

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

A Full Gospel Affair

The Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship is a very special organization within the Louisiana State Penitentiary. It is the group which bridges the gap between the Christians and the non-Christians at the Louisiana State Prison. One officer of the group, Walter Wren, Sr., said, "We are not a church. We are just an outreach for the church."

Many prisoners who have since become dedicated born again believers came to their new awareness of Christ via a Full Gospel Saturday evening service.

Recently, the young Christian Outreach group held its annual banquet activity. The group's president, Otis Henry, opened

the 4th Annual Banquet of Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship. Henry began by inviting the guests to come forward and have seats near the front. "We're just looking forward to having a wonderful time in the Lord." He stated, "We know that on every hand the enemy is at work trying to destroy the works of the Lord, but this is more or less what you can look for when you are trying to do something for God." Henry injected, "I see wonderful looks on everybody's faces. We are definitely anticipating having a wonderful time in the Lord tonight."

Henry introduced the Evangelist for the Church of God in Christ congregation, Willie Thomas, to lead the gathering in



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an opening prayer. After the prayer by Thomas, the group's chief officer introduced the master-of-ceremonies for the night, its newly elected vice president, Sidney Deloch.

"Glory to God," Deloch began. "It is again that we are grateful to be found in the presence of the Almighty God." He expressed, "We realize that we didn't do anything so wonderful that we should be here this evening. It's only because of the Grace of God that we have been brought safe thus far."

"We came to have a fine time in the Lord," Deloch proclaimed. "I'm privileged and honored to be found here in the midst of you brothers. I just thank God for each of you that come out tonight."

In his opening Deloch acknowledged the group's inside Sponsor, F. Berlin Hood and his wife. Also on hand for the even-



GARLAND - REACHING OUT

ing was the outside Sponsor for Pentecostal Fellowship and Chaplain for Earl K. Long Memorial Hospital, John H. Brown.

The Welcome Address was delivered by the group's inside Sponsor, Berlin Hood. "I've been gone all week," he remarked. "I just got back a few minutes ago, and it looks like some people got moved and a few other things took place, but we are glad you are here. We hope that each of you have a good time and we just give the Lord praise for everything that is done here tonight."

Mrs. Hood also spoke to the gathering. She simply said, "Thank the Lord for my husband."

Richard Garland, outside sponsor and long-time supporter of the Full Gospel group was the next speaker of the evening.

"We're so happy to have you here tonight," Garland commented. "Even though we are going to get a late start, you know Jesus is never late." He breathed a sigh of relief, then continued. "I've had one of those kind of week ends that you have sometimes when something real important is going on. I just thank God that He is justly moved and He was always ahead of me. Thank God and I'm following along enjoying what He was doing and how He works things out."

Garland who is based in Monroe, Louisiana went on to expound on some of the work done by the Full Gospel group. "I want to welcome each one of you, and all of you visitors, we come here once a month. We just have a good time with the Lord." He pointed out, "This is one thing that we are thankful that the men have supported. You see this is their chapter, and God set it up and then the men came together and made this a Full Gospel Businessmen's Chapter."

"We are an organization designed to reach out," Deloch commented. Then he brought on the President once again.

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"You know I'm happy and delighted to be in the House of the Lord this evening," Henry stated. "For I know that you can get your soul renewed right here. Thank God for everyone that had an opportunity to come out and share with us in this glorious occasion from the Lord." The leader looked about the gathering, then said, "I see some of the sponsors of the different congregations in the building, we'd like to hear a few remarks from them. From Methodist Men we have Elder Edward Smith and his wife Mattie." Henry explained, "The Smiths have been coming up here a number of years and through them many men have been set free."

The Methodist Men outside Sponsor said, "Certainly, I am glad to be in the House of the Lord one more time." He proclaimed "I didn't come against my will. Amen!" Smith as always stirred and exhorted the audience with his remarks. "I thank the Lord for being here and for me being a blessing to somebody, and for all the brethren. I come over once a month and, it just look like the time can't get here fast enough for me to come to the penitentiary and to try to be a helper to someone. That's my purpose." Elder Smith said, "We all need salvation. The ones that don't have it. So tonight, you from outside focus your mind upon the service, you just might get saved in here tonight. Who knows." He concluded, "Certainly, I thank God for you -- you pray for me. And may God forever bless you."

Chaplain John Brown, the outside Sponsor for Pentecostal Fellowship, followed Elder Smith. "God bless you," Brown started, "Look out over all these beautiful faces." He encouraged the audience, "couldn't nobody make me believe that we are in Angola, tonight."

Brown proffered some food for thought for the congregation to ponder then moved on. Absent from the list of guests was one of Full Gospel's strongest supporters, Bro. Jack Ponder. Ponder was at the bedside of his brother who was very ill. Ano-



BUCHANAN - SOULFUL MELODIES

ther staunch Full Gospel sponsor, former Angola Warden Victor Walker did not make the affair because an engagement in Dallas, Texas detained him.

Then Bro. Andrew Joseph, Pastor of the St. John Institutional Baptist Brotherhood was called to bless the meal that was about to be served and the stage was set for a special treat.

After songs by the prison's Gospel Melodies, the congregation was treated to a spiritually moving rendition of song praise from Sis. Patricia Buchanan and Brown Sisters of Delhi, Louisiana.

The congregation responded to the inspired praise with choruses of 'Praise the Lord' and 'Amen.' Then it was time for the formal portion of the program. The officers of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship, International, Chapter 1708 were presented with awards.

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Receiving awards were: Samuel Starks, Secretary; Walter Wren, Sr., Treasurer; Larry Barr, Vice President; and, Shelby Wayne Piper, Assistant Secretary. Each man made comments, but Samuel Starks, Sr. left this lasting impression with the audience about the goodness of God. "He reached down and touched me," Starks stated. "I hope and pray tonight that He reach down and touch you tonight." He retorted, "The Lord doesn't need nobody who is going to play with His word. Call sin where there is sin. There is no partiality with God."

The message was delivered by Brother Michael O'Neal. A Reverend and Pastor of his own church O'Neal Made the trip to Angola for the first time.

He began by having the audience turn to the Book of John, Chapter 15, verse 7. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it



KEYNOTE SPEAKER O'NEAL

shall be done unto you." O'Neal asked, "How many of you believe that." Then he read the 8th and 12th verses of the same chapter., "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Then, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."

"Now I'm going to preach a little bit different style of message tonight." the preacher said. "Before I begin, I'm going to ask you to do something that you might have to do just because I tell you to do it." He asked them to turn to two or three people and say 'I love you,' "shake their hands, look them in the eye and say 'I love you.'" They did.

Then he asked the group to bow their heads with him as he prayed. He began the sermon.

"The question that I am going to show you tonight is not a question of whether you love your brother." He paused. "You may think this is strange, but I'm going to share with you--I'm going to ask you a very different question." O'Neal asked "Do you love yourself? Can you say 'amen' to that?" He continued. "The question is not do you love your brother, but do you love yourself, because we are going to see in God's word tonight that if you can get that basic ingredient of loving yourself the way God wants you to love yourself, then you won't have any problem loving your brother."

"Everyone of us who are here tonight," he proclaimed, "have been called to live our lives the way that God wants us to live our lives! Amen?"

In the sermon, O'Neal went on to bring out scripturally the importance of loving ourselves, second, after loving God - but by illustrating that "we are created in the image of God." "If we don't love ourselves," he illustrated, "then we don't like what God has done. God cares about you. He doesn't want you to hate yourself.