

# THE UNIVERSITY CONCOURSE

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## Public schools and moral degeneracy

by Martha Blandford

Dr. Regis Martin's article, "Where Do We Go From Here?" in the September issue of the *Concourse* presented a depressing, but unfortunately accurate view of American popular culture. Reading it, I was reminded of Orwell's *1984*: how the fictional state controlled the "proles" through the use of pornography, alcohol and the lottery. These "controls" parallel those that enslave the masses of today. I asked myself the question Dr. Martin posed: "Have we grown so callous to the corrupting effects of sin, so demoralized by the disorder around us, that none of it matters any more?" And yet, in *1984* it wasn't so much the sin of the proles that was so astounding—wrong and pathetic—yes, but evil—no. The real evil existed in the state, whose power-mongers systematically inculcated in their people a debilitating moral passivity, which led to decadence as an escape.

Public education is one means by which the state is rendering its civilians morally handicapped.

One can see the same sort of rampant passivity and escapism in our society, especially among our younger generations. What is causing this horrifying moral breakdown? If one believes that knowledge of reality (truth) and an understanding of truth (wisdom) are prerequisite in the formation of a

strong conscience, then an absence of these things could be a big part of the answer. Can it be that our government is responsible for their absence? If so, what is their *modus operandi*?

Public education is one means by which the state is rendering its civilians morally handicapped. Many people, including zealous proponents of public education, agree that it has become a colossal failure. After decades of argument, debate and experi-

mentation, it has become increasingly clear that reform programs and refinancing gimmickry will not save the system. What went wrong? One good answer is that the public school system

has failed because it is a socialist system education, and therefore shares all the symptoms and consequences observed in other examples of socialist enterprises, such as ever-burgeoning overhead costs and lack of incentives to succeed. More specifically, I believe there are three important ways in which state schooling undermines the education process. First, public education has failed in teaching the basic subject

*See Public Schools on page 8*

### Should Catholics oppose the death penalty?

by Noelle Hiester

I was very disturbed by the execution of Karla Faye Tucker—not because she was a woman and pretty, or because she was a Christian, but because she had exhibited such a change in her life. Karla Faye's execution and the debate which preceded it made me re-evaluate my own position of the death penalty. I had always held that the state has the right to impose the penalty of death, and should impose it for the most heinous crimes, and I struggled with the Pope's declaration in *Evangelium Vitae* that cases which demanded the death penalty were rare if not non-existent, which seemed to

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## QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS



### Thank you

Thank you for the wonderful apostolate work you are doing for the Lord and His people through the *Concourse*. We are enjoying the lively discourses on the varied theological and philosophical topics. We miss the University and the late-night intellectual pow-wows we used to have there. These sorts of discussions and dialogues rarely occur in typical parish life—at least not with the same depth and breadth. And so the *Concourse* is helping fill a need that was once filled attending graduate school in Steubenville.

Jim and Meg Beckman

*Jim (class of '87) and Meg (Forsyth,*

*MA class of '93) Beckman live in Colorado, where Jim is a youth minister, and Meg is coordinator of adult religious education programs for the diocese of Denver. Jim also continues to lead FUS youth conferences. They are expecting their second child in October.*

### Little hope for change

In his article on the recent statement by the Holy See on the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priests and its impact upon the use of extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, Jeff Ziegler quotes the popular aphorism, “*Roma locuta est, causa finita est.*” This saying is based upon a passage from one of the sermons of Saint Augustine, “*Causa finita est: utinam aliquando finiatur error*” (The cause is finished; would that the error were as speedily finished).

Judging by the response to the Holy See’s document by many American pastors and even bishops, I think it would be foolish to expect any widespread change in current practice. John L. Allen, Jr., writing in the January 9, 1998 issue of the *National Catholic Reporter*, said “regardless of what Rome may decree, lay ministry is here to stay.”

Clarification of the Church’s law (on this or any matter) is not effective when so many individuals in positions

of responsibility within the Church are not receptive to the authentic teaching of the Holy See.

Noel S. McFerran  
Information Services Librarian  
John Paul II Library

### Different degrees of authority

*A friend sent me the following remarks on last issue’s editorial. I asked for and received his permission to publish them anonymously. KvS.*

**You wrote a nice piece in support** of Ziegler’s very interesting article, but I was a little puzzled by the way you led with infallibility. The document certainly doesn’t come close to an exercise of infallibility. I would think in fact that a Catholic who complied with the guidelines on giving communion and who affirmed the dignity of the ordained minister and the tasks proper to the layman, would be within his rights to think the guidelines unfortunate and to work through the appropriate channels to have them reversed. I personally am glad of the directives of this document, but I can think of plenty of post-Conciliar curial legislation on the liturgy—for example, the Vatican suppression of the Mass of Pius V, or the

# THE UNIVERSITY CONCOURSE

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#### Editorial Policy

*The University Concourse* is an independent journal of opinion, published by alumni and students of Franciscan University, but not formally affiliated with the University. It is designed to encourage fruitful discourse among members of the FUS community. The views expressed in this journal do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, nor those of the Franciscan T.O.R.s or other University officials.

We welcome submissions from faculty, students, administrators, staff, alumni, parents, trustees, benefactors and friends, on any topic of interest to a general university readership, provided they are courteously expressed and framed with a view to advancing the welfare of FUS and/or Catholic culture at large.

We recommend opinions be kept to fewer than 1,500 words.

Contributions should be submitted on a 3.5" disk, either to *The University Concourse*, Box 27, University Boulevard, Steubenville, OH 43952, or sent to e-mail address: “Concours@clover.net”

Please include your full name, phone-number and e-mail address, if you have one.

We will consider printing submissions anonymously or under a pen-name; however, in general we wish to encourage open, “face to face” discussion. In either case, the editors require the full name and phone-number of the author of each opinion.

approval of the barbarous ICEL translations—that I can't help regarding as unfortunate and where I console myself with the thought that the *causa* is not *finita*. In other words, much as we want to welcome this new document, we don't, I would think, want to welcome in such a way that our hands and consciences are tied when a less satisfactory document comes around.

**The Editor replies:**

My thanks for the chance to correct a misleading editorial. I had not meant to imply that this new document is on a level with an ex-cathedra exercise of papal infallibility. My intention was to reflect not so much on infallibility proper as on the world—confounding happiness and freedom that flow from the authority of the Church exercised in all its dimensions. From this point of view, even a document that we may legitimately consider unfortunate and work to see reversed can be accepted with joy—perhaps as a discipline or a mortification; an opportunity to express our humble, filial obedience to an imperfect Mother, and to show our absolute confidence in God's ultimate protection of the Church, in spite of her fallen aspect. But, I expressed myself badly.

Now that the point has been clarified, however, I am wondering just what kind of authority this document does have. My impression from reading Mr. Ziegler's article was that it was something more than a routine curial instruction. It seemed to me to have an air of finality to it—as if the Church has been observing the efforts of the faithful and deliberating over the question for some time, and is now ready to pronounce definitively that certain practices (including some that have been normal at FUS) are not fully consistent with the mysteries at hand.

But I am certainly no expert on these things. Is there a theologian in the house who might be willing to help us out?

## Prone to shouting matches?

Why not try a more civilized way of making your point....



Write it down your opinion and send it to Box 27 or [Concours@clover.net](mailto:Concours@clover.net)

## What were households meant to be?

I am writing in response to an article by Kathleen van Schaijik last semester in which she criticized the present situations of households on campus. She wrote about an “official interference with the workings of individual households,” and she questioned the purpose and meaning of the household covenants. As an FUS student interested in joining a household or possibly starting my own, I wonder what she thinks the purpose of households originally was, if indeed that purpose has changed over the course of time. What was it that made households then different and better for Kathleen van Schaijik?

*The author, who is a sophomore, prefers to remain anonymous.*

**Kathleen van Schaijik replies:**

I am very happy to hear that students are raising questions like these. It is just the sort of thing I hoped for when I wrote my article. It is so temptingly easy to just go with the flow and do what we're told—accepting the system uncritically, ignoring evidence that

things may be off kilter, and avoiding the responsibility to discern carefully for ourselves what is right and good and what may not be.

We should not forget that the household system, though obviously inspired by God, is nevertheless a human institution—subject to error, requiring correction and open to improvement. We do a serious disservice to that institution, to the University as whole, and to the students in particular, if fail to acknowledge this in practice—for instance, by treating honest and responsible criticism as if were an “attack” on households.<sup>1</sup>

As to the purpose of households, I think, at its most basic level, it is now what it always has been: to provide a means of conversion and personal growth for the FUS student body.

The difficulty, as I see it, is not with the purpose itself, but with the way that purpose is practically carried out by Student Life. In my view, too many at FUS (consciously or not) tend to interpret student evangelization too much in terms of *pastoring*. Those who make this mistake put too much emphasis on “programs” and “teachings;” they treat households as if they were mainly a way

of organizing students into accessible groups, open to a sort of trickle-down formation process going from Student Life to the RDs to the coordinators to the members; they look askance at households who resist their initiatives and prefer to go their own route; they think they strengthen and improve household life when they redouble the pastoring—more teachings, more central programming, more “access” to individual students through mandatory meetings. Whereas, in my opinion, as I said in my earlier article, the greatness of household life<sup>2</sup> lies its being precisely *not* a pastoring thing, but rather a way for peers to help and support each other in their life of faith.<sup>3</sup>

I think that this bad tendency has always been present to a certain degree, just as it was present in the covenant communities which inspired the household system. But, by the nature of these things, if the tendency isn’t deliberately checked, it gets worse over time. When I was a student, at least for the first two years, there was far less of it.

Much more could and should be said. The discussion has barely begun. I hope others will send in their perspec-

tives, including current students and staff members.

*Besides the four years spent as a student at FUS, and the five semesters on the Gaming campus, Kathleen van Schaijik resided in Steubenville from 1994-1996, during which time she was frequently on campus and otherwise in close contact University students, staff and professors, as well as with household advisers. Her husband Jules taught philosophy at FUS during the 1995-1996 school year. Her parents live in Steubenville. Her father, Nicholas Healy, is a University Vice President.*

<sup>1</sup> We should always be vigilant against error in any human institution, but at FUS we have special reason for being on our guard in the recent history of the covenant communities with which our University is so closely tied (culturally and historically speaking). There we see, graphically illustrated, the serious damage that can be done through even divinely-inspired, well-intended, and zealously applied programs for Christian living. Among the things we should have learned through that painful experience, is the importance of encouraging public reflection and open criticism of such programs.

<sup>2</sup> While I’m on the subject, I’ll seize the opportu-

nity to answer an objection to my previous article, which I’ve heard second hand more than once, and which goes something like this: “Kathleen van Schaijik doesn’t know what she’s talking about when she says households are a grassroots thing. They were never grassroots; they were instituted by Father Michael when he became president, and they have been organized and run by the Student Life Office ever since.” Here is my answer to this objection:

When I said that households were essentially a grassroots thing, I was not speaking of their historical facticity, but rather of their “genius,” that is, of their distinctive greatness—of what it is about them that makes them such a powerful instrument for good at FUS. It is true, as a matter of historical fact, that households did not arise spontaneously from the student body, but were rather instituted (even imposed) by university officials. I think it is also safe to say that if they had *not* been officially instituted, they never would have happened. Nevertheless, I still say they are essentially grassroots—not because of how they began, but because of what they *are*, namely, a network of peer-support. University officials (thanks be to them and to God) got households off the ground, but once there, they took wing, so to speak, and began to live a life of their own—the kind of life that thrives best when its left mostly alone.

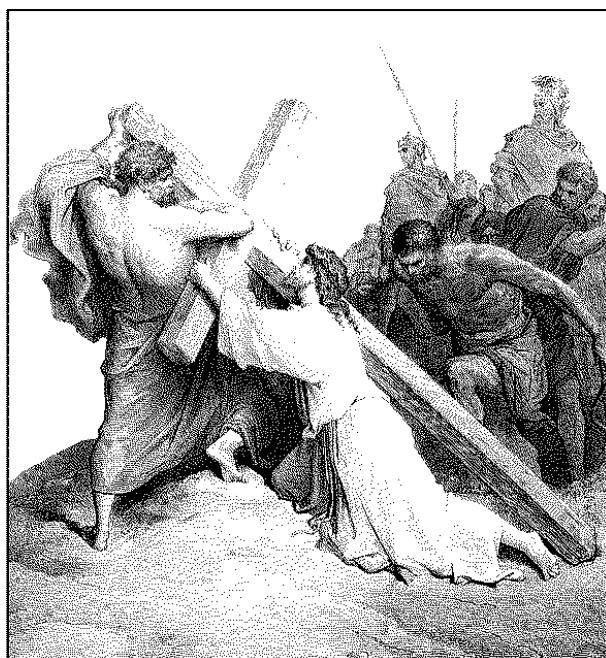
<sup>3</sup> Not that I have anything against pastoring, in its place. What I’m against is the reduction of evangelization to pastoring, which tends to downplay or overlook the (often times more valuable) *other* ways the Holy Spirit is moving among students, such as through their friendships or through their studies.

**J**esus continues to live his passion.  
He continues to fall, poor and hungry, just  
like he fell on the way to Calvary.

Are we at his side to volunteer to help  
him? Do we walk next to him with  
our sacrifice, with our piece of bread—  
real bread—to help him get over his  
weakness?

—Mother Theresa

(Taken from “In My Own Words”, Liguori Publications, ©1989)



# How hobbits and company might really exist

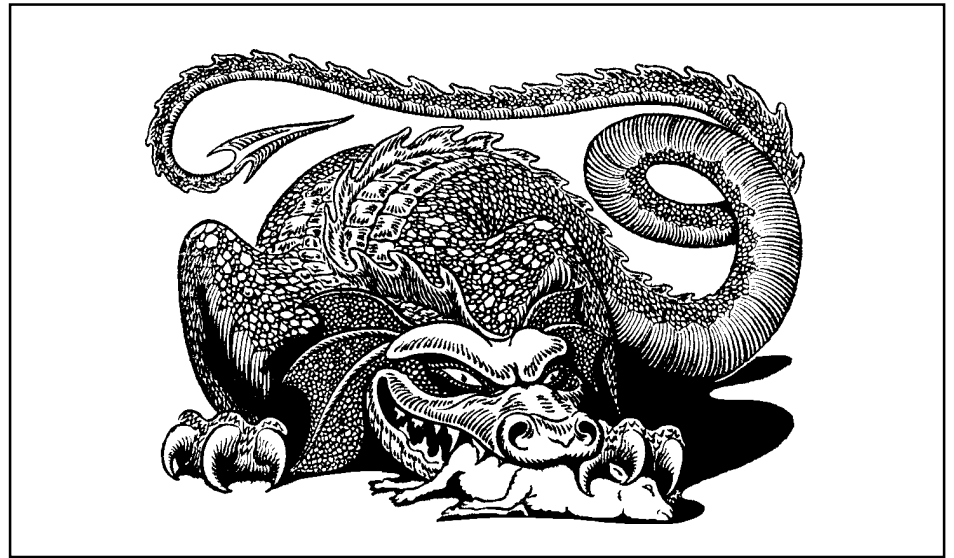
by Michael Healy

LATE IN 1996, JUSTINE SCHMIESING AND DR. HOLMES BROUGHT UP SOME INTERESTING POINTS CONNECTED WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF

EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE IN THE *CONCOURSE*. IN HER ARTICLE, Mrs. Schmiesing remarked in a footnote: "I regret to note that my theory rules out the possibility of the real existence of the inhabitants of Tolkien's Middle-Earth—elves, dwarves, hobbits, and the like—but I see no way around it."

I am an avid Tolkien fan, with a knowledge of his works somewhat too intimate for my own good, so I knew that I would eventually have to reply to those words.

First of all, we must reject the idea that Tolkien conceived of Middle-Earth as another planet or as an inhabitable region at the core of this planet. The term "Middle-Earth" is a direct translation into English of Old Norse "Midgard." In Norse myth, which highly influenced Tolkien's writing, "Midgard" is the name given to this planet. Middle-Earth, therefore, is Earth in the distant past. This may or may not be apparent in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* but it becomes more and more obvious in Tolkien's lesser known works, such as *The Silmarillion* and *The Book of Lost Tales*. In fact, in *The Book of Lost Tales* Tolkien makes this plain as day by referring to England, Rome, Babylon—and even states that the fall of the Elvish city of Gondolin was more disastrous than the fall of Rome or Babylon! And, of course, the sinking of Numenor is comparable to all the myths of lost continents that we see even today—but particularly to the sinking of Atlantis. The Akallabeth could even be rewritten as Plato's account of the sinking of Atlantis if the names were changed and its first four pages cut and all references to the events



of those pages cut or altered.

One may naturally ask, "If this is so, when did the events in Tolkien's books supposedly occur?" The answer can be deduced from Plato's dating of the sinking of Atlantis and Appendix B to *The Return of the King*. According to Plato, Solon learned on a visit to Egypt that Atlantis had sunk 9,000 years before their time. Solon lived in the late sixth century before Christ, so it seems that Atlantis is said to have sunk in roughly 9,500 B.C. This means that the year that Tolkien gives for the sinking of Numenor in Appendix B, S.A. 3319, is equivalent to the year 9,500 B.C. Using this as a starting point, one can accurately determine the equivalent year on the Gregorian calendar for any date in the Second and Third ages of Middle-

Earth and can come to approximately equivalent years for the First Age of Middle-Earth. The War of the Ring can be dated, by this method, to 6,360-6,359 B.C.

Middle-Earth, therefore, exists.

We're living on it. Therefore, the possibility of the existence of Tolkien's human characters is equal to the possibility of the existence of the non-historical characters in historical fiction or the heroes of mythology. But there is no reason why hobbits could not have existed either. How can I claim this? In the first part of the prologue to *The Fellowship of the Ring* Tolkien writes, "It is plain indeed that in spite

If Elves  
and  
Dwarves  
exist Christ  
wants us to  
convert  
them to  
Christianity.

of later estrangement Hobbits are relatives of ours: far nearer to us than Elves, or even than Dwarves." It seems to me

that there can be only one interpretation of these words: whether he would state it directly or not, Tolkien conceived of the Hobbits as a race of pygmy human beings who happened to have hairy feet and live long lives—not as a distinct race like the Elves. This invalidates the idea that since the Bible does not mention Hobbits, they cannot exist. For if Hobbits are human pygmies, they are as completely a part of the human race as pygmy tribes living today.

What of the Elves and Dwarves? Tolkien deals with their origins in *The Silmarillion*. In the *Ainulindale* he makes it clear that in his conception of the creation of Middle-Earth the Elves were in exactly the position that Mrs. Schmiesing deems impossible—that of a non-human intelligent race that is as much a part of God’s plan as humanity is. How is this possible? Let us recall that Dr. Holmes points out in his article that being made “in the image and likeness of God” need not be interpreted literally. It seems to me that the Bible supports this view. Genesis 1: 27 states, “So God created man in His own image and likeness, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” If one interprets this as meaning that human beings physically resemble God, one will be hopelessly confused. It clearly implies that both men and women are made in the image

and likeness of God—yet God is nowhere referred to as a hermaphrodite, and even if He were, neither sex would be wholly in His image and likeness. No—the meaning must be that we humans resemble God in our immortal souls, in our ability to love one another, in our ability to reason and in our ability, with the help of God’s grace, to grow in virtue. If these are the traits that make us “like unto God,” any other being that has these traits is also made in God’s image and likeness. Tolkien repeatedly makes it clear that his Elves have immortal souls and can love and reason and grow in virtue.

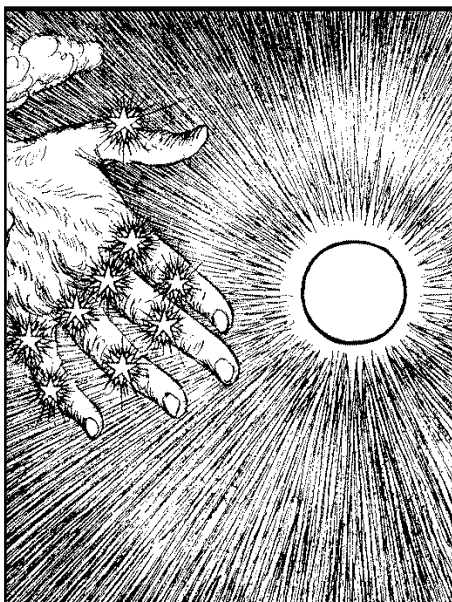
From this point of view, if the existence of Elves is not affirmed in the Bible, at least it is not denied. Besides, the Bible itself seems to contradict the idea that only those things which are mentioned in the creation stories in Genesis actually exist. Where in Genesis 1 or 2 is the creation of angels mentioned? Therefore, if the Bible does not deal with the creation of angels, though they undoubtedly exist, how can we say that any being not mentioned in the biblical creation stories cannot exist?

Mrs. Schmiesing asks in her article how Christ’s passion, death and resurrection could apply to any non-human race. Dr. Holmes provides a partial answer when he points out that C.S. Lewis, in his space trilogy, presents Mars as being inhabited by intelligent races that never succumbed to original sin and Venus as being inhabited by a newly created intelligent race that has yet to be tempted, and which also, in the end, does not succumb to sin. But this can only be a partial answer to Mrs. Schmiesing’s question, for it does not take into account non-human sentient life that *has* succumbed to temptation. This is precisely the condition of Tolkien’s Elves and Dwarves. But I ask: Need Christianity work only for the salvation of human beings? The answer would seem to be, “Of course! Christ came as a man, was born of a woman, preached to men, and died for their salvation. How could any non-human race be saved through Him?” Never-

theless, I think that there may be reason to believe that Elves, Dwarves, and aliens could be saved through the Church. Why? Mk: 16: 15-16 is generally translated, “And He said to them, ‘Go into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: but he that does not believe shall be condemned.’” Note that in this, His final instruction to the apostles before His ascension, Christ tells the apostles to proclaim the gospel not to all men but to all creatures. Thus, He is not revealing to us whether there are any beings other than humans to whom preaching the gospel is worthwhile, but He implies through his choice of words that such beings may exist and that if they do He wants us to preach the gospel to them. Thus if Elves and Dwarves exist Christ wants us to convert them to Christianity. He would not want us to preach the gospel to Elves and Dwarves unless there were hope for their salvation through Christ’s death and resurrection. Therefore, I think there must be a way for non-human sentient beings who live on this earth to be redeemed through Christianity.

What of aliens? Interestingly enough, the word used for “world” in Mk 16:15 is *kosmo* (kosmos), which can not only be translated as “world” but also as “universe.” Thus, based on the Greek text, Christ might have said, “Go into the whole universe and preach the gospel to every creature.” Thus Christ has not told us whether there is sentient life on other planets, but He has said, once again, that if it exists we are to convert it to Christianity.

Mrs. Schmiesing states her remaining argument thus: “[God] has called us His Bride— could He share such intimacy with another race and not be an adulterer?” I reply that if this were true on a cosmic scale, it would also be true on a smaller scale—the relationship of individual persons with God. Would Mary accuse God of being an “adulterer” for offering us a chance to be saved? Or did God betray each angel



by creating other angels and humanity? Asking whether God could share intimacy with another race and not be an “adulterer” is like asking whether He can share intimacy with more than one person and not be an “adulterer”—which I believe to be tantamount to questioning the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. For if God were truly the Jealous Lover (as Kay Cummins put it in her reply to Mrs. Schmiesing) would not God the Father and God the Son be so anxious to preserve their love that they would refuse to allow the Holy Spirit to spirate? And if they refused to permit the procession of the Holy Ghost, would they decide to create us? I think not. If they did we would potentially be “interlopers” threatening to ruin the love of God the Father and God the Son. Even if they did create us they would not offer us salvation, for then we would indeed threaten to distract the Father from the Son or the Son from the Father.

If God were the Jealous Lover, I think that He would never have created anything. And just as we find in experience that God’s love for others somehow adds to the fullness of our own relationship with Him, it seems to me that if the Lord made any non-human intelligent races they would be our complements, just as man and woman are complementary, and would further, not hinder, our relationship with Him. In other words, just as man and woman are a gift to each other so would the human race and non-human intelligent races be a gift to each other to further the glory of God and to heighten the magnitude of His gift to us all.

I think that these arguments demonstrate that according to Tolkien’s conception of the Elves they could indeed exist. Proving the possibility of

the existence of the Dwarves would in general follow along the same lines, though the strange story of their creation complicates things. Tolkien states in the second chapter of the “Quenta Silmarrillion” that the Dwarves believe that they have immortal souls, but that the Elves disagreed. However, since Dwarves can speak and learn and remember and love, I think Tolkien conceived of the Dwarves too as having immortal souls. If he did, it is possible, by these arguments, that they too could exist.

What of the other races of Middle-Earth? To the best of my knowledge, too little is said about the nature of the giants, the monster in the mere outside Moria, the trolls, the Mewlips, or the giant turtles to determine whether they could exist. “Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar” is the One True God. The Ainur, the Valar, and the Maiar are the Angels. Melian, Gandalf, Saruman, Radagast, Tom

Bombadil, Goldberry, the Ents, and the two “Blue Wizards” are Maiar who have taken bodily form—that is, they are “angels incarnate.” Morgoth, or Melkor, is Satan. Sauron is whatever demon is second to Satan. Balrogs, Dragons, werewolves, vampires, and giant spiders are other demons. Therefore, it is unquestionable that they all exist on the spiritual plane. Whether they could exist as Tolkien depicts them depends on whether angels and demons could adopt physical forms and dwell among us. Barrow-wights are demonically possessed corpses. The Nazgul are humans who live continuously on earth through demonic magic and whose bodies do not decay. Instead they gradually become more and more insubstantial until, despite the fact that they still have bodies and may yet be slain, they literally look like ghosts.

Thus, as long as either Elves or Men exist, so could Orcs—and, of course, Men do exist.

Gollum, of course, is a hobbit who started down their path but never completed it.

Finally, let us consider whether Orcs can exist. To answer this we must see how they came into existence in Tolkien’s works. Tolkien offers two theories: one is in the third chapter of the “Quenta Silmarillion” “...all those of the [Elves] who came into the hands of Melkor...were put in prison, and by slow arts of cruelty were corrupted and enslaved; and thus did Melkor breed the hideous race of the Orcs....” Another account appears in a footnote to “The Drúedain” in *Unfinished Tales* “Doubtless Morgoth...bred Orcs from various kinds of Men....” The implication seems to be that to “create” the Orcs, Morgoth (a.k.a. Melkor) ensnared various Elves and Men and bred all beauty and goodness out of the population and bred only ugliness and vice into it. This means that the Orcs, of all things, have a good chance of actually existing! For they are not actually a separate race—they are the result of centuries of diabolical selective breeding on a scale that Nazi Germany would never have dreamed possible. Thus, as long as either Elves or Men exist, so could Orcs—and, of course, Men do exist.

I must admit, though, that I personally do not believe that Elves, Dwarves, or Orcs exist. Nor do I believe that there is intelligent life on other planets. Yet this is only because I do not yet see any convincing proof that non-human sentient physical beings exist. I do not think that Catholic doctrine makes the existence of other intelligent life forms impossible. For we cannot fathom the mind of God, and if it has pleased Him to create other intelligent races for us to share this universe, or even this planet, with, we must admit that it is within His power to create them. If He has done so we may never know His reasons for creating them. But we do know that if we meet any non-human sentient life forms we must accept their existence as His will—and we must evangelize them. ■

*Michael Healy is a junior majoring in philosophy.*

## Public Schools

*Continued from page 1*

areas, the substratum of all higher learning. Secondly, state schooling tacitly teaches values that are anti-family and anti-Christian under the guise of “separation of Church and state.” Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it creates a crippling disdain for learning.

Proponents of government schooling claim that it produces large-scale literacy for all classes of people and that compulsory public schooling greatly benefits society as a whole, since education increases human productivity. But in fact these ideals are illusory. Employers today frequently complain of employees’ inability to follow simple directions, or to even speak and write basic English correctly. Business owners and leaders (who take the education of our youth very seriously, donating billions of dollars to educational programs) share the fear of the future that Dr. Martin expressed when he wrote, “A people besotted for a generation or more on images of deviance, violence and depraved sex cannot even be trusted to keep the machinery going.” As for creating a literate society, research shows that fewer people know how to read and write since public schooling became nationally compulsory in 1900,

and that scores on the American College Test (ACT) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) have declined significantly since the 1950’s.<sup>1</sup>

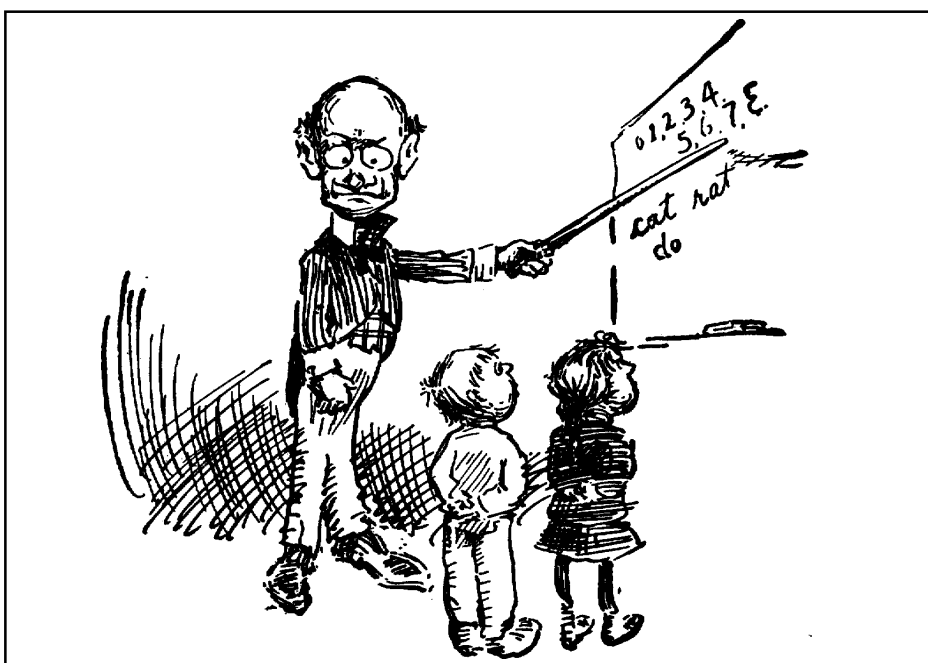
One wonders if education would have been much better off remaining solely in the private sector. “But education is too important to be left to the free market,” supporters of public school tell us. Actually, education, like religion, is too important to be left in the hands of the state.

If one questions the claim that public education is run like other socialist systems, one could consider the philosophy, specifically the epistemology, of the Father of American Education, John Dewey. Dewey’s theories spawned the so-called “progressive” educators, who formally delivered American schoolchildren over to a bankrupt pragmatist philosophy. Dewey’s view of education was to dispense with all “rigidity,” all principles, all necessary laws, whether of reality or of the mind, and to proclaim the final climax of the idealist view: human beings are free to select their own thought patterns in accordance with their own unrestricted choice; they are free to “experiment” with any form of thought which they can imagine or concoct; and, therefore, they are free to attempt to create whatever reality they

choose, no holds barred. The mind, says Dewey, is not a “spectator” and knowledge is not “a disclosure of reality, of reality prior to and independent of knowing...” It would seem from this statement that the goal of progressive educators was not to relate a specific system of ideas on the student, but to destroy his capacity to hold any ideas, on any subject.<sup>2</sup>

Dewey’s epistemology not only rejected the notion of an objective reality outside man’s own experience, but it also created a method of teaching not conducive to any learning beyond memorization. A brief historical note on the development of modern education may clarify this idea. Throughout history, rulers and court intellectuals have aspired to use the educational systems to shape their nations. The model for this was set out by Plato in *The Republic* and was reproduced most faithfully in Soviet Russia, Fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany. But one need not look only to extreme cases to find such uses of public schooling. “Europe’s first national system of education was set up by King Frederick William I of Prussia in 1717. After the defeat at the hands of Napoleon in 1807, King Frederick William III strengthened the state’s hold on society by, among other measures, increasing the power of the school system. He instituted certification of teachers and abolished semi-religious private schools. Children aged 7 to 14 had to attend school. Parents could be fined or have their children taken away if the children did not attend.”<sup>3</sup>

American advocates of compulsory state schooling observed the Prussian system, became enamored of it, and adopted it as their model, creating a standard for educational systems which survives to the present. This system aimed less at forming well-educated adults than at creating good citizens—that is, citizens amenable to the interests of the government. John Taylor Gatto, a former New York City and state Teacher of the Year, wrote: “The whole system was built on the premise that isolation from first-hand information





and fragmentation of the abstract information presented by teachers would result in obedient and subordinate graduates, properly respectful of arbitrary orders.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, rigorous, independent thinking was practically discouraged.

Furthermore, by breaking whole ideas into fragmented “subjects” and by dividing school days into fixed periods, Gatto believes that “self-motivation to learn would be muted by ceaseless interruptions.” Patrick Welsh, another public teacher agrees:

“Imagine an office where you sit at a desk and do the same work as 25 co-workers. No one is allowed to talk. At the end of 50 minutes, a bell rings, and whether you’re finished or not, you must immediately move to another office, have a different boss and different colleagues, and start a job that had nothing to do with what you were just working on. Imagine doing that six or seven times a day. That is the essence of the environment that educators have designed for teenagers full of energy and raging hormones.”<sup>5</sup>

Younger children in public schools face a similar environment. Bursting with curiosity about the world around them, including their fellow pupils, they are ordered to sit still, keep quiet, and don’t touch. That is called “socialization.” If they cannot follow orders, they may be diagnosed as having attention deficit disorder and drugged, or declared “learning disabled”—a label that often haunts throughout life.

According to the progressive’s method of “education,” while Johnny may not be able to read or add or spell or think, he does learn to cooperate with others, to adapt to others,

and to obey his leader.

As in 1984, progressive double-speak disguises disvalues as values. For example, the progressive’s “individual” becomes what Dewey termed the “new individual,” for whom social conformity is the fundamental imperative. The progressives stress “scientific methods” and “intelligence,” while promoting an epistemology that denies the mind’s capacity to grasp reality, including true principles and fixed causal laws. The progressives emphasize the notion of “individual power,” meaning not the power to know reality and live by the moral law, but rather the “power” to create reality subjectively and eschew morality. Americans once wanted education to instill a morality relevant to life; the Deweyites lay claim to this goal, and proceed to disseminate a cynical amorality.

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Besides the subjectivism inherent in the epistemological foundations of this pedagogy, today’s public schools are ruthlessly denuded of every vestige of traditional moral instruction, under a specious interpretation of the separation of Church and state. Nativity scenes are banned from public property; the Ten Commandments may not be displayed, and school prayer is eliminated.

Needless to say, such practices do not ensure that education is “value-neutral.” Public education simply exchanges the values parents wish their children to learn for those the state has chosen.

In the late 1960’s public education added to its list of responsibilities that of educating young people on sex. The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in 1964 gave a grant to a Planned

Parenthood unit in Texas of a little less than half a million dollars. By 1966, the OEO’s financing of sex education had multiplied more than five-fold by the end of that fiscal year.<sup>6</sup>

“Family planning services grew phenomenally from the mid-60’s to the mid-70’s. In 1964, the federal government made its first family planning grant, which served only married women. By 1970, Congress had passed the first national family planning and population legislation. Federal expenditures grew from \$16 million to close to \$200 million. In 1969, there were less than a quarter of a million teenagers using family planning clinics; by 1976 this had swollen to 1.2 million.”<sup>7</sup>

I mentioned earlier what I believe to be one of the most wide-spread, negative consequences of state schooling, i.e. the creation of a disdain for learning. Albert Einstein was a product of a state school modeled after the Prussian education system. Einstein’s intellectual achievements might suggest that the schools in Germany were of high quality. Before drawing that conclusion, however, listen to Einstein’s own words:

“One had to cram all this stuff into one’s mind, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect that, after I had passed the final examination, I found the consideration of any scientific problems distasteful to me for an entire year. It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail.”<sup>8</sup>

Having made these accusations against public education, I realize that many have survived it somewhat unscathed, and many others of us have reached great success as strong

Christian leaders in innumerable vocations. My point here is that it seems that the current educational system is deteriorating at a rapid pace while corroding the natural desire of our young people to learn. Left without this thirst for truth, beauty and goodness, man is left to boast of his effronteries like the prostitutes, drug addicts and racists the talk-show hosts use to torture good people like Dr. Martin's wife.

Parents, it is true, can opt out of the system, but only at an enormous cost. They have to be willing and able to pay a double tuition—once in the form of compulsory taxation for the public education they are rejecting, and again in the form of a voluntary fee for the private educational services they actually want their children to have. I know that many *Concourse* readers choose to homeschool their children as an alternative to public education. I am greatly inspired by their actions, and have much to learn about home-schooling methods. Home-schooling provides an opportunity for parents and children to declare their independence from the state's educational system. They need not wait for reforms; they can do it at once. (Of course, the abolition of school taxes and a major reduction in the general

burden of big government would make it easier for families to turn to that form of education.) Home-schooling also provides possibly the best environment for real learning, an education not devoid of stimulation or of moral instruction.

In conclusion, no single institution should be held responsible for all the world's woes, and in my criticisms of state schooling I do not want to underestimate the power of an individual's free will in rising above his environment. My question is how "free" is an individual who, as a youngster, has been subjected to this method of "learning" for twelve years? I also want to state that I do not believe that all public teachers and educators conspire against the masses to intentionally dumb them down. I'm sure that the majority of those involved in public education are true believers in what they are doing, and mean to do well by their students. My intention here is to simply show that the consequences of public schooling are many and grave. In robbing a child of knowledge, diminishing his love of learning, and substituting his moral instruction with a state religion, government schooling erodes humanity. ■

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Murray and R. J. Herrnstein, "What's Really Behind the SAT-score Decline?" *Public Interest*, Winter 1992, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *The Quest for Certainty* (New York, Putnam's, 1960), pp.44, 137.

<sup>3</sup> Murray N. Rothbard, *Education, Free and Compulsory: The Individual's Education* (Wichita, Kans.: Center for Independent Education, undated), p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1992), pp.10 Gatto is the former New York State and City Teacher of the Year who in his acceptance address denounced the schools as antichild and antifamily.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Welsh, "The Bored of Education: An apology from a Teacher", *The Washington Post*, "Outlook" section, June 21, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Sowell, *The Vision of The Anointed: Self-congratulation as a Basis for Social Policy* (New York: Basic Books, A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.), pp. 14-15.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore Ooms, *Teenage Pregnancy in a Family Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), p.26.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Paul Goodman, *Compulsory Mis-education and The Community of Scholars* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), p.6.

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## Death Penalty

*Continued from page 1*

practically shut the door on the use of the death penalty.

The Catholic Church does not deny that the death penalty is one of the options reserved for legitimate authority. The Catechism states: "...the traditional teaching of the Church has acknowledged as well-founded the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty."

(2266) The Catechism goes on to caution: "If bloodless means are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons, public authority should limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person." (2267)

There are three major purposes of punishment by the State as outlined in the Catechism. The first and foremost is justice. The crime must be paid for by a commensurate punishment, that is, one which rectifies the violation of persons and the disorder in society caused

by the crime. Secondly, punishment is intended as a protection for society against the aggressions of the criminal. Finally, it should have remedial value in bringing the offender to express contrition for his crimes and to amend his life.

John Paul II, in *Evangelium Vitae* expresses himself in even stronger terms on the possible case for using the death penalty. He states:

It is clear that, for these purposes [for punishment] to be achieved, *the nature and extent of the punishment* must be carefully evaluated and decided upon, and ought not go to the extreme of executing the offender

except in cases of absolute necessity: in other words, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society. Today however, as a result of steady improvements in the organization of the penal system, such cases are very rare, if not practically non-existent.

The arguments advanced by the Pope and in the Catechism against using the death penalty refer to the improved conditions of penal systems, especially in advanced countries. Because of these improved conditions, criminals can be taken out of society and prevented from inflicting further harm without having to be made extinct themselves. This is a way which is more in keeping with the dignity of human life, even the life of criminals. When a criminal is executed, and he does not pose a danger to society, it sends the message that his life was worthless. While it is very tempting to view felons guilty of the most awful crimes as valueless, it is in fact not true. They too have been made in the image and likeness of God and have a dignity which cannot be given away, even in the face of horrible offenses against God and man. If this were the case many actions which are not prosecutable in the legal sphere, but which are also heinous would also result in devaluing people. Abortion is also murder and adultery is considered one of the most serious of sins, but the people who commit these serious offenses are able to find forgiveness and the strength to begin again.

Thus, there is a certain way that we can view the death penalty as an

injustice against the sanctity of life. The attack does not stop with the life of the criminal which, hard as it may be for us to understand, is precious in the eyes of God, but reaches to each and every one of us. If we get into the habit of thinking that some people deserve death, we get out of the habit of remembering that they are precious in God's sight, that they too can receive forgiveness from God and the grace to amend their lives.

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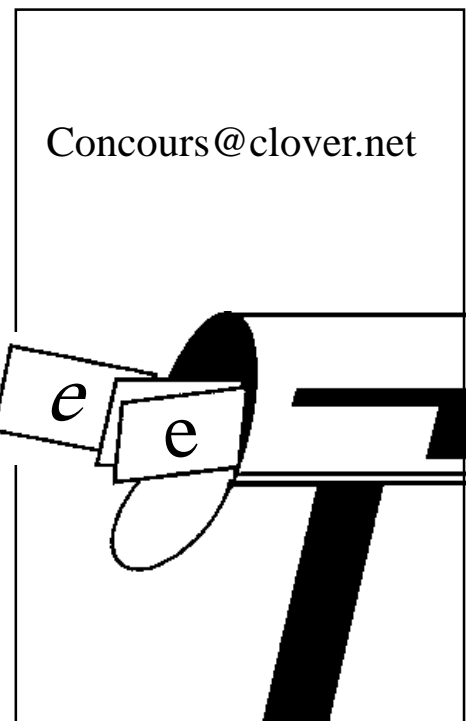
Karla Faye Tucker had once believed that she should pay for her crime with her life. However, at the challenge of a friend she began to study the issue more closely and came to understand the value of human life. She said, "But I know the value of human life now. I can't believe in the death penalty or abortion or mercy killings. I've been in a position to take life. I know how horrible it is."

With this attack on life, even on the lives of the hardest of criminals, comes the response which we witnessed outside the prison in Texas where Karla Faye Tucker was executed. I was shocked to hear people actually cheering at the announcement of the death of another person. The husband of Mrs. Thornton, the woman murdered by Karla Faye Tucker told all other victims to demand the death penalty as their right. He refused any forgiveness, even in the face of Karla Faye Tucker's execution, and plainly showed that he is continuing to be bitter against her.

There are many arguments against the death penalty. These include the surprising statistics which show that

states in which the death penalty is legal often have a higher rate of crime than those without the death penalty. Also, many argue that the death penalty costs much more than keeping a prisoner in jail for the rest of his life. And, perhaps the most serious objection is that this punishment could be wrongfully applied. There are many examples of men who have been executed and later were discovered to be innocent. While these objections have merit in considering the advisability of using the death penalty, they take a back seat to the main question: Is the death penalty the only way of achieving justice in this situation? Are there other punishments, for example, life in prison, which would also correct the wrong which was done?

In Karla Faye Tucker's case, all the secondary reasons for and against execution were missing. There was no question of the state executing an innocent person. She, herself had testified as to her guilt. On the other hand, Karla Faye Tucker was clearly no longer a menace to society. She converted to evangelical Christianity within six months of her jail term, expressing contrition for her crimes. She counted among her supporters the brother of one of her murder victims



and one of the jurors who voted for the death penalty. All that was left were the facts of her crime and the punishment which should follow from it.

The state of Texas decided that they could not commute Karla Faye's sentence from death to life in prison. I have not been able to find any particular reason offered for its decision, but lacking any other motive it seems that the board believed that her crime was so horrible that nothing could pay for it except her death, and nothing could mitigate that.

This idea—that there is no possible way to make amends after the crime has been committed—is, strictly speaking, not Catholic. The sacrament of Confession is the primary external example of God's continuing mercy in the world.

In our country the separation of Church and State is a religiously held law. For this reason, the State cannot invoke the new law which Jesus Christ came to establish, the law which replaces "an eye for an eye" with "turn the other cheek." At the same time, a State which allows no place for mercy in its judgments is an inhumane place to live. In all states of our Union, there are parole boards. The job of these

boards is to decide who has been rehabilitated enough to try life again outside of prison. These boards represent the mercy of the State. They may, on evidence of good behavior and a change of heart, give a person a second chance. Thus, there is an acknowledgment in our justice system that contrition and repentance allow for a response of mercy. Does the same not apply to Death Row inmates?

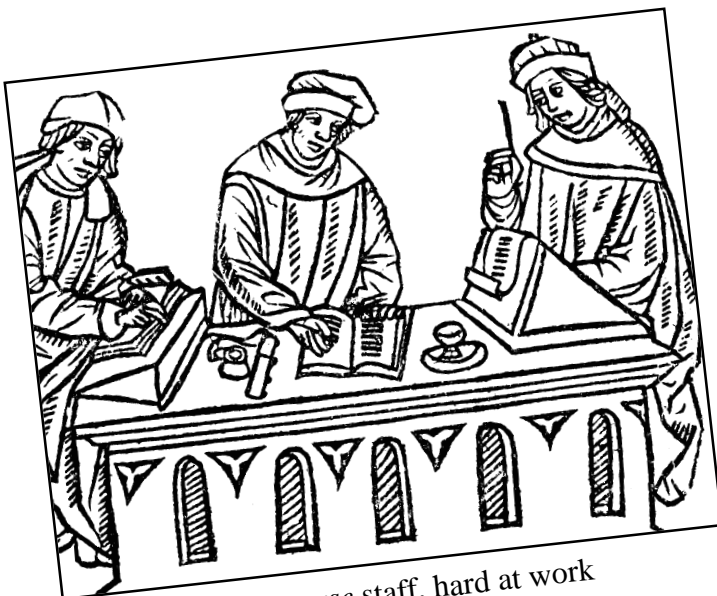
I was amazed to find that most people thought that Karla Faye Tucker was asking for special consideration because she was female and had converted to Christianity. In the many debates which I read, the consensus seemed to be that Ms. Tucker should be executed because she was a woman. Her execution would prove that women were treated with equality even in the jails of Texas. Contrary to these perceptions are the words of Karla Faye Tucker herself. She responded to this charge in an interview in Newsweek, "I say gender should not play any role in this at all...If this was a man, and the same [personal reform had occurred], he should be considered as an individual also." The issue was not about gender and religion; it was about justice,

contrition and mercy.

While the State may carry out a death sentence, they should reserve that right for serious cases where there is no other option. To do otherwise is to further offend the dignity of life. And, where a death sentence has been deemed necessary, there should always be the possibility of mercy. To show no mercy is to act in a manner no more civilized than the criminal who shows no respect for society.

Karla Faye Tucker once said that she hoped that her death would bring more people face to face with the question of the death penalty. In the end she left her life, and death, up to the Lord to use as he willed. Perhaps she is the means the Lord has chosen to challenge Christians to take a closer look at the death penalty. Though I only knew of her for a few days before her death, I can say that she has been a challenge to me, in my faith, in my concept of other people, especially criminals, and in my view of the death penalty. ■

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