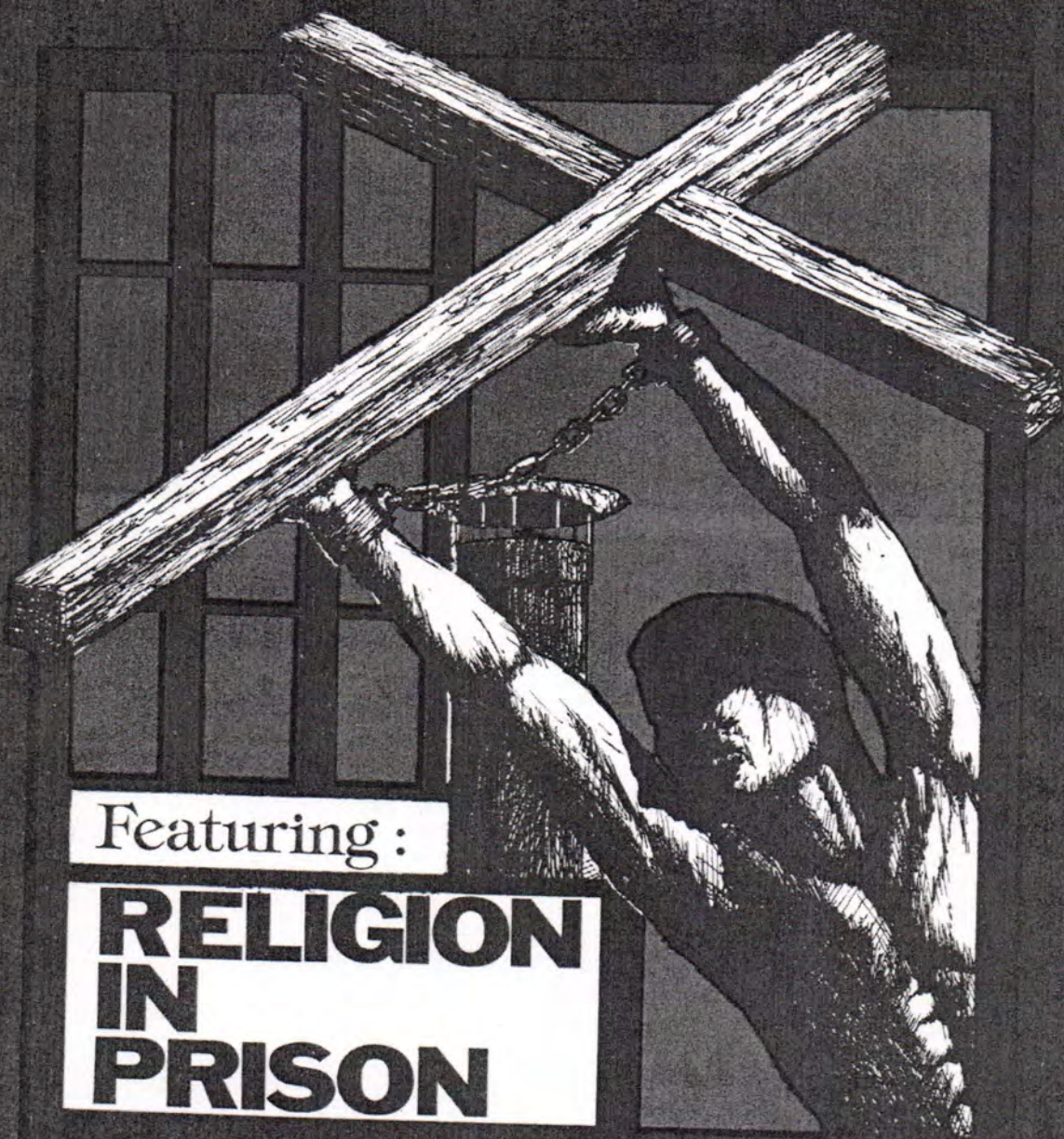


THE ANGOLITE



Featuring :

**RELIGION
IN
PRISON**

INSIDE ANGOLA

RELIGION IN PRISON

Ghostly shadows are etched onto the ground by the powerful, all-seeing security lights that light up the night like a hundred frozen beacons. The concrete arteries that labored all day carrying its human traffic back and forth to various points in the Main Prison look abandoned, resting in a haunting kind of silence. There is little human activity to be seen in the sprawling campus-like prison to the distant observer - the prison manswarm had shut down for the night. But the night is yet young and, from any point in the prison, even the farthest with a tuned ear, you can hear it - a deep thumping kind of music, rolling across the darkness like an ancient chant, coming from an empty room that used to serve as a classroom in the now-abandoned Education Department Building. From a distance, the sound faintly caresses the night but up close it tears through the darkness with a crude and undefinable beauty.

"I don't know what YOU come to do,
but I come to serve the Lord.
I come to jump and shout.
I come to praise his name.
I come to lift him up ..."

In the drab-looking classroom, approximately 40 to 50 men are on their feet, clapping and stomping their feet, repeating each line of the chant as a young preacher in front of the room sings them out. Another man with a guitar stands off to the side, thumping the deep, bluesy sound to accompany the song. The music is loud and the walls of the room vibrate from the sounds of guitar thump-

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

ing, hand-clapping, feet-stomping, and strained voices singing off-key. But the music is rich - that heart-throbbing, old-time arm-raising, hand-clapping black gospel music which was perhaps sung on the very same spot a hundred years ago by the pained and shackled slaves whose life's blood fertilized this land. Generations of flesh have changed, come and gone, but the music - that all-grasping and powerful music - has endured and remains the blessed music for the troubled mind and lost soul.

The men, all dressed in blue denims, are prisoners. The preacher exhorting them in song and lifting their hearts to near frenzy is 37-year-old Allen Brown, who is serving a 39-year sentence for robbing a Delhi, Louisiana Bank. He started preaching the gospel in 1974 in the Ouachita Parish Jail and, since coming to prison, he has become an ordained minister and serves as pastor for the 56-member inmate Church of God In Christ at Angola. He's leading them in their regular Friday night worship services. Every fourth Friday of the month the church holds its services in the prison's A-Building, where auxiliary church members from New Orleans travel here to join them for an evening of old-time religion. On those Friday nights the A-Building fills with the heat of religious fervor and bluesy music. Men and women, sometimes carried away by the fever of the moment, dance or even faint - all in the name of praising the Lord.



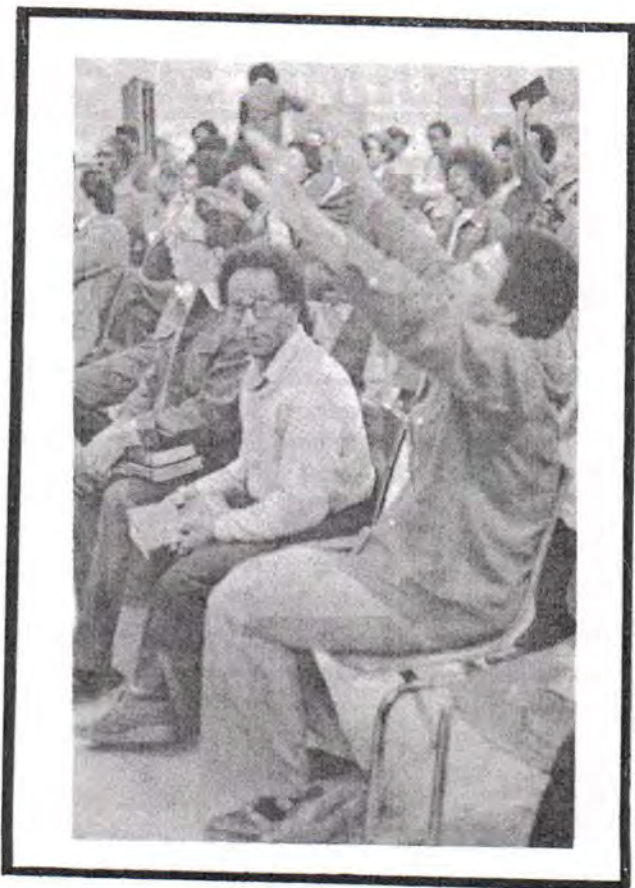
PREACHER...

PRISONER...

VISITOR...

WHEN THE SPIRIT STRIKES, THEY HAVE TO DANCE

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)



Whether in the Education Building among themselves or in the A-Building with fellow worshippers from the free world, the affair is the same and the men are there for the same reason - to sing and preach his eternal glory. They are a motley group of the men who get trapped on this side of life. Defeat is plainly stamped on the faces of many of them. They're men whose eyes have seen too much pain, and whose beings have eagerly embraced the only thing left them in life that offers meaning to their wretched existence. Rejected, banished to a cruel world and held prisoner in it by guns, fences and concrete, they need something to fill, or at least explain, the void in their empty lives, something that holds out promise for Tomorrow. A solemn music sounds in their heart - it is not loud or blaring. It is just ever-present, always there speaking of death and darkness in a silent whisper. There is no creation, no structure, no hope in the music - just that haunting whisper softly singing that special sorrow of all those who know no joy, those who are sad, lost and along.

Overwhelming their emotions, the life-pulsing gospel music echoes down the sullen and empty hallway of the Education Building, reaching deep into the hidden places where each of them don't wish to live, yanking to the surface all of those secret emotions which have long craved expression but denied an outlet - until now, when they can surrender all in the name of the Lord. They can weep, shout, dance, fall on their knees and pray, totally oblivious to what anyone else may think. Some of them, swept away by the rushing tide of emotion evoked by the gut-gripping music, began to dance; a shuffling, uninhibited kind of dancing, with neither grace nor form, that takes one back across the sands of Time, back to the birthplace of their long-dead ancestors, to a time when dancing was part of a religious ritual; a means of exorcising evil spirits, of releasing the emotions of joy, grief, pain and misery, of communicating with God - of trying desperately to understand man's salvation.

The beat of the music is hypnotic and as they dance, lost to the rhythm and the primeval urges raging within them, the guards, the wall and the guns, the memories of the past and the agonies of the present and the problems of the future, slips away from them, much the same as raindrops sliding down the roof. That absorbed look in their faces tells that all has been forgotten, save the moment, the music, the rejoicing, and the strange sensations pulsing through their veins like a salve, bathing the sores of their souls. For that moment, they are in another world, a world lost to Time and Distance, a world which their grating bodies, eyes shut and staring inwardly, has somehow entered, a world where

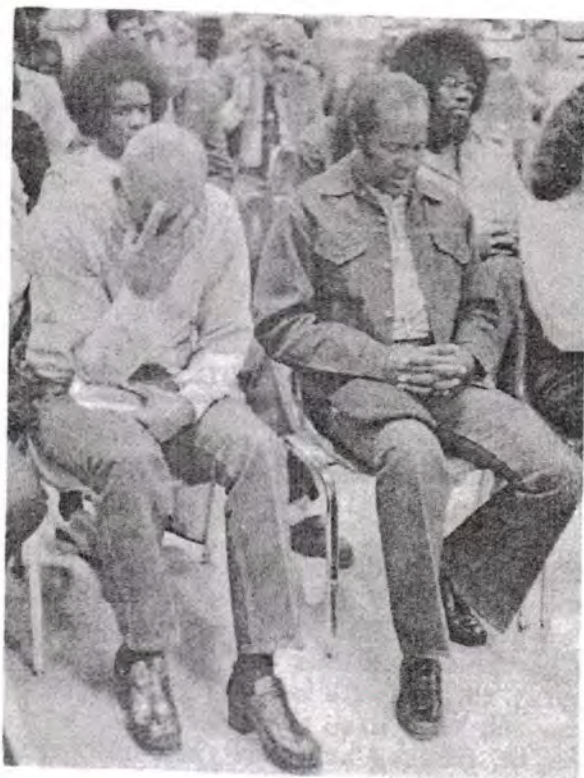
RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

their keepers cannot follow, a world in which they know no pain. They have escaped into an euphoria that will carry them for a time longer once they depart and return to the madness of their dormitories and the routine of prison life.

Church and prison have a long and strange relationship. It was primarily a result of religious efforts that penitentiaries were created and developed in America. The penitentiary was born on the wings of a noble idea and pursued as an example of Christian charity. Reformists and religionists fought the brutal public punishments of the stocks, the whipping post, and the gallows as being cruel and barbaric. In place of them, they offered, and fought for, the creation of an institution devoted to not only isolating the offender but also rehabilitating him. It was a place they called "penitentiary" (a place where one does "penitence" and "repents") and its advocates felt that the natural innocence of man could be restored by right-thinking induced by solitary confinement and the proper spiritual guidance. It was viewed as an example of Christian mercy. Their high hopes were soon dashed when too many of those subjected to their penitentiary idea went insane and committed suicide. What began as a Christian act ended in a cruelty that surpassed their sins. Mercifully, the governor pardoned the remainder of the prisoners who had survived the experience and set them free.

But the institution, penitentiary, had been created. Though born of noble religious notions, the religionists ultimately abandoned it to the hands of the police, the politicians, and the experts, under whose guidance for the next almost 200 years it gradually evolved into a monster that now destroys the souls it was originally intended to save. The presence of religion, however, still exists in the nation's prisons, although in most instances it is just a token presence, like one prison chaplain. Just about every prison has a chaplain. Some, like Angola, have several and want more - and that presence keeps alive the lingering belief among some that religion can be a force for rehabilitation.

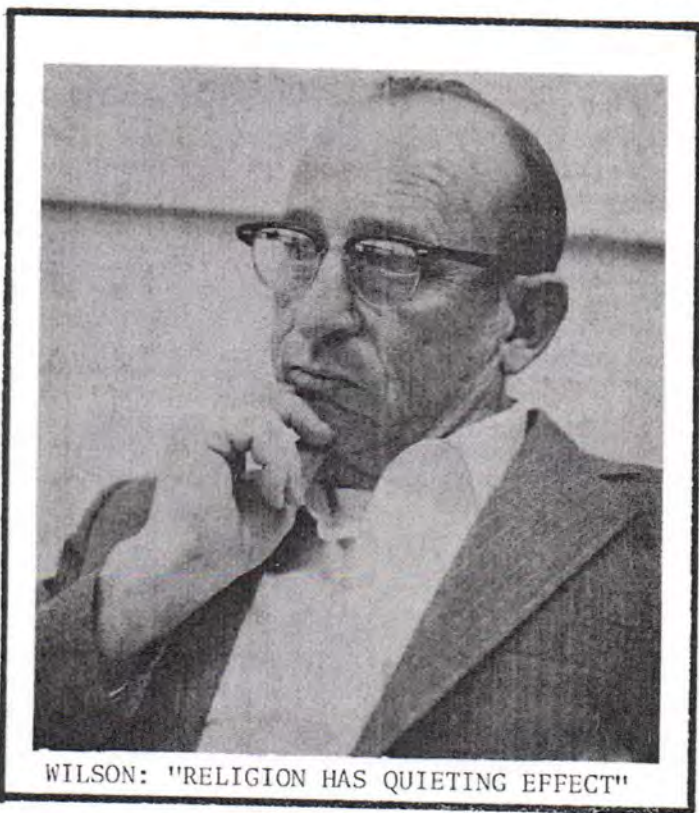
"Religion is very definitely a viable rehabilitative force," Angola Chaplain Joseph Wilson told THE ANGO-LITE. "It can have the effect of turning the direction of the person's life completely around in a good, positive and meaningful way." The 50-year-old father of four, who regards Harrisburg, Mississippi as his native home, was in business college when "I had a feeling the Lord had something special for me, so I surrendered my



RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

life to special service, though I didn't know what it was." He soon found out and has been a minister ever since. He's been a chaplain at Angola for the past 12 years, longer than any in recent times, long enough to form some definite conclusions about religion in prison.

"Religion has a definite quieting effect on those prisoners who are especially involved," he states. "To what extent this carries over into the general population, it's hard to say. But even though some who are involved in religious activities may be hypocritical about what they're doing, at least it takes their time away from something that would be less fruitful, to say the least. That certainly benefits the institution. Another way religion helps the prison community is that it keeps not only inmates but employees as well aware of the morality and their involvement in the morality around the prison."



WILSON: "RELIGION HAS QUIETING EFFECT"

Wilson is head of the Chaplaincy at Angola. "I don't know of any prison in the United States that has a more complex religious ministry than we have here," he told THE ANGOLITE. "We have so many different camps in which to coordinate religious activities ..." His voice trails off, as if contemplating the mammoth size of Angola. He's right. The sheer size and structure of Angola, the largest maximum security prison in the nation, makes even his simple tasks more difficult. The Chaplaincy must minister to the needs of 4200 prisoners who are widely dispersed in a number of mini-prisons scattered about over the sprawling 18,000-acre prison farm. Within those entities are more problems with prisoners being segregated according to custody or whatever - one group not being permitted to be in touch with the other group and that requires a duplication of

effort by the Chaplaincy on so many different occasions that it would tax the patience of even Job. So much paperwork and red tape must be dealt with that it occupies the energies of two chaplains alone.

Wilson supervises a staff of 3 full-time and 4 part-time chaplains, each of whom has specific duties, areas and activities around the prison assigned to him. All are responsible for conducting worship services and all engage in direct contact and consultations with inmates in their respective areas of the prison. For example, they handle consultations with inmates desiring to get married while in prison and they also handle funeral matters, including the burial of unclaimed bodies of inmates at Point Look-Out, the prison's pauper cemetery. But while they have the function of handling religious matters, that is not all they han-

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

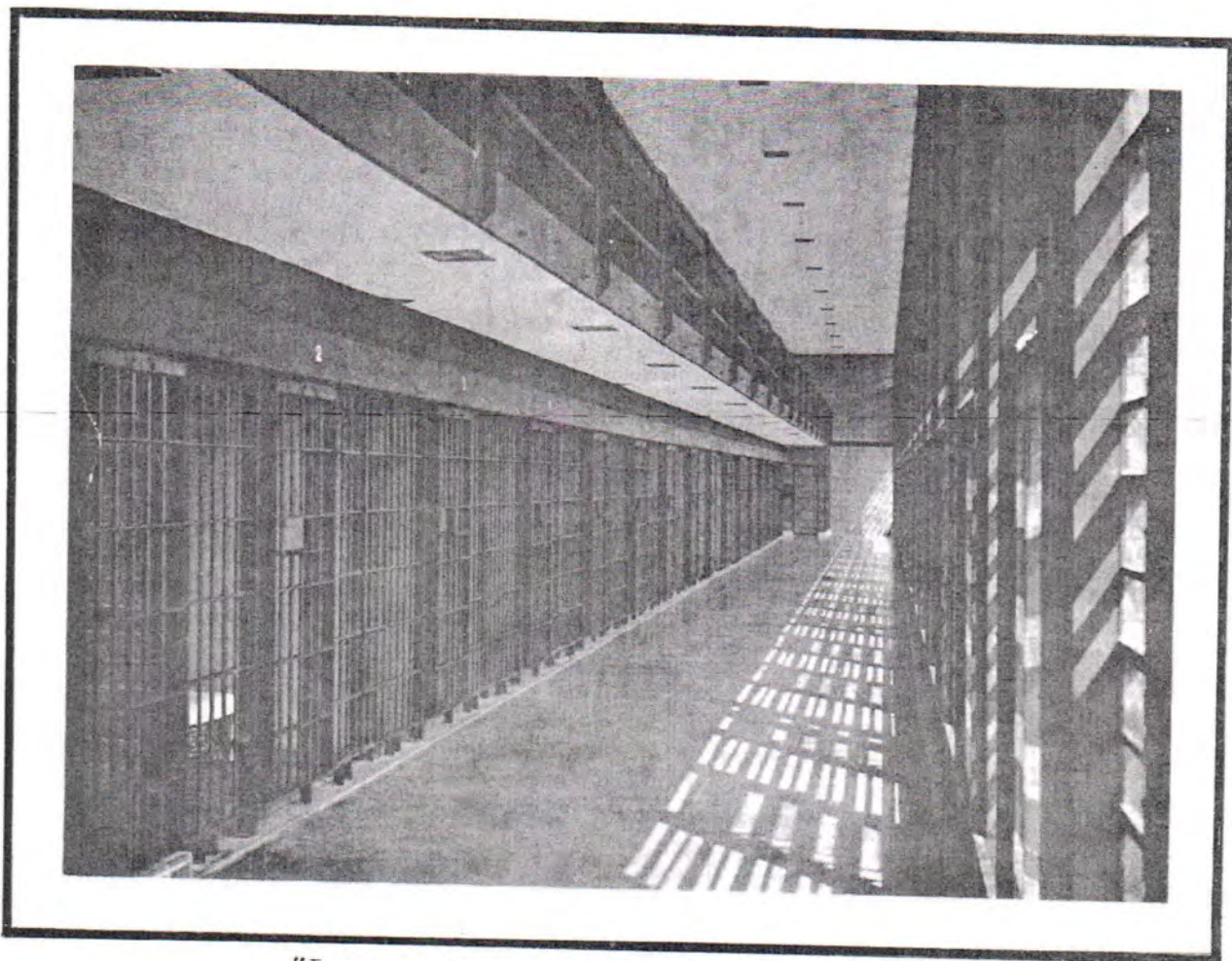
dle. They must deal with any of the problems inmates bring to them. "There are so many problems that have to be met on a day-to-day basis," Wilson explained. "To some the problem may be unimportant, but to that individual effected, the problem is very important." Wilson then cited one of his biggest problems by saying his department does not have "enough chaplains to do the work that needs to be done. I could use 25 or 30 more."

Wilson's supervisor, Assistant Warden Peggi Gresham, would like to have at least 15 more chaplains - immediately. "I'd hire them tomorrow," she told THE ANGOLITE. "I'm talking about good chaplains, top-notch chaplains. But we can't. We don't have any positions authorized. We've asked for them repeatedly." But the requests were rejected. Religion in prison is not a priority in this state.

"More than anything else, religion should be able to inject a touch of humanity into the prison system today," Rev. Paul J. Henry told THE ANGOLITE. Henry is national coordinator of Chaplain Services for the United States Catholic Conference in Washington, D.C. He feels that chaplains, if necessary, should serve as the conscience of institutions. "Our chaplains should definitely play a very strong role in assisting institutions to care for the people who've been put under their charge by court decree and helping the institutions to realize that they're still human beings and still in need of being cared for while they may have been put there for a reason by the court."

Henry feels that the role of religion should be to humanize prisons and for the chaplains to be the conscience of the institution. But that rarely works in the arbitrary world of prison, where everyone plays for keeps and the sole thing of importance is Power and the exercise of it. That is particularly true of Angola where the traditional prison powers have demonstrated a marked intolerance at the interference of religionists into what they regard as "non-religious" affairs of the prison. And in any test of wills, chaplains - as has always been the case with Treatment - have customarily lost out to the rule of custody. Some chaplains have even been forced out of prison - that's a simple reality. Prison is the one place where the power and will of the Lord commands little respect. While some chaplains have in the past recognized that reality and prostituted themselves to it, others have sometimes valiantly, sometimes foolishly, jumped into the struggle to fight against a perceived wrong. They, as expected, bit the dust.

Being imperfect humans like everyone else, chaplains have sometimes fallen victim to their own naivete, sometimes to the forces of corruption, and other times to the weakness of the flesh. Chaplains who have passed through Angola have been no better, no worse than any other breed of men. Some have been perverse, one took pleasure in the death ritual of condemned prisoners, and still another liked money so much that he absconded with funds being raised to build a chapel for the prisoners, and on and on. Some have been timid, others fanatical in their zeal to help prisoners, ending up sometimes hurting them more than helping them because of their unrealistic approach to the resolution of their problems. On the other hand, there are some who are solid, realistic, cognizant of the various pressures, and problems, and strives to strike that balance that will permit them to do as much good as possible. Like prisoners, these are the ones who endure and prove most effective in their endeavors.



*"I was a stranger, and ye took me not in;
naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and
in prison, and ye visited me not."*

On the heels of that statement, Christ ordered his followers to go into the prisons ...

... and people have come, like flies after sugar: the correctional employees, the penal "experts," the bureaucrats, the social workers, the rehabilitators, the reformers, the rights protectors, the grant-hustlers, the shysters, and even the politicians - but seldom the Church. Louisiana is part of the famed Bible Belt, where people are raised in the church, where the church is regarded as the haven of hope, mercy, compassion and salvation. And prisoners are no different - in the depths of their punishment and despair, they look to the church for compassion and hope, if from nobody else. But the church in Louisiana has traditionally kept convict's at arm's length. Oh, they'll donate money, erect statutes, give Bibles and greeting cards, and offer prayers for the lost souls but they rarely get personally involved with Angola. Instead, they keep their involvement at a distance and feed its imprisoned souls with a long-handled spoon. Back in 1973, prisoners had to call upon then-Governor Edwin Edwards to inter-

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

vene with the Catholic Church to secure a catholic chaplain for them. The situation with the churches has been such that it causes one to wonder what would happen if the Department of Corrections didn't actually "hire" chaplains to minister to the prisoners. Apparently, where the Christian spirit doesn't work, the dollar will.

The number of prisoners interested in religious services and activities isn't that great. "But a sizable number of inmates are interested in attending religious services and activities," Gresham told THE ANGOLITE. Wilson estimates that only 400 prisoners attend church services and involve themselves with religious activities with any degree of consistency - that amounts to one-tenth of the total population at Angola. Whether the number is that small because of lack of interest, disillusionment, or simply because of lack of encouragement or attempt to reach and save them, is not known. What is known is that involvement by the established churches of all denominations is absent from Angola.

The most conspicuously absent of all is perhaps the Catholic Church, the biggest and most powerful church in the state of Louisiana. And its present lack of involvement is not in keeping with its history. "The Catholic Church has had a long tradition which carries back centuries, as far as caring for prisoners," Henry explained to THE ANGOLITE, "and actually it takes its mandate from the scriptures itself, to visit those in prison, which comes out of what Christ himself has asked all of us to do. The Catholic Church, in the middle ages, took a very strong role of making sure that prisoners who were in institutions were receiving just and humane treatment. Now, many times they were not always successful insisting upon that, but they were still in the forefront of making sure that it was done. During the next few centuries, you find that the church still had many people who were functioning in just prison ministry and are there to assist the prisoner from the viewpoint of their religious beliefs for making sure that they still recognize that they are human beings themselves and that also the people who were responsible for them did not forget as well."

Henry points out that the bishops of the United States have consistently taken stands against capital punishment since 1974 and that, no matter what period in time referred to, the Catholic Church has always taken positions for the patricious concern for human life, in all of its forms and all of its aspects."



HEWSON: REPRESENTING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

However, things have been quite different in Louisiana. According to the Chaplain's Office, approximately 20 to 25 percent of Angola's 4200 prisoner population is Catholic. Father William J. Hewson, with the assistance of volunteer worker Rev. C. Jenniskens, minister to them. But, as stated, there were many times in the past when there was no one to minister the Catholic prisoners. Even today, the only Catholic activities available to them are mass and visitations conducted by Hewson and Jenniskens. Few prisoners attend the services. "If I was forced to go to church," one Catholic prisoner told THE ANGOLITE, "I'd pick some other church to go to in here, even though I understand there ain't that much difference between them and the Catholic Church. I was born and raised a Catholic, but they cut me loose when I fell in prison. You know, it's like they've showed me what they think of me. What do I look like running behind a church that gonna cut me loose soon as I get in trouble and don't show no kind of interest in me? They can keep it."

Asked if the lack of Catholic prisoner participation in Catholic services might be due to a reaction to the Church's not being visibly involved at Angola, Chaplain Wilson replied: "I don't know - it's possible."

Catholic Church involvement is must less than that of established churches of other denominations - and even those other denominations leave much to be desired. "You have to take into consideration," Wilson tried to explain, "that the Catholic faith is not as evangelistic-minded as some of the more fundamental ones. However, they are involved in some activities that have to do with the betterment of prison life, and that is in the area of prison reforms. They are working behind-the-scene with the Louisiana Interchurch Conference in Baton Rouge doing an exceptional job of trying to do away with the death penalty for one, trying to get involved with some activities that provide some support for an inmate once he gets out, half-way house type of activity, and others kind of support to the person incarcerated which does not necessarily come in and produce a Christian worship service or a mass for the inmate."

Henry, admitting that he was speaking from a distant point of view, offered another reason for the church's minimal involvement. "One of the issues which recently has arisen for the Catholic Church has been the decrease, either by attrition or by deaths of priests that they have, for function, not only in parish life but also just for ministry," he said. "There have been many times we would really like to have people function there. Sometimes it's difficult to get someone who would go into that form of ministry. Many times the individual diocese will look at the personnel and many times they have just enough to serve their own parishes. The result is that the parish is responsible for the care of the institutions and that places an extra burden on them which often times that's difficult for them to understand because they really have not been geared primarily to deal with that institution within their jurisdiction. In the Louisiana area I would suspect - and that's all I can say is that I suspect - this has been part of their problem, a lack of priests in order to function there."

Henry expects the future to be more promising. "In other areas of the country where we're beginning to see what the diocese is," he explained, "they're beginning the use of religious sisters, religious brothers and also lay-people to function side-by-side with chaplains to bring some of this ministry really to the people that they serve - and that's going to be an increasing thing that we-

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)



"NEVER UNDER-ESTIMATE INMATE INGENUITY"

're going to see more of in the future. It would be my hope that I would see the same thing perhaps happening in Louisiana."

But there's a saying in prison: "Never under-estimate inmate ingenuity." Back in the 1960's and encouraged by then-Warden C. Murray Henderson's policy of urging prisoners to create self-help programs and organizations, inmate-religionists, who had always banded together in small informal groups to worship, began to form their own religious organizations, conducting religious services and activities on their own. Some succeeded in getting some outside churches involved in at least supporting them and sometimes even to come and join them in services. But it was a hit-and-miss thing at best. The churches and preachers who came were often those who happened to know the inmate organizational head, or was formerly pastor to him prior to his imprisonment, or was pastor to his family. Generally speaking, there was some kind of prior relationship between the inmate and those pastors who did come and participated in the inmate religious activities.

That was the case with Rev. Louis Barnard Harrell, pastor of Grace Temple Church of God In Christ in New Orleans. He had been acting as a volunteer chaplain at the Jackson Barracks work training facility in New Orleans since 1960. "I got to know a lot of young men down there and a lot of them got sent back to Angola," he told THE ANGOLITE. "Many of them wrote me and told me that they just didn't have people who were coming up here that were concerned about them - and I'm not casting a reflection on any other religion or denomination, but I felt it was a very sad situation that one of the largest institutions in America didn't have true religious people who wanted to come and see about these young men.

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

So I decided to come and, when I did, I was received overwhelmingly by a lot of young men, and I became their religious advisor and counselor." That was in 1973. Feeling the need for something more than just visiting the inmates, he worked toward the creation of the first Church of God In Christ ever established in a prison and eventually secured the licensing of an inmate religious leader who had assisted him, as a minister by the Church's national headquarters in Memphis. The Angola Church of God In Christ is a viable and popular religious organization today. And Harrell still baby-sits it, traveling to the prison two or three times a month to conduct services and to give the inmates visible support. Over the years, he has been joined by Rev. Earl Leviege of New Orleans' Gethseme Church of God In Christ in his prison ministering. Usually they come together, but when one can't make it to the prison for the church's activities, the other is there, often with other members of their congregations. They've been doing it for years and their expenses come out of their pockets. "We all pitch in and buy gas for the cars," Harrell says. "It doesn't matter. We feel that it's worth it. We feel that if just one brother here at Angola accepts the Lord and changes his way of living, then it was worth it." They also go to the Dixon Correctional Institute regularly.

A number of inmate religious organizations developed with the assistance of persons from the outside as did Church of God In Christ. And, since those days when the prison's chaplaincy was under-funded and under-staffed and unable to provide adequate services, the organizations have survived and still function as viable vehicles of religious expression in the prison, commanding the attention and energies of a large number of inmates. While a handful of organizations have exclusive memberships, forbidding their members from being a member of any other religious organizations, most are not. As a result, many of the inmates involved in religious organizational activities generally belong to a number of different groups, with some inmate-leaders holding office in more than one organization. Wilson, whose office works closely with the inmate religious organizations, attribute the mixed memberships to a couple of factors. "One is wanting to be involved with Christian activities, period, regardless of what it teaches," he told THE ANGOLITE. "Some are striving for something to hold on to. They're striving for something to claim as their faith, and they're probably going to all of them to try to find out what it is ... some do it in order to impress somebody else by showing them that they are involved as much as they can be."

Prisoners at Angola are given considerable freedom to practice their religious faiths. "They are generally allowed all the expression they want," Wilson explains. "We have several different kinds of religious activities here that are considered by some to be off the usual, or should I say, the more traditional Christian traditions." So much freedom of religious expression is accorded the inmates here until it sometimes collides with the rights of other prisoners.

Odis Henry, 28, has served about two years of a 22-year sentence for attempted murder. He takes his religion quite seriously. He is vice-president of the Angola chapter of Full Gospel Businessmen and vice-president of the Methodist Men's Club, and he spends much of his spare time involved in the organizations' activities. But that isn't enough. Every Sunday morning, on his own, he goes to the boxing ring located on the Big Yard near Oak 1 dormitory and preaches. He

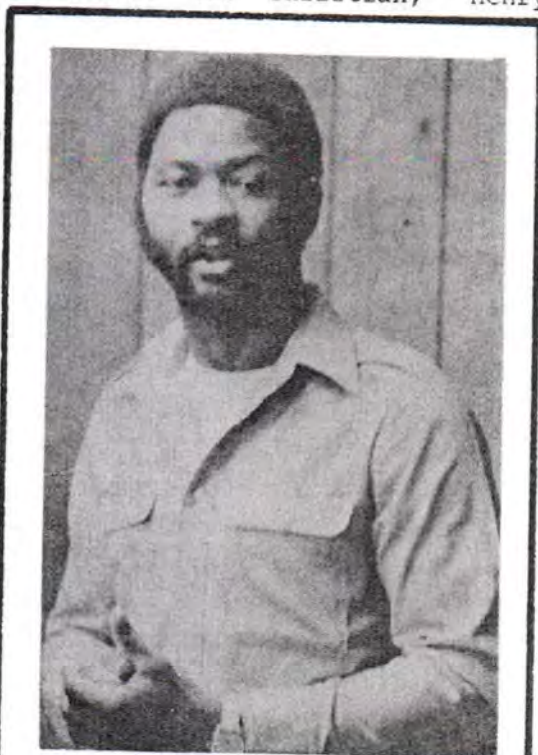
RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

doesn't just preach - he hooks up a loudspeaker to a powerful amplifier and bellows the Word out across the early morning stillness. He does it religiously - every Sunday morning he is standing there, alone, in the middle of the boxing ring, gesturing and bellowing as if the Second Coming were approaching the very next moment. The yard is empty - the other prisoners are not as inspired as this Sunday morning preacher is.

Most prisoners sleep late on Sunday morning and, since they choose to sleep late rather than go listen to Henry, the insistent young preacher secured permission from security to amplify his message to the sleeping prisoners. The result is that several hundred prisoners can depend upon being awakened every Sunday morning by the Word being blared at them through huge loudspeakers. And while Henry is quite pleased with effectively delivering his spiritual message to a compound of unwilling listeners each Sunday, the inmates who can't escape the loudspeakers don't particularly care for it. Several of them told THE ANGOLITE that, if they could get away with it, they'd hang Henry from the roof of the boxing ring.

Asked why he does it, Henry told THE ANGOLITE: "I preach every Sunday morning for one simple reason. I feel that, out of all the things that there is in the world, I have found the best thing is a person-to-person relationship with the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and I endeavor to pass this information on to others so that they might know Christ in such a way as I know him. THE ANGOLITE pointed out that there are plenty of ways for the religious inmates to spread the Word of God without waking up much of the Big Yard prisoner population and forcing them to listen to his sermons. "The position of the Christian," Henry replied, "all the way from the beginning of the Bible through Revelations, has always been on the OFFENSE - not the DEFENSE. Christ told his disciples to go out and COMPEL THEM, to go out and somewhat FORCE them." That's precisely what Henry does. "Well, in a way that's what it is," he admitted. "But Christ gave us the commandment to go out and COMPEL them to come into the church. The people in the church are already saved, so the messages from the boxing ring are designed to bring people into the fold."

One inmate lawyer named Herman Smith told THE ANGOLITE that he has been asked to file a lawsuit against the institution for providing Henry with the amplifiers. "The dude has a right to express his religious beliefs in any kind of way he wants," Smith explained. "He is free to run around and advertise that he's going to be preaching on Sunday morning at the boxing ring and invite everybody to go and listen to him. But the thing is, nobody is going out there to listen to him - and with that in mind, it must be understood that his right to religious expression ends where the next man's right



HENRY: CONFLICTING RIGHTS

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

to privacy begins. And all those guys trying to sleep on Sunday mornings yet being forced to listen to him have a right not to listen to him. He can't preach loud enough in his natural voice to violate their right to privacy. It's only when prison officials provide him with amplifiers that he's able to violate their right not to listen to him."

"Yeah, I somewhat feel like I am imposing on their rights," Henry admitted to THE ANGOLITE. He also stated that he is considering changing the hour to a more convenient time for the Big Yard population and he says that "maybe it should not be as loud." But, he adds: "I wouldn't give up the amplification system because I want to go into a particular area that maybe I couldn't walk into."

The religious freedom of today didn't always exist. In fact, as late as 1974, the Jehovah Witnesses experienced much difficulty in trying to establish a branch inside of Angola and securing the same organizational privileges accorded other inmate religious organizations. While the prison administration gave the Witness elders from the free world permission to form an organization, it was not until the elders were able to secure the personal assistance of a couple powerful inmate leaders and the support of the powerful Jaycees and Lifers' Association that they were finally able to secure meeting nights and office space for their organizational activities. During the ensuing years, the Jehovah Witness elders and outside organization have won the trust and respect of the prison administration and they no longer have the kind of problems that plagued their beginning at Angola. Each year they hold an assembly in the prison's rodeo arena to demonstrate their support for those inmates who have joined their faith. And thousands of Witnesses from around the nation descend on the rodeo grounds to sing, pray and worship with the inmate Witnesses. They have so demonstrated their good intentions and trustworthiness that prison officials permit them to handle their own security and generally manage the entire assembly, including the clean-up afterwards. The prison does not permit any other group that kind of freedom.



JEHOVAH WITNESSES: IT WAS A STRUGGLE

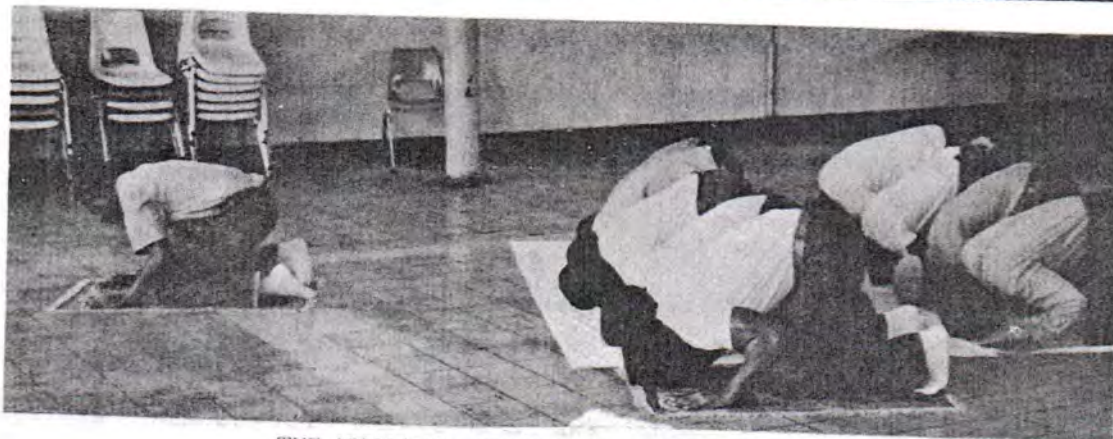
Of all the religious faiths, none has ever caused as much consternation among the nation's penal authorities as the Islamic faith over the past 20

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

years. Because of its original black nationalism and its opposition to the same socio-economic system that held them prisoner, it held a powerful appeal for the nation's black convicts. As more and more black inmates embraced the movement authorities began to see it as a threat to penal and national security and openly tried to crush the movement. Strikes, riots, deaths and lawsuits marked the struggle that followed. It was the Muslims who started the prisoners' rights movement by having to go to court seeking religious freedoms back in the late '50s and early '60s. Out of their legal efforts came a number of judicial precedents concerning prison conditions, particularly in relation to solitary confinement and the treatment accorded them. They won, but they paid a heavy price for their efforts.

While little was heard of the Islamic movement in Angola, they too had to struggle to establish themselves the same as their brethren in other institutions around the nation. In the beginning, many of them were locked up because of the general belief that a Muslim was automatically a revolutionary who wanted to kill whites. Overt repression of the Muslims ended in the mid-70s when a class of two dozen began with permission of the wardens. While the upper echelon of the prison administration was willing to permit the Muslims to practice their faith, penal personnel at the lower levels - believing, as did most of the nation's whites - that the Islamic movement is anti-white and advocates black supremacy and the violent overthrow of the existing order - continued to be hostile toward them and that was underscored by various forms of harassment. The Islamic cause wasn't helped by their practice of parading in military fashion, complete with uniforms and their flag, down the prison walk to and from their organizational meetings. However, the hostility eventually tapered off and within a year or so, the Muslims were left alone.

Yah-Ya Luquman Ziyad attributes the tapering off of the former hostility to the efforts of Muhammad, the present Islamic leader, to move (during the 19-70's) the nation of Islam away from its former "prejudices, racism and fanatical black nationalism." He told THE ANGOLITE: "I think this has been the biggest contributor to the change of attitudes in prison administrators." Ziyad serves as Muslim chaplain here, ministering to the 50-member Students of Islam, the official Islamic organization here at the prison. He is contracted by the prison to visit the Muslims at Angola one day a week and attend to their religious in-



THE MUSLIMS: THEY PAID HEAVIEST PRICE

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)



ZIYAD: PROBLEMS, BUT OPTIMISTIC

terests. But Ziyad is serious about his inmate Muslims and often comes up to the prison three or four days in a week at his own expense. He's been doing it for 4½ years. He also travels regularly to Hunt Correctional Center and Dixon Correctional Institute at his own expense. "If it's something I can do that'll maybe touch some of these people," he said, "then I'll do it. Money's not the problem."

The Muslims have come a long way and they've paid a much heavier price for acceptance as a viable religious faith than any other. While the problems of today are not as monumental as those of the past, they still have some. "I wouldn't say that we get equal administrative support," Ziyad told THE ANGOLITE. "I have witnessed, what I felt were situations to do similar things and finding, I'd say, people of the Christian faith facing less trouble." But there is hope. Ziyad points out that, while there is no official policy to accommodate the Muslims' pursuit of their prayers and rituals, which takes place at certain times of the day, the security officials at the Main Prison unofficially let them pursue their rituals with minimal or no interference. Outcamp security officials have not been as accommodating. The Muslims, however, remain optimistic. Walter Pence recently became czar of the prison's entire security operations and that benefits the Muslims because, as Ziyad points out, Pence has in the past been understanding and sympathetic to the Muslims.

Mutee' Aadil Rashada is the 33-year-old leader of the Students of Islam. He has served 7 years on a 21-year sentence for manslaughter. He was here five years before finally deciding to accept Islam as his faith. He believes that their main problems stem from the misconceptions created by the former ideology of the Nation of Islam which, he points out, has undergone a dramatic change. "We still have many people who think that we still call white people 'devils,'" he told THE ANGOLITE, "or hate them, or want to separate from them, or that we are worshipping the prophet or the honorable Elijah Muhammad - when we're really worshipping God like everyone else. And we just want an opportunity to be able to put the Quoranic faith out there which we think would help everyone and is for everyone." Ziyad adds: "What we're really all about is spiritual, moral and social reform and improvement according to the Quoran, which is a criteria for human development."

The law of supply and demand applies as much in the religious field as it does in the free market system. And in the vacuum created by the lack of involvement by the established church, the evangelists and layman ministries

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

The first big organized religious movement into Angola is believed to have been orchestrated by a group of laymen over 30 years ago. It began with a prisoner in a parish jail who spent his time reading a Gideon Bible while he awaited his transfer to Angola. When the deputies prepared to bring him to the prison, they told him that he would not be allowed to take the Bible with him. So, the inmate copied the Chicago address of the Gideon organization which was published in the Bible. Later, after arriving at Angola, he wrote the Gideons on a piece of brown paper telling them that he would like to have a Bible. The Gideon headquarters sent the inmate's letter to G.L. "Jack" Malone, head of the Louisiana Gideons. Malone reportedly came to Angola with the letter and a Bible and made arrangements with prison officials to give the Bible to the inmate.

As a result of that incident and the need he felt it indicated, Malone organized a group of Gideons to come to Angola annually to provide Bibles and visit with interested prisoners. And they've been coming every year since. When Malone got to the point where he could no longer handle the supervision and leadership of the project, his son, Doyle Malone, took over and they're still coming, invading the prison like an army one day each year, giving Bibles to inmates and chatting with them on their beds or wherever they run across them. Wilson points out that the Gideons' effort goes beyond just spreading the printed word of God because some "get personally acquainted with an inmate, begin corresponding with him, and then become his religious advisor."

In the ensuing years, the evangelists have followed the Gideons, bringing their followers, their choirs, and their fiery down-home religious philosophies to the prison. And, while many don't stay all that long, there are always



RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

others following behind. Gresham acknowledged to THE ANGOLITE that the evangelists, as a group, are more involved religiously in prison today than the established churches. Needless to say, the evangelists are popular among Angola's religious inmate body.

Richard Garland was president of the Monroe chapter of Full Gospel Business men's Fellowship International, a worldwide, non-denominational religious organization, when he received a call in 1978 from the wife of a member of the Oregon branch of the organization. She was worried about her son and daughter-in-law who had been arrested in Monroe. She didn't know why, but she had heard about southern jails and she was worried. She asked for help. Garland and his wife were preparing to leave for California, so he got one of his members to visit the prisoner and see what was wrong. When he and his wife returned from their trip, they began to visit the inmate and his wife. Garland became attached to them. He was soon visiting and talking to others in the jail who needed help or someone to talk to.

One morning, while shaving, Garland says that God spoke to him. "He told me that he was going to put a chapter here in Angola prison," he told THE ANGOLITE. "I'd never been to Angola, didn't know where it was, other than looking on a map occasionally." He told his wife and he began to work toward that goal. He told the prisoners in the jail where he was regularly visiting, "and they began to give me names of men to contact in the prison who would be receptive." Three months later, at a meeting, Garland told former Angola Warden Victor Walker about his idea. Walker, a member of the Baton Rouge chapter of Full Gospel, told him, "I want in on it."

Garland and Walker later came to Angola five minutes after "we had explained to Warden Blackburn what we would like to do, he gave us permission to speak to the men." An inmate chapter of Full Gospel has since been established at the prison and their meetings always features some businessman or successful individual as a guest speaker and are well-attended by the inmates. Garland and Walker are still outside sponsors for the prison organization and they are always on hand for the regular meetings.

Garland also conducts weekly Bible classes in the West Monroe Jail, and, as he points out, his prison ministry all began with that phone call. Garland's ministry and organization is "simply to tell a man about Jesus Christ, to praise God." He informs the inmates and urges them to pass it on "that we didn't come in here to get involved in their activities between them and the state. It's strictly between them and Jesus Christ what we're interested in." Like the Gideons and a few others, his prison ministry has its limitations.

But other evangelists involved in prison ministry feel differently about how far they should go in their involvement. Harrell, who also heads the Living Witnesses Crusaders for Christ, told THE ANGOLITE: "We have an evangelistic team who are greatly concerned and we're not only interested in the person's spirit, his religious side, we're looking at the whole man, both naturally and we try to minister to the needs of the whole man, both naturally and spiritually as well." Harrell's ministry aims at total involvement. They will help an inmate with his legal efforts to secure his freedom, provide him a place to stay in the organization's halfway house upon his release, and find him a job.

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

"We have what we call family services," he explains. "We go to the family and if a prisoner is getting close to getting out, we try to explain to them that they are going to have to play an important role in his re-integration back into society because he's used to living one way, and when he comes home to the family he's going to need a period of adjustment, they're going to have to help him. You know, he's somewhat a stranger if he's been gone five, ten or fifteen years. Even though you know him and you've been visiting him, his habits and his thinking are different now, and he's 15 years older." Harrell's organization provides shoes and other material needs that a prisoner might have. They're in the process of adding lawyers to their staff who will provide free legal service to the inmates who can't afford it.

Why such total involvement? "If you're drowning and you say 'help me,'" Harrell explained to THE ANGOLITE, "what good is it, me telling you to have faith that God will save you. You know you don't care about that. All you know is 'throw me a stick or rope or something - I'm drowning. Now when I get out, then talk to me about the Lord, okay?' So if you're drowning, you're looking for somebody to rescue you. Now when I reach that stick and you grab, you are very grateful to me and then, at that time, you are open and you're very vulnerable to the gospel. And it's the same way if you're hungry, if you're barefeet and you have no clothes. Let me say this - love is more than just a four letter word. If I told my wife I loved her and never did anything for her physically or mentally, or spiritually, or whichever way - she would never believe that."



HARRELL: LOVE IS MORE THAN FOUR LETTER WORD

"We're interested in the total being," Ziyad told THE ANGOLITE, explaining the Islamic philosophy. "We know that the moral and spiritual message is good, but it's sort of like you having a ghostly body - you got to put some bones and flesh on it in order for it to deal in the outside world. So, therefore, you must be about clothing and sheltering a person if he's going to leave here, or assisting a person with a job and whatever. If a person is going before the parole or pardon board and they need a place to stay and a job, we feel duty-bound to try to provide that, and not only for Muslim inmates but for anybody who's trying to make a legitimate effort at moving into the outside world ... and it doesn't matter whether he's Muslim, Christian, black or white."

Prison officials prefer efforts by outside religionists to be aimed at more than just the spiritual needs of the inmates. "I think it should be for the total individual," Gresham told THE ANGOLITE. "After all, you can't very well save a man's soul without affecting the things that happen to him." Wilson agrees that involvement should extend beyond spiritually. "You can't get a person to

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

give any consideration to his spiritual needs unless you can show him that you are concerned about his physical needs as a person also," he explained. "You've got to be able to prove to a person that you're interested in him as a person. Besides, Jesus never took a person just to save his soul, as I understand the Bible."

The total involvement of religionists and organizations with the inmate and all of his problems has one drawback - one that everyone recognizes. It invites con and deception by insincere inmates hunting ways to secure their needs or obtain assistance in their efforts to regain their freedom. Outside religionists and organizations promising to become totally involved with the inmate and assisting him with all his problems create a situation ripe for exploitation by criminal and insincere inmates. The only requirement is that they ride the religious pony and, given their basic criminality, deception comes easy."

"This is why," Garland explained to THE ANGOLITE, "I stand against getting involved in the inmate's legal matters and all that sort of thing. It simply takes up a lot of time, and I don't know what is in their heart. I can see outward appearances - God gives me some spiritual discernment about certain men but the majority of them, it's simply between them and God."

"I think there are a lot of brothers here who are phony," Harrell told THE ANGOLITE. "They are here to get what they can, they want to ride the religious horse, and they feel that by coming to my church services, they will get me to go to the parole board for them, to write letters for them. But let me say this: we have a mixture of both. Some of the men are sincere and some are not sincere. Some come to the services because we bring ladies with us who sing in the choir and they want to talk with the females - those make up about two percent of the brothers who come. But, for the most part, the men come because we can offer them spiritual help, and the others because we can offer them some assistance, legally. But I don't care why they come. I feel that whatever their reasons are, if they come they are going to hear the gospel and they're not going to go back the same. They're going to remember something I said. So it doesn't matter. The Bible says that the gospel is like a net. You cast the net out into the sea and when you drag it back in, you don't necessarily have just trout fish - you have crabs, shrimp, turtles. That's the way the gospel is: it draws everybody. But my chief concern is that God spoke in the book of Matthews that, when he was in prison, we didn't come to see about him. And further on, he breaks it down, letting us know that he means EVERYBODY who are in prison."

Arthur Terrell is president and pastor of St. John Institutional Baptist Brotherhood. He's served almost 11 years on a 25-year sentence for armed robbery. He admits that some of the inmates in his organization are not sincerely religious and are, in fact, faking for whatever reason. Asked to venture a guess on the amount of his membership who are faking, he told THE ANGOLITE: "I'd say about 25 out of 75 - one-third of 'em." Chaplain Wilson declined to venture an estimate as to the percentage of inmates involved in religious activities who are faking. "That would be like asking how much faking goes on in the average church," he pointed out. "You just don't know."

Rashada, leader of the prison's Islamic movement, acknowledged that there are some fakers among his Muslims, but believes that the number is very low be-

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)



TERRELL & RASHADA: Fakers are a Problem.

cause of the nature of their religion. Ziyad also acknowledges the existence of fakers. "I've run into them," he told THE ANGOLITE, but added that "the Islamic religion is more practice than it is mere theology, and many times the fakers usually don't show up when you're looking for practice. We don't discriminate. We just try to extend to all people the right guidance. If they follow it, we say praise due to God - and when you're dealing with any type of religious work, you're not actually looking to bring pious, sanctimonious people to God. They're already supposed to be there. You're actually looking for so-called sinners. And no matter, whatever the motive, if a person comes, this is what you should be looking for if you're going to be a religious servant." Rashada added: "Our policy is for the ones who are sinners to strive as hard as possible, and this will make the ones who're faking either come on in all the way, or get on out."

The fakers who manage to con their way out of prison by riding the religious pony with the help of religious leaders and who revert back to crime after their release causes disappointment among the religionists who believed in him and helped him. All the evangelists and religionists asked by THE ANGOLITE about the fakers admitted to having been stung and disappointed by someone they believed in who reverted back to crime after their release. The religionists, as a rule, don't think of them as having been faking, refusing to accept their declaration of salvation as a con game. "I'm not going to say they were faking," Harrell told THE ANGOLITE. "Let me say that maybe they were too weak, or they fell with the wrong company, or they had nobody to turn to. I would like to think that as the reason - not that they were conning."

"I see preachers fall by the wayside in the free world who've never been in prison," Garland added. "They'll run off with the church secretary or they'll abscond with the church funds. I see men fall everyday. I've fallen myself and

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

got back up. But that doesn't bother me in the least because I still think there is a man down the road that will accept Christ, and when he gets out of here through God's help, that he'll live a Christian life and make a good citizen."

Garland's attitude is that of the typical religionists. "I don't think an individual case has that much effect on people getting involved in prison ministry, or on those already involved," Wilson said. "I think people on the outside who are willing to be involved to some extent at least do recognize that there are those who will fall. The real problem comes in those who are critical and don't want to become involved in the first place - the faking or failure of someone simply provides them with the excuse they need to justify their not getting involved.



BROWN: FAKERS HURT ALL

Inmate religionists, on the other hand, feel strongly that the failure of inmates who were thought saved enough to go straight but fall to the wayside has an adverse effect on them. "It hurts the rest of us badly," said Brown, the inmate pastor of the Angola Church of God In Christ. "We have to prove ourselves to the prison administration and to our fellow inmates as well - and both of them think that we're hiding behind the Bible, that we're faking. And whenever some inmate Christian goes out and fails and commits some crime, then that makes it that much worse for us because it gives the impression that when we get outside the gate, we're gonna throw the Bible away too. It makes it bad on all of us."

Wilson agrees with Brown. "It probably does," he said, "in some way, affect the administration's viewpoint in what goes on in religious activities and the purposes behind religious activities. But, on the other hand, you have people like Chuck Colson, Paul Cramer, Bill Hudson, and many more who have turned out beautifully - that's the other side of the coin. And when you see the other side of the coin, you see that it's worth it to go ahead and produce something to try to produce some worthwhile results."

Bill Hudson is a former Angola inmate presently serving as state director for TEEN CHALLENGE, a national religious organization aimed at rehabilitating youthful drug abusers and preventing the usage of drugs among the young. He is also very active in his work with the Louisiana Interchurch Conference in the area of prison reform. He makes his home across the lake from New Orleans and is a recognized leader of his religious denomination of Assemblies of God.

Chuck Colson and Paul Cramer, both ex-cons, are with PRISON FELLOWSHIP, a national prison ministry organization consisting of 60 staff members, 6,000 volunteers, and supported by contributions from about 45,000 people throughout the nation. Colson, one of the former Watergate conspirators, founded the ministry

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

following his release from prison. Cramer, who served time with Colson in federal prison, serves as the ministry's regional director for southwestern United States. "There is something about the prison fellowship that I like in particular," Wilson told THE ANGOLITE. "It leaves something in the hands of the inmate that he can personally use and grow on."

The ministry operates in over 200 prisons around the nation and is committed to total involvement. The organization is deeply involved in prison reform activities and sponsor and/or operate a number of varied programs aimed at assisting convicts and ex-convicts. They start off with a two-week religious seminar conducted in the prison. Cramer told THE ANGOLITE that they also take prisoners out of institutions and place them in Christian retreats, deep-sea diving and vocational education programs. He said that the ministry has already taken several hundred state and federal prisoners out of institutions, "and we haven't had any problems with any of them."

PRISON FELLOWSHIP also provides transportation for relatives to visit prisoners who can't afford it. They assist prisoners leaving the institution by getting him a place to stay and helping him get a job. They provide inmate/family counseling for inmates having problems with their families. They sponsor a pen-pal program helping inmates obtain regular correspondence from the free community. They operate a variety of other programs, all aimed at meeting the inmate's spiritual and material needs. The ministry's operations are based on the belief that a large percentage of the prisoners presently housed in institutions do not really need to be there and are thus receptive to help and assistance.

PRISON FELLOWSHIP first got involved at Angola last year when it sponsored two religious seminars and followed with a concert performance by country music superstar Johnny Cash. Several more seminars and increased involvement are planned for 1981. The organization and its program appeal to the inmate religionists because it has demonstrated an interest in them with a commitment to help men and women incarcerated. Leaders of the organization also communicate and deal with prisoners realistically. On his first visit to the prison, Colson laid it on the line when he talked to a group of inmate religionists. "Look, I don't mind telling you this," he said, "and you should know it already, but I'd say about 80 percent of the people in this country would just as soon have you drawn and quartered as to spend 5¢ on you. They don't care about you or about prisons. They don't know anything about prisons, and they don't want to know. They don't care what happens to you." Given that situation, he urged the inmates to care about themselves and about their fellow inmates and to work for something better for all. He urged them not to think of themselves as being powerless in prison, pointing out that they have the key and power to change and do positive things,



CRAMER: NOTHING BUT SUCCESS

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)



COLSON: COMMUNICATING IN CONVICT LANGUAGE

and that his organization is committed to helping them bring it about.

When Colson talks to inmates about Jesus, as he did at the Johnny Cash concert, he doesn't present the image of Jesus as most preachers offer their congregations, but one they can easily relate to and understand. He talks about Jesus as a prisoner who was betrayed, snitched on and made to suffer all the indignities that convicts themselves suffer in their own individual prison existence. Jesus as a prisoner who was stripped-searched by guards and Jesus who was snitched on by an informer. Jesus with his 12 apostles and whom Colson likens to the "dirty do-

zen." Colson makes his points well, drawing applause, but continuously and methodically driving the point home that Jesus was not the prophet of the Victors, but of the losers. "Jesus came for the losers of society," he told them. "Guys like you and me." And he closed, as he usually does, by telling the inmates to always remember that, even if Christians on the outside of prison tend to forget who Jesus took to heaven with him, it was "the thief hanging on the cross next to him."

Prison officials here are pleased to see PRISON FELLOWSHIP moving toward increased involvement at Angola. Colson explains why Angola was selected: "A lot of reasons. You've got a lot of problems here, and I felt that the guys were really doing some good things. I have been reading THE ANGOLITE and I'm impressed with what you guys have been saying about your own institution and the desire of the inmates to help themselves. I was tremendously impressed with the Christians I met. And while I don't have many good things to say about prison officials, I think Paul Phelps (Corrections Secretary) and Frank Blackburn (Warden) are decent human beings and that they are trying to do the right thing for the inmates. And, if there's one place that we can give a shot in the arm and help, it'll be Angola."

While religious people and organizations encounter considerable difficulties in working in some of the nation's prisons, they find a more or less open invitation extended to them here at Angola. The reason for the open-door policy to religious activities, programs and expressions here is due in part to the influence of religion in the prison's administration. Warden Blackburn is an ordained minister, as is Prison Medical Director Dr. Thomas Beamon and the Assistant Director of Classification Alvin Hall. Prison Food Service Director F. Berlin Hood, also an ordained minister, pointed out to THE ANGOLITE that: "This is a strong Bible Belt area and many of the employees who work here come from

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

strong rural religious backgrounds. They believe in God and in the power of religion - even when they don't practice it." Hood conducts weekly Bible study classes for employees at his home and is internal sponsor for the inmate chapter of Full Gospel Businessment, which he helped Garland establish at Blackburn's request. Hood devotes a substantial amount of his spare time attending and participating in inmate religious activities at the prison.

But while the latent influence already existent at Angola creates an administrative receptiveness to religionists wishing to get involved in prison work, that doesn't mean there aren't any problems and complaints. There are, but the bulk of them evolve around bureaucratic procedures required by the prison. There is plenty of red tape and the paper bureaucracy is growing. "I think part of it is because we have so many more organizations," Gresham told THE ANGOLITE. "The more organizations you have, the more documentation you have to do because the bigger any business is, the harder it is to control. It's simply a fact of life that the bigger something is, the harder it is to manage - and in order to be sure that those people who are properly cleared and that the meeting is scheduled and the rooms are available on the meeting nights, there is much paperwork that has to be done."

The biggest problem and complaint that comes from the inmate religionists is that they have extreme difficulty in trying to get the established churches involved in organizational religious activities. "The inmates themselves have been conducting the services and meetings in our organization for the past two years," Terrell told THE ANGOLITE. "We don't have no outside support." He states



PRISON FELLOWSHIP: LEAVING THEM SOMETHING TO GROW ON

RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

that his organization has been writing Baptist churches and organizations in Louisiana for the past two years, trying to interest them in getting involved with the St. John Institutional Baptist Brotherhood, but their efforts have failed. "All we got was responses," Terrell states, "saying that they'd like to get involved, but when we sent them the forms, we never received them back." He points out that one New Orleans church responded with an offer to "supply us with our quarterly Sunday School books and tapes of their services." And the church kept their word, supplying Terrell with the promised items - but the church has never come to the prison.

The Students of Islam report having the same problem. "We have several times contacted New Orleans, especially since most of us are from that area," Rashada told THE ANGOLITE. But their Muslim "brothers and sisters" also have been ignoring their appeals to come and get involved with them here at the prison. Rashada isn't satisfied with the present relationship with outside Muslims. "No," he said, "we're not satisfied with the situation."

Terrell believes that the reason for the lack of involvement is "because a lot of people think that the dudes who are off into the Bible up here in the penitentiary are out for personal gains, either they're trying to get a parole or a pardon through the church." Rashada has given the matter thought as well. "We really can't pinpoint it," he says. "But I personally think that people are caught up too much in their own life on the outside to get involved with prisoners."



RELIGION IN PRISON (Cont.)

Both Gresham and Wilson feel that a volunteer program at the prison would greatly improve the religious picture at Angola and they are working toward that goal. "That's what we need," Gresham told THE ANGOLITE. "A volunteer program that is workable and widespread, because I think that's where the real salvation is going to come from. The administration has got to develop a volunteer program that will go out in search of volunteers - the right kind of volunteers to do the job that needs to be done. There's a tremendous amount of skill out there just waiting to be called on. Unfortunately, the people who are maybe the best qualified are not the people who are actually coming in. So, I'd like for us to be able to go out and look for these people."

How Wilson and Gresham's volunteer recruitment efforts will fare is difficult to predict given the winds of vengeance that are blowing harshly across the state - a tide of the times that is smothering compassion and making already indifferent hearts colder and increasing hostility for those behind bars. The established church has demonstrated its attitude by turning a cold shoulder on prison involvement. That doesn't mean that the established churches are not interested in our justice system. To the contrary, some churches, particularly the INTERCHURCH CONFERENCE, have been fighting for reforms, working against the capital punishment, and getting involved in ex-offender assistance. The INTERCHURCH CONFERENCE is presently spearheading a drive to erect a chapel at Angola. The Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge has assisted inmate veterans at Angola by funding VETS INCARCERATED, a veteran self-service program.

But the disturbing thing about that kind of involvement is that it is nice, neat, and polite but it doesn't directly involve the churches with prisoners, in that nitty-gritty ugly world of prison. There is almost a studied distance between the established churches and prisoners. That gap may be lessening. Some think so. Colson is one. "I honestly believe that things are changing," he told THE ANGOLITE. "You can go into churches today that were conservative churches five years ago and you will find them either involved or interested in the prison ministry. They bring people into the prisons - they're really trying to help. I think the church is changing its position on so many social issues, including the prison ministry."

On bended knees, in a silent and darkened prison dormitory, a scarred and punch-drunk little boxer says his prayers. It's a striking, a soul-touching sight to see this little man kneel in a dormitory of murderers, rapists, and robbers and ask our Lord for forgiveness of the day's transgressions. That lonely, stifled picture the world outside will never see lends credence to the belief that not all of the men in Angola are beyond the pale of salvation.

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