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THE RELIGIONISTS

By MICHAEL GLOVER

"If a man cannot be a Christian in the place where he is, he cannot be a Christian anywhere."--Henry Ward Beecher

Angola's religious program is intended to encourage prisoners to establish a relationship with God, and give them freedom to worship according to their beliefs. True religious conversion has special significance in the prison setting because it changes an individual's moral foundation. Social programs, self-help programs, educational and vocational courses improve a person's ability to cope in the outside world, but seldom alter the underlying criminal mentality. "Teach a burglar carpentry and you get a thief who can cut wood," is the common philosophy. A united, harmonious religious program can effect the moral transformation necessary for rehabilitation. Angola does not have such a program.

Sincere religious commitment is difficult to determine. Mere participation in a prison religious program does not reliably indicate that an individual has attained true religious convictions. A better understanding of the prison environment highlights this problem.

A ten-year-old article which appeared in **Moody** magazine (February 1982), still reflects a sound reality of prison conversion. Written by Dennis Roberts, the article quotes then-executive director of Prison Ministries, Inc. (not associated with Prison Fellowship), Bobby Novak: "The harsh reality is that following Christ inside and outside prison are two different things. Our experience has been that only a handful of prison Christians retain their commitment a

significant time after release... I see it time and time again. The guys may be super-dedicated in prison; but once they hit the street, it's almost like they never knew God... In prison, he has nothing to do but live for God. Outside, there are all sorts of distractions."

The history of prison in America reveals a hoped for relationship between cell and soul which never actually materialized. The very word "penitentiary" stems from the word "penitent." When the Great Law of Pennsylvania made imprisonment a punishment for most crimes in 1682, the goal was to induce "penitence" in the guilty. Before then imprisonment as punishment for crimes committed by ordinary people was unheard of.

"There had, of course, been prisons and dungeons of sorts for centuries," writes Jessica Mitford in her book **Kind & Usual Punishment**, (Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), "but these were reserved for persons of quality; state prisoners, the prince, queen, statesmen who had fallen afoul of the reigning monarch, the philosopher, mathematician, religious heretic suspected of harboring dangerous or subversive ideas. Lowlier offenders were detained in prison only while awaiting trial. In colonial America, as in Europe, the standard punishment for the pickpocket, the thief, the highwayman was hanging; for lesser offenders mutilation, the stocks, public brandings and floggings."

The influential Quaker reformers responsible for implementing the idea were of the middle- and upper-class, and their class origins mitigated the harsh-

ness of their punishment. Russ Immari-geon, in his article "To Reclaim rather Than to Destroy," from **Crime & Justice Newsletter** (July-Sept 1990), wrote, "While men like William Penn were frequently imprisoned for long periods of time, they may well have found imprisonment useful; indeed, these were times when they reflected and wrote some of their most important works."

However, in implementing a prison system for the lower class, key elements were omitted. Where Penn and his peers had access to libraries and no lack of writing materials, the lower-class people who ended up in prison were placed in solitary confinement under severe sensory deprivation, with only a Bible. Many could not read. According to Mitford, they routinely died or went insane.

By the mid-nineteenth century the

religionists had withdrawn leaving only the occasional chaplain behind. The penitentiary had been adopted by the state. Prisoners were put to work and allowed to congregate with each other. Serious offenders were still executed, and lesser offenders were still flogged, but it was done behind prison walls.

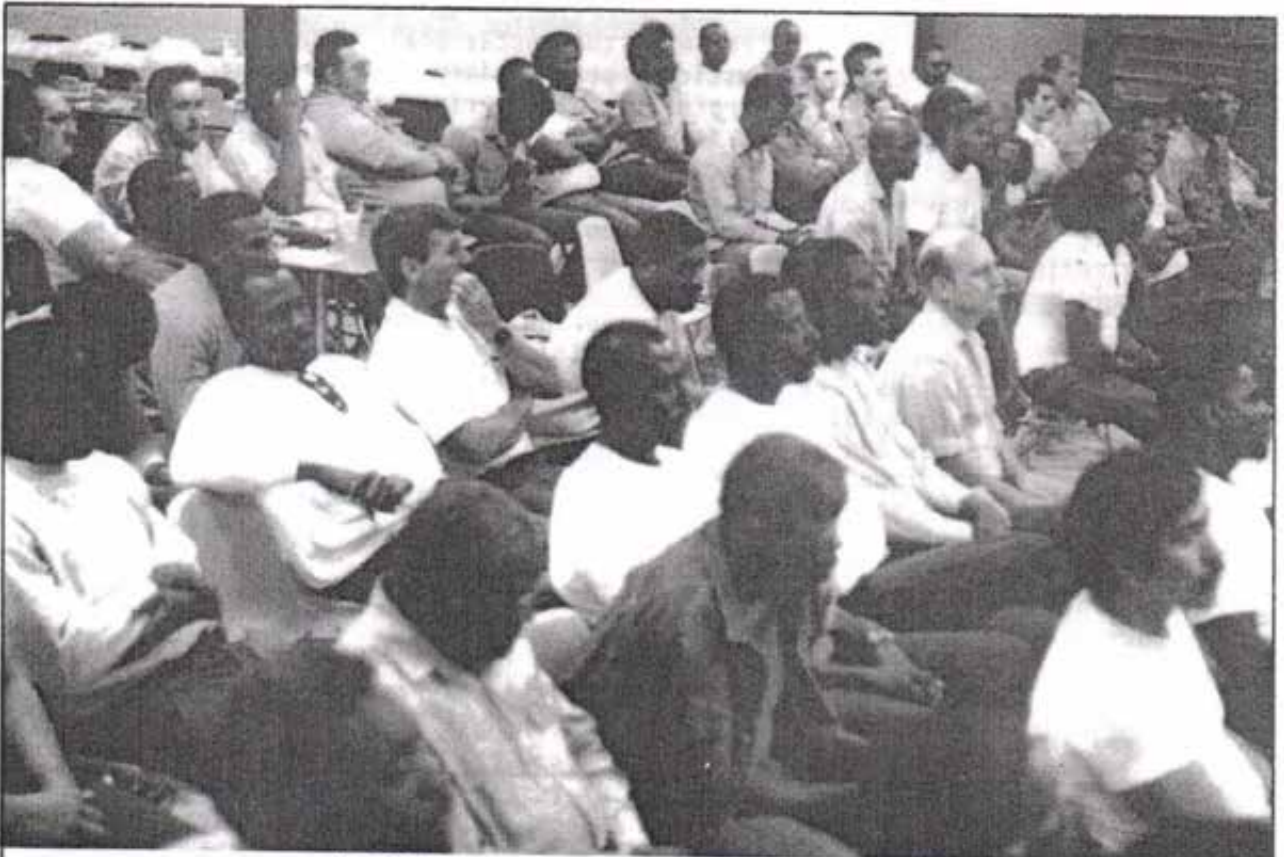
Todd Clear, in his article "Faith Behind The Walls," which appeared in **Vital Christianity**, (September 1991), separates the present day population of an unnamed mid-western maximum security prison into five categories:

Devout: "Born Again" Christians, traditional Catholics, and members of the Nation of Islam, who live the religious life with remarkable integrity.

Novice: Those who profess religious beliefs, but have trouble abiding by them in the face of the considerable



"THE AMBASSADORS" (FROM MARRERO, LA) PERFORMING AT ANGOLA



PRISONERS GATHERED FOR RELIGIOUS SERVICE

strains of prison.

Frontier: Those who falsely adopt the veneer of religion in order to be protected from prison gangs or to impress the parole board - or merely to have a social diversion in the face of the incredible monotony of prison life.

Conventional: Those who fully adopt the prisoner life-style.

Ethical: Those who resist the inmate culture, but profess no particular religious orientation.

Scripps-Howard News Service writer Linda Negro's review of the book, **When God Becomes a Drug**, by Reverend Leo Booth, an Episcopal priest, appeared in the Baton Rouge **Advocate** on June 13, 1992. In her report Booth acknowledges that religion can be as much of a destructive addiction as alcoholism. "We

understand now that people who are addicted to a substance often have an addictive, obsessive personality," Booth said, and "a large number of people can get obsessed with their own religion and spiritual position." Writing for the world outside of prison, Booth states that religious abuse can be as damaging to a family as alcoholism.

Angola has more than its share of addictive, obsessive personalities. It doesn't take a sociology major to predict a number of these individuals will substitute one dependency for another. When a prisoner changes his single-minded pursuit of drugs to a narrow-minded obsession with religious dogma, his "conversion" may not be what it seems. He may appear as a "super devout," but a fundamental concept of Christianity - the love of others - doesn't always transfer when conviction is based solely on switched addiction.

This category of individual is an addition to Clear's five. Call him the **abuser**. While he is not truly rehabilitated, he is no longer a violent threat to society as long as he does not switch his addiction again.

With the addition of the abuser, these categories hold true in Angola. The difficulty in separating the fronter and the abuser from the novice or the devout is obvious, and made more difficult because there is movement among the categories. Ethicals can become devout, novices can become conventionals, etc. No inflexible classification can be accurate.

The fronter is remarkable in several ways. For him religion is a game, and the prize is freedom. Protection and support are fringe benefits. The game ends upon release from prison, whereupon he reverts to his criminal behavior

pattern. Ironically, in the course of his act - while "walking that walk and talking that talk" - a true religious conversion can take place. It does not happen often, but often enough to keep religious leaders from striking them from their congregations, or calling them by name.

At one time the fronter population was so large that professional boards that evaluate prisoners for early release developed the "GB - BC - FG" formula; meaning, "He was a **Good Boy**, but he fell in with **Bad Company**, but then he went to prison and **Found God**." Where other prisoners, and even some prison guards, can recognize a fronter because they are in daily contact with him, pardon and parole boards cannot. A brief review of a prisoner's record, or a ten-minute interview, or even a three-day seminar, cannot separate a fronter from a devout or a novice.



JAKE BENTON VISITS FROM BETHANY



OTIS HENRY - FORMER INMATE



PRISON FELLOWSHIP SEMINAR IN THE INTERFAITH CHAPEL

Before examining Angola's in-prison religious program in detail, a contribution from the foremost national organization involved in prison ministry should be mentioned. Prison Fellowship (PF), a group of over 30,000 volunteers who conduct seminars in over 600 state and federal prisons, plays a meaningful role in Angola's program.

"PF is a fellowship of men and women who, motivated by their love for the Lord Jesus Christ and in obedience to His commands, have joined together to exhort and assist His church in the prisons and in the community, in its ministries to prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families, and to promote biblical standards of justice in the criminal justice system." So reads the pamphlet PF distributes to explain its program.

In fact, PF conducts four seminars every year in Angola. Chuck Colson, founder of the organization, spent seven months in a federal prison after being convicted for his participation in the Watergate scandal. He "came to know the Lord" behind bars, and, upon release, he founded, funded, and nurtured PF until

it grew into an international organization with chartered ministries in over 40 countries.

Apart from the seminars, PF sponsors the "Angel Tree" program, which distributed Christmas presents to over 140,000 children of inmates last year. They also sponsor "Community Service Projects" in which non-violent prisoners are furloughed to work on projects to help the needy, including the elderly and victims of crime. "Justice Fellowship," the justice advocacy division of PF, works to reform the criminal justice system, promote victims' rights, alternative forms of sentencing, victim-offender reconciliation, and church-based victim assistance programs.

It's not surprising that Prison Fellowship wanted to determine how effective its programs were. They undertook a research project to track the recidivism (the frequency with which released prisoners return to prison) of its program participants. Perhaps because religious commitment is so difficult to verify, no studies had ever been done to determine its effect on recidivism. Pri-

son Fellowship declared this to be the first project of its kind.

Prison Fellowship's recently released "Final Report On Year One" is the result of the first year of that research project. It reports recidivism rates of prisoners eight to fourteen years after their participation in Prison Fellowship "Discipleship Seminars," and compares them with a "control group" of prisoners released at the same time.

The bottom line results of the study caused a considerable stir across the nation. An 11% decrease in the recidivism of the Prison Fellowship group as compared to the control group was found. That fact was transmitted across the country by the Associated Press, and received expanded coverage in many local publications.

Details within the report did not get as much attention. When females are excluded, the decrease in recidivism is only 7%; and when black males are taken as a group the study found a 4% **higher** rate of recidivism among the Prison Fellowship group. In Angola, where black

males comprise 80% of the population, that statistic cannot be ignored.

Statistical separation of high-risk and low-risk prisoners (by U.S. Parole Commission Salient Factor Scores) also proved significant. Both high and low risk prisoners were included in the study, but high-risk inmates showed no reduction in recidivism.

The report admits that its results might be tilted in favor of religious commitment because the Prison Fellowship prisoners were "a self-motivated group of people who freely chose to take part in the Prison Fellowship program," and because they underwent an "arduous selection review" choosing only those most likely to succeed.

One explanation given for the higher rate of black recidivism is "...compared to today, there were relatively few black staff in Prison Fellowship ten years ago when the...program was run. Thus, blacks may have found the program harder to identify with." Another explanation reads: "...if black males are more likely to return to communities



CHAPLAINS MAGEE, WILSON & P.F. DEATH-ROW SEMINAR FACILITATORS



OUTCAMP PARTICIPANTS IN PRISON FELLOWSHIP SEMINAR

with limited socio-economic opportunity and increased exposure to drugs, the possible effect of Prison Fellowship may be competing with stronger forces." This is probably true, but it does not explain the increase in recidivism of the Prison Fellowship participants.

The study also redefined recidivism to mean "any new arrest following release from prison," a significant departure from the normal definition which requires the subject actually be convicted and returned to prison before he is considered a recidivist. This

FULL GOSPEL BUSINESSMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Six of the Main Prison's eight religious organizations are mainline Christian and preach that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Five of the six consider themselves to be "churches." The exception, the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship (FGBMF), considers itself to be an outreach organization. Its leader, Walter Wren, is the "president," not the "pastor."

"Our major concern is for those who do not know the Lord," said Wren. "Our program is designed to encourage them to come and hear the Word of God." While there is a sharp division in the way the churches understand the Holy Trinity, and milder divisions concerning the definition and significance of "speaking in tongues," baptism, and being "slain in the spirit," none of these differences effect the FGBMF. "Full Gospel serves as a buffer for the other churches." Anyone who expresses curiosity about Christianity is quickly added to the call-out. At FGBMF meetings prisoners are allowed to smoke and fraternize much more than in the churches. The leadership does not expect its congregaton to be "saved," they only expect them to listen to their program.

That program usually includes participation by outside Christian organizations. Ken Weaver, the outside sponsor for the group, brings Christians from all over the state to FGBMF's monthly meetings. Preachers, musicians, singers, all mix with prisoners, and all testify to the power of God. Of all the people who come to minister in Angola, Weaver has proven himself over the years to be one of the most reliable, hardworking, dedicated sponsor any group could have.

Wren criticizes the chaplain's department for not showing interest in the inmate organizations. "I know sometimes guys have written to the warden, and he's answered that he would have no problem with their proposal, 'if the chaplain has no problem with it.' But when they brought it to the chaplain he flatly denied it." Wren also felt chaplains needed to be around when inmates needed them. "If you need to see a chaplain at night, you just can't," he said. "Come the next day you can write him a letter. A few days after that he may put you on call-out to come see him. We need to have a chaplain here."

His most serious concern, however, was being treated as a second class Christian. "Not only

unique definition skewed the results. An arrest is no indication of the guilt of any American, and young black males living in high crime areas may be more likely than their white counterparts to develop an arrest record.

The other fatal flaw in this study is the size of the study group. Only 40 black males and 108 white males (and an equivalent control group) were involved. With more than 1.2 million people incarcerated in America, this is not a statistically significant volume of data. Perhaps no conclusions at all should be drawn from this study. Perhaps we should let it serve only to indicate a direction future studies should take.

Angola's religious program is not centered around Prison Fellowship. Its main engine is the local program driven by two factors - the chaplain's department, and the inmate-run religious organizations. There can be no understanding of this program without an understanding of the man who molded and shaped it for a quarter century.

Joseph E. Wilson served for seven-and-one-half years as a U.S. Army chap-

lain before entering the Angola chaplaincy over twenty years ago. He now leaves to minister to the victims of crime in Prison Fellowship's "Neighbors Who Care" program. Before retiring, Wilson characterized his 23 years service for the **Angolite**: "It has been an education. When I came here I was as green as a gourd on how to handle people, and as far as knowing anything about the games people play. But not only have my eyes been opened to what goes on among inmates, but I have been made aware that it's not just inmates. It's people."

A traumatic experience early in Wilson's career as chaplain may have influenced him in a fundamental way. **Angolite** staff-writer Douglas Dennis remembers the incident. According to Dennis, two inmates, Kenneth "Satch" Henley and Newt Martin, successfully escaped from the prison grounds one hot summer night in 1971. They tried and failed to steal a car, but they did steal an old tire. They were walking down the only road leading in or out of Angola, carrying the tire in plain view, flagging traffic trying to get a ride. Wilson, on his way to pick up his two children from choir

the chaplain's department, people all around looked on us as second class. 'Jailhouse religion' they call it. They come from the street intending to minister to poor little ole inmates. But when they get here, I'm telling you, they get surprised! We've had spirit-filled Christians come in here and tell us, 'This is something. We thought we were coming here to minister to you, and you have been ministering to us.' You can't fool spirit-filled believers. You might put on a show for a carnal-minded person, but you can't put on a show for the spirit-filled. They will let you know."

Wren looks forward, as do the inmate pastors, to working more closely with the chaplain's department. "For a long time Chaplain Wilson was just set in his ways, and that was it. The difference was made within him. He stopped supporting us. What did he expect? All that should be behind us. This is a brand new day, a brand new ballgame. I can say this with a free heart and a free spirit, that if the chaplain's department shows interest in giving the inmate pastors the respect that they are men of God, I think the inmate pastors and the rest of their flock will support the chaplain's department."



F.G.B.M.F.'S WALTER WREN

CHAPLAIN JOSEPH E. WILSON

Not long after Joseph E. Wilson came to work in 1969, Angola became known as the "Bloodiest Prison in the Nation." There was no chapel for prisoners, no Prison Fellowship organization holding seminars four times a year, and no contract or volunteer chaplains to help with the work. "If my calculations are correct," he said, "we were averaging one death by violence every month. Religion was not a potent force here."

Conditions improved, and Wilson credits those improvements to the federally mandated consent decree of 1975. "It's pretty obvious it was the court order that made the difference," he said. "It changed Angola from a place where religion was tolerated, to a place where it is at least considered as a viable rehabilitative force." He feels the present religious program is helpful, but not adequate. The other chaplains share his belief that there should be at least one full-time paid chaplain for every 500 inmates.

Wilson believes the chaplaincy is fundamentally different from all other departments. "With most departments you can look at statistics which tell you about the work that's going on. With the chaplain's department you can't do that. If you did, we'd have to stop at the end of every day and write down how many people we saw and what it was pertaining to. You don't try to keep that in statistical form. The chaplaincy is a ministry of presence. Not a ministry of statistics. It's not what you say or do when you are trying to be of support to a man who's hurting. It's the fact that you are there. Administrators don't know what the work of chaplaincy is about."

Wilson believes spiritual growth is more important than any other aspect of rehabilitation - and that mental health is essential to spiritual growth. He feels a special responsibility toward mental health patients because he believes the seeds of some mental health problems might be nested in the "ultimates" - the eternal life and death issues - that chaplains deal with. "Many mental health problems are associated with a tormenting God," he said. "A God of judgement rather than a God of love. They think God is always watching, just waiting for them to mess up so He can slap them down. That's the picture you can get if you don't go to a church."

"If we could take five positions that are presently authorized for the mental health department, and make them chaplain positions, we could do twice the good mental health does. They will get all up in the air about that kind of statistic, but it's true. Mental Health will tell you they deal with the man's mind, but do you know how? They say, 'He was this, and this, which caused him to be the way he is.' There's a difference in telling him what caused him to be the way he is, and telling him how he can change. We tell him how he can change."

Chaplain Gary Penton, who now works at Dixon Correctional Institute, but worked with Wilson in Angola from 1978 to 1985, credits Wilson with starting and maintaining the volunteer chaplain system. "He had the patience to filter the meaningless contributors out of the program," Penton said. "He had patience through all those years of dealing with a very sensitive subject."

That volunteer system has been both blessing

practice, stopped to help them.

Martin had kept a low profile in prison, making no pretensions. Henley however, was well-known. He was heavily involved in inmate organizations, and always coming up with new programs. He was full of "positive ideas." He presented himself as a rehabilitated man. He threatened to cut Wilson's heart out if he didn't do as he was told.

Martin and Henley kidnapped Wilson, making him drive them to Baton Rouge in his own car. On several occasions during that ride Martin had to calm Henley down and persuade him not to harm Wilson. They left Wilson in his car, unharmed, when they stole another vehicle out of a hospital parking lot. They were eventually re-captured, but only after Henley went on a five-state crime spree, accumulating so much time in so many states

he may never return to Angola. Martin did not go with him. Eventually he was identified and brought to St. Francisville to face charges of aggravated escape and aggravated kidnapping. Wilson made every effort to help Martin and succeeded in holding his additional sentence down to five years. To this day Martin has only praise for Wilson.

But Wilson had only been working as chaplain for two years and was still, in his own words, "green as a gourd." Many feel he made an important distinction between the unpretentious Martin, and the enterprising facade displayed by Henley. A distinction that set his attitude toward inmate leaders for the next twenty years.

Because he was head chaplain, Wilson's attitude affected the entire chaplain's department, and for as long as

and bane to Wilson. Presently 15 volunteers, who receive no wage, come to Angola to support various inmate religious groups. "Volunteers claim to come in under the name of religion - well I know different," said Wilson. "They come in ready to play games. I don't mean all of them. We have a large number who come in with the express purpose of trying to make religion meaningful in the lives of the inmates. [But] we have some volunteers who are here for their own build-up.

"Their ulterior motive could be any number of things," he said. "To be able to go out and say, 'I'm a chaplain at Angola.' It would make people think, 'He deals with the hard core. He knows what it's about to be down there where those inmates are. He's winning them to Christ.' How many of those statements would you believe? They are trying to build up the ministry they already have [out on the street]. And by that I mean to put that word 'ministry' in quotation marks. It's their ministry. I don't see it as God's ministry. They will claim to be winning inmates to Christ in Angola, and use it to persuade people to contribute to their ministry. They often claim they not only go to Angola, but any number of other prisons, and they say, 'We need your help.'

"By and large there are a lot of good prison ministries that are doing some good for the people involved," said Wilson. "I'm not by any stretch of the imagination trying to imply that every prison ministry is a farce. But the few who are not in it for the good they can do are a detriment to the prison ministry."

Penton does not believe the system would have worked without Wilson. He credits him with the

ability to discern in advance who was going to cause problems, and who wasn't. "Inevitably, his predictions came true," said Penton. "Wilson had a comprehensive program to screen volunteers and balance spiritual realities," he said.

Penton also credits Wilson with organizing the first Death Row seminar with Prison Fellowship. "The first ever Death Row seminar was held in Kentucky," he said, "but Wilson organized the first one done in Louisiana, which was actually the second Death Row seminar in America." At the time it was an extremely novel idea. Few felt death row inmates could benefit from any prison program. The seminar was successful, and they've been doing it every year ever since.

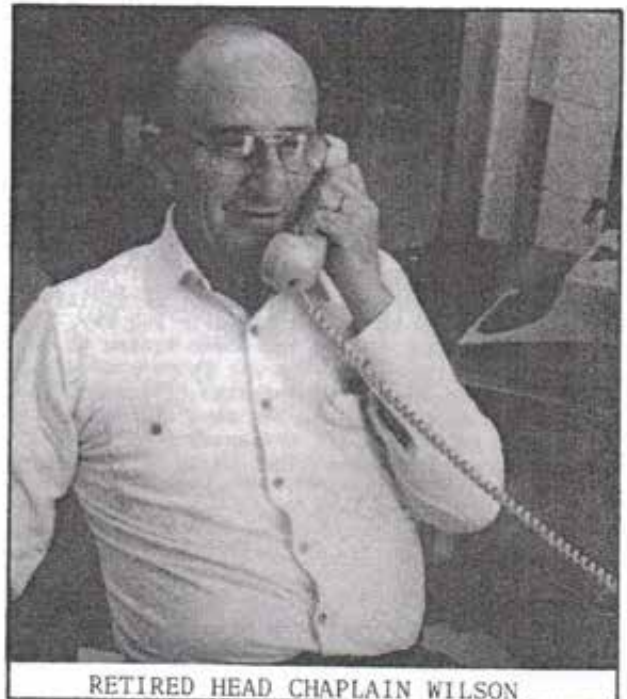
This was Wilson's farewell interview. Reflecting on the things he'd said, he wanted to be sure he gave credit where it was due. "A whole lot of what I've been saying here has a negative impact. I don't want that, I want to leave a positive impact. One of the things which changed this prison was the presence of the chapel. I would like to express a word of appreciation to everybody who had a part in building it. Reverend James Stovall had a lot to do with that. So did Ms. Lydra Seay. The architects, the construction workers, the Interchurch Conference, the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and the State made a large contribution."

Wilson had one parting comment for the prison population: "Playing games may get you ahead here or there as far as this world is concerned. But the only way you can get ahead as far as the Lord is concerned is complete surrender to His will for your life."

the old-timers can remember there has been friction between that department and the inmate religious organizations. In any discussion of the issues affecting Angola's religious program, this friction is paramount.

ISSUE I. Friction between the chaplain's department and inmate religious groups:

Back in the late 1960s, encouraged by then-Warden C. Murray Henderson's policy of urging prisoners to create self-help programs and organizations, inmate-religionists, who had always banded together in small informal groups to worship, began to form their own religious organizations, conducting religious services and activities on their own. Five Christian churches, a Jehovah's Witnesses congregation, a Muslim organization, and one Christian outreach organization, now



RETIRED HEAD CHAPLAIN WILSON

exist in Angola. [See sidebars]

Eight prisoners are pastor, spokesman, Imam or president of Angola's eight religious organizations. The bulk of the Main Prison religious community follows their leadership. Chaplain Wilson held a dim view of many individuals in these groups.

"The driving force behind inmate preachers, if you want to call them that, in many cases is finding an area in which they can have some power," Wilson said. "Now, we're talking about individuals, we're not talking about a whole group of people being the same way. Some of them intend to try to promote the Lord's work. But on the other hand, you have a number of them who are in it because of the power and prestige they get out of it. The percentage of those that are in it for power and pres-

tige has not changed, to my knowledge, for the past 23 years." Wilson would not divulge that percentage, but said "anyone wanting to denigrate the religious program can point to any one of these people and everybody knows who they are."

In the past, many of these leaders were involved for power and prestige, and as Chaplain Wilson said, everybody knew who they were. There are no secrets in prison. Under constant observation, there is no time any prisoner has alone to himself. Men must work, sleep, eat, and play in close contact with each other. No one can indulge in the common prison vices - homosexuality, drugs, gambling - without becoming a subject of the prison rumor mill. Religious leaders are under even more intense scrutiny because the inmate population delights in tales of fallen preachers. No such

CHAPLAIN NOLAN FONTENOT

After Wilson left, Nolan Fontenot was promoted to Head Chaplain. He'd worked for 17 years at Jackson Mental Institution as a Psych Aid 2, supervising 19 employees. Always a deeply religious man, he felt "called into ministry" and acted on his faith. In 1974, when he was 36 years old, he quit his job, his wife quit her job, and they packed up their two children and moved to Houston to attend Texas Bible College. Both Fontenots graduated four years later, and returned to Louisiana in 1978. Fontenot fulfilled the two year pastoral requirement all full-time chaplains must meet by serving as a volunteer chaplain. He was hired full-time in 1980.

Fontenot converted from Catholicism in 1967, and has been a member of the United Pentecostal Church (UPC) ever since. If you ask him about the relationship between United Pentecostal Apostolic Church (UPA), the inmate religious organization he sponsors, and UPC, he will smile and say, "It was a compromise between those who wanted to call it the Apostolic Fellowship and those who wanted to call it the United Pentecostal Fellowship. But UPA preaches and teaches the same as UPC on the outside." UPC tenets set UPA apart from Angola's other Christian organizations which often have no relationship between their names and their doctrine. None of that bothers Fontenot. "The names of our religious organizations are not really important," he says. "The name of the Lord is."

Receptive, yet focussed on his message, Fontenot looks directly at you. His speech is candid. "When a man lies he binds himself," he says, "because lying brings feelings of guilt and

condemnation. You are bound by that. The Bible says, '...and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' People say the truth shall set you free, but the Bible says it will make you free. To be made is a process. You have to submit to it. You can be set free by the Governor, and still feel bound. But if I sit here and tell you the truth, when I leave I have no worry. I can come back and tell you the same thing. I feel free. Truth has that power. But if I sit here and misrepresent myself, or God, or anything, I will feel guilt and condemnation, and I will wonder when will you catch me in what I said. That is binding. That is not liberating."

Fontenot believes "truth" is the doctrine of the United Pentecostal Church. That belief is central to his being, and some of the controversy surrounding him flows from it. Prisoners have a choice in the manner they interpret his words and actions.

For example, he is the only chaplain who sponsors an inmate religious organization, but the manner in which that organization was formed once caused ill feelings [See page 19-20]. Prisoners can view the fact that his inmate church is in strict adherence to his own stated religion as proper and natural, or as a kind of favoritism.

Another example: since the inmate pastor of his sponsored church is his own clerk, does that mean he is overly supportive of the people who work for him, or does it mean he exercises an extraordinary degree of control? And since that church is the only religious organization with regular callouts in the chapel, does that mean anything at all?

tales have circulated in many years. Angola's present religious leaders are proven men. They are not without blemish - not without wrinkle - but without exception they live the doctrine they preach.

It would not be enough if all that could be said of them is that they don't curse, or have any pornographic magazines in their locker boxes, or that they don't watch "R" rated movies on television. Leaders must exemplify the good, not simply condemn the bad. To command a congregation these men must not only preach the Word of God, they must live it, walk it, talk it, breathe it, and even dream it.

So it is that hundreds of inmates walk past the chaplain's service in the air-conditioned chapel, with its comfortable seats, its raised altar, its organ



HEAD CHAPLAIN FONTENOT

Joseph Stevenson, inmate pastor of the Methodist Men's Fellowship, brought out another example of Fontenot's penchant for controversy when he reported: "Chaplain Fontenot once said that he's still learning how to like black people. When you make a statement like that, and you're in a position like he is, then you're actually saying, 'I have not yet learned to like black people.' That tells me you don't like me. So how can you deal with people as a chaplain in a community which is 80% black? You're saying you don't like 80% of the people that you are hired to minister to."

Fontenot's statement can be interpreted in other ways. He could have meant his appreciation for blacks continues to grow, or that he is learning to like black people more as time goes on. Whatever you decide, Fontenot is not worried. "It doesn't matter what people think about me," he says, "but it does matter what He thinks about me. I want to be your friend, but above all I want to be right with the Word."

"My reputation is only important with God," says Fontenot. "My wife, who is the closest person to me in the world, probably disagrees more with me than anybody else. But my love doesn't diminish. Now that I'm in the new head chaplain I know there will be a lot more people disagreeing with me because I have to deal now with departments that I never had to deal with before. I'm going to have to make decisions that some folk are not going to agree with. It won't be that this is my personal decision, but for the whole it's the best decision that we can make."

"I would not have taken this position if I

thought my convictions were going to make me prejudiced and biased to the point where I would hurt anyone. Not one day have I worked here hoping to become the head chaplain to have only Pentecostal believers in this prison. I never have felt like that. Just give me the same liberty you have. You don't have to agree with me, and I know you can't because the flesh wars against the spirit and a lot of religions are just carnal. They want to do what their flesh wants to do. But if I'm going to be religious I want to be right. And if I'm going to help someone I want to help them to be right - because you cannot serve two masters. We can't serve our flesh and our spirit, because one is against the other."

Inmate pastor Wilfred Cain, of the Church of God in Christ, has a positive impression of Fontenot, "This man does one thing that Chaplain Wilson could not do. He will smile. He will give you a very round smile. I appreciate it. Do you know how much that smile cheers people up? It's the little things that show somebody cares. That's all we need to make our day. Whether he actually does or not, that smile says somebody cares. I think that's very important. It reveals a lot about him. I really admire that about him."

Fontenot's face lights up and his eyes shine when he speaks of the tenets of the United Pentecostal Church. Listening to him expound upon the "Oneness Doctrine," the "Trinitarians," and the "Jesus Name Baptism" is a thought provoking experience. "The biggest war we fight is between our ears," he said. Well versed in scripture, Fontenot makes his points and backs them with logic. You realize; it's the ministry he loves, not the politics.

CHAPLAIN HOWELL CHAMPAGNE

Father Howell Champagne hired on as a full-time chaplain in August of 1991. He was schooled in a monastery in Covington, Louisiana, and graduated from Catholic University in Washington, DC. He went to theology school in New Orleans, and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1974. He follows a line of successful Catholic chaplains assigned to Angola by the Catholic bishop.

Champagne has worked in the "parish life," taught in a high school seminary, and served as an Army chaplain at Fort Hood, Texas. He served the St. John the Evangelist Church in Plaquemine for six years before coming to Angola. The prison setting has not fazed him. "I thought it would be very similar to the Army, and it is," he said. "The Army is an institutional setting, it has rules and regulations, it has command structure. It has certain things it has to get done - it has a mission. The same thing applies to Angola. This is an institution, it has a mission, rules and regulations. Yet there is a felt need by the institution, the state, for a religious program."

For Champagne, the demands of ministry don't change inside the prison. "It's people," he says. "A little different from the parish life, but in many ways it's exactly the same. It's people who have problems, who have, even in this place, some

joy and some happiness, as well as sorrow and tragedy. It's people who have a need to worship God. Which is why I'm here - to help them to do that in whatever way I can be of help to them."

Champagne makes a conscious effort to reach across doctrinal boundaries in helping prisoners. "My job is to help people achieve a relationship with God. I'm the Catholic chaplain, but I'm also a chaplain. My job is to clear the way, and to help an individual inmate to relate to God."

Doctrinal differences between Catholics and Muslims are severe, but Champagne says he has nothing but honest respect for the Muslims. "I think they have a gift to offer, and I personally like them, because they are a beneficial element here at Angola," he said. "They are peaceful, brotherly. For the most part they are quiet, though they certainly will yell and scream if they feel wronged. And that's good. Basically they are a calming influence here. I have nothing but the greatest admiration for them."

The admiration is mutual. Mujahidin Abdul-Karim, inmate spokesman for the Muslims, does not believe the chaplain's department is capable of representing the Muslim interest, and for the most part, he resents having to deal with Christian clergy. "They know nothing about the religious laws of the Muslim," said Karim, "and we

and piano, its guitars and public address system, to pack themselves like sardines in hot, stuffy, dingy little classrooms, where the temperature often exceeds 100 degrees, to hear their inmate pastors "deliver the Word."

A) Racial aspects of all-white chaplaincy: Few, outside of Hollywood, will dispute that the neighborhood church is a potent force in America. The segregated neighborhood church is the natural consequence of the segregated neighborhood. In the South, and in many places throughout America, segregated neighborhoods are the norm. Regardless of doctrinal difference, church-goers are conditioned to worship in segregated groups. Blacks expect black congregations and black preachers. Whites expect white congregations and white preachers. Neither side is comfortable when this formula varies.

Eighty percent of Angola's population is black, but all of Angola's full-time chaplains are white. As the Prison Fellowship study suggests, this may affect

the ability of any religious program to lower recidivism among prisoners, and may explain why the chaplain's services have been poorly attended.

Sidney Deloch, inmate pastor of Angola's St. John the Baptist Brotherhood, laments the lack of a full-time black chaplain: "I think it's a sad injustice to have a predominately black prison, one of the largest in the country, and have not one black chaplain on staff. I was told that it is hard to get a black chaplain because most have congregations they will not leave for what the state pays. To me it made sense, but it was also a slap in the face to say the only thing they would come here for is money. I think it's a sad injustice to our Christian community. I advocated the need for a black chaplain, and I was heavily stigmatized because some felt I was trying to incite a riot. The truth is the chaplains we have are just not meeting the needs. Prisoners need somebody they can feel comfortable with. It does not mean there is a racial thing there."

can't explain these things in hopes they will understand because there is no willingness on their part to understand. No dialogue. No good faith effort being made by anyone in the chaplain's department, with the exception of the Catholic chaplain. Father Champagne has been very cordial, respectful, and cooperative with the Muslims. Outside of him, and one of the volunteer chaplains, we've had no cooperation."

Joseph Stevenson, inmate pastor of Methodist Men's Fellowship, agrees in principle with Karim. "All Catholics, and I don't mean to stereotype them, but all Catholic priests who I've ever met have been outgoing people," said Stevenson. "They have not been hard to talk to. They listen. I feel comfortable with Father Champagne, and I believe that anybody who would go to him with a legitimate need would have that need met. Champagne knows his job. He's been so well trained to do that, that he doesn't do it according to the person, he does it according to the need."

Champagne tries to deal with all religious factions equally. He recognizes there are denominations within Angola that sincerely believe other denominations are going to hell. "Just so long as they allow others the courtesy of believing the way they believe, and not try to force their beliefs on others, I don't have any problem with them," he said. "I respect them. I know

explicitly that there are some denominations here that will not have any type of association with me as a Catholic. They will not talk to me, they will not even acknowledge that I exist. I have no problem with that. I respect their belief. I try to accommodate them by not imposing, by not forcing the issue - yet treating them with the utmost of respect and brotherhood to the extent that I can - which is to leave them alone."

Not one of the eight inmate religious organizations is Catholic. Some think that's because the Catholic chaplain has traditionally been extremely active, moving all over Angola's 18,000 acres, holding Mass twenty-three times a month, and Catholic Doctrine classes once a week. Champagne also supervises meetings of the Latin American Cultural Brotherhood, which he sponsors, and conducts weekly meetings of what may be the only therapy group for rapists in the DOC. According to Champagne, there are no inmate run Catholic organizations because "the Catholic church is organized differently. Protestant churches have charters, and each one is independent. The Catholic church does not operate independently. Our main times are when we can get the entire Catholic community of medium and minimum security prisoners together in the chapel." Although over a thousand prisoners list their religion as Catholic, the active Mass-attending community totals about 115 inmates.

Deloch encapsulated the feelings of a large segment of the population when he said, "I think the chaplain's department has a bad outreach program. I think it's due to a cultural barrier. Because if you come up with a silver spoon in your mouth you can't know me. You can't know my problems. You can't understand me. And even if you live next door to me, if you're white, you can't know me."

Joseph Stevenson, inmate pastor of Angola's Methodist Men Fellowship, does not feel race should be a factor. "I don't think the white chaplains would have any problem reaching out to the inmate population if they wanted to," he said. But he also said the chaplains felt "threatened by inmate pastors for two reasons. Number one, if the inmate pastors are without a doubt bringing in more people than the chaplains do they see that as a downer because it makes them feel inadequate. I don't think that's what it is, it's that inmates are more comfortable with inmates. A person who comes out of society into Angola tends to talk down to you. You're looked

upon as a second-class Christian. Most inmates feel that way around chaplains, and some chaplains have given them that impression."



FATHER CHAMPAGNE

Stevenson believes a black chaplain would help, but realizes that getting one will be difficult. "Those who are qualified don't want it, and those who are unqualified can't get it," he said. "Consequently we are left with white chaplains. It was brought up in one of our meetings, and Warden Whitley asked, 'Who are you going to get? You name him and I'll try and get him.' He threw the ball back in our court. How can we expect the administration to find a qualified black chaplain when all of our people can't come up with a single candidate?"

Walter Wren, inmate president of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship, didn't feel it was necessary to address racial aspects. "To be honest with you, be he black or white, if the chaplain is not in the Lord, if he is just professing and not doing what is really supposed to be done, he is worthless. If he is a man of God, be he black or white, everything will fall into place."

George Harris, spokesman for Jehovah's Witnesses, disconnects his group from the chaplain's department. "We have to go through that channel for our call-

outs," he said. "This is all that relates us to them. Other than that we have no connection whatsoever. It does not concern us that all the chaplains are white. As long as the Elders of the St. Francisville congregation, which we are a part of, have their pass and can come up here, as long as there are no problems with our program, we are not concerned with them."

Oscar Edwards, inmate pastor of Angola's United Pentecostal Apostolic Church, finds no fault with an all-white chaplains department. Where the other pastors recognize a need to reach out to the prison population, Edwards relies on the population to act as if they already are Christians and simply submit themselves to authority. "You can't say, 'I'll accept God, but I want to keep my blackness,' or 'I love God, but I want to keep my whiteness,'" he said. He admits, however, that a black chaplain would be a better idea if one were available. "Perhaps one would feel more at liberty with his own, but to designate that this is what I want, this is what I demand, this is what I have to have for me to be complete, is out of focus," he said.



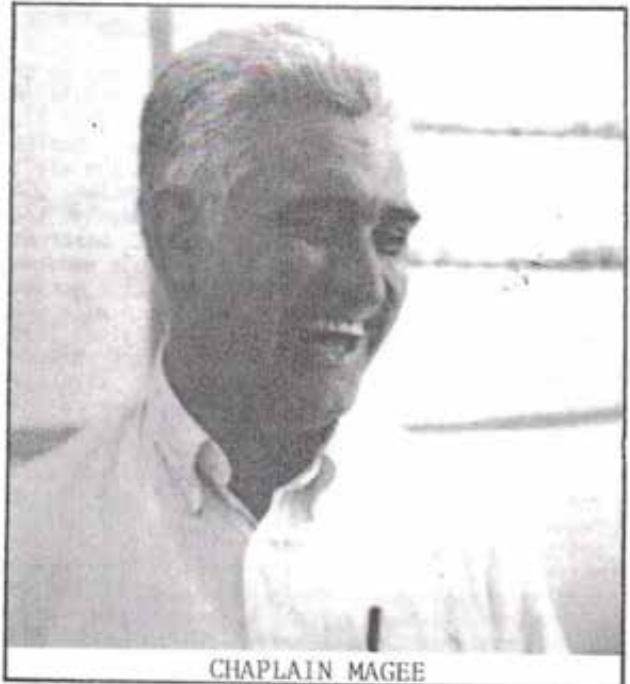
CATHOLIC MASS



HOLY COMMUNION

Mujahidin Abdul-Karim, inmate spokesman for the Students of Al Islam, feels the next chaplain should be a black Muslim Imam. He estimates there are 200 Muslims spread throughout Angola, most living in the out-camps. He believes they have a constitutional right to equal treatment. "You have one full-time Protestant chaplain, you have one full-time Catholic chaplain. The law provides this. We are just asking that we be equally represented with a full-time Imam, as all the Christians are afforded."

When asked why all the full-time chaplains were white, new head chaplain Nolan Fontenot said, "Anytime there is a position open, it is open to black chaplains as well. We've had many black chaplains in the past." He then named Bertrand Griffin (transferred to Dixon



CHAPLAIN MAGEE

CHAPLAIN WILEY MAGEE

"When I was five years old I contracted a high fever," said Reverend Wiley Magee, Angola's Southern Baptist chaplain, "It left scar tissue on the motor part of my brain. There's a fancy name for it which I don't know." That incident affects Magee's muscular coordination, hampering his ability to walk and speak, but it has not hampered his ability to think or discharge his duties in Angola. Understanding him takes a little practice, but the value of what he says is worth the effort. Magee's life symbolizes triumph against the odds; his simple existence is a source of encouragement for inmates with disabilities not so visible.

Magee felt the call to ministry in 1967, just one year after he was "saved." "When I told my pastor I was crazy and that I couldn't preach. I tried to forget about it, but the thought kept coming up in my mind. I tried to just push it back down, but it was really driving me crazy. One day I said, 'Lord, it doesn't make good sense, but if this is what you want me to do I'll do it.' Only then did I finally find peace."

Despite his disability, Magee started out on an evangelical circuit. He went from church to church, throughout Louisiana and Arkansas, preaching the "Word of God," trying to reach those who refused to hear.

He'd been the pastor of Mt. Bethel Baptist Church in Leesville for three years when he learned of an opening in Angola's chaplain's department. He applied for it and in April of 1990, according to Magee, Chaplain Wilson called him and said, "I need a warm body immediately,

can you start work on May 8th?" Magee resigned from Mt. Bethel and has been here ever since.

"My work here is non-denominational," he said. "I preach basic Christianity to anybody who will listen. I've thought of starting a group that is more in line with Southern Baptist, but the last thing Angola needs is another faction."

Magee's opinion of Chaplain Wilson comes from a very close association. "He was the most understanding man I've ever worked for up to this point," he said. "Chaplain Fontenot is a tremendous man, and that's not taking away from him. But Chaplain Wilson was a tremendous man. He was a real help to me."

Magee feels Wilson was misunderstood by the prisoner population. He says Wilson was thoughtful and quiet, and many inmates interpreted that to be self-righteous and conceited. "I don't fault the inmates for that. I can look back on some of my professors who I thought were crazy but who really had tremendous insight. We all do that. But I think because of the inmates' shortsightedness they missed a grand opportunity to tap into a great supply of wisdom that only experience can afford a man."

Magee wants to thank the prisoner population for their acceptance of him. "Inmates here have treated me tremendously well. I could not ask to be treated any better, as a whole, by any group. And I appreciate that. I think a problem with inmates is they feel nobody appreciates them. I want them to know that I do, I really do. And the chaplain's department cares. Sometimes it doesn't always come over, but we do care about your spiritual welfare."

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST BROTHERHOOD

Sidney Deloch, pastor of St. John, may be the most controversial religious leader in Angola. He is certainly one of the most outspoken. When T.J. Jemison, pastor of Mount Zion First Baptist Church in Baton Rouge and president of the eight-million member National Baptist Convention USA, the nation's largest black church, suddenly took an interest in the case of heavyweight boxer and convicted rapist Mike Tyson, many people wondered at his motivation. Jemison said that as a servant of God he was duty bound to help those with the most need, but like so many other religious leaders, he had never visited Angola. Deloch brought the subject up, and not in private. He chastized Jemison over the microphone at a major prison "special function."

"I found it ironic that T.J. Jemison would leave his hometown and church, and go way to Indiana to defend one millionaire criminal. I don't have anything personal against Mike Tyson, but for T.J. Jemison to fly over 20,000 poverty stricken convicts here in Louisiana, just 56 miles from his home church, to help one millionaire convict a thousand miles away, well, I've got problems with that. In that message I was

talking about a soul in need who was helped by the good Samaritan when others just passed him by. The people that passed him by were priests and Levites. That's the way I saw T.J. Now, that does not mean that T.J. is not a man of God, but even men of God make mistakes. I've made many, and I'm probably going to make some more. But I pray to God that I can be big enough to say I'm wrong and ask for forgiveness. Hopefully we'll get some type of response like this from T.J.

"The vast majority of Christians in society believe we are second class saints. In all actuality, since we are saved by the same faith, there should be no distinction. If they want to say that we have only jailhouse religion, well, Jesus was in jail - though he was there for doing no wrong. Paul was in jail. Peter was in jail, James was in jail. John was in jail - he lost his head in jail. If they have problems with convicts they better not go to heaven, because heaven is going to be full of ex-convicts.

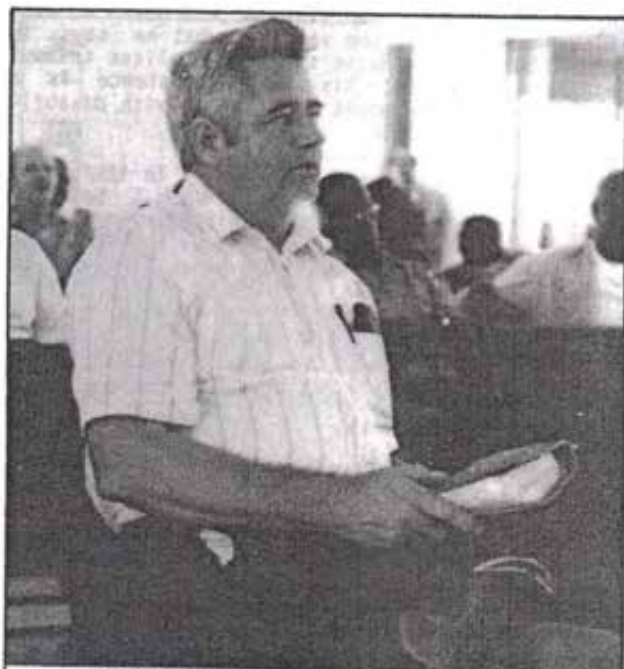
Deloch feels the chaplain's department has been inadequate, and seeks to improve it. "The only true rehabilitation I've come to know is in Jesus Christ, because I've been in the world too. I was so low-down and stinky 'til I was ashamed

Correctional Institute), John Clemens (transferred to Hunt Correctional Center), and J.C. Parks (terminated). All were full-time black chaplains. He also pointed out contract (part-time) chaplains, naming Fahmee Sabree (former

Muslim chaplain), Willie D. Brooks (retired), and Clifton Brown (who is now on the job). The state is an equal opportunity employer, and black applicants get the same consideration as white applicants, he said.



GUEST PASTORS LISTENING AT BANQUET



VOLUNTEER CHAPLAIN ROGILLIO

and afraid of myself. But God picked me up and showed me the light right here in prison. I know the guy I used to be is dead and gone. I'm not saying this so people will get me out, I'm already out. When I became free on the inside, I became totally free. But I need other people to experience this freedom. Without an adequate chaplaincy there are a lot of people who are just not going to get a chance to receive the real rehabilitation that they need.

"Ever since the chapel was built - we did the ground breaking ceremony - we did the dedication - it just continued to go down, down, down hill. There is no outreach. There is deep concern because of the shortage of chaplains. Two or three people just can't do an adequate job done. We have three chaplains here, and 5300 prisoners. That's ridiculous.

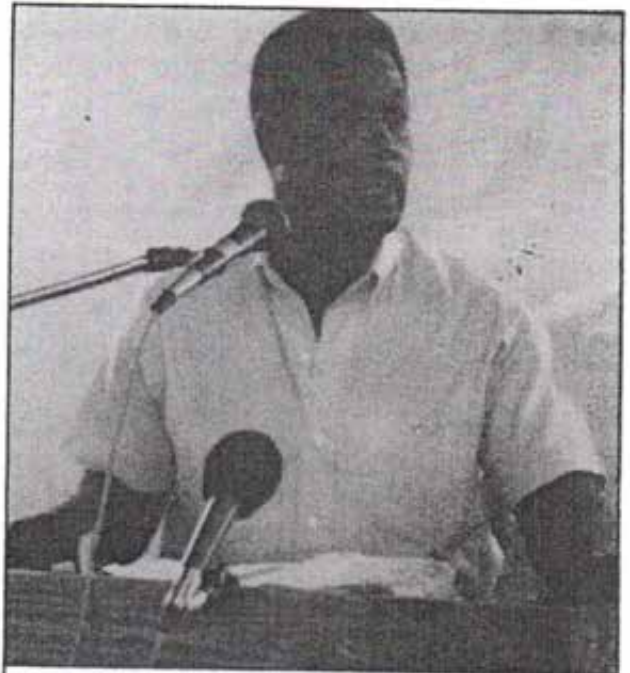
"I think if we are going to deal with jail-care and penal reform it's going to have to begin with us. We can't expect the administration, the government, and certainly not our chaplain's department to do this. We have to become serious about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and proclaim it with everything that's in us. The harvest is ripe, the laborers are few."

Reverend Wiley Magee, Angola's Southern Baptist chaplain, gave a shorter answer. "I don't know why all the full-time chaplains are white," he said. "But I do know the educational requirements are very stiff, and the pay is very low."

Angola Warden John Whitley is aware of all these aspects. His efforts to replace Wilson are specific. "We are definitely trying to hire a black chaplain," he said, "and special attention is being given to hiring a Muslim chaplain because we need one. We've made progress, but nothing definite has yet been decided."

B) Racial aspects of all-black inmate religious leadership: Twenty percent of the prison population is white. From a statistical viewpoint at least one, and possibly two of Angola's eight religious leaders should be white. None are. If the totally white chaplain's department smacks of racism, what of the totally black inmate religious leaders?

"Our inmate leaders are black only because of the way pastors become pas-

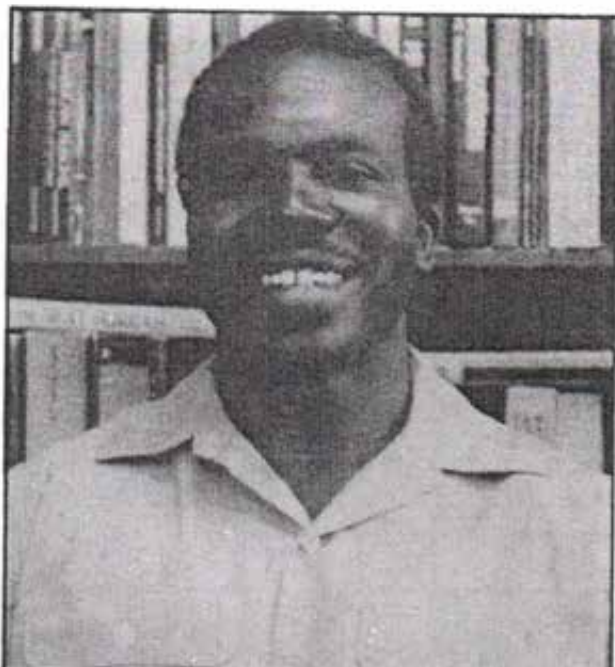


ST. JOHN'S SIDNEY DELOCH

tors," says Stevenson. "The next most likely pastor in any of the six fellowships is going to be whoever is the assistant pastor right now. It is very unlikely that any pastor is ever going to have to compete in a serious election, and that's not because anybody is scared to run against them. It's because we consider ourselves being placed where we are by the Lord. We trust one another, and when a person shows himself having the ability to lead then he's probably going to be there until he leaves here."

What Stevenson says is true, but the more obvious reason no whites are pastors is because of the overwhelming majority of blacks in the congregation. They will support who they are most comfortable with. They could elect a white pastor, but it hasn't happened yet.

There have been some political contests. Charles Lawrence, when he was a staff-writer for the **Angolite**, researched one of the more colorful struggles. According to Lawrence's records, in 1983, a leadership battle with racial overtones occurred within the Pentecos-



LOUIS MITCHELL

tal Fellowship between black pastor Louis Mitchell and white member Gary Martin which resulted in transfer to the outcamps for both inmates. "The chaplain's office was tied up in that," says Stevenson. "They were trying to create at least one fellowship where there was a white inmate pastor. Most blacks resented that because if there was a white pastor it would be because everybody wants him to be, not because he's white or black."

In Lawrence's taped interview Chaplain Wilson repeatedly denies there were any racial overtones. "The Pentecostal Fellowship had an inmate in charge of the group whom I and the outside sponsor tried to counsel to be a better kind of leader," Wilson said. "The more effort we put into it the more sour it turned until we made an attempt to shut it down, and, in so doing, Warden Ross Maggio assumed that we had assumed his power. And he said, 'No!, I'm the only one who can shut something down.' And so he reopened it." Wilson maintained that control of inmate religious organizations is vested in the chaplain's department, and that "any time the



PATRICK MULLEN

administration takes over the chaplain's responsibilities, it always turns sour."

Gary Martin was Wilson's clerk, and Wilson knew him well. "Martin had no desire to run anything," Wilson said. But Louis Mitchell claimed Martin was actively trying to remove him as pastor, and was instigating trouble among the whites in the congregation. When things finally sorted out, a brand new United Pentecostal Apostolic Church was formed, independent of the Pentecostal Fellowship. The chaplain's department insists the only reason they authorized the formation of the new church was to resolve serious doctrinal differences within the Pentecostal Fellowship. Yet according to Patrick Mullen, the inmate the chaplains appointed as pastor of UPA, (and the only white pastor of any inmate religious organization) all of the original members were white.

After 1983, UPA did not remain all-white, or under white leadership. Martin discharged, and later became involved in the scandal which caused the downfall of Pardon Board Chairman Howard Marsellus. Mullen discharged from prison, committed

another crime, was convicted and returned to Angola in rapid sequence. Mitchell never left, but no longer involves himself in things Christian. UPA continues to have the highest concentration of whites, and is the only religious group with a white assistant pastor.

C) The ability to preach: "You've got to preach the gospel!" is a common exhortation among inmate preachers. And they're good at it. They rely heavily on Romans 10:14, which says in part, "...and how shall they hear without a preacher?" They bring excitement, emotion, and lots of energy to the pulpit, often working their congregations to a fever pitch. In contrast, Wilson delivered dry dissertations - informative speeches. He set the trend for the others.

Deloch comments: "No offense to any

of the staff chaplains, but you have to be able to preach the Word when you come in here. You have to be able to command some attention. Inmate preachers here are preaching the Word, and whether people on the outside believe and agree with it or not, it's the Word of God. You've got people coming in here who are just not cutting the mustard. They're just not upholding their end of the deal. There is a distinction between being called to preach and taking a job as a chaplain. I think that you have to be able to deliver a message to God's people. There is more to being a chaplain than just preaching, I understand that. I'm not saying that all a chaplain should do is preach. But I believe when the doors open for church, he should know that's a part of his job. Because of that, because we don't have adequate preachers, because there is a cultural difference, because there is a racial



WILSON



DELOCH

barrier, we have a \$378,000 chapel down there, with central air and heating - with 15 or 20 people on Sunday."

D) Attitude of the chaplaincy toward prisoners: Wilson's feelings about enterprising inmate pastors affected his own ministry. Every Wednesday and Sunday night, the chapel is open for all who care to come and listen to the Protestant chaplains preach. "But the inmate population does not respect the chaplain's department," said Wilson. "If they did they'd be here on Wednesday and Sunday night. Do you know how many come? Fifteen or twenty if we are lucky. The place should be full. The competition is in the inmate groups, and the inmates who are after a power play to keep their following. They make negative comments about the chaplain's department. I'm not saying all of them are, but many of them. A responsible Protestant religious leader would bring everybody that follows him in here."

Walter Wren, of Full Gospel Business-

men's Fellowship, disagrees. "Chaplain Wilson was wrong in claiming we kept prisoners from his services. You can't tell another inmate where to go. An inmate might do what he sees his leader do, but you can't tell him where to go and what to do, that just wouldn't be right. I don't believe there's a leader who ever told his congregation to stay away from the chapel. Personally, I didn't miss a chaplain's service for about five years straight, but they showed no interest in the Christian community and I felt like I was just spinning my wheels."

Wilson's feelings about the population and the prison administration affected the attitude of the entire department. Those feelings are reflected in his statement: "When a chaplain tries to stand up in the face of inmates who are playing games, and tries to stand for what is right, those inmates get angry and make all kinds of derogatory remarks about the chaplain up and down the walk. The chaplain's position is the

UNITED PENTECOSTAL APOSTOLIC

"We adhere to the letter of United Pentecostal doctrine," says Oscar Edwards, pastor of Angola's United Pentecostal Apostolic (UPA) Fellowship. "I would say the baptism in Jesus' name sets us apart from most other churches. When one is being buried in the water, we include the name Jesus, as we have received it from the Book of Acts." Most other churches baptize saying, "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." The difference may seem trivial to the uninitiated.

"This is not a small thing," says Edwards. "If I'm trying to have previous sins remitted, then I'm going to have to make sure that I'm understanding and doing right. I wouldn't say, 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and in Jesus' name,' because then I'm not actually having faith in one particular scriptural text. I think that's revelation."

Indeed it is not a small thing. It leads to the controversy over the Trinity. "If you receive the revelation of the Jesus name baptism, then you should be able to receive the 'Oneness' in comparison to the Trinity," said Edwards.

Where the other churches believe in a "trine" God they cannot explain, UPA insists there is but one God who manifests Himself in any way

He sees fit. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are merely different manifestations of the same entity. "I have yet to have anyone completely explain to me the actual Trinity concept," said Edwards. "When I ask questions they tell me, 'That's a mystery, God has to show you.' If it's such a mystery that you can't explain it then I don't know that it has any substance to it. But all through the Bible we understand that there is one God. He has to have one name."

UPA is unique in several other respects. Edwards is the only inmate pastor who is also a chaplain's clerk, and the only one who believes inmate organizations should have submitted to Chaplain Wilson. "Many times over the years I didn't agree with what Wilson was doing. I gritted my teeth. But I can't go beyond my status and handle him like he was below me or my equal. I haven't been given that liberty."

"I don't think Chaplain Wilson trusted inmates like he could have. I think he had fear of them. I think he was more intimidated by them. He was taken hostage at one time. I sympathize with him in some areas because he had been deceived and fooled over the years because he was green. So, when he gets burned here, he learns. An inmate plays a game on him over there, and he gets burned. And he learns. Now we all get labeled.

"Let's get real now. We are incarcerated. I

least appreciated position of any person in the whole prison. It's not appreciated by the administration or the inmates."

Oscar Edwards, inmate pastor of United Pentecostal Apostolic fellowship, agrees with Chaplain Wilson, and adds, "I think some of the guys had stirred up animosity against the chaplain's department. Some of the guys had said the chaplains were bad water, and the others just wouldn't drink it. But if we're going to be what we claim to be, Godly people, Christian people, then there is no way we can have these walls and barriers.

"Chaplain Wilson thought of it this way," Edwards continued. "This is the chaplain's department. For the church groups to work as a part of the chaplain's department they would have to be branch offices of the chaplain's department, rather than the chaplain's department being a branch of them."

Wilfred Cain disagrees. "If I were to

don't doubt God can call people for work, but I do not see God having us to operate in conflict. The Bible tells us to follow peace for all men. It tells us to submit ourselves to those who have rule over us. We are subject to those who are in power - that includes Warden Whitley, a chaplain, a sergeant, or whoever. If what they are requesting of us does not require us to sin against God, we are bound by the Word of God to submit ourselves. That's a principle most of us who are incarcerated never learned. That's why we are here.

"We get chaplains, and others, who don't do things like we think they ought to be done. But when we learn how to submit ourselves to whoever is in charge, as long as they don't cause us to sin, then we learn something from God. God is going to use us. He's going to make that chaplain sit up and take notice."

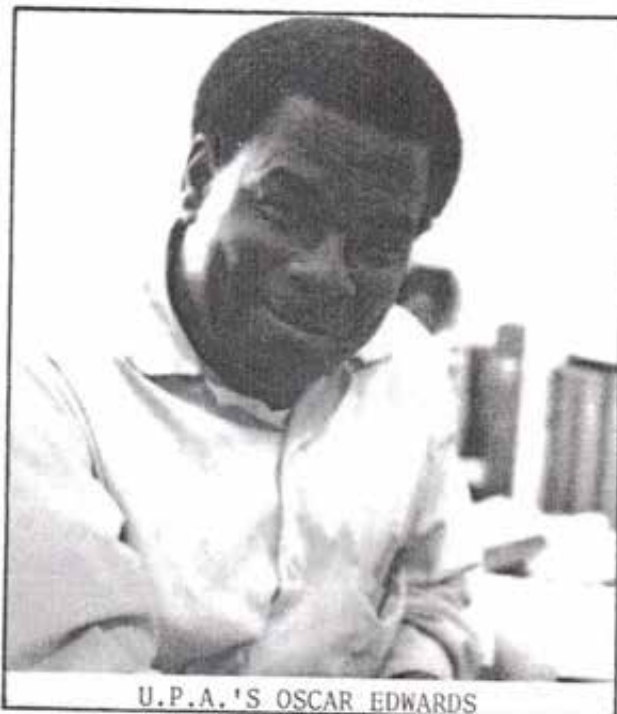
Edwards admits that Wilson never did "sit up and take notice." He explained, "That might be why he's gone now. I really do believe that there's something - I can feel it stirring - God is getting ready to do something in Angola, something that will cause the world to take notice. The Bible says that where sin abounds, Grace that much more abounds - and I feel God is going to do some things here, in salvation and in healing. Some miracles. And the rest of the world is going to take notice, simply because we have the religious programs that no other institutions have."

subject myself under an administration like Wilson's, where I am being demeaned as one who doesn't know what he's talking about or shouldn't be teaching people, what I'm doing is agreeing with him. I should do just what he tells me to do, and bring people in so he can talk to them. He's not working with me, I'm working for him. I would have to agree with everything that he's doing in order to subject myself to that. I don't."

ISSUE II. The shortage of chaplains:

Almost every problem with Angola's religious program is related to the shortage of full-time chaplains. To ask a man to minister to the spiritual needs of 500 inmates is asking a great deal. Yet in Angola three chaplains are allotted over 1700 inmates each.

When Wilson came to Angola in 1969 there was only one other chaplain, a Catholic priest. The two men were expected to hold an occasional service, preside over funerals at the prison cemetery, and deliver death messages to those who lost family members. With a



U.P.A.'S OSCAR EDWARDS

METHODIST MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

The Methodist Men's Fellowship is considered to be an inmate church, though not a Methodist church. "I can't give you a rundown of the doctrine of Methodist Men because we don't run it like the Methodist Church," said pastor Joseph Stevenson, who faults denominations for splitting Christians apart. Stevenson is considered more of a teacher than a preacher, and prepares himself for his Bible study classes with extreme attention to detail. He is aware of doctrinal differences and seeks the common ground.

For example, in speaking of baptism, Stevenson points out that baptismal ceremonies were not limited to Christianity. "It was an initiation into many of the sects of Biblical times. Jesus knew this, so He said, when you enter the Kingdom of God be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit - or in the name of Jesus. In that way you are publicly stating who you are a part of." Stevenson preaches that baptism is good, but salvation is more important because it "deals with your heart and your mind before God."

On being "slain in the spirit," where members of a congregation lose control of themselves and fall quivering to the floor, Stevenson proposes a test. "If God comes upon me and knocks me down, and I get up the same way I was before I got

knocked down, there is no significance in that. Some people have been slain in the spirit when they went up for a healing, and after the experience they were healed, and that has significance, but that doesn't happen in all cases. Sometimes people have a tendency in Christendom to look for power, for powerful ministries, to experience something that they never experienced before so that they themselves can feel closer to God. So, it could very well go into the psychological area. It could be wishful thinking."

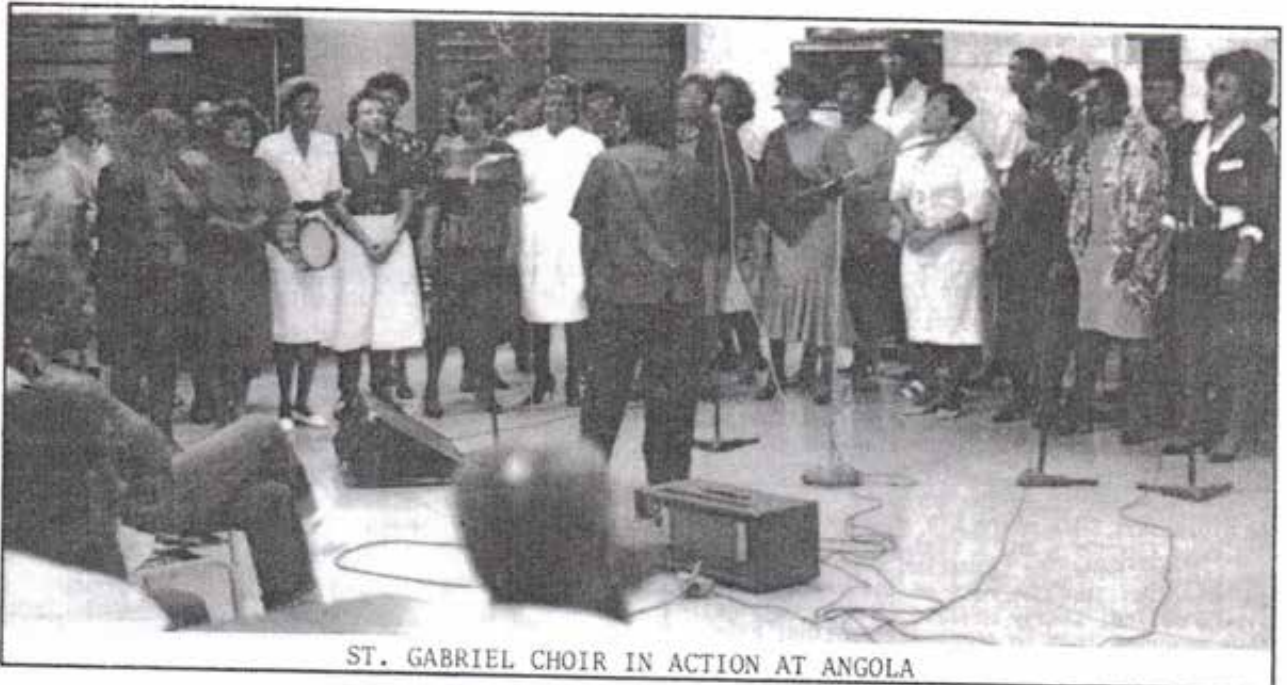
Stevenson does find a biblical foundation for "speaking in tongues," where members of a congregation appear to babble gibberish that makes no sense, even to themselves. "There are certain guidelines in the Bible where tongues are supposed to be presented in the church. There should be an interpretation - and if there is not it is not a true tongue." Stevenson does recognize the "prayer language" which he says enables the believer to pray things that his spirit knows, but his carnal understanding does not perceive.

Stevenson believes in the Trinity, as do the other churches with the exception of the United Pentecostal Apostolics. He separates belief from understanding and admits the Trinity doctrine cannot be explained. "It's something we can't comprehend," he said. "How can there be three distinct manifestations of the one God, each cap-

population of slightly over 2500, there was little more they had time to do.

The State of Louisiana now authorizes four full-time paid chaplains. No re-

placement for the retired Chaplain Wilson has yet been found. The assistance of two contract chaplains, who are paid for part-time work, is helpful, but the record shows only one, Chaplain



ST. GABRIEL CHOIR IN ACTION AT ANGOLA

able of acting independently, but all three acting coordinately having one mind, one purpose, and one will? This is alienated from our way of thinking. We think three people can be friends, they can think alike on a lot of subjects, but no three people, no two people for that matter, can think exactly the same thoughts, have the same will and purpose, all of the time throughout eternity. When a pastor is asked to explain the Trinity he will usually say, 'I cannot rationally explain the Trinity, but I will give you scriptures that support the doctrine of the Trinity and you can study it yourself.' But you can't explain it because the moment you come up with an answer you do what you know you cannot do, and you end up in fallacy."

Stevenson does not shy away from discussing the "color of God's skin." He concerns himself with the Church of the Black Madonna, a sect not yet established in Angola. They preach that Jesus was a black man. Stevenson agrees that Jesus certainly could not have looked like the blond-haired, blue-eyed Caucasian pictured in most Bibles, but he doubts Jesus was a black Ethiopian. He thinks Europeans changed the appearance of Jesus for their own cultural reinforcement, but feels duplicating the crime to the opposite extreme is not the proper response. "Jesus was a Jew," says Stevenson, "painting him as black is just as wrong as painting him as Caucasian."

Clifton Brown, is presently performing in any capacity. Brown holds services on Sunday at Camp A and Camp F.

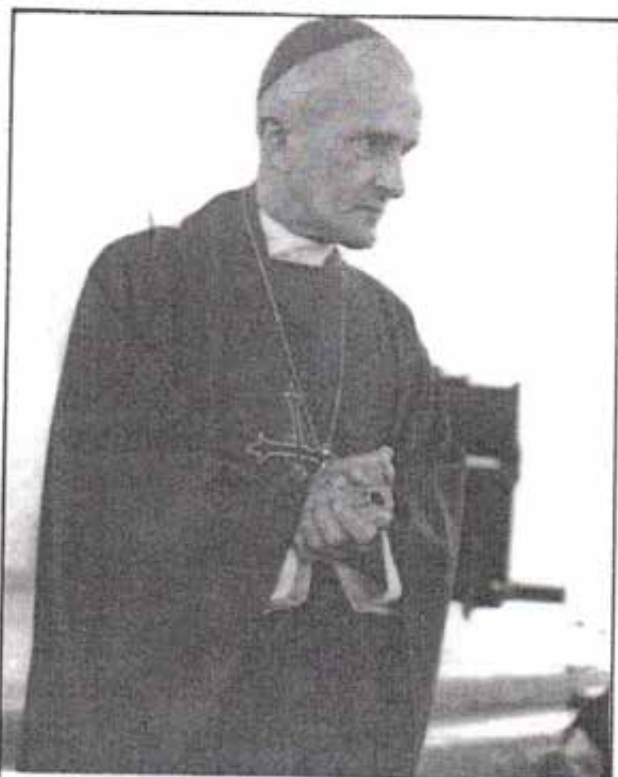
One important reason Wilson felt more chaplains were needed was to visit the cellblocks. Unlike medium security inmates who live in dormitories, maximum security inmates are locked in cells. When not escorted by armed guards, they are handcuffed and shackled whenever they leave their living area. They can't go to the chaplain. The chaplain must go to them. If the three chaplains spent their entire 40-hour work week visiting Angola's 1400-plus maximum security inmates, each inmate could claim less than seven minutes of the chaplain's time. While it's true most inmates would have nothing to say to a chaplain, those who did would more than make up for them. And what of the other 3800 prisoners? What of the services that must be performed and the administrative paperwork that must be completed? Because this job was clearly impossible, Wilson said he seldom visited cellblocks unless he was delivering a death message.



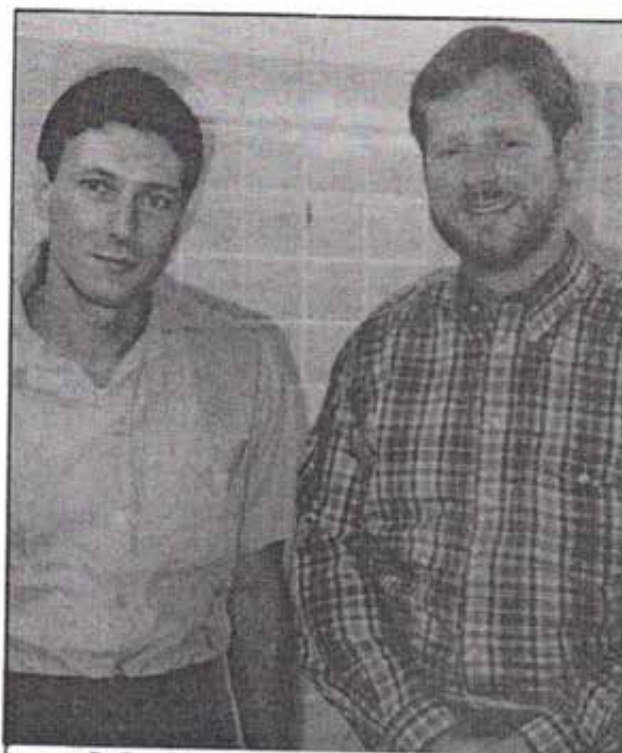
METHODIST MEN'S JOSEPH STEVENSON

Without Angola's fifteen volunteer chaplains, who don't get paid at all, the job would be impossible. But those volunteers usually restrict themselves to specific religious denominations, and are generally only present when the inmate organizations they support are holding meetings.

Wilson has requested additional chaplains in the budget for each of the 23 years he has been here, except in those years when a "standstill" budget froze spending at the previous year's level. "I have gotten shot down every time," he said. The only reason there are four chaplains now, instead of the original two, is because Wilson managed to move a vacant headquarters chaplain's position to Angola, and upgrade a secretary's position to full-chaplain. Although he managed to double the number of chaplains, the number of prisoners has also doubled, leaving the chaplain's department in no better condition. He has watched other departments grow at tremendous rates, while the chaplaincy remains stagnant. "They had only four or five Classification Officers when I came here," he said. "There are at least 20



BISHOP OTT AT INTERFAITH CHAPEL

P.F. PARTICIPANT TASSIN WITH
P.F. FACILITATOR JUDGE DOWNING

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

"Many years back people thought Jehovah's Witnesses just gave the name Jehovah to God," says George Lee Harris, Spokesman for Angola's group of Witnesses, "but as the years passed people have come to understand that the name Jehovah is in the Bible. We adhere definitely to what the Bible teaches, and our teachings contradict what a lot of other faiths believe and are teaching. The point is, what we show from the scriptures is what brings out the truth. This is what really makes us different."

According to their book **You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth**, (1982 - Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.), Witnesses do not believe Jesus is God, but they do believe he was the first being created by God, and refer to him as the "firstborn Son of God." Once Jesus was created, he shared with Jehovah in creating all other things, including angels, heaven, earth, and mankind.

Relying on a biblical formula culled from Daniel, Revelation, Numbers, Ezekiel, and Matthew, Witnesses believe Jesus Christ began to rule as king of God's unseen heavenly government in 1914. They believe Armageddon will occur before the last person born in 1914 is dead; then the dead will be resurrected, and those alive, if they pass judgment, will never die.

"The purpose of a resurrection is to give you

an opportunity at life again," says Harris, "not to be brought back and punished." Harris draws a parallel with man's law, saying, "Suppose once we discharge the sentence that holds us in Angola we go as far as St. Francisville and they pick us up and convict us again on the same charge. That's double jeopardy. The Bible says the wages of sin is death. When we die we have paid for our sins. If you are resurrected to account for all of your sins again, that's double jeopardy."

Witnesses believe that upon death people go only to their graves, and that some will be resurrected on Judgment Day (which will be 1,000 years long) to be tested once more when Christ rules the world. The judgment will be based on what they do during those 1,000 years, not what they did in their first life. They believe in heaven, but that only 144,000 tried and faithful Christians will go there, and only for the specific purpose of helping Jesus rule over a world where everyone else will be living in paradise.

Angola's Jehovah's Witnesses are a part of the St. Francisville congregation. They submit to the direction of the St. Francisville Elders. They do not believe any prisoner qualifies to be an Elder or to hold any office in religion. "First Timothy, Chapter 3, Verse 2," says Harris, "lists all the qualifications a person must have to hold an office of oversight. As Jehovah's Witnesses we must adhere to what the scripture really says." Since no convicted felon can be irreprehensible, no prisoner can hold such an

of them now." He also pointed out increases in the medical department, and the previously non-existent mental health department.

Chaplains are limited to 40-hour weeks, unless they're willing to work without pay. Catholic chaplain Howell Champagne explained that 10 of his hours are spent on paperwork, and another 15 hours on cellblock tiers. That leaves only 15 hours a week for ministry to the 3800 inmates outside of maximum security, or a little less than two minutes each.

The bulk of the work falls on the full-time chaplains. Their cry for more chaplains is supported by the inmate religious organizations. Sidney Deloch, inmate pastor of St. John the Baptist Brotherhood, said he spoke to Warden Whitley about the shortage. "He assured me that every other department in the prison was short. I understood that, but the chaplain's department has been short

office. "I'm just used as a spokesman in case something happens and someone has to get in touch with the Elders, or some decision has to be made or whatever," says Harris.

Other organizations are required to hold elections to determine their leaders, but "we won't be doing that," says Harris. "Our leader is appointed by the Elders. There is no power struggle among the brothers. Whatever way the Elders see fit to do things is the way it will go."

Witnesses celebrate only one holiday a year, the "Memorial of Christ's Death." They point out that Jesus told his followers to observe a memorial of his death, not of his birth. They do not go along with the rest of the world in celebrating Christmas because, apart from there being no scripture to support a celebration of birth, December 25th could not have been the day Christ was born. They point out that it is the day the people of Rome celebrated the "Feast of Saturn," the birthday of the sun, and therefore not significant to Christians. They do not celebrate Easter for similar reasons.

"These are the things that separate us from other religions," says Harris. "If you notice, anyone who talks to one of us is told [by other religionists] that they shouldn't. But we offer them the opportunity to sit down with an open mind and just reason and look through the scripture, to come to a conclusion one way or the other."

for all the years I've been here. Everything else gets filled but the chaplain's department. I know it's not Warden Whitley's fault. Someone in Baton Rouge has given religion a very low priority."

Each of the other chaplains share Wilson's belief that there should be at least one full-time paid chaplain for every 500 inmates. "That doesn't seem like too much to ask, but that would mean ten or eleven paid chaplains where we now have only four," said Wilson.

The shortage of chaplains has caused two other problems: limited access by prisoners to the chaplains available; and, under-utilization of the prison chapel.

A) Limited Access to Chaplains: Every day, at around 3:30 in the afternoon, hundreds of prisoners who have worked in the fields all day march back to their living areas. At the same time the Prison Enterprise industrial complex and Jumonville Memorial Technical Institute release a few hundred more. Everywhere you look you see inmates who have worked



JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES GEORGE HARRIS

THE STUDENTS OF AL-ISLAM

Christians often claim Muslims worship Muhammad, and that theirs is a godless religion. Nassor Zimbabwe Faruq Hassan is the Imam, or leader, of Angola's Muslim community. He emphasizes that Muslims worship only God, whom they often refer to in Arabic as "Allah." Muhammad was merely His "Messenger" or prophet.

Mujahidin Abdul-Karim, spokesman for the Students of Al-Islam, explains: "The main focus of Islam was to establish a religion of monotheism. Monotheism is the worship of God Himself. We do not worship trees, rocks, stones, idols, pictures, men, positions of rank; we don't worship these things. We only worship God. In the Christian religion you have the Trinity - the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, as one. In Islam God is One. We worship Him and Him alone. This basically is the difference between Muslims and Christians - the Trinity."

The Quran is the Muslim holy book. They believe it was sent down by God to Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel, called "Jabril" in Arabic. "Jabril is charged with bringing the revelations to all the prophets," said Karim. "All of your books, the Quran, the Bible, the Psalms, the Torah, the Seven Books of Moses - all these religious books were delivered by one and the same Angel. Jabril is the messenger between God and man. Moses, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is the only prophet whom Allah

talked to directly when He revealed the Commandments to him." Muslims believe Muhammad was an illiterate man, and so scribes wrote down the Quran as Muhammad received it. The transcription took 23 years.

"Muhammad was a man, a living man," said Karim. "He was chosen by God to bring the message of the Quran to mankind. For this we follow his examples. We try to exemplify what he did. Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was the most successful man in the annals of history because he brought this revolutionary message. Not revolution in terms of militancy, but revolution in the purest sense of the word. Change! He changed a society pagans who worshipped over 360 idols, to Monotheism - the worship of the One God. He did this in a span of 23 years. No other religion in the world has such a miraculous record of revolution."

Muslims believe God is "most gracious" and "most merciful," and will forgive any sin, except the "assigning of associates to Him." They believe that to worship Jesus Christ as God or the Son of God is an example of this one sin God will not forgive. For them, Jesus was a prophet in the same category as Adam, Noah, Moses, Abraham, David, John, and Muhammad, but they do not believe he was God. "God is the only one who gives life and takes death," said Karim. "In this particular sense, God is a jealous God. We would like to think that He wants us to recognize that He is the Supreme Deity, that He created everything,

all day coming back to their living quarters. Often, you will also see Angola's full-time chaplains leaving the area at the same time.

According to Wilson, the state is reluctant to pay chaplains over-time hours on a continuing basis. They must also interact with other administrative



THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY GATHERED FOR BANQUET

and there is none like Him."

Karim explains, "In Genesis, it states very clearly in the first verse, when the earth was created it was void, it was in total darkness, and nothing existed but the Word of God. Period. Nothing existed. The Word was God, the Word was with God, and His face abided over the water. And if you go down the line of creation and how God states He created the Earth in six days, there is no mention of Jesus. God did these things on His own. He created the sun. He saw there was light and He said it was good. He did this Himself without the help of anyone."

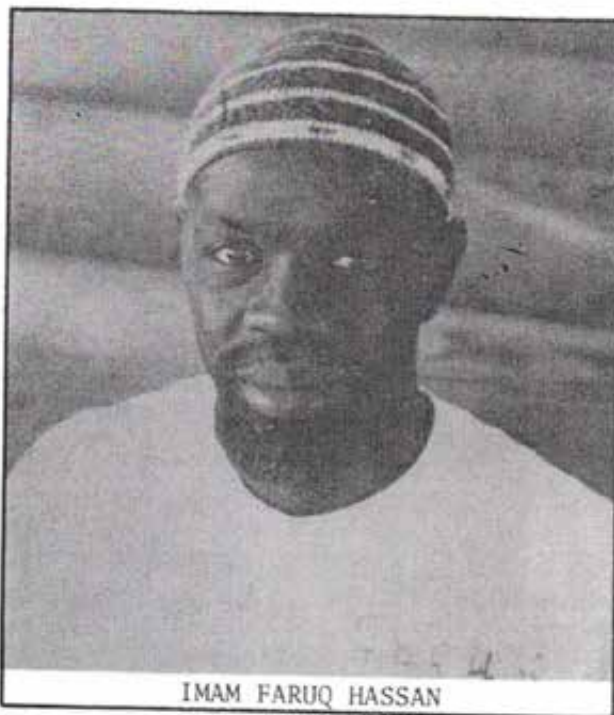
Are Christians who believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God condemned to hell? "Their intention might be good in that they believe in heaven and hell," said Karim. "They believe in doing the right thing. They believe in basically the same principles that the Muslims believe in. But to associate partners with God is a very heinous act. The most sinful act there is."

Are Muslims who do not believe Jesus is God condemned to hell? "I guess that's what religion is about," Karim answered. "It all boils down to what you believe. It is good to have a belief in God. To worship God. But your belief must be based upon clear evidence, logic, reasoning, and sound judgment. The Christians can state that the Muslims are going to hell, but only God knows these things. I can't say emphatically who is going to go to hell and who is not. I'm not God."

offices to perform many of their duties, and they must stagger their days off to keep at least one chaplain on duty each day. All these things limit their options in scheduling their working hours. So it is that just when a chaplain's ministry to prisoners would be most effective, no chaplains are available.

When asked how prisoners gain access to chaplains who are only present during working hours, Chaplain Nolan Fontenot explained: "If a prisoner needs to see us and the only time that we could see him is during working hours, we have the liberty to put him on callout." But Fontenot also observed that many inmates who ask to be placed on callout "don't know what to do once they get to the chapel." He believes they would not have asked to come if it wouldn't get them out of work.

Chaplain Champagne can see the irony of having chaplains present only during working hours, and he couples that pro-

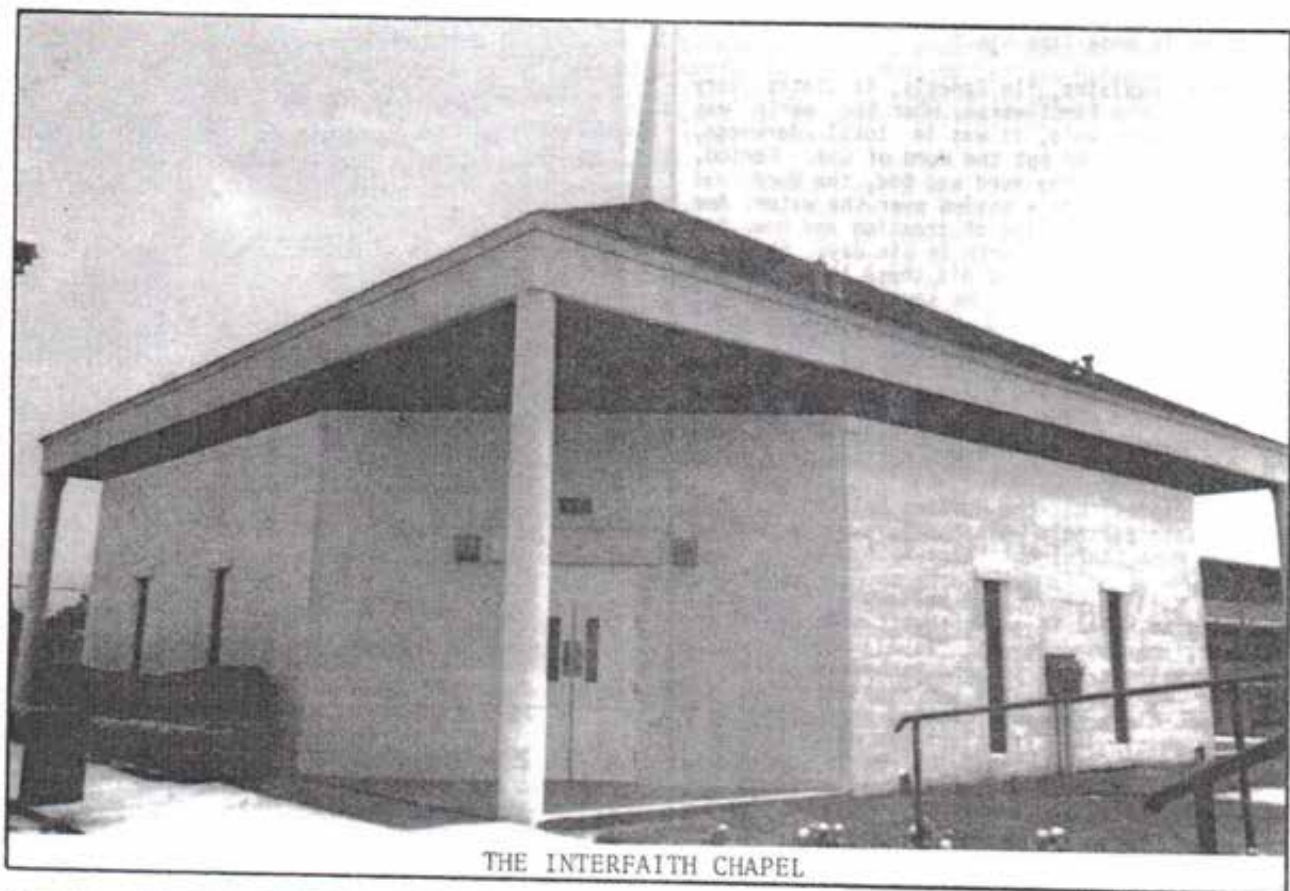


IMAM FARUQ HASSAN

blem with the under-utilization of the chapel. He suggests a solution. The chapel cannot be opened unless a security officer or a chaplain is on the premises. When the chaplains leave, the chapel usually remains closed because there are not enough security officers to keep one posted in the chapel at night. But if the chaplains were given flex hours, they could keep the chapel open and increase their accessibility. "We could work from nine to seven, or even ten to eight," said Champagne. "Whatever it takes to get 40 hours. I'm willing to do that, but I wouldn't dare speak for anyone else. I'm sure some of the others wouldn't mind doing it one night a week."

Chaplain Wiley Magee agrees with Champagne's idea of flex hours. "We've been discussing that," he said. "It would work if we had more chaplains." But he doesn't believe it will work with only three, or even four chaplains.

B) Under-utilization of the prison chapel: One of Wilson's crowning achievements was the construction of the Interfaith Chapel in Angola's Main Prison. It



THE INTERFAITH CHAPEL

THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

Pastored by Wilfred Cain, the Church of God in Christ emphasizes the Holy Spirit. Outside of Angola this denomination adheres to strict doctrine, but is somewhat more relaxed within the prison. Cain concentrates his efforts on compassion for his fellow prisoners. Outspoken, yet cooperative, Cain talks of working with other churches, increases and decreases in his congregation, and his experience with Chaplain Wilson.

"If you are lifting up Jesus over there, and I'm lifting him up over here, when we come together Jesus is only thing we should be lifting up. Not my personal beliefs, or your personal beliefs, or what we don't do because we don't believe like this or that. Those things should be put aside, and what we can agree on we should do. We must remember that others are looking. I'm not going to come and visit you if you and your family are fighting all the time, I don't care how good a barbecue you serve. Angola's religious community is a family community, and we want it to grow.

"We know whenever there's an influx of new guys coming into prison the church congregation gets loaded. More people come because they don't know about the penitentiary. They come and they

try to get a sanction. They try to get some protection, so they come to the church. That's just a human act of survival. It's something in us; when trouble starts we try to reach the higher source. But then they find out that the penitentiary isn't as rough as they thought it was. They find a few home-boys, they talk about old times, they figure they can stand on their own and they stop coming to church.

"Maybe out of ten, eight will stop coming. I don't hold that against them, and when the next load of new guys come in I don't say, 'Well, I'm not going to spend time with you ten because only two of you are going to stay.' That's not my job. I'm not appointed to such a job. **And neither is the chaplain.** You can't say people are all alike. You've got to deal with people the way the Bible tells you if you are in the ministry. We can't just quit and give up on any soul because he fits the pattern of previous failure. Even when you've done all you can do, you put him in prayer. You never give up on him.

"Chaplain Wilson never knew me, though it would have been easy for him to find out about me. There are no secrets in here. It's easy to find out about anybody in the penitentiary. He could check records, he could talk with my supervisor, he could check with dormitory sergeants, with other inmates, he could come sit in on our

was made possible, according to then-Corrections Secretary John T. King, by a \$250,000 donation by the Louisiana Interchurch Conference, an \$81,000 donation by the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and a \$120,000 donation by the state. Originally, each religious organization was to have use of the chapel one night a month. Four offices, one for each of the three chaplains employed at that time, and one for two inmate clerks were part of the structure.

But in the ten years the chapel has been in existence, it has not worked out that way. Prisoners attend religious services by being placed on a "callout": a list of prisoners approved by security and the chaplain's department to leave their living areas and attend a particular function. In the course of a month, there are 126 religious callouts in Angola, 85 in the Main Prison. Of 44 monthly callout opportunities in the Chapel, only 22 are utilized. All 22 are supervised by chaplains or volunteer chaplains. Only one inmate religious organization utilizes the Chapel. The

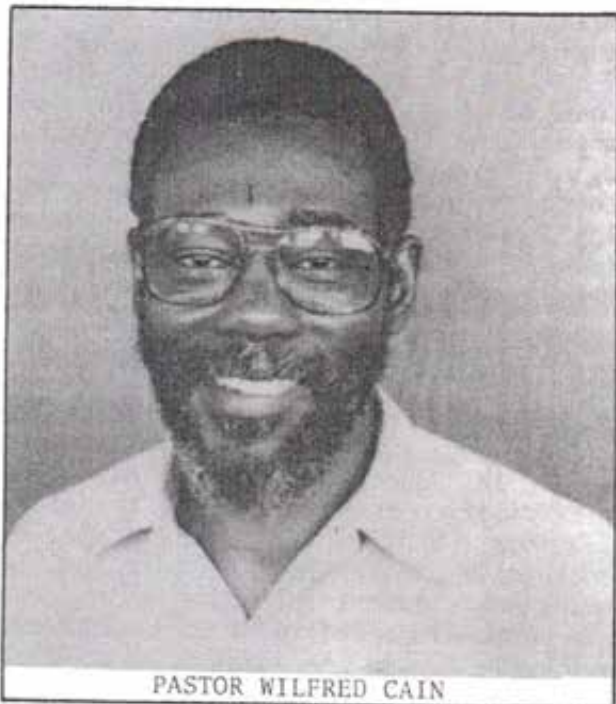
majority of religious callouts take place in the Main Prison Education Building, or the "A" Building, with no supervision by chaplains.

Were there more chaplains, it might be possible to have a chaplain on duty at night and at other times when the chapel is closed. Without those chaplains the chapel is empty half the time. Most prisoners look upon it as no more than a fancy office for the chaplains. Many non-Christians resent the use of the Education Building by religious organizations because it restricts educational programs they would like to create. The "joyful noise" Christians make is just a lot of hooting and hollering to them. They claim it makes it impossible to concentrate on their classes. They often point to the Latin American Cultural Brotherhood, an inmate "club" which is sponsored by a chaplain and holds its English/Spanish classes in the Chapel. "They can't study in the Education Building because of all the noise," they complain, "but the church groups which should be meeting in the chapel are ruining everybody else's callout."

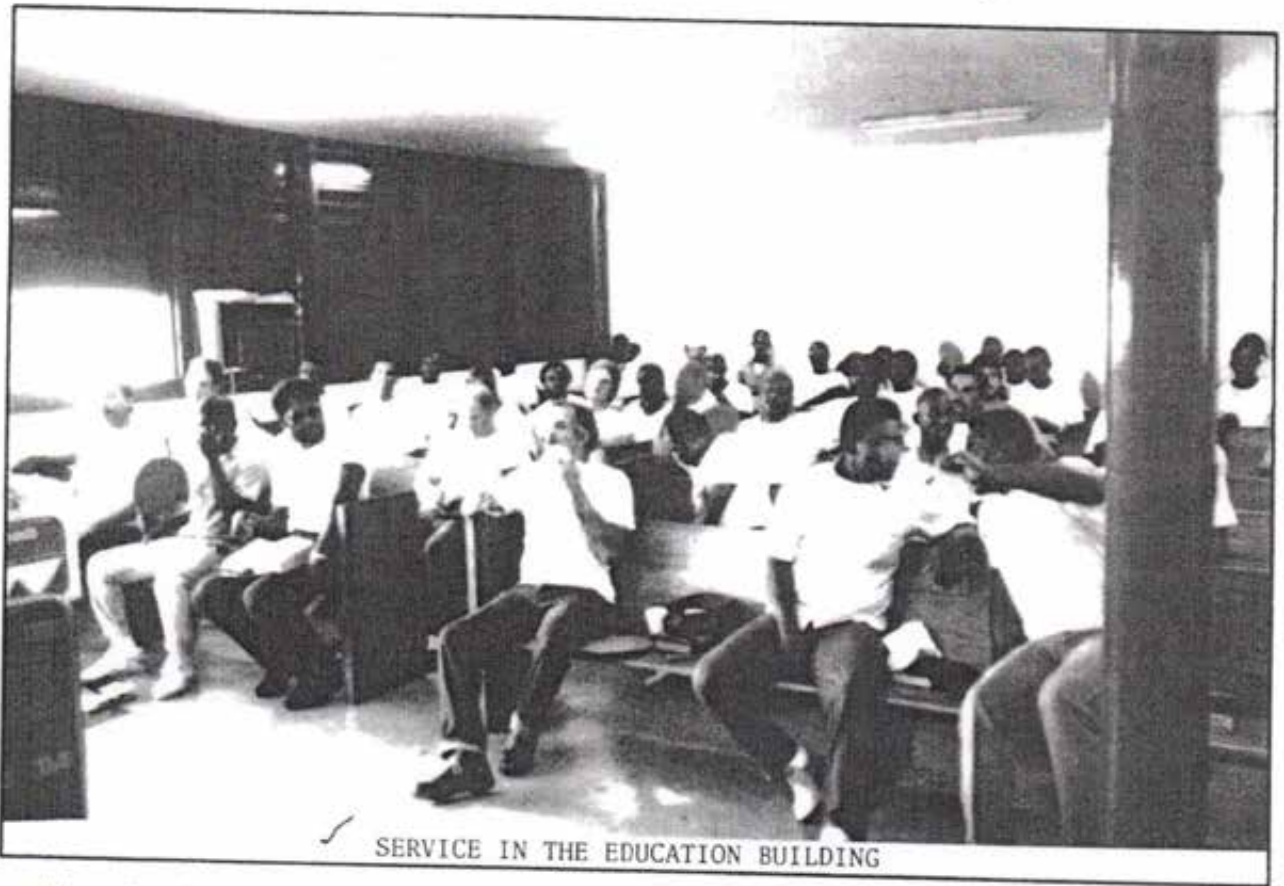
meetings and hear for himself. But he never did that. So how is he going to put me in a category with anybody else?

"The Bible gives us examples of men who were appointed a job to do for God. They didn't know any barriers. Yes, they went to jail, but it was all for the furthering of the gospel. They did not whimper with the heat. If we take it upon ourselves to work in the ministry of Jesus Christ, whether it be in the chapel, as an inmate pastor, or as a pastor outside the gates, if we are not ready to do the sacrificing that it takes, if we are going to whimper at every little storm that comes in, then we are not standing in faith.

"Wilson could have been discouraged. I can bear with him, I can feel for him, because I get tired sometimes too. It gets like all your efforts and all the things you try to do to show a person that you're concerned about them fail. After a while you just wear down. But that's not what this gospel is about. If Jesus would have given up when he fell carrying the cross, where would we be now? He didn't give up. And if you are going to serve, you can't give up. When you fall you have to get up. Whether it was because he had some initially bad experiences, or whatever, he should have overcome it, or he should have quit the ministry."



PASTOR WILFRED CAIN



SERVICE IN THE EDUCATION BUILDING

When Chaplain Fontenot was asked why the chapel wasn't better utilized he said, "Almost every day there is something going on. Some of the problem is that inmate groups request use of the chapel when it's already in use, and then they say it's not being utilized. We have four seminars a year with Chuck Colson. Then we have other seminars. Then we have Mass seminars. We haven't tried to just see how packed we can cram things in here as far as services are concerned, but it's pretty well occupied."

Fontenot's point is valid. Though the chapel is only scheduled for activity at half its capacity, there must be flexibility to accommodate seminars, weddings, baptisms, and other special occasions. That flexibility might be maintained with a fuller schedule, but the manpower needed to do so is just not available due to the insufficient number of chaplains.

ISSUE III. Chaplains' reluctance to perform inmate marriages:

According to the U.S. Supreme Court states have the power to set procedures and make restrictions on inmate marriages, but the state cannot abridge the fundamental right of prisoners to marry. Chaplains, however, have rights as well. Father Champagne explains: "We perform marriages from time to time. We don't do many because marriage to us is a religious event. Many times the men getting married are not members of a church, so a chaplain will not do it. For some of the men, getting married is not a religious event. We are religious leaders, not city officials. We have a right to function as religious ministers in an institutional setting. We do not have to perform a service if it is against our religious principles."

Several volunteer chaplains will perform the marriage ceremony, and prison-

THE PENTECOSTAL FELLOWSHIP

The Pentecostal Fellowship, pastored by Glenn Fisher, is another organization that has shed the doctrine of its namesake. "The Bible speaks about one church," said Fisher, "that's the body of Christ, the Church of God. But in that body you have different branches, but if they believe Jesus died on Calvary, that He rose on the third day, they're the same church. Why this particular church chose to call themselves Pentecost I don't know. When I became the pastor it was already called the Pentecostal Fellowship. I came here and found it like that.

"The core, our centerpiece, is Jesus Christ," said Fisher. "That's it. Jesus Christ. Our vision is to uplift Jesus Christ and draw men unto Him. All the other things go along with that." Fisher declines to discuss doctrinal differences, to criticize the chaplain's department, or discuss church politics. "We have no disagreement, no division, no separation about it," he said. "We are led by the Holy Spirit. Whatever the Spirit says is final. Nobody's vote overrides the Spirit of God or the Word of God."

Fisher preaches in a dialect easy for prisoners to understand. He speaks with cadence and rhythm, in logical progression of ideas and illustrations. Asked to explain his calling, Fisher said, "Well, after I was saved some years back, I began to apply myself, just like a person who takes on a trade of doing something. He applies himself diligently until he becomes a master at it. I began to apply myself, and I began to get rooted like a plant. In order for a plant

to grow it's got to have roots down in the earth. That's what I began to do in the Word of God.

"I began to get serious with the Lord," he continued. "I began to read and study the Word and I began to grow. After some years the Lord began dealing with my heart about preaching the gospel. I tried to ignore it, but the Lord put it on other people's minds as well. I tried to ignore it and not pay it no attention. Not that I didn't like it, but I didn't want to take on that responsibility. Finally, the Lord spoke to my heart, and He told me to preach His word.

"At first I didn't want to take it. I just wanted to sit in the background. I don't like the limelight. But, when I decided to do that I didn't have no peace. Until I made my mind up to step up as pastor then my peace came back. When you don't do what God wants you to do, you don't really have no peace."

Fisher has an explanation for the six different Christian organizations in Angola. "If we just had one church, we would only get to fellowship once or twice a week. But because we have all these different organizations we can go to church every night of the week.

"My message to people is, don't try to understand God. Don't try to line God up with what you believe. You need to line up with Him. I'm grateful that He would send His son down and save me. That He would forgive me of my sins. That He would be patient with me. That He would let me live in His kingdom for eternity. I'm grateful for that. I thank Him for that."

ers are permitted to bring in their own ordained pastors from the street, but the men paid by the state to minister to prisoners will usually refuse.

Chaplain Magee, who has been happily married for 14 years, has his own reasons for not performing the ceremony. "I can only speak for myself," he said. "I have two reasons. First, there is a theory going around here that sex is not important in marriage. It's just a spiritual thing, they say. But marriage is both spiritual and physical. The union of two becoming one includes the sex act, not just the ceremony at the altar. That opportunity is not afforded Angola inmates.

Second, marriage is extremely difficult when people live together and work at it. It's even more difficult when they are separated by incarceration. The



PASTOR GLENN FISHER

odds are very much against them. Marriage is more than a 50-50 proposition, as some people say. It's 100-100. Sometimes the man has to carry the whole load, sometimes the woman. People who don't realize this miss the point of the union. I just don't think prison marriages are a wise idea.

Chaplain Wilson has an even stronger opinion, one that he told inmate pastor Joseph Stevenson. "Wilson refused absolutely to perform any inmate marriages," Stevenson said. "He felt that it took time for two people to know each other, to build a solid foundation. Wilson said inmate weddings were a mockery of Christian marriage. He didn't want to perform a marriage where the inmate might only be doing it for his own advantage. Or one where the woman had not really considered what she would go through if the guy never got out - or when he did get out."

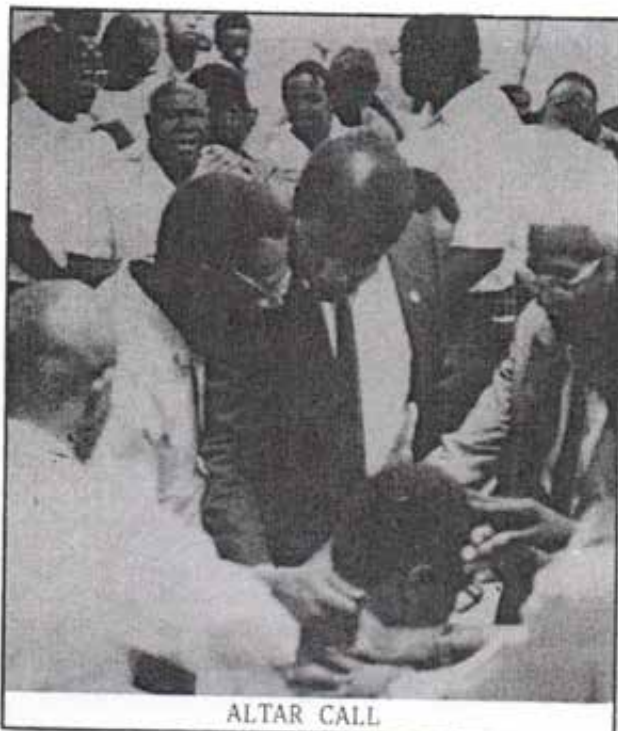
The general refusal of full-time chaplains to perform prison weddings does not prevent inmates from getting married. It only makes it more diffi-

cult. Once a couple has navigated the sea of red tape and secured the services of someone to perform the ceremony, they will remember the assistance - or lack of it - they received from the prison chaplaincy. Word will spread. In this manner prison weddings can either add to or decrease the friction between the inmate population and the chaplaincy.

CONCLUSIONS

No method has yet been fashioned to uncontroversably verify, isolate, or quantify religious commitment. Therefore any statement regarding the effectiveness of a religious program must to some degree be subjective. In that context, Angola's religious program works. Two factors keep the program from its full potential.

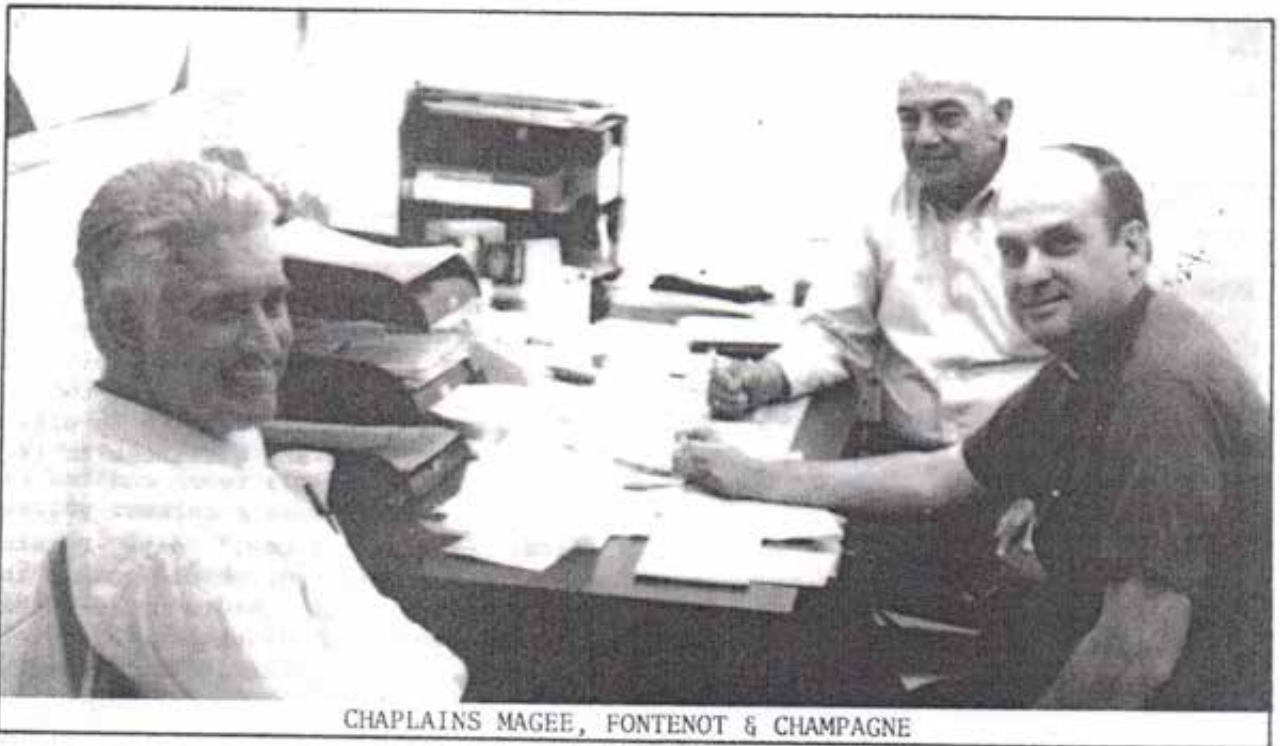
First, the lack of sufficient full-time chaplains cannot be resolved at the local level. The state legislature must first be convinced that augmenting Angola's religious staff is a priority, so that they will appropriate the necessary funds. But the present, and possibly



ALTAR CALL



ANAHEIM, CA "VINEYARD" VISITS ANGOLA



CHAPLAINS MAGEE, FONTENOT & CHAMPAGNE

permanent, budget crunch makes it highly unlikely money will be found to hire the six additional chaplains many feel are necessary to bring the chaplain/inmate ratio down to a manageable level. Angola will have to make do with the present number of chaplains for the foreseeable future. Methods of increasing their effectiveness should be the area of concentration.

The second factor, the friction between inmate religious groups and the chaplain's department, is something that can only be corrected by the people involved. Most agree that recently retired head Chaplain Joseph Wilson was a good man. A true Christian, he was well versed in scripture, and willing to work for his beliefs. To be effective, however, the Angola head chaplain should be a high energy, charismatic, progressive, individual - a dynamic preacher with a large capacity for forgiveness. These were not Wilson's qualities. More parson than preacher, Wilson seems to have been the right man in the wrong job.

With Wilson's departure, an era ends.

We face a new beginning. Whatever prevailed in the past need not extend to the future. Father Champagne predicts things will get better. "With our new head chaplain, Nolan Fontenot, you will see a lot more cooperation between the inmate organizations and the chaplaincy," he said. "From time to time we will be getting together with all the groups. We are all in this together. We are in this for the same purpose. We are not working against each other; we are working for each other."

Fontenot himself has promised improvement and predicts increased interaction in the future. This kind of language starts people thinking about change. When that language is backed with action, the change begins.

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[ED: In a future issue, we will examine the changes occurring in the religious programs. We will also cover volunteer chaplains, support from local churches, and present an Angolite study of prisoner congregations.]