. Such a promotion is all right in business matters, but it becomes a travesty of justice when a judge applies the same principle to more than one murder committed by the same killer. — There ought to be a change.

(3) Between 1967 and 1977 more than six hundred vicious killers were sentenced to death, but none of them was executed. During this time, the number of murder victims doubled to the 20,000 figure — for a single year.

The second phase of Christian improvement is the principle of “*turning of the other cheek*” (Mt. 5, 39), i.e., bringing charity into the procedure of justice.

This figurative expression of Christ, “*turning of the other cheek*”, became a distorted argument in the hands of false prophets who wish to use it for shielding convicted murderers from proper punishment. When Christ told us to “turn the other cheek”, He certainly did not want to advise us to cooperate with evildoers, and leave innocent people without adequate defense. If we are required to follow the false interpretation of “the other cheek” — principle, then, what should a father do who having two daughters, one of whom is raped and killed by a criminal? Shall he — in the name of “Christian” forgiveness offer his other daughter, too, for the pleasure of the criminal? — Absurd.

—Then, what is the right application of “*turning of the other cheek*” in case of a brutal homicide?

When justice demands the life of a criminal, our Christian charity should offer him *eternal life* through Christ, by instructing him how to do penance, how to resign himself to God’s will, and how to accept death as payment and atonement for his criminal conduct. If we can elicit from the criminal this kind of cooperation, then, we did him the greatest service, because even though he loses his physical life to justice, he gains eternal life through the forgiving mercy of Christ.

THE GOOD THIEF

This is exactly what happened on the cross to one of the two criminals who was crucified alongside Christ. Jesus forgave the one who was called Dismas, because the man was sorry for his sins, and gave true signs of repentance. By His mercy Christ prepared the soul of Dismas for a true conversion. Dismas cooperated with the divine graces. He acknowledged his evil deeds; he was sorry for them, and he was willing to offer his life in atonement. We can read the story in the Gospel of Saint Luke (23, 39ff):

“One of the robbers who were (also) hanged, was abusing him, saying, ‘If you are the Christ, save yourself and us!’ But the other in answer, rebuked him and said, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing that you are under the same sentence? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what our deeds deserved; but this man has done nothing wrong!’ And he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom’. And Jesus said to him, ‘Amen I say to you, this day you shall be with me in paradise.’”

SAVE THE SOUL

The purpose of Christ’s coming into this world, the purpose of His terrible suffering and death on the Cross was to liberate human souls from eternal damnation. This also has always been the purpose of Apostolic activity in the Church. In our age, we can witness how differently the modernist philosophy works. The modernist Conciliar bishops are led by secular humanism rather than by genuine Christian consideration. From the viewpoint of secular

humanism, physical life is the supreme value. That is why sincere abolitionists wish to save the life of the criminal, while they tend to neglect his immortal soul.

In contrast to this, Christian consideration regards the immortal soul and its eternal salvation as the supreme goal. In the Christian economy of salvation, the tool of temporal punishment, like the death penalty, can become a tool of eternal salvation. This was in the mind of ST. PAUL, the Apostle, when he was talking about the destruction of a criminal’s body in order to save his soul for eternity (I. Cor. 5, 3ff). This should be the bishops’ concern, too: liberate the hardened criminals, not from capital punishment, but from eternal damnation.

If spiritual leaders wish to follow the example of Christ, they should do everything in their power to *save the soul of a sinner*. This is the primary duty of a spiritual leader. The greatest service that a priest or bishop can perform in the spirit of Christian compassion is to lead the criminal to repentance. Interestingly, it is not a hard job to achieve. While there is a minuscule chance to convert a free-running, prosperous criminal, it is different in the death chamber.

Recently, some States, yielding to the pressure of public opinion, carried out a few executions. But we did not hear that any of the convicts refused the assistance of a prison chaplain. Usually, they show willingness to repent and make their peace with God before execution. If prison chaplains can be instrumental in the conversion of a criminal, which includes the acceptance of the death penalty, then the criminal will receive the forgiveness of Jesus, and will gain eternal life. (No matter how long the sufferings of Purgatory will last, the opening from there leads only in one direction: heaven.)

From the perspective of eternal life, physical death is not a loss. It is not the supreme evil for a human person, either. The supreme evil is the damnation of the soul into eternal hell. Jesus said:

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. But rather, be afraid of him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell” (Mt. 10, 28).

It is a great mistake when spiritual leaders concentrate their efforts on saving the criminals from execution, but they are not worried about their unrepentant souls and about their future crimes and victims. What kind of love is that which saves the body but loses the soul?

It is not honest either to induce the criminal into the belief that he can be forgiven and be reconciled with God without any meaningful cooperation of his own, without any satisfaction of his own.

—What about the mercy of God? Is not God merciful?

—Yes. God is merciful, but the mercy of God does not forfeit the justice of God.

The mercy of God can be applied only to *repentant sinners*. Any man who has committed a crime should offer true repentance with a proportionate satisfaction, which together with the satisfaction of Christ, will answer God’s justice, and will open the treasures of God’s forgiving mercy. Without offering proportionate satisfaction to God, there can be no forgiveness. As

ST. PAUL put it: "There can be no forgiveness without bloodshed." (Hebr. 9, 22). *If a murderer is not willing to die for his sin, he has no sincere repentance.* This principle was generally accepted by the early Christians.

When ST. PAUL the Apostle was dragged before the Roman governor, and was accused of various crimes by his adversaries, he made the following statement:

"If I have done any wrong, or committed a crime deserving death, I do not refuse to die" (Acts 25, 11).

The Apostles and disciples regarded capital punishment as part of the working law in cases of murder and other great crimes.

Later, in the history of Christendom, we find other examples when saintly kings, even popes applied capital punishment for the securing of law and order in society.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

In the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we can read about the numberless miracles that ST. PETER, the first pope, performed while healing all the sick people who were presented to him. Yet, the same ST. PETER was instrumental in the sudden death of two of his disciples named *Ananias and Sapphira*. The story shows how much God hates falsehood and lying. Ananias and Sapphira did not kill anybody. They only conspired to tell a story to ST. PETER in order to represent themselves as better Christians than they really were. The Holy Ghost could not tolerate that the spirit of falsehood should permeate the early Christian society. He moved ST. PETER to severely reproach and punish the liars. Both of them met sudden death in the presence of ST. PETER. After this swift judgment, according to Scripture, a *great fear* came upon the members of the early Church. Seeing the fate of Ananias and Sapphira, they got a strong lesson for the love of truth.

DETERRENCE WORKS

There are other stories in the Bible which demonstrate that Christian tradition has never abolished capital punishment for convicted criminals. Today's abolitionists are aware of this. Therefore, they come up with other artificial arguments for their cause. They say that the death penalty is not justified in our society, because we do not have scientific evidence of the deterrent effect of the death penalty.

This is an unscientific and untrue statement. Practical life often provides proof of the deterrent effect of capital punishment. The only reason the opponents do not see it is that they do not want to see it.

During the time when capital punishment was used in this country, several criminals who committed violent crimes abstained from killing their victims, although it would have eliminated them as potential witnesses. At their interrogations, these criminals confessed that the restraining force was the threat of the death penalty. The spectre of the electric chair has actually saved

The Catholic religion has organically grown out of the Old Testament and received its fullness in the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Catholic tradition comprises both the Old and New Testaments.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Let us consider first what was the practice of the Old Testament in handling criminals. The practice relied upon the Laws of God, implemented mostly by the great prophet and lawgiver Moses. Here are some quotations from the Old Testament:

Gen. 9, 6: "From every man I will require the life of his fellow. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed."

Duet. 27, 24-25: "Cursed be he who slays his neighbor in secret. Cursed be he who accepts payment for slaying an innocent man."

Lev. 24, 21: "Whoever slays an animal shall make restitution; but whoever slays a man, shall be put to death."

The death penalty was not unusual in the Old Testament. MOSES has been held in high esteem by Jews and Christians alike, in spite of the fact that MOSES was not sentimental when it came to the problem of weeding out criminals from society. MOSES put people to death not only for murder, but also for breaking certain religious laws.

KING DAVID was another great prophet of the Old Testament, respected by both Jews and Christians. He several times ordered the summary execution of murderers, including a case of the so-called "mercy killing." (2 Kings, 1)

When leaders of the Old Testament meted out capital punishment, they did it in the conviction that it was necessary to maintain the rule of law and order in society, without which the lives of innocent people could not be properly protected.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

One may say as an objection: "That was the Old Testament, but now we are living in the New Testament. Christ has changed everything."

Christ has *not* changed everything. He changed some man-made ritualistic laws, but He has not changed the laws of God, and He did not abolish the capital punishment of hardened criminals. He explicitly stated: "Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill." (Mt. 5, 17)

One might ask: "Does this mean that there is no improvement in the penal practice of the New Testament over that of the Old One?"

—Yes, there is. Even a two-fold improvement.

The first phase of the improvement makes it imperative that punishment should *not* be motivated by personal vengeance, by the spirit of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, torture for torture, — but by impartial justice in the self-defense of society.