NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE PRISON IS OUR PARISH:
A HISTORICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND PRAXIS BASED EXPLORATION OF THE PRISON IN THE UNITED STATES FROM A WESLEYAN-HOLINESS PERSPECTIVE

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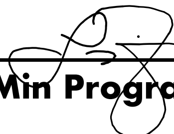

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ABSTRACT

Olivia A. Metcalf

THE PRISON IS OUR PARISH:
A HISTORICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND PRAXIS BASED EXPLORATION OF THE PRISON IN THE UNITED STATES FROM A WESLEYAN-HOLINESS PERSPECTIVE

Mass incarceration is well documented in the United States. Seeking to understand why we have the highest incarceration rate in the world is essential work that must continue. The purpose of this work is not to add to that discussion as much as it will seek to trace how theology has helped create the prisons we now have. An alternative to the current retributive theology that undergirds the prison system is Wesleyan-Holiness theology and its optimistic view of humanity and God. Coupled with Wesley's thought, an examination of Rene Girard's ideas around scapegoating, unmasking, and mediated exposure will provide a lens to reconsider the purpose of punishment. Listening to how the family members of the incarcerated were treated by the church will help to create a missional ecclesiology to live out our theology in healing ways that bring shalom. It will be argued that this exploration is a pathway toward holiness as understood by the Church of the Nazarene in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

INTRODUCTION

Situated near pastureland, a gravel quarry, and miles and miles of sagebrush is the South Idaho Correctional Institute. In much the same way the earth has been cut open at the quarry, the desolate high desert landscape is gashed by razor wire, guard towers, and the only facility in the United States still patrolled by vicious dogs. “The animals themselves are former death-row inmates,” an Associated Press article from 2009 asserts. They are “dogs that were deemed too dangerous to be pets and would have been destroyed at the local pound if they had not been given a reprieve and assigned to prison duty.”[1] Their wooden dog houses dot the perimeter of the fencing for a men’s medium security prison.

There are six prisons on the property. Chain link fence soars into the big sky of Idaho, swathed in razor wire on top, around the bottom, and doubled up on the doubled-up fence. If you could ignore the security measures you might think you were at a school. Portable classrooms, a track and ball field, outdoor workout equipment, and lots of green grass with sparse landscaping are all behind the fences.

The first stop any visitor must make is at Control, a guard station near the ball field. At Control any volunteer must trade their driver’s license for a volunteer badge. Whether you are teaching yoga, helping to give birth to a baby, leading a Bible study, or a 12-step class, the badge is the same. Unless, of course, you have put in enough volunteer hours to get the coveted green badge with your own picture on it and printed with your name and not just “VOLUNTEER.”

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[1] Associated Press, “Mean Dogs, Few Escapes at Idaho Prison,” *NBC News.com.* March 24, 2009, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/29866455/ns/us_news-crime_and_courts/t/mean-dogs-few-escapes-idaho-prison/#.XYwkyJNKjOR.

Sometimes while checking in a van will pull up, release its contents, and drive away. Those that had been riding in it will be wearing bright t-shirts or sweatshirts that say “Inmate Worker” on the back in big block letters. Everyone will be wearing the same kind of pants and shoes as they wait for the fence to open and usher them back into their captivity. These are just a handful of the 5,611 inmates that live behind the razor wire in Kuna, ID.

Depending on the weather, there might be a game of softball going on while men walk the track and others lift weights on a concrete slab that overlooks the field. Between the ball field and the Women’s North Dorm, the fence is covered with black slats woven into the chain link to keep the men and the women from seeing one another. The slats and the distance between the two sets of fences aren’t enough to stop the inmates from trying to have contact with the opposite sex. The guards call it Fencebooking—a play on Facebooking—as the inmates on opposite sides of the divider walk slowly, talk loudly, and try to impress and attract one another. When both facilities have free time, a steady stream of men on the one side and women on the other stagger themselves and walk rhythmically at set intervals along the fence. Keeping in step with one another they talk loudly. The next coupling gives the one in front of them room and keeps their own pace so they too can talk without interrupting each other. When someone tries to cut in this line or upset the spacing, fights break out and lead to lockdown.

“I’ve almost been hit in the head with a rock before!” one inmate shares about how love notes are thrown across the barrier between the two yards. Some welcome *any* kind of contact with the opposite sex. Others try to avoid prison romance as they focus on staying sober, taking classes on behavioral modification, parenting, or getting their GED.

"I don't shop at the dog pound," one inmate remarked of the men on the other side of the fence. One woman wrote in her class journal about her male "Fencebooking" love and a woman with whom she is incarcerated. "I've had a crush on her for a minute. I know it's wrong, but to lock women up together for years at a time… what do they expect? It gets lonely."[2]

To get into North Dorm you must go through what used to be the Pre-Release Center (PRC) for women. It had to be converted to a prison for "timers" instead of "riders" recently because of a massive influx of women prisoners in the state of Idaho.[3] North Dorm houses 380 females. There are two gates to go through to enter. The first buzzer goes off and the gate opens automatically. This leads to another gate and another buzzer all the while the razor wire is winding across the fence above. "When I lived in Lesotho the fences and razor wire made me feel safe. It kept people out," a college student who volunteers at the prison said. "It feels totally different here. I imagine it doesn't feel safe at all because it is meant to keep you in."[4]

All around the grounds are stacks of rocks. The gravel is pushed to the sides and little dirt pathways are made throughout the yard. These stone towers, or cairns, can be found on trails and paths in nature to mark the way so people don't get lost. Here they

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[2] The quotes in this paragraph come from female inmates that participated in a college course inside the Idaho Department of Corrections taught by the author.

[3] The Idaho Department of Corrections designates "termers" which the inmates call "timers" from "riders." A termer or a timer is a person who has been sentenced by the courts to serve a designated sentence. Riders are also known as retained jurisdiction. These inmates are incarcerated and offered intensive courses and services. When they complete their programming, they go back to court where they may be released or sentenced—https://www.idoc.idaho.gov/content/prisons#:~:text=Retained%20jurisdiction%20or%20%22riders%22%20are,incarceration%20in%20an%20IDOC%20facility.&text=Upon%20completion%20of%20a%20rider,or%20sentence%20them%20to%20term.

[4] From an assignment by a university student in a course taught by the author.

serve a purely symbolic purpose that points to the desire of the women to get on the right path, be released, and remain free.

The guard is usually flustered when the evening volunteers arrive. Dinner is finishing which means there is a lot of movement amongst the inmates. Multiple outside groups hold classes simultaneously which causes him stress that can often be visible in his treatment of both the volunteers and the inmates. Waiting patiently in the lobby area to get escorted to the classroom gives ample time to examine the suicide watch room that is currently being utilized as a storage room—filled with extra chairs, cardboard boxes and a stool. There is also art created by inmates in one of their classes decorating the walls. A green-skinned woman whose long flowing locks move from one canvas to another covers the wall by the metal detector that you walk through but is always unplugged.

North Dorm requires a walk through the yard. Walking alone isn't allowed so a guard comes along as an escort so nothing will happen on the short trek in the open with inmates. After coming to the prison week after week the guards start to loosen up and might let you head out without them. It is hard to know if this is trust or a necessity because the Correctional Officers must handle so many tasks in a shift. A group of college students stand out like a sore thumb walking down the asphalt road in between the facilities. The inmates' clothes are heathered grey sweats, hunter green scrubs, white t-shirts, and dark grey shorts. Although the students wouldn't have stood out on their campus, they are out of place here with their trendy jean jackets, stylish shoes, painted fingernails, and various jewelry. One inmate came close to the group and said with a wry

smile, "What's this? Scared Straight?"[5] Many times the inmates comment on not just how volunteers look, but how they smell. The practices of dehumanization in the prison go all the way to controlling the fragrances the women can have. To buy anything that smells good is very expensive, especially when the women who have jobs get paid from $.10 to $.40 an hour.[6] The commissary marks everything up to unreasonable prices and the low wages make purchasing things very challenging.

When the 6 p.m. class begins the women have already been awake for thirteen hours and fifteen minutes. The Wake-Up Call is at 4:45 a.m. with the first count at 5:00 a.m. Breakfast is at 5:30 a.m. along with the medication line. Classes, work, and naps take up the rest of the morning until the sitting count at 10:00 a.m. For the morning and evening count you can stay laying in your bed, but for the sitting count everyone is required to be upright. "It's so they know you aren't dead," one inmate remarked with a smirk. Lunch is at 10:30 a.m. and dinner doesn't come around until 5:30 p.m.

The classroom looks much like a Sunday School room. The walls are lined with a few more bookshelves, but the religious art on the walls and the prayers in cursive on the white board feel less like prison and more like church. There are Bibles stacked on the top of the shelves, organized by translation. The largest stack is a bunch of NIV Bibles donated and free for anyone to take. On the cover is a set of open handcuffs and the words "Free on the Inside."

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[5] "Established in the 1970s, Scared Straight programs are used throughout the United States as a means of deterring juvenile crime. They usually entail visits by at-risk youth to adult prisons, where youth hear about the harsh reality of prison life from inmates." https://universalcrisisintervention.com/interventions/scared-straight/.

[6] From conversations with inmates and the author.

Compelled by passages in the Bible that exhort believers to visit the prisoner[7] and that remind them that Christ came to set the prisoner free have led Christians to engage inside the walls of prisons for centuries. Often this work is connected to the concept on the cover of those Bibles in the Prison Library. It is as if Christians say, "You are not free, but Christ can make you free." A spiritualizing of freedom while facing the consequences of actions is a common theme in prison ministry. While it is true that there is freedom in Christ in any location we may find ourselves, there is something unique about how Christians tend to operate in a symbolic or spiritual realm rather than a literal or material one when it comes to "release to the captives."[8] Too often evangelicals focus on ministries that meet people at the end of a series of experiences, systems, and roadblocks rather than addressing a more holistic approach to engagement with the incarcerated, their families, and their communities. Dominique Gilliard writes, "We think we can banish the source of our social sickness by extracting the people we see as a *cancer* among us; thus we become a fundamental part of the problem plaguing our nation."[9] What is plaguing our nation, Gilliard believes, is a failure to remedy the breach in relationships that crime causes. When the church outsources conflict resolution to the state the only place we will find ourselves is inside the prison after the fact. To address the systems that lead many to incarceration means taking a hard look at our society, privilege, and laws. This isn't the kind of work that the evangelical church typically does. Rather, engagement is connected to the ends without paying much attention to the means.

Wesleyan-Holiness theology and ecclesiology was developed with an emphasis

[7] Matthew 25:36 and Hebrews 13:3 for example

[8] Luke 4:18, NRSV

[9] Dominique Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration: Advocating for Justice that Restores* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 161.

on meaningful praxis. John Wesley was a boots-on-the-ground kind of leader who invited others to engage in ministry proximate to their neighbors to receive grace and give grace through this relationship. He wrote in his sermon "On Visiting the Sick,"

> One great reason why the rich, in general, have so little sympathy for the poor, is, because they so seldom visit them. Hence it is, that, according to the common observation, one part of the world does not know what the other suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it; and then plead their voluntary ignorances an excuse for their hardness of heart. "Indeed, Sir," said person of large substance, "I am a very compassionate man. But, to tell you the truth, I do not know anybody in the world that is in want." How did this come to pass? Why, he took good care to keep out of their way; and if he fell upon any of them unawares "he passed over on the other side."[10]

Although Wesley is not here talking particularly of the incarcerated it would serve the reader well to know that in the United States poverty and incarceration are linked. The Prison Policy Initiative states, "Not only are the median incomes of incarcerated people prior to incarceration lower than non-incarcerated people, but incarcerated people are dramatically concentrated at the lowest ends of the national income distribution."[11] Thus, visiting those incarcerated and those who are poor can be seen as one in the same. Wesley asserted that this sort of engagement with our neighbor was not merely a means of grace for those the wealthy visited but was a means of grace for the wealthy as they engaged with their impoverished neighbor. This is not charity; this is Christian community. While Wesley was not perfect in enacting this kind of holistic love of God and neighbor, his methods are instructive today.

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[10] John Wesley, Sermon 98, "On Visiting the Sick," in *The Sermons of John Wesley,* ed. Chris Dinter, The Wesley Center Online, accessed October 13, 2021, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-98-on-visiting-the-sick/.

[11]Bernadette Rabuy & Daniel Kopf, "Prisons of Poverty: Uncovering the Pre-Incarcerated Incomes of the Imprisoned." Prison Policy Initiative, July 9, 2015. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/income.html.

Somehow along the way some of the churches that followed in his footsteps have lost their way and been married to a more dualistic understanding that divides the body and soul, life from the afterlife, the physical bondage from spiritual bondage. The Church of the Nazarene, which began with an emphasis on care for the poor that was holistic and attempted to address the systems of oppression, addiction, and classism, did not stay with this mission for long. The second generation of leaders moved the denomination into an emphasis on revivalism that neglected our founding principles.

In *Our Watchword and Song,* which recounts the history of the Church of the Nazarene, the authors write of church leaders in the 1920s, "The second generation of leaders of the church were not, for the most part, ones who wedded social compassion with the mission of the Church of the Nazarene."[12] They continue,

> By 1928 the general superintendents warned that social ministries in the church such as maintaining orphanages should be done on a "very conservative basis and continued in a limited way." The role of the church was spiritual. Revivals would "save the world from sin and spiritual darkness," as General Superintendent Williams put it in 1933.[13]

This shift has haunted the soul of our church since.

It is crucial for the church to wed the importance of engaging the sinful systems of the world with an invitation to individuals into a saving relationship with Christ. One without the other is a failure of the call to be like Jesus. Christians must not merely seek to provide spiritual freedom to those incarcerated. Instead, they must look deeply at the systems that have led to unprecedented imprisonment in our nation. The church must ask the question: How did we get here? Once we understand the history of incarceration and

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[12] Floyd Cunningham, ed., *Our Watchword and Song: The Centennial History of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2009), 236.
[13] Cunningham, *Our Watchword and Song,* 237.

punishment in the United States, we can ask and seek to answer a further question: What do we do now that we are here?

Mass incarceration is well documented in the United States. Seeking to understand why we have the highest incarceration rate in the world is essential work that must continue. The purpose of this work is not to add to that discussion as much as it will seek to trace how theology has helped create the prisons we now have and to provide a way to repair and restore what and who has been harmed. The church and state partnership has been forged mostly through a reformed theological lens, which has a history of seeking harsh punishment as the theological response to crime. An alternative to this long-standing thinking in public spaces is Wesleyan-Holiness theology and its optimistic view of humanity and God. Coupled with Wesley's thought, an examination of Rene Girard's ideas around scapegoating, unmasking, and mediated exposure will provide a different way to look at the atonement and punishment for crime that is restorative in nature rather than punitive. Further, interviews with family members of the incarcerated will help to ascertain a picture of how the church, which has helped create and enforce incarceration, responds to those caught up in the system. This will reframe a missional ecclesiology to help the church imagine new and theological ways to engage with the prison, the justice-involved, and their families. The concepts of movement and improvisation outlined by Miroslav Volf and Michael Croasman can help to repair harm and reform our communities as we seek to be proximate and innovative as we pursue a Christian and biblical understanding of justice. Ultimately the response to all of this is to repent and work toward restoration. This is the pathway that leads toward holiness.

CHAPTER ONE

The Current State of Incarceration in the United States

Today more than 2.2 million people are incarcerated in the United States.[1] At the end of 2016 4.5 million were under supervision through parole and probation.[2] We outpace the world in incarceration. In the US 698 adults per 100,000 are incarcerated. Among our NATO allies the next in line is the United Kingdom with an incarceration rate of 139 per 100,000.[3] Not only do we have more people behind bars in the United States than any other nation in the world, but we have also found ways to target and over incarcerate people of color. Ashley Nellis writes of this, "Black Americans are incarcerated in state prisons across the country at nearly five times the rate of whites, and Latinx people are 1.3 times as likely to be incarcerated than non-Latinx whites."[4]

In *The New Jim Crow,* Michelle Alexander describes this phenomenon at length. Faulting the War on Drugs, the heightened militarization of police, the targeting of neighborhoods that are predominantly occupied by people of color, and legislation that has criminalized certain populations' crime over and against crime from other classes and races, we have a major crisis on our hands.[5] Many of these statistics only deal with the

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[1] "Criminal Justice Statistics," The Sentencing Project, accessed January 11, 2021, https://www.sentencingproject.org/criminal-justice-facts/.
[2] "Probation and Parole in the United States," Bureau of Justice Statistics 2016, accessed January 11, 2021, https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ppus16_sum.pdf.
[3] Wagner, Peter and Wendy Sawyer, "States of Incarceration, the Global Context, 2018," Prison Policy Initiative*,* accessed January 11, 2021, https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2018.html#methodology.
[4] Ashley Nellis, "The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons," The Sentencing Project https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/color-of-justice-racial-and-ethnic-disparity-in-state-prisons/ accessed January 11, 2021.
[5] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness (*New York, NY: The New Press, 2012).

data that can be gathered once a person has been arrested and/or incarcerated. They do not account for the systemic issues of poverty, lack of education, lack of affordable housing, and food deserts or food insecurity, that lead to a cycle that often creates avenues for people to end up behind bars. Although it is essential to work with those that are within the prison walls, Christians should also be mindful of the extenuating societal circumstances that have put people there. It is not merely a crime issue; it is far deeper.

David Cayley writes in his book *The Expanding Prison* that there are three things prisons provide for societies. First, a prison is a "dumping ground for unwanted people."[6] This may seem to be too harsh a statement, but the statistics demonstrate this to be true in the US. The poor, the addicted, the under-educated, the mentally ill, and people of color are incarcerated at high rates. While this is an expensive, and arguably unhelpful, way to assist people with their real needs, we continue to lock up people who fall into these categories. The high rates of recidivism reveal to us that this is not a successful system, yet we continue.[7]

Secondly, Cayley writes that imprisoning people helps to balance the scales of justice.[8] When injustice tips the scale, the punishment of prison rebalances it. One of the issues with this sort of thinking is our definition of injustice. There are certainly crimes that would be considered unjust by the majority, even with extenuating circumstances considered. However, there are circumstances where multiple scales of injustice must be

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[6] David Cayley, *The Expanding Prison: The Crisis in Crime and Punishment and the Search for Alternatives* (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1998), 3.

[7]A Bureau of Justice Statistics report found, "About 6 in 10 (62%) prisoners released across 34 states in 2012 were arrested within 3 years, and 7 in 10 (71%) within five years." https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/rpr34s125yfup1217.pdf?utm_content=rpr34s125yfup1217_tcdca21_tcus14st&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery. It is important to note that these are arrest rates and not conviction rates.

[8] Cayley, *Expanding Prison,* 3.

weighed. There are often various scales of injustice in the lives of individuals. As a society we must recognize there are systems out of balance that can lead to further injustices unless they are remedied. For example, in underfunded public schools, in neighborhoods that are over policed, in communities that are blighted, the scales of justice are already tipped toward injustice. Yet rather than dealing with the roots of the problems in our societies we pluck at the stems believing that incarcerating individuals will somehow remedy the imbalance to the scales of justice. It is important to also ask at this point, who determines what is just? And not only that, but why is the state allowed to engage in behaviors that, enacted by anyone else, would be considered unjust?

Cayley makes the claim that the third thing prisons do is *something.*[9] In response to what is happening in the world around, because the law has been broken, because harm has been caused, "something must be done." While there is truth that for a society to function, and potentially thrive, we must care for one another and address grievances and harm, how this happens matters greatly. Christians should be particularly concerned with the "how?" of the *something.*

Cayley's assessment is important as a guide for the rest of this chapter which will address the influence Christians had on the creation of the prison system in the United States. Beyond the creation of prisons, Christians have aided in the continuation of the early practices. Weighing both positive and negative influences this chapter will attempt to situate the Church of the Nazarene in the broader conversation around crime and punishment. This will be accomplished in three ways. First, a brief history of John Wesley's work in the prison is vital because the Church of the Nazarene was born out of

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[9] Cayley, *Expanding Prison,* 3.

the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. Second, a survey of the evangelical influence on the movement toward "tough on crime" rhetoric and how that connects to the Church of the Nazarene. Third, a look at the *Herald of Holiness,* and how this denominational publication frames crime, sin, punishment, and policing.

The Creation of Prisons in the United States

Religious misfits, criminals punished with "transportation" instead of hanging, educated businessmen, and farmers dealing in exports all came to colonize North America. This eclectic group created systems of government that impact our lives to this day. Many North Americans can point to the way colonizers shaped government and current laws. However, few would imagine that the issues we are facing as a nation regarding mass incarceration can be traced back to those early settlers. Interestingly some of those who came to the colonies because of religious persecution helped to create new systems of persecution in the quest to reform. The very theological difficulties that caused some of the colonizers to flee Europe have influenced the rationale, the method, and the current system of incarceration in the US.[10]

Christians have been addressing the issues of incarceration for two millennia. Hebrews 13:3 admonishes the early church to, "Remember prisoners as if you were in prison with them, and people who are mistreated as if you were in their place." This, and other biblical mandates have led Christians to engage in prison work. The question has been, and continues to be, how do Christians serve those incarcerated faithfully? The Protestant Reformers were asking the very same question as they began to create the first prisons in the New World.

[10] Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration,* 100.

Although the separation of church and state is a vital part of our country and government, the church had a role in creating the current system of incarceration and thus has a part to play in addressing it. Beginning with a movement of the Quakers to create a system they believed would help to bring about the reformation of the character of criminals, to the use of solitary confinement today, we find the fingerprints of the Protestant church on the prison system. This should come as no surprise considering the presence of Christian people in all levels of government and in all aspects of society in the United States from the early days. What should spark interest in Christian communities is the seeming disconnect between the message we preach and the practices of the justice system.

Those who came to North America were not creating prison systems, laws, and government in a vacuum. The way most in Western society viewed law, order and justice can be traced back further than the expansion of Europeans to this continent. In the year 1140 a monk by the name of Gratian began to organize the laws, liturgies, and practices of the Catholic church into categories and hierarchy. "Canon law began to acquire the properties of the modern legal institution…" writes David Cayley. "Folk law had been concerned with the satisfaction of honour by reparation. Now crime came to be seen as something more than a wrongdoing demanding recompense. Justice itself demanded vindication."[11] This shift elevated the law, diminished the rights of victims, and operated under the idea that suffering was the way forward to true restitution. It also redefined sin and what was needed to remedy it. Cayley also points to the legacy of canon law in the modern practice of determining guilt—particularly in the realm of intent. He writes, "The

[11] David Cayley, *The Expanding Prison,* 128.

question in criminal law has remained not, 'What is to be done?' but rather 'How much punishment does this person deserve?''"[12] This philosophy of just deserts deeply impacted the church, the state, and the individual wherever it was implemented. As the church began to operate in these ways, while continuing to hold sway in political systems, much of canon law bled into the practices of secular law.

Some of the first to address crime and prison in the New World were the Quakers. Jennifer Graber writes that, fleeing the persecution they themselves had faced, and seeking a different way forward that mirrored their theological convictions, the Quakers were incredibly influential in the formation of the modern day prison system.[13] These Protestant Reformers did not merely want to care for prisoners while they were wards of the state, they wanted to actively work to reform the European system they had inherited and to mend the hearts and lives of those imprisoned. As Dominique Gilliard writes in *Rethinking Incarceration*, "As criminal justice became progressively retributive, a humanitarian countermovement swelled. Activists petitioned humanity's moral consciousness, calling the masses to reconsider society's treatment of the poor, disabled, and incarcerated."[14] In similar fashion to the Catholic church seeking to address crime and punishment with their religious convictions, the Quakers began the process of building prisons based upon theirs.

Graber writes that this involvement was directly connected to

> the foundational Quaker idea of the Inner Light and the eighteenth-century development of elaborate systems of discipline with Friends' communities.

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[12] Cayley, *The Expanding Prison,* 131.

[13] Jennifer Graber, *The Furnace of Affliction: Prisons and Religion in Antebellum America (*North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 21.

[14] Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration,* 99.

> Society members' proposals for the prison were grounded in their belief that proper environment allowed lawbreakers to experience God's presence within.[15]

If only inmates could reflect on what they had done, practice silence, and work hard they would experience the transformation that the Friends believed was possible. In the Walnut Street Prison built in Philadelphia in 1773-1776, they began this experiment and continued it in an adjusted format in Newgate Prison in New York, opened in the 1790s.

Thomas Eddy, a Quaker reformer, designed and built the old Newgate prison and ran it from 1797-1801. Building on what he had learned in Walnut Street, he continued to seek a facility and program that would reform those incarcerated there. Eddy viewed the prison as a garden to form hearts and lives. He believed that all people were capable of being reformed and with the right balance of silence, hard work, and inner reflection true change could take place. He was a deeply optimistic person who not only worked toward prison reform, but also sought the state's help in caring for those with mental illness.

The problem with the work of the Quakers was that it did not bring the kind of reform in the lives of the inmates they desired. Inmates began to write their own accounts of their experiences in Newgate Prison. "Bad conditions, cruel guards, and rooms brimming with felons created desperate men unable to choose the good."[16] There was a growing set of voices describing the prison as a school that raised up criminals instead of reforming them. This distressed Eddy and caused him to do something that continues to be detrimental to this day: increase his use of solitary confinement.[17] In the prison in Auburn, NY the ill effects of solitary confinement were quickly realized. Graber notes,

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[15] Graber, *Furnace of Affliction,* 22.
[16] Graber, *Furnace of Affliction,* 68.
[17] Graber, *Furnace of Affliction,* 79 and 81.

“five inmates died, one ‘became an idiot,’ and another committed suicide.[18] In a move designed to bring reform and prevent crime, what was once used as a last resort became normalized despite its negative effects.

Eddy was forced out of Newgate for political reasons and other, less caring leaders took over. A return to the use of corporal punishment and “a theology of divine justice and mercy in which inmate reformation sometimes demanded the lash” became the norm.[19] The garden that Eddy envisioned was not blooming or producing a harvest. As others observed the failure of this model, they began to seek different ways to address the issues in the prisons. Instead of a garden Rev. John Stanford envisioned the prison differently. Stanford’s view was that the prison should be “a furnace of affliction, a well-running, orderly machine designed to put great pressures on inmates, who would then emerge transformed by the experience.” [20] This differed greatly from Eddy and further compromised the Quaker reformers initial goals.

Stanford, a Baptist who had been raised an Anglican began a theological shift in the prisons. He helped to usher in a new way in which Protestants influenced the criminal justice system. Whereas the Quakers believed that in the right circumstances prisoners could reflect on what they had done and experience the kind of growth that leads to new life in Christ, the Baptists instead viewed the prison as a rightfully painful and gloomy place of suffering that was authorized by Christ for their redemption.[21] Practices that call to mind Anselm’s theory of the atonement rekindled a desire for corporal punishment in

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[18] Graber, *Furnace of Affliction,* 80.
[19] Graber, *Furnace of Affliction,* 49.
[20] Graber, *Furnace of Affliction,* 55.
[21] Graber, *Furnace of Affliction,* 59.

the prison systems in America. Timothy Gorringe writes, “That the answer to violence in a community is the violence of sacrificial death is taught to Christian society by its faith. Criminals die to make satisfaction for their sins as Christ died for the sins of all.”[22] Reformers like Stanford didn’t view the work of Christ on the cross as dealing with the sins of criminals. Rather, they utilized a conception of Christ satisfying our sin as the mode in which criminals were to satisfy their *own* sins. Although this is a misinterpretation of Anselm, it is connected to his viewpoint. Whether it was capital punishment or corporal punishment, this sort of violence against inmates was believed to be for their good. Gorringe writes, “Wherever Calvinism spread punitive sentencing followed.”[23] This was visible in the prison system in North America as Calvinism took deep root in the nineteenth century.

Calvinism and an increased emphasis on meritocracy began to shape and form thinking around prisons and punishment. Gilliard writes, “Christian meritocracy has evolved as a byproduct of syncretizing biblical and nationalistic values. This toxic mixture trivializes grace and promotes the dichotomy of saints and sinners that ignores the fact that we have all fallen short of the glory of God.”[24] This illustrates the way in which our theological foundation is determinant for how we will view the systems at work in our society. The punitive and retributive ways that Calvinism, and penal substitutionary theories of the atonement in particular, have shaped the theological imagination of the United States have misshapen our view of justice and our understanding of God. Although they tried to answer the questions of how to faithfully

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[22] Timothy Gorringe, *God’s Just Vengeance: Crime, Violence, and the Rhetoric of Salvation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 27.
[23] Gorringe, *God’s Just Vengeance,* 140.
[24] Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration,* 170.

serve in the prisons, the answers they found were incomplete, and in some ways, destructive.

John Wesley and the Methodists

Although Calvinism may drive much of the way Christians created and view the penal system, there is another theological alternative that counters this punitive understanding. The Methodist emphasis on personal and social holiness led John and Charles Wesley to engage in serving those who were imprisoned. In their day, prior to the Quakers work in North America, brutal physical punishment, public executions, and imprisonment for being unable to pay debt were the norm. The Wesleys knew first-hand the impact of prison as their father, Samuel Wesley, had been imprisoned when John was young for being unable to pay a debt. When he discovered that his sons were going into the Castle Prison around the year 1730 in Oxford, he wrote a letter encouraging them in this work and sharing his own experience of visitation.[25]

In *Social Justice Through the Eyes of Wesley,* we read of the early work of the "Holy Club." Irv Brendlinger writes, "In a literal response to the Gospel mandate they 'fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited those that are sick, and in prison.' With scheduled regularity they visited prisons, bringing spiritual solace, and providing money for those imprisoned because of small debts."[26] This engagement with the incarcerated was coupled with addressing the larger societal issues of poverty, lack of education, and lack of access to jobs. Joerg Reiger writes, "[Wesley] did not only consider the plight of

[25] Richard P. Heitzenrater, "Prison Ministry in the Wesleyan Tradition," in James M. Shopshire, Mark C. Hicks, and Richmond Stogin (editors), *I Was in Prison: United Methodist Perspectives on Prison Ministry* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2008), 76.
[26] Irv A Brendlinger, *Social Justice Through the Eyes of Wesley* (Ontario: Joshua Press, 2006), 3.

the workers, the poor, the prisoners, the sick and the slaves; he structured his societies in such a way that the plight of these groups was alleviated– not merely through service to them, but by bringing them into the communities."[27] This is an important distinction. The idea that any person could and should join a society, could and should serve the needs of others, and was expected to, is key to Wesleyan theology. It demonstrates the way that class, position, and role did not preclude any from becoming proximate to those in need—not just to serve, but to be served. However, in some ways we might say this was aspirational. While the heartbeat of the Methodists was to break down barriers to live out the Greatest Commandment, they were by no means perfect at it.

The Wesleys' work in the prisons included praying with prisoners, escorting them to execution, providing for their physical needs by raising money, and working to free inmates who had been wrongfully accused. They did not view their main efforts as a reforming presence in the penal system but as a spiritual one. Richard Heitzenrater writes, "The Wesleys and their followers were more interested in helping free the convicted prisoners from sin and spiritual death than in freeing them from their sentence and imprisonment."[28] This emphasis on helping to save souls and supporting those who were going to be executed characterized much of the early work of John and Charles. Even though Wesleyan theology is built upon a holistic faith and experience of God that transforms people and systems they did not develop the reformist response one might expect regarding the prison. Kenneth Carder writes, "While we applaud and benefit from [the Wesley's] witness to those sentenced to death, we wonder why they did not reflect

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[27] Joerg Rieger, *No Religion by Social Religion* (US, Foundery Books, 2018), 11.
[28] Heitzenrater, "Prison Ministry," 69.

more on the implications of their affirmation of the *imago Dei* and holistic salvation on a system that considered the death penalty an acceptable punishment for even petty crimes."[29] One can study the Wesleys and find ways to support prison reform and even abolition in their theology, but we do not have extensive witness of it in their practice.

Although Carder critiques the Wesleys on this point he is also quick to point out that what happened at Aldersgate, when John's heart was strangely warmed, did not happen in isolation. In fact, he asserts that without the work and experience that John had in the Castle Prison he would not have had the Aldersgate experience. In the months leading up to May 24, 1738, Wesley was actively at work in the prisons—preaching and experiencing the grace of God at work in the lives of those imprisoned. According to Carder, "Wesley considered visiting the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned as an indispensable means of grace to both the visitor and the visited. In fact, he considered such acts of mercy as having priority and as a means to greater sanctification."[30] The distinctives of Wesleyan theology can be seen in the emphasis on both personal piety and social holiness. Although they did not explore or address all the issues they could have, the foundation was laid for future generations of Christ followers to engage the questions that needed to be asked to formulate a deeper, more holistic theology to address the social ills of incarceration.

It is important to recognize that the Wesleys wanted to understand how to serve in the world faithfully. Heitzenrater writes of how they attempted to do this.

> The life of Christ was the model of holy living that Wesley and the Methodists strove to follow; and the power of the Holy Spirit provided the energy for their

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[29] Kenneth L. Carder, "Castle Prison and Aldersgate Street: Converging Paths on the Methodist Way." Address given at the Vanderbilt Divinity School, Nashville, TN, February 5, 2009, 4.
[30] Carder, "Castle Prison," 4.

> dual program of vital devotion to God and active involvement in helping the needs of their neighbors. Wesley would call it a 'plain duty' that we, in fact, *do* the visiting. And he very clearly points out that to 'visit,' speaking etymologically, means 'to look upon' the person with your own eyes. Otherwise, we do not really know what the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned are suffering.[31]

This is, in part, a faithful way in which followers of Christ can engage in the prisons. The Wesleys practiced, in multiple contexts, a ministry of proximity—coming close to broken people and systems with the intention of reforming and renewing. Proximity offers a much-needed corrective to address the problems of the system of incarceration we face today.

Manfred Marquardt notes that Wesley was concerned about the conditions of prisons, the lack of reform and restoration that happens for those incarcerated, the lengthy and unfair trials, the disparate treatment in the justice system when it came to wealth or poverty, and the horrific way prisoners of war were treated.[32] He argues that through Wesley's journals, public speeches, and articles in the newspaper there is a reforming aspect to his ministry. He writes,

> If the impartial historian…looks more closely at Wesley's public declarations on this subject, Wesley's significant influence upon improvement of the prison situation will become evident. That influence affected not only acute distresses but also fundamental grievances grounded in the legal structure, trials, and punishment.

However one judges Wesley's engagement it is important to note that proximity was vital to his work. It was through seeing with his own eyes the conditions of prisons that caused him to raise money and awareness. It was through visiting and hearing the stories of the imprisoned that he recognized the injustice and unfairness present. It was through going

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[31] Heitzenrater, "Prison Ministry," 81.

[32] Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 84-85.

to the prisoners of war and viewing them as human beings that he could publicly request that people give to help even their enemies. This ministry of proximity was a part of the warp and woof of Wesley's lived faith and should be true of those within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition today.

Evangelicals and Criminal Justice

The impact of the modern evangelical movement must be noted as we continue to explore the way the church has created and maintained the criminal justice system and prison. Evangelicals are defined in the *Global Wesleyan Dictionary of Theology,* as those who hold to the "authority of the Scriptures, a cruciform life, evangelical conversion, and discipleship actively expressed in works of mercy and love. Evangelical theology was also creedal in formation (stated or unstated), meaning that its doctrine is based on the Nicene Creed (AD325)."[33] While this may define aspects of evangelical theology in practice these tenets are varied. For example, how an evangelical church defines the authority of Scripture will be different based on if it is born from a Wesleyan perspective or a Calvinist one. It is important to note that there is a difference between evangelical theology and the evangelical movement that is increasingly defined by political leanings rather than theological continuity.[34]

Aaron Griffith, in his book *God's Law and Order,* traces the way evangelicals have engaged the criminal justice system. Prison rates did not increase dramatically from the 1890s to the 1920s. However, over the ensuing decades rates of incarceration began to soar. The 1940s saw 125 people per 100,000 imprisoned up from roughly 73 per

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[33] David Rainey, "Evangelicalism," in *Global Wesleyan Dictionary of Theology,* ed. Al Truesdale (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2013), 186.
[34] For more information on this topic see Kristin Du Mez's work, *Jesus and John Wayne* (New York: Liveright, 2020).

100,000 just 20 years earlier.[35] This pattern of increase has continued with few outliers to this day.[36] Griffith demonstrates a correlation between the rise of evangelicalism after World War II and the rise in rhetoric about law and order as well as the growth of the prison population. "Postwar evangelicals helped make crime something to fear even as fear of crime helped make postwar evangelicalism."[37]

The evangelical focus on soteriology can help to explain their deep connection to crime and punishment. Rather than focusing on the systemic issues in society, evangelicals claimed the issue was personal choice that led to sin. Therefore, criminals needed to be saved. Personal salvation would then solve the systemic issues. Whether due to the strong emphasis on individualism, congregationalism, and loose or non-denominational alliances, evangelicals have been a mixed bag when it comes to the issues of law and order, prison, and capital punishment. The majority have advocated for harsh punishments and an understanding of personal responsibility and sin when addressing crime. However, within this majority voice have always been those that have attempted to address the causes of crime, the plight of the incarcerated, and address both individual sin and systems.

Billy Graham is one such person. Chris Hutton writes of one of the ways Graham talked about the issues: "[Billy] Graham's work would capture evangelicals' imaginations by offering a way to explain why the crime rate was so high. It wasn't that there were severe economic stressors or environmental elements driving men to crime.

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[35] Aaron Griffith, *God's Law and Order: The Politics of Punishment in Evangelical America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020), 26.

[36] In the year 2021 639 people per 100,000 are behind bars.

[37] Griffith, *God's Law and Order,* 102.

Instead it was a heart issue."[38] However, that wasn't the only way that Graham talked about crime and punishment. Griffith writes,

> For evangelicals in the early postwar era, the ideal outcome for criminals was their *conversion,* not conviction. Evangelicals like Graham spoke of lawlessness in dire terms, but they generally believed the best way forward was for criminals to be embraced by the nail-scarred hands of Jesus, not the long arm of the law.[39]

Often Graham would recognize the needs of the incarcerated and even advocated for better conditions for the imprisoned. Hutton writes, "...his discussions stressed the prisoners' humanity and wanted to seek their good regardless of how much evil they did."[40] Griffith also states that although Graham had a hand in drumming up fear that crime was prevalent and disruptive, "he was remarkably consistent in defining the truly Christian response to the issue as spiritual heart change, not harsher law enforcement."[41] While Graham may have advocated against harsher law enforcement this was not the prevalent way in which evangelicals have approached the issues in the United States criminal justice system.

White evangelicals have been some of the most vocal proponents of the most serious forms of punishment from solitary confinement to capital punishment.[42] While the general population was becoming more and more disenfranchised with the idea of the state killing anyone, the evangelical churches began to come down hard in favor of the

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[38] Chris Hutton, "After Crafting American Criminal Justice Evangelicals Keep Changing the Rules*," The News Station,* July 19, 2021, https://thenewsstation.com/after-crafting-american-criminal-justice-evangelicals-keep-changing-the-rules/

[39] Griffith, *God's Law and Order,* 57.

[40] Hutton, "After Crafting," 13.

[41] Griffith, *God's Law and Order,* 64.

[42] Joanna Piacenza, "Support for Death Penalty by Religious Affiliation," Public Religion Research Institute. https://www.prri.org/spotlight/support-for-death-penalty-by-religious-affiliation/#.VaMS__lViko. Modern day statistics show the divide between Protestants and other Christians and other faith expressions as well as the racial divides. This statistical difference between White Christians and Christians is important to the discussion around race, policing, and mass incarceration.

idea. Why was this the case? Griffith posits three main movements. First, he describes evangelicals as anxious and fearful about crime. This led them to a law-and-order position that argued enforcing the law was a neutral act. Secondly, evangelicals were seeking to become more mainstream and viewed as respectable. This led them to develop this harsher ideal through their publications like *Christianity Today*. The third main factor that led evangelicals to come down hard on law and order politics was the engagement the group had with particular Supreme Court cases, problems in the city, and their battle against the mainline churches and what they perceived to be a loss of their Christian identity in the broader culture.[43] Griffith, it should be noted, is not writing about a particular denomination, but addressing evangelicalism in general, while referencing particular stories that do come from denominations. This broad look leads us to a narrower look to see if these major movements can be discerned in particular denominations or traditions.

The Church of the Nazarene

Born out of the nineteenth century Holiness movement in the United States, the Church of the Nazarene was founded as a denomination in 1908. Phineas Bresee, a former United Methodist pastor and founder of the denomination, longed for a church that emphasized both personal holiness and social holiness. The denomination formed when a variety of holiness societies, churches, and denominations across the US decided to unite. The church was known for its strong emphasis on entire sanctification *and* compassion for the poor, addicted, orphan, prisoner, and unwed mother. While the Church of the Nazarene has had ministries within the prisons and to the families of the

[43] Griffith, *God's Law and Order,* 102.

incarcerated throughout her history, there has not been a concentrated effort to systematize or train those who seek to serve in this way. This does not mean the denomination hasn't had an influence on the thought process of church members around the issue of crime, punishment, prison, and police.

Bresee was deeply concerned with helping those in society to find a wholeness in Christ that was connected to breaking down systems that harmed individuals, families, and society. This can be seen in examples such as the first letterhead of the denomination which had "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" inscribed upon it.[44] Bresee, writing in the *Nazarene Messenger* in October of 1901, called the church to remember why it was founded. He stated,

> The first miracle after the baptism with the Holy Ghost was wrought upon a beggar. It means that the first service of the Holy Ghost-baptized church is to the poor; its ministry is to those who need them most. As the Spirit was upon Jesus to preach the gospel to the poor, so his Spirit is upon his servants for the same purpose.[45]

It is also clear in the way the early days of the denomination were marked by an emphasis to serve in the cities where injustice abounded. Born out of the Methodist church, it is important to note the way Bresee desired for the distinctives of serving those in need to permeate the new denomination called Nazarene. In the first Nazarene Manual there was a list of the things that marked the new denomination. There are fourteen items that were rules for members of the church. On the list we find, "By seeking to do good to the bodies and souls of men. Feeding the hungry, clothing the destitute, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and ministering to the needy, as opportunity and ability are given."[46] A Holy

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[44] Timothy L. Smith, *Called Unto Holiness,* Vol. 1, (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1963), 113.
[45] Harold Ivan Smith, ed., *The Quotable Bresee* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1983), 167.
[46] Smith, *Called Unto Holiness, 116.*

Spirit filled person will naturally engage in this sort of care for their neighbor. David Busic, General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, writes of the unique characteristic of Methodism,

> Two of the most important factors [to the growth of Methodism] include the missionary spirit of Methodists to break down socioeconomic and racial barriers, and the prominent place of the doctrine of entire sanctification in the preaching, teaching, and experience of the people.[47]

Busic describes Bresee's continuation of the Wesley's partiality to the poor this way: "While Bresee's care for the poor may have been partially influenced by the postmillennialist eschatology of his day, he recognized it as a necessary aspect of true religion and faithful discipleship."[48] This follows John Wesley's insistence that Methodists must not merely give to the poor or sick, but also know them, visit them, and be proximate to receive grace while also being a means of grace for their neighbor.

The realities of mass incarceration impacting the poor, people of color, and those in marginalized urban settings at higher rates should cause Nazarene's to reflect on our historical roots in the city as we seek to address this problem. However, since the birth of the denomination there has been a struggle to stay true to our founding principles. Busic, referencing sociologist and ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene, Paul Benefiel, believes by 1901 the church was already starting to drift from our preference for the poor.[49] Alongside the shifts in leadership within the church, pressures from without were substantial as well.

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[47] David Busic, *The City: Urban Churches in the Wesleyan-Holiness Tradition* (Kansas City: The Foundry, 2020),71.
[48] Busic, *The City,* 75.
[49] Busic, *The City,* 14. This is notable since the denomination wasn't officially born until 1908.

The Church of the Nazarene was not immune to the evangelical emphasis on crime as a heart issue and not a systems issue. Aaron Griffith writes in *God's Law and Order* that there were two major views on crime, criminals, and prison in the twentieth century. First, that it was an issue of the heart. If more and more people could experience salvation all the ills of society would be remedied. Second, the response to this sort of thinking and practice was to delve deeply into sociology and a critique of the broader systems that led to crime and criminal activity.[50] Although both views have something to offer, it is the extremes that tend to divide the church. If the focus is solely on getting people saved the church will fail to see the impact our individual sin has on the systems we create. However, if we divorce our understanding of faith from an exploration of those failed systems, we will believe we can legislate and treat our way to wholeness. It is necessary to hold these ideas in tension rather than swing to one side or the other.

Bresee said, "Let the poor be fed and clothed; let us pour out our substances for this purpose; but let us keep heaven open, that they may receive the unspeakable gift of His love, in the transforming power of the Holy Ghost."[51] Quotes like these point to the way in which the beginnings of the church were holistic in understanding that we have an embodied faith. Not very long into the history of the denomination however, the Church of the Nazarene often would find itself in the first camp believing that personal salvation and sanctification were the *only* way to address the issues of crime and punishment in our nation. Disconnecting souls from bodies, and spiritual things from temporal things, is a kind of gnosticism that should concern the church. Our understanding of salvation and

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[50] Griffith, *God's Law and Order,* 27.
[51] Smith, *The Quotable Bresee*, 168.

sanctification should never be divorced from our lived experience, the physical reality around us, and the systems that we all are living under.

Although the Church of the Nazarene had orphanages, homes for unwed mothers, schools, and other ministry endeavors that addressed broken systems there is little record of engaging with the prisoner. Stan Ingersol, historian, and archivist for the Church of the Nazarene can find little information of a concerted effort to engage with prisoners. "Occasional stray notice[s]," as Ingersol describes what can be found in *Nazarene Archives* involve things like Mary Lee Cagle (1864-1955), noted evangelist once preaching to prisoners at the Arkansas Prison.[52] Ingersol wrote about Cagle's work in the prison in the Wesleyan Theological Journal, "She wrote with a deep sense of compassion about those to whom she ministered in jails and prisons, stating that her first experience in prison ministry 'gave her a greater degree of sympathy for the suffering' that remained throughout life."[53] There is some work of note, but little record, done by Ina Lambert in Wyoming. Her death notice in the *Herald of Holiness* relays that she was the mother-in-law to a General Superintendent and mother to a District Superintendent. She was a Deaconess in the Church of the Nazarene, and her picture was uncovered with three other ladies with the caption "Cheyenne-Jail Crew."[54] Little is known about what these women did, how long they served, and what their ministry entailed.

However, in the *Herald of Holiness*[55] there are many mentions of crime, prison, police, and the death penalty. While mentions of these topics can be found early in the

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[52] Stan Ingersol, Email to author, September 27, 2021.
[53] Stan Ingersol, "The Ministry of Mary Lee Cagle: A Study in Women's History and Religion," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 28, nos. 1&2 (Spring and Fall, 1993) 191.
[54] Ingersol, email, September 27, 2021.
[55] This is the denominational magazine for the Church of the Nazarene which started in 1912. It was renamed *Holiness Today* in 1999.

publication's history, this exploration will center on issues published in the 1960s-1990s. It is important to note the way in which the Church of the Nazarene adopts the prevailing evangelical understanding of "tough on crime" politics while abandoning even further the early roots of the church. While there are dissenting voices in the *Herald of Holiness*, many of the references address the issue of personal sin over systems. The themes that are pertinent to this chapter are found in different genres within the publication across this time frame and illustrate how the second generation of Nazarene thought and the prevailing attitudes of evangelicals impacted the church.

For example, the *Herald* highlighted prison chaplain Max Jones in the section on denominational news. In 1985 he was elected as the President of the Nazarene Chaplain Association.[56] Other references are found in letters to the editor sent from inside the prison that ask for more copies of the publications to be sent or to share how the periodical has been a blessing to the incarcerated. In 1985 Randall Gray wrote of the support he received from the donated subscription and shared how he passes the magazine along to others.[57] Mrs. John Crauswell wrote to the editor to encourage churches to sponsor such subscriptions in January of 1984 as she was at that point writing to 100 inmates. In the same issue that printed Mrs. Crauswell's letter, the *Herald* staff published a letter from an inmate in Michigan City, Indiana by the name of Alvin McNary. McNary wrote:

> I am a 20-year-old inmate of the Michigan State Prison. I have been incarcerated for approximately three years. I have lost all contact with the outside world, but I

[56] "In the News," *Herald of Holiness*, 74, no.17 (September 1, 1985): 21, https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1985_v74_no17.pdf.
[57] Randall Gray, "Prisoner Writes," *Herald of Holiness*, 74, no.7 (April 1, 1985): 4, https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1985_v74_no07.pdf.

have found one sincere Friend and that's Jesus Christ. I have accepted Christ as my personal Savior and that is something I will never regret.[58]

Often in the section entitled *News of Religion* information about crime can be found. This short section has snippets from other news sources, both Christian and secular, that were of interest to the editors at the time. In 1967 the *Herald* reprinted information entitled, "A Minority Report," which details the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. Griffith highlighted this in his book, and it is important to note that the Church of the Nazarene reprinted this, further demonstrating the connections between the broader evangelical movement and the Church of the Nazarene. This minority report refers to Miss Genevieve Blatt, a commission member and Roman Catholic, who "pointed out that the Commission had neglected 'to recognize godlessness as a basic cause of crime and religion as a basic cure.'"[59] Grateful for this voice, evangelicals published this information widely, illustrated by the fact that the *Herald* ran the same information in a different format in back to back issues.[60] Griffith writes, "Evangelicals happily trumpeted Blatt's minority report, a remarkable development considering their lingering suspicion of Catholics' place in American public life."[61]

Oftentimes the "News of Religion" section documents the rising or falling crime rate, the government's actions regarding crime, and information about the vices the Church of the Nazarene calls on its members to abstain from—gambling, alcohol,

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[58]Alvin McNary, "Prisoner Converted," *Herald of Holiness,* 73, no. 1 (January 1, 1984): 4, https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1984_v73_n01_0.pdf.
[59] "The Minority Report," *Herald of Holiness,* 56, no. 15 (May 31,1967), 10-11, https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1967_v56_n15.pdf.
[60] "In Fighting Crime 'Don't Forget God,'" *Herald of Holiness*, 56, no. 13 (May 17, 1967): 17 https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1967_v56_n13_1.pdf.
[61] Griffith, *God's Law and Order,* 119.

tobacco, drugs, and promiscuity. Chuck Colson and his push for prison reform cropped up in this section in 1983.[62] Other times the headlines are sensational and shocking. "Mother Won't Blame Boys Who Crucified Her Baby,"[63] and "Couple Slain Ministering to Inmate,"[64] are some of the examples. There is also mention of important actions by sister denominations and news of the National Association of Evangelicals. In 1972 "News of Religion" shared that the NAE supported the death penalty. Within that small report it reads, "But even God does not forgive without appropriate penalty for our redemption.…"[65] This justification of the death penalty does not line up with Nazarene Articles of Faith or even any of the traditional metaphors used to describe the atonement. However, it is in keeping with the way in which evangelicals were developing harsher and more punitive understandings of law and order and codifying them in Christian language.

There are a variety of articles written on these themes. One of interest is entitled "No Help from Second-Story Windows," by J. Winfield Fretz which calls on readers to become proximate to those in need. He challenges readers to move, from observing and judging from the second story, into the places where people are hurting with compassion and mercy. Fretz writes,

> Our neighbors, who are head over heels in distress with one problem or another, know we are good people, righteous people. They know we never miss going to church; that we don't drink, dance, or smoke, and that we are for peace. They

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[62] "Colson Calls for Reform, Begins Justice Organization," *Herald of Holiness*, 72, no. 23 (December 1, 1983): 30, https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1983_v72_n23.pd.
[63] "News of Religion," *Herald of Holiness*, 60, no. 15 (May 26, 1971): 34, https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1971_v60_n15.pdf.
[64] "News of Religion," *Herald of Holiness*, 61, no.12 (June 7, 1972): 28, https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1972_v61_n12.pdf.
[65] Ibid.

> know, also, that in our purity and goodness we look condescendingly upon them, that we half-pity and condemn them.[66]

The call to the church is to come down from our second story windows to show the love of God to a hurting world. This article, among others, shows a more compassionate, nuanced, and systemic bent within the Church of the Nazarene.

William Goodman

It is difficult to find a consistent message or concerted effort in *The Herald of Holiness* around these issues, but one author repeatedly was asked to write for the publication, and he chose to focus many of his articles on crime, policing, and vices. From the year 1967 to 1995, Reverend William Goodman wrote over 45 articles for the *Herald of Holiness.* In some places Goodman is listed as an ordained elder and a freelance writer. In others his bio reads, "A Nazarene Elder serving as the Salvation Army's Director of Correctional Services for Western Missouri and Kansas Districts. He resides in Leavenworth, Kansas."[67] From the articles Goodman wrote, he also describes himself as a "police patrol wagon driver,"[68] a police officer,[69] a patrolman,[70] and a

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[66] J. Winfred Fritz, "No Help from Second-Story Windows," *Herald of Holiness,* 56, no. 26 (August 16, 1967): 8-9, https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1967_v56_n26.pdf.
[67] William Goodman, "The Herald in the Hood," *Herald of Holiness,* 75, no. 17 (September 1, 1986): 18, https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1986_v75_no17_0.pdf.
[68] William Goodman, "Where Have all the Missionaries Gone*?*" *Herald of Holiness*, 65, no.4 (February 15, 1976): 3, https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1976_v65_n04.pdf.
[69] William Goodman, "A Christian Concern about Alcohol," *Herald of Holiness*, 68, no. 15 (August 1, 1979): 7, https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1979_v68_n15.pdf.
[70] William Goodman, "A Patrolman Speaks," *Herald of Holiness,* 64, no. 21 (October 8, 1975): 13,, https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1975_v64_n21.pdf.

"Christian police officer."[71] The evangelical mixture of punitive and sociological is evidenced in the writing of Goodman for the Church of the Nazarene.[72]

In an article entitled "My Duty to My Neighbor"[73] penned in 1965, Goodman writes about what a Christian should do if a Black family moves into their White neighborhood? "Will there be danger that his friends won't come to his home now that a family of another race lives next door? Should he move before any more of the other race should decide to move into this community?" Goodman asks on behalf of the White male homeowner.[74] His answer is a hearty "No!" The Greatest Command to love our neighbor means that we recognize everyone as a neighbor and anyone moving into the neighborhood as an opportunity to "do whatever needs to be done for the kingdom of God."[75] This is a provocative and prophetic word in the year 1965 especially given the prevailing attitudes of many evangelicals. However, the mixed messages and methods of the evangelical movement when it comes to the issues of crime and punishment are mirrored in Goodman's writing.

The next mention of Goodman is in a brief news report from 1971 reprinted in the *Herald* entitled "Hawaii Cop Carries Bible."[76] The article describes police reservist Goodman as a man with a gun and a Bible. It states that he believes there is no conflict between his nonviolence and the potential need to use the gun he carries. Goodman

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[71] William Goodman, "Resist?" *Herald of Holiness,* 69, no. 4 (February 15, 1980): 9, https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1980_v69_n04.pdf.
[72] Griffith, *God's Law and Order,* 34.
[73] William Goodman, "My Duty to My Neighbor," *Herald of Holiness,* 54, no. 1 (February 24, 1965): 9, https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1965_v54_n01.pdf.
[74] Goodman, "My Duty…" *Herald of Holiness*.
[75] Goodman, "My Duty…" *Herald of Holiness*.
[76] "News of Religion," *Herald of Holiness,* 60, no. 12 (April 14, 1971): 24, https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1971_v60_n12.pdf.

describes the gun as nonviolent. You can hear the political leanings of an article like this. "I've met some bad ministers," Goodman is quoted as saying, "but I've never met a bad policeman. Someone has to do the society's dirty work."[77] An article like this provides a perspective that was popular among evangelicals. The marriage of law and order and faith can be seen clearly.

In a 1975 article entitled "A Patrolman Speaks," Goodman wrote,

> Leading criminologists cannot agree as to what causes crime. Many reasons are given: poverty, race tension, drugs, alcohol, glamour of crime, unequal justice, corrupt law enforcement, permissiveness, lack of parental guidance, diet, genetics, boredom, greed, and even "the devil made me do it."[78]

One might begin to think there would be some nuance coming from Goodman. However, the article continues that it is not due to these realities but has to do with missing Christian values. Divorce, adultery, and being a workaholic play a larger role in juvenile delinquency than those suggestions. Goodman writes, "Fathers and mothers who incorporate God and His love daily into their lives, who continuously renew their love for each other, and who love their children as their most prized possession will take a long step toward avoiding juvenile delinquency in their families."[79] While there is truth to the importance of family in the issues of crime, it is not the only element that must be addressed. Goodman boils the major societal issues he previously listed down into a simple formula—a good family with married parents who don't work too much will fix everything.

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[77] "News of Religion," *Herald of Holiness* (April 14, 1971).
[78] William Goodman, "A Patrolman Speaks," *Herald of Holiness*, 64, no. 21 (October, 8, 1975): 13, https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1975_v64_n21.pdf.
[79] Goodman, "A Patrolman Speaks," *Herald of Holiness*.

One year later Goodman calls for young people to heed the call of God to become missionaries in the inner cities. He, as a police officer, has seen the deep needs there and wants to see the church embrace its mission. Goodman also calls for an increase in police, funding, and enforcement.[80] In that same year Goodman writes,

> When an 86-year-old lady is raped, robbed, and beaten to death as a common occurrence in society, it is time for those in the church to become vocal and forceful and call upon governmental officials to enforce stringent justice and discipline at all levels of society. This can be done while at the same time proclaiming the power of Christ's gospel to transform the criminal into a saint.[81]

One can see how Griffith's emphasis on fear is played out in publications by the Church of the Nazarene. The tug of war between sociology/systems theory and salvation is also very clear in a few short articles.

Following the Church of the Nazarene's emphasis on avoiding tobacco, drinking, dancing or gambling Goodman wrote several articles expressing the criminal aspects of these behaviors. Rightly calling out advertising agencies who were targeting young people, to statistics on the increasing crime rate in Nevada because of gambling, to the danger of addiction, Goodman used his background in the criminal justice system to help argue the church's stances on these issues. Alongside his articles about the need for sleep, the value of aging, and prayer, Goodman wrote pieces entitled, "A Tobaccoless Society," "Gambling is a Contagious Plague," and "A Christian Concern about Alcohol." These were the kinds of articles that helped the Church of the Nazarene connect its conduct and character stances to crime that was on the rise.

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[80] William Goodman, "Where Have all the Missionaries Gone?" *Herald of Holiness*, 65, no. 04 (February 15, 1976): 3, https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1976_v65_n04.pdf.
[81] William Goodman, "Detente with Evil," *Herald of Holiness*, 65, no. 01 (January 1, 1976): 16-17, https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1976_v65_n01.pdf.

In an article entitled "Resist?" Goodman writes about those who resist arrest, resist Christ, and resist the devil. "It is amazing that people reject Christ and return to the harshness of the devil," he wrote. The piece continues,

> People that reject Christ are saying, I'll work out my problems and the problems of my life my way, the human way. I'll stay with the murderers, those that assault, fight, get drunk, use drugs, attempt suicide, and are involved in the daily mayhem, violence, and carnage that require the attention of police and medical staffs.[82]

This article ends by simplifying what can happen when we accept Christ. It demonstrates the evangelical conception that when a person receives Christ everything will shift from "mayhem, violence, and carnage" to "inner peace and the security of God's love."[83] Later in his writing career for the *Herald* we read Goodman's assessment of the crime problem. In 1995 he penned these words for a different Nazarene publication: "The root of our crime problem is the loss of individual morality and the resulting erosion of our character as people. If crime stems from moral factors, then the solution to crime must be moral as well."[84] He declares in this article what others had said before him—the problem we face is the slipping of Christian influence in our society. "As we exclude God from our society...we will reap the social whirlwind we have at present."[85] He finishes the article by calling for the personal repentance of the inmate. When that man or woman repents, they become more righteous and as they do so does society. We hear a type of trickle-down-salvation at work. Personal salvation will be the solution to all the problems the individual faces and will then change the world around him or her. Griffith wrote of this

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[82] William Goodman, "Resist?" *Herald of Holiness,* 69, no. 4 (February 15, 1980): 9, https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1980_v69_n04.pdf.
[83] Goodman, "Resist?" *Herald of Holiness*.
[84] William Goodman, "Crime is Rooted in the Soul," *Preacher's Magazine,* 70, no. 3 (March, April, May 1995): 23, https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/1995_70_03.pdf.
[85] Goodman, "Crime is Rooted in the Soul," *Preacher's Magazine.*

phenomenon in broader evangelicalism. He states, “This was evangelicals’ version of the progressive philosophy: social ills could be attributed to diverse contributing factors beyond individual choice, but these ills were linked to the loss of conservative religious and philosophical virtues.”[86] It is evident that the Church of the Nazarene has had a role in supporting the broader evangelical understanding of law, crime, prison, and violence.

Conclusion

Jennifer Graber ends her work on the Antebellum era and its impact on the formation of prisons by saying,

> The Protestant reformers played an important role in giving us the institutions we have, prisons dedicated to punitive punishment, marked by a Protestant narrative of suffering and redemption, and pressed toward a religiosity of citizenship that holds adherence to law and obedience to state authority as its highest goals. These were not the prisons they wanted, but they were the hardly surprising result of their public aspirations in a disestablished and pluralistic society.[87]

The cairns at the South Idaho Correctional Institute shouldn’t merely symbolize an incarcerated individual’s quest to find freedom—both literal and spiritual—they should also be a sign and symbol to the evangelical church that it must reckon with the past and how it has brought about this present reality. We have followed pathways that have led to the reality of mass incarceration, over policing and criminalizing of people of color, and systems that dehumanize. The cairns should also be a reminder that Christians can seek a different way and make new markers on the journey, so mistakes of the past are not made again. The Christian church has impacted crime, punishment, and prisons in myriad ways. The question for us now is what shall we do?

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[86] Griffith, *God’s Law and Order,* 123.
[87] Graber, *Furnace of Affliction,* 184.

CHAPTER TWO

We want (prisoners) to have self worth…
So we destroy their self worth.

We want them to be responsible…
So we take away all responsibilities.

We want them to be positive and constructive…
So we degrade them and make them useless.

We want them to be non-violent…
So we put them where there is violence all around.[1]

Interview of Parole Officer[2]

The parking lot is partially paved, partially gravel. The Parole and Probation Division office is a stand-alone building in a typical looking strip mall. The strip mall has a drug and alcohol treatment center, a physical therapy clinic, a Mexican grocery store and a few open store fronts. There is a trailer park adjacent to the facility and a relatively new Starbucks on the opposite side of the shopping area.

On the door to the Parole and Probation facility is a sign reminding those entering that they need to be sure to pay their supervision bill. If they cannot pay, there are options for payment plans and financial counseling listed. All the signage is in English only. The door opens into a waiting room filled with chairs, vending machines, and flyers and

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[1] Dennis Challeen, *Making it Right: A Common Sense Approach to Criminal Justice* (Aberdeen, South Dakota: Melius and Peterson, 1986).

[2] This interview was conducted by the author on September 17, 2019 as part of ethnographic research into different branches of the criminal justice system. Any quotes in this section came from the interview and are used with permission by Cory Barrier.

pamphlets of services available to those under supervision hanging in pockets on the walls. The walls are painted a "coffee with cream" color and decorated with a wooden cut out that says in cursive "Believe." There are two men quietly seated in different rows. They keep their eyes down after quickly looking up as the door opens.

The receiving officer sits behind a bullet proof window on the phone, taking down the details of a domestic dispute. "Have you called the police?" he asks the person on the other end of the line. Just then Cory Barrier, the Manager of Judicial District 3, enters the waiting room through two substantial wooden doors. A smile on his face and a firm handshake, he is dressed in an Idaho Department of Corrections polo shirt and khaki pants. Cory shares that the lobby had recently been updated to have a feel of a doctor's office and not a sterile corrections waiting room. His goal is to help those under supervision feel this is a warm and inviting place where people want to help them succeed. He also mentions that those coming through the door should receive a respectful and kind greeting. Individuals on parole or probation should feel "your needs are important to me."

The offices are organized along the outer edge of the building in a circular pattern with break rooms, work rooms, and supply rooms in the center of the facility. The hallways are lined with original paintings done by the administrative assistant that add color and life to the space. The offices have awards hanging on the walls, white boards with lists written on them, "Back the Badge" and "Blue Lives Matter" art is sprinkled throughout, as well as sports paraphernalia, and motivational posters. In Cory's office there are paintings that say, "Positive Attitude," "Respect," and "Teamwork."

From his office, Cory manages all the personnel, hiring, enrichment, training, and day to day operations of the facility. Working as a Parole Officer (PO) in the past, he most enjoyed serving in Drug Court during his career in the criminal justice field. Cory views his work as, first and foremost, relational. This was obvious by the way so many people stuck their heads in his door during the interview. There was laughter in the hallways, employees chatting in one another's offices, and friendly smiles and greetings throughout. This behavior demonstrates the kind of people Cory hires. For Cory, empathy is key to hiring. Empathy isn't something he believes you can teach but is incredibly important for those working with people under supervision. You can learn how to "take someone down or discharge a firearm," he says, but empathy needs to be innate.

His employees learn the skills for the job at the POST (Peace Officer Standards and Training) Academy. As PO's they also undergo training in Motivational Interviewing which is a process of inviting the person under supervision to participate in goal setting. When Cory started in the department, he said surveillance and looking for people to "mess up" was the norm. More recently there has been a shift to positive goal setting and celebrating successes of clients that he values.

He is clear to call those under supervision "clients" because he wants them to know they are viewed as people and not numbers. Cory believes that success comes from humanizing people, not dehumanizing them: "Our goal is achieving long-term behavior change. We know that short-term compliance only gets us so far." The variety of people in the office—PO's, clinicians, drug and alcohol counselors, mental health experts, general caseload managers, pre-sentence investigators, and outside nonprofits—all work together to achieve this long-term behavioral change.

Part of this teamwork happens on Tuesdays when people released from prison on parole, or sentenced with probation by the courts, come to be processed. Each person provides their own transportation and usually comes alone. The employees will process each person through a Care Coordination Interview to assess the needs they may have, engage in Motivational Interviewing, and set goals the client will work towards with the help of their PO. Depending on how many people are released or sentenced, there can be anywhere from 5-25 people on a given Tuesday.

The intake process is part of the 80% of a typical employee's time spent in the office. The field is where employees spend the other 20% of their time. In the field a PO will wear what looks like a typical police uniform—flack vest, weapons and other "tools," as Cory describes them. They will be marked with Parole Officer on the back of their vest to differentiate them from other Police Officers. The hope for this time is that they will help the families, the clients, and the community to have a much-needed positive interaction with law enforcement.

Fieldwork for Parole and Probation Officers isn't always positive. Cory says some of the more discouraging realities they face involve seeing one of their clients on the news causing problems and breaking the law. They receive a lot of criticism when someone under supervision reoffends. Cory emphasizes a need to celebrate even the smaller victories that POs are having with their clients to remind everyone that good things are happening. One way celebrating success is normalized is through the "Shining Stars" bulletin board. On the board are a variety of pictures of smiling faces of clients and POs. Next to the pictures are handwritten cards explaining the successes of these individuals. Some of the pictures are mug shots with a more current photo of the person

under supervision. The differences are dramatic—gaunt faces filled in, missing teeth replaced, smiles in the place of scowls. Victories like a clean drug test after two failed tests or celebrating graduation from supervision and holding a job are honored on the board created by an inmate in the South Idaho Correctional Institution.

Although there is a culture of acknowledging successes, Cory mentions that the job is stressful and has a high turnover rate. One of his greatest frustrations is that the community doesn't really know what they do. He feels they are underfunded and that the expectations on them are unfair. It costs $63 a day to house an inmate in prison and $5 a day to maintain a person under supervision. He firmly believes more people should be under his relational model of supervision and less people behind bars. Not only does he believe that with proper funding and the right number of staff that supervision can be highly successful, but he also believes it is far more worthwhile than incarceration.

Introduction

What does an interview with a Parole Officer have to do with a chapter on Wesleyan-Holiness theology? First, it is important to understand some of the branches that are a part of the criminal justice system when thinking about how the church has played a role in the creation of prisons. Parole and probation are prevalent in our communities and should be understood as churches seek to engage the justice-involved and their families. Second, part of understanding theology is looking for how concepts Christians value and hold as key to their faith are at work in positive or negative ways in our societies. Underlying Cory Barrier's practice of parole and probation is a philosophy that values human beings regardless of what they have done. Creating an atmosphere that is designed to help those who are justice-involved to be treated with kindness and respect

even though they have broken the law demonstrates a level of humanization amid a dehumanizing system. It must be understood, however, that this information has come from the person with the power. The power dynamics even around a humanizing kind of incarceration cannot be ignored. However, this sort of practice is a start toward lessening the use of incarceration as the only means of dealing with harm in communities. Practices such as these can begin to repair some of the fracturing that has been caused. One of the ways this is possible is to identify the theological underpinnings that might be guiding even secular practitioners.

Criminology posits reasons for crime, the purpose of punishment, the right way to punish, and the like. This is important and must not be neglected. However, theology has played an important role in the way the United States has addressed crime and punishment. As chapter one showed, this has centered mostly on a Reformed and Western theological understanding and has led to harsh punishment. This chapter will offer a different theological pathway that can help to address the harm the church has enacted in the criminal justice system. A Wesleyan-Holiness theology will be examined to see if it provides an alternative understanding of humanity, crime, and God's work in the lives of justice-involved. This chapter will address varying viewpoints on the *imago Dei* and seek to explain that how it is viewed will impact our work with the justice-involved. From there prevenient grace will be defined and the connection it has with the *imago Dei*. It is crucial to convey the importance of acknowledging that God is already at work behind the razor wire and how Christians engage with that reality will impact the way they minister to, alongside, and are in turn ministered to by those incarcerated. Finally, a look at the doctrine of entire sanctification will be explored to make a

connection with the prison and the experience of holiness. This chapter will demonstrate how engaging with the justice-involved can be a means of experiencing the infilling of the Holy Spirit and enable the believer to be sanctified in love. Although this chapter will only be able to scratch the surface of the ways a Wesleyan-Holiness framework can inform holistic and transformative work with the incarcerated and their families, it is a key foundation that must be laid if we are to be faithful to who Christ is calling us to be.

Cory Barrier did not make a statement of faith during the interview mentioned above. In fact, he was careful to couch his understanding of the person, the successful transformations clients have, and the need for empathy in language free from religious terminology. However, there were important connecting points between the work he is attempting to do and Wesleyan-Holiness theology. These similarities of understanding can create a bridge to help the church to engage with existing structures in the justice system. These connections can lead to an opportunity to influence and repair some of the ways the church has formed punitive and oppressive practices. If there is to be a remedy to what Christians have helped to create what we believe about humanity and God will need to be carefully sorted or the same mistakes of the past will continue to be made today.

Where Are We Now?

Theology is tied to the way the United States operates. This is in part because of the early colonizer’s faith practices. One such example of this is the criminal justice system. It should cause Christian’s great sorrow to consider that part of the reason for mass incarceration is our responsibility. The creation of some of the abusive practices that take place in the prison system today started with well-meaning Christians seeking to

create a just society. Jennifer Graber writes of the formation of the prison system in the United States. She reflects that the attitudes of these reformers were that they "believed that a society could be evaluated by its treatment of criminals and that current use of harsh bodily practices belied the goodness of American life."[3] In their attempt to mitigate the abusiveness of corporal and capital punishment of their homeland and the new societies they were a part of the reformer's work to remedy the problems created new ones. This should give us pause as we consider how Christian faith can evaluate, dismantle, and reform systems.

It is also important to understand that our justice system is built upon a foundation of retributive justice. Christopher Marshall describes this theory of punishment as built upon four elements–guilt, desert,[4] equivalence, and reprobation.[5] These understandings paint a criminal as a person who has broken a known law and must be punished (guilt). This punishment is deserved and must be in some way proportional to the crime committed (desert and equivalence). He is clear to note that this system does not focus on reform or restoration or even reparation. Rather, the purpose is to try to even the score. The final goal of retributive justice is to make an example of the people who have done wrong. These concepts are fundamentally non-relational and lead to the dehumanizing of a lawbreaker as well as the victim. How is a victim dehumanized? Our system centers around the offender. First and foremost, the law is what is broken. The state, the creator and enforcer of the law, has been wronged and must be satisfied. This sidelines the

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[3] Jennifer Graber, *Furnace of Affliction*, (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 26.
[4] The theory of Just Deserts asserts that when someone breaks the law they deserve to be punished. Further, their punishment needs to match the severity of the crime in some manner.
[5] Christopher Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 109.

victim, their experience, and justice for them. The guilty party serves as an example to the broader society while he or she serves time, separated from community and the experience of restoration. Marshall writes,

> The massive institutions of punishment that characterize the present criminal justice system are sustained largely to service the popular demand for retribution, with a corresponding lack of imagination being shown in the development of mechanisms of restitution and reform.[6]

These policies are often supported by Christians who tend to value politicians who are "tough on crime."

Differing theological frameworks will lead Christians to view God, sin, and people in very different ways. For instance, how human dignity is defined will impact how crime and punishment is viewed in a society. Or the way God is characterized will determine how humans interact with one another. Beliefs around eschatology will guide Christian engagement. Depending on which metaphor of the atonement is emphasized the way we view punishment will be influenced. It is important to note that no theological stream is a monolith. Within a tradition there will be differing understandings of these theological concepts. However, theology is connected to how we approach all aspects of our lives. Therefore, it must be understood that it is deeply embedded in our praxis of punishment. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan writes, "Whether one can conclude that dominant contemporary Christian theologies of punishment actually contributed directly to the increased punitive nature of U.S. society, there is no question that the two are culturally congruent and mutually recognizable."[7]

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[6] Marshall, *Beyond Retribution,* 116.
[7] Winifred Fallers Sullivan, *Prison Religion: Faith Based Reform and the Constitution*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), 101.

In 2019 the strange marriage between theology and the criminal justice system was visible in a very public manner. William Barr, the Attorney General for the United States of America, was busy enacting the federal sentence of the death penalty. Federal executions had not occurred in seventeen years but began again under the Trump Administration. In 2020 at the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast, Attorney General Barr was awarded the *Christifideles Laici* award for exemplary service to Christ by a layperson in the Catholic church. This award, which many have decried as a political move, went against Pope Francis and the Bishops in the US who made a declaration that the death penalty is wrong.[8] It isn't just segments of the Catholic church that approve of this sort of punishment. This ultimate form of retributive justice is favored by 59% of White evangelical Protestants, which is 19 percentage points higher than the average of all Americans surveyed.[9] Why do Christians who believe Jesus has died for their sins, and paid the price for them, support this kind of punishment? Part of the answer to this question begins not at the cross but at the fall.

The *Imago Dei*

Christians have been arguing over what it means that Genesis describes the creation of human beings as in the "image of God" for centuries. The witness of Scripture is that we are created in God's image, as Genesis 1:26-27 asserts. The phrase is repeated

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[8] Justine Coleman, "Nuns criticize Catholic group for giving Barr award for 'Christ-like behavior,'" *The Hill,* Accessed, 11/20/20, https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/517776-nun-criticizes-catholic-group-for-giving-barr-award-for-christlike

[9] Joanna Piacenza, "Support for Death Penalty by Religious Affiliation," *Public Religion Research Institute.*Accessed, 11/20/20, https://www.prri.org/spotlight/support-for-death-penalty-by-religious-affiliation/#.VaMS__lViko. It is important to note that for the first time since the Gallup organization began polling on opinions regarding the death penalty in 1985, the majority of Americans believe life in prison without parole is more favorable than execution. See also, https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/news/gallup-poll-for-first-time-majority-of-americans-prefer-life-sentence-to-capital-punishment, accessed 11/20/20

after the flood in Genesis 5:1 and 9:6. From there we find no other mention of the concept until the New Testament where Jesus is called *the* image of the invisible God,[10] and humanity is described as made in God's image in 1 Corinthians 11:7 and James 3:9. Human beings are made *in* the image of God and Jesus Christ is *the* uncreated image of God. The Biblical basis for believing we are made in God's image is present, but it is not prevalent.

Although the Scriptural references appear scant there are volumes of arguments and definitions of what the *imago* is and what it means to be made in such a way. There are two schools of thought that greatly impact the way in which we understand this concept. First, the Western theological tradition has emphasized an understanding that Adam and Eve were created fully mature, "the epitome of what God intended them to be."[11] This leads logically to their conscious and fully reasoned choice to sin against God. This sin then removed the perfection in which God had created Adam and Eve. Their sin became what Christians call original sin and impacts all of humanity. The Western church has determined that who we are as human beings is integrally linked to The Fall. Thus, humans are now marked by guilt, shame, and a powerlessness to choose *not* to sin.[12]

Second, the Eastern Orthodox tradition views the way the first humans were created to be with room to grow and develop. They assert that the Fall was a decision to be like God, like the Western church did. However, they viewed the results of the Fall differently. Randy Maddox writes that in this line of thinking we do not inherit guilt from

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[10] Colossians 1:15
[11] Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace,* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 65.
[12] Maddox, *Responsible Grace,* 66.

our parents, rather that guilt comes when we imitate them. Further the East defines the Fall by what it brings into the human experience, namely sickness and death. This reality weakens human beings so they cannot become what God designed them to be on their own. Humanity is then defined by creation, according to Maddox, rather than the Fall.[13] This difference is important to grapple with--one leads to a strong emphasis on guilt, failure, and separation while the other focuses on what remains of who we were meant to be. Depending on where one lands on the theological spectrum on this topic will determine the way one views sin, forgiveness, and crime and punishment.

Taken to its logical end, the Western stream seems to say: Despite our utter guilt, shame, and separation we should somehow be able to choose what is right, even without a relationship with God and Christian morals guiding us. In other words, we are held to the standard of where we were at creation rather than in our fallen state. The state, who makes the laws and doles out the punishment, is also viewed not in a sense of the Fall but as a just and merciful agent. So, while the image of God is completely decimated in the viewpoint of Western theology the standard of judgement is on the pre-fall state of humanity.

It is important to note that connected to our understanding of humanity and the Fall is the atonement, or what Christ's life, death, and resurrection provide. When beginning with an understanding of humanity as utterly devoid of our original nature it is natural to view the cross in a retributive manner. As Thomas Porter writes,

> At the heart of Anselm's satisfaction theory and Calvin's penal substitution theory is an assumption that God's justice is retributive. Jesus must die to satisfy the honor or the justice of God, so that we might all be saved. There is no way out

[13] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 66.

> except for the sacrifice of God's son. To satisfy such a justice, there needs to be an eye for eye, a punishment so that sin does not go unchecked and unpunished.[14]

Dominique Gilliard emphasizes this as well when he writes, "Penal substitution is a reductionist theory that forsakes the embodied life, ministry, and relationships of Jesus, reducing Christ's body to punitive surrogacy."[15] The Western mindset requires this sort of remedy for sin. An important question to ask those who hold to a pattern of retributive justice and the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement is: If Christ died once and for all, why do we believe that painful punishment is the right way to engage in criminal justice?

Maddox believes that Wesley fell in the middle of these two concepts. This can be seen in the way he describes sanctification as a continual process in the life of the believer helping us to become like Christ. In Wesley's sermon *The New Birth* he writes,

> In like manner, a child is born of God in a short time, if not in a moment. But it is by slow degrees that he afterward grows up to the measure of the full stature of Christ. The same relation, therefore, which there is between our natural birth and our growth, there is also between our new birth and our sanctification.[16]

Although new birth happens in an instant according to Wesley, the maturing of the believer to be made holy is more in keeping with a growth model. This matches what John Behr, an Orthodox theologian writes. He invites us to acknowledge

> the point made by St. Gregory of Nyssa, that looking around us we do not directly see "images of God" everywhere, but men and women living broken lives, suffering, falling sick, and ultimately dying. However, rather than say that despite these empirical conditions, each of them is a person and so to be respected as such, it would be better to allow our interpretation of what we see to be

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[14] Thomas Porter, "Breaking Down the Walls: Transforming Conflict into Restoration," Manuscript of presentation to the Virginia Annual Conference, accessed 12/17/21 https://www.c4rj.org/documents/PorterKeynote_TransformingConflictIntoRestoration%20(2).doc

[15] Dominique Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018),159.

[16] John Wesley, "The New Birth," NNU Wesley Center, accessed 11/22/20, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-45-the-new-birth/, paragraph 3

> conditioned by the light of Christ, so that we can say that what we see are images of God *being fashioned, human beings in the making*.[17]

Wesley may not have been fully aware of the Eastern understanding, and more influenced by the West, but it is also clear that this line of thinking can be found in his thought. In his sermon *The General Deliverance*, Wesley encourages those who have come awake to their humanity because of what Christ has done to help others awaken to this reality which he calls "the knowledge and love of God."[18]

This in-between place is typical for a Wesleyan. What it created in Wesley's thought and practice was what Maddox describes as Wesley's "therapeutic concern."[19] He goes on to write, "Like the later Western traditions, early Greek theologians affirmed the two consecutive states of humanity–before and after the Fall. However, their real interest was focused on a third state, the gracious and gradual restoration of humanity to God-likeness."[20] This interest provides us with a different way of looking at the world around us. Focusing on the current reality, context, and human experience is a valuable tool to bring the healing to people and societies that retributive justice never can.

Beyond Eastern and Western thought, the disputes about what the *imago* Dei provides for and demands from humanity also greatly influence how people live and move in the world. Is "image" our ability to reason? Does the image mean our soul and not our bodies? How do we define dignity? Are we meant to be rulers, priests, or co-creators with God? J. Richard Middleton works through some of these issues in his text

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[17] John Behr, "The Promise of the Image" in *Imago Dei: Human Dignity in Ecumenical Perspective,* Thomas Albert Howard, eds (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 2013), 37. Emphasis added.
[18] John Wesley, "The General Deliverance," NNU Wesley Center, accessed 11/22/20, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-60-the-general-deliverance/, paragraph 12
[19] Maddox, *Responsible Grace,* 67
[20] Maddox, *Responsible Grace,* 67.

The Liberating Image. He writes that to understand what being made in God's image means for us is that "human vocation is modeled on the nature and actions of the God portrayed in Genesis 1."[21] Asking and answering what God is doing in the creation account will help us better understand what we were made for. Many assert that we are meant to be rulers. Middleton asks if that is what God was doing in the creation story? There is a sense that God is ruler over all that is made, but it is not out of dominion and power, but out of creativity and joy that the world and all that inhabit it come into being. What does this imply for our understanding of who we are and what we are meant to do? He concludes that,

> Given the portrayal or rendering of God's power disclosed by a careful reading of Genesis 1, I suggest that the sort of power or rule that humans are to exercise is generous, loving power. It is power used to nurture, enhance, and empower others, noncoercively, for their benefit, not for the self-aggrandizement of the one exercising power.[22]

This focus on love fits nicely with a Wesleyan understanding of what it means to be human, saved, and sanctified. Diane Leclerc writes,

> Foundational to Wesley's own understanding of humankind is that human beings are relational. We are created for relationship. We are created for love and created to love. Wesley was aware of the different interpretations of the *imago Dei*, but according to Mildred Bangs Wynkoop and others, he held strongly to the image as the capacity to love.[23]

If love is the marker of how we are made in God's image, power will be understood through the lens of love. How human beings use power was practical to Wesley–it should be connected to everyday living and the issues in the nations we inhabit. In a pamphlet he

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[21] J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 60.
[22] Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 295.
[23] Diane Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness: The Heart of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology,* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2010), Kindle location 3100.

wrote against slavery, Wesley argues that there is no basis to hold slaves because one might believe it "is necessary for the trade, and wealth, and glory of our nation."[24] Wesley responds to this argument that "wealth is not necessary to the glory of any nation; but wisdom, virtue, justice, mercy, generosity, public spirit, love of our country" are what brings true glory.[25] It can be seen in Wesley's push to abolish slavery that power is realized in a different manner than the typical worldly understanding of power. His list in this case demonstrates love for God and neighbor alongside his understanding of growth in grace that is possible because of his understanding of the third state of the Eastern stream of thought mentioned above—the restoration of all things.

Bryan Stone, writing about the image of God, says that the initial state we were created in had three main components. We were created free, created in community, and created to be creative.[26] These characteristics make us fundamentally human, and sin has disfigured our humanity. Stone believes it is an important practice to understand the reality of creation, the Fall, and redemption from the perspective of the poor. This lens is instructive in that it illustrates in real ways the struggles that humans face to be who they were created to be. Stone states, "We lose or distort what it means to be created in the image of God, however, when we consider it from an allegedly neutral perspective above and beyond the predicament of real people who hurt and suffer."[27] Examining how the image of God is understood within the walls of a prison, how a person is allowed to be who they were created to be in spite of mistakes, or how they can become different than

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[24] Lee M., "John Wesley on Slavery and Human Rights," A Thinking Reed, January 11, 2012, https://thinkingreed.wordpress.com/2012/01/11/john-wesley-on-slavery-and-human-rights/
[25] Lee M., "John Wesley on Slavery, https://thinkingreed.wordpress.com/2012/01/11/john-wesley-on-slavery-and-human-rights/
[26] Bryan P. Stone, *Compassionate Ministry: Theological Foundations* (NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 23-43.
[27] Stone, *Compassionate Ministry,* 20.

they are is crucial to any theological understanding. Stone sums his chapter on the image of God up by describing what ministry should look like if it is going to be faithfully "image-of-God" ministry.[28] If there is coercion, lack of true community, and the inability to be creative we fail to live in our true humanity.

> Ministry, in sum, has a kind of three-fold character: it is a response to grace, it is a participation in grace, and it is an offer of grace. Through Christian ministry, the work of the restoration of the image of God begun in us is extended to the world. God's compassion becomes our compassion. God's solidarity with victims becomes our solidarity with victims.[29]

These concepts are important when thinking about honoring the image of God in people who are incarcerated, victims, and the families of the justice-involved. Allowing this sort of thinking to guide Christian engagement inside the prison can be a beginning to restore what has been broken both through the previous efforts of the church and by the realities of oppression and crime.

While we are invited to partner with God it is important to turn our attention to how grace invites and then enables this partnership. We turn now to Wesley's concept of prevenient grace.

Prevenient Grace– "The beginning of restoration."[30]

H. Ray Dunning writes, "In the Wesleyan perspective the *imago* was totally lost as a consequence of the Fall, but a reflection of it...is restored by the activity of prevenient grace. In fact it is this graciously restored aspect of the *imago* that constitutes personhood."[31] It is important to remember this connection between these two concepts

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[28] Stone, *Compassionate Ministry,* 42-43.
[29] Sone, Compassionate Ministry, 43.
[30] Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace,* 87.
[31] H. Ray Dunning, *Reflecting the Divine Image: Christian Ethics in Wesleyan Perspective,* (Eugene, OR: WIPF, 1998), 51.

as we explore prevenient grace or the "grace that goes before." It is not the grace that brings about our salvation, but it makes our acceptance of salvation possible. This differentiation of preceding grace and saving grace is important. According to Wesley, prevenient grace is universally available in the life of every person ever born.[32] Saving grace, on the other hand, is reserved for those who will accept it. This is not to say that all people don't have access to both, it is a reminder to us that there is a difference between the grace we all have, and the grace we choose to receive. So, prevenient grace is the grace that goes before our recognition of sinfulness. It goes before salvation. Leclerc writes, "Prevenient grace is that grace that God gives at our birth. This grace, which is the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, is the grace that draws us, or 'woos' us, to a relationship with God. We are not on our own in our attempt to find God. God first seeks us."[33]

One way to experience this grace is to observe the world around us. The beauty of creation is a signpost to the Creator. When humans are in awe of a sunset, whether they have experienced saving grace through Christ Jesus or not, they are experiencing the grace that goes before. Howard A. Snyder writes, "All creation is suffused with God's grace as an unconditional benefit of Christ's atonement. God's grace is universal in this sense."[34] It isn't just in the majesty of nature that we can see God, however. When people who do not know Christ do good in the world this is a signpost to the Savior of the world

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[32] Christopher Payk, *Grace First: Christian Mission and Prevenient Grace in John Wesley,* (Chicago: Tyndale, 2015), 45.
[33] Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness,* Kindle location 375
[34] Howard A. Snyder, *Yes in Christ: Wesleyan Reflections on Gospel, Culture and Mission,* (Chicago: Tyndale, 2011), 76.

who redeems all things as well. It is not salvation through those good works, it is those good works enabled by God.

This experience of God's grace through the beauty of creation, or through the activities of others demonstrates the truth that grace is born out of and sustained by relationship. To enhance this understanding of prevenient grace as relational, Maddox reminds his readers that this grace is not a gift that we receive and then possess in a static sense. In describing the work of Thomas Langford, Maddox writes, "By contrast, he [Langford] argues that prevenient grace should not be considered a gift *from* God, but the gift *of* God's activity in our lives, sensitizing and inviting us."[35] Grace as a gift symbolizes something we possess, viewing grace as God's activity denotes ongoing relationship. Christopher Payk emphasizes this reality as well when he writes, "God's grace which is preveniently given to humanity combines the drawing love of the Father, the enlightening of the Son, and the conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit."[36] This Trinitarian emphasis is valuable as we hold on to the relational element of prevenient grace. As the Trinity is relational, we as human beings are invited into that relationship.

The uniqueness of this doctrine is that, unlike Calvin who calls this common grace and distinguishes it from irresistible grace, free will is implied in Wesleyan-Arminian thought on this topic. Calvin asserts that those who have been predestined cannot resist the grace of God and thus *will* be saved. They do not choose it, rather, they are chosen. Wesley would say it differently. First, those who will be saved are not predestined; every person on the face of the earth will have the opportunity to be saved.

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[35] Maddox, *Responsible Grace,* 89.
[36] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 44

Second, grace is resistible even though prevenient grace is universally available. This resistibility comes from our ability to choose to receive it.[37] There are similarities between common grace and prevenient grace, but as Dunning states, for a Wesleyan grace is persuasive rather than coercive.[38] This nuance reminds us again of the reality that Wesleyans believe we must choose to respond. Snyder writes of this describing the Holy Spirit's work as "counteracting the effects of sin to the extent that people *can* respond to God's grace."[39] The grace that goes before woos, draws, points, and invites us into a saving relationship with God that we must choose. Maddox emphasizes our need to respond as well when he writes of his preference for the description of prevenient grace to be "responsible grace." He states,

> It internalizes Wesley's conviction that our requisite co-operation is only possible in *response* to God's empowering. It also carries hints of the universality of Prevenient Grace– it is because God is graciously present to all humanity that all humanity is responsible.[40]

One can recognize the relational reality, as well as the persuasive rather than coercive nature of this kind of grace.

Marred by sin entering the world, the *imago Dei* within fallen humanity is still connected to the Creator in Wesley's thought. The connection is the prevenient grace of God to work in the hearts and minds of people inviting them to be who they were meant to be. Often drawing on John 1:9, like the Quakers he read and studied, Wesley liked to use the concept of the inner light to describe the connection between the image of God

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[37] See also Greg Crofford's *Streams of Mercy, Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John and Charles Wesley*, (Kentucky: Emeth Press, 2010) and his writing about Barclay's understanding that the universal light of Christ could be resisted. 58

[38] H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness.* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), 296.

[39] Snyder, *Yes in Christ,* 76

[40] Maddox, *Responsible Grace,* 92

destroyed by sin and the gracious work of God that goes before our salvation. He wrote in his *Notes on the New Testament* on this passage: “Who lighteth every man - By what is vulgarly termed natural conscience, pointing out at least the general lines of good and evil. And this light, if man did not hinder, would shine more and more to the perfect day.”[41] It is more than our conscience. It is beyond our ability to reason. It is God’s gracious activity in us that can enlighten our darkened existence so we can be restored to whom we are meant to be. Calvin and Wesley would agree that humanity is totally depraved. Yet Wesley differs from Calvin in that “Wesley’s grim descriptions of natural man are qualified by his assertion that such portraits refer to persons without grace, but that there is no person anywhere or who has ever lived who is devoid of grace.”[42] This demonstrates the importance of our definitions to transform our living. If it is true that no person is without God’s grace, how we live, view our neighbor, and deal with broken relationships will be radically different. What does it mean that every person behind bars is not devoid of God’s grace and how does that shape our engagement with them?

Theology in Practice

Wesley writes in his sermon *Upon the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount: Discourse 10,* “‘Whatever ye would not that men should do to you, do not ye unto them.’ Here is a plain rule, always ready at hand, always easy to be applied. In all cases relating to your neighbour, make his case your own.”[43] Our ability to live in such a way is deeply

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[41] John Wesley, “Notes on Scripture, John 1:9” NNU Wesley Center, accessed 11/20/20, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesleys-notes-on-the-bible/notes-on-the-gospel-according-to-st-john/#Chapter+I

[42] Dunning, *Reflecting the Divine Image,* 57.

[43] John Wesley, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount,” NNU Wesley Center, Accessed 11/22/20, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-30-upon-our-lords-sermon-on-the-mount-discourse-ten/, paragraph 24

connected to the original intent of our creation in the image of God, and the gracious work of God in all people through prevenient grace. When we rightly understand the inherent value in all people and the truth that God is at work in all places, how we interact with those who are justice-involved will be transformed.

According to Christopher Payk, in his book *Grace First: Christian Mission and Prevenient Grace in John Wesley,* we must begin to evaluate our Christian witness and ministries based on prevenient grace. He describes three ways to measure the effectiveness of Christian mission in this manner. First, negative–is what we are doing taking away from prevenient grace? Second, neutral–is what we are doing in ministry helping or hurting the impact of prevenient grace? Third, constructive–is our work building upon and enhancing the work of prevenient grace?[44] Payk writes, "From a Wesleyan perspective, the church's engagement in mission is a response to grace. Thus the church can 'improve' upon or 'take away' from God's prevenient interaction with humanity."[45] The purpose of these categories is to evaluate, create, and guide the missional work of the church.

When seeking to find the applicability of prevenient grace to the foundations of mission engagement with those incarcerated, who are made in the image of God, these three categories are instructive. It is important to recognize, first and foremost, that if one accepts these doctrines as true, God is already at work in the prison and in the lives of the justice-involved. Christians working in, volunteering at, or even being incarcerated are not the reason God's grace is available in the prison. Rather, because of the *imago Dei*

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[44] Maddox, *Responsible Grace,* 74.
[45] Maddox, *Responsible Grace,* 75.

that is marred, but present in all people, and the prevenient grace of God that is drawing and moving *every* person on the planet, God's presence can be found in all places and at all times. Too often the attitude of those who engage with those incarcerated is a colonizing mindset that leads to a sense that without their presence there is nothing good behind bars. This is fundamentally flawed.

When a savior mentality is connected to work in the prison, we will find we have a negative impact on the prevenient grace of God. To be constructive in this work is to see that there is good without me, in a place that doesn't seem good at all. This is not to imply that because there is grace at work everywhere we allow broken and destructive systems to continue. Rather, when we can see and point out the grace of God already at work ahead of us, we will honor the image of God in the incarcerated and in ourselves and deepen our experience of the grace of God. This posture will enable a response to the living God that can lead to salvation and sanctification.

Another important way we should allow prevenient grace to guide what we do with the justice-involved and their families is to embrace the way Randy Maddox defines it as the beginning of restoration. All too often the way we think of punishment, incarceration, and the formerly incarcerated isn't with an attitude of restoration. In fact, the language of restoration may be used but our practices belie our intent. The immense difficulty the justice-involved and their families have to find housing, work, and help with addiction prove that our justice system is not in the business of restoration. Rather, retribution is the name of the game. While this is the case, restoration cannot be accomplished. As followers of Christ, we should partner with God in the restoration of all things. If we are to understand prevenient grace as the beginning of restoration for those

ensnared in the justice system we can "improve" on this grace by standing with those individuals and their families. We can also engage in work in our communities that foster restoration. Providing safe and affordable housing when people re-enter society; having a daycare that has a sliding scale for those who are living in poverty; or as I experienced while volunteering at Mary's Mantle, a Catholic Charity in Atwater, California, that housed pregnant women who were supposed to be incarcerated. There are many ways restoration and hope can be nurtured.

Mary's Mantle is an excellent example of partnering with the grace of God. Pregnant women who should have gone to prison could go to Mary's Mantle instead. Part of the work done there was to provide cooking classes, a safe place to live, job skills, companions to court dates, and a family type situation for them to give birth in. There were Bible studies that were provided by volunteers from the Catholic church, but none of the women were forced to participate or to accept Jesus.[46] Yet, the opportunity was there. This is partnering to "improve" on the prevenient grace of God.

Too often our local churches focus on ministries for those who are already saved. We spend our money on things that serve the members of the church. What would happen if churches began to look at the needs of the justice-involved, embraced the prevenient grace of God, and began to spend our money, time, and energy on an outwardly focused ministry of grace? What if, like Wesley encouraged, we made our neighbor's case our own? How might we experience our own restoration and partner with God in the restoration of the world around us? Loida I. Martell writes in her essay "La Nueva Encomienda: The Church's Response to Undocumented Migrants as Mass

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[46] This ministry included volunteers across Christian denominations—Holdeman Mennonite and Nazarene individuals engaged to serve the women assigned to this non-profit by the state.

Incarcerated," about the way the world should see the church if we are living rightly as followers of Christ. When this is our way of living and being, she states,

> We uncover something that was hidden: God's active presence in the liminal spaces 'outside the city gate,' amid the voiceless and right-less of the world. The world should see how we are to live as people created for community, love, fidelity, hospitality, and justice. The church is called to model how we are to be neighbor in the world.[47]

What we see in the original creation of human beings is this kind of truth about who God is to us. In the liminality of our sinfulness, while the *imago* is still present yet greatly damaged, God is active and present calling, drawing, and inviting us back into what we were meant to be. This is happening behind bars, in over-policed neighborhoods, and in the homes that are ravaged by incarceration.

In an article entitled, *Get on the Cart: Wesleyan Discipleship in an Age of Endemic Incarceration*, the authors write,

> Throughout the ministry of John Wesley, and in the ministries of many who followed him, the model of ministry was not one of mere condescension; he did not understand things in such a way that he was going to others to save them. Rather, he believed that we are saved *together* by the grace of God. Ministry to others is always ministry *with* others. Since Jesus himself instructed his disciples to visit prisoners, Wesley undoubtedly understood this ministry as not only a means of grace for them, but also for those who went to the prison to be present with them.[48]

Thus, through ministry to the incarcerated and their families, we too are restored in the image of Christ by the prevenient, saving, and sanctifying grace of God.

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[47] Loida I. Martell, "La Nueva Encomienda: The Church's Response to Undocumented Migrants as Mass Incarcerated," in *Thinking Theologically About Mass Incarceration*, ed. Antonios Kireopoulos, et al (New York: Paulist Press, 2017), 184.
[48] Benjamin Hartley, et al., "Get on the Cart! Wesleyan Discipleship in an Age of Endemic Incarceration" in *Thinking Theologically about Mass Incarceration,* edited by Antonios Kireopoulos, et al., (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2017), 242.

Entire Sanctification

Important to any discussion of Wesleyan-Holiness theology is the doctrine of entire sanctification. After receiving the grace of God to save us and redeem us from our sins, Wesley believed there was more for the Christian. Rather than receiving the grace of God for the forgiveness of sins, sinning again, and receiving forgiveness again, Wesley believed Christians could be saved from this cycle. H. Ray Dunning describes the process:

> By *justification* we refer to that declaration of divine grace (as attitude) that restores the sinner to right relation to God by pardon and forgiveness; by *regeneration* we mean the operation of the Holy Spirit (grace as power) that makes the sinner alive unto God; by *entire sanctification* we refer to that work of the Spirit in the believer that 'cuts short His work in righteousness' (Wesley, cf. Rom. 9:28, KJV), delivers from all sin, and creates a relation to God that can be referred to as perfection.[49]

All of this explains how a person receives the grace of God. When the prevenient grace of God has revealed to us the condition of our lives and our world, we then can choose the grace of God that leads to salvation and sanctification. Dunning here uses the word perfection which has led to confusion and legalism in the church. It is important to remember that Wesley does not imply perfection in the manner Plato meant it (without error) but in the Aristotelian sense (perfect for the purpose for which it was created).[50] When we approach the damaged image of God within all of humanity, the reality of a fallen world, and God's gracious work in both by focusing on what the purpose of creation was, we can rightly understand the kind of perfection Wesley was calling for. If God is love and we are created in God's image, the perfection we can expect to

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[49] Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 455.

[50] Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness,* Kindle location 4325

experience is to be made whole in love (1 John 4:16). For love is our purpose. Leclerc writes,

> What [Wesley] wanted to maintain was that the love of God could so fill the heart of the person wholly devoted to God, that such love would exclude sin. This love of God is a purifying love, continuously filling up the heart of those who love God. Knowing, willful, rebellious disobedience is foreign to such a purified heart. Committing such sin is not impossible, but it would go against the nature that has developed from God's cleansing and empowering grace.[51]

Rather than a sinless perfection, Wesley believed in a life transformed by love. This is possible because we are made in the image of God, wooed by prevenient grace, saved by grace through faith, and transformed in love by the Holy Spirit.

In Wesley's own writing we read that entire sanctification "does not imply any new *kind* of holiness: Let no man imagine this. From the moment we are justified, till we give up our spirits to God, love is the fulfilling of the law….Love is the sum of Christian sanctification."[52] As Dunning states,

> From his understanding of the *imago Dei* as love, Wesley interprets the Christian life as a process of developing love that moves along in part by way of definable stages. Love is instilled in the heart in regeneration. From that point on, there is a gradual development that knows no *finis*, not even death.[53]

This transformation is something that begins in a moment of complete surrender and continues as a follower of Christ daily surrenders to God. While there is great value in this theological understanding being taught to those who are incarcerated there is also something to be said about how engaging with those who are justice-involved can be a means to sanctification of the one ministering there. We would be wise to note that we do not use others as the means to our salvation or sanctification. This would be an abusive

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[51] Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness,* Kindle location 4132 and 4155

[52] John Wesley "On Patience," NNU Wesley Center, accessed 11/20/20, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-83-on-patience/

[53] Dunning, *Grace Faith and Holiness,* 465.

faith. However, the grace we have received can lead us into particular places and experiences to deepen our experience of grace. It has already been mentioned that for John Wesley visiting the poor was a means of grace both for the poor and for the visitor–this was the working out of salvation *and* sanctification. This sort of thinking is continued in the response the Church of the Nazarene says is expected and natural in the life of a believer who has been sanctified.

> The Church of the Nazarene believes this new and holy way of life involves practices to be avoided and redemptive acts of love to be accomplished for the souls, minds, and bodies of our neighbors. One redemptive arena of love involves the special relationship Jesus had, and commanded His disciples to have, with the poor of this world; that His Church ought, first, to keep itself simple and free from an emphasis on wealth and extravagance and, second, to give itself to the care, feeding, clothing, and shelter of the poor and marginalized. Throughout the Bible and in the life and example of Jesus, God identifies with and assists the poor, the oppressed, and those in society who cannot speak for themselves. In the same way, we, too, are called to identify with and to enter into solidarity with the poor. We hold that compassionate ministry to the poor includes acts of charity as well as a struggle to provide opportunity, equality, and justice for the poor. We further believe the Christian's responsibility to the poor is an essential aspect of the life of every believer who seeks a faith that works through love. We believe Christian holiness to be inseparable from ministry to the poor in that it drives the Christian beyond their own individual perfection and toward the creation of a more just and equitable society and world. Holiness, far from distancing believers from the desperate economic needs of people in this world, motivates us to place our means in the service of alleviating such needs and to adjust our wants in accordance with the needs of others.[54]

The holy life, then, is one marked by a recognition of the grace that can be received as we move incarnationally in the world. Following the model of Christ who made His dwelling among us, we must continually be on the move. We do not just follow the incarnation, but we seek the kenotic way of Christ as we pursue the holy life. Leclerc speaks of this kind of self-emptying in terms of relationship with God, self, and others. She writes,

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[54]Church of the Nazarene, *Manual 2017-2021*, (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017), Paragraph 28.3.

> Life in God enlivens us; it brings us to real life through the liberating grace of God. We find our*selves* in God! Only as we find this godly sense of self can we then in turn give ourselves away in love. But this is not really about a loss of self, because when we lose ourselves, we again find ourselves in God.[55]

This is the redemption and renewal of the image of God in us which begins with prevenient grace and can move to sanctifying grace. As we experience this self-emptying, complete devotion, to Christ we are becoming what we were always meant to be– perfected in what we were created for. Grace that is prevenient, saving, and sanctifying, is the salve to our wounded self as our holy lives become a salve for a wounded world. This grace comes to us then through the means of service to the other for the sake of Christ.

Conclusion

The Marshall Project is an organization that collects the news about prison, law, and crime into a weekly newsletter. In November of 2020 one of the articles written by Ryan Moser, a man who is incarcerated, was shared. The article does not say if Moser is a Christian or not. However, his writing connects to the issues discussed in this chapter around the image of God, prevenient grace, and entire sanctification. He writes,

> I've only been up for five minutes, but despondency is already poking at my psyche. I vow to myself to never let prison make me an animal… Like my friend Ernest says, I am destroyed but not defeated. I know that I am worthy of great things, but also that those things aren't defined yet and they're in a future that's not guaranteed.… I'm weary and loathing another calendar day imprisoned because of my addiction, but, suddenly as I look up and around at the morning sky, I'm spellbound by its beauty…. Damaged men snake through the gates and past the barbed-wire fences down the concrete walk. They are followed by officers with pepper spray, and I look away from the sky for a moment. A rifle

[55] Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness,* kindle location 4840

> points from a window in the guard tower, its shadow looming over us. Just before we walk inside, I turn to look at the heavens one last time.[56]

Prison has the power to dehumanize. In its current form, it is created to do just that. Moser wants to retain his humanity in a place meant to strip him of it. He recognizes that he is not who he is meant to be, which is true for all of us who have been impacted by the scourge of sin throughout history and in our personal experiences. This feels impossible to him given the circumstances, but then he catches a glimpse of beauty. There is a moment of grace in what is meant to be a graceless place.

We know there is no graceless place. We also can recognize that there is great value in a surrendered life partnering to enhance the prevenient grace of God at work in the world. It is also clear that grace can be received in our willingness to engage with people who are different from us and in places we don't feel like we belong. When we look at working with the justice-involved in this way we will recognize the necessity of serving them, advocating for them, and making an equitable world for them isn't merely for their good, it is also for our own. As Leclerc writes,

> We are empowered to be holy, but not for the sake of our own holiness. Holiness, most vividly expressed as kenotic love, is always costly and always for the other. We are empowered to be holy so the world might know we are Christians by our love (John 13:35)—love that calls us, bids us, in the footsteps of Christ to come and die so others might live.[57]

We now turn our attention to following Christ to the cross as we explore how our understanding of the atonement may impact our thinking on the death penalty.

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[56] Ryan Moser, "A Pacifist's Plan to Survive the Violent World of Prison," The Marshall Project, accessed 11/5/2020, https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/11/05/a-pacifist-s-plan-to-survive-the-violent-world-of-prison.

[57] Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness,* Kindle location 4885.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

Lisa Stotler Balloun sits at a table in her home while the cameras roll. Werner Herzog is off-screen and asking questions. This interview is a part of his documentary about the death penalty, entitled *Into the Abyss,* where he investigates the murder of Lisa's mother and brother, Sandra and Adam, and the ensuing execution of one of the perpetrators. Michael Perry and Jason Burkett were involved in the theft of a car that ended in the murder of three people. Perry received a sentence of death and was executed on July 1, 2010. In the film, Balloun says, "I'm glad I went [to the execution]. I'm really glad I went. It really did something to me." Herzog probes more deeply. "What did it do?" he asks. She replies, "I don't know, I don't know, I don't know what happened but I immediately after the execution, I felt like… that saying a 'huge weight has been lifted.' I actually could take a deep breath. My heart didn't ache as much." He asks her if lengthy sentences would be sufficient instead of death sentences. She agrees that a sentence of life without parole would "definitely, definitely" be reasonable. Herzog continues by saying that the death penalty sounds more like the angry God of the Old Testament and he states, "Jesus would probably not have been for the death penalty." Balloun replies, "Probably not, but some people just don't deserve to live."[1]

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[1]Werner Herzog *Into the Abyss,* directed by Werner Herzog (Investigative Discovery, 2011) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCmlE17iUT0.

In these brief minutes in the documentary much of the thought of René Girard can be found—from desire, to scapegoating, and even a kind of unmasking of sacred violence. Once you begin to understand the thought of Girard you begin to see his theory playing out in every sphere of life. This chapter will seek to define the basics of Girard's thought in general, connect it to the criminal justice system in the United States in particular, and demonstrate how mimicking the slaughtered Lamb from Revelation 5 can redefine our view of others and how we might engage in justice and mercy.

Mimetic Theory

René Girard is described as a historian, philosopher, anthropologist, literary critic, and Biblical scholar. His journey to the latter came when he began to study the Judeo-Christian Bible using his theory of mimesis. Unlike many scholars he came to the study of the scriptures in a nontraditional way, using his unique theory to guide him.[2] As he applied it to what he read in the Old Testament, and particularly in the Passion narratives of the New Testament, he uncovered a different way of looking at sacrifice, the atonement, and the purpose of the scriptures in general. S. Mark Heim writes of Girard's interdisciplinary approach to scripture as seeking to answer the question, "How do victims become visible? To put it another way, where do our antisacrificial sensibilities come from?"[3] To answer these questions Girard developed a system he finds in literature, myth across cultures, and in the Bible. The following are some of the basics of mimetic theory.

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[2] Vern Redekop, "Scapegoats, the Bible, and Criminal Justice: Interacting with Réne Girard" (Akron, PA: MCC US Office of Criminal Justice, 1993), 2.
[3] S. Mark Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 11.

Desire and Rivalry

First, mimetic theory is about desire and rivalry. Girard draws on the reality that from the time human beings are born they very early learn to imitate those around them. This imitation can be positive in that it shapes the way humans learn and love.[4] It can also be negative as humans begin rivalries from a young age. The rivalries are born out of the way in which we mimic one another's desires. Girard writes that all human desire is not original but borrowed.

> There is no such thing as a natural desire, otherwise it would just be instinct. If desire had a fixed object and it couldn't change, it would be the same thing as animal instinct. Therefore, desire comes always from the other. Therefore, this other, if he is close enough socially or physically, will necessarily become our rival when we desire his object.[5]

In other words, if someone appears to be admirable to another person, they will begin to mimic that person. This can lead to virtuous behavior. It also can become problematic as this mimicry can harm the relationship. One such example is a student and teacher. At some point in this relationship that involves imitation, rivalry can begin to tear the two apart as social spheres collide, roles change, and expected hierarchies disintegrate. This can then lead to competition that devolves into destructive violence.

This is evident in the Bible in the garden of Eden when the serpent tempts Eve. This temptation is based upon rivalry and jealousy. God and the first humans are in the same social sphere, so to speak, and the serpent tells Eve that eating from the forbidden tree won't do what God said it would do. "You won't die!" the tempter declares, "God knows that on the day you eat from it, you will see clearly and you will be like God,

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[4] Curtis Gruenler, "The Promise of Mimetic Theory as an Interdisciplinary Paradigm for Christian Scholars." *Christian Scholar Review*, (Winter 2021): 126.

[5] Rene Girard, "Things Hidden," in *The Ideas of Rene Girard,* ed. David Cayley, (Independently Published by the author, 2019), 7.

knowing good from evil."[6] They eat, and they do see clearly, but because it was driven by their own rivalry and desire to be gods, it ruptures the relationship.

Their children, Cain and Abel, model this reality for us as well. One sacrifice is pleasing, one is not. Cain wanted the favor of God that Abel received and when it did not come, he killed him because of his jealousy. Abel is not killed because he is different from Cain. He is killed because Cain wants the *same thing* Abel has. Kathryn M. Frost says of this desire,

> It is not simply or only that we desire another's possessions, but rather we come to desire the *being* of another. We may convince ourselves that this other person has figured out the key to life and presume that adopting this way of being would fill any personal void we have.[7]

When Cain could not have what Abel had—the favor of God—he determined that murdering his brother would provide relief. This isn't just a story found in Genesis chapter 4, but is replicated again and again across cultures, religions, and societies. When our desires are out of control, we become rivals who practice violence. This violence toward the other can be one individual harming another, as in the story of Cain and Abel, or can occur between whole communities as in the many stories of the Israelites battling their neighbors, or the infighting that takes place within the tribes of Israel.

Scapegoating

This leads us to a second important theme of Mimetic Theory, the Scapegoat. When rivalry turns to violence Girard observes there must be something that could bring

[6] Genesis 3:4&5, Common English Bible

[7] Kathryn M. Frost, , "Mimetic Theory: A New Paradigm for Understanding the Psychology of Conflict." *Christian Scholar Review*, (Winter 2021): 169

peace or societies would escalate violence until they were destroyed. Enter the scapegoat mechanism. Curtis Gruenler writes,

> As escalating rivalry threatens to swallow the community, one member, marked by some sign of otherness such as a disability, is singled out for blame. Suddenly, mimetically, all other members of the group direct their violence against this one, who is cast out or killed.[8]

Two warring sides will mimic one another and come together in unity against the one described as "other" to bring about a semblance of peace. The "other" will be dehumanized in the process as the violence against them seems to be sacred because it seems to bring unity when nothing else could. It is the violent act, neutered of its humanity, that becomes the mechanism that cultures have used to avert destruction. The problem, however, with scapegoating is it never satisfies. This practice of "sacred" violence must be repeated time and again because mimetic rivalries continue. And it also must not be known to be scapegoating or it loses its effect.

Girard writes, "The victim must be perceived as truly responsible for the troubles that come to an end when *it* is collectively put to death. The community could not be at peace with itself once more if it doubted the victim's enormous capacity for evil."[9] It is important that Girard uses the word "it" to describe the scapegoat, or the surrogate. This mechanism only works when the act of destroying is mythologized and raised up as expedient. Otherwise, it would become clear to those involved that what they were doing was wrong and the peace would fail. The "it" is also known as the *pharmakos* in Greek.

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[8] Gruenler, "The Promise of Mimetic Theory as an Interdisciplinary Paradigm for Christian Scholars," 127.
[9] Rene Girard, "Mimesis and Violence," in *The Girard Reader,* ed. James G. William (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1996), 14. Italics mine.

The word means both poison and cure/remedy.[10] It illustrates well the idea of a surrogate who causes the problem that must be dealt with but is somehow also the solution for it.

Heim writes, "Persons are not chosen to be killed because they are sacred, because they belong to some special if elusive class. They are 'sacred' because they are chosen to be killed…. Designated victims are holy because their death has a supernatural, reconciling power."[11] A scapegoat is someone the mob can unify around because there is something different about that person--an accent, a disability, their skin color, the fact that they are alone, or any other number of distinctions. Their variance from the rest of the community is magnified as the violence against them grows and the mob becomes single minded. Once the scapegoat is killed Girard says that

> peace will descend on the community because everybody will be without an enemy…. When these people [the mob] find themselves reconciled, they are too modest, they know too much about themselves to think that they are responsible for their reconciliation. So who can be responsible?[12]

This modesty Girard writes about stems from the human understanding that they could not have reconciliation on their own. They know their penchant for violence. Their understanding in this moment is that something sacred, spiritual, or other worldly has taken place to stop the violence. If it is not the mob's action, what brought the peace? Of course it is the scapegoat, the one who *seemed* to be the source of the community's problems to begin with. As Girard says, "the malefactor becomes the benefactor."[13] Thus, this is sacred. This is beyond human efforts and must come from a higher power for in the act there is now peace.

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[10] Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice,* 45

[11] Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 48.

[12] Girard, "Things Hidden," in *The Ideas of Rene Girard,* ed. David Cayley, 15.

[13] Girard, "Things Hidden," 15.

Unmasking

A third important part of our exploration is Mimetic Theory's connection to the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Passion narratives. If imitation is part of our human nature, it follows that what we imitate is crucial. Our tendency is to imitate in ways that lead to rivalry and violence that must have a false cure to protect us from destruction. The message and ministry of Jesus Christ points to a different form of mimicry. "Christ, in showing the way of love," Gruenler writes, "calls his disciples to imitate him and renounce other models of desire, especially those mimetic rivals that he calls stumbling blocks."[14] Girard would affirm that this is the imitation that matters most for the hope of humanity. In Jesus Christ we find a life lived contrary to our mimetic rivalry and practices of "sacred" violence. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection our sinful patterns are revealed as he chooses a different way forward. Girard writes that the call to imitate Jesus is to mimic someone who will never be our rival.[15] This demonstrates that mimetic desire is not evil when we desire what is good and pure and right. Girard elucidates this point with an interesting comparison. He writes,

> Not unlike Jesus, Satan says to us: 'Imitate me' and he, himself, is an imitator. His ultimate model is God the Father, the same model that Jesus has. Imitation is characteristic of both Jesus and Satan. We always imitate someone when we desire, either Jesus or Satan. In the Gospels, therefore, desire itself is mimetic. It is rooted not in the desiring subject, not in the desired object but in a third party, the model of our desire. If this model influences us through his own desire, we both desire the same object. We become rivals…What is the difference between the mimetic desire of Jesus and the mimetic desire of Satan? The difference is Satan imitates God in a spirit of rivalry. Jesus imitates God in a spirit of childlike and innocent obedience and this is what he advises us to do as well.[16]

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[14] Gruenler, "The Promise of Mimetic Theory…", 128.
[15] Cayley, *The Ideas of Rene Girard,* ed. Cayley, 48.
[16] Girard, "Satan," in *The Girard Reader*, ed. Williams, 197.

This is critical to discipleship. Because Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, there is no competition between Jesus and humanity. He has fully entered it to show us a different way, and this different way changes everything.

> By sharing in the wholeness of the one in whom no competition exists, we can enter into new, compassionate relationship with each other. By accepting our identities from the one who is the giver of all life, we can be with each other without distance or fear.... This divine compassion is not, like our self-made compassion, part of the competition. Rather, it is the expression of a new way of living in which interpersonal comparisons, rivalries, and competitions are gradually left behind.[17]

Imitating Christ will lead to our transformation, and thus away from our need for scapegoating sacrifices because of rivalry. Girard writes,

> Since we are without sacrifices, either we are going to love each other or we are going to die. We have no more protection against our own violence. Therefore, we are confronted with it. Either we must follow the rules of the Kingdom of God, or the situation is going to get infinitely worse.[18]

Jesus demonstrates the rules of the Kingdom of God all the way to the cross, which reveals, in a way other sacred stories never could, our bent toward scapegoating violence. This is where Heim's question, "How do victims become visible?" is answered. What Christ does as he is scapegoated is to reveal victims—he is a victim, but he shows all of humanity the victims that have always been there. Girard writes,

> This is the meaning of Jesus' passion in the four Gospels. What God demands is not sacrifice of his Son, not a perfect scapegoat, but the unconditional refusal of scapegoating, even if the price must be death.… Instead of covering up once again the collective ignorance of unanimous victimage, the four texts of the passion disclose it so thoroughly that, in the long run, the hiddenness of scapegoating is everywhere uncovered and its power to persuade gradually undermined.[19]

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[17] Henri Nouwen, et al., *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life.* (New York: Image Doubleday, 1983), 19.

[18] Girard, "The Scandal of the Cross," in *The Ideas of Rene Girard,* ed. Cayley, 49.

[19] Réne Girard, forward to *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred: Liberation from the Myth of Sanctioned Violence,* by James G. Williams, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), vi.

It is “everywhere uncovered” because amazingly the record we have been given by the witnesses reveals their culpability. Peter knew what he had done when the rooster crowed three times. Jesus declared it from the cross, “They don’t know what they do.” The disciples gave testimony to this broken and blind system at Pentecost. Saul/Paul recognized what he was doing when Jesus came to him in a vision and said, “Why are you persecuting *me?”* as he persecuted Christians. Girard was amazed that this was the way the Bible tells the story– there is no hiding what is really happening. And it is in the revealing of what human beings and societies do that there can be change. Heim writes, “The cross is unique because it is the one death that has been happening since the foundation of the world that in the reversing light of resurrection reveals the sin in which we are everywhere enmeshed and offers us a different way.”[20] Jesus is not a victim that stays dead but overcomes the sacrifice through resurrection to reveal our sin.

Part of this revealing is that although Jesus does not respond violently, we do. Girard is clear that we cannot scapegoat the Jews by claiming they killed Jesus. Rather, the Gospels demonstrate that we *all* killed him. Through the crucifixion then, Jesus unmasks our “sacred” violence to remove its power over us. Heim writes, “Jesus’ cross wasn’t the one time it [scapegoating sacrifice] happened. It was the time we knew it happened and became able to see others.”[21] This knowledge opens the door for us to begin to think differently about the way we treat others, how we seek peace, how salvation is offered to us, and how we are to imitate Jesus.

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[20] Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice,* 195.
[21] Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice,* 111.

Criminal Justice and Mimesis

Victim as Scapegoat

If Girard is right, that violence builds and needs an outlet, we can view the acts of perpetrators against victims as a release of this pent-up anger. Vern Redekop writes that murder "is the pouring out of violence on a victim. Those murders which are crimes of passion manifest the growth of violent impulses which often are caused by mimetic desire and reciprocal conflict."[22] The crimes of passion we often hear about don't occur in a vacuum. Rather, in this way of thinking they have been building as rivalry and mimicry have been taking place. As these emotions and experiences grow the tension can sometimes find release in the violence that leads to murder. This does not imply that the murder is premeditated. It merely acknowledges that the violence was predicated on a building of mimesis. It's not only murder that follows this pattern, though. Redekop also writes of other types of crimes that can be connected to mimetic desire where someone begins to want what someone else desires and thus takes it.[23]

We can see this playing out in the example from *Into the Abyss* in the introduction. Two young men wanted to drive a car that wasn't theirs. They first intended to have their acquaintances make this possible, but things escalated into violence and murder. They desired something they couldn't have on their own, they were in close proximity to what they wanted, and they took it by committing murder. Girard's thought helps us to begin to grasp the "why" of this sort of violence, but it should not be seen to

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[22] Redekop, "Scapegoats, the Bible and Criminal Justice," 30.
[23] Redekop, "Scapegoats, the Bible and Criminal Justice," 30.

excuse it. Rather, when we understand that there is a possibility for this kind of act, we can offer different pathways to stop the cycle of violence.[24]

Perpetrator as Scapegoat

Once a perpetrator has been apprehended a broader form of scapegoating begins to take place. Society is rightfully horrified by what has occurred to people like Sandra and Adam Stotler and they begin to unite around the punishment of the perpetrator of violent crime. It is not that accountability should not occur; it is the flawed mechanism humans use that must be addressed. This flaw is revealed in Maurice Chammah's book *Let the Lord Sort Them*. He writes that when the United States Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty was unconstitutional in 1972 Americans became concerned about their ability to deal with crime. He quotes a judge from Dallas, Texas who wrote, "A sad, indisputable fact of life is that human mad dogs exist. It is not only stupid but is 'cruel and unusual punishment' not to execute them. The doctor's knife must be cruel in order to be kind. If the ruptured appendix is not removed, the patient dies." Chammah goes on to say, "Americans didn't realize how much they liked the death penalty until they were deprived of it."[25] The word "liked" might seem to be uncivilized, or even an unfair assessment, however it fits well with Girard's thought. The reason Americans *like* the death penalty is because it provides the illusion that there is justice and peace. For a brief

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[24] Recognizing that mimesis can lead to violence should guide communities to stop the pipelines that often lead to prison. Improving access to meaningful employment, education, and other resources are ways to help mitigate some of the problems that lead to crime. This is not a magic bullet that will stop people from committing crime but can help to create a more stable foundation for individuals and families as communities seek to address crime.

[25] Maurice Chammah. *Let the Lord Sort Them: The Rise and the Fall of the Death Penalty*. (New York; Crown Publishing, 2021), 27.

moment the one to be executed becomes the *pharmakos*– the poison and the cure for society's ills. This is something humanity has "liked" from the beginning.

This is not merely something that impacts the broader society but seems to provide help to the families of the victims as well. "I didn't know that I would feel this relief. Now there is some hope in this society for victims," said a witness to the execution of her son's murderer.[26] The death penalty confirms Girard's belief that a mechanism is desired to vent the violence that the community experiences. It seems to provide relief because it is systematized to control retributive violence. A victim's family does not need to respond with murder to continue the cycle. The state has stepped in to bring peace.

This peace comes with a cost. Redekop writes of the way we have legitimated the government's ability to be violent with an individual. The perpetrator may be accused and deemed guilty of kidnapping, but the same behaviors he is accused of can now be used against him with the idea that this is justice. "What would be considered inappropriate anywhere else now becomes okay," Redekop writes as he outlines forced confinement, seizing of property, and involuntary bodily searches.[27] In the name of peace and justice we empower the criminal justice system to enact what would otherwise be seen as violent, inappropriate, and, in any other circumstances, a crime. State sanctioned executions are justified because somehow we have come to see them as peace-keeping rather than murder.

A major flaw of this mechanism of peace and justice is the very capriciousness with which it is administered. That capriciousness is part of the mimetic theory, however.

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[26] Chammah, *Let the Lord Sort Them,* 12.
[27] Redekop, "Scapegoats, the Bible, and Criminal Justice," 27.

Seeking to find someone who is different, an easy target, or an outsider is key for this scapegoating to succeed. This helps to describe, for instance, why the state of Texas has outpaced other states in their executions. Because of their reliance on "future dangerousness"[28] they have not only executed those who have committed serious crimes, but those who *might* commit one again. This is classic scapegoating, where this person is believed to be the poison in our community and healing can only come through their death. At this point in our history, we have seen this played out a multitude of times and know it is not a lasting solution, yet it is our mechanism for justice. The scapegoating of people who commit crimes is seen to keep peace and those who help societies to execute perpetrators are held up as heroes. As Redekop writes,

> In a secular society, nothing is as sacred as the law code and the justice system which enforces it. The buildings in which laws are made are the most elaborate and the courts in which decisions are made about points of law are the most stately. Formality, uniforms, and respect surround the agents of the law.[29]

If this is true, we must now turn our attention to how the criminal justice system is a mimetic priesthood that enacts our sacred violence through scapegoating to keep peace.

Criminal Justice System as Mimetic Priesthood

Girard reminds us that cultures must not be able to see what they are doing for scapegoating to work. The practices of sacred violence must remain shrouded, and this is

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[28] Maurice Chammah, *Let the Lord Sort Them: The Rise and Fall of the Death Penalty,* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2021), 96. "Future dangerousness" is used to determine if a defendant is likely to commit a violent crime in the future. Juries are made to determine this by a yes or no vote. If the answer is yes, the death penalty was assigned the defendant. Research now shows that this is not an appropriate way to assess a person. See Ana M. Otero, "The Death of Fairness: Texas's Future Dangerousness Revisited," *University of Denver Criminal Law Review,* Vol 4, Issue 1 (January 2014): https://digitalcommons.du.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=crimlawrev and "Neuroscience Experts: Brain Science Shows Texas' Use of Future Dangerousness to those Under 20 to Death is Unreliable, Unconstitutional," *Death Penalty Information Center,* June 23, 2020. https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/news/neuroscience-experts-brain-science-shows-texas-use-of-future-dangerousness-to-sentence-those-under-21-to-death-is-unreliable-unconstitutional for more information.

[29] Redekop, "Scapegoats, the Bible, and Criminal Justice, 16.

where ritual and the unity of the mob play a part. This shrouding can be connected to the way in which the death penalty is administered. Yes, there are witnesses and reporters, but there is also a drive to hide what is really happening.

Texas is well known for its penchant for executions. The prison employees there became efficient and professional at the process of putting inmates to death. This led them to become trainers of executioners across the nation in how to do it "right." For example, the "tie down team" at the Walls Unit in Huntsville, Texas, as they became known, knew how to get a prisoner who was to be executed strapped to the gurney in fifteen seconds.[30] In Florida a botched execution where the man being executed caught on fire caused the governor to send Ron McAndrew to study under this tie down team to make Florida's executions better, because of the public relation fiasco of burning flesh in the witness room. Chammah writes that McAndrew's had to take notes about "the specifications of the syringes and IV lines, the way industrial tape was used to keep the two IVs in the two arms, and then covered with hospital tape 'to make it look pretty.'"[31] This ritualization worked its way into the lives of those involved in the executions themselves. One executioner in Texas found this routine was what helped him to cope with what he was doing.[32] It wasn't just in Texas, though. Charlie Jones, a Warden and executioner at Holman prison in Atmore, Alabama tells of his experience with the death chamber. "I did seventeen men and one woman."[33] When asked how that affected him personally, he chuckled,

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[30] Herzog, *Into the Abyss.*
[31] Chammah, *Let the Lord Sort Them,* 174.
[32] Chammah, *Let the Lord Sort Them*, 181.
[33] Mark Laita "Warden/Executioner Interview Charlie Jones," produced by Soft White Underbelly, June 26, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnuzlkwXZdQ

> Well, that's a good question. I've never let their problem become my problem. And I didn't put 'em there. I didn't go out and arrest 'em and sit in judgment on 'em…. We could look 'em in the eye and let 'em know what's fixin' to take place and what's the what for and here it comes.

Jones did not see his work as being responsible. Rather, he was enacting what others wanted and decided. Not only that, but he also knew the steps and shared them with the accused which connotes a kind of ritual that is repeated in death chambers across our nation. Jones states,

> Afterwards you know it lays on your mind. It did me. But not a guilt thing. Just hoping that I had done everything to be sure that his case was perfect as it could be. That there was in no way me or my staff the cause of him having to sit in that chair when maybe he shouldn't have. If he shouldn't have, it was somebody else's handling, not us.[34]

Justified by doing their job well and not being responsible for what they were doing, (for it was "the state" that handled the decision making) these "priests" of the criminal justice system enacted the sacred violence designed to bring peace.

Girard explains the motivation for this scapegoating justice by stating, "You can see, communities go into ritual when they are *afraid.*"[35] The Criminal justice system's rituals are often connected to the fear of citizens. Crime, and the potential for criminal activity, drive ordinary people to unite against a person who has broken a law. Punishment becomes a response to fear that leads to disproportionate punishment of a few for the peace of the many. The Supreme Court wrote in 1972,

> The instinct for retribution is part of the nature of man, and channeling that instinct in the administration of criminal justice serves an important purpose in promoting the stability of a society governed by law. When people begin to believe that organized society is unwilling or unable to impose upon criminal

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[34] "Warden/Executioner Interview Charlie Jones.

[35] Cayley, *The Ideas of Rene Girard,* 17.

> offenders the punishment they 'deserve,' then there are sown the seeds of anarchy—of self-help, vigilante justice, and lynch law.[36]

This thinking implies that if the state doesn't create ritual, ordain priests, and enact the sacrifice it will happen in more violent and out of control ways. The argument that organized punishment and executions bring peace is fundamentally connected to what societies have been doing since the beginning. A need for a release of the tension caused by crime or harm is normative according to Girard. The way it is dealt with, so society doesn't destroy itself, is to ritualize violence and mythologize the death of a scapegoat. This is the norm, but it does not mean it is the way of the Kingdom of God.[37]

From Scapegoating to Shalom

If what Girard has asserted is true and we can find it mirrored in our criminal justice system, then we must determine a way forward that helps us to rightly see all people, not as scapegoats but as part of our society. If the cross unmasks our violence and identifies victims, followers of Christ must stand with the victims to continue to be signs and symbols in the world of the Christ we claim to follow. This can occur through the concept of mediated exposure and by imitating the slaughtered Lamb in Revelation.

Mediated Exposure

Mimetic Theory posits an interesting concept that helps us to imitate Christ and operate in a way that continues to unmask the mimetic rivalries around us. It is connected to Girard's idea of models. In their article "Violence Loop to Conversion Spiral," Dennis Feaster and Curtis Gruenler discuss how having a mediator that shows a different way of

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[36] Chammah, *Let the Lord Sort Them,* 63.
[37] This concept connects well with the work of James K.A. Smith in his Cultural Liturgies series. Smith addresses a variety of locations that have elements of worship built into them—the shopping mall, the sports arena, for example.

seeing the world can be transformative. Feaster has done extensive work with disabled orphans in China. He writes about a woman named Xu Bing who was serving as a translator for a British woman named Rose. Rose was working on an educational initiative to create a curriculum for disability-inclusive education in China. Feaster describes Xu Bing as having limited exposure to children with disabilities, but she had been exposed to the benefits of early childhood disability inclusion programs. This created a situation where she was ready for a transformative encounter. It was clear the children in the orphanage were being neglected. As a stigmatized and despised population, disabled orphans in China are typically pushed to the margins and their families suffer as well. They are innocent victims but become stigmatized because of the discomfort they cause the able-bodied. The discomfort comes because of the *existence* and not the actions of the disabled in their communities. None of this factored into how Rose treated them. Feaster commented that Xu Bing's transformation occurred when she witnessed how Rose responded to the children. "Rose's face lit up and she held them and she loved them." As Xu Bing saw Rose behave in this way, as a positive model, it helped her move away from the prevalent ideas about the disabled. It was through the modeling of Rose that she was changed.

This conception of relationship is key to breaking down the negative cycles of mimesis. Feaster and Gruenler use a helpful diagram to explain how the violence loop can transform to a process of conversion.[38]

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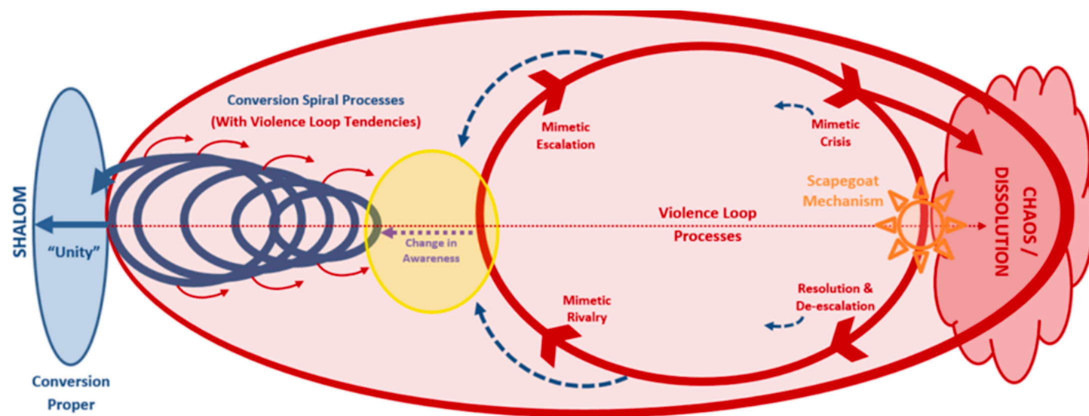
[38] Image is from Dennis Feaster and Curtis Gruenler, "From Violence Loop to Conversion Spiral: Mimetic Theory and Communities of Care for Children with Disabilities." *Christian Scholar Review*, (Winter 2021): 200.



The violence loop has as its result chaos and dissolution unless there is a scapegoat that stops the mimetic rivalry that leads to escalation and then crisis. They assert that, rather than a traditional scapegoat, a positive model provides a change in awareness. These can break the cycle of violence and lead an individual or community into the conversion spiral, a process that results in the Biblical concept of *shalom.*[39] This exposure doesn't automatically convert us to a way of imitating Christ. Conversion happens with time and relationships. They write,

> The process of entering into deep community with individuals or groups who have been historically "othered" was not reflected in the data sources as being a momentous, one-time conversion. Rather, it reflected cycles over time of increasing awareness of and identification with vulnerable groups. These cycles move from rejection to pity to empathy and ultimately to deep identification and communion.[40]

This relational intentionality that seeks proximity to those who have been "othered" is crucial to break the cycles of mimesis and lead to true conversion to Christ. Again, we

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[39] Dennis Feaster and Curtis Gruenler, "From Violence Loop to Conversion Spiral: Mimetic Theory and Communities of Care for Children with Disabilities." *Christian Scholar Review*, (Winter 2021): 200.
[40] Feaster and Gruenler, "From Violence Loop to Conversion Spiral," 200.

can connect the thought of Girard to the writing of Nouwen and his co-authors. Writing about how compassion can only be experienced and expressed through community, they touch on this theme of mediated exposure: “When there is no community that can mediate between world needs and personal responses, the burden of the world can only be a crushing burden.”[41] To relieve this burden requires deep and meaningful relationships. “When information about human suffering comes to us through a person who can be embraced, it is humanized.”[42] This is what Christ has done for us. By entering fully into our humanity, God has been revealed as the one who suffers with, joins with, and calls us to do the same with one another.

We can see this truth in the actions of Jesus throughout his earthly life. Moved with compassion he wept over the city of Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37-39 and at the tomb of a friend in John 11:35. Reaching out to touch the unclean in passages like Matthew 8:3 and caring for those who are abused like with the woman caught in adultery in John 8 connects Jesus to our real human experiences. It is this Jesus, fully God and fully human, that goes to the cross. It is in embracing Christ and embracing one another that we can break the violence loop and enter into the true journey toward *shalom.* Heim writes, “God exalts and vindicates the crucified one. But God does not do so through retribution and violence. Instead, a new community forms, built around the memory of the victim as innocent, not the official memory of a justified sacrifice.”[43] We turn now to what it means to embrace and imitate Christ.

[41] Nouwen, et al., *Compassion,* 51.
[42] Nouwen, et al., *Compassion,* 58.
[43] Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice,* 231.

Revelation 5: Imitating the Lambkin

In Revelation chapter five we find John in the throne room of heaven. His vision is particularly interesting when considering Girard's thought. The scroll John sees in the hand of God is unique. It has writing on the front and back which is unusual in the ancient world.[44] It is also perfectly sealed. This is discernible because of the perfect number seven being utilized to describe the seals. The strength of the seal is increased when the scripture says, "I saw a powerful angel, who proclaimed in a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"[45] We are meant to understand this is an important message in the hand of God that requires someone special to open it. Although we do not know what the scroll says, its importance is implied in several ways—who holds it, how it is written on, how many seals, that a powerful angel calls for someone to open it, and that John realizes it can't be opened and weeps. It is at this moment that one of the elders in the throne room of God speaks to John, "Don't weep. Look! The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has emerged victorious so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."[46] The Lion of Judah connotes power and legacy. It should not surprise us that this victorious creature could open it.

Scholars say one of the most important things to note about this vision of John is the great reversal that takes place between what he hears and what he turns to see.[47] He *hears* of a kind of power any of us would expect based upon our understanding of power. What he *sees* is the antithesis of power. Revelation 5:6 reads, "Then, in between the

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[44]Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly,* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011), 108.
[45] Revelation 5:2, CEB.
[46] Revelation 5:5, CEB.
[47] Gorman, *Reading Revelation,* 109.

throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb, standing as if it had been slain."[48] What could be weaker than a slaughtered Lamb standing between the throne? How could this be the one to open the very important scroll with its very strong seals?

There are three important things to take note of here. First, the Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes. This symbolizes to the reader that the Lamb has perfect power and wisdom. As we consider how this connects to mimetic theory we can see that it is in the slaughtered Lamb that true power is revealed. This is a critique of the violence and scapegoating the world uses. Violence to drive out violence, power used against the weak to dominate—these are not true power in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom the slaughtered Lamb, who is Christ, introduced is one who calls its citizens to turn the other cheek, pray for enemies, and not to throw stones. True wisdom is also revealed in the symbology of the slaughtered Lamb being the true victor, as the sacrifice of Christ unmasks sacred violence. Heim writes that in the cross "there is rescue and vindication of a victim of scapegoating sacrifice, and more broadly, there is a rescue of all of us from the thoughtless bondage to that violent way of maintaining peace and unity."[49] Additionally we should not look at Jesus as a proxy for our punishment. Thomas Porter writes, "God always stands against evil and injustice. God's way of restoring is not to punish Jesus as a substitute, but to break the cycles of punishment, violence and retribution through solidarity with us as victims and forgiveness to us as offenders, who

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[48] Revelation 5:6, CEB
[49] Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice,* 296.

receive this forgiveness through repentance, a real accountability."[50] Not only is our scapegoating tendency revealed through the slaughtered lamb, but our experience of being scapegoated also finds a remedy in Jesus Christ sharing our victimization.

Second, it is important to define the Lamb's identity. In the Greek the word is *Ἀρνιον* (Arnion) which means lambkin.[51] This isn't any lamb; it is a small lamb. It is important to pay attention to this distinction, but also to understand that the Lambkin doesn't merely remain passive. We see in Revelation 14:1ff the Lamb is leading the people to victory. Thus, the size of the Lamb is not a symbol of weakness. Rather, this redefines for us what is true power.

Third, the text is also clear that this Lambkin retains the wounds of slaughter. This imagery is meant, again, to shock us into a new way of viewing power, wisdom, and the work of Christ. Girard sees the crucifixion and the visible wounds of Christ as a sign that God and God's story is one that sides with the victims, not the powerful. Seeing the wounds that remain make it impossible for us to hide our violence.

This reversal, or, in the language of Girard this unmasking, is crucial as we consider who Christ is and what Christ came to do. Further, it demonstrates to us what and who we are to imitate. This is not an invitation to be martyred, but an invitation into a different way of moving and being in the world. This is echoed by Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green who write, "Those who worship the Lamb are called to embrace the way of the Lamb, to emulate in their lives the faithful witness of the Lamb—even to death."[52]

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[50] Thomas W. Porter, "Breaking Down the Walls: Transforming Conflict Into Restoration" Manuscript of Presentation to the Virginia Annual Conference. https://docsbay.net/breaking-down-the-walls-transforming-conflict-into-restoration accessed 10/10/2021.

[51] https://biblehub.com/greek/721.htm

[52]Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, (Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 105.

They go on to say that John, the author of Revelation, “insists that faithful witness in the world requires prophetic engagement with the world, irrespective of the consequences.”[53] When we stand on the side of victims, unmasking the rituals of death in our communities, there will be consequences.

Conclusion

Fred Allen was a Captain in the death house at the Walls Unit, in Huntsville, Texas. Participating in 125 executions, Allen didn’t just know the rituals he oversaw them. He, too, sat across from Herzog, the documentarian, and shared his experiences in *Into the Abyss.* Allen tells of the ten steps it takes from the holding cell to the death chamber. He describes their process—fingerprinting, allowing the person to shower, letting them dress in “free world clothes,” providing the last meal, bringing extra things to drink or other items the person would request. “You want anything else? Just ask,” he would say. Everything about life behind bars is suddenly transformed on the day of death.[54] There were also cues that moved the process along. Everyone had their roles. The Warden at the prison would take off his glasses when it was time to begin. It was at that moment that the lethal injection fluids would start to flow.[55] This was normalized, done efficiently and effectively. And then something changed for Allen.

Karla Faye Tucker was convicted of a gruesome murder but became a Christian behind bars. A sort of celebrity, she drew media attention because of this radical change

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[53] Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross,* 105.
[54] Herzog, *Into the Abyss.* This is a prime example of the “poison becoming the cure” as a reversal takes place for the accused and convicted before their death. The lengthy process of dehumanization is shifted, and humanization is attempted in the final hours before the death of the inmate.
[55] Howard Rosenberg, “The Deaths That Go Unseen,” *The LA Times*, October 11, 2000. https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-oct-11-ca-34498-story.html

of life. When it came time for her execution George W. Bush, the then Governor of Texas, chose not to stay her execution and Allen got Tucker ready to be killed. He remembers her saying, “Thank you Captain Allen for everything you’ve done.” Not knowing how exactly to respond he told her, “You’re welcome.” Reflecting he stated, “What else could I say? I’m fixing to strap you down in another hour.”[56] Tucker is said to have skipped those ten steps from the holding cell and then laid down on the gurney while praying, “Lord help them to find a vein!” These were unusual circumstances.

Two days after her execution Allen had a breakdown of sorts. Her execution was no different than the dozens he had participated in before, but something in him was suddenly different. “I started actually visualizing the other inmates. I could see them. I could see them in the holding cell again,” he said.[57] Allen’s exposure to Tucker mediated a change within him that caused the violence loop to break and a movement toward conversion to begin. He was able to see the victims before him. He no longer could hide behind the professionalism and the ritual of the process to justify what was happening in the death house. He never performed another execution because what he had been a part of was exposed in a new way. The consequence of seeing the scapegoat and breaking free from the patterns of “sacred” violence was losing his pension because he quit his job.[58]

Christopher Marshall writes, “that a compassionate political system has three characteristics: attentiveness to the suffering of the most vulnerable people in the community, active listening to their voices in order to discern what they need most, and

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[56] Herzog, *Into the Abyss.*
[57] Herzog, *Into the Abyss*
[58] Herzog, *Into the Abyss*

wise and appropriate responses to their distress."[59] This kind of thinking can realistically impact every person in a society. Although it is important to move toward the margins, there are marginalized and vulnerable people everywhere who need this kind of care. When we assume that compassionate justice, an unmasking of our scapegoating, is only for one segment of our society we miss the point of what Christ has come to do for us. Girard's thought helps us to understand that there is scapegoating in every facet of our lives that must be unmasked. If these three characteristics are correct, we must employ them with victims, perpetrators, legislators, and others to become who God has designed us to be.

Girard is clear that part of the importance of what he has discovered is that it invites self-reflection. We must be critical of our own motives, behaviors, and judgments. We don't do this on our own, but it is the Holy Spirit who convicts and teaches us. This is the same Holy Spirit Girard asserts advocates for the victims among us.[60] It is long and slow work to undo our proclivity for "sacred" violence to bring peace. This is what enables Christians to live differently and bring about true transformation in the world—it is the grace of God at work unmasking. The unmasking that the cross provides enables people like Allen to recognize when we are victimizing. But this is not just for Christians. As has been mentioned above, prevenient grace is available to all. This grace also plays a role in revealing the victims in our society to those who are not disciples of Christ. This theory provides a way to be self-critical, it invites into community people who will stand

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[59] Christopher Marshall, *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables in Law, Crime, and Restorative Justice*, (Eugene: Cascade Book, 2012), 300. Marshall is summarizing Elisabeth Porter's conception of a compassion in politics from her work *Politics.*
[60] Girard, "Satan" in *The Girard Reader*, 201 and Girard, "The Archimedean Point," in *The Ideas of Rene Girard,*67.

against the mob and not engage in the mimetic frenzy of violence but emulate the slaughtered Lambkin in a world that very well may kill this minority voice. Although that reality is true, we are moving from sacrifice to less sacrifice as grace enables us to move toward *shalom*.[61]

Leonard Rubio, San Quentin

Although San Quentin is one of the most notorious prisons in the United States it is also a place of surprising inspiration and transformation. The first brick and mortar prison in California, it was built by inmates and opened in 1852 with only 68 incarcerated at the time.[62] San Quentin is the home to almost all of the male death row inmates in the state. In 2005 it was deemed "the most populous execution antechamber in the United States," with over 700 inmates in its "Condemned Unit." [63] Violent men have walked the yard for decades. However, for decades there have also been glimmers of innovative hope and healing behind those walls.

Alcoholics Anonymous was first held in a prison behind the barbed wire of San Quentin. Baseball has been a part of the ethos since the 1920s with two teams from the inside playing an outside team named "The Willing" twice a week during the summer months. It is home of *Ear Hustle,* the only podcast created fully within a prison and run and produced by former and current inmates. In San Quentin you can receive a college education that isn't available in any of the other prisons in California. It is also a place

[61] Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice,*

[62] Dan Reed, "Killer Location May Doom San Quentin Prison." *San Jose Mercury News*. August 20, 2001.

[63] Peter Fimrite, "Inside death row. At San Quentin, 647 condemned killers wait to die in the most populous execution antechamber in the United States." *The San Francisco Chronicle.* Archived from the original on 2 July 2009. Retrieved 2019-08-20.

where Leonard Rubio experienced a radical life change while he was incarcerated for murder for 23 years.

While incarcerated, Rubio wanted to figure out what led him to take another person's life. He went on a journey of self-reflection—reading, taking classes, processing what his life had been before that fateful day in 1986. A devout Catholic, Rubio also attended Mass seeking to make sense of his choices. He began to explore Restorative Justice but couldn't find much information on the topic in the prison library. Wanting to go deeper in his understanding, he partnered with a Catholic priest, a volunteer in a program called Kairos, and the prison staff to host San Quentin's first Interfaith Restorative Justice Roundtable held in the prison in 2004. This was a response to the United States Council of Catholic Bishops document entitled, *"Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration,"* penned in 2000. Rubio and others felt it was a document with good ideas but lacked practical steps of implementation. They created a White Paper out of the roundtable called *"Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration: A Response and Implementation Plan,"* which was presented to the California Catholic Conference, in partnership with Our Lady of the Rosary, San Quentin Catholic Chapel.

At the same time, another volunteer with an organization called Insight Prison Project (IPP) was leading select inmates through a program called Victim Offender Education Group (VOEG) in San Quentin. This curriculum was created by a variety of people—mental health professionals, the formerly incarcerated, and religious leaders. Rubio was invited to participate in the second cohort of VOEG in 2005. These two events continued a shift that changed the trajectory of his life. Building on the work of a variety of practitioners, Rubio participated in, and then helped to enhance, the VOEG program

which has now reached over 1000 inmates at San Quentin and other prisons across the country and the world. Released in 2010, Rubio later took on the Executive Director role at IPP to continue the innovative work that changed his life.

Innovation occurs due to varying realities. It can be driven by decline, need, pure imagination, or a desire to move an organization to the next level. Although innovation can occur when trouble or needs are presented, these same realities can also lead to buckling down and keeping things the same instead of innovating. Lack of innovation doesn't just lead to the death of organizations, it radically impacts people, often the most vulnerable. L. Gregory Jones writes in *Christian Social Innovation: Renewing Wesleyan Witness,*

> Christian social innovation describes a way of life in relationship with God that focuses on building and transforming institutions that nurture generative solutions to wicked social problems, and is shaped by intersections of mindsets and practices of blessing, hope, forgiveness, friendship, imagination, and improvisation.[64]

IPP exemplifies this type of Christian social innovation as it engages unlikely partners in the process of healing and restoration behind bars. Innovation behind bars creates a unique and challenging context. To innovate in a setting such as this requires the buy-in of many different constituent groups, a need to bend to the culture of criminal justice and can be hampered by unique hurdles that others may not face. However, it is incredibly valuable in dealing with the "wicked problems" Jones writes about. Engaging the challenging context requires innovation and reiteration which are both evident in the way the IPP programming has morphed and changed based on contextual pressures over time.

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[64] L. Gregory Jones, *Christian Social Innovation* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 13.

Something that hasn't changed is Rubio's passion for dealing with shame. This is key to the healing he experienced, and the healing others experience through the two phases of the VOEG program. He still gets choked up as he talks through the exercises the group engages in. These include crime impact statements, naming your victim(s) by listing them on the board, reflecting on your own family and the way it shaped you, processing trauma and your reactions to it, and considering the losses of your victim's family beyond the initial loss of life. Rubio reflected on the reality that because his girlfriend was 15 when he killed her, her family wouldn't get to send out graduation announcements. They would, however, receive them from others celebrating their children's accomplishments and be reminded again of their loss. This is but one example of the depths of pain and impact crime has on so many. In prison, Rubio states, people don't want to talk about their crime. Instead, inmates try to make sense of it by dehumanizing their victims, blaming others, or keeping what they did secret while trying to celebrate their conquests on the outside. VOEG invites people to name, admit, and own what they did which then leads to healing of shame.

In Jones' writing he describes at length the concept of "holy friends." The impact VOEG had on Leonard is like journeying with holy friendship. Jones writes of the value of these friendships to help us to process who we are, what we've done, and why we have done it. He writes, "We are most likely to engage in such activities if we are part of larger communities of holy friends who accompany us to see the truth of our lives in the complex interconnections of sins, gifts, and dreams."[65] This is the type of community that

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[65] Jones, *Christian Social Innovation*, 107.

VOEG provides for those who are incarcerated. As they explore the dimensions of what they have done they are able to in turn help lead one another into a different future.

The eighteen-month program doesn't only impact the lives of those convicted of violent crime, it also helps those who have been personally impacted by violence. In the state of California victim's rights laws prevent those who have been convicted from interacting with their victims. VOEG has found a creative solution for this that helps to bring healing to both inmates and victims/survivors. Surrogate Victim Panels are not unique to VOEG and IPP, but they are a rare example of innovation in healing and restoration. IPP puts together a group of victim families and survivors that have experienced crimes *like* those of the members of the VOEG cohort. When the group gathers, the victims/survivors share the impact of what happened to them or their loved one in front of the inmates. Next the inmate who committed a similar crime shares his story in front of the group. Although these aren't the literal people they harmed, they have an opportunity to repent, own, and apologize for the hurt they have caused. This process is helpful to both the victim/survivor and the inmates. This is not the typical way our criminal justice system operates. Victims are kept far from the people who have harmed them. However, in this innovative setting, with trained practitioners, inmates who have done deep work, and victims/survivors who are brave enough to enter the process, lives are being changed.

This sort of change takes place in very painful situations. Jones writes about Maggy Barankitse, who witnessed the massacre of many in her hometown in Burundi and how she stayed behind to continue to serve those in need. He writes, "She believed that the hope of new life is found through pain and suffering—not by fleeing it. She

recognized that Christ's resurrection transfigured his wounds; it did not erase them."[66] It is in the hard work that IPP facilitates in the VOEG training that the wounds that have been inflicted can be transfigured and new life can come. Continuing in the usual system of trials, incarceration, separation, and lack of healing has proven to cause more wounds to be inflicted. Entering the broken places within ourselves and in the lives of those around us can bring about Christ-like transformation to our criminal justice system.

Rubio was clear to note that what VOEG does is one piece of the puzzle. When asked about the success of the program he was clear that there is no way to measure how one program makes a difference in the lives of those who take it. Most inmates are engaged in many programs, have different levels of dedication and desire to reform, and have varied structures of support. Because of this you cannot always pinpoint what helps to end recidivism. Nevertheless, IPP and the VOEG program have graduated over 1000 inmates and only five have returned to prison, none of them committing violent crimes.

One sign of the success of IPP is the innovation of others who have gone through the program. Several graduates have been released and are actively engaged in Restorative Justice in their communities. Recently one of the students in the IPP program was released from prison and immediately deported. While back in Mexico, he took the second phase of the VOEG program and fully translated it into Spanish. Now both courses of VOEG are available in English and Spanish, expanding the impact on those incarcerated.

The University of San Francisco awarded Rubio the Archbishop Oscar Romero Award in 2013 for his continued work in the field of Restorative Justice. The award goes

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[66] Jones, *Christian Social Innovation,* 74.

to a graduating senior who “embodies the university’s motto of ‘Change the World From Here.’”[67] Rubio and IPP demonstrate well what Jones writes when he says, “We embody a commitment to traditioned innovation when we engage strategies and techniques that keep us focused positively on the future through the virtue of hope.”[68] Hope is written all over the Insight Prison Project as they continue to invite the incarcerated into substantive change through innovative means.

Rubio’s story is a powerful bridge to the thought of Rene Girard. Rubio’s journey connects with many of the ideas Girard has uncovered about human interaction, violence, and scapegoating. Transformed in the program he now leads, Rubio is a mediator to help expose the broken realities of the lives of those incarcerated. He helps them to break the violence loop and experience conversion. The work IPP does with surrogate victims is a beautiful illustration of healing the harm that we often cause one another. Insight Prison Project is an excellent way to imagine how Girard’s thought can be implemented to bring about transformation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

“Jails don’t rehabilitate. Only Jesus does.”[1] So begins an article entitled “Gloria’s Ministry to Prisoners.” One might think this article would focus on an individual soul-saving kind of prison ministry lined up with the shift in the Church of the Nazarene after

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[67] Villavicencio, Monica. “Murder, Marriage and a Mission.” *University of San Francisco Magazine*, Summer (2013). 31.
[68] Jones, *Christian Social Innovation,* 62.
[1]https://tnu.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_Herald_of_Holiness_1987_v76_no15.pdf

the first generation. However, Gloria Wagner fits more of the original heart of the Church of the Nazarene. Her ministry that was highlighted in the August 1, 1987 issue of *The Herald of Holiness* demonstrates a much more nuanced understanding of the issues of incarceration. Wagner understood that there was more to crime than bad choices. Her non-profit worked with the incarcerated and their families. Using her home as a halfway house for released inmates and a guest room for the families of the incarcerated, Gloria sought to provide a holistic ministry. "All the suffering isn't going on in the prisons and jails," Gloria says. "It's in homes and families." The article states, "Discovering a group of fellow Christians who give, not pity, but support and understanding, helps ex-prisoners overcome the cycle that spawns repeat offenders." Because of her own experience of abuse and trauma, Gloria sought to help others in dire circumstances. Her own encounter with Jesus transformed her and compelled her to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the incarcerated.

The church has had a distinct role in the formation of the prison and systems of criminal justice. If this is true, the impact of incarceration on the prisoner's family is something Christians must also grapple with. The church needs to recognize that in our Sunday School classes, pews, neighborhoods, and communities, many people are suffering under its burden. There are many different ways that incarceration impacts people. Examining the collateral damage of incarceration on family members is vital to think differently about crime, punishment, and reconciliation. Helping to address this corresponding trauma is an important aspect of how the church can be involved in bringing about the new creation flourishing that Scripture talks about at length. Incarceration does not merely impact the victim and the defendant. The family members

and friends of both parties experience disruption that can have catastrophic impacts. Using research on the issues family members face, and interviews of individuals who have experienced these issues firsthand, this chapter aims to offer a way forward for the church to serve these individuals. The personal experiences in this paper are a small sampling but they do tell a story of where the church is lacking. The point is not merely to demonstrate the failure, but to offer a way forward.

Flourishing Life

Understanding what is meant by a flourishing life is helpful if Christians are to serve families who find themselves with a loved one incarcerated. Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun write in *For the Life of the World: Theology that Makes a Difference,*

> For the Christian, then, the problem of flourishing life isn't a matter of tips and tweaks. Flourishing requires the transformative presence of the true life in the midst of the false, which requires that the true world come to be in the midst of the false world, that the world, recall, recover, and for the first time fully embody its goodness as a gift of God who is love.[2]

They break this process for true life into three categories: Life led well, life going well, and life feeling as it should.[3] This will provide a framework to compile the research, interviews, and response.

When Flourishing Isn't Available

It is an understatement to say that when someone faces incarceration their life is not flourishing. Things are out of order, radically disrupted, and on a negative trajectory when a prison sentence is handed down. This disruption bleeds over to the family. Todd Clear writes in *Imprisoning Communities,* "There is no single institution that carries more

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[2] Miroslav Volf & Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2019), 150.
[3] Volf and Croasmun, *For the Life*, 17.

importance in the well-being of children than the family, and the prospects for healthy social relations in adulthood rely heavily on the existence of a vibrant family life."[4] If there is an imbalance in the family it can cause generational struggles.

Incarceration is one such cause of imbalance. Studies estimate that 2.7 million children in the United States currently have a parent behind bars. This is 1 in 28 children in our country. And that is only the children who have a parent *currently* behind bars. It is also estimated that there are 5 million children in the US who have had a parent behind bars.[5] How can life go well if the family is the crucial institution in the development of a child into a healthy adult, but it is harmed by incarceration? One study by Central Connecticut State University estimates that a child who has experienced the incarceration of a parent is roughly three times more likely to be justice-involved compared to children who have no justice involvement.[6] This is concerning. Clear states, "Myriad studies show that children and partners of incarcerated adults tend to experience other difficulties, as well, compared to children of non-incarcerated parents. These include school-related performance problems, depression and anxiety, low-self esteem, and aggressiveness."[7] Although these things can also occur when a child loses a parent due to divorce or death, Clear believes there are different degrees of struggle, and that incarceration magnifies these.

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[4] Todd Clear, *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 95.
[5] *FAQs About Children of Prisoners.* https://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/training-resources/family/ministry-basics/faqs-about-children-of-prisoners/#children_with_parent_in_prison (Accessed 3/25/2020).
[6] "Seven Out of Ten? Not Even Close." James M. Conway, Edward T. Jones, Department of Psychological Science, Central Connecticut State, 2015–The Children with Incarcerated Parents Initiative
[7] Clear, *Imprisoning Communities,* 97.

It isn't just a negative impact on the children in the home, it is also detrimental to the spouse that is left as a single parent. In *Doing Time Together*, Megan Comfort shadows women who visit their significant others in San Quentin state prison in California. The experiences of these women involve "secondary prisonization"—a reality that the prison has sway and control over their lives even though they themselves are not behind bars. From the strict rules, times, and ways they can visit their loved ones, to the complicated system and cost of phone calls, women find themselves under state control even without committing a crime. She writes,

> The facility's management of visitors' bodies and behaviors does not stop at the institution's gate. It permeates women's domestic and social spheres in unintended and uncharted ways, affecting such personal traits as one's purchase of possessions and development of a fashion style.[8]

This is symptomatic of the way in which the family is affected in a variety of ways by the incarceration of a loved one. Comfort goes on to say, "The assignation of extra 'security' measures solely to families, lovers, and friends, however, suggests the extension of the convict body to the visitor body, which then becomes a permissible subject for punishment and the extraction of retribution."[9] This is not a life of flourishing and does not help things to go well for a family. Here we see that the criminal justice system is shaping the lives of individuals both in and outside of prison and if flourishing is to happen it won't be the state that provides the right virtues and habits.

In a study of justice-involved Latina juveniles in California, Jerry Flores discovered that the systems put in place to try to help young women stay out of prison

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[8] Megan Comfort, *Doing Time Together: Love and Family in the Shadow of the Prison,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) 60.
[9] Comfort, *Doing Time Together*, 61.

often led them there. “Wraparound services” often led to greater problems for at-risk young people and should more realistically be called “wraparound incarceration.”[10] The state is not necessarily seeking the same heart of flourishing that the church should be seeking. Although there are services that are intended for good, and some bring about meaningful change, the church has a role to play in contributing to or providing systems that lead to flourishing and challenging those that don’t. At times partnering with state agencies can be the place for the church. However, Christians must carefully and thoughtfully assess the ways the state enacts control and punishment that are not conducive to flourishing and in turn provide a better way.

The burden on the older generation is also an important point of note when studying the impacts of incarceration on the family. In Bruce Western’s book, *Homeward,* he writes of the way in which mothers and grandmothers of the incarcerated bear the lion’s share of responsibility for child care, financial support, and grace. In his study of the reentry into society of formerly incarcerated individuals he found that success depended on the support they received immediately upon their release. “In the immediate period of transition women offered the recently released family member a place to stay and helped him or her make ends meet.”[11] Often this was a mother, grandmother or sister. This isn’t just true after an individual is no longer behind bars; it is a part of the care of the family while that person is locked up.

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[10] Jerry Flores, *Caught Up: Girls, Surveillance, and Wraparound Incarceration* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 7. Wrap-around services are programs designed to help those who are at risk. A team of practitioners use their particular education to partner in service to an individual who has broken the law, run away, or has been victimized. Educators, counselors, social workers, and police officers seek to help the individual. Flores argues that this assistance actually leads to higher rates of incarceration for juveniles rather than breaking the cycle of violence the young person is engaged in.

[11] Bruce Western, *Homeward: Life in the Year After Prison* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2018), 36.

An examination of children's literature shows many of the stories have a grandmother involved in the care of the children. In the young adult novel, *The Same Stuff as Stars,* the children are living with their great grandmother after their father goes to prison and mother abandons them.[12] Beautifully illustrated, *Visiting Day*, by Jacqueline Woodson tells the story of grandma taking the little girl by multiple bus routes, once a month, to see her dad behind bars.[13] This is echoed in both *Missing Daddy*[14] and *Mommy Loves Me from Away.*[15] These experiences are played out in families across our nation and in our churches.

In the powerful book *All Alone in the World,* Nell Bernstein writes, "In a trend that is fueled by both addiction and incarceration, 4.4 million children now live in grandparent headed households. Half of all children with incarcerated mothers, and a sixth of the children of incarcerated fathers, are cared for by grandparents."[16] These statistics are now 15 years old and likely much higher because of the realities of mass incarceration and the over incarceration of women that has taken place in those years.[17] Bernstein's ethnographic work across the United States has led her to conclude that the negative impact to grandparent caregivers is immense.

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[12] Katherine Paterson, *The Same Stuff as Stars* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002).
[13] Jaqueline Woodson, *Visiting Day* (New York: Puffin Books, 2002)
[14] Mariame Kaba, *Missing Daddy* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2019)
[15] Pat Brisson, *Mama Loves Me From Away* (Honesdale: Boyd Mills Press, 2002)
[16] Nell Bernstein, *All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 110.
[17] The increase in female incarceration is connected mostly to drug crimes. The criminalization of drugs, use of mandatory minimum sentencing, and three-strikes-you're-out laws, have deeply impacted the rates of all people behind bars. Research demonstrates that addiction is a medical and mental health condition. If this is the case, the church can help to advocate for different methods of help for those dealing with addiction. Incarceration does not solve the problem of drug use. While in prison drugs and alcohol can be available. While in prison people can also become "clean." However, being released into their community and family that still has issues with addiction leads to high rates of relapse and recidivism. See Belenko, Hiller, & Hamilton's work: Treating Substance Use Disorders in the Criminal Justice System. *Curr Psychiatry Rep* **15,** 414 (2013). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-013-0414-z

> Sleeplessness is commonplace among grandparent caregivers, as is depression. Their worries are endless: that they will die and leave their grandchildren parentless; that they will not be able to manage, as they grow older and slower, to keep the children safe and fed; that they will lose this generation to the same forces, or failures, that overtook the last; that their children will never come back and retrieve the grandkids; that they will.[18]

This is not flourishing.

Interviews

Many of the experiences that were found in the research were echoed in the personal interviews I conducted for this chapter. Following are summaries of interviews with people known to me or those whom I became acquainted with through referrals. Names and some details have been changed to protect the identities of those interviewed. Each interviewee was asked to tell their personal story, answer the questions of how the church responded when their loved one was incarcerated and how they believe the church should respond in this situation.[19]

Whitney—Father Incarcerated

Whitney was raised in the church; her mother had been a children's pastor most of her life. Her parents divorced while she was in college and her dad quit attending church. Whitney was a youth intern and interim youth pastor at the prominent denominational church of over 1000 that her mother served in. At the time of her father's arrest, ten years after the divorce, she was married, had two small children, and was serving with her husband as the nursery coordinators at that same church. Whitney's husband was a board member, and her mother was still serving as the children's pastor. Whitney had grown up

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[18] Bernstein, *All Alone in the World*, 114.

[19] Each interviewee signed an Informed Consent waiver connected to an IRB. See Appendix A for details.

in that church and had a close relationship with the lead pastor and the rest of the pastoral staff.

The arrest and ensuing trial for embezzlement regularly made the nightly news and was in the paper during the three-year investigation. This very public reality meant most everyone in the church knew what was happening to Whitney's family. She recalls that during this time very few people in the church reached out to her and her family to see how they were coping with the trial and incarceration of her father. A small group she and her husband participated in cared for them but no one else from the church reached out.

During the three-year investigation her father renewed his Christian faith and began to make amends for what he had done to cause harm in his family and other relationships. Whitney recalls that he came to church with her one time during that stretch. During the greeting time she looked around knowing there were a number of people who would know her dad in the worship space. She begged, silently in her head, for the lead pastor to come and greet her dad. He did not come. During that greeting time only one person came and shook her father's hand.

Whitney's family helped to pay for the legal fees for her dad, which was a financial burden. On top of that, they helped to subsidize his meals in the prison by adding to the commissary. Covering phone calls and other needed supplies impacted their finances.

There was one specific occasion when Whitney reached out to her lead pastor. Her dad had missed his regularly scheduled phone calls. When this happened more than once, Whitney became frantic wanting to know what had happened. Calling the prison,

she was unable to get any information and so she called her pastor to pray. It happened that her dad had been put in solitary confinement after being severely beaten by his cellmate. She describes her state of mind when reaching out to her pastor as the most vulnerable she had ever been in her life—"out of control vulnerable." The pastor never followed up with her.

McKinley—Mother Incarcerated

McKinley was also very connected to the church at the time of her mother's many arrests. Her grandfather was the pastor of a church in a rural community of around 7,000 people. Not only that, but her father was also the youth pastor. McKinley's mother had started abusing painkillers when she was a teenager and started using heroin when McKinley was around 10. In and out of the house, in and out of sobriety, McKinley's mother's behavior was traumatic and disruptive. She recalls the time her dad finally kicked her mom out for good, changed the locks, and got a restraining order. It was devastating. She was 12. Her mom did not spend a long time in jail for her two arrests, but the fact that she lived with her boyfriend while still married to McKinley's father and was behaving recklessly in the small community had a deep impact on this young teenager. Now 19, McKinley looks back on that time as one of depression and acting out. She attempted to commit suicide more than once, was smoking marijuana in the 4th grade, and stealing. She continued to go to church during this time but did not believe in God. "If God loved me, why did he let all this bad stuff happen to me?"

The most difficult part of McKinley's experience in regard to the way the church interacted with her was that they all knew the details of what was happening with her mother but kept her and her brother in the dark. McKinley recalls being hurt by the fact

that the people she was supposed to trust had lied to her. She couldn't understand why her family and the church didn't just tell the truth.

It wasn't all bad for McKinley. A female youth worker made it clear that her door was always open for McKinley. As she began to go through puberty it was awkward for her dad to help her navigate this, but the youth worker took her shopping, talked her through the changes in her body, and gave her a safe place to hang out and talk about what was happening in her life. McKinley thinks this relationship was crucial for her coming out of her depression and anger at God.

Emmett—Father Incarcerated

Emmett also grew up in a Christian home and was very connected to a prominent church in the community where he lived. He was four years old when his dad went to prison for financial fraud. His family lost their home and had to move to a nearby community and into a much smaller dwelling because of what his father had done. Emmett has very few memories of his dad before he went to prison and very few of the time while his dad was in prison. Incarcerated in two different states, visits were almost impossible. When they did happen, they felt awkward for Emmett because he didn't really know his dad. He recalls receiving a videotape of his dad sitting in front of a blue wall reading a children's book to him. This was part of a prison program meant to build connections between incarcerated parents and their children. For Emmett, this was a strange and uncomfortable experience that didn't help to bond him to his dad.

Like Whitney, Emmett's dad's trial was highly publicized. He was too young to be impacted by this but knows that it took a heavy toll on his mom and older siblings. Many of the people who had been close friends to their family from church suddenly

weren't there for them anymore. There was judgment toward Emmett's mom and questions about how she didn't know what was going on. This led the family to leave the church. In the new community where they moved, they did not attend a church regularly as a family because the crime impacted families in that community as well.

Emmett has one positive memory of a family coming to help them move. He doesn't remember who they were, but just that they came when his family desperately needed someone. Emmett attended a small private Christian school and everyone knew his story there. He doesn't recall a lot of bullying because of his experience but knows there were stressors that were connected to his dad's incarceration. He struggled until college with his own self-worth and fear of ending up like his dad. If it could happen to his dad, it could happen to him, he reasoned.

Janet—Husband Incarcerated, Emmett's Mother

"No one from the church staff reached out to me," Janet remembers. Her husband's arrest led her to feel shunned by her faith community, "It was like I had leprosy or something." Accused of knowing all along, and caught up in his deceit, Janet struggled to find support during the very public arrest, trial, and incarceration. Janet quit attending church with her four boys, started working three jobs, and was alone. The impact of the lies, the imprisonment of her husband, and the loss of identity and church relationships were grieving to Janet. After a year her eldest son, Austin who was 16 at the time asked her, "Will you ever stop crying in the closet, Mom?" She had tried to hide her pain, but it impacted her sons anyway.

One family from her previous church would give her $25-$50 checks each month, but no one else reached out to her. The Seventh Day Adventist church provided

Christmas gifts to her sons one year, but not her home church. Janet says she felt more support and acceptance from non-Christians than from Christians. She attends church now but "sneaks in when no one is looking and sneaks out when no one is looking." She still feels the sting of what her ex-husband did eighteen years later. Janet knows that in spite of the hurt she has experienced God loves her. She wishes that Christians could be less judgmental and more loving. "Just walk over and lend your arms to those struggling in love," she says. "That's what hurting people need."

Sue—Brother Incarcerated

Sue grew up in a very restrictive and legalistic Christian church. This small denomination has tight-knit relationships and definitive rules about how to dress, how to engage with the outside world, and what a Christian life should look like. She left that church many years ago but still has strong family ties. She says she has very little good to say about the denomination she grew up in, but the story of how they treated her brother who was incarcerated is positive.

Sue's brother turned himself in for sexually abusing his children and his stepchildren. He served his time and was released. The church rallied around him knowing he would need support if he wasn't going to re-offend. He has been honest about the fact that he will struggle with this for the rest of his life and this honesty has allowed the church to embrace him and help hold him accountable. Sue said the church sees it as their responsibility to take care of him so that children are protected from what he might be capable of.

Hilda—Son Incarcerated

Hilda maintains her son's innocence and is fighting even now to help him get out of prison. Accused of molesting a child, Hilda's son has been in prison for five years now on charges she thinks stem from bad blood in her church. According to Hilda, the church told its members they were not to associate with her when it became clear she was going to support her son. She quit attending the church because of the hostility, but her second husband continued to attend. For quite some time the church had convinced even her husband and adult daughters to turn against her. Hilda was a part of the same strict denomination as Sue's brother. She talked about how the pastor is always right in this church. During this time Hilda says the church created new rules to punish her. A visiting pastor came in and preached a sermon about how no one should testify for anyone outside of the church—Hilda's son wasn't a part of the church.

When it was time for the trial Hilda arrived at the courthouse and a group from the church gathered in a large circle and began to pray. "No one ever prayed with me," Hilda said. "Why couldn't the pastor have prayed for both of us?" Now raising her five grandkids because her daughter-in-law has been struggling with anger and bitterness that has turned violent at times, Hilda has a lot on her plate. Her husband is no longer against her, but he is aging and can't help her as much as she needs. They live in a two-bedroom house and she does most of her son's legal work—he sends her documents and information and she puts it together and submits it to lawyers. Hilda spends $50 a week on phone calls with her son and an additional $50 a month on his commissary. She is tired and struggles under the burden that she is carrying.

Conclusion

These interviews reveal the financial, relational, spiritual, and identity struggles that each person experienced. Although each story had some glimmer of kindness or response, they were small and inconsistent, or not connected to the church the person attended. It is also clear, in all but Sue's story, that the church failed the family members of the incarcerated in one way or another. Often, the failure was incredibly damaging. It isn't only the damage the church did to these individuals, the state also saddled them with difficulties that disrupted their lives. Combined, none of the individuals interviewed were flourishing and some still are not. If Volf and Croasmun are right about what it takes for a flourishing life to be a reality then there are three potential postures the church can take to assist families with a loved one incarcerated to flourish. These are discipleship, advocacy, and partnerships.

Life Led Well—Discipleship

Volf and Croasmun describe this part of the flourishing life as the "right thoughts of the heart and right acts to right habits and virtues."[20] This is true discipleship. If we see this aspect of the flourishing life as merely keeping the right rules we will fall into the great sin of the people of God–legalism. The flourishing life is not meant to be one that is about checking boxes, to be sure we followed the right rules. Rather, it is a life of love. In *Kingdom Ethics* the authors identify this sort of life as one with four main movements as revealed in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. First, "Love sees with compassion and enters into the situation of persons in bondage." Second, our actions are to be "deeds of deliverance." Third, they write, "Love invites into community with freedom, justice, and

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[20]Volf and Croasmun, *For the Life of the World,* 16.

responsibility for the future." Finally, "love confronts those who exclude."[21] As we learn to follow Jesus and are enabled by his grace, we can live this life of love. These four movements could create a framework of discipleship in the local church.

Connecting them to John Wesley's rule of life which is, do no harm, do good, stay in love with God always, could also help to build a discipleship program that responds to those on the margins.[22] This rule is instructive as we discuss discipleship and connects well with what Gushee and Stassen describe as the life of love. In the interviews, the family members of the incarcerated talked about the harm that was done to them, as well as the lack of good they experienced. The two are not the same thing. In some of the circumstances direct harm was done as family members were judged, ostracized, and actively rejected. In other circumstances the lack of someone from the church doing good is equally damaging and damning. The lack of love is painfully evident in the interviews.

Made in the image of God, all people are worthy of God's love and the flourishing that love brings. Helping those that are in such a disruptive reality to accept that they are worthy is part of the struggle the church faces. This is in part because members of the family are themselves unsure if they can live life well because of what has happened. The participants repeatedly talked about their own fears and shame associated with what their loved ones had done. This was then magnified by the way the church treated them. The self-doubt and shame that accompanied incarceration, coupled with being ostracized and judged by the church was very damaging. All of those who were young, when their parent went to prison, struggled with identity, and acted out in

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[21] David P. Gushee & Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context,* 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 115-118.

[22]Rueben Job, *Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010)

ways that harmed themselves and others. The church has a response to this, but too often we err on judgment rather than on love.

The interviews revealed what all of them wanted—someone to offer them love. Janet calls on the church to have open arms to lift those that are struggling. Hilda begs for the church to pray for both parties involved. The younger children of the incarcerated longed for someone to be there for them whether they were willing to receive the help or not. Whitney asked her pastor to pray, and he never checked back in. These are invitations for the church to "do no harm and to do good." Wesley, of course, connects these behaviors to our love of God. We love others because God loves us.

The church must disciple in ways that impact the lives of those who attend to live in love. In Sue's story, the church does not act as though her brother did not commit his crime, rather they see it as their responsibility to welcome him *and* hold him accountable, so he won't do it again. McKinley's youth worker journeyed with her, a faithful presence, to show her love through the experiences of her life. These types of stories are sadly few and far between. This is a failure of discipleship.

We are seeing the fruit of this failure in our broader culture as Christians continue to stand for platforms and ideals that run contrary to the Bible. Church attendance is on the decline and the amount of time spent being "discipled" by talk radio or news personalities far outpaces what the church can contribute. Pastors and church leaders need to strategically consider how to help the truths of Scripture to transform the lives of those they are leading. It should begin with their leadership, which is lacking in almost all the interviews. The church needs to be *doing* more in the community with what the Scriptures teach us. Providing for all ages in the church an opportunity to put into

practice what they claim to believe, will help those truths not to just be something we assent to, but something that we become. Discipleship needs to teach us of the love of God and lead us to live in that love with, and for, our neighbors.

Life Going Well—Advocacy

Volf and Croasmun connect this principle of flourishing to the biblical conception of peace. Life going well is all about the circumstances one finds themselves in either by birth or by choice. To experience flourishing there is a necessity for peace. “The restored peace,” they write, “in the relationship with God rectifies relationships; in the fully flourishing life, peace with God brings *peace with others and with the creation as a whole.”*[23] One of the purposes of advocacy is to seek the peace, the shalom, of all. Righting broken systems, creating stability, and leveling the playing field are some of the ways that peace can be sought through the avenue of advocacy.

When life is not going well it is important to look at the broader picture of systems of oppression that may be contributing to the realities that those who are suffering reside under. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s conversation with Ambassador Andrew Young in regard to the Good Samaritan expresses this well:

> I am tired of picking up people along the Jericho Road. I am tired of seeing people battered and bruised and bloody, injured and jumped on, along the Jericho Roads of life. This road is dangerous. I don’t want to pick up anyone else, along this Jericho Road; I want to fix… the Jericho Road. I want to pave the Jericho Road, add street lights to the Jericho Road; make the Jericho Road safe (for passage) by everybody….[24]

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[23] Volf and Croasmun, *For the Life of the World,* 172.

[24] https://rhettsmith.com/2008/01/martin-luther-king-jr-and-fixing-the-road-to-jericho/ (Accessed on 4/29/2020)

This is the heart of Christian justice. The church should advocate for fixing the Jericho Road of incarceration.

Advocacy for the church can take on, at minimum, two forms. First, advocate changing the laws. The person incarcerated is the one that has been meted out punishment, that the family suffers unduly because of what their loved one did is neither fair nor just. If the church believes in the importance and value of the family, advocating against the high costs of incarceration on the family backs up this claim.

Second, the church can advocate directly. Advocating to change laws is long, slow, and sometimes expensive. While that process is undertaken, the church can work to advocate for the family by paying expenses, supporting families financially, and helping with visitation. Every family is different. This means the church needs to be nimble in its plans of how to help the family. Families must also know that there are ways the church is willing to help. This closer form of advocacy doesn't merely have to be financial, it can also take on the form of bringing meals like we would when someone is sick, checking in, writing notes, helping to celebrate birthdays and holidays, and being present. To help create the peace that is required for life to go well in the flourishing paradigm, the church should be an advocate—broadly and narrowly—for the families of the incarcerated.

Life Feeling Well—Partnerships

The feeling that Volf and Croasmun are talking about isn't trying to make us *feel* happy. Rather, this is the deep abiding joy and hope that comes from Christ, not from the circumstances around us–it is the outcome of the love and peace already mentioned.[25] Volf and Croasmun write, "At the final consummation, joy characterizes the flourishing

[25] Volf and Croasmun, *For the Life of the World,* 16.

of the world that has become the home of God…. The world of perfect love and of perfect peace makes possible flourishing life that is always and only a life of joy."[26] As we seek to live a life well, and experience a life going well, we will find the joy that comes as we journey together with one another and with God.

Arditti believes mistakes are made in this arena when we have "fervor without infrastructure."[27] The church would be wise to take this seriously. As we seek to find ways to serve the families of the incarcerated we must be careful to know what they need, work to help meet that need, and be in it for the long run. For example, positive results of mentoring programs don't often show up until 12 months have passed.[28] This means that the church has to be willing to stick it out if we are not going to contribute to the constant sense of abandonment and lack of worth that the families of the incarcerated already feel. It also requires us to listen to the people who are impacted and not assume we know what is good for them.

One of the best ways we can participate in cultivating a life that feels well is to partner with already-existing organizations. Rather than recreating the wheel, or only partnering when the organization perfectly fits our beliefs, we should get involved in what is already happening. Seeing what is already at play in our communities will help the church know what the real needs are. Volunteering in an organization can also often help us know where there is a gap in care. Once we know this, the church could begin to work on filling the gap. We, however, should never put our fervor before our research and the actual needs of those we are serving. Bruce Western writes, "It is not police,

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[26] Volf and Croasmun, *For the Life of the World,* 177.
[27] Joyce Arditti, *Parental Incarceration and the Family: Psychological and Social Effects of Imprisonment on Children, Parents, and Caregivers* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 169.
[28] Arditti, *Parental Incarceration,* 169.

courts, and the threat of punishment that create public safety, but rather the bonds of community produced by a raft of social institutions–families, schools, employers, churches, and neighborhood groups."[29] The church should find itself in partnership with all kinds of organizations to support the family and the person who has been incarcerated. These are ways the church can help to bring a deep abiding joy—an outcome of the flourishing life.

Volf and Croasmun write about the life of joy coming out of realities of love and peace. When these three elements are working together there will be human flourishing. Advocacy, discipleship, and partnerships can be the avenues we journey down to bring true flourishing to the lives of those suffering under the burden of incarceration. And as we meet the needs of those among us, we will find we too have been given lives of flourishing in ways we never expected.

The church responding in a way that journeys with those experiencing incarceration of family members is one step toward correcting the harm that has been caused by the church in the creation of the system.

CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction

If the church tends to engage poorly with those who are suffering the impacts of the criminal justice system, it is important to consider the church and its purpose. A contextual and missional ecclesiology can help to reshape the response Christians offer to

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[29] Bruce Western, *Homeward: Life in the Year After Prison,* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2018), 181.

those in their churches, communities, and the prisons. While there is not space to address all the ways the church can offer a new pathway, one will be highlighted in this chapter: Christian Higher Education. Education can be one avenue to help repair the harm the church has caused in the creation of the current criminal justice system in the United States.

The Church of the Nazarene has a strong global emphasis on education. This strength could be further utilized to share a Wesleyan-Holiness understanding of anthropology, prevenient grace, and help us to experience the sanctifying grace of God in ways to connect to the beginnings of our denomination–through acts of compassionate service. Education can be an incredible way to partner with the prevenient grace of God to enhance what God is doing to heal the world. It is not the only way that reform must happen, but it is one way the church could offer a remedy that both serves the incarcerated and their families and is a means of grace to those serving and learning. This kind of engagement within the prison can also serve as an unmasking to the system that can lead to a deeper engagement in reforming a criminal justice system that is deeply malformed. Before moving into that discussion, a profile of Kosuke Koyama will help set the stage for what a contextual and missional theology can look like.

Kosuke Koyama and Contextual Theology and Missional Ecclesiology

Koyama, a notable ecumenical theologian, spent extensive time in Northern Thailand as a missionary and many years as a seminary professor across the globe.[1] Japanese by birth, Koyama was passionate about understanding how to contextualize the

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[1] Douglas Martin, "Kosuke Koyama, 79, an Ecumenical Theologian, Dies," *The New York Times,* March 31, 2009.

Gospel in Asia. Considering the differences in religion, historical realities, economies, and political leanings of the nations, Koyama wanted to bring the Gospel in understandable terms based on this knowledge. In the first chapter of his seminal work *Waterbuffalo Theology,* he takes the reader on a journey through different countries and asks pertinent questions, coming up with different answers, on how to bring the Good News of Christianity to each place.

Koyama writes of the importance of raising societal issues and not just knowing theology.[2] He declares that his methods start in the context and then allow theologians to be conversation partners with the issues that are evident in that unique place. He writes, "I decided to subordinate great theological thoughts, like those of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth, to the intellectual and spiritual needs of the farmers."[3] Reacting to the way the church attempted to bring a one size fits all, primarily Westernized Gospel message, Koyama came at the task in a much different way. Although he subordinated the great thinkers to the needs of those he was ministering to, he did not discard them. Rather, he sought to understand both the farmers and the theologians and bring them together as he shared the Christian faith.

History is also an important factor in the birth of *Waterbuffalo Theology* and other works by Koyama. The colonization of Asia and the colonizing work of missionaries are something he describes as the "gun and the ointment."[4] Looking historically he sees the wounding and the healing work of the West in Asia. For Christian mission to continue in Asia, Koyama firmly believed this history must be considered. Without accepting this

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[2] Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology,* (New York: Orbis Books, 1974), 20.
[3] Koyama, *Waterbuffalo*, viii.
[4] Koyama, *Waterbuffalo*, 46.

historical reality, he sees the church as continuing to be the gun and Asian ointments seeking to be the salve for the people's pain. This is evident in his critique of the methods of other missionaries in the region from decades before him. Koyama challenged a former missionary to Thailand named Dr. McGilvary. This was a posthumous critique of the old ways of doing mission work that Koyama claimed were inflexible, too strange to be understood, and communicated in a way that would lead to syncretism.[5] As he wrote this letter he could not send to Dr. McGilvary he was, in fact, writing to current missionaries and sending organizations.

Koyama's accessible writing style gave him great reach to the academy, the church, and the individual. The accessibility was important to him. Wherever his readers find themselves is a potential place of the "Promised Land" which he defines as an "intersected life...busily engaged in encounters."[6] *Waterbuffalo Theology* is an invitation to intersect our world and engage with others in unique ways. Inefficiency vs. efficiency, neighbourology, and the crusading mind vs. the crucified mind are some of the major threads of Koyama's work that are born out of his experience, personal faith, study of theology, and relationships with farmers in Thailand.

Koyama's preference for the farmers of Thailand is connected to his understanding of God as inefficient in the eyes of the world. Why would God wander with the people in the wilderness? Why would Jesus be incarnate in a slow time? "Wasn't there a more efficient way?"[7] Koyama asks. He argues that the problem with efficiency is that it becomes a god for us. Instead of the inefficient ways of a God who enters into

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[5] Koyama, *Waterbuffalo*., 82
[6] Kosuke Koyama, *Three Mile An Hour God*, (London: SMC Press, 1979), 45.
[7] Koyama, *Waterbuffalo,* 66

history, moves slowly within it, and takes time to patiently work with people, efficiency offers us quick solutions that seem more relevant, yet leave people empty.

In *Three Mile an Hour God*, Koyama expands this concept. “Love has its speed. It is an inner speed. It is a spiritual speed. It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It is ‘slow’ yet it is lord over all other speeds since it is the speed of love.”[8] Although this was written forty years ago it is an important word for the church and those engaged in the prison today. As the world has gotten more technologically advanced the church has in turn embraced and moved toward modernization. We are seeing in our societies that faith, judged by efficiency and ministry attempting to be technologically advanced and modernized, no longer seems to compel people to Christ and falls short in true discipleship. Following Christ is slow, it is inefficient in the standards of society, yet it is needed for true depth. Koyama longed for depth over distance.

In the prison Christians often enter with a goal of getting decisions and baptisms. This is not a “three mile an hour God” methodology. Instead, it represents our fast, efficiency-hungry society. It does not, however, consider the deep human needs, the brokenness, and the slowness that often accompany relationships with those who are in prison. Going at the speed of love is hard, outside pressure can cause us to want to hurry things up to get results, and our own desire to succeed can betray the heart of what we want to do. Koyama reminds us that Christ was in fact not just walking three miles an hour through the countryside, but because of his great love for us he came to a complete stop on the cross. “At this point of ‘full stop,’ the apostolic church proclaims that the love

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[8] Koyama, *Three Mile an Hour God,* 7.

of God to man is ultimately and fully revealed."[9] If this is the testimony of the church and the heart of our faith, we too must learn to be inefficient as we follow an inefficient God.

Neighbourology, which is inefficient, is integral to much of Koyama's writing. It is what the heart of "reading with your needs in mind" is all about. He was insistent that using the ordinary things of a culture were the best way to spread the Good News of Christ to his neighbors. Connecting sticky rice and cock fighting to his preaching was an important part of his ministry to the Thai farmers because they could understand those things. It is also tied to something he calls "Particular Orbit Theology" (POT) which is an understanding that people should celebrate their heritage, language, culture, and traditions. "And when you engage in POT," he exhorts the reader, "you must not forget one thing...to incorporate into the *heart* of your theology 'whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just…' of your community."[10] Rather than imagining that Christian theology comes and replaces everything within a culture, the truth is there is something good and right already present because God is present. Further, Neighbourology is a reminder that anyone can have a good and true word for us. Understanding our neighbor's reality, Koyama argues, helps us to understand the presence of God in the world.[11]

In these particularly divisive times we are living, Neighbourology is an important concept for Christians to embrace. Rather than building walls, drawing lines, or assuming there is only one right way to think and believe, Christians would do well to hear Koyama, and thus hear Jesus' call to love our neighbor. What would happen if we were

[9] Koyama, *Three Mile an Hour God,* 7.
[10] Koyama, *Waterbuffalo*, 45.
[11] Koyama, *Waterbuffalo*, 91.

to keep other's needs in mind, honor what is good in all cultures, and seek to know our neighbors' reality so we can truly experience the presence of God? In the prison Neighbourology is a humanizing concept. Rather than the colonizing mindset that often marks ministry to the incarcerated–we bring the Good News to you, we are the saviors–a neighbor oriented mindset would remind us of the image of God in the incarcerated, that all truth is God's truth and it can come from surprising places, and that to understand the inmate's reality can help those coming into the prison to rightly understand that God is already present there.

The goal of inefficiency, Neighbourology, and other themes in *Waterbuffalo Theology* is the crucified mind. Koyama defines this mind as "*love* seeking the benefit of others."[12] A crusading mind is one that comes in, wipes out, denies value, and asserts itself over others. A crucified mind is one that lives controlled by the crucified Lord.[13] Koyama uses the story of the woman caught in adultery from John 7 to illustrate this idea. The Pharisees came with a crusading mind—they had the law to protect and society to uphold! Jesus deepens the law of Moses in this instance which is an opportunity for the Pharisees to experience a crucifixion of their crusading minds. In the moment Jesus confronts them, they have a crucified mind as they drop their stones and walk away from the woman. The deepening of the law by Jesus crucified the Pharisee's crusading minds. It also provided the woman with a "risen mind."[14] She now can live in a new way, as can the Pharisees if they so choose. Koyama calls our role as missionaries and ministers of

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[12] Koyama, *Waterbuffalo*, 223.
[13] Kosuke Koyama, *No Handle on the Cross*, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1976), 9.
[14] Koyama, *No Handle*, 12.

the gospel to be people who share the "dead-alive--lost-found" story of Scripture.[15] When we have the crucified mind, nurtured by our crucified Lord, our very lives will tell that story.

If Christians were to seek a crucified mind over and against a crusading mind the world would be a different place. If we were to allow the love of God to shape us in such a way that we lived with the needs of others first, our communities would be transformed. If we slowed down our churches would grow in depth. Although Kosuke Koyama was keeping the needs of his Thai farmers in mind, his work keeps all serious followers of Christ in mind too as he invites us to a deeper life with Christ and others.

Context

"Oh, we *get* Turkish Delight!" she said looking back and forth at the women around the table while they all laughed and nodded. I blinked my eyes hard and tried to keep my face pleasant but neutral. "What are they talking about?" I thought. Then it dawned on me, they are all addicts.

It was the third week of a book club at the South Idaho Correctional Institute. We were reading C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,* and it was that comment that awakened me to the unique setting I was in. Of course, you can't miss the context of prison because everything from that left-hand turn into the drive screams prison–razor wire stacked on top of razor wire and then a little bit more for good measure, the dogs barking that guard the perimeter of one of the men's facilities, the tiny windows in all five prison buildings on the grounds, the squatty building labeled "Visiting Room," and the guard towers sprinkled here or there with someone always

[15] Koyama, *Waterbuffalo,* 224.

watching. You hand over your driver's license to a guard behind bullet proof glass in exchange for a badge. You can't wear earrings that are too big, or open toed shoes, or high heeled shoes if you want to go in–your jewelry might get stolen, or you might need to run in an emergency–this is what they tell you at training. All of the inmates have their assigned attire on, so you stand out like a sore thumb, no matter what you wear.

One might have thought it was when I had to be buzzed through multiple gates attached to fences that soared over my head covered in the cutting, twisting reminders that you aren't supposed to get out that I would have said, "Aha! This place is different." But it was in a cold room, with plastic 8ft tables, and blue and green prison approved chairs, and fourteen incarcerated women, with a copy of *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* in their hands, that I first really felt it. "I don't know this context."

Context can be tricky because we can believe we know what we are getting ourselves into. We *can* know a lot about a place and be prepared to go somewhere. However, that very knowledge can give us a false sense of security or a belief that we have a handle on wherever we are. It is only when the veil of our own hubris comes down that we can experience the culture and place we have entered. I had read enough, seen enough on movies and tv, been trained as a volunteer, and been in enough challenging situations that I thought I had things well in hand. However, I needed a wakeup call, a reminder that I was in a new place, in circumstances I could not control or fully grasp no matter how often I visited, and that there was something valuable for me to gain, not merely give.

Contextual theology reminds us that our own understanding of faith comes from our context. We believe the way we do because of the family we were raised in, the

community we grew up in, the denomination we were born into, and the experiences we have had. This doesn't mean all our faith is relative. Rather, it means we must consider the context of our theology when we encounter beliefs and practices that don't fit within our own. Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheiler write, "The gospel has within it the potential of being good news in every context; but to be so, it must be expressed in terms that make sense to those who are hearing it."[16] How one person has heard the good news has impacted them, but that doesn't mean the *way* they heard it will impact everyone. Our challenge is to stop judging all practices of faith and understandings of God by our own practices and understanding. Contextual theology considers the way God moves in valid and true ways in our varying cultures and experiences to transform our lives. This understanding will, in turn, transform our practice of mission.

Missional ecclesiology is then an invitation for us to enter the contexts where we find ourselves with the Good News of God, a missionary God, who uses the church to bring about the redemption of all things—people, societies, structures, and cultures. For too long mission(s) has been considered an arm of the church. Prison ministry has been viewed similarly–it is something some churches do because they have a passion for it, or a passionate person engaged in it. To rightly understand ecclesiology, we must see it through the lens of mission. If this is the way we begin to view God and the church, it will reshape our work in the world from pet projects and niche ministries to a more holistic partnership with the missionary God who longs to transform us and remake the world into the new creation. The church doesn't *do* missions, it *is* mission.

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[16] Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *Participating in God's Mission: A Theological Missiology for the Church in America*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 42.

Following in the teaching of Lesslie Newbigin, we can assert that mission must be done in the way of Christ. Newbigin's description of mission in the way of Christ is a starting point in defining what missional ecclesiology looks like in practice. Michael Goheen summarizes Newbigin's thoughts on the matter in four ways. First, we continue the work of the incarnate Christ in the world by imitating his life, word, and deed. Secondly, mission in the way of Christ is marked by the cross. Suffering and confrontation with a broken and oppressive world will happen as we live in this way. We also must cling to resurrection even as we walk in the shadow of the cross. Third, we must live in the historical and relational realities of the Jesus who called the church into being and the Christ who is ascended and reigning. This eschatological view of the mission in the way of Christ naturally leads into the fourth aspect Goheen highlights. The Spirit empowered Jesus and that same Spirit empowers the church today to live as we are called by God.[17] This expanded view of the mission of God and the mission of the church will help us shift our understanding of who God is and who we are meant to be in the world. When we understand that context should guide us as we partner with God in mission, we will go places we never planned to go and imagine, and create, and iterate ministry we never could before.

Two ways to begin to live into this vision is to look at how movement and improvisation are a part of contextual theology and missional ecclesiology. When rightly focused, movement and improvisation can help us enter mission with God in our particular contexts.

[17] Michael W. Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation: Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 71-72.

Movement and improvisation are key but must be rightly guided. Joyce Arditti writes in *Parental Incarceration and the Family* of the failures of organizations, non-profits, and churches in their pursuit to help the families of the incarcerated. She describes the shortcomings by using the phrase "fervor without infrastructure."[18] The reverse can also be true. Sometimes we have infrastructure and no fervor. If we focus on movement and improvisation as we are considering the work of the church in the world we will not find ourselves in either of those places. These two elements will keep us in a middle place where there is passion and a structure to help guide us as we live into the mission of God to redeem and restore all people and all of creation.

Movement

As chapter four illustrates, the movement of the church can often be away from those who are struggling with the reality of incarceration. When we think of the movement of the church represented in the interviews, we see the church moved *away* from these families. Questions arise as we consider the complex realities of crime. What is the church to do when faced with the brokenness of incarceration? How can we better minister to the incarcerated and their families? What can we be doing in our communities to help circumvent the normal pathways to incarceration that are systemic in nature? What does it mean to move in ways to be the missional people of God in our particular contexts? These interviews, compiled with the general data, reveal that the church has a lot of work to do to move towards those in our congregations facing this challenging reality of life.

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[18] Joyce A. Arditti, *Parental Incarceration and the Family: Psychological and Social Effects of Imprisonment on Children, Parents, and Caregivers,* (NY: New York University Press, 2012), 169.

Girard's concept of scapegoating is instructive here. It becomes evident that there is a fundamental dehumanization of the parties involved in the criminal justice system. The church, rather than living into its call to be image bearers who partner with God's grace in the world, falls into the sinful patterns of the world. Mimicking the world around us, we find ways to "other" our neighbor, choosing, for instance "tough on crime" rather than a redemptive relationship. A sign of the transformative work of God in individuals and congregations would be a transformed movement toward those that are so often pushed to the margins. This would be a mimicking of God's gracious movement toward us.

Movement is always a part of the work of God. This can be a geographic movement from one place to another, a mental movement as people come to accept new ideas and knowledge, or a spiritual movement as the work of the Holy Spirit rushes into the lives of individuals whose hearts are moved to change. Often these movements happen in varying degrees simultaneously or lead to one another. We can see these three forms of movement throughout Scripture. Early in Genesis we find a grand story of movement that encapsulates all three elements above: the story of Abraham. Christopher Wright asserts that the church itself wasn't born at Pentecost but can be traced back to the work God did in and through Abraham.[19] This work was to move Abraham closer to God so in turn Abraham and his descendants could be a blessing to the nations of the world. This is, according to Wright, what missional ecclesiology is all about.[20] Abraham models for us the kind of movement the church should engage in.

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[19] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 73.
[20]Wright, *The Mission of God's People,* 68.

Referencing Genesis 18:18-19, Andy Johnson writes of the purposes of God's calling of Abraham. "Note that the first move in the whole sequence is God's. God makes a sovereign choice of Abraham before Abraham has done anything of consequence. But this sovereign choice of Abraham has a purpose. It is *so that* he will teach his family to keep the 'way of the LORD,' which is immediately defined in positive terms as doing 'what is right and just.'"[21] Johnson explains that the Biblical practice of righteousness and justice is to bring *shalom* to God's creation. The movement of God toward Abraham comes with an invitation for Abraham, and in turn all God's people, to move toward the world in a way that brings about flourishing.

It must be acknowledged, though, that God's people didn't always mirror God's movement. The Christians who came to what is now the United States believed they were moving in an Abrahamic manner. However, these early settlers invaded this land, helping to destroy and oppress the native people here, all while seeking their own religious freedom, attempting to create a society built on Christian values they believed would be a blessing. The very nature of their coming and how they established themselves through violence, undercut the vision of flourishing they thought they were living out and sharing with others. Coming with a desire to be the city on the hill, to create a Christian nation, to be a holy people, the colonizers were not a blessing to the people who already lived on the continent, nor were they a blessing to the slaves they tore from their homelands. Anything that was born out of their movement needs to be critiqued by that reality.

What came out of the immigration to North America was a fractured and fracturing church. Relying on Colin Woodard's work about the way the colonies

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[21] Andy Johnson, *Holiness and the Missio Dei* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016), 14.

developed in the United States, Van Gelder and Zscheile paint the reality of the competing differences in the churches in the early days of our nation.[22] Each colony had their own unique brand of Christianity and blessing they wanted to bring into the world. Instead of uniting, these divisions are still impacting the church across the globe as denominations cropped up in ways no one had ever seen.[23] The movement west contributed to our missional failure. European immigrants came to North America and then migrated across the continent, bringing with them an oppressive way of sharing the Gospel. Their mission centered more on people becoming like them—believing the right things, in the right ways—then on moving in the ways in which God was calling and looking to be a blessing. Van Gelder and Zscheile do list some exceptions to this reality, who mostly were seen as outliers.[24]

The rise of denominations and fundamentalism brought about by the movement to, and across, North America caused missiology to have a very distinctive focus on converting people to right belief and Western culture and often missed the call to be a blessing to the nations. It had a deep and wide impact on the formation of the United States and is felt to this day. Jennifer Graber writes about the formation of the prison system during this period from the 1600s to the 1800s as has already been expressed in Chapter One.

The movement has impacted not just the way the church in the United States operates in overseas missions and migratory conquests, but in our mission to our neighbors in our own communities. This oppressive impulse continues to this day as

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[22] Van Gelder and Zscheile, *Participating in God's Mission,* 73ff.
[23] Van Gelder and Zscheile, *Participating in God's Mission,* 77.
[24] Van Gelder and Zscheile, *Participating in God's Mission,* see 85 and 116.

people of color are persecuted in our communities. Although churches are willing to send missionaries to different countries there is often a lack of care for those cultural, ethnic, and racial groups within the United States. We can see the damage of this treatment of others in the way we over incarcerate people of color.[25] When the church is too connected to our citizenship in a nation or affiliation with a political party, we lose our vision of the God who calls us near and sends us out to be a blessing. Instead, we operate in oppressive and violent ways, continuing the ecclesial and societal fracturing of our forebearers.

Seeking to move into positions of power has also hampered the church in the United States. The compromise that is required to experience upward mobility waters down the mission of God and a Christian's ability to live into it. Although not perfect, the persecuted church in China demonstrates an interesting reversal to the American way. Wonsuk Ma writes of the Word of Life Church in China, "The hostility of the world has kept the identity and mission of Christians and the church clear. Christianity is never viewed as a means to upward social mobility, as observed in some Christian sectors. Indeed, being Christian results in a voluntary downward social mobility."[26] This reality has helped the church in China to keep their eyes on Christ and on the work of being a blessing to those around them. This illustrates the way in which power and position can corrupt our calling to be the people on the move for God.

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[25] For more information on understanding the racial issues at work in our justice system see *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander, https://www.prisonpolicy.org/racialjustice.html for a variety of reports, and https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/race-and-punishment-racial-perceptions-of-crime-and-support-for-punitive-policies/#A.%20Overestimating%20Black%20and%20Hispanic%20Crime%20Rates And The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons (Accessed May 15, 2020).

[26] Wonsuk Ma, "Two Tales of Emerging Ecclesiology in Asia: An Inquiry into Theological Shaping" in *The Church from Every Tribe and Tongue: Ecclesiology in the Majority World* eds.Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K.K. Yeo (Carlisle, UK: Langham Publishing, 2018), paragraph 18, chapter 3.

Downward mobility, of course connected to the *kenosis* of Christ, has created unique ways for the church to move and breathe in China. This sort of vision could also create unique ways for the church to engage in the prison. Too often we view the work Christians do in the prison as a blessing to the inmates–we come with the blessing and leave it behind. This mirrors the colonizing manner mission work has often been done in North America and overseas and reveals our belief that we are better than those behind bars. However, if we come to the work of the church in the prison with an attitude of downward mobility, true blessing can come for all involved. Jason Sexton writes,

> This *sent*-ness, accounting for ongoing evangelistic work within the prison by prisoners, as well as the grounding of the church's life in the transcendent life of the Holy Spirit, carries a theological rationale that proceeds on the basis that, by the Spirit, Jesus has revealed himself there locally within the carceral setting, thus enabling multiple communities simultaneously to participate in this life of a universal church in embodied ways, lived out in radically different contexts and in ways constitutive of the same kind of life being experienced by ecclesial members in particular contexts. In other words, Jesus *belongs* to each ecclesial setting, known by the individual members of his body in particular locations.[27]

Sexton helps us see how we may come with blessing in the name of Christ, but we should also be ready to receive blessing because Christ is already present before we arrive. This echoes the Wesleyan expectation to engage with the poor or marginalized to be sanctified.

Recognizing the church behind bars as no less the body of Christ than the church down the street, we come to Lesslie Newbigin's definition of the church as gathered to be scattered. This is part of what the Word of Life church is attempting to accomplish, and what the church in the United States has all too often missed. Newbigin calls these the

[27] Jason Sexton, "Experiencing Justice from the Inside Out: Theological Consideration about the Church's Role in Justice, Healing, and Forgiveness," *Religions* 108, No 10, (2019): 8.

"simultaneous duties" of the church.[28] In describing the faithful church he determines there must be proper corporate worship and then a sending out to encounter the world and its suffering. Worship for Newbigin is to help the Christian understand that his or her citizenship is in the Kingdom of God. When this is our understanding of worship it transforms what happens when we scatter into our families, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and broader community. It is the proper worship of God, and the right understanding of our citizenship, that leads to our ability to be a blessing to the world. Without the gathering we haven't drawn near to God and without the scattering we haven't been true to the call we receive when we draw near. Both of these movements are crucial for any church that truly understands that God is a missionary God, and the church is the vehicle God wants to use in the world to live out that mission.

Newbigin's desire for the church to gather so that it can scatter is so we can live out that mission in a way that impacts the world around us. Miguel De La Torre agrees with Newbigin on this front. In his work *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins* De La Torre challenges Christians to move from the places of power, particularity, and position to the unlikely places in our society. This movement challenges the norm within the United States and yet it is, according to De La Torre, what is required for all people–the oppressor and the oppressed–to be the people we are called and created to be. He invites Christians to "do love."[29] Doing love is the movement required if we are going to understand and live into the mission of God. "Only by loving the disenfranchised, by seeing Jesus among the poor and weak, can one learn to love Jesus, who claims to be the

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[28] Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation,* 110.
[29] Miguel A. De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins,* 2nd ed, (Maryknoll, NY: 2014), 9.

marginalized. To love the marginalized is to love Jesus, making fellowship with God possible as one enters into just fellowship with the disenfranchised."[30] The gathered and the scattered, and the privileged Christians moving to the margins, are key to drawing near to God and moving out into the world to be the blessing that Abraham and his descendants were promised to be.

Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Institute, works with the marginalized who are incarcerated because of race, socio-economic status, mental illness, and other unjust reasons. He writes of the need to move into places where the marginalized are so we can empathize, and by gaining empathy do something about injustice. To be a blessing to the nations means not just sharing the love of Christ but allowing the love of Christ to cause us not to allow oppression or injustice or the marginalization of any people. Stevenson, like Wesley, believes we need to become proximate to the suffering of others if we are to truly understand ourselves and others, our brokenness, and the brokenness of others, and if we are to truly seek justice and mercy.[31] This movement towards the margins is crucial for the church to live out its calling. Jesus was always proximate to the margins; we should follow Him there.

Knowing and following Jesus, teaching people kingdom citizenship over and against the idolatry of nation and political parties and calling Christians to go with Jesus to the margins needs to once again be emphasized in the church. Our movement toward personal salvation has led to an imbalanced faith and a faulty eschatology that divorces our responsibility to one another from what Christ has done for *me*. If pastors are not

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[30] De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins,* 9.

[31] Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, (New York: Random House Books, 2014), 17.

modeling for their congregants what it means to love people in their most challenging times, despite what they have done, we are not faithfully following Christ. It must be teaching *and* doing if we are to be on mission with our missionary God. The church needs to give invitation *and* opportunity for Christians to engage in practical and tangible ways to serve, to live their faith, and to move toward the margins.

When the church does engage in working in the prison it takes a variety of forms, many of which are tied to assenting to faith statements and repenting without dealing with the systemic issues of oppression that lead many people to prison in the first place. The church would do well to consider the important role of discipleship that takes place in the gathering and then is lived out in the scattering to include rooting out oppression instead of contributing to it. This is a challenging call to the church in the United States because of the early realities of the way the church believed they could remedy the state. Looking back to the Christian's involvement in the creation of the prison, and solitary confinement in particular, is important as Christians consider how to move toward the incarcerated and their families in ways that are redemptive of the whole person and all of creation.

Improvisation

In the fall of 2019, I had the privilege to teach a class for Northwest Nazarene University (NNU) I created called *Faith Formation in Diverse Spaces.* The course took place inside the Women's prison at the South Idaho Correctional Institute. Taking nine traditional on campus students with me each Tuesday evening, we joined eight incarcerated students in our learning experiment. Partnering each traditional student with an inmate student, a relationship was created for the learning environment to go beyond

the course material. Following are some of the reflections of the students who participated.[32]

McKayla, an outside[33] student wrote,

> I got to be a part of a theology course that took place in a small, crowded room found inside a prison. I had never envisioned taking a college course in such an unexpected place, but it has been one of the greatest experiences in my life. It has been a blessing to get to know a small handful of the women serving time there. I loved getting to discover all the ways in which we were similar in light of all of the different walks of life we had come from.

Another outside student commented,

> Words cannot adequately describe the positive impact of this class on me as a person. Learning with incarcerated students is something I think everyone should have the opportunity to experience. It is humbling and life changing. I have gained a better understanding of what it means to live out my faith in difficult, unique places and developed habits of success spiritually.

One of the inside students wrote, "I didn't expect everyone to be so nice to us. The outside students were all amazing shining lights of hope and acceptance. It was a lot of fun to work with them."

Our movement towards the inmates and their movement toward us was transformational. We came with blessing but also received the blessing of God by engaging in this way. This unique form of educational experience in its location, content, and student makeup was built on the normal forms of education to create something unique and different. Although courses inside prisons with inside and outside students are not new, it was a new endeavor for NNU and for all of us involved. It was a kind of

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[32] See Appendix B for information about the proposal, syllabi, and other course material that guided this experiment.

[33] This refers to traditional on campus students who participated in the course. The class agreed to call the incarcerated students the "inside" students and the traditional students "outside" students. All of the participants are technically NNU students and received credit for the class, this was just a way to help us describe one another.

improvisation within the known and common structures to attempt a different way to learn and offer learning.

Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun write in *For the Life of the World: Theology that Matters* about the importance of improvisation in our theological pursuits. This isn't permission to make everything up as we go, but it is an invitation to explore, create, and shift based upon culture, context, and circumstances. Using the metaphor of improvisation in Jazz music they discuss the freedom musicians have within the genre, form, and tune.[34] They want Christians to experience the flourishing life and believe that as we look to Christ, Scripture, and those who have gone before us, and those who are with us on the journey, we will "learn to hear in them the voice of the author of the tune, and imaginatively improvise the next few bars."[35] Improvisation is necessary for missional ecclesiology.

How do we improvise? What does it mean for the church? How do we stay true to what we are called to and who we are meant to be if there is so much flexibility? These questions are real and can guide us to become concrete and restrictive rather than responsive and creative. Some guidance is key. Miguel De La Torre demonstrates a way to improvise, while not compromising. His use of the hermeneutical circle in his quest to do Christian ethics from the margins is a practical tool that helps the church have a structure. The circle begins with 1) observing: historical and interpretive analysis; 2) reflecting: social analysis; 3) praying: theological and Biblical analysis; 4) acting: implementation of praxis; 5) reassessing: new ethical perspectives.[36]

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[34] Miroslav Volf & Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2019), 110.
[35] Volf and Croasmun, *For the Life of the World*, 113.
[36] De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins,* 56.

Viewing our contextual theology as something that is always moving, has space to flex, and a need to adapt helps the church not to become an ingrained, self-centered, and out of touch organization, but the living and breathing body of Christ in the world. De La Torre invites us into a creative process, with endless opportunities to iterate, and a heart that is humble enough to assess what we have done, so the church can be the blessing we are called to be.

It is the kind of work that requires us to know and follow Jesus. If the improvisation we engage in is not within the framework of the Gospel we will falter in our efforts. As a consummate improviser, Newbigin adapted to the culture of India as a missionary and then challenged Western culture in his other roles in the church when he returned to the UK. Newbigin believed that contextualization was key but cautioned that we should not allow culture to shape the Gospel, but rather for the Gospel to shape our

understanding of culture and our engagement with it.[37] Working from culture to Gospel causes us to pick and choose the ways we will follow Christ, disciple in our churches, and move in the world. Instead, when we start with the Gospel, we will be able to see what the true calling of God is and then be able to improvise within the Gospel framework to faithfully follow Christ in our distinctive cultures, times, and contexts.

We can see this in the life of Jesus. Johnson writes of how Jesus reinterpreted purity standards through His life and ministry. Changing the emphasis of purity from ritual and rule keeping to a life of hospitality didn't imply Jesus didn't value purity; rather,

> rejecting many of the specifics of existing purity maps, he redraws the lines of what counts as purity and impurity. Jesus' words and actions suggest that on his purity map, participating in just, *shalom*-restoring actions towards others and whole-hearted love/fidelity toward God makes one "pure" inside and out. This is the life pattern of Jesus himself, whose just, liberative, and *shalom*-restoring actions characterized by compassion and mercy display not just purity, but the very character of God, thereby explicating the nature of holiness in the Synoptic Gospels.[38]

This manner of reinterpreting what the culture holds as valuable is crucial. Kosuke Koyama modeled this in his emphasis on having the needs of the Thai farmers in mind. Whenever Christians are engaging in *shalom*-restoring activities within their contexts we are both following Jesus and improvising through grace.

Ruth Padilla Deborst writes of this very thing as she describes what she calls the Community-of-Love that is brought about by the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ.[39] This Community-of-Love is in the world but not of the world. It

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[37] Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation,* 159.

[38] Johnson, *Holiness and the Missio Dei,* 77.

[39] Ruth Padilla Deborst, "Church, Power, and Transformation in Latin America: A Different Citizenship is Possible," in *The Church from Every Tribe and Tongue: Ecclesiology in the Majority World* eds.Gene L.

is one that adapts and changes through relationship with Christ and one another and reflection on the world around it. This community seeks to be faithful to the Gospel wherever it might be. Deborst is clear to articulate that faithfulness will look different in different places and times. This is improvisation. Van Gelder and Zscheile see the incarnation of Christ undergirding this sort of thinking. Context and culture should always be a part of the worship expressions and the missional identity of the church wherever the church is. They call on the church to engage in incarnational ministry, following the model of God.

> The incarnation also disallows the premise that it is possible to have a pure, unadulterated, culture-free gospel. Because the gospel is an enfleshed Word, the gospel is by nature always embodied in cultural particularity...In the incarnation God both embraces and critically engages culture.[40]

In the prison context the culture is determined in some ways by the state with rules and punishment. There is also the reality of inmate culture that is another aspect of life inside. Those working to move toward the prison and prisoners will need to understand this broader culture and determine how to be the Community-of-Love in that unique setting. Thinking of embodying the Gospel within the prison is a practice that those engaging in the prison would be wise to wrestle with. Also, envisioning how the inmates might embody the Good News is a key element to any ministry in the prison.

Jason Sexton is again instructive on this front. He has coined the phrase *Ecclesia Incarcerate* to help the church envision what our role behind bars is and how God is at work through and despite the prison walls. He writes,

> He [Jesus] equally belongs elsewhere, in heaven with the Father, and yet also down here in the prison, belonging to the carceral setting. This is the sacramental

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Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K.K. Yeo (Carlisle, UK: Langham Publishing, 2018), Paragraph 28, chapter 2.

[40] Van Gelder and Zscheile, *Participating in God's Mission,* 39.

> feature of his incarcerated body (Matthew 25:36-40), and part of the reason why the incarcerated church exists– for other incarcerated and nonincarcerated churches to work in 'fellowship' partnerships for the sake of a shared mission. *Ecclesia incarcerate*, then, should not be viewed through a lens of charity or pity, but with the acknowledgement of the dignity of the resurrected body of Christ.[41]

Newbigin asserts the same, although without specific reference to the prison, when he writes of the *ekklesia* as assembled by God and thus is the church wherever God is drawing people together.[42] Michael Goheen writes of Newbigin's emphasis on the local *ekklesia* as "the new humankind in this particular place and is called to offer to all people in that place an invitation of Christ to be reconciled to God through him."[43] This thought about the *ekklesia* incarcerate being the new humankind behind bars requires improvisation. It also requires the tearing down of our paternalistic and colonizing ways of viewing mission.

Christ is already in the prison. God is assembling God's people in prison. The church, on mission with God, seeks to be the new humanity in prison. We on the outside must then creatively, imaginatively, and boldly partner with what God is already doing behind bars instead of believing we can somehow do the work that only God does. Releasing power, raising up leaders, empowering missionaries behind bars, and discipling will look different in the prison context, as it should. Improvisation is challenging, it can seem dangerous at times, but it enables us to partner with God's mission in any context and with any person. Just as the outside students benefited from

[41] Sexton, "Experiencing Justice from the Inside Out: Theological Consideration about the Church's Role in Justice, Healing, and Forgiveness," 8.
[42] Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation,* 106-107.
[43] Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation,* 107.

learning within the walls of the prison, and the inside students benefited from the presence of the outside students, we can be transformed through Godly improvisation.

Prison Education

Education inside the gates of prison is a unique and challenging endeavor. The power differential between instructor and inmate, the rules and regulations of the facility, the attempt to be humanizing in an overtly dehumanizing context all create an atmosphere filled with hurdles. There are also many questions asked when prison education is discussed: What is the cost-benefit? How does this help the state do its job more effectively, and is this the goal of education anyway? Do inmates deserve an education? Theological education is often more difficult to justify behind bars because it seems niche, impractical, and expensive. These hurdles have not prevented colleges and seminaries from moving ahead to offer theological education inside prisons. Comparing and contrasting the models of professional ministerial training by Duke Divinity School's (DDS) Project TURN and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's (NOBTS) extension program inside Angola prison, I will demonstrate the importance of this type of education for the prison, the students, and the broader church. Although formidable in many ways, theological education for the incarcerated creates an opportunity for Christian praxis at the margins of society.

Tobi Jacobi in an essay entitled "*Curating Counternarratives beyond Bars*" writes, "prison educators are obligated to the ongoing curation of counternarratives and spaces."[44] Although Jacobi is not writing of theological education, her writing explains

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[44] Tobi Jacobi, "Curating Counternarratives beyond Bars," in *Prison Pedagogies: Learning and Teaching with Imprisoned Writers,* eds. Joe Lockard & Sherry Rankins-Robertson, (NY: Syracuse University Press, 2018), 125

the kind of transformative education colleges and seminaries seek to provide for ministers of the Gospel. Without a counternarrative, Jacobi believes there is no purpose in educating behind bars. Education must be provided to help tell a different story than the one inmates have inhabited, currently inhabit, and believe they *can* inhabit moving forward. Project TURN at DDS strives to provide this sort of transformation for all involved. Students from the outside and the inside gather in classrooms in North Carolina prisons to engage in training for ministry. The students from the outside receive credit toward their graduate degrees while students on the inside participate in eight courses that make up a "Certificate of Achievement in Theological Education."[45] Sarah Jobe, creator, and director of the program writes,

> Each TURN class makes space for relationship-building and wisdom-sharing across social divisions of race, class, educational access, and carceral status. We expect the theological content of any class to be shaped by the experience of having learned it inside of a prison.…[46]

This flattening of the classroom and social hierarchy provides a unique and valuable experience for all. Rather than mirroring the system of the prison that creates distinct power roles, the classroom attempts to take up a counternarrative in its practices and pedagogy.

Equity is one of the markers of Project TURN as students from very different backgrounds are all given a voice and place at the table of theological training. Another attempt at fairness requires all students to handwrite their assignments, even though the students on the outside have access to computers. All courses and assignments are the

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[45] Sarah C. Jobe, "*How programs in prisons are challenging the who, where, how, and what of theological education,"* Teaching Theology and Religion 22 (2019): 18, https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12466
[46]Jobe, "*How programs in prisons are challenging the who, where, how, and what of theological education,"* 17.

same for the students even though they arrived in the class from very different pathways of education. Jobe believes the diversity of experience, educational level, and other social differences make the classes vibrant and deep.

Striving toward equity is meant to help emphasize the importance of relationship and growth while also helping to satisfy the requirements of accreditation and program directives. This relational pedagogy transforms all involved—the inside students, the outside students, and the faculty who teach in this unique setting. Jobe writes, "Who God is becomes contested and fruitfully complicated as traditionally accepted perspectives are allowed the same respect and airtime as traditionally excluded perspectives."[47] There is great benefit, in spite of the immense challenges, in shared learning with inside and outside students in prison classrooms.

There is also great benefit in classrooms in prison that are only populated by incarcerated students as has been demonstrated by the partnership between NOBTS and Leavall College in their extension program inside Angola prison in Louisiana. When this program began in 1995, Angola had a reputation as the largest and harshest prison in the United States. Started as an attempt by the warden to help transform the violence in the prison,[48] NOBTS has flourished and prison violence has decreased as they have offered complete Bachelor's and Master's degrees to inmates, with over 300 graduates as of 2018.[49] Offering full degrees is a major difference between Project TURN and NOBTS

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[47] Jobe, "*How programs in prisons are challenging the who, where, how, and what of theological education*," 18.
[48] Prison violence statistics have shown that this program has reduced instances of violence in the prison as demonstrated in Hallet, Hays, Johnson, Jang and Duwe (2017), study entitled: *The Angola Prison Seminary: Effects of Faith-based Ministry on Identity Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation.* Philadelphia: Routledge, 2017.
[49] Kevin Brown, "A Faith Model of Prison Reform" *The North American Association of Christians in Social Work* accessed 9/25/2020 https://www.nacsw.org/a-faith-model-of-prison-reform/

programming. Another major difference is the way the education inside Angola offers structured ministry opportunities for inmates while they remain incarcerated. There are two jobs students who graduate from this program can fulfill– social mentors and church planters. An example of how social mentors and other pastoral roles have played out was demonstrated when Hurricane Katrina forced inmates from other Louisiana prisons to crowd into Angola. Graduates and students of NOBTS were prepared to minister to their new neighbors in a time of turmoil and loss.[50] Being that the vast majority of inmates in Angola are serving life sentences these ministry opportunities are akin to the counternarrative Jacobi writes about. Not only are these inmates receiving an education that can fill their time and engage their minds, but they are also provided with unique opportunities to serve.

One of the ways this program has had a lasting impact is that inmates receiving degrees from NOBTS have requested and been granted transfers to other prisons. Prison transfers are not typically easily attained, but NOBTS and Leavall college graduates are granted transfers because they are going to other prisons to plant churches. The degree program that culminates in ministry has not only impacted Angola but other facilities as well. Kevin Brown writes of the value of training inmates to serve inmates when he compares this pedagogy to the training of missionaries to enter other cultures. Recognizing that there is a particular culture behind bars he writes,

> Outside ministries that offer occasional services to inmates are incapable of having the same impact as can an indigenous leader housed inside and alongside his fellow inmates. With the right training these leaders can exert a moral influence inside such a closed environment capable of changing the spiritual, emotional and behavioral climate of the institution.[51]

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[50]Michael McCormack, “Katrina broadened Angola Inmates ministry,” Baptist Press, June 7, 2007, https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/katrina-broadened-angola-inmates-ministry/
[51] Michael McCormack, “Katrina broadened Angola Inmates ministry.”

Viewing theological education for the incarcerated in this way has been the key to the success of this program.

Although differing in structure, scope, sequence, outcomes, and individuals served, these two programs of theological education to the incarcerated exemplify the value they provide for all involved. These differences demonstrate the need for understanding context when engaging in ministry and education of any kind. Project TURN seeks to serve the incarcerated while also enriching the depth of education for the outside students. Taking theological training outside of the walls of the seminary and moving it behind the razor wire helps to elevate silenced voices and move theological education to the margins.[52] This format provides a counternarrative for the outside students as well as the inside students. Although NOBTS doesn't incorporate outside students in its classrooms the program empowers those incarcerated to minister in their context in transformative ways. Creating pathways for inmates to care for one another through theological education is one way to teach a counternarrative. In my very limited experience leading inmate-only book clubs and an inside/outside course for college credit, I have seen firsthand the value both of these models can provide. While I am partial to the partnership of inside and outside students learning together because I have seen how it changes everyone involved, I am also cognizant of the importance of many entry points and methods of education to meet the diverse needs and contexts represented within the prison walls.

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[52] This emphasis comes from an ATS Member School study called "Educational Models and Practices in Theological Education: Programs in Prison Peer Group Final Report", https://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/current-initiatives/educational-models/publications-and-presentations/peer-group-final-reports/15-programs-in-prison.docx 3

Conclusion

Part of the reason movement and improvisation are key is because in many ways they mirror the trinitarian understanding of *perichoresis.* When we envision the Godhead as in a circular dance, three persons, distinctly working in the world for the same purposes through love, we can see movement and improvisation taking place. We, as the people of God, are invited into this communion to be blessed and to be a blessing as we join the holy dance.

Like Abraham we must heed the call of God to move away from what is comfortable and known to us. In so doing we draw towards God who shapes and forms us to be the blessing the world so desperately needs. This movement is key. Part of the failing of Abraham, however, was his inability to trust God, his attempts to circumvent the way God would bring about the promised child and the great nation. Christ shows us what trust looks like in His kenosis and willingness, as Paul writes, to be obedient to death, even death on the cross.[53] On our own we will be able to move in some of the ways God may be calling us, but it is only through the grace of God in Christ Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit, that we will be able to accomplish this movement into the mission of God more fully. We have seen what happens when the church does not take the posture of Christ but seeks power and position. A malformed disciple, a malformed church, and a malformed mission are the result. We become rivals and as Girard has observed, violence breaks out. However, when we apprentice ourselves to Christ, take up our cross daily and follow, and allow the Holy Spirit to shape and form us into the image of Christ we will be the blessing we are called to be.

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[53] Philippians 2:8, New International Version

As we grow to know Christ and become more like Him, we will have the opportunity to improvise for the sake of Christ and the Gospel in the world. One thing I have learned in my many visits to the prison is that I am constantly surprised. Lessons I had planned take on a unique character I did not predict. Ideas I had about how a concept might connect don't connect in the way I expected. Thoughts I had about what might be meaningful end up not landing. Often, I am so surprised that I have to catch my breath. This has never been a negative experience, rather it has been a moment when I have been awed by the work of God.

One such example happened after I had assigned a reading to the class and two of the inside students had practiced the spiritual practice of kneeling prayer. The inside students said they had chosen the bunk nearest the bathroom to kneel in prayer three times a day. Unprompted, Susan said, "We chose my bunk because the bathroom is the loudest and most obnoxious place in the prison and we wanted to learn to pray in the chaos." That night on the van ride home from the prison everyone in the class had been struck by the desire of these two women to engage in their faith in this way. They moved to a challenging place and improvised within the framework they were given to draw near to God and be a faithful witness to those around them. Sexton writes that there should be a "closer unity between incarcerated churches and non-incarcerated churches viewing the prison church as equally called, gathered, endowed, and sent in missionary contexts, especially hard ones wherein the church is called to love and serve."[54] We learned that night from our inmate sisters and were challenged to deepen our devotion to Christ in

[54] Sexton, "Experiencing Justice from the Inside Out: Theological Consideration about the Church's Role in Justice, Healing, and Forgiveness," 9.

prayer in that challenging context. We weren't the ministers or teachers; we received the blessing of the *ekklesia* incarcerate–the Body of Christ behind bars.

CHAPTER SIX

Introduction

The question we must ask at the end is, "Now what?" To this point in this dissertation, the intent was to establish the deep impact that theology has had on the creation and maintenance of the prison system. In chapter one, we saw part of the history of the prison system in the United States. This broad look at the beginnings of the prisons and the way the evangelical movement pushed a "tough on crime" rhetoric and practice helped to set the stage for where we are now. The chapter then moved into a narrower look at the *Herald of Holiness,* a publication by the Church of the Nazarene, that helped to bolster this evangelical way of thinking. Theology played an integral role in the practices that the reformers sought to implement in the creation of and the continuation of the prison. Part of the continuation was to capture the imagination of Christians to believe things about crime, criminals, and police. To do this required a theological narrative which was enhanced through Christian publications like the *Herald.*

The second chapter built the case that a Wesleyan view of the *imago Dei,* prevenient grace, and entire sanctification are helpful to rethink the way we view the self, sin, and God's work in the world and in relation to the prison. When this theology is rightly understood, it can begin to undo part of the narrative about the criminal justice system. Wesley believed, optimistically, that the grace of God was sufficient to transform all people. This was not naive optimism, rather it was based on study of scripture, Christian tradition, reasoned argument, and the experience of believers. Wesley also sought to break down the divides that people so often build between one another. The rationale for this urge was theological. As has been noted, Wesley believed the means of

grace were available for us as every person served their neighbor—the rich received grace knowing and caring for the poor, the poor received grace knowing and caring for the rich. Thus, a Wesleyan-holiness viewpoint helps the Christian to understand that engaging with the justice-involved is not merely for the incarcerated person or their family's benefit, but for the sanctifying work of God in the one serving as well.

Rene Girard's Mimetic Theory, in chapter three, offers a unique way to further understand the human condition, what Christ has done on the cross, victims, and how to be made whole. Girard deepens our understanding of the self through his understanding that human beings naturally mimic one another. This mimicry often leads to rivalry, which leads to violence, which requires some sort of tension release or humanity will destroy itself. Part of the argument in this chapter is that the use of the Death Penalty is one such tension release. This is reasoned as such because Girard argues the point of tension is where the scapegoat is needed. Humans unite against someone who for a fleeting moment brings peace. This is seen in the stories of relief that come when a murderer is executed. But it is important to remember these are never truly transformative. In Jesus, this pattern is broken, though. Jesus is treated as any other scapegoat, but the fact that he rises from the dead reveals that he is different—his peace is lasting. He breaks our cycle of violence by unmasking what we do to victims. Our rituals of violence are revealed. Girard's thought, if true, is disruptive to our normal patterns of punishment. It creates an avenue for us to reconsider the inhumanity and futility of scapegoating to try to solve the problem of crime.

In the fourth chapter, a type of scapegoating was described. The family members of the incarcerated often suffer greatly along with their loved ones. The interviews

described the way in which the church often adds to the suffering instead of creating a space of flourishing or shalom for those who so desperately need it. It was argued that this is an issue of failed discipleship in the church. If the final hope for humanity, in Christ, is shalom–true flourishing–this should be what the church works for in our communities. For this to happen there is a need for new pathways of discipleship, advocacy, and partnerships with others who are doing work that create shalom.

Finally, in chapter five a missional ecclesiology was presented. The ideas of movement and improvisation with a contextual understanding can guide the church as we seek to engage in any sort of ministry in the world. Kosuke Koyama was used as an example of this sort of thinking in practice. This was then further demonstrated by exploring the idea of Christian Higher Education within the prison setting which demonstrates movement towards the incarcerated and improvisation of the normal modes in which we educate. This was but one example of how we can begin to rethink the ways we operate as the church. Hopefully, there are a variety of concepts throughout each chapter that could guide us as we continue to wrestle with the problem of mass incarceration in the United States and how our theology has added to this travesty. However, at the close, I want to offer two thoughts on what is next if we are to move forward. First, we must repent; second, we must restore.

Repent

Repentance is not a new concept for Christians. Yet in the current context of this writing there is considerable resistance for considering repentance as a Christian response to systemic failures. Christians are asking, "Why should I repent for something that happened before I was born?" This is something that the church must grapple with as we

work to be disciples and help make disciples of Christ. Defining sin can be helpful at this point. John Wesley had two categories for sin– sins of commission and sins of omission. Sins of commission are the willful acts of disobedience humans engage in. In other words, when we do something we know we shouldn't we commit a sin of commission. A sin of omission, on the other hand, is when we fail to do something we know we should do.[1] This dual definition, and the reality that we know the systems of our world are broken because of the Fall, helps us to expand our responsibility.

While we may not be personally responsible for the creation of solitary confinement, we now know how damaging it is and we are allowing laws to exist to continue its use. Based on what has been discussed in this work, we also are mindful that all people are created in the image of God and that we tend to scapegoat others to try to deal with the problems in our society. This knowledge should cause us to repent in the truest definition of the word–turn around and go in a different direction. As long as we allow unjust systems to continue we will have something that we, as a group of people, must repent of. Working toward justice is an outward sign of the inward work of the Holy Spirit, it is a sign of our repentance.

Repentance for the sins of those who have gone before us or the sinful systems in our world is not merely for the individual to do. Repentance for systemic sin is importantly engaged in through community. The rugged individualism of the United States that is manifested in the myriad denominations as well as the emphasis on personal rights has left the church needing to embrace community again. This embracing of

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[1] Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness,* Kindle location 3193. See also Wesley's sermon "The Repentance of Believers,"http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-14-the-repentance-of-believers/

community means we also must embrace our shared culpability. This is an unpopular suggestion. However, for the church to be what it was always called to be will require us to own up to who we have been and how we have failed. The core reason for this emphasis on the communal and not just the personal is because that is the mission of God, and we are called to join God's mission. Rene Padilla writes, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a personal message—it reveals a God who calls each of his own by name. But it is also a cosmic message—it reveals a God whose purpose includes the whole world."[2] This repentance can be done on an individual congregational level, a denominational level, or even more powerfully through an ecumenical group. This is not to say that individuals don't need to take personal responsibility. Rather, it is to say that the biblical witness calls the people of God to repent. The writers and the prophets in the Old Testament call on the *whole* people of God to repent time and again.[3] It is not an invitation to one person, but an invitation to all to turn away from their wickedness, injustice, oppression, and idol worship. The response of God's people is very often in the plural form as well. When Jesus teaches disciples to pray, he instructs, "Forgive *us* our debts, as *we* forgive *our* debtors."[4] An understanding of our communal responsibility is key to our true repentance.

The sort of repentance I am calling for here is public, not private. We must face the truth of the brokenness we have created, caused, benefited from, or allowed to take place. To move toward restoration there is a need for a public confession. At the writing of this chapter, we are remembering the life of Archbishop Desmond Tutu who died on

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[2] Rene Padilla, "Evangelism and the World I & II." In Let the Earth Hear his Voice. Lausanne 1974. Theological Education Fund, (1977): 116.
[3] See for example 2 Chronicles 7:14, Jeremiah 4:1-2, Isaiah 1:10ff,
[4] Matthew 6:12, NIV

December 26, 2021. His work to bring public confession through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa is instructive. Repentance was a vital part of the process of reconciliation and healing. For there to be restoration of any kind, the truth had to be spoken. Tutu once wrote,

> Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking, but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing.[5]

Statements can and should be written. Acknowledgment of our participation in the problems within our society should be made. Petitions can be signed and rallies should be attended to demonstrate our repentance through solidarity. However, there is more that can be done to demonstrate the true change that has happened when we have repented and by God's grace been forgiven: restoration.

Restore

From true repentance comes restoration. This is true in the life of the individual and in communities. When we have turned away from the pathway of brokenness the logical road to walk down is one of restoration. This can take many forms and some have been mentioned throughout the different chapters. In a general sense, restoration requires us to come to terms with the ways we have moved away from our theology in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. We need to restore the optimistic, life-transforming truth denominations like the Church of the Nazarene were founded on. Reclaiming this way of understanding God, ourselves, and the world is a part of the work we can do to transform

[5] Desmond Tutu, "Truth and Reconciliation," *Greater Good Magazine,* September 1, 2004. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/truth_and_reconciliation

the criminal justice system. This means the church has work to do in restoring our methods, means, and content for discipleship. We have allowed other theologies to take over our understanding. Not only that, but we have also allowed nationalism and politics to supersede what Scripture says about how we are to be in the world. There must be a restoration of discipleship that influences the world around us, not allowing the world to influence what we imagine discipleship to be. This is not to say that our context plays no part in discipleship. It is important to note that the methods of discipleship may shift, but the message of the Gospel does not. To experience restoration of our mission we must return to Jesus, mimicking him and no one else.

Restoration will also require us to advocate for different responses to the harm that breaks our communities through crime and violence. I have chosen this word on purpose because I believe Restorative Justice is one of the ways we can begin to repair our communities.[6] The Insight Prison Project was mentioned in a vignette after chapter three and is but one example of how programs such as this are having a deep and lasting impact on everyone involved. Restorative Justice dovetails with a Wesleyan-Holiness theology and ecclesiology because it offers dignity to all people, involves true accountability, invites the community to engage in the process, and seeks healing.[7] It also leads to real transformation and community building as demonstrated by lower rates of recidivism, greater rates of victim satisfaction with the process, and high rates of

[6] It is important to note that this is not a perfect method. See Kay Harris and her "Reflections of a Skeptical Dreamer: Some Dilemmas in Restorative Justice Theory and Practice" for some of the critiques and pitfalls to be aware of.

[7] Thomas Porter, "Breaking Down the Walls: Transforming Conflict Into Resolution," Presentation to the Virginia Annual Conference. Also of note would be the Wesley Class Meetings where truth telling, confession and accountability were required.

completed restitution as compared with the traditional criminal justice system.[8] Howard Zehr, often called the father of Restorative Justice, writes,

> Justice will not be served if we maintain our exclusive focus on the questions that drive our current justice systems: What laws have been broken? Who did it? What do they deserve? True justice requires, instead, that we ask questions such as these: Who has been hurt? What do they need? Whose obligations and responsibilities are these? Who has a stake in this situation? What is the process that can involve the stakeholders in finding a solution? Restorative justice requires us to change not just our lenses but our questions…. It is a reminder that all of us are interconnected.[9]

These are good questions for the church to ask and answer as they look toward serving the broader community they are imbedded in.

Restorative justice is not just for crime and the community, however. These tools are also useful to deal with the conflict that is often present in the church that is not criminal in nature. Training practitioners and practicing these methods can be important ways of discipling Christians to be peacemakers. One such example is a pilot program through Nazarene Compassionate Ministries in the state of Hawaii. A grant has been provided to train and coach restorative justice cohorts on each of the islands so they can address issues in the church and the community when they arise.[10] More study could be done by following this program and evaluating the success of its outcomes. This could lead to more innovation and further expansion of restorative justice principles throughout the Church of the Nazarene.

Repair is also an important part of restoration. The example of education being offered inside the prison walls is an avenue to repair. 60% of those incarcerated are

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[8] Mark S. Umbreit, "Restorative Justice Through Victim-Offender Mediation, A Multi-Site Assessment," Western Criminology Review, 1998.
[9] Howard Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (New York: Good Books, 2014), 76.
[10] Eric Paul is the trainer for the NCM program in Hawaii. See Appendix C for a copy of the proposal.

described as functionally illiterate. Studies show that those who receive literacy education while incarcerated recidivate at remarkably lower rates than those who don't.[11] Offering college education will enhance further the opportunities of those who have been imprisoned. This is also a way the church can help to stop some of the pathways that impact incarceration. Offering educational classes for children, teens, and adults in local churches can build skills and relationships that create opportunities for people to flourish. The church can also work to create jobs or advocate for organizations that do. Education, meaningful work, housing, and relationships make a world of difference for those who have been incarcerated and their families. Churches, non-profits, and Christian Colleges and Universities should partner with each other to provide these tools.

Conclusion

I noticed something remarkable while I was sitting in my Sunday School room in an upper middle class, highly educated, predominantly white church. There were four couples in that circle of twenty people who had family members who had been, or still were, incarcerated. While the ravages of mass incarceration impact our cities and people of color at alarming rates, the impact of the criminal justice system is far reaching. The issues addressed here, and the solutions offered as a way forward are for all kinds of people, in all sorts of communities, from every different background imaginable. Crime, victimization, violence, and harm are found wherever human beings are. This means Christians have a responsibility to address this reality.

[11] See https://www.begintoread.com/research/literacystatistics.html and https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2016/04/01/literacy/ for more information about illiteracy and incarceration

In the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, we need to reclaim a God of love who offers us true healing for the deep wound of our sin through sanctification. We are not merely seen as righteous; we are being made righteous day by day. This happens as we imitate Christ. Thomas Porter writes, "If we believe that God is retributive and we believe in imitating God, we are more likely to be retributive, supporting, for example, capital punishment."[12] Wesleyan-Holiness people do not believe in a retributive God. We believe that God is love. If we believe this to be true, we cannot be compelled by a tough on crime mindset. Instead, we must be compelled and transformed by the God of love who is inviting us to repent and partner in the restoration of all things.

May our movement look like the kenotic movement of Christ who dwells among us and gravitates toward the marginalized. May our improvisation be shaped by the work of the Holy Spirit so we can rightfully view the world around us and share the good news in a way that is winsome and life-giving. May our fervor be balanced by wise structures and may our structures not hinder our passion to be like Jesus. May we reckon with our broken history and oppressive systems, repenting and receiving forgiveness. May we respond to the grace we have received by honoring the dignity of all people and seeking restoration and holiness. And may we kneel at the bunk by the bathroom, making it an altar so we can be shaped to be the blessing we have been called to be, even behind the razor wire.

[12] Porter, "Breaking Down the Walls," 11.

Appendix A—Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Olivia Metcalf, Doctorate of Ministry student, at Nazarene Theological Seminary is conducting a research study related to the response of the local church in relationship to family members of the incarcerated and/or the formerly incarcerated themselves. The project will investigate what steps a local church did or did not take to help family members deal with their loved one being incarcerated, as well as how the local church supported the person who was formerly incarcerated—while on trial, while incarcerated, and post incarceration. I appreciate your involvement in helping investigate how to best serve family members and those incarcerated through the local church.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a healthy volunteer, over the age of 18.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will participate in a face to face or online video interview at some point between March 2020 through May 2022 .
2. The interview will be recorded but kept confidential and will inform the writing of research to serve the church as they navigate ministering to members and their families who are experiencing incarceration.

These procedures will be completed at a location mutually decided upon by the participant and principal investigator.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the interview questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time. If you are distressed during or after our interview the following resources may be helpful to you:
    - I would be happy to talk with you outside of the interview: My experience and training as a pastor and chaplain has provided me with the ability to engage in spiritual counseling with people who are experiencing distress. Email: ometcalf@nnu.edu Phone: 208-890-8888
    - If you are a Northwest Nazarene University student or employee you can contact the NNU

Wellness Center--**Phone:** 208-467-8466 **Email:** wellnesscenter@nnu.edu
Location: 518 E. Dewey Avenue, Nampa ID

- If you are not a Northwest Nazarene University student or employee you can contact Terry Reilly Health Services where they utilize a sliding scale for their services. **Location:** 223 16th Avenue North, Nampa, ID 83687 **Phone:** 208-467-7654
- If this is an emergency dial 911

2. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio tapes, and disks will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the Department and the key to the cabinet will be kept in a separate location. In compliance with the Federal wide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better understand how to offer transformative education to inmates and those formerly incarcerated.

E. PAYMENTS

There are no payments for participating in this study.

F. QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the investigator. Olivia Metcalf can be contacted via email at ometcalf@nnu.edu, via telephone at 208-890-8888 (Cell) or by writing Northwest Nazarene University, 623 S University Blvd, Nampa, ID 83686 c/o Olivia Metcalf.

Should you feel distressed due to participation in this, you should contact your own health care provider.

G. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

Signature of Study **Participant Date**

______________________________________ _________________________

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study:

Signature of Study **Participant Date**

______________________________________ _________________________

I give my consent to be recorded for this study:

Signature of Study **Participant Date**

______________________________________ _________________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent **Date**

______________________________________ _________________________

Appendix B—Faith Formation in Diverse Spaces Course Material

In the Fall of 2019, I created and taught a course inside the South Idaho Corrections Institute. Working with the prison officials and Northwest Nazarene University the following proposal and syllabi were developed. The outside students, the terminology we used for the non-incarcerated students, received upper division general education theology credit and a few more assignments than the inside students. The inside students received a lower division theology credit for their work. The hope was to have more classes offered and work toward a program that would provide a certificate of some sort for the incarcerated students. With the COVID-19 pandemic beginning to deeply impact the United States in early 2020, this dream was put on hold. Coupled with the continuing realities of COVID preventing volunteers in prisons across the United States and my departure from NNU it is difficult to say if this program will ever be reconsidered.

1. Project Proposal, page 169-171
2. THEO1094 Syllabus for inside students, page 172-174
3. THEO3094 Syllabus for outside students, page 175-178
4. Copy of application for inside students, page 179

Project Proposal
Faith Formation in Diverse Settings
University Course in SICI
Instructor, Reverend Olivia Metcalf
Fall 2019

About NNU:

Northwest Nazarene University, a Christian comprehensive university, offers over 60 areas of study, 18 master's degrees in seven different disciplines, and two doctoral degrees. In addition to its 90-acre campus located in Nampa, Idaho, the University also offers programs online as well as in Idaho Falls and in cooperation with programs in 35 countries. Founded in 1913, the University now serves over 2,000 undergraduate and graduate students, more than 6,000 continuing education students, and over 2,000 high school students through the concurrent credit program.

Our mission is to encourage a habit of mind that enables each student to become God's creative and redemptive agent in today's world. We believe that the education obtained from NNU prepares graduates to be global Christians through academic excellence, social responsiveness, and creative engagement. NNU is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Background:

Currently, NNU faculty, staff, and students have been involved in volunteering in the South Idaho Correctional Institution led by Olivia Metcalf since January of 2017. The group has led and participated in a book club for the female inmates. This meaningful engagement has prompted a desire to enhance and expand the University's involvement with IDOC and the lives of the incarcerated.

Format:

Eight students from NNU and eight inmates from SICI would meet one evening a week to learn about Faith Formation in diverse ways as well as diverse spaces. The course will be 14 weeks and each class period will last 3 hours. Projects would be done inside and outside of class and are detailed on the final page. Students will be expected to spend 2-3 hours outside of class in reading, preparation, and homework.

All reading materials will either be in PDF format or in books provided for inmates at no cost and made available to them per the requirements of the facility.

No computer or internet access would be required. Rather, research items would be submitted in advance for approval to bring into the facility.

IDOC students can audit the course by filling out a paper application. NNU is working on offering the IDOC students college credit at no charge. This has not been approved but is in process.

IDOC students will need a high school diploma or equivalent to participate.

Course Description:

Faith Formation has often been relegated to church buildings and Sunday school classes. However, faith formation can, and should, take place in all aspects of our lives. Exploring themes of empathy for self and others, habits for transformation, and seeing God in unlikely places students will find that their faith journey can happen in a church and also in a prison. Through Christian and non-Christian texts, project-based learning, film, and art, students will expand their understanding of what it means to grow in faith. The course will be taught at the Southern Idaho Correctional Institution. Half of the students will be traditional NNU students, and the other half will be comprised of female inmates.

Learning Outcomes:

1. **Empathy**—part of healthy faith formation involves learning empathy for self and others. Students will engage with texts, practices, and journaling to grow in this regard. Growth will be measured by an assessment assignment at the beginning and the end of the semester.
2. **Habits for Transformation**—healthy habits are an important part of every life. Students will be exposed to a variety of faith formation habits that they will learn to implement, test, and evaluate. This will culminate in a personal Rule of Life project.
3. **Identifying the Sacred** using a novel and a movie students will be given skills to identify faith in what appears to be purely secular entertainment. This will help them with creative imagination and critical thinking. In groups, they will put together a presentation that will be made before the class.
4. **Teamwork**—students will engage in a variety of group projects and exercises throughout the semester. This will help them to learn how to relate to one another, work together in a unique setting and with limited resources, and to accomplish things together.

Assigned Texts:

Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers, Anne Lamott, Riverhead Books, 2012

The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction, Justin Earley, IVP, 2019

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, CS Lewis, Harper Collins, 2008 (reprint)

Select Biblical texts to evaluate and learn from

Other Resources:

Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse, Sony Pictures, 2018

Proposed Schedule:

(All of these dates are subject to approval by the appropriate entities from IDOC)

Volunteer Training: Traditional NNU students would receive volunteer training on campus with Jeff Kirkman the week of August 27th-30th

Course Time and Duration: Classes would start Tuesday, September 3rd,

5:30-8:30 pm and conclude on December 3rd

Final Exam and Graduation Ceremony: This will need to be determined based on the traditional NNU students' finals schedules which won't be known until the course starts. The hope would be the final would be group presentations that could be presented to other inmates and interested IDOC employees. After the final, each student would receive a certificate of completion

Example Projects and Assignments: (These are tentative)

Individual:

- **Journal:** each student will keep a journal they will turn in periodically. This journal will be a way to engage in some of the practices and habits taught in the class, to reflect on their reading, and to engage with the topics we are discussing
- **Rule of Life:** each student will create a Rule of Life that synthesizes things we have learned in the class with their own life experience and personality. This is a guide to help them both inside and outside of prison/college

Group:

- **Story Sharing:** students will interview one another and retell their partner's story to the group. This assignment will help us to get to know each other, have empathy for one another, and demonstrate listening and communication skills
- **TED Talk:** In groups of two (one inmate and one trad student) a topic will be selected and approved by the instructor. The group will put together a meaningful presentation that is like popular TED talks. They will present these as their final project. The topics will be connected to faith formation and the groups will have the freedom to use creativity to express their thoughts

Notes:

-Traditional NNU students will be doing a few additional assignments because this will be an upper-division course for them, but a lower division course for the inmate -Not all students need to be Christian, NNU does not require that, however, we would need students not hostile to Christianity to participate

-NNU would be interested in offering more courses for inmates that could potentially lead to an AA or BA for those incarcerated. This would be a pilot for such a partnership

THEO 1094 Faith Formation in Diverse Spaces Fall 2019
Instructor: Olivia Metcalf

Classroom: Assigned classroom in SICI PRC

Introduction
This course is designed to acquaint you with a variety of spiritual practices within the broader Christian tradition. You will learn what these practices are, how they are done, and have opportunity to practice them. The unique makeup of the course--students who are incarcerated and those who aren't--will give you a perspective of faith formation you wouldn't get alone.
We will be considering the following questions:

- What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?
    - What are practices that can help to shape and form us to be the people of God?
    - How does context impact our ability to encounter God?
    - What do Christian practices offer us when we are in diverse locations?
    - What can we learn from one another on our faith journey?
- What is a rule of life and why should I have one?
- What does it mean to journey with Jesus alongside people with different backgrounds and experiences?

Required Texts that will be provided for you:

- *The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction,* Justin Earley
- *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers,* Anne Lamott
- *When Love Bends Down: Images of the Christ who Meets Us Where We Are,* Michael Lodahl
- *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe,* CS Lewis
- Short readings or videos as assigned in class
- A Bible

Goals:
Students will

- Learn about Scripture and what it is and why it can be important to our everyday living
- Understand faith practices and engage in them
- Learn alongside college students what it means to be formed in faith no matter the location
- Realize that we can engage in Faith Formation in diverse settings and through diverse mediums (film, novels, etc)

Objectives:
Students will

- Create a rule of life alongside an outside student and present them to the class and a potential group of other inmates
- Engage with a section of Scripture in a way that demonstrates understanding and application of the text to everyday life
- Understand the University values of Truth, Transformation, Community and Service
- Gain empathy for self and others through learning together
- Explain to others the meaning and significance of faith formation and how they can engage in it no matter the circumstances

General Education Outcomes:
Students will understand the Bible as a collection of ancient texts gathered as a canonical library for the Church, and will develop and employ appropriate exegetical skills and methods in order to interpret the Bible responsibly and transformationally. [Value: Truth & Transformation]

Course structure and procedure:
Classes will meet on Tuesday evenings from 5:30pm to 8:30pm. Your fellow students will attempt to arrive on time and get class started on time as well.

How to succeed in this course:
For any college course, expect two hours out of class per week per credit. For a 3-credit class, that means an average of six hours per week of activity, reading, and writing outside of class.

1. **Show up and be ready to observe and learn!** This is a unique class that will take a different kind of engagement from you. Part of your learning experience will be to observe your fellow students and how they engage in the course. What is needed of you is a mind and heart that is open. Attendance is crucial since one class period is equal to an entire week of class.
2. **Read** all assigned material before the class meeting for which it is assigned.
3. **Participate in activities in the class time**. This class is dependent on everyone engaging. You will be graded on your participation each week.
4. **Write**

   a) Reflection papers/journal entries

   You will write a variety of reflection papers that will be assigned in class about your personal experience in class. You will also be reflecting on some of the reading you will be engaging in as well as keeping a regular journal

   b) Research Paper

   You will be writing one major research paper during the semester that takes a passage of Scripture and interprets it, connects faith formation practices to it, and contextualizes it

   c) Rule of Life

You will complete a personal Rule of Life as part of this course. It will be a written document that outlines what you have learned and which practices you will be incorporating in your faith formation. You will also describe the reason you chose these particular practices

5. **Missing and Late Work Policies**
   You will have one freebie when it comes to late work. For any reason, without my approval, you can turn ONE assignment in 1 week late. You do not need to offer an explanation but do need to notify me that this is your "freebie" assignment. If you are struggling to get other work in on time you are free to talk to me about your situation. However, very few exceptions will be made.

Grades:

A supplement to the syllabus will be provided the first day of class that helps you understand the grading system

Classroom Courtesy:

We will follow the rules of IDOC when it comes to engaging one another appropriately. We will also work hard to interact with one another and not just sit with our friends. This will be helped by the fact that you will be paired up early in the semester and you will be working closely with your outside classmate.

One important part of a learning environment is being honest with one another. This doesn't mean you need to bare your soul the first night, but an important part of this class will be to get to know one another, to talk about our lives, and to grow with one another. This can be intimidating, but if we all do it it can also be very rewarding.

You are Northwest Nazarene University students! You have filled out an application, you will have a student ID number, you are Nighthawks! We are excited to provide you with college credit for this course and to share the educational experience with you.

Plagiarism and Other Forms of Cheating:

Don't do it. A first-time incident of plagiarism or other dishonesty is reported to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, your academic dean, and your advisor. A first plagiarized assignment earns a zero, whether or not the plagiarism was intentional, and may incur additional penalties at the instructor's discretion.

Important Notes:

This is an incredible learning opportunity for all of us. Volunteering in the prison has been deeply impactful in my life. My hope and prayer for you is that your heart will be expanded and you will both be blessed and be a blessing to your fellow students.

THEO 3094 Faith Formation in Diverse Spaces **Fall 2019**

Instructor: Olivia Metcalf **Email**: ometcalf@nnu.edu
Cell: 208-890-8888 **Office**: Emerson 105
Classroom: Emerson Living Room/South Idaho Correctional Institute

Introduction

This course is designed to acquaint you with a variety of spiritual practices within the broader Christian tradition, as well as a Wesleyan understanding of faith formation. The unique location of this course will help to further expose you to the ways in which our context can form us and ways to overcome our context to continue in a relationship with Christ. We will be considering the following questions:

- What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?
  - What are practices that can help to shape and form us to be the people of God?
  - How does context impact our ability to encounter God?
  - What do Christian practices offer us when we are in diverse locations?
  - What can we learn from one another on our faith journey?
- What is a rule of life and why should I have one?
- What does it mean to journey with Jesus alongside people who are incarcerated?

Required Texts: (Please do not buy digital books. You cannot take them into the prison with you!)

- *The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction,* Justin Earley, ISBN 978-0-8308-4560-6
- *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers,* Anne Lamott, ISBN 9781594631290
- *When Love Bends Down: Images of the Christ who Meets Us Where We Are,* Michael Lodahl, ISBN 978-0834122208 (You will need to buy this book used)
- *Rethinking Incarceration: Advocating for Justice that Restores,* Dominique Gilliard ISBN 978-0830845293
- *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe,* CS Lewis--this book will be provided to you, you do not need to buy it
- Short readings or videos as assigned in class and available on Canvas
- A Bible in NRSV, CEB or NIV--your choice

Goals:

Students will

- Learn about the basics of the criminal justice system by IDOC training and active observation
- Understand the history of the church's involvement in the criminal justice system in the United States and reflect on that legacy
- Learn alongside inmates what it means to be formed in faith no matter the location

- Understand from a Wesleyan perspective what faith formation is and why it is important
- Become acquainted with a wide variety of faith practices and learn to implement them

Objectives:
Students will

- Create a rule of life alongside inmates and present them to the class and a potential group of other inmates
- Articulate a Wesleyan understanding of faith formation and how it could influence the criminal justice system
- Describe how being engaged in the prison system helps to live out the University values of Truth, Transformation, Community and Service
- Gain empathy for self and others through learning alongside inmates by understanding the Imago Dei on a deeper level
- Explain to others the meaning and significance of faith formation and how they can engage in it no matter the circumstances

General Education Outcomes:
Students will understand and value the role of thoughtful biblical/theological reflection within the Wesleyan theological context and will develop and employ enhanced skills that critically integrate aspects of biblical interpretation and Christian theology to explore contemporary issues. [Values: Truth & Service]

Course structure and procedure:
Classes will meet on Tuesday evenings from 5pm to 9pm. We will carpool to the prison, and you must arrive at the JSC parking lot PROMPTLY. It takes 30-40 minutes to get to the prison and we will talk while we are riding together--this is part of the course. You are welcome to bring dinner along for the ride. If we cannot go to prison for some reason, you will be notified and we will meet in the Emerson Living Room.

How to succeed in this course:
For any college course, expect two hours out of class per week per credit. For a 3-credit class, that means an average of six hours per week of activity, reading, and writing outside of class.

1. **Show up and be ready to observe and learn!** This is a unique class that will take a different kind of engagement from you. You will have the opportunity to learn every minute of this course whether there is a lecture or not because of the unique locale. What is needed of you is a mind and heart that is open. Attendance is crucial since one class period is equal to an entire week of class.
2. **Read** all assigned material before the class meeting for which it is assigned.
3. **Participate in activities in the class time**. This class is dependent on everyone engaging. You will be graded on your participation each week.
4. **Write** at a 3000 level. Your writing should be error free, coherent, and free of plagiarism

a) Reflection papers/journal entries

You will write a variety of reflection papers that will be on CANVAS about your personal experience in the prison and in class. You will also be reflecting on some of the reading you will be engaging in.

b) Research Paper

You will be writing one major research paper during the semester that addresses the book *Rethinking Incarceration* from a Wesleyan perspective. You will find the information for this assignment on CANVAS

c) Rule of Life

You will complete a personal Rule of Life as part of this course. It will be a written document that outlines what you have learned and which practices you will be incorporating in your faith formation. You will also describe the reason you chose these particular practices

5) **Missing and Late Work Policies**

You will have one freebie when it comes to late work. For any reason, without my approval, you can turn ONE assignment in 3 days late. You do not need to offer an explanation but do need to notify me in CANVAS that this is your "freebie" assignment. If you are struggling to get other work in on time you are free to talk to me about your situation. However, very few exceptions will be made.

Grades:

A supplement to the syllabus will be provided the first day of class that helps you understand the grading system

Classroom Courtesy:

Because we will be in a prison facility we will follow all of the Idaho Department of Corrections rules. No computers, tablets or phones are allowed in the facility. We will be working with pen and paper only. Everything we bring in must be brought out. Everything we bring in has to be approved in advance. This means for example, we will count pens at the end of class to be sure we aren't leaving anything that could be viewed as, or used as, contraband behind. We want to continue and grow this relationship. Following the rules of the prison will help this program to continue at NNU.

We will also work to mingle with the inmates in the class as much as possible. This means that we need to sit spread out and not in our own cluster. This will be helped by the fact that you will be paired up early in the semester and you will be working closely with your inside classmate.

These are NNU students! They have filled out an application, they will have a student ID number, they are Nighthawks! The difference is they are inside and

you are outside. We will do the best we can to keep barriers and distinctions from being a part of our class experience.

Plagiarism and Other Forms of Cheating:
Don't do it. A first-time incident of plagiarism or other dishonesty is reported to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, your academic dean, and your advisor. A first plagiarized assignment earns a zero, whether or not the plagiarism was intentional, and may incur additional penalties at the instructor's discretion.

Important Notes:
This is an incredible learning opportunity for you. Volunteering in the prison has been deeply impactful in my life. My hope and prayer for you is that your heart will be expanded and you will both be blessed and be a blessing to your fellow students.

Application – Non-Degree Seeking Student

Academic Status:

What best describes your current status? (Please read each selection carefully to choose the correct response. Select all that apply.)

- I am a high school graduate or have a GED.
- I am a high school graduate with AP Scores, IB Credits, Running Start or Concurrent Credit taken before high school graduation.
- I have completed credits at another college or university after high school graduation.
- I have been enrolled at NNU in the past and would like to readmit to classes.
- I would like to take the class, **THEO1094: Faith Formation in Diverse Places**, but I understand that I am not working towards a degree and am not applying for admission into any degree program.

Personal Information:

Last Name: ______________________________

Maiden Name (if applicable): ________________________

First Name: ______________________________

Middle Name: ______________________________

Preferred Name: ____________________________

Date of Birth: _________ / _________ / __________ (Month / Day / Year)

Signature: ____________________________ Date: __________________

Appendix C—Restorative Justice Model for the Church of the Nazarene

HIPAC Mission Strategy Team
Summary of Restorative Justice Initiative

May 18, 2021

As the Coordinator for Justice and Compassion, I have written two grants to support a two-year minimum project *to create Nazarene Restorative Justice cohorts on each island to address harm and conflict in the church and the community*. Briefly, Restorative Justice represents an active process that draws together those who have been affected by an action that has caused harm or strain to relationships. The act of repairing or rebuilding relationships requires the acknowledgement of harm and subsequent needs, addressing obligations, building empathy and connection, and making things pono. Practices within justice models that restore relationships include family group conferencing, conflict or peace circles, reintegration circles, peer mediation, Victim Offender Conferencing, and the like.

I am working to "let go" of some of my responsibilities at West Hawaii Mediation Center, and working with the board to allow flexibility, in order to give more to this work in our District.

Activities for the project include:

- Recruiting Church leaders as volunteers (a cohort on each island)
- Trainings in Peace Circles Processes and Restorative Group Conferencing
- Educating District Churches in restorative justice concepts and its integration with Christian witness and theology.
- Coach/mentor each cohort.
- Creating community partnerships
- Build a referral process that connects to each cohort of volunteers
- Initiate and conduct circles/conferences to "make things right."

While the project covers the first two years of inviting participants, training volunteers, educating the church, establishing community partnerships, and initial circles/conferences, the five-year goal is to activate referral networks connected to probation officers, police precincts, public/private schools, other faith communities, nonprofits working in areas dealing with mass incarceration/juvenile justice/housing/mediation, and immigrant labor challenges. My dream is that the Nazarene Church leads our many communities in cultivating shalom. Our churches will become community hubs for reconciliation, and a holy training ground for restorative justice for members of our community. In five years, we will have 40 trained volunteers, strong community connections, annual trainings and workshops for the whole community, and specific RJ projects solidified through community-based assessments.

Dr. Power and I are working with Nazarene Compassionate Ministry for a total of $40,000 over two years that would be an addition to the $7000 the District has already

committed to the Coordinator position. Funds would be used for salary, travel, trainings, education resources, and retreats. Mahalo for the work you do to cultivate faithful mission in Hawaiʻi.

Peace and Aloha,
Eric Paul

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