TRANSFORMING THE CRIMINAL MIND IN ANGOLA

By

Alex Hennis

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

Global University

Springfield, Missouri

October 2018

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Accepted

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The last attempt in the April 2017 legislative session to reform Louisiana's criminal justice system was arguably one of the largest bipartisan efforts in the state's history to rewrite the laws governing the criminal justice system. The results seem to have fallen short of the desired goals of many legislators, business groups, and faith-based organizations because powerful self-interest groups who have tremendous influence over the legislative body thwarted the meaningful attempts at reform. William Wilberforce's story has a strikingly similar scene to it. The nineteenth-century social reformer devoted his life to ending the horrible practice of slavery in England's Parliament; however, the most powerful self-interested men in the country resisted his efforts. After Wilberforce's death, the seeds of his life's work would bear fruit, and this atrocious problem would end. His life is an inspiration to never give up in pursuit of a God-given dream. I would like to thank and acknowledge all those who participated in Louisiana's Prison Reform movement in 2017. Take heart from Wilberforce's example and remember the words of Paul, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 9:6).

GLOSSARY

Aisle. The ideas of division between the Democratic and Republican parties.

Angola. Originally a slave plantation named after the country where many of the slaves lived previously. The land was later purchased by Major Samuel L. James and housed some of the earliest state prisoners under a lease agreement. In 1901, the state of Louisiana regained control of state prisoners, discontinued the lease, and purchased Angola from Samuel L. James' heir. Angola is synonymous with Louisiana State Penitentiary after 1901.

Check out. Leaving a housing unit or job because of fear.

Contraband. Any unauthorized substance or material possessed by inmates.

Criminal Menopause. The aging out of criminal practices.

Disrespect. This occurs when relational boundaries are crossed in a prison setting, which results in an inmate taking offense.

Family. An informal gang or clique that congregated together for protection in Angola's more turbulent days.

Fiscal Cliff. A possible $1.3 billion deficit in Louisiana's state revenue once a temporary sales tax enacted in 2016 expired July 8, 2018.

Geriatric Parole. A proposed idea for parole for those who were 50 years of age and have been incarcerated for 30 years.

Good Time. A deduction of time off a prison sentence for good behavior.

Hobby Craft. Handcrafted items made by prisoners.

Hobby Shop. Work area in which prisoners make handcrafted items in Angola.

Inmate Counsel or Counsel Substitute. Often called a jail house lawyer. A prisoner who functions as a lawyer representing inmates inside the prison in disciplinary hearings and filing appeals.

Inmate Guard. Once known as Khaki backs. An armed prisoner given responsibility to guard other prisoners.

Kangaroo Court. A dishonest, mock court set up to hear disciplinary reports concerning prisoners.

Lifer. An inmate who has been sentenced to the Department of Corrections for the remainder of his natural life.

Long-Termers. Men who have served at least twenty-five years in the Department of Corrections.

Louisiana State Penitentiary. Originally built in 1835, on the corner of 6th and Laurel Street, it was called The Walls. Later, in 1901, the plantation called Angola would be bought by the state of Louisiana, and from that date on the term Angola would be synonymous with the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Mass Incarceration. The inevitable overcrowding of prisons because of tough-on-crime policies employed in large part since the 1970s.

Old Man. The dominate male in a homosexual relationship where the weaker is enslaved.

Outer Camps. Housing unit built in the late 1970s on the penitentiary grounds.

Prison Accounts. Accounts set up for prisoners where they do not physically handle cash money but use a debit system.

Prison Enterprises. Article 501 C3 tax exempt organization that utilizes inmate labor to turn a profit.

Rat. As a verb it means to inform the security concerning the activity of another prisoner. As a noun, it is the person doing the informing.

Recidivism. Acts that result in re-arrest, reconviction, or return to the prison with or without a new sentence during a defined period following the prisoner's release.

Rehabilitation. To change a prisoner's thinking, attitudes, character, and behavior patterns so as to diminish his criminal propensities.

Shakedown Crew. A group of Correction officers with the specific assignments to travel around the Louisiana State Penitentiary looking for contraband.

Soft on Crime. Often used as a label in political circles to attack opponents who appear to be too lenient on criminals and crime.

Slave. Usually, a male prisoner forced into homosexual activity. Also, a form of non-

sexual slave who often pays for protection or works for his owner in money making rackets.

Slipping in the Game. Allowing your guard down so others can immediately take advantage of you.

Solitary Confinement. Lock Down. Hole. Dungeon. A cell or tier of cells used for extreme cases of bad behavior.

Strong Arming. The practice of stronger inmates using the threat of physical harm to force a weaker inmate to provide a favor. Usually used as a verb as in, “He strong armed him into giving us his food.”

Throw-Away-the-Key-Prison Building. A philosophy that pushes harsh sentencing laws, which lead to overcrowded prisons while certain people profit from the situation.

Tough on Crime. This movement started in the 1970's with Richard Nixon where politicians combined harsh political rhetoric and harsh sentencing guidelines to appear touch on law breakers.

Tough on Crime Policies. The belief that locking up law breakers for minor offences keep them from committing more serious offenses.

Trustee Status. Changing one’s custody status from maximum to minimum within the Department of Corrections. More freedom, more privileges, and less security are included in this upgrade in living conditions. Only the well behaved who have served a considerable number of years are afforded this status at Angola.

Turning Out. The brutal rape and enslavement of a prisoner.

Working Cell Blocks. These are tiers of two-man cells where the inhabitants leave the cells Monday through Friday to work in the fields at Angola from 7:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.

White Collar Crime. Violations of the law by a respectable person with social standing while working on his occupation.

Whore, Gal boy, Old lady, Wife. A male sex slave.

Write-Up. A disciplinary report given to an inmate for a rule infraction.

ABSTRACT

The Louisiana State Penitentiary has experienced a notable cultural change that is reflected in the way inmates are living their lives together from day to day. A culture of brutality and violence has been replaced by one of peace and stability. This work addresses the transformation of the criminal mind concerning the men in the Louisiana State Penitentiary who have been sentenced to life in prison without the benefit of parole. In particular, the question was explored whether these men continue to pose a threat to free society. Several qualitative research methods were used to determine the answer.

The multiple newspapers across the state also offered valuable insight into the political process governing Louisiana's prison population and the different attitudes toward it. Information was also gathered concerning the organizations that were against reforming the system and bringing about change to Louisiana's prison system. In addition, years of journalism that were produced by the prison's own magazine offered tremendous insight into the lives of inmates and the transformation of the prison culture. Another valuable resource was interviews conducted with prisoners. Many have served decades behind bars having witnessed the change of the men incarcerated with them. Several opportunities were employed to conduct Focus groups where four groups of ten men each came together and interacted and discussed their criminal history, years of incarceration, and their religious beliefs. This qualitative methodology demonstrated the evolution of positive change that has occurred across Angola.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"When newly elected Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards was sworn into office on January 1, 2016, Louisiana was facing a nearly two billion dollar deficit concerning the state budget" (Bridges and Ballard 2017, 1). In conjunction with this deficit, "Louisiana had and continues to hold the highest incarceration rate per capita not only in the United States but also the entire world" (Mire 2016, 7). Tremendous amounts of money and legislative effort are invested in incarcerating men. Sheriffs across the state are allowed to house prisoners in their local jails, and the state pays them a certain amount of money per prisoner. According to Cindy Chang, journalist for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, "This practice has spawned a jail building boom across the state and influenced the Louisiana legislature to incarcerate men and women for what other states would simply write out a ticket" (2012, 11).

In 2009, a Livingston Parish sheriff said he took out a $1.7 million loan to build a bigger jail because housing prisoners was where the money was. As of April 2017, that jail is overcrowded. After a Parish panel studied the problem, "they determined the solution to the overcrowding problem would be solved by building an even bigger jail" (Kinchen 2017, 1). If Louisiana continues following this course of action, the not-so-distant future may have the state paying more to incarcerate people than to educate them. "The budget for the Department of Corrections will eventually eclipse spending for

higher learning" (Ballard 2017, 3). The historical, economic, and sociological data clearly indicate a cultural trend in Louisiana of increasing dependence on incarceration. This research seeks to explore alternatives to this dependence. This research data frames the problem by exploring the Louisiana context that produced and maintains the acutely inflated incarceration rate and also explores alternatives to this dependence phenomenon.

There are men who have been incarcerated in the penitentiary for over fifty years who have never had a chance to go before a parole board because of Louisiana's stringent laws. These men left children outside the institution who would later follow in their fathers' lifestyles and be sentenced to prison. Broken homes and absentee fathers have helped increase the population of the prison system and perpetuate the cycle of crime and incarceration (Sack 1977, 163-74). "Children have grown up in homes without their fathers, and the women who had to raise them did not have the financial help that the spouse ought to have brought home; therefore, many of these women relied on government assistance" (Focus Group One 2017); (Anderson 1999, 38); (Hallett and Johnson under Resurgence of Religion in America's Prisons).

"This socioeconomic hardship has helped create impoverished inner cities throughout Louisiana whose streets are lined with abandoned buildings, broken glass, and homeless people. The crime and illiteracy in these areas have spread throughout the communities and ensnared men and women while duplicating itself through entire family lines" (Focus Group Four 2017); (Anderson 1999, 205); (Hallett and Johnson under Resurgence of Religion in America's Prisons). Throughout this paper, Louisiana is shown by this research to be heavily involved in using imprisonment as a major crime

fighting initiative. Psychologist and author Robert Gangi is quoted in *Time* magazine as saying, “Building more prisons to address crime is like building more graveyards to address a fatal disease” (Smolowe 1994, 56). In fact, the use of incarceration, according to criminologist and author Jeffery Reiman, “is part of the problem, not so much the solution” (2001, 3).

As a result of a cultural shift in the Louisiana State Penitentiary, violence levels, escapes, and rebellion toward authority figures have decreased significantly. Churches have been built across the prison, and religious services have increased significantly. Men who have been sentenced to life in prison with no possibility of parole have largely contributed to the positive change in the environment. Although there is no hope of their release and very little incentive to change their criminal behavior, many of these prisoners have found purpose for their lives and a new identity through faith in Jesus Christ (Frink 2004, 36-39). As a result of this information, the questions should be asked: does the Louisiana State Penitentiary possess a faith-based model that other prisons could emulate while working toward public safety? Would it also be in Louisiana’s socio-economic interest to reconsider keeping someone incarcerated for the entirety of their natural life (Dagan and Teles under The Conservative War on Prisons)?

Statement of the Problem

Louisiana State Penitentiary houses the majority of men who have been sentenced by the Louisiana courts to spend the rest of their natural lives behind bars. The previous warden over the state penitentiary, Burl Cain, explains the situation in a lecture entitled, *Life in Angola Means Life*. “Their crimes are either first degree murder, second degree

murder, kidnaping, or rape. The only exceptions are habitual offenders. All these crimes incur the harshest penalty in the criminal justice system, second only to the death penalty. The practice of sending men to prison in Louisiana with life sentences with no possible means of release has been occurring since the early 1970s" (2015, Lecture). The purpose of this study is to analyze the thinking and observed behavior of randomly selected inmates who have life sentences without parole in the Louisiana State Penitentiary. This study will be done in order to determine if the prisoners who have life sentences without parole can possibly no longer possess criminal mindsets and could function as responsible free citizens.

"Previously, from 1926 until 1972, a customary practice in Louisiana's criminal justice system existed where a prisoner's time was commuted after he served ten years and six months. The method of release was referred to as the Ten-Six rule" (Giorlando 2013, Lecture). During this period, a prisoner serving life had the hope of release after serving ten years and six months; however, with the 1972 election of a new Louisiana governor that practice of parole was no longer used. In his first term, from 1972 to 1976, using his personal authority, the governor ended the Ten-Six rule and stopped discharging prisoners sentenced to life. This action would be the precursor to the movement across the country commonly referred to as "tough-on-crime," where harsh political rhetoric and harsh laws would combine to take Louisiana to the highest incarceration rate in the world (Giorlando 2013, Lecture).

Purpose of the Study

Louisiana has the highest incarceration rate in the entire world. “This state incarcerates people in jails and prisons at a rate thirteen times higher than China, fifteen times higher than Iran, and twenty times higher than Germany” (Chang, under Louisiana is the World’s Prison Capital). The statistics reveal, “The state had 776 people in prison for every 100,000 residents in 2015, according to the Federal Bureau of Justice Statistics. The national rate was 458 prisoners per 100,000” (Deslatte 2017, 7). That figure is nearly double the national average.

This overwhelming and chronic problem of the rate of incarceration per capita is most likely connected to many issues and demands attention; therefore, this researcher has chosen the Louisianan prison population as his broad area of study. The nature of these statistics provides a substantial component in the motivation for this research and a rationale for choosing the Louisiana prison population as the broad area of study. Potential ethical issues that may be exacerbating the dependence on incarceration must be considered also.

Due to rhetoric in the political realm, “Louisiana’s criminal justice policies have driven the incarceration rates to record highs” (Corley 2017, 26). This outcome has created a financial demand and attracted private industries to house prisoners alongside state-run facilities. In essence, “The state of Louisiana has spawned a jail-building increase that has caused people to invest their finances and focus their careers toward this endeavor” (Chang 2012, 11). In plain language, incarceration was made profitable to private industry. Many non-violent offenders have been incarcerated as result of strict

sentencing guidelines to enhance the economic system (Dagan and Teles under The Conservative War on Prisons). The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-profit organization, and the Justice Reinvestment Task Force, a nonpartisan group put together by the Louisiana legislature and governor, released a detailed report that "eighty-six percent of people admitted to prison in 2015 were sent there for a nonviolent offense" (O'Donoghue 2017, 2). In contrast, "Louisiana has more than six times as many people serving life without the possibility of parole than Texas . . . . Add Texas' prisoners to those in Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee, and the five states have fewer people serving life without parole than Louisiana" (Stole 2017, 4).

Louisiana's mass incarceration has created even more problems. One major issue is determining who has to pay the expenses to house, feed, clothe, and medically treat these approximately 40 thousand prisoners. "The Louisiana Department of Corrections' budget has risen to nearly $750 million dollars a year" (Mire 2016, 7). This demand for money is siphoning off valuable state revenue that could be allocated toward other services. In 2016, when the newly elected governor came into office, he inherited the nation's highest incarceration rate, tremendous fiscal problems, and a predominately Republican legislature possessing a different governing philosophy. The incarceration rate problem along with the state's budgetary problems were to be addressed specifically in the 2017 legislative session beginning in April. "The state was nearly $2 billion in debt" (Bridges and Ballad 2017, 1).

Many parties in competition for political advantage, tax breaks, and resources, recently came forward in April's legislative session to either try and reform the system or

defend the status quo. Those involved in this session ranged from associations seeking tax breaks to sheriffs and district attorneys who were resistant to any change in the criminal justice system. The editorial board of *The Advocate* suggested, "The sheriffs' and district attorneys' budgets are largely dependent on the prison population" (Our View 2017, 6). Could the dependence on incarceration be driven by special interests' economic benefits rather than the goal of improving society? Are political dynamics shielding these issues from thorough inspection and thus conflicting with the state's interests in the social and economic health of the citizens? Considering these competing interests, the economic problems involved, and the sociological impact, the issue becomes:

- Is the state of Louisiana and its population being served properly by keeping men incarcerated for the entirety of their natural lives?
- Would the citizens of the state be better served finding out if the men who have been sentenced to life in prison without parole no longer possess a criminal mindset?
- If they no longer possess a criminal mindset, would it be more advantageous to give them another chance to function as responsible free citizens?

"Many have concluded that violent offenders are incorrigible, and any participation by them in religious activities is fictitious at best" (Johnson 2012, 60); (Welch 2011, 413–12). This study, concerning inmates serving a life sentence with no possibility of parole at Angola, offers objective proof concerning the positive impact the gospel of Jesus Christ has had on the thinking and behavior of these prisoners. This research is intended to discover an inmate's framework of thinking and its outworking in

his or her behavior before and after conversion to Christianity. The research focuses on a Christian worldview, an examination of apologetics, and ethical systems concerning absolutism and relativism. Each of these topics have been used as tools to examine the participants shared thoughts and regularly observed behavior.

The Past of the American Penal System

In the early establishment of American colonies, prison was rarely used as a form of punishment. The Quaker colonies of West Jersey and Pennsylvania rejected capital punishment, except for murder, and later established what has been suggested by United States House Representative Clay Higgins as the first penitentiary called the Walnut Street Jail in 1770. Originally, Quakers believed that men could be reformed through hard work and meditation upon their crimes and the Word of God. The first places of imprisonment were designed with the idea of reinstating the offender back into the community. Later, cells were used in a monastic fashion where the emphasis was on work, discipline, obedience, silence, meditation, and isolation. The goal was to bring these men to a place of repentance where they thought differently about their crimes. These men were not forced to pay for their incarceration; therefore, Higgins speculates that this practice eliminated the abuse of taking advantage of those who were poor. "These methods of reinstatement were eventually ended after the Quakers lost control in 1702 in New Jersey, and Pennsylvania had to accept the English criminal code in 1718. After the American Revolution, 1775-1783, Pennsylvania Quakers and other sympathetic parties led by Dr. Benjamin Rush continued to make significant contributions to prison reform in a system that had become largely abusive toward men" (2017, Lecture).

Trained in history at Harvard University, Professor David J. Rothman suggests that crime was not recognized as a crucial social problem in Colonial America in his book, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*. After the influence of the Quakers waned, "they [early Americans] devoted very little energy to devising and enacting programs to reform offenders and had no expectations of eradicating crime. Nor did they systematically attempt to isolate the deviant or the dependent" (1971, 3). Instead of blaming society or inferring crime was due to a breakdown in the social order, the early colonists' Christian worldview simply believed men were sinful and crime was a natural expression of the heart's condition. People were, in fact, predisposed to sin. "Their Christian sense of crime as sin, their belief that men were born to corruption, lowered their expectations and made deviant behavior a predictable and inevitable component of society" (1971, 17). Early Americans' religious view of the nature of crime connected the lack of proper parenting to this problem. The book of Proverbs reads, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6 [ESV]). Without proper socialization, the child would grow up into an enemy of God's intended social order (Walker 1998, 1).

In *The Oxford History of the Prison*, Rothman points out:

> What little effort colonial Americans spent in trying to analyze the sources of crime beyond the sinfulness of human nature went to a careful distinction between insiders and outsiders, town residents and nonresidents. Although anyone might commit a crime, the major source of the threat seemed to emanate from those who wandered from town to town, rogues and vagabonds as they were then called. (1995, 112)

When someone was apprehended for committing a crime, a jail was used only to house the person until trial or sentencing. At times, men who were in debt and could not afford

to pay were often jailed. However, these times of incarceration were not extended for long periods of time nor were they part of the punishment. “They were used simply as a holding period until punishment was enacted. These swift punishments were often brutal and shameful. They were whippings, mechanisms of shame (stocks and public cage), banishment, and hanging. These places of incarceration were not intended to reform the individual; they were only a part of the penal process” (Rothman 1971, 52–3). Rothman also writes, “Magistrates in colonial America never considered the possibility of rehabilitation through punishment. Their aim was not to reform the offender but to frighten him into lawful behavior. Only when the crime was very grievous as in the case of murder, did the idea of just deserts–the offender who deserves to be executed–enter into the equation” (1995, 113).

One of Louisiana’s earliest attempts to house prisoners was in New Orleans in a dilapidated city jail that was evidence of squalid conditions. While looking on this reprehensible sight, French observer, Alexis de Tocqueville, described it with these words, “We saw there men thrown in pell-mell with swine, in the midst of excrement and filth. In locking up criminals, no thought is given to making them better but simply to taming their wickedness; they are chained like wild beasts; they are not refined but brutalized” (Pierson 1938, 622). The attention brought upon this situation by de Tocqueville would set a pattern throughout Louisiana’s penal history that would reveal a scandal which would in turn bring change albeit slowly.

Alexis de Tocqueville’s January 1, 1831, diatribe concerning the jail’s conditions drew the attention of politicians necessary to change it. “The very next day one of the

major themes of the Governor's address to the General Assembly was penal reform. Within a year, the needed finances were allotted, and by 1835, the first Louisiana State Penitentiary was built, called The Walls, on the corner of 6th and Laurels Streets in Baton Rouge. Erected on a piece of real-estate nearly seven city blocks east of the Mississippi River in the down town area, the new penitentiary's political goal was to make prison profitable, or at least revenue neutral, by using prisoners to produce consumer products to be sold by the state" (Louisiana State Penitentiary Museum Foundation 2005, 15–36). Within this methodology, it was purported to have the necessary components to offer rehabilitation. This idea of prison for profit would determine the focus of the Louisiana penal system for many years to come, but the profits involved would somehow always be beyond the state's ability to produce results.

History of the Angola Churches

Robert F. Kennan became governor of Louisiana in 1952 and attempted to fulfill his campaign promise to reform Angola after a horrible scandal that occurred previously under Governor Earl K. Long's administration. Thirty-one white prisoners slashed their Achilles tendons with a razor blade rather than going into the cane fields because of what they claimed was overwork, brutality, abysmal living conditions, and extreme physical punishment. He immediately charged the Hospital Board that was responsible for the prison to hire a competent professional penologist to run the prison. They were at liberty to choose the right man for the job because no political promises had been made concerning Angola. Before this scandal, that would not have been the case (New Orleans Times-Picayune 1952, May 28).

Governor Kennan sought an initial $4 million from the Legislature to begin building projects with another $4 million to follow (Acts of Louisiana 1952, 684, 837). As a result, construction on the main prison complex, designed for an emphasis on education and rehabilitation, was finished in 1955. Finances were also appropriated to improve pay for civilian guards and recruit more officers. This plan was in hopes of fulfilling the commitment to reduce the volume of convict guards who had been a necessary evil. The Hospital Board was split and reorganized to form the Board of Institutions that would have sovereign oversight of the prison system.

In May 1952, Reed Cozart, who was the director of the federal penitentiary in Texas, after surveying Angola, developed a twelve-point program to initiate change in the Louisiana penal system at the behest of Governor Kennon. The new vision for Angola was to replace brutality and corporal punishment with measures that would curtail or deny privileges, convict guards with a trained correctional force, politicians with a professional administrative staff, and *profit for profit's sake* with rehabilitation. A *Baton Rouge State Times* article noted, "Through retirements, resignations and outright firings, Cozart and Warden Anderson cleaned out much of the old regime" (Baton Rouge State Times 1953, June 30). The reforms worked toward improving morale among the inmates, but Cozart and Anderson still had the stigma of being northern outsiders who were resented by the few southern traditionalists remaining in power at Angola.

Maurice Sigler, who replaced Warden Anderson in December 1952, was a penal professional connected to Cozart. Sigler had the complete backing of Governor Kennon, and he was well aware of what he was joining. "I was not welcome here," he told *The*

Angolite in a 2000 interview. “This was a deep segregation time. You just didn’t do anything for black people. But I had my own ideas and I believed in these [rehabilitative] programs because that’s the way I was raised and trained” (Rideau 2000, 22). His intention though, was to reshape Angola, so that when inmates left they would be responsible citizens and not return to prison.

The heel slashing of February 1951 and its aftermath triggered tremendous change in the Louisiana prison system. Warden Sigler would become the first warden to allow inmate led churches and civic organizations, and implement a penologically-based classification system in Louisiana prison history for categorizing new arrivals. Education and volunteer programs were instituted and an inmate counsel was established to interact with the administration voicing complaints and solving minor problems before they became major problems (Giorlando 2014, Interview). Yet, the violence and brutality continued with very little interruption.

Sam Starks served time at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in the 1950s only to return again to Angola in 1965 with two life sentences and forty-one years. Starks died December 31, 2017, but before he passed away he shared some of his memories of Angola’s church. Starks remembers occasionally a group of inmates would spontaneously come together to study the Bible. Considering most black prisoners could not read, these impromptu meeting would be accompanied by much singing of Negro spirituals and repeating what they had heard taught throughout their lives. This practice was handed down to them by field hands that have served time before them (Starks 2015, Interview).

Before Governor Kennon's building projects of the 1950s were complete, the prison had two similar church buildings that faced each other in the middle of the prison grounds. One was a Protestant chapel and the other was a Catholic chapel. On the weekends, two services each were offered. The first service was offered for the employees or "free people," and the second service was offered for the inmates. A contract chaplain for both Protestant and Catholic faiths had been on staff since 1908, but they rarely had anything to do with the inmates' spiritual well-being other than delivering death messages (Starks 2015, Interview); (New Orleans Times-Picayune 1918).

If someone were to die in an inmate's family, the chaplain would bring the news of the death. This stigma of bringing terrible news followed the chaplain, so the superstitious inmates did not want anything to do with him. By most accounts handed down, the white chaplain did not want anything to do with the majority black inmates either. The feeling was mutual. The Protestant chapel soon burned down after Starks' arrival. Considering the inmates used the chapel as a meeting ground for immoral acts, many thought the burning down of the building was a sign of God's disfavor (Starks 2015, Interview).

When Clifton Hampton arrived at Angola in 1964, nearly twelve years after Governor Kennon's building projects, inmates were not interested in attending church. Hampton states, "They were interested in staying alive" (2014, Interview). Church services as far as he can remember were attended by those who were interested in having a sexual tryst with a homosexual. Occasionally, a prisoner's homosexual lover may be housed at another section of the prison, so church offered them a rendezvous. The

perversions were so rampant that the situation was similar to the condition of the temple in the days of King Manasseh (2 Kings 21).

Once the new Main prison was operational, inmates were allowed to gather unsupervised in rooms in the upstairs of the Main prison's education building for the purpose of holding church services, but prisoners did not carry Bibles with them. They carried knives. The general statement was, "It's better to be caught by security with it [knife] than another prisoner without it" (Focus Group One 2017). The rooms offered a central meeting ground where inmates could obtain illegal drugs, hooch [homemade wine], or male prostitutes. One prisoner commented that from the sixties into the seventies, some of the inmate preachers owned more homosexual slaves than anyone. In order to hold any position in Angola or any kind of respect, one had to be dangerous and feared (Inmate Subject One Interview 2014).

During the 1970s and 1980s, federal intervention occurred in the penitentiary as result of a lawsuit for "cruel and unusual punishment" (Shere 2005, 42). Angola had a long held reputation for being one of the worst prisons with the bloodiest 18,000 acres in America (Lear and Staggs 1952, 16). Another reform-minded warden, Ross Maggio, took charge to stop the violence and institute order throughout the prison. In conjunction with this man getting the prison-wide violence under control, spiritual and moral reform filtered into the church (Inmate Subject Two Interview, 2014). Outside volunteers also began working with the inmate-led churches. Bible teaching and education started filtering into the system.

By 1995, there were five official churches recognized at the Main prison along with one Jehovah witness congregation and one Islamic service. Seven hundred prisoners out of five thousand were attending church. Burl Cain became warden this same year and allowed the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to begin classes on the prison grounds. After graduating the first class, Warden Cain allowed inmate minister jobs to be created to assist the Chaplain's Department. Next, he allowed more inmate-led churches to be opened across the prison. By 2013, there were over 2,500 inmates attending over thirty protestant churches across the prison (Sharkey 2017, Interview).

From 1990 to 1995, as the five original churches were experiencing growth, development, and discipleship, they were all visited by a charismatic renewal. The church leadership and large sections of the congregations were baptized in the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues (Acts 2:4). This experience was a catalyst for more intense growth, development, and discipleship throughout the churches. Even the music styles in the services changed from the old Negro spirituals to contemporary praise and worship. All five churches, Baptist, Methodist, Church of God in Christ, Pentecostal, and United Apostolic Pentecostal, received the second blessing subsequent to salvation (Myles 2014, Interview).

Questions

The following questions aided the researcher in resolving the problem statement of this paper. They provided guidance for the types of data the researcher should collect. The questions also suggested how the researcher should analyze and interpret the data.

1. Did inmates experience abuse and neglect at an early age that promoted antisocial behavior?

2. Were some prisoners raised in a culture that promoted an illegitimate worldview and a faulty ethical system that predisposed them toward criminal behavior?

3. Did prisoners who accumulated many rule infractions early on in their incarceration later transition to a stable lifestyle that is evident by their disciplinary records?

4. Did the biblical new birth experience in Christ promote inner healing and emotional health among prisoners?

Importance of the Study

Louisiana's extraordinary incarceration rate relative to all other states and countries suggests the need for an in depth research project and an explanation of the reasons for the incarceration rate. Some of the relevant questions that should be addressed are: What role might ethical conflicts in government play in the incarceration rate? Are the people in Louisiana more evil and sinister than in other states? Are there ethical conflicts in government that are driving the incarceration rate to record highs? Why do the neighboring states have nearly the same crime rates, but their prison systems are not filled with men and women convicted of felonies? (Lapeyre and Finan 2017, 7). Louisiana has men who have been sent to prison with life sentences and will never have the opportunity for parole. This practice has continued since the 1970s when they took away all hopes for release through the legislative process. The question seems to be

inescapable; are these men incorrigible? Does one act of violence forever define a man's existence? After decades of incarceration, do these men pose a threat to society?

The fiscal problems the state of Louisiana is facing are daunting. Recently in 2016, the governor of Louisiana inherited a 2 billion dollar budget deficit. The previous governor cut state services multiple times during his two terms. Political commentator Tyler Bridges notes, "Year after year, lawmakers passed budgets that didn't balance, and they went along with the former Governor when he swept bare every fund under the state's control. Legislators deliberately ignored the consequences [under the newly elected Governor] by passing more than $1 billion of temporary taxes that expire in 2018—an amount they will have a hard time making up with spending cuts" (2017, 7). This Louisiana practice of temporary fixes to budgeting problems came to the attention of New York's financial institutions, Moody's, Standard and Poor's, and Fitch. Bridges points out, "Lawmakers have returned to temporary budget patches, and the rating agencies have taken notice. All three have downgraded the state over the past year, citing the dependence on interim tax measures as a major factor" (2017, 1, 11). Simply stated, the higher the bond rating, the lower the interest taxpayers must pay when the state takes out loans to build roads and other constructions projects.

"These fiscal problems are compounded with the Department of Corrections budget that is nearly $750 million and growing" (Mire 2016, 7). State resources have been directed toward housing prisoners while other valuable services have been overlooked. For instance, "Louisiana has the worst public education system in the United States, according to a new survey. The study comes from WalletHub, an organization that

researches economic and community issues throughout the country. The survey ranked Louisiana 51st in the country for its education system. The study examined systems in all states and the District of Columbia" (Mcedlfresh 2017, 3). If Louisiana continues on the current path, "the state will be spending more to incarcerate people than educate them" (Ballard 2017, 3). Assuming some of the men who possess life sentences are no longer dangerous, is it ethical to keep spending tax revenues to keep individuals incarcerated while valuable community services are cut off? In how many ways are these practices hurting the people of Louisiana?

Reviewing the economic status of Louisiana is related to the purpose of this research because it explores a potential rationale for accepting the results of this research. If the state's desperate financial needs could be better served by considering the demonstrated transformation of prisoners serving life, then this research should be considered in the context of state government. The state's economic status is also relevant to this study if it can be demonstrated that some comprising entities perpetuate incarceration policies for purposes other than the best interest of society or of the prisoners.

"Some criminologists acknowledge that putting away large numbers of offenders in penal institutions might reduce crime due to an overall incapacitation effect" (Schmalleger 2014, 35). However, there is greater debate over whether longer sentences produce a deterrent effect for those released from prison. "The new report, some experts say, suggests that the answer is no" (Butterfield 2002, A11). According to Professor of Criminology Joan Patersillia, "The main thing this report shows is that our experiment

with building lots more prisons as deterrent to crime has not worked" (2002, A11). As a result of the radical shift in the prison culture, perhaps the Louisiana State Penitentiary holds the antidote to criminal behavior.

The trajectory of Louisiana's penal policies has not succeeded in changing key metrics, such as financial sustainability, reduction in crime rates, and rehabilitation of offenders. In fact, the data presented and reviewed above indicates continued worsening in these key areas. The logical prediction is that continued pursuit of current policies and practices will, at best, only perpetuate these severe problems and may intensify them. The data is sufficient to argue that a fresh look at alternatives is well reasoned. Do the lives of penitentiary prisoners prove there are healthy men able to live in free society who deserve another chance at life in the community? If so, then the dire situation illustrated by the statistics can be positively impacted by the results of this research.

Assumptions

The following conditions were taken as assumptions, without which this research project would be pointless. These assumptions act as self-evident truths that any knowledgeable person might accept. These conditions are set forth as the foundation upon which this study rests.

1. One assumption is that this researcher will be allowed access by inmates into their personal lives in order to observe their daily behavior.
2. The second assumption is that the participants in this study are telling the truth when they explain their views and daily activities.

3. The third assumption is that an objective view of deontological ethics is also connected to the change in behavior that has led to a new culture.

Delimitations

1. The analysis to be conducted is not an attempt to criticize a particular political party, or is it an implied or expressed endorsement of any political platform or system.

2. This study will not cover the evolution of policies used in dealing with juvenile offenders.

3. This paper will not promote or discourage the use of capital punishment in Louisiana.

4. This work will not examine the ramifications of medical experiments practiced on inmates throughout the 1950s and the 1960s.

5. This paper will not focus on the possible abuses that women prisoners may have experienced throughout the history of the Louisiana prison system.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Books

Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman, Jr. (2002) wrote *Faith Has its Reasons*, which equipped the researcher with the ability to recognize how prisoners defend the Christian faith in the face of competing philosophies. This work compares the Christian worldview to non-Christian worldviews utilizing logic and reason. Ravi Zacharias (1994) authored *Can a Man Live without God*, which shows how affirming the reality of God's existence matters overwhelmingly in prisoners' lives. In this work, he shows how God's existence will impact prisoners' relationships with each other, their commitment to integrity, their attitude toward morality, and their commitment to truth. In another book, *Why Good Arguments Often Fail*, James W. Sire (2006) points out common logical fallacies held by some Louisiana prisoners. Even good arguments within the Christian population of the prison often fail. In closing, Sire puts forth solid arguments that work in the arena of reason such as applying the character of Christ in the prison setting. For example, when a correctional officer demands a prisoner be quiet and walk in a single file line, the prisoner humbly complies with the order.

David A. Noebel (2001) authored *The Battle for Truth*, which enabled this researcher to expose the competing worldviews that prisoners hold. For example, Secular Humanism with its atheistic position and Cosmic Humanism with its pantheistic position

often surfaced when interviewing prisoners. However, the Christian worldview is far more logically consistent than these other competing views when answering questions such as: where did mankind come from? what is wrong with the world? and how does a person fix the problem? The problems connected to these competing worldviews, from relativism to evolution, have infiltrated every area of modern society including education, politics, business, and the media, and exercise a powerful influence on the way prisoners and regular citizens think and behave. Noebel also assists the reader in understanding how the Christian worldview offers superior insight on each of these subjects. Tim LaHaye and David A. Noebel (2000), in *Mind Siege: The Battle for Truth in the New Millennium*, explain Secular Humanism in simple terms so that laymen can understand its destructive and dangerous nature. This system of thinking is in opposition to the Christian worldview. For example, instead of acknowledging God as the creator, Secular Humanism holds that matter is eternal and men evolved through natural processes. In response to the question of whether men are inherently sinful like the Christian Scriptures teach, Secular Humanism purports that men are inherently good. All men need to improve their condition is to advance their education and allow the government more control over the lives of people. Through secular government (free from religion), men can make an ideal society that will promote utopia. The authors helped reveal to this student that there is a conflict in American society as well as the penitentiary between the Christian worldview and the worldview of Secular Humanism that is competing for the minds of prisoners and law abiding citizens. Their thesis was proven in this paper by analyzing several theories in criminology in reference to human nature and personal responsibility.

Nancy Pearcey (2004), in *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, offers three major points with accompanying questions that aid the reader in defining a worldview: 1. Creation. How did it all begin? Where did we come from? 2. Fall. What went wrong? What is the source of evil and suffering? 3. Redemption. What can we do about it? How can the world be set right again? These points guide one of the arguments of this paper as the Christian worldview is contrasted with the Secular Humanist worldview. Josh McDowell and Bob Hosteller (2002), in *Beyond Belief to Convictions*, offer an interesting paradigm of relational apologetics that has been effectively employed throughout the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Many prisoners have moved from an abstract view of truth to recognizing truth is found in the person of Jesus Christ. These two authors postulate a rational, Bible-based argument that caused prisoners to move beyond simple belief to moral conviction. Louis Palau and David Sanford (1997), in *God is Relevant*, recognize the devastating effects atheism and skepticism have had not only in modern society but also in Angola's earlier culture when prisoners disregarded the value of human life and brutalized each other. The authors also advocate for superiority of theism in comparison to both of these positions. Ronald H. Nash (1988), in *Faith and Reason*, defines a Christian worldview and demonstrates the rationality of religious belief. This reality is demonstrated throughout the prison church in the Louisiana Department of Corrections through decreased incidences of violence between inmates and correctional officers as well as among other prisoners.

Francis Beckwith and Gregory Koukl (1998), in *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air*, deny the legitimacy of moral relativism that was practiced largely at one

point in Angola's history. The authors put forth three variations of this position along with the cultural settings where these views express themselves. The variations are Society Does Relativism, Society Says Relativism, and I Say Relativism, which are descriptive, prescriptive, and individually subjective bases of moral ethics. While addressing the problems of political correctness and multiculturalism, objectivism is shown to be superior in each instance, as viewed in the new cultural practice throughout the prison setting at Angola.

David K. Clark and Robert Rakestraw (1994) edited *Reading in Christian Ethics Volume 1 of Theory and Method*, in which twenty-six essayists address both theory and method in relation to Christian ethics. The book concludes with a discussion of the process in which a moral person, especially a transformed prisoner, decides and arrives at a moral decision. This work defines the ethical evolution of the prison culture studied for this paper. The authors use concise definitions that accurately describe each ethical position the inmates held over the years before and after coming to faith in Jesus Christ. In *Readings in Christians Ethics Volume 2 of Issues and Applications*, David Clark and Robert Rakestraw (1996) used forty-five contributing authors who have written essays dealing with many contemporary issues and their ethical implications that also apply in the prison setting. For example, the problem of homosexuality in Angola is regularly addressed within Christian Bible studies and services as men are called to moral purity. While recognizing the philosophical and biblical approaches to issues of prison morality, the editors' primary method of dealing with these subjects is theological.

Norman Geisler (2010) writes, in *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options, 2nd ed.*, six basic ethical views comprised of three teleological views and three deontological views. These systems were listed throughout the historical narrative of Angola's ethical evolution in this paper. Inevitably, inmates were labeled under one of the categories through interviews and observations. Larry May, Shari Collins-Chobanian, and Kai Wong (2002) edited *Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach*, which presents a broad view of many contemporary issues where half the essays are from a non-Western point of view. These anti-Western views were often found in the beliefs of prisoners who were not professing faith in Christ. For example, the Marxist idea of blaming the government for the oppression of the poor was a common excuse for inmates' criminal behavior. Unwilling to admit any wrong doing, they simply confessed to being victims of an unfair system. Scott B. Rae and Kenman L. Wong (2012), in *Beyond Integrity: A Judeo-Christian Approach to Business Ethics*, investigate moral issues in business through the framework of Christian thought. The implied messages from this work are that ethics derive their source from God-enhanced moral commitment, empower a deeper sense of the prisoner's moral identity, and address the issue of why a prisoner should act morally. The principles were easily found among Christian leaders in the prison system during interview sessions. In one instance referred to in this paper, an inmate pastor led the church to purchase another inmate's freedom from his sexual captor.

Lewis B. Smedes (1983), in *Mere Morality: What God Expects from Ordinary People*, emphasizes morality and seems to attempt to draw moral conclusions from the Bible; however, as the text continues, the author often excuses immorality, which he

incorrectly allows under his ethic of love, and makes allowances for situational ethics. This researcher notes this practice of situational ethics in interviews with prisoners who lacked a firm commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. These prisoners quickly justified their immorality under the banner to love. This idea seemed to be accompanied by a blind commitment not to judge anyone for wrong doing. Steve Wilkens (1995) wrote *Beyond Bumper Stickers Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right and Wrong*, which uses popular phrases that capture the heart of nine ethical positions as headings for select chapters. Some of these sayings are often used throughout the prison system, so this book aided the researcher in defining what positions the prisoners hold. For example, Wilkens opens a chapter with the heading, *Look Out for Number One*. Behind this statement is the ethical system of Egoism. The practice of Egoism was discovered at one point during the evolution of Angola's prison culture while men selfishly pursued their own gratification without any consideration of their fellow prisoners.

Robert D. Hare (1993) wrote *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of Psychopaths Among Us*, which describes the thinking patterns and behavior of psychopathic criminals occasionally found in Angola's new culture. While Hare details the similarities found between the extreme cases of cold-blooded killers and simple conmen, this book aided the researcher in distinguishing the difference between the common criminals held in Angola and the true psychopaths among them.

Stanton E. Samenow (2014) wrote *Inside the Criminal Mind*, which recognizes that some people are born with a predisposition towards criminal activity. He uses years of personal interactions with criminals along with updated genetic and biological research to

prove his thesis. This theory is reflected in the doctrine of the fallen nature of man and the Christian anthropology that governs this paper and helps substantiate the criminal mindset. Samenow's explanations often characterize many of the men who are incarcerated in Angola who have not experienced the new birth. Elijah Anderson (1999) wrote *Code of the Street*, which is an ethnographic study that details the cultural mores that shape the behavior of the inner city residents of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Many prisoners in Angola identified with his description of inner city ethics and related similar experiences to those Anderson illustrates. For example, many prisoners fathered children out of wedlock and left them with their mothers to raise with government assistance. This work helped the doctoral candidate understand the cultural background of the criminals in this study.

Jeffery Ian Ross and Stephen C. Richards (2003) edited eighteen essays from criminologists in *Convict Criminology*. Many of the essayists have been incarcerated and offer a unique perspective about the criminal justice system that is not offered in other textbooks. Some of their input helped direct a portion of the discussion about the criminal thought process and crime in this paper. In one instance, a criminologist confessed to his class that he lacked a reason why he committed his crime. Humorously, he concludes that the law is the reason for crime. In this paper, the criminologist's idea is connected to Paul's idea of the result of God's law revealing sin, or in this case, crime.

Shadd Maruna (2001) wrote *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*, which uses interviews with inmates to discover a narrative of rehabilitation that is revealed in common testimonies. These interactions with reformed inmates help to establish the psychological dynamics of crime and desistance, which are reflected in the

changed inmates at Angola. For example, Louisiana prisoners who experienced the new birth developed a new self-image derived from Scripture. They no longer see themselves as criminals but as children of God called to serve their fellow man instead of taking advantage of him.

Frank Schmalleger (2014) wrote *Criminology*, a textbook that contends with theoretical developments in criminology in an attempt to help the reader understand crime and criminals. Some of the theories such as the *Theory of Anomie* and the *Theory of Culture Conflict* were analyzed and applied in this paper in comparison to a Christian worldview. The inherent weakness of relativism in each theory was exposed in comparison to the Christian framework of thinking. Freda Adler, Gerhard O. W. Mueller, and William S. Laufer (2010) wrote *Criminology*, which focuses on understanding criminology, explanations of crime and criminal behavior, and types of crime. The information gathered from this text helped substantiate many of the conclusions of this researcher, such as blame shifting and insistence on immediate self-gratification, two common excuses found among Angola prisoners for committing crime.

John E. Conklin (2010) wrote *Criminology*, which studies crime and its causes, relying heavily on quantitative data. Ideas from this work helped influence some of the major criminological theories of this paper such as orientational and interpersonal changes in prisoners. These orientational changes are seen throughout society, including in prisoners at Angola as they gain a new perspective of self, a growing awareness of time, changes in their aspirations and goals, and an increased fear of injury or death. Two interpersonal changes seen in some of the prisoners are an increased desire to form better

relationships with family and loved ones and a deeper satisfaction in activities. Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser (1996) wrote *Managing the Congregation: Building Effective Systems to Serve People*, which offers a Systems Model to assess a culture transforming organization by considering the interrelationship of its parts as well as the relationship between the organization and its environment; therefore, this researcher attempted to apply their model to Angola's prison church in order to view its component parts as a whole in this paper. After successfully applying the model and dissecting the church system, it was determined the church as a whole functions as a culture transforming system.

Ann Butler (1990) wrote *Angola: Louisiana State Penitentiary, A Half Century of Rage and Reform*, which detailed the lives of several convicts and their connections to the penitentiary that illustrated a strong cross section of criminal behavior behind bars. Another work by Ann Butler, co-authored with previous warden, Charles Henderson (1992), *Dying to Tell: Angola, Crime, Consequences, Conclusion at Louisiana State Penitentiary*, follows a similar pattern to her previous work, but delves deeper into the depraved culture and lives of the inmates housed at Angola. In another insightful work, which reveals similar patterns of criminal thought, Wilbert Rideau (2010) reflected on his crime and incarceration at Angola, in 1961, that covered four decades until his release in 2005, in *In the Place of Justice: A Story of Punishment and Deliverance*. In addition, Dennis Sheer (2005) in his book, *Cain's Redemption*, captured Warden Burl Cain's thoughts on criminal behavior at Angola based on his lifetime of service in the Louisiana Department of Corrections.

Magazines

Another door to Angola's past and peaceful present was opened through *The Angolite: The Prison News Magazine*. The magazine first began in the 1950s reporting on the day-to-day prison life inside Angola, and has since won national awards. *The Angolite* was preceded by *The Argus*, but due to a fire in the prison's Education Building, most original manuscripts have been destroyed.

Newspapers

Several Louisiana newspapers, Baton Rouge's *The Advocate*, New Orleans' *The Times-Picayune*, and Shreveport's *The Times*, were helpful in providing the material necessary to write a well-rounded account of political efforts put forth toward prison reform and many issues related to Louisiana's incarceration rate. *The Advocate* most recently seemed to lead the group in efforts to support the overhaul of the criminal justice system. In comparison, *The Times-Picayune* started pressing the issue of reform many years prior. *The Times* took a more neutral position and had far less to report than the other two newspapers.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Several qualitative methods were employed in collecting and interpreting data. As a result of this researcher being incarcerated, he relied on other parties to locate primary and secondary sources on the Internet. Unfortunately, prison policies will not allow him to access the information highway; therefore, he directed friends and family to necessary sites, such as la.gov, to retrieve the hard copies needed. A content analysis was conducted on several books, magazines, and newspapers. After examining multiple documents connected to the penitentiary's prison population, this researcher interpreted significant patterns of inmate behavior throughout the history of the prison along with trends in the Louisiana legislature. This data was further validated through one-on-one interviews and interviews with four focus groups consisting of ten people in each group. The crimes of these men range from murder, rape, and armed robbery to habitual offenders who have been given life sentences without parole.

Research Methodology

A content analysis was conducted in a detailed and systematic examination of several books written on the subjects of worldviews, apologetics, systems of ethics, and criminology. The insight gleaned was used to sift through the thoughts and address the behavior of all the subjects who participated in this study. An attempt was made to

recognize the worldview and system of ethics that has governed or continues to govern the lives of these men. The system of thought they are using to respond to life was qualified and addressed within this paper.

A content analysis was also conducted in a detailed and systematic examination of several books written in connection with Angola. Consequently, all the books that were located were written, for the most part, in the same format. Either they detailed the life experience(s) of one inmate or several. From these overviews, a clear picture can be seen of how inmates lived inside Angola during the period they were incarcerated. These books profile the immoral and violent experiences of prisoners detailing the barbaric culture of the past. These authors are attempting to capture the attitudes of the inmates they interviewed along with the culture that surrounded them.

Newspapers and magazine articles were also utilized to recognize significant patterns in the prisoners' behavior along with patterns in the Louisiana legislature. These sources recognized the issues that help add substance to the ideas that surfaced throughout this paper. These firsthand eyewitness accounts helped substantiate the claims raised in this work.

The secondary sources that were used in this paper are readily available to this researcher. *The Angolite* office is the headquarters for a national award winning prison news magazine published by prisoners incarcerated in the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Decades worth of journalism have been done by inmate journalists inside the prison. The daily lives of inmates, both good and bad, have been covered throughout the years. Patrick Govan, an inmate journalist who oversees the archives, agreed to be interviewed

and offer any help connected to the archives that was needed to complete this assignment. This source opened the door to Angola's past and present culture through eyewitness accounts captured by the staff of *The Angolite*. Angola's Museum curator, Dr. Miriam Giorlando, is another noteworthy individual who possesses some in-depth insight into the behavior patterns expressed throughout Angola's past and present. She, too, agreed to interviews as time allowed.

Target Sample of the Population

A total of four focus groups were employed. Each group consisted of ten people whose charges ranged from murder, rape, and armed robbery to habitual offenders who have been given life sentences without parole. For the first group, this researcher selected ten different people with more than forty years of incarceration, and the second group of men had ten people with more than thirty years of incarceration each but less than forty years. The third group of men had ten people with more than twenty years of incarceration but less than thirty years, and the last group had ten men who have been incarcerated more than ten years but less than twenty years. These focus groups had a total of forty different men involved.

Fifteen inmates were utilized for individual contact and one-on-one interviews for this paper; however, this researcher interacted with several thousand inmates over his twenty-two year ethnographic observation. A rich collection of notes gathered throughout the years were used to shape the body of this work. Inmates who have had contact with this researcher through sporting events, civic clubs, and church services were selected for interview, along with those who have been noticed during social events through their

actions or words. Several community service projects have brought both inmate introverts and extroverts into view of this researcher as he sought out those who were willing to talk. Some of these men who were willing to participate in this study connected this student to others in their social groups to further his network of contacts.

One inmate who participated in this interview has been incarcerated since 1964. His incarceration in Angola has spanned more than five decades. Each interviewee was asked to spend significant amounts of time on multiple occasions in order to share their thoughts and how they express them over the years. These interviews were both formal and informal encounters. On occasion, this researcher visited their housing unit inside the prison and ate with them while discussing their lives. At times, interviews were more formal conducted seated across from each other at a table in one of the prison Education Buildings. These formal interviews did not go over an hour-and-a-half unless the interviewee wanted to continue.

Having been incarcerated in the Louisiana penal system for over twenty years, this researcher has conducted an extensive ethnography. Once he was convicted, the Louisiana courts acted as a gatekeeper, introducing him to the world behind bars. Over the years, this researcher has intermingled with prisoners, getting an overall social and cultural context. During his stay, he has identified key informants who provide information and insights relevant to the research questions, and they have introduced him to others who have helped him in his endeavor. By using participant observation, this researcher has immersed himself in the daily life of prisoners. He has been absorbed into the prison population and no longer is considered an outsider. As a result, significant insight has been gathered about

the prison that could not have come through another avenue. In order to avoid becoming so emotionally involved that the ability to assess the prisoners' lives that make up the culture is compromised, outside mentors were used for spiritual and emotional balance to provide a more detached view. This involvement enabled the researcher to aim for balance, fairness, completeness, and sensitivity in the interpreting of data.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Louisiana politics have experienced tumult in recent years. This tumult reflects social and political phenomena from both state and national contexts. Regardless of which party or official is responsible, the result is a seemingly insurmountable budget deficit. Because the state's economic and political realities directly impact its penal policies and conditions, this research must show an awareness of these factors. These dynamics have produced the current situation and conditions, which this research argues can be positively impacted by the reforming effect of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Fausset 2014, 23); (Rainey and O'Donoghue 2017, A); (Bridges and Ballard 2017, 1); (Bridges 2017, 11); (O'Donoghue 2017, 2); (Bridges 2017, 2); (Oliver and Erwin 2017, 2).

In addressing the shortcomings of a previous governor's administration, political commentators Tyler Bridges and Mark Ballard write, "Fifteen times over the past nine years, the state had to bridge unexpected deficits to keep the budget balanced which has led to repeated spending cuts after lawmakers thought they had finalized their budget work and left Baton Rouge." They continue, "Legislators raised revenue and cut spending in 2015 during [the governor's] final year in office, but the budget they passed included so many gimmicks that [the incoming governor] inherited a $2 billion budget shortfall" (Bridges and Ballard 2017, 1).

This fiscal problem was so daunting that in 2016 the newly elected Louisiana governor appeared on all the Louisiana television networks and warned the general public of the looming possibility of shutting down universities and closing hospitals. Interestingly, he said during his pessimistic forecast that the sheriffs across Louisiana needed money to continue housing prisoners. He also encouraged the public to call their representatives and demand action. A special session was called to address the issue. "The state Legislature wasn't particularly happy in 2016 about approving more than $1.4 billion worth of tax and fee changes, even if it did help to close a budget deficit so large it threatened to shutter [close] public universities in the middle of the academic year" (O'Donoghue 2017, 2).

A solution applied to this problem was a temporary one-cent tax added to the Louisiana sales tax, which was already highest in the nation. Bridges notes, "Year after year, lawmakers passed budgets that didn't balance, and they went along with [the governor] when he swept bare every fund under the state's control. Legislators deliberately painted themselves into a corner by passing more than $1 billion of temporary taxes that expire in 2018—an amount they will have a hard time making up with spending cuts" (Bridges 2017, 7). This Louisiana practice of temporary fixes to budgeting caught the attention of New York's financial institutions, Moody's, Standard and Poor's, and Fitch. Bridges points out, "Lawmakers have returned to temporary budget patches, and the rating agencies have taken notice. All three have downgraded the state over the past year, citing the dependence on interim tax measures as a major factor" (Bridges 2017, 11).

Connected to Louisiana's budget problem is an annual Department of Corrections budget of $750 million and climbing. Margaret Mire, manager for the State Affairs for Americans for Tax Reform, writes, "Louisiana continues to rank among the worst in the national crime statistics despite investing approximately $700 million a year in corrections" (2016, 7). This obvious problem has caught the attention of politicians of both political parties along with businessmen and faith-based groups. While attempts to enact reform have been made, mass incarceration remained Louisiana's number one crime fighting tool. Mire points out, "Louisiana is the prison capital of the world. To put this fact in context, the Pelican state's incarceration rate is nearly double that of the entire country" (Mire 2016, 7).

Having inherited a $750 billion Department of Corrections budget along with the world's highest incarceration rate, Louisiana's state government decided to adopt House Current Resolution 82. This measure created the Justice Reinvestment Task Force whose members would chart a data-driven course for comprehensive reform of Louisiana's criminal justice system. "The task force will be undergoing a top to bottom analysis of Louisiana's criminal justice system. In addition, it will closely examine policies that have proven successful in other states, along with scientific research about changing criminal behavior and keeping the public safe" (Mire 2016, 7).

During this time, political campaigns attempted to leverage the electorate's fears by accusing their opponents of being soft on crime, intending to release thousands of dangerous felons back into society, and reducing sentencing guidelines (Grace 2017, 7).

Whether the campaign accusations are true or not, this political strategy clearly demonstrates how politicians contribute to the current incarceration policies and conditions.

In order to quiet any fears generated by the idea of prison reform, the Justice Reinvestment Task Force would study Louisiana's incarceration problem for ten months by reviewing a tremendous amount of scientific studies and listening to expert testimony. "They would hold town hall meetings in Lafayette, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans, and host urban and rural crime victim and survivor round tables. The task force will also examine a correctional center and conduct meetings with public and invited testimony in which multiple people will offer information and opinions. Finally, they will hold fourteen policy development subgroup meetings" (Pettit and Schmidt 2017, 7).

Considering Louisiana leads the nation in incarcerating its citizens with a cost of $750 million annually for its tax payers, the state's criminal justice policies do not appear successful. "One in three people who comes out of the prison system returns in three years, and our crime rate is no better than in states that incarcerate less. In fact, our state sends people to prison for non-violent offenses at twice the rate of South Carolina and three times the rate of Florida—states with almost identical crime rates" (Lapeyre and Finan 2017, 7). Different models will be examined to demonstrate the influence that Christian programing in the prison has, either positive or negative.

The catalyst for the state's most recent explosion of prison population growth can be traced back to a 1992 Ruth's Chris Steak House meeting with Dixon Correctional Institute Warden Burl Cain, David Wade Correctional Center Warden Richard Stalder, and Democratic gubernatorial candidate Edwin Edwards. Cain headed a political organization

called L.A.W.S., Louisiana Wardens and Superintendents, which was a voting block of interested parties connected to the Department of Corrections. Since Edwards' Republican opponent was David Duke, the previous Grand Wizard of the Klu Klux Klan, "the normally conservative Republican L.A.W.S. made a deal with Edwards that they would endorse his candidacy and vote for him with one promissory note. If he were to win, they wanted Richard Stalder appointed as Secretary of the Department of Corrections. All three shook hands. Edward ran and won" (Sheer 2005, 44–45); (Chang 2012, 11).

Shortly after Governor Edwards was sworn into office, he appointed the Republican Richard Stalder to head the Louisiana Department of Corrections. At that time, the prison system was under federal court order to reduce overcrowding; however, there was no money budgeted to expand or build more prisons. The accumulation of prisoners was overwhelming the sheriffs and the parish facilities. In response, Orleans Parish Sheriff Charles Foti loaded a bus full of state prisoners and dropped them off in the parking lot of Elayne Hunt Correctional Center also known as Hunt. Stalder, in turn, understood a method that would turn this situation around, where all law enforcement involved could achieve their desired end and solve their immediate problems.

Stalder soon met with the Sheriffs' Association and promised financial incentives for housing state prisoners. He also guaranteed forty percent occupancy to each facility involved. Chang suggests, "Sheriffs, seeing jobs for their constituents and new equipment for their deputies, volunteered to build the new prisons the state could not afford. The once recalcitrant Foti expanded his prison to more than 7,000 beds" (Chang 2012, 11). Foti's radical shift is an example of the revolution in policy that came at the behest of

Stalder. The financial incentive offered by the state to parish sheriffs produced a radical shift in parish policy and resource allocation. This initiative further added revenue from incarceration as incentive to perpetuate the penal system's status quo (Chang 2012, 11).

The influx of wealth helped expand the sheriffs' power and influence throughout the state, especially in politics. As the prisons began to expand, the sheriffs also became major employers. Over a period of time, the sheriffs transformed into a powerful lobbyist group that holds tremendous influence over the Louisiana legislature. According to Chang, "The Louisiana Sheriffs' Association lobbies extensively on its members' behalf and funds campaigns through a related political action committee. With strategically placed contributions, they can influence legislation as well as politically steer inmates to their own prisons" (Chang 2012, 11).

For example, there was an attempt to enact prison reform by Representative Joe Lopinto, a Republican from Metairie, who sponsored two bills that would have reduced the state prison expense by $328 million over ten years. One proposal would have reduced the amount of time non-violent, non-sex offenders would have to spend locked up before they are eligible for parole. Another measure would have allowed prisoners to accumulate good time faster in order to be released from prison sooner. Jarvis DeBerry, political commentator for *The Times-Picayune,* points out, "The Pew Center on the states estimates that such a change by itself would save the state $253 million over ten years. But the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association put the lid on that. The state often pays local jails to house state prisoners and the state's sheriffs are adamant about holding on to that money" (2011, 3).

With the expansion of prisons, another social dynamic occurred when smaller parishes became dependent on them for their economic survival. For example, in 2004 Andy Brown was elected Sheriff of Jackson Parish, promising to build a new jail. He brought in LaSalle Corrections, a private prison that invested $15 million into a structure. In fact, the new facility is as dependent on the sheriff as the sheriff is the new facility. "Only government entities can receive inmates from the state" (Chang 2012, 11). In return, Brown receives a monetary payment each year. Chang reasons, "The real cake is the jobs. He made sure the prison's 100-plus employees would be the sheriffs' deputies with full government benefits, instantly tripling his workforce. For a parish of only 16,000 residents, a 1,147 bed prison is an economic powerhouse" (2012, 11).

In another example, the town of Mangham, Louisiana, experienced a drop in the prices for agricultural products around the time of the prison boom. Since many farmers went bankrupt, the 160 jobs offered by the sheriff that included a package of full benefits were welcomed by the community. "The 2010 census has Mangham's population at 672, while the prison is 782 at full capacity" (Chang 2012, 21). State Representative Charles Chaney, Republican of Rayville, states, "You don't want to earn a living off the misfortunes of people who are incarcerated, but somebody has to fill the void. Having them in local rural parishes is an economic driver in our community" (Chang 2012, 21).

Sheriff Charles McDonald echoed those words, "I hate to make money off the back of some unfortunate person. The fact is, somebody's going to keep them, and it might as well be Richland Parish" (Chang 2012, 20). Doug White is part owner of the Richland Detention Center and shares twenty-five percent of the profits each year with

other investors. He states, “We did a service for the community and provided a lot of jobs for farmers who went broke, and for their wives. It was good for the parish and good for the state” (Chang 2012, 22). Right before McDonald retired, he remarked, “We’re stuck with this jail. We can’t walk away. We’ve got investors, employees” (Chang 2012, 22). Chang remarks, “The political pressure to keep beds full is a contributing factor to the state’s world-leading incarceration rate. No other state comes close to Louisiana’s 53 percent rate of state inmates in local prisons, and few lobbies in Louisiana are as powerful as the Sheriffs’ Association” (Chang 2012, 20).

A 2012 *Times-Picayune* article read, “In Louisiana, even baby steps are met with resistance. Jindal, who rose to the governor’s office with the backing of the sheriffs’ lobby, says too many people are behind bars. Yet earlier this year, he watered down a reform package hammered out by the Sentencing Commission he himself had convened” (Chang 2012, 10). If this situation is the case, the problem seems to be an inability to reform the system as long as it is lucrative for communities and organizations to house prisoners. Governor John Bel Edwards’ proposes to lower the head count in the Department of Corrections. These political promises are accompanied by proposed increases in per diem rates for each prisoner. Rebekah Allen, journalist for *The Advocate*, notes that prisons would receive a higher per diem rate for each state prisoner housed if Edwards’ prison reform package was passed. “Half of the state’s prison population is housed in local jails, but per-diem rates are so low that the sheriffs are unable to provide programs to reduce recidivism” (2017, 7). The net effect retains a financial incentive to incarcerate individuals for extended periods.

The reasoning under the Edwards' administration is if the state pays the sheriffs more money to house prisoners, then honest reform can take place and the state will send less people to prison. Governor Edwards states, "We'll be able to increase sheriff per diems in exchange for better services" (Allen 2017, 7). It must be noted that money seems to be a major factor in causing the prison building boom and leading to the world's highest incarceration rate, so offering more money to fix this problem may not have the desired effect in lowering the prison population. The idea of providing substance abuse programs and job skills training at the parish level is an honorable approach at reform; however, given the documented relationship between revenue incentives and the extreme incarceration rate, oversight and accountability will be essential to the success of this approach.

In March of 2017, the Justice Reinvestment Task Force released their finding from their years' worth of data-driven research. "The ink is barely dry on a draft slate of recommendations to overhaul Louisiana's criminal justice system and already the battle lines appear to be forming for a fight in the Legislature over the proposals" (Stole, Simerman, and Mustian 2017, 1). In reference to the criminal justice overhaul, Larry Hannan, online journalist for *The Slate*, writes, "While the political stars seem aligned, there's one group standing in the way: The Louisiana District Attorneys Association (L.D.A.A.). Louisiana DAs have historically taken a merciless approach to incarceration. A 2013 American Civil Liberties Union, A.C.L.U., report found that the state had an astounding 429 inmates serving life without parole for nonviolent crimes" (2017, 2). "The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Justice Reinvestment Task Force released a detailed

report that eighty-six percent of people admitted to prison in 2015 were sent there for a nonviolent offense" (O'Donoghue 2017, 2A).

The District Attorneys Association countered these claims, suggesting that the men and women who were sent to prison for nonviolent offenses were really violent people. In reference to the eighty-six percent of the nonviolent offenders admitted to prison in 2015, Pete Adams, president of the Louisiana District Attorneys Association states, "Some of the people Pew classified as 'nonviolent' had a previous conviction for violent offenses" (O'Donoghue 2017, 2). In other words, a prior criminal conviction for a violent offense permanently labels an individual a violent offender regardless of the nature of subsequent offenses, based on this rationale. The district attorneys noted that many people were allowed to plead to a lesser charge with jail time to avoid going to trial and facing more prison time with a more serious charge or avoid the habitual offender law being applied to their case.

At the request of the Governor, Senate President John Alario sponsored a bill connected to the criminal justice overhaul that changes the habitual offender law. "Under current law, any felony conviction, including those for theft and other non-violent offenses, can trigger a mandatory minimum sentence—and much longer time in prison—if the defendant is convicted of a second crime in the next 10 years. The governor's task force recommended that the non-violent felonies apply to the habitual offender period for only five years instead of ten" (O'Donoghue 2017, 2). Julia O'Donoghue, journalist for *The Times-Picayune* points out, "Prosecutors are skeptical. They say it will limit their ability to secure plea deals and avoid trial, because the threat of longer sentences for

repeat offenders can be used to persuade defendants to agree to a lesser charge" (2017, 2). The district attorneys do not want the law changed because prosecutors use the harsher sentences as leverage in plea bargain negotiations.

Flozell Daniels, CEO and president of the Foundation for Louisiana and member of Louisiana Justice Reinvestment Task Force, writes *The Advocate* in response to the mounting opposition of the Louisiana District Attorneys Association toward the recommendations put forth by the task force. He accuses the district attorneys of making a number of false and misleading claims about the task force. Daniels asks a number of questions: "If a person is really violent, then why didn't the prosecutor convict him of a violent offense? And if they have so many prior convictions as to render them dangerous repeat offenders, then why weren't they convicted under the habitual offender statute? Are all the supposedly nonviolent people in Louisiana's prisons really dangerous criminals?" In answer to his own questions, he writes, "Of course not. They are just subject to harsher laws. The task force's work uncovered this fact—and the scary falsehoods that the district attorneys are pushing are just plain wrong. We send more people to prison because we have been creating more policies for far too long based on anecdote and fear." Finally, he concludes, "It's not because we're protecting public safety—clearly other states are reducing both crime and incarceration. It's because the district attorneys are trying to keep us from meaningful reform." In a justification for the task force's work, he writes:

> For 10 months, we reviewed the data on what's driving the size and growth of our prison population. We pored over the best research in the field on what works to reduce crime and victimization. We studied what policies worked well for our neighboring states and how they could be adapted here. And after 10 months, we

> issued by consensus a package of recommendations that will increase public safety, reduce our prison population, save millions and reinvest $154 million into programs that work to further reduce crime and recidivism. I'm immensely proud of the work that we accomplished and I don't want to see it go to waste because we're distracted by the same tired defense of the status quo. (2017, 7)

In reference to the prison reform movement, *Advocate* staff writers Bryne Stole, John Simerman, and Jim Mustian conclude, "The toughest battle appears likely to be over whether to shorten the lengthy prison sentence for those convicted of the worst crimes, including murder, or offer those inmates a shot at parole in the effort to cut the state's nation-leading incarceration rate" (2017, 1). Laurie White, chief judge of the Orleans Parish criminal court and member of the Justice Reinvestment Task Force suggests that the attempt to offer parole eligibility to long-term inmates is a much needed change from the tough-on-crime policies that have led Louisiana to the highest incarceration rate in the world. She states, "We're recommending eligibility to apply for parole, not automatically granted parole. You're not letting the worst of the worst out; you're letting the best of the best out." However, "I think the district attorneys are not going to be interested in anything that reduces jail terms," White states. "That's how we got into these extensively long mandatory minimum sentences–basically feel good, tough-on-crime legislation. Everybody's for it until you start looking at the price tag and the age of the population. Those people are past their criminal menopause" (Stole, Simerman, and Mustian 2017, 8).

East Baton Rouge District Attorney Hillar Moore, who has been a leader for the District Attorneys Association at looking at the governor's reform proposals, has been vocal in his opposition, along with writing a statement of discontent toward the prison reform package that was released on behalf of the association. Moore remarks, "We are

not locking up more people for nonviolent offenses. That's nonsense" (O'Donoghue 2017, 2). Orleans Parish District Attorney Leon Cannizzaro told *The Times-Picayune* that at least one hundred people who were sent to prison from his jurisdiction in 2015 were classified as nonviolent by the Pew, but should be considered violent (O'Donoghue 2017, 2). When O'Donoghue questioned both men about their opinions about paroling long-term prisoners, their views were made clear. "The prosecutors oppose weakening or providing more leniency to violent offenders. This means, for example, the district attorneys would not support a geriatric parole proposal that might give people serving life sentences a shot at parole once they hit 50 years old and served 30 years in prison" (2017, 2). Both of these district attorneys have suggested if the prison reforms were enacted, it would be a prescription for social chaos. "In a report issued a week before the Legislature convened the state's chief prosecutors vowed to oppose early release or significantly reduce penalties for violent offenders calling them a 'sure prescription for disaster'" (Simerman, Allen, and Stole 2017, 7).

A recent article by *The Advocate* exposed some relationships throughout state government, particularly the Department of Corrections. "The blood ties in the department also extended to crucial power brokers outside it. Warden Burl Cain's wife is a cousin of East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney Hillar Moore, whose brother [Mike Moore] heads Prison Enterprises, the money making wing of the corrections' department" (Thompson 2016, 11). A similar factor in prison reform in Louisiana relates to the capacity of the prison system to produce revenue. This significance directly relates to the scope and purpose of this research. Proposed sentencing reform will allow many mature inmates to be

released on parole. The prison systems revenue producing industry depends largely on a workforce comprised of these mature inmates. Inmates who have demonstrated trustworthiness based on age and maturity are the most trusted and dependable to provide cost-free labor. Since it is the aging, mature inmates who would be released, the income producing capacity of the prison would be reduced, perhaps significantly.

Hillar Moore was the subject of another article a few months earlier, referring to when he advocated for a misdemeanor jail. “Officials like Hillar Moore III, East Baton Rouge Parish district attorney, say a misdemeanor jail is a tool that deters misdemeanor offenses and compels those offenders to pay their fines and fees” (Allen 2016, 2). In other words, if a person is caught speeding or involved in a domestic dispute, he or she can be arrested and housed in prison to offset the fine. In response to Moore’s desire to use the funds collected to enact the prison and house nonviolent offenders, Baton Rouge Representative Ted James proposed Bill 92 to stop the flow of money toward the project and return what has been collected to the courts. Moore’s idea was met with opposition by those who likened it to a debtor’s prison.

In voicing opposition to geriatric parole, “Hillar Moore III, the East Baton Rouge Parish district attorney who’s been a vocal presence at the Legislature, said the current commutation process already provides a chance for truly reformed inmates to return home” (Stole and Simerman 2017, 6). Yet, when Governor John Bel Edwards commuted David Bacon, who was fifty-three years old and spent twenty-seven years behind bars, from life without parole to ninety-nine years with immediate parole eligibility, Moore expressed his opposition. “The decision to release Bacon from prison came over the

objection of Hillar Moore" (Stole 2016, 1). The Pardon Board gave Bacon a unanimous decision in recommending him to the governor's office for commutation, and the governor's office, in turn, recognized his rehabilitation along with the board. Moore admits, "I think there is a certain time that people age out of criminal behavior, but the victim is still dead. Moore maintained that the devastation and trauma caused by a murder or rape demand retributive justice" (Stole and Simerman 2017, 6).

Governor Jindal rarely acted on recommendations for commutation of sentence the Board of Pardons gave him (Stole and Simerman 2017, 6). Governor John Bel Edwards, in contrast, pardoned more in his first year than the previous three governors combined within a span of years covering over two decades. "Five of the 22 for whom Edwards shortened terms were originally sentenced in the 1960's and 1970's. Three were in their 70's or older. Five were in their 60's. Sixteen were serving life sentences before their commutation, and 15 were convicted for murder" (O'Donoghue, under Governor and clemency).

Recently, a nonprofit group called The Lens exposed New Orleans District Attorney Leon Cannizzaro for issuing fake subpoenas to reluctant witnesses. "According to the report the office issued notices that were clearly labeled as subpoenas, and threatened witnesses who did not show up as ordered with possibility of a fine, or even jail time." Grace went on to write, "The very significant problem here is that the DA's office does not have the authority to issue subpoenas on its own without a judge's signature. Nor does it have the power to impose the penalties mentioned" (Grace 2017, 5).

Some might be willing to forgive or even overlook a law enforcement officer such as Cannizzaro using a threat of incarceration through a powerless fake subpoena to secure

the testimony of a witness to put a dangerous criminal behind bars; however, Cannizzaro has truly been locking up innocent witnesses through material witness warrants to secure their testimony. A nonprofit group, Court Watch NOLA, issued a report exposing the unlawful practices of Cannizzaro's office. Emily Lane, journalist for *The Times-Picayune*, writes, "In a 2016 case, a rape victim was jailed for more than a week after the Orleans Parish District Attorney's Office issued a material witness warrant for her arrest. She was incarcerated at the same facility—the Orleans Justice Center—where her accused rapist was being held, said Simmone Levine, the executive director of Court Watch NOLA" (2017, 1). According to Levine, "Judges and prosecutors in other states expressed surprise that six victims had been jailed in New Orleans in a single year" (Lane 2017, 15).

"In a written statement, Cannizzaro defended the practice, saying he 'must balance the concerns for the victims with the safety of a community that is being torn apart by violent crime'" (Lane 2017, 2). Multiple court cases generate serious concern about whether a priority is properly assigned to the actual guilt or innocence based on evidence. These cases seem to indicate a higher priority is placed on conviction and incarceration, justified by the need to protect communities from violent crime (e.g., see the case of John Floyd in Daley 2017; Kunzelman 2017; Gill 2017).

After overseeing inmate John Floyd for over twenty years as the Warden of the Louisiana State Penitentiary, Burl Cain comments, "If John was guilty, I would say he is completely rehabilitated and it serves no purpose him being in prison. Because I believe John is innocent, I think keeping him in prison any longer is a tragedy" (Sledge 2017, 3). Political commentator James Gill offers this statement, "The City Counsel, blaming

Cannizzaro for an excess of prosecutorial zeal, has cut $600,000 out of his budget. And, that was before the mighty squawk arose over his habit of arresting crime victims on material witness warrants" (2017, 6).

In May of 2017, North Shore District Attorney Warren Montgomery acknowledges that fake subpoenas were being used by his office. The District Attorney's office had inherited the practice from his predecessor, Walter Reed. Once the office culture of using fake subpoenas lacking a judge's approval to pressure witnesses to cooperate was found, Montgomery disavowed it and promised to discontinue using such tactics. Montgomery states, "I consider this misleading and unacceptable. The use of such a document to pressure a witness to meet with prosecutors and investigators is inappropriate" (Rhoden 2017, 4). Montgomery's predecessor of thirty years, Walter Reed, used a different approach, "This is my general philosophy: We identify the bad guys, bad people—people who repeatedly commit crimes over and over again, especially violent ones—and we use the resources of this office to get rid of them for as long as we can" (DeBerry 2017, 6). Kim Chatelain, journalist for *The Times-Picayune*, notes, "Under Reed who held the position for three decades, St. Tammany's justice system garnered the moniker 'St. Slammany,' a nickname Reed came to embrace, even giving out awards in that name to prosecutors he thought were especially hard-nosed and aggressive" (2017, 4).

Walter Reed was investigated and convicted of corruption and sentenced in 2017 to four years in prison. This reduced sentence followed Reed's plea for mercy, but is in stark contrast to sentences Reed secured for others during his prosecutorial tenure. For example, Brian Martin, second-offense car burglar, received 24 years; Cornell Hood's

fourth marijuana conviction resulted in a life sentence; and Melissa Harris' fourth insufficient-funds check produced a twenty-year sentence. Brain Martin, the car burglar, was not a violent criminal. Cornell Hood was not a violent offender either. Harris, who was writing bad checks to satiate her addiction, was not violent. However, Reed was determined to give them all a virtual life sentence because they were repeat offenders.

DeBerry's frustration is evident when he reflects on the double standard in Reed's sentencing, "How novel, a judge looking at the complete picture. How quaint, a judge basing a sentencing decision in part on how dangerous that person's freedom would be to the rest of us. If only state judges had such discretion. If only local prosecutors would exercise their discretion—as in stop multiple billing nonviolent offenders—so as not to tie those judges' hands. When Reed had his way, he'd give a defendant as much time as he could" (2017, 6).

Criminal justice reform advocates and Governor Edwards himself have stressed that Louisiana's incarceration rate is not high because the state has more criminals. Edwards comments, "While Louisiana is the incarceration capital of the world, I refuse to believe that our people are inherently more sinister than in other parts of the world. For too long, this has been a drain on our state resources and has done little to make our cities and towns more secure" (Allen 2017, 6). Actually, Louisiana's crime rates are similar to its Southern neighbors. The policies and laws that have been implemented in the name of being tough on crime have promoted longer sentences and few opportunities for parole. Allen writes, "In recent years, legislators have added 80 new laws limiting parole opportunities for inmates—55 of those were for nonviolent offenders" (2017, 1). Edwards again addressed

this issue saying, “Our policy decisions have been driven by fear and not hope balanced with reason. What we’re doing isn’t working” (Allen 2017, 6).

In response to this problem the Justice Reinvestment Task Force released twenty-six recommendations on March 16, 2017, after nearly a year of intense study of the issues. “Several members of the task force stressed that the hard part begins with the legislative work—translating the recommendations into bills and trying to achieve consensus among the legislators” (2017, 7). Out of the twenty-six proposals, “The recommendations that garnered the most opposition would allow people serving life sentences or lengthy sentences for violent crimes to be considered for parole” (6). Once the recommendations were synthesized into pieces of legislation, ten bills were introduced by Democrats and Republicans with the full backing of the governor. “The overall impact of implementing the recommendations would save Louisiana $305 million over 10 years, according to estimates provided by The Pew Charitable Trust, which advised the task force” (7). In a political move, the Pelican Institute, a Libertarian think tank that has promoted the prison reform package, hired U.S. Senator David Vitter as a consultant. Vitter, who originally opposed the reform, later endorsed the prison reform package and gave it his blessing. “This move offered politicians more cover to simply do the right thing without fear of repercussions of a smear campaign” (Grace 2017, 7). Secretary of Corrections Jimmy LeBlanc, who was the chairman of the task force went on record saying, “This is not a menu from which to choose one or two items; this is a multifaceted package. The truth is our state needs to be more than just tough on crime, especially in a budget crisis. We need to be smart on crime” (Allen 2017, 7).

State Senator Danny Martiny wrote Senate Bill 139 based on the task force's recommendations that would offer parole eligibility to inmates serving life sentences who were at least fifty years of age and had done thirty years in state custody. This bill also included parole eligibility for all non-homicide convicts who had done at least twenty years in custody and turned forty-five years of age. However, "The Louisiana District Attorneys Association, which has voiced cautious support for some other proposals in the package, opposes offering early release to those serving life and also making changes to the sentences for violent crimes apply to those already in prison" (Stole and Simerman 2017, 6). Stole and Simerman note, "The average time served by Louisiana inmates rose by 27 percent over the past decade, to just shy of six years in 2015. That's mostly because those who have been locked up for a decade or more make up by far the fastest growing share of the state's prison rolls, according to Pew analysis" (2017, 6). In comparison, those in Louisiana who have a nonhomicide enumerated sentence will have to serve seventy-five percent of their sentence; however, those convicted in Mississippi and Texas will only do half the time given in court. Only thirty-three percent of the original sentence is expected in South Carolina and Georgia. State Public Defender Jay Dixon recognizes this Louisiana problem and comments, "This state ends up paying more money to take care of inmates the longer they're held and the older they grow. It's the largest old folks' home in the state" (Stole and Simerman 2017, 6).

Chang reports:

> Angola is home to scores of old men who cannot get out of bed, let alone commit a crime. Someone who made a terrible mistake in his youth [and] has transformed himself after decades in prison has little to no chance at freedom. Yet, it is the murder, rapist, and other long termers who learn trades like welding, auto

> mechanics, air conditioning repair and plumbing. Angola's Bible college offers the only chance for Louisiana inmates to earn an undergraduate degree. (2012, 2)

She continues, "Such opportunities are not available to 53 percent serving their time in local prisons. In a cruel irony, those who could benefit most are unable to better themselves, while the men who will die in prison proudly show off fistfuls of educational certificates" (2). Bed space in the Department of Corrections has generally been reserved for people with more violent offenses who have serious amounts of time to serve. It seems that if there were a real relief mechanism through parole, the long-term rehabilitated prisoners could cycle out of the Department of Corrections and make room for those in parish facilities.

In reference to parole offered to lifers, Senator Danny Martiny states, "We have to do something. There are too many programs in the state being affected by the amount of money we pay to incarcerate people" (Allen 2017, 6). O'Donoghue reasons, "While some advocates for geriatric and medical parole make a moral argument to release old or ill prisoners, there is also a practical reason: It's expensive for the public. During the fiscal year that ended June 30, the Department of Corrections spent about $53 million on hospital and medical wards in its prisons, plus $22.7 million for health at offsite locations, for a total of $75 million." She continues, "Older inmates require treatment for dementia, blindness, hypertension, hearing loss, and vision problems at higher rate[s] than their younger counterparts. Older people who have been locked up for decades are more likely to need medical care than a person who is the same age but not in prison: They go to the doctor about five times more often, according to the Vero Institute of Justice" (2017, 3). As the number of aging long-serving inmates has stacked up in the state's prisons, the cost of their

health care has grown. “LeBlanc explains to a State House Committee that one chronically ill prisoner cost the state upwards of $1 million per year in medical expenses” (Stole and Simerman 2017, 6). Even though this example is extreme, it represents the continued growth of medical expenses as the prison population ages.

The recommendations from the task force that have been translated into ten prison reform bills are not new pioneering attempts at reform. These proposals have benefitted tax paying residents of other states many times over without backing up the court system or increasing the crime rate. In fact, since its 2010 reforms, “South Carolina’s imprisonment rate has come down 16 percent and its crime rate dropped 16 percent. The state has closed six prisons and saved more than half a billion dollars” (Daniels 2017, 7). Since its 2012 reforms, “Georgia’s imprisonment rate is down 7 percent, crime is down 11 percent, and they’ve invested more than $50 million into evidence based programs that reduce recidivism” (Daniels 2017, 7). Mark Holden, the general counsel for Koch Industries, was the featured speaker at the Criminal Justice Reform Breakfast briefing. The two billionaire brothers who head Koch Industries contribute liberally to conservative causes and push criminal justice reform as an avenue to save money for state governments. “Holden expressed surprise that the Louisiana district attorneys are uniformly opposed to the revamp. He states, ‘Deep red states like Texas and South Carolina and Georgia passed it and found that it works for them. You’d think they’d find comfort in the experiences in those states’” (Ballard 2017, 3). State Senator Jack Donahue, Republican of Mandeville, while attending the same breakfast states, “The battle really is with the DAs and sheriffs” (Ballard 2017, 3).

In contrast to the District Attorneys Association and the Sheriffs' Association, "More than half of Louisiana residents don't think the state's system is fair, and many more say they support efforts to overhaul the system, including shorter sentences for some nonviolent offenders, a new poll shows" (Crisp 2017, 6). The editorial board of *The Advocate* published an article recognizing the various groups who were coming together in support for the prison reform package. It was an odd mixture of liberals, fiscal conservatives, faith leaders, and business leaders; however, *The Advocate* staff recognizes the district attorneys as a powerful obstacle to overcome for the sake of reform. The staff exhorts, "Louisiana should not be an outlier in the South. We hope that all participants in this debate will come together around sensible crime and justice reform, including the toughest issues of long-term prisoners who have aged out of their youthful offenses" (Our View 2017, 6). Hannan reveals, "The L.D.A.A. is trying its best to frighten legislators into ignoring the task force's fact based report. The L.D.A.A. has accused the bipartisan body of writing a 'prescription for disaster'" (2017, 3). In a letter to the editor of *The Advocate*, Michael Tracy, director of engineering of Youngsville, comments, "The DAs and sheriffs treat the Legislature like only they know what's best for Louisiana. The laws these groups are sworn to abide by are those made by the legislature, not the other way around . . . . It's time for the Legislature to put on their grown up pants and take back their power from the DAs and sheriffs' lobbies . . . . Incarceration has become a justification for the DAs' and sheriffs' budgets" (2017, 6).

Since the initiation and development of the prison reform package the Sheriffs' Association had been relatively quiet. Unexpectedly, Edwards announced that the focus of

the prison reform should remain on nonviolent offenders. “The Governor’s comments came on the same day that the Sheriffs’ Association released its first public statement on efforts in the Legislature this spring to lower the state’s prison population” (O’Donoghue 2017, 2). Ballard notes the Sheriffs’ Association’s statement, “Louisiana sheriffs are concerned though current proposals discussed reduction in costs and prisoner populations as major factors for consideration there is little consideration for additional crimes committed by violent offenders. We oppose reductions in sentences of violent offenders” (2017, 4). In reference to Governor Edwards’ press release, “His and others’ comments last week indicate that state doesn’t seem posed to shorten sentences for serious offenses or curb the so called lifer population in its prisons during the 2017 session” (O’Donoghue 2017, 2).

The District Attorneys Association’s executive director, Pete Adams, indicated the association was ready to support the reform measures with only minor adjustments (Ballard 2017, 1). However, those reasonable amendments turned out to be a major overhaul of the package. “Six of the ten measures need minor adjustments in the prosecutor’s estimation, while the rest would need to be substantially rewritten, according to the District Attorneys Association . . . . We will offer amendments to correct the flaws” (Ballard 2017, 5). One key feature of the reform that caused them to fight the hardest was a sweeping revamp of the Criminal Code in Senate Bill 220. Allen comments, “A key proposal to create a felony class system was delayed a year at the request of the state prosecutors. The felony class system was the centerpiece of the reform package. It intended to categorize some 600 individual felony statutes, assigning penalty ranges while strengthening uniformity and transparency in sentencing” (2017, 8). The editorial

staff of *The Advocate* reveals, "We have 629 unique felony crimes in Louisiana. Stealing a cell phone worth $600 is a misdemeanor with a maximum 6 months sentence, while possessing a stolen cell phone worth $600 is a felony with a maximum 10 year sentence. In the past 10 years, legislators approved 80 restrictions on parole" (Our View 2017, 6). The district attorneys decide which charge to apply concerning the cell phone, which means the proposal would directly impact an element of prosecutors' control.

North Shore's District Attorney Warren Montgomery writes the editor of *The Advocate* defending the L.D.A.A.'s hostility toward Senate Bill 220. He states, "We oppose the wholesale revision and reclassification of the Criminal Code. The fact is, this is a complex, inter-related matter which requires further study to protect the integrity of the criminal justice system" (2017, 4). In this same letter, Montgomery comments the L.D.A.A. is also opposed to releasing any violent offender who would be covered under Senate Bill 139. Former Orleans Parish Assistant District Attorney and former member of the Louisianan District Attorneys Association, Graig Murdock, also responds to the ongoing battle over prison reform with a letter to the editor. He writes, "I'm appalled by the L.D.A.A.'s reaction to recent criminal justice reform efforts put forth by state leaders." He continues, "The L.D.A.A. is purposely stoking fears and disregarding facts in order to maintain a status quo that is adding greatly to Louisiana's fiscal problems, imprisons far too many nonviolent offenders for far too long, and tears at the fabric of our communities. It is vital that either the L.D.A.A. stop its scare tactics, or that the Legislature rejects the groups' blatant attempts to undermine these common sense data driven reforms" (2017, 4). Due to opposition from both sheriffs and district attorneys, Secretary of Corrections Jimmy

LeBlanc was worried about the fate of the Senate Bill 220 and Senate Bill 139. He explains to a legislative briefing organized by a coalition of the conservative groups, “If we don’t pass 139 and 220, the savings go out the window” (Ballard 2017, 4).

John Legend, singer, songwriter, and ten-time Grammy award winner, made an appearance at the state capital, in May of 2017, to speak against mass incarceration and encourage the attempts of the state at prison reform. However, “On Tuesday, just a day before Legend arrived to build buzz around the topic, a Senate committee scaled back the initial proposal to address concerns raised by some in the law enforcement community” (Crisp 2017, 2). After finding out Edwards’ compromise with both groups, “He [John Legend] mildly upbraided the Edwards’ administration for agreeing to remove about 40 violent offenses covered in the sweeping rewrite of the state’s approach to crime and prisoner rehabilitation” (Ballard 2017, 7). As the movement for reform began losing its momentum due to the sheriffs’ and district attorneys’ influence, *The Advocate* staff takes notice. “Even with the powerful elected officials like sheriffs and district attorneys protecting their turf, the prospects were bright enough this year. Instead, a package of watered down bills may pass, but with half the legislative session over, tough on crime political rhetoric has clearly won many victories over data driven policy” (Our View 2017, 6).

After the prison reform movement was officially derailed and the bills were sufficiently watered down, Secretary LeBlanc reversed an earlier statement. Elizabeth Crisp, journalist for *The Advocate* writes, “Secretary of Corrections Jimmy LeBlanc has said the compromise package will still accomplish at least 75 percent of the original proposal” (2017, 2). In reference to John Legends’ visit, Ballard comments, “What

Legend bumped up against was not so much a conservative cage fight—businessmen and faith community versus prosecutors and sheriffs—over two key measures that changed state criminal laws, but the prelude to the most important proposal: House Bill 489, which describes how all those savings will be calculated and how that money will be spent" (2017, 7). *The Advocate* staff offers these words, "Without a stronger effort from reformers, the status quo—which made Louisiana tops in the nation in its percentage of people in jail, and nearly last in efforts to rehabilitate prisoners—will dodge the sweeping change promised by the Justice Reinvestment Task Force." They continue, "We doubt LeBlanc's assertion that the amended bills, along with less controversial measures in the package will get to 75 percent of what the task force sought" (Our View 2017, 6B).

The Advocate headline on June 6, 2017, reads, "Prison reform bills pass" (Allen 2017, 1). "All 10 bills of a dramatic overhaul of Louisiana's criminal justice system have passed both chambers of the Legislature and are within reach of the Governor's desk for final approval" (Allen 2017, 1). Governor Edwards responds, "I am proud of the Legislature's work on these historic bills and look forward to signing them into law when they make it to my desk" (Allen 2017, 1). *The Advocate* staff notes:

> The original bills, blessed by the large majority of members of the bipartisan task force, were ambushed in a late-blooming political offensive by district attorneys and sheriffs, some of whom finance their operations with per-diem allocations for keeping state inmates. That resulted in watered down versions of proposed changes in parole policies, and also in sentencing reforms. In their original form, these proposals weren't radical measures but were in line with changes made in other conservative states. (Our View 2017, 6)

On June 16, 2017, Governor Edwards officially signs the criminal justice overhaul into law. Edwards states, "I'm signing these bills because a broken justice system leads to

more crime not less. Today, we begin building the system we want rather than continue to settle for the system we have" (Allen 2017, 3). As encouraging as the previous words are at face value, they seem hollow and empty knowing that many prison reform issues were set aside due to political pressure and monetary gain (Crisp 2017, 2); (Ballard 2017, 4). There also seems to be a collective unwillingness to extend any mercy toward prisoners convicted of violent offenses. Jane Hogan, post-conviction attorney, writes, "Must we be reminded that we are not the sum of our failure and that a human is more than the worst thing he has ever done? Can we not fathom that convicting someone of a crime of violence does not make that person a 'violent offender'" (2017, 4).

The sheriffs, district attorneys, and the Legislature have spoken in a compromised but collective voice that no lifer will have an opportunity in Louisiana to have a parole hearing. In essence, what has been communicated is those who have been sentenced to life without parole are not safe or eligible to be allowed back into the free world. In fact, they are not even eligible to have a hearing to determine if they no longer pose a threat to society. During a barrage of false claims from district attorneys aimed at his Senate Bill 139, Senator Martiny went on record clarifying the issues with these words, "There's not a word in this bill that says we will let a violent person out of jail. What it says is that if you jump through hoops and meet certain benchmarks, then you will get a chance to let someone hear why you're not violent anymore. That's all it does" (Allen 2017, 8). The issues producing the political turbulence swirling around the penal reform conflicts might be represented by these questions:

- Can one act in a person's life define him for the rest of his waking years? Are lifers really incorrigible?
- Are there inmates who have life sentences without parole who no longer possess a criminal mindset; could they function as responsible free citizens?
- After a reasonable amount of time has been served and their thinking has been changed, would it be in society's best interest to allow them to go free?

In reference to the number of lifers, Senator Martiny states, "We have to do something. There are too many programs in the state being affected by the amount of money we pay to incarcerate people" (Allen 2017, 6). When Mark Holden addresses the Criminal Justice Reform breakfast attendees about following the recommendations of the Justice Reinvestment Task Force, he points out, "Louisiana spends twice as much on criminal justice as on education, Holden said. But the crime rate remains high. Other states that adopted similar proposals have seen the crime rates drop. 'It'll save Louisiana taxpayers millions and millions of dollars.' Holden told the briefing" (Ballard 2017, 3). The state's district attorneys argue that giving parole eligibility to murders, rapists, and armed robbers pose a threat to public safety and breaks promises to victims. Bo Duhe, district attorney for the three-parish 16th Judicial District in Acadiana, states, "The vast majority of lifers 'forfeited the right to live in free society' when they committed brutal crimes" (Stole and Simerman 2017, 6). In contrast, Gene Mills, the president of Louisiana Family Forum, a conservative group, introduces an idea to revamp the criminal justice system saying, "Make redemption a core value throughout the Louisiana justice system" (Hannan 2017, 4).

Interestingly, Mills is suggesting that the legislative attempt at reforming the criminal justice system should use the concept of redemption when creating and applying policies. The biblical idea of redemption recognizes that a man is doomed because he has fallen into sin and out of a relationship with God the Father, but instead of enacting judgment and eternally condemning mankind, the Father gives mercy and sends his Son Jesus to redeem men and women from their fallen state. Through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, mankind is brought back into fellowship with the Father through expressing faith in the crucified Savior (Rom. 5:8-11). Mills is applying his Christian worldview to interpret Louisiana's incarceration problem and postulate an answer for the mass incarceration. Encapsulated in his statement is the recognition that man is a flawed creature subject to the weakness of human flesh with the propensity for making a moral mistake, but capable of being brought back to the moral path of living if that mistake occurs. The district attorneys and sheriffs seem to suggest that once a man commits a violent act he is forever violent; however, they do not say why that is the case. The evidence actually suggests just the opposite of what the prosecutors and sheriffs purport.

For example, the Louisiana State University Department of Sociology released a study, in June 2013, with a Working Papers Series called *Recidivism in the state of Louisiana: An analysis of 3 and 5 year Recidivism Rates Among Long-Serving Inmates* by Edward S. Shihadeh, Louisiana State University; Keith Nordyke, Nordyke and Greenfield, LLC; and Anthony Reed, Louisiana State University. The study examines recidivism rates for a unique group of offenders who have served extended sentences in the Louisiana Department of Corrections. The paper reads, "The report also finds that

recidivism declines with age and with the length of the sentence served" (2013, 1). Recidivism is defined as, "Acts that resulted in the re-arrest, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a defined period following the prisoners release" (2). The target group turned out to be a group of men convicted of murder who each had a life sentence without parole. Some of them received a pardon from the governor who was presiding during their incarceration. The Department of Corrections provided those records. "This file contained 217 records" (4). As a result of their intensive study of this target group, they discover not a single second-degree murder convict in the pardon sample was returned to D.O.C. (Department of Corrections) custody for a new crime within a five-year window of release (6). "Indeed, among those who served more than 26 years, the recidivism is essentially zero" (7).

When directed toward lifers, the district attorneys' and sheriffs' philosophy does not differ much from the criticism Chandra Bozelko, author of *Up the River*, discussed in her book. When addressing the common belief that people do not change, Bozelko counters, "Except they do. Researchers at the University of Illinois analyzed 207 studies and concluded that people can change in as little as six months if they get the proper intervention" (2017, 7). Nancy Amato Konrad, retired Jefferson Parish juvenile court judge, writes the editor of *The Advocate* claiming, "Criminologists have found that longer prison sentences are not more effective at curbing recidivism than shorter sentences or prison alternatives, and they've developed a huge body of research on what does work to reduce recidivism" (2017, 7).

Although Bozelko's idea that people change is correct, her idea of who they actually are and how they change needs to be addressed. Bozelko's previous comment is very revealing when she refers to crime not being a lack of character but a suspension of it. This statement supposes that the criminal is inherently good, but he has had a simple lapse of judgment, or *suspension* in character. In other words, he was already virtuous and good at heart, but for whatever reason, he did not express that moral nature at a given point; it was suspended. He most likely needs to get in touch with who he really is. This anthropology is flawed and finds its origin in Secular Humanism (Secular Humanism will be addressed later). In contrast to the idea of man being inherently good, Chuck Colson, Christian author and speaker, writes, "To meet the test of justice, a criminal justice system must start by taking a realistic view of human nature—taking into account the inherent propensity toward sin and evil—and must proceed to treat offenders as morally responsible beings. Original sin means that human nature is flawed, but it does not mean we are without hope. Individual acts of sin are neither compelled by our nature nor free from moral responsibility" (2001, 74). The encouraging news is that once an individual takes a realistic view of human nature, immediately he finds the key to the cause of crime. It is not genetics, environment, or poverty, but wrong moral choices.

Criminologist Jack Katz, who wrote *Seductions of Crime*, focuses on the relationship between decisions to commit crime and the rewards of those decisions. He explains that crime is the result of "often wonderful attractions within the lived experience of criminality" (1988, 8). Katz suggests that crime is pleasurable for those committing it, and this pleasure of one sort or another is the major motivation behind

crime. Katz defines these pleasurable experiences as “the seductions of crime,” as the title of his work reveals (8). The pleasure and satisfaction that criminals derive from crime are not always immediately recognizable. Katz points out, “Criminologists have often depicted crime as something to be avoided, but have failed to understand just how good some crimes feel to those who commit them” (3). This information sounds very similar to Saint Augustine’s famous passage about stealing a pear. “I willed to commit theft, not because I was driven to it by any need . . . . For I stole a thing of which I had plenty of my own and of much better quality. Nor did I wish to enjoy that thing which I desired to gain by theft, but rather to enjoy the actual theft and sin of the theft . . . . Foul was the evil and I loved it” (2003, 42). In this example, Augustine reduced sin down to mere human choice. Colson aptly writes, “The Christian approach to human responsibility for human acts precludes any excuse based on heredity, upbringing, economic, or anything else. These things can influence us, but ultimately we are responsible for our acts” (2001, 80).

Edward Tromanhauser, criminologist professor, notes:

> When teaching criminology, I have often posed this question to my students: What do you think causes crime? The replies come fast and furious. ‘Poverty caused crime,’ say some. My reply: Why aren’t most poor people in jail or prison? My second reply: Why do we convict wealthy people of crimes? Ah, says another student, ‘greed causes crime.’ My reply: Then why do so many people not commit crimes, even though it is obvious that there is a great deal of greed in the world? What causes one greedy person to obtain more of something in a socially approved fashion while another rapacious person is willing to take unlawful paths to the same end. (2003, 84)

After filling his blackboard with a long list of possible answers, Tromanhauser admits to his students that the answer is not that simple. He claims it is very complicated.

Humorously, he writes, “In my criminology class, after a long discussion about the causes of crime, I made the statement: ‘I know what causes crime: the law. If we did not have the law, we would not have crimes’” (2003, 85). Tromanhauser’s thoughts on the cause of violations of the law are not far from the apostle Paul’s when it comes to violations of the law. Paul records, “Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). The law of God in the apostle’s case reveals the problem of sin; whereas man’s law in Tromanhauser’s case reveals a problem he cannot quite understand.

Tromanhauser, a previous criminal turned college professor, confesses his confusion:

> The cases of crime are complicated and difficult to analyze. Explanations fall easily from the lips, especially when you are familiar with all of the theories. But in spite of years of introspection and reflection, I cannot provide myself, or you, with an explanation that rings true, an interpretation that I know intuitively is the real answer. Still, you may find it hard to believe that a lot of people, including myself, who have committed crimes cannot provide a definitive explanation for why they did what they did. (2003, 85)

Tromanhauser recognizes the problem of sin, although he may not call it that. The confusion comes in part by not recognizing the true state of mankind; Tromanhauser has a flawed and misleading anthropology. If a person sees himself as a truly good person without a flawed sinful nature, he will wonder why he committed an unlawful deed because it goes against the picture he has of himself. Christian speaker and apologist, Ray Comfort, and actor Kirk Cameron, demonstrate in a video series that when an individual is asked if he is a good person, he will nearly always say yes because his conscious has not been pricked by God’s law. The pervasive cultural conditioning of Secular

Humanism has told him that he is inherently good (2002, The Way of the Master). Paul determined the sinful condition of man is part of the reality men commonly share as fellow members of the human race, regardless of lineage. “Jew and Gentiles are alike under sin” (Rom. 3:9). Paul goes on to indict the entire human race under sin with an Old Testament quote, “There is no one righteous, not even one: there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good not even one” (Rom. 3:10–12).

In answer to the cause of crime, Colson writes, “So what is the cause of crime? It turns out the Bible was right all along. Humans are responsible for sin and evil. In contrast to the ritual cleanliness of the Pharisees, who saw individuals as capable of being defiled by unclean foods going into them, Jesus stressed that defilement comes from the heart—that is, from the seat of the will” (2001, 78). Simply stated, an outside force does not corrupt a man. The corruption comes from within him. Jesus gives understanding on this issue with these words, “What comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. For from within, out of men’s hearts come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from within a man and defile him” (Mark 7:20–23). “So we have crime because human beings make wrong moral choices, and human beings make wrong moral choices because their natures are distorted by the primal error, the name of original sin” (2001, 83). Colson concludes, “Most of the failed and flawed criminal justice polices of the past century, to which the high crime rates and burgeoning prison systems stand as towering monuments, can be traced to a wrong view of human nature”(2001, 46).

Although Louisiana's prison growth leads the world, implemented across the nation, tough-on-crime, fueled by an inaccurate view of mankind and an erroneous view of the problem of crime, has seen a continued growth in America's incarceration rate. Frank Schmalleger, Professor Emeritus at North Carolina University, comments, "From a long-term perspective, even with recent declines, crime rates in this country remain more than seven hundred times what they were in 1940" (2014, 13). Schmalleger created a time line that shows the steady rise in crime across the decades from 1933 to 2014. He comments, "By early 2011, the nation's state and federal prison population (excluding jails) stood at 1,612,395 inmates, a figure that represents an increase of more than 700% since 1970" (35). John Corely, inmate journalist for the *The Angolite*, shows the national incarceration rate has reached 2.2 million people. "Nearly 160,000 U.S. prisoners are serving life sentences . . . . Federal data indicate the number of lifers has more than quadrupled since 1984, with about one in nine serving life terms" (2016, 3). These figures reflect a radical cultural shift from a biblical worldview and its accompanying practices to a Secular Humanist worldview and its inevitable consequences. Colson remarks, "The weakening of religious bonds has unleashed a degree of chaos we find unsupportable, and yet the enlightenment on which we preen ourselves prevents us from embracing the only possible remedy" (2001, 35).

In order to understand this moral decay in America that has led to mass incarceration and its cultural shift, a person must recognize the powerful influence of worldviews. Robert Harris suggests, "One way to understand worldview is to say that it's a personal theory of everything." He went on to clarify that statement, "In other words, a

worldview is a comprehensive and unifying way of looking at all of life, a means of bringing coherent meaning to one's experiences, thoughts, feelings, and so on" (2004, 77). Lorraine Zinn points out, "Generally, adults have formulated some life philosophy which underlies their interpretation of the world and their actions within it" (2004, 40). Although this philosophy is often unrecognized and rarely articulated, it provides a framework for thinking and influences the decisions a person makes. Integral to this framework of thinking is a point of reference where one derives his ethics that govern each situation faced in life. In other words, there is a source of authority he accepts to draw his conclusions concerning the rightness or wrongness of a situation. That source of authority could be anything from God, government, or a parental figure. David Noebel, author and Christian speaker warns, "The cultural conflict that currently engulfs America and the West is designed to dethrone Jesus and replace the biblical worldview with the ideas of fallible human beings" (2001, viii). Those fallible ideas frame the worldview of Secular Humanism.

Clearly, this cultural battle between biblical Christianity and Secular Humanism is a war of ideas. As the battle of worldviews rages forward, where exactly are these two competing systems of belief hostile to one another? After all, ideas have consequences. Ronald Nash writes, "An inadequate conceptual scheme can, like improper eyeglasses, hinder our efforts to understand God, the world, and ourselves. The right conceptual scheme can suddenly bring everything into proper focus" (1988, 34). Nash likens a worldview to a pair of eyeglasses, and quite naturally if a person has the wrong worldview like an improper pair of eyeglasses, he will not see properly, or in the case of

worldview, act properly. Authors and Christian speakers, Tim LaHaye and David Noebel, adamantly confirm this idea by recognizing the devastating consequences of the thought system encapsulated in the worldview of Secular Humanism. “Today’s wave of crime, violence, pornography, promiscuity, venereal disease, no-fault divorce, guilt free sex education, out-of-wedlock births, abortion, homosexuality, bisexuality, AIDS, self-obsession, shattered dreams, and broken hearts can be laid right at the door of Secular Humanism” (2000, 105).

Nancy Pearcey offers the following three-point test that can simplify an individual’s search to understand the fundamental thoughts that shape his or her worldview or any he or she may encounter. “1. CREATION: How did it all begin? 2. FALL: What went wrong? What is the source of evil and suffering? 3. REDEMPTION: What can we do about it? How can the world be set right again?” She went on to write, “By applying this simple grid, we can identify nonbiblical worldviews, and then analyze where they go wrong” (2004, 25). For the Christian, the Bible should supply the answers for each of these questions; however, James Sire, author and professor, recognizes, “There are many causes operating in the development of our beliefs. Family, friends, the media, society, and culture all impinge on us, and it is only within their context that our beliefs develop” (1994, 78). Keeping this statement in mind, one should appreciate Paul’s comment all the more, “And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2 [KJV]).

The first point of the test Pearcey poses was creation along with the accompanying questions, *how did it all begin*? and *where did we come from?* From the biblical worldview, the short answer is God. Nash points out, "In the Christian account of creation, nothing existed prior to creation except God. There was no time or space; there was no preexisting matter. Everything else that exists besides God depends totally upon God for its existence. If God did not exist, the world would not exist. The cosmos is not eternal, self-sufficient, or self-explanatory. It was freely created by God" (1988, 36). In contrast to the above, Secular Humanism is atheistic. In order to answer the first point and accompanying questions, adherents believe matter is all that has ever existed in a closed system. This belief is expressed by the 1981 Humanist of the year, Carl Sagan, with these words, "The Cosmos is all that ever was or ever will be" (1980, 4). This form of naturalism is also referred to as materialism, and it underpins the Marxist/Leninist belief system as well. Noebel explains, "Many of the attributes Christians ascribe to God—eternal, infinite, uncreated, indestructive, lawgiver, life, mind—Marxist assign to dialectical matter. The philosophy affirms matter as ultimately real and denies the reality of God" (2001, 61). Therefore, God answers both questions for the Christian worldview: however, when Secular Humanists remove God from the equation and make matter eternal, there is still the nagging question, *where did we come from?*

"Belief in evolution is as crucial to Humanism's worldview as are its atheistic theology and naturalistic philosophy" (117). If it was not for the theory of evolution, Secular Humanism would be forced to recognize God as the Creator, which would fundamentally destroy Humanism's system. *The Humanist Manifesto I* reads,

"Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process" (Humanist Manifesto I 1080, 4). This idea is repeated in the *Humanist Manifesto II*, "Science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces" (Humanist Manifesto II 1980, 17). This concept was the catalyst for biologist Richard Dawkins to write, "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist" (1986, 6). To Dawkins and many others like him, the idea of Darwinism had demonstrated that it was not necessary to believe in God to explain the origin of life. Pearcey concludes, "If natural causes working on their own are capable of producing everything that exists, then the obvious implication is that there's nothing left for a creator to do. He's out of a job" (2004, 154). Christian writer and teacher, William Watkins recognizes, "Darwin also turned the image of God into a product of nature. Man was no longer a special work of the divine Creator but a successful mutation of lower life forms that adapted and won its struggle to survive" (1996, 75). Once this position is accepted, there is nothing to stop man from committing unspeakable horrors under the banner of evolutionary progress.

Since this philosophy removes God, logically ethics will have to go with him. Ravi Zacharias, Christian apologist and author points out, "Outside of Christ there is no law, no hope, and no meaning. You, and you alone, are the determiner and definer of these essentials of life; you and you alone, risk everything you have on the basis of a hope you envisage. As a cynic once put it, 'We are all in this together, alone'" (1994, 61). Since there is no final authority, truth has no grounds; therefore, it is fictitious or relative at best. Winfried Courduan, Christian author and minster, explains the outworking of

relativism with these words, “What you believe to be right and what I believe to be right can both be right. This is true even if our beliefs are contradictory, just as long as we are sincere about our personal standards” (1993, 27). There is another problem that can arise when God is removed from the equation. If God is not the determiner of truth, the state will gladly fill the void to determine what is right or wrong. “Legal positivism claims that the state is the ultimate authority for creating law. That is, since God is a mythical being and natural law is simply legal fiction, man must rely on his reason to discern what is legal—and the men who decide the law are the men in power” (Noebel 2001, 215). Evangelist and writer, Luis Palau, made the connection with this type of progressive thinking and the death of 100 million people during the past century alone due to abuses of tyrannical leaders (1997, 149).

In contrast to these ideas, Nash writes, “According to the Christian worldview, God is the ground of the laws that govern the physical universe and that make possible the order of the cosmos. God is also the ground of the moral laws that ought to govern human behavior and that make possible order (or peace) between humans and within humans.” He goes on to explain, “Christian theism must insist that there are universal moral laws. In other words, the laws must apply to all humans, regardless of when or where they have lived. They must also be objective in the sense that their truth is independent of human preference and desire” (1988, 40). Christian authors and speakers, Josh McDowell and Bob Hosteler, recognize God’s universal standard and offer this insight, “This means that moral and spiritual truth isn’t simply abstract or philosophical; it is innately concrete, because truth is a person. It is best understood as a ‘who,’ and not as a ‘what.’ And when we are

careful to keep truth within that personal, relational context, it can change everything in the minds and hearts of our young people and the whole postmodern generation" (2002, 54). Zacharias notes the weakness of the evolutionist's position with these words, "The fundamental difference between a naturalistic worldview and religious worldview is the moral framework. While a naturalist may choose to be a moral person, no compelling rational reason exists why one should not be amoral. Reason simply does not dictate here. Pragmatism may, but reason alone doesn't allow one to defend one way or another" (2007, 76). In answer to the Darwinian naturalist, "God is the author of moral boundaries, not man and not culture" (78).

The next point of the worldview test that Pearcey brings up is the fall along with the two accompanying questions, *what went wrong?* and *what is the source of evil and suffering*? The Christian worldview recognizes the problems of what went wrong and what is the source of suffering in the world with one word, sin. Millard Erickson writes:

> The key passage for constructing a biblical and contemporary model of original sin is Romans 5:12–19. Paul is arguing that death is the consequence of sin. The twelfth verse is particularly determinative: 'Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned–.' Whatever be the exact meaning of these words, Paul certainly is saying that death originated in the human race because of Adam's sin. He is also saying that death is universal and the cause of this is the universal sin of humankind. (2001, 208).

Man is not good or even basically good. He was originally created good, but he fell by rebelling against the Creator's prescribed order and sin was lodged in his spirit and death resulted. Out of this fall, death and suffering have reigned over mankind. John Stott, Christian author and speaker, states, "Sin is more than an unfortunate outward act of habit; it is a deep–seated inward corruption. In fact, the sins we commit are merely outward and

visible manifestations of this inward and invisible malady, the symptoms of moral disease . . . . Because sin is an inward corruption of human nature we are in bondage. It is not so much certain acts or habits which enslave us, but rather the evil infection from which these spring" (1967, 44). Nash makes the following comparison, "The essential paradox here—the greatness and misery of humankind flows out of the two important truths. God created humans as the apex of his creation; our chief end, in the words of the Westminster Catechism, is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. But each human being is fallen, is in rebellion against God who created and loves him" (1988, 44).

In contrast to the above, Psychologist Abraham Maslow remarks, "As far as I know we just don't have any intrinsic instincts for evil" (1978, 11). In a separate journal article, Psychologist Carl Rogers comments, "I see members of the human species, like members of other species, as essentially constructive in their fundamental nature, but damaged by experience" (1982, 8). These two Humanist psychologists espouse a fundamental tenet of Secular Humanism that man is not fallen or inherently sinful, but he is, in fact, good. Rogers thinks that man is corrupted by outside forces, particularly cultures. Simply stated, man is not responsible for his actions because outside forces made him misbehave. Under closer scrutiny, this position cannot stand because cultures are made up of people. If people are inherently good or at worst neutral, and simply corrupted by cultures, how were they corrupted in the first place to create such a culture? Maslow suggests, "Since this inner nature is good or neutral rather than bad, it is best to bring it out and to encourage it rather than to suppress it. If it is permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful, and happy" (1968, 149).

These men along with other Secular Humanists gave rise to the pursuit and obsession with self-actualization, self-image, self-love, self-sufficiency, self-esteem, and self-satisfaction. Man became the center of the universe instead of God. All things revolve around him for his pleasure. In 1999, journalist Katherine Kersten writes this statement in the *Wall Street Journal* in response to man's obsession with self. She contrasts the two worldviews with these words:

> The psychologist and scholar Philip Rieff sheds light on this question in his classic work, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*. Traditional Christianity, Mr. Rieff observed, made great moral demands on believers. Its goal was salvation; consequently, it exhorted believers to die to self, repent of sin, and cultivate virtue, self-discipline and humility. Today, however, wrote Mr. Rieff, 'psychological man' is rapidly shouldering Christian man aside as the dominate character type in our society. For psychological man–the offspring of Freud and his ilk–life centers not on the soul, but on the self. Psychological man rejects both the idea of sin and need for salvation. He aspires to nothing higher than feeling good about himself. Mr. Rieff summarizes it this way: 'Christian man was born to be saved; psychological man is born to be pleased.' (1999, 15)

This hedonistic idea of unrestrained pleasure works in tandem with relativism and the lack of accountability toward God. Any law restraining man's immoral passions must be removed to allow free and uninhibited expression. Considering this position, it is easy to see how religion, particularly Christianity, with its allegedly oppressive rules governing morality, would be a major antagonist for Secular Humanists. Since man is inherently good or neutral at worst and society is the only corrupting influence, the need to remake society to be permissive and nonjudgmental is a driving passion of Secular Humanists. The disease, death, crime, tyrannical government, and war chronicled throughout history are a testimony against this inaccurate description of man and his problem.

The third point of the worldview test that Pearcey brings up is redemption along with the two accompanying questions, *what can we do about it?* and *how can the world be set right again*? In short, man is the answer for Secular Humanism. Whether it is the scientist in the lab or the teacher in the classroom or the politician in Washington, man is his own savior. Recognizing the brutal, deterministic, survival of the fittest, Richard Hawkins offers, "Mankind's only hope in his violent, evolutionary process was in the machines we could invent that would help stave off the atrocities of his fellow man." In response to this statement, Zacharias comments, "The savior of technology would come riding on the wings of science to rescue us from the clasping teeth of determinism" (1994, 170). Noebel notes that Secular Humanists are using the avenue of the classroom to mold people into a superior culture. "The Humanist sociologists believe that they must actively strive to see these suggestions implemented. Sometimes this means using the classroom as a means for swaying student opinion in favor of creating an entirely new social order" (2001, 187). One of the biggest motivators and tools for Secular Humanists is government and the redistribution of wealth and power. Noebel writes, "By reshaping the economy to grant inherently good men more control, we should be moving toward a more desirable society. The offshoot of such thought is obvious: we need only to grant men more power—to expand government a little more—before we have enough control over our environment to perfect it" (350). In view of this information, Secular Humanism promises unlimited freedom, but evidence and history prove it leads only to chains and oppression.

In contrast to the above, the Christian worldview answers Pearcey's questions, *what can we do about it*? and *how can the world be set right?* with one word, Jesus. By a

sovereign act of God, the second person of the Trinity stepped down into the created order clothed in human flesh. He took on the nature of a man and walked among people experiencing the full gamut of human trials (Jn. 1:14). He was tempted to sin at every point, yet He overcame and was found to be without sin (Heb. 4:15). At the appointed time, He was crucified among thieves for the sins of the world (Jn. 19:18). He literally took upon himself the sins of mankind and experienced the wrath of God, so that men might be forgiven and brought into relationship with God the Father (1 Cor. 15:3). Zacharias uses these words to describe the answer of the God man:

> His answer was a stumbling block then, and it is a stumbling block now. But only if it is properly and seriously understood can its beauty be seen amidst its obvious pain and hatred. I refer to the cross of Christ. The cross stands as mystery because it is foreign to everything we exalt—self over principle, power over meekness, the quick fix over the long haul, cover-up over confession, escapism over confrontation, comfort over sacrifice, feeling over commitment, legality over justice, the body over the spirit, anger over forgiveness, man over God. (1994, 171)

After suffering on the cross, He died. Once He was taken down, He was placed in a borrowed tomb; however, this hour was not the end because on the third day, He rose from the dead justifying men before God (Rom. 4:25). McDowell and Hostetler note, "The resurrection of Jesus Christ and its relational meaning to us completes the picture of reality. It allows us to see life with all its struggles from God's perspective. A deepened conviction in Christ's resurrection can equip us to face whatever happens in life—good or bad—with gratitude, courage, and optimism" (2002, 242). Now, all who believe that He was crucified for their sin and raised for their justification can be saved from their sin and the wrath to come. This act of faith opens the door for one to be born again and regenerated into a new creature in Christ. A born again Christian is no longer a slave to

the dictates of the flesh, but he is freed to live as God originally intended. This influence carries over into his relationship with God, government, and family. Tom Wright comments, “There is no area of existence or life, including no area of human life, that does not come up for critique in the light of the sovereignty of the crucified and risen Jesus; no area that is exempt from summons to allegiance” (1997, 157).

Having previously established the Christian worldview and its accompanying born again experience, the question can be asked: can this system of thought really be the antidote to the criminal behavior, which could just as easily be called sinful behavior? After all, crime is an issue of morality. Is it possible to introduce this framework of thinking into a depraved and violent culture and transform the people in it? What about Angola, 18,000 acres of land housing men considered by some to be the most dangerous men in the state of Louisiana? Can the framework of thinking espoused in the Bible truly transform the most hardened criminals who possess a life sentence without parole? Classification director Francis Abbott explains to a closed forum on criminal justice reforms that “13.4 percent–4,860 of about 36,000 state prisoners are serving life, most as first felony offenders, many having been incarcerated for decades” (Corley 2017, 26). Holding this number of men, the penitentiary could easily be considered a city or small town considering Angola has its own hospital and fire department. Can the Christian worldview and its accompanying born-again experience be introduced to this notorious population of men and transform them from a criminal mindset into courteous men who would make responsible citizens?

Colson postulates that holding the wrong worldview, especially concerning the tenet about human nature, has been the root problem in America's criminal justice system throughout the twentieth century. He claims that the presiding worldview has been the philosophical catalyst responsible for failing to decrease crime and, in turn, leading to the world's highest incarceration rates. Colson remarks, "And even more seriously [the wrong worldview] has been responsible for an attitude that can only lead to a loss of moral responsibility, a further coarsening of crime, a dehumanizing of the individual, and a compounding of evil." He continues, "The chaos that results from such failure poses a grave danger, for in any society only two forces hold the sinful nature in check: the restraint of conscious or the restraint of the sword. The less the citizens have of the former, the more the state must employ the latter" (2001, 72). The following information will explain the evolution of culture change that occurred at the Louisiana State Penitentiary when men put down their knives and picked up their Bibles.

The Louisiana State Penitentiary, commonly referred to as Angola, has a sordid history of violence and brutality. For example, "From 1972 to 1975, sixty-seven prisoners were stabbed to death in Angola, and more than three hundred fifty others were seriously injured in fist fights or beatings with blunt objects. Another forty-two died of natural causes in a world where the average age was twenty-three" (Rideau 2010, 95). Escalating violence around this time accompanied the removal of armed inmate guards before funding materialized to replace them with paid staff.

The violence at Angola continued to escalate. "Stabbings increased from fifty-two in 1972 to one hundred sixty in 1974; 1975 was already the most violent year in

contemporary history" (Louisiana State Penitentiary Museum Foundation 2005, 26). An inmate who experienced this era states, "Blood stained the walk almost every day" (Inmate Subject Three 2014, Interview). The physical violence was rife, but the majority of inmates avoided the chaos because it was usually connected to certain dangerous elements of the prison culture. If a person was involved with illegal drugs, homosexual activity, or disrespectful behavior toward other inmates, his odds of being stabbed rose exponentially. Interviews with prisoners suggest nearly one quarter of the inmate population was under some form of slavery. Rape, extortion, and imposition of one's will over another often went unreported, but by all accounts were as common as any activity (Focus Group Two 2014, Interview).

What could possibly promote such chaos? Immediately after World War II, Helmut Thielicke, a Christian author writes, "Once a man ceases to recognize the infinite value of the human soul—and this he cannot do once the relationship to God is extinguished and thus man's character *indelebilis*, which God has stamped with eternity, is smashed—then all he can recognize is that man is something to be used" (1951, 84). Since Angola houses thousands of violent offenders, it stands to reason that the institution could be one of the most dangerous places in society. Violent criminal histories of felons contribute considerably to the degree of violence in prison; still, a multitude of other factors also warrant careful consideration. For instance, harsh institutional conditions fuel anger, frustration, and fear; emotions that can dominate the experience of prison. J. Douma, an internationally known ethicist, suggests, "Emotions of rage, hatred, or even excessive love can dominate us that we lose sight of responsible actions" (2003, 20). In a

meager attempt to control the situation, “Despite the hiring of seventy-five black guards during the past two years [1973-1975], many of whom had largely quit. The total number of guards was only four hundred, divided in three shifts, to oversee two thousand inmates in the Main prison and another two thousand spread across the main camps A, H, I, F, RC, Death Row, and the hospital” (Rideau 2010, 95).

In review of what was previously mentioned, this researcher, however, has concluded that the chaotic practices found their source in a depraved form of deontological ethics, which framed the prison population’s thinking. Seminary professors David Clark and Robert Rakestraw point out, “Deontological ethics is an ethics of duty, for norms are based on something other than their ability to produce benefit” (1994, 20). This definition captures the essence of the problem that expressed itself through the decision making processes of the inmates.

The brutal barbaric culture had a code of conduct that governed prison affairs. These unwritten rules, known as the *Convict Code*, were indelibly branded on the minds and hearts of prisoners coming into the system. These twisted rules practically mocked the Bible. To list a few, for example, “Thou shalt not rat. Thou shalt not be forced into homosexuality. Thou shalt not check out” (Inmate Subject One 2014, Interview). In order to *rat*, a person would have to inform the security officers concerning the behavior of another prisoner. Ironically, the second command reads *forced into homosexuality*; however, it would be perfectly permissible to be the deviant who is forcing someone against his will to participate in such an act. The idea of *checking out* is when a person transfers from a housing area or job because he fears the situation. If there was even a hint

that the code was broken by an inmate, the same code demanded the nearest inmate to lash out in retribution. To violate these rules could easily incur a death sentence, or possibly, a man would be forced into the role of a homosexual prostitute who was enslaved to a master. At best, a prisoner would experience total social rejection and isolation.

Each section of the code had its own amendments equivalent to a Bill of Rights. Each "thou shalt not" had a list of commandments and prohibitions that governed the outworking of the idea. In a blind Kantian fashion, "We should look at our maxims and not at how much misery or happiness that act is likely to produce" (May, Chobanian, and Wong 2002, 272). For instance, if one owned a homosexual slave, the slave must sit on the toilet like a woman instead of standing at the urinal like a man. The slightest violation of this rule demanded the owner lash out physically with punishment. If not, he or anyone else who failed to enact discipline would be treated like a weak homosexual slave from that point. "It was a game of survival of the fittest, and fear ruled all" (Inmate Subject Two 2014, Interview).

Turning out is the term used to describe the barbaric rape and enslavement of a prisoner. This practice symbolically robbed him of standing as a man and redefined his role as a woman. When an inmate was targeted for turning out, he was obligated to thoroughly defeat the predator. Otherwise, the rape would brand him as property for the duration of his sentence. In this process defeat usually meant death. Regardless, these two men would never be housed around each other if either of them were unsuccessful in their attempts. Afterwards, if they were ever around each other, bloodshed could be expected. During this time period in Angola, strength was the only thing respected in this

violent culture, and the oppressed had no choice but obey his master's every twisted desire. If the master chose to physically abuse the slave or prostitute him out, the slave would be trapped in this life the duration of his sentence. A homosexual slave's life no longer belonged to him. As property, homosexuals were often traded, used as collateral, sold, or given away. Depending on their owners' involvement in trafficking illegal merchandise, slaves were often used to move contraband throughout the prison. As a result, they were given the nickname mule.

There was no hope and nowhere to turn for those entrapped in this lifestyle. The culture in Angola reinforced this system of bondage, including the security officers, who capitalized from the oppression of one segment of the inmate population. If an officer had the slave owner in compliance, he had everyone under his control behaving as well. These perverted roles, between master and whore, were called marriages among security and inmates. If a whore went to a guard complaining about his predicament, he would be returned to his owner, also known as his old man, and lectured to be a better wife. The homosexual slave's only reprieve was to kill himself, escape, or kill his old man (Focus Group One 2014).

The totality of these twisted rules created the framework for an inmate's thinking and behavior. These rules were absolute. They conditioned his thinking in such a fashion that he would respond to challenges in a robot-like fashion. It was a harsh rigid system of ethics with no flexibility. Inmates responded to the *Convict Code* out of a sense of duty. If relational boundaries were crossed in the prison setting, this action was a form of disrespect. This set of rules took on godlike qualities that demanded slavish devotion no

matter what the consequences. For example, Clifton Hampton came to Angola over fifty years ago to serve a few years for a robbery. Another inmate disrespected him in a sexual manner; therefore, in honor of the code, he secured a knife and stabbed the inmate to death. As a result, he was given a life sentence. Mr. Hampton is now the second longest serving prisoner in America with over fifty years of straight incarceration. When asked about the situation, he simply replied, “I had to do what I had to do” (2014, Interview).

As 1975 passed into 1976, the federal courts would intervene in the affairs of Angola, recognizing the turbulent culture represented cruel and unusual punishment (Shere 2005, 42). A new Warden, Ross Maggio, would be appointed, and the necessary funds to address some of the egregious problems would be made available. Long sought after change would begin to happen under his administration in large part because twenty-two million dollars would be allocated toward this endeavor (Rideau 2010, 31).

A powerful breakthrough came in Angola’s culture when the money was provided for Warden Maggio to hire enough guards to supervise the inmate population. Until that time, the penitentiary had been using inmates called Khaki Backs who were armed with shotguns to oversee the majority of the prisoners. By disarming the inmate guards and hiring professionals, significant steps were made in taking control of prison affairs. Although the presence of authority cannot change a human heart, the authority figures can be a presence that restrains destructive behavior.

Another step toward progress was creating a group of officers, referred to as the shakedown crew, to disarm the population and stop the flow of the contraband into the prison. Through the element of surprise, the shakedown crew was able to show up both

day and night and establish check points throughout the prison. This method soon made it difficult to possess or traffic weapons and narcotics inside the prison. In order to decrease assaults, the weapons had to be taken away from potential killers. By hindering the flow of contraband, fewer situations would be present to cause a disturbance. For example, if there are no illegal drugs in the hands of the dealers, then there is no chance a deal can go bad and lead to violence through not paying after delivery or not producing the quality of drugs expected.

Once a responsible number of staff was hired, stability and control were finally a reality. This structural control would set the stage for tremendous change in the years to come. However, structural control itself would not be enough to tame the violent hearts of men, no more than catching a tiger and posting a guard in front of the cage would cause it to cease from being a tiger. Many more years of labor and implementing dynamics would still be to come.

Throughout the eighties, violence levels dropped considerably since there was enough security to maintain order. The refining of the disciplinary procedures aided this transition because abuses were not easily overlooked. However, even with criminal acts being punished, there were several high profile murders, but nothing like the previous years. This relative stability and punishment for rule infractions slowly siphoned the power out of the *Convict Code*.

The dawning of a new environment allowed prisoners to look around them for other things to occupy their time and energy. Self-help groups, hobby shops, sporting events, and movie nights with meals became the center of prison life. There was still the

semi-hidden world of drugs, homosexuals, and illegal contraband, but the price and consequences that a prisoner had to pay to be involved in these activities were considerably higher.

Although violence had been on a steady decline, the angry, strife filled, turbulent environment of prison continued. This environment, along with the penalties for rule infractions, caused many to withdraw from prison life to avoid trouble and making their lives more uncomfortable. Ethics professor, Lewis Smedes, offers this insightful comment, “Only where most of our relationships are built on trust can we live together as persons. Trust breaks down with fear. When people sense that private places are vulnerable, they fear every stranger in their midst. And so they shut the strangers out” (Smedes 1983, 190). With the *Convict Code* no longer gripping the minds of the prison population, the vacuum was filled with a teleological system of ethics, particularly egoism. Clark and Rakestraw conclude, “As the word implies, egoism benefits the actor, it teaches me that the rightness of an act depends on whether the act in question maximizes good results for me” (1994, 20). This system of thought offered a new self-centered approach to prison life that each prisoner could live under. Furthermore, the inmate no longer cared what anyone else was doing as long as the actions of others did not affect him. However, “A frequent criticism of egoism is that it subverts attempts to live together. How can we get along if people everywhere are looking out for their concerns only? Doesn’t this degenerate into anarchy” (Wilkens 1995, 49).

From the 1980s, moving into the1990s, this new teleological system with the core philosophy that the end justifies the means created individual universes for each inmate.

Now, the convict sat in the center of his world with everything revolving around him and his wishes. All his decisions were made in the light of one question: *What maximizes good results for me?* In other words, he is asking what is in it for him. Instead of creating a utopian society or fostering healthy relationships, ethical egoism created isolated, autonomous islands out of each inmate. In addition, it kept him enslaved to his selfish desires.

The convict sat in his castle surrounded by the impassible mote of self-preservation; he only let the relational drawbridge down for others to see him if it was in his best interest. The idea of self-sacrifice for the sake of others was alien to his thinking. He sat as god over the kingdom of his life, and all that was done or said must further his agenda. Zacharias adds these words, “We wish to be a law to ourselves. Of course, we also wish to have complete control over the tree of life. We desire perpetual and autonomous existence, in effect, wanting to play God. Even though we did not author creation, we wish to author morality and take the reigns of life” (2007, 80).

One result of egoism was no one cared what the next guy was doing as long as his actions did not affect him. Prisoners were not as deeply offended by others violating the *Convict Code* as long as others actions did not disrupt their personal pursuits. The prison slang expressed it this way, “You do you and I’m gonna do me. I don’t care what you do as long as it don’t affect me” (Inmate Subject Two 2014, Interview). The idea of everyone solely making decisions for his own best interest did not take long to reveal its inability to sustain community.

If everyone is determining what is right for himself and making decisions in his interest, how long will it be before someone crosses a line of offense in another person's life? Moral relativism is defined as "a stance that sees all ethical beliefs, norms, or methods depending on individual persons or cultures" (Beckwith and Koukl 1998, 38). In other words, what may be true for one prisoner may not be true for another prisoner. The logical conclusion is a prisoner could steal from another inmate or rape another weaker inmate, but no one else can tell him he is wrong because he believes it is morally permissible considering his beliefs, circumstances, and culture. "Truth is whatever he makes it" (White 1994, 10).

Inevitably, those criminal acts are exactly what happened inside the prison. If it were not for the restraining presence of the security enforcing the moral absolutes, or institutional rules, the prison would have erupted into utter chaos once more. Factions would have risen from this hurricane of violence and brutality. Each faction would be run by the most aggressive brutal inmate the prison had to offer. Christian author J. Phillip Wogaman writes, "Somebody (or some group) has to decide whether the productive efficiencies gained by the harmful practices are worth the cost to the community and to the people who face the impact of those practices most directly" (Clark and Rakestraw 1996, 360). The above statement, however, may be the inevitable conclusion in reference to a people who have lost sight of objective truth, which is what this researcher believes. Wogaman does not understand the fallen nature of man, nor has he seen firsthand what horrible acts men are capable of doing. If this were the case, he would not hold his present position.

With the arrival of the mid-90s, a new warden, Burl Cain, would come on the scene, inheriting the structural changes and the security force from years of previous efforts. However, one major issue no one had been able to successfully change in mass was the culture of the prison. Since the heart and minds of men gave expression to the lifestyles in prison, the true battle for Angola would be spiritual and moral. Cain clearly saw this when he made this statement, "As my career as a warden evolved, I had come to realize criminals are very selfish people. It is so simple to understand. They take your life, your property, anything they want for themselves. They don't ask. They just sneak around, lie, steal, kill, whatever they want." He went on to say, "I realized I could teach them to read and write, could help them learn a skill and trade, but without moral rehabilitation, I would only be creating a smarter criminal" (Shere 2005, 34).

One of the most powerful influences over Warden Cain and his philosophy on governing the prison was his mother. She told him, "I raised you right—to know God—and God will hold you accountable one day. If you don't see that those prisoners have a chance to know God, He will hold you accountable for their souls" (Toney 2014, Interview). Warden Cain once told a group of inmates the story about the first prisoner he was forced to execute. The inmate asked him as he lay on the death gurney what was going to happen once he died. The warden remembered a statement from Billy Graham about the angels coming to get people when they died, so he told him the angels would come for him. The prisoner then asked the warden if he would hold his hand while they took his life. The warden ended up holding his hand until he was pronounced dead. When he walked away, the reality hit him that he had just given the order to kill a man. After

seeking counsel, “Cain set out in remembrance of his mother’s words to make a difference” (Shane 2014, Interview).

Facing drastic cuts in school funds for the prison, Warden Cain spoke with Reverend T.W. Terrel, Director of Missions for the Judson Baptist Association, about starting a college program at Angola. Terrel, in turn, called Dr. Landrum P. Levell, President of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (N.O.B.T.S.) and Dr. Jimmy Dukes, Dean of the N.O.B.T.S. Extension Center System. Together, these men planned and organized an extension center for the N.O.B.T.S. at Angola. “In September of 1995, a regionally accredited seminary program was planted in the middle of Angola’s Main prison” (Eckhom, under Bible College Help Some at Louisiana Prison Find Peace).

Inmate club leaders from self-help groups and those spiritually inclined were invited to participate. Within a few years, the penitentiary would produce its first graduates with both an Associate in Christian Ministry degree and a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry degree. Associate Dean of Abilene Christian University, James W. Thompson, came to recognize, “Although Aristotle differs from Plato in his understanding of ethics, he agrees that (a) humans can do good if (b) they are appropriately educated” (2011, 137). This theological training would greatly enhance church services and lead to an innovative idea. The graduates could go on to become inmate ministers, and they would be recognized as inmate chaplains who worked for the prison full time. Inmate ministers would be given the responsibility of delivering death messages. If a fellow prisoner had a death in the family and the prisoner was notified, it would be the inmate minister who would break the news and offer grief counseling. Inmate chaplains would also preach messages, hold Bible

studies, and start churches all over the prison grounds. University professor Duncan Forrester offers these insightful words that capture the essence of this movement that began to occur, “The Church is still regarded by many as an important agency of moral education and nurture, a powerful reinforcement to ethical behavior, a kind of moral glue holding society together” (1997, 1).

Opening the door to inmate ministers presented the opportunity to replace the teleological system of ethics with deontological Christian ethics through discipleship. This new framework for thinking and responding to life would be based on God’s command, the revelation that is both general, “Because that which is in known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:19-20), and special, “And know His will, and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law” (Rom. 2:18). The Creator has made himself known both in nature, “The heavens are telling the glory of God; And their expanses is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth And their utterances to the end of the world” (Ps. 19:1–4) and in Scripture, “The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure enlightening the eyes” (Ps. 19:7–8). Through nature, general revelation commands His will for everyone. Special

revelation instructs His will for believers. In both cases, divine revelation is the basis of ethical responsibility.

Norman Geisler points out, “Since God’s moral character does not change (Mal. 3:6; James 1:7), it follows that moral obligations flowing from His nature are absolute” (2010, 16). Briefly stated, these moral obligations govern every person in every place. However, not everything that God wills flows solely from His unchanging nature. Many things are in harmony with His nature, but flow unhindered from His will. These commands flowing from God’s will, but not solely from His nature, are equally binding on the believer, but they are not absolute. In one sense, they must be obeyed because God prescribed them, yet He did not prescribe them for all people, times, and places. For this reason, a Christian is no longer fearful of picking up sticks on the Sabbath (Num. 15:33), but he would never commit murder (Ex. 20:13). Christian professor, Charles Cosgrove, reiterated these thoughts through these words, “The force of rules exists on a continuum from absolutely to virtually exceptionless to robustly presumptive and so forth on down to the most weakly presumptive” (2002, 16)

In comparison, those who hold to the divine command theory believe it is not the case that God commands a particular action because it is right or prohibits it because it is wrong. On the contrary, an action is right or wrong because God commands or prohibits it. Considering the June 2015 Supreme Court case, Obergefell vs. Hodges, the question arises: *Can God change His mind that homosexual marriages are morally permissible?* In light of the deontological position rooted in an unchanging God, this thought offends His very character and nature.

Some theologians have tried to slip the idea of situationism into the Christian community by dressing it up with theological jargon. J.I. Packer defines situationism as, "An umbrella-word for all views which reject the idea that the way to decide what to do is always to apply rules, positive and negative, concerning types and actions (keep your promises, do not steal, do not rape, do not torture)" (Clark and Rakestraw 1994, 149). Even when some theologians try to Christianize this idea, they cannot escape the affront to God's unchanging character. By trying to absolve themselves from obedience to God's Word, it seems this often gives the adherents permission to live a sexually immoral lifestyle. They try to sanctify their rebellion by claiming a universal ethic; however, when the claim is unmasked, it is nothing more than a subjective feeling justifying one immoral sexual encounter after another. J.I. Packer kindly notes this situation with the following words, "It endorsed the modern (and we might add, ancient and Edenic) disinclination to treat any external rules as unbreakable. Its exponents have a lot to say about sex, which to most people is a very interesting subject, particularly when handled in a way that sounds permissive" (Clark and Rakestraw 1994, 148).

Joseph Fletcher dressed situationism up with theological trappings, and it is often referred to as situational absolutism. Between the polar opposites of legalism, with the laws for everything, and antinomianism, with its lack of laws for anything, he puts forth his philosophy with its one law for everything. Under this idea, the situationist approaches every ethical challenge bound only by love. "Only the command to love is categorically good" (1966, 22). In other words, every other decision is hypothetical: do

this if it is loving. Any moral rules and principles and ideas and norms are only contingent, only valid if they happen to serve love in any situation" (27).

The meaning of love is not determined by a situation. The particulars of the situation do not completely determine the meaning of the love norm, but is merely conditioned by them. Circumstances do not determine the norms; they only influence them. The cultural setting where a norm is applied does not determine its application but only influences its application. If the situation dictated the full meaning, then the alleged ethical norm would not really be normative at all. Instead of the norm being determinative for the situation, the situation does not determine what is right; God does. Situations only help believers discover which of God's laws is applicable.

Out of all these approaches, graded absolutism holds the Word of God in the highest regard. It consistently maintains that the Bible presents many ethical absolutes. Practically, as the eyes of one's understanding are illuminated to these great truths, he soon realizes that these moral imperatives sometimes come in conflict with each other. Many Scriptural witnesses show the reader this pressing reality, such as Daniel's disregard of the king's command not to pray (Dan. 6). Even in modern society, the famous encounter of Corrie ten Boom with German soldiers revealed this conflict. When the soldiers knocked on her door, they asked her if she was hiding any Jews. This situation placed her in a conflict whether to obey one of two absolutes. Either she would tell the truth and forfeit those under her care to be killed, or she would lie and protect those under her from murderers. "One objective against graded absolutism is that it allows exceptions to exceptionless norms" (Clark and Rakestraw 1994, 115). In answer to

this charge, graded absolutism holds that Scripture reveals a hierarchy of moral laws, so that when a situation of unavoidable moral conflict arises, the believer can know the higher law to choose.

The Bible presents a case where not all moral laws are of equal weight. The Lord himself spoke of the "weightier" matters of the law (Mat. 22:36). Jesus told Pilate that Judas has committed the "greater sin" (Jn. 19:11). After presenting a lengthy list of biblical characters ranging from Rahab (Josh. 2; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25) to the Hebrew midwives (Ex. 1), Geisler demonstrates the biblical basis for conflicting absolutes and the moral high ground (2010, 102–103). Therefore, in real, unavoidable moral conflicts, God in His infinite wisdom does not impute guilt to a person for not keeping a lower law since he could not keep it without breaking the higher law. Again, Geisler recognizes this exemption functions like an ethical right-of-way law. He points out that in many states the law declares when two cars arrive at an intersection without signals or signs, the car on the right has the right away. Common sense dictates that they both cannot go through at the same time. One car must yield. Likewise, when a believer enters an ethical intersection where two absolutes come into conflict, it is evident one absolute must yield to the greater (Clark and Rakestraw 1994, 135).

In conjunction with the cultural shift and the Christian deontological system of ethics, Angola's Bible College trained hundreds of inmate minsters to offer the hope of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Eternal matters are discussed daily, especially the condition of one's soul. Warden Cain was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying, "The greatest enemy here is lack of hope" (Eckholm, under Bible College Helps Some at

Louisiana Prison Find Hope). In response, many prisoners have developed an eternal hope through the gospel that has stabilized their lives, which is reflected in the new culture at Angola. “Some 2,500 inmates attend church regularly, according to Cathy Fontenot, assistant warden” (Eckholm, under Bible College Helps Some at Louisiana Prison Find Hope).

The church groups that have been established throughout the facility offer an antidote to the gang problems many prisons face. The inmate churches offer social interaction while providing responsible leadership to help prisoners adjust to their new lives. Biblically based teaching confronts the various worldviews prisoners have absorbed through American culture that lead to destructive behavior. Intense discipleship provides the avenue in which their minds can be washed and renewed by God’s Word (Rom. 12:2) and reshaped by the Christian worldview. Within the community of believers, an inmate can receive assistance in processing through his anger in order to make responsible decisions. Community support offers a place he can overcome the hurts and pains of the past and look toward the future for better days.

Behind bars, gangs are often organized by a list of written rules resembling the *Convict Code*. These groups take on a formal structure that provide services to those who belong to the gang. A sense of community and protection are two major psychological functions of these groups. Considering many prisoners have a lack of family support, the more prosperous members contribute everything from tobacco to illegal contraband for less fortunate members. Information both inside the prison and in society is important to these gangs because of their criminal activities; hence, a communication network is employed

where family and friends are constantly trading information. People are often brought into the network based on an information barter system. These gangs act as a pseudo-family and offer a sense of brotherhood inside prison. From this sense of belonging, they have a perceived identity that reinforces a sense of importance inside prison.

The promotion of church growth and discipleship across the prison has radically altered the barbaric culture of Angola and eliminated all gangs. Many prisoners have put down their knives and picked up their Bibles instead. The Christian influence has become so strong that the culture has shifted in favor of it. Things such as owning homosexuals and using drugs that were once admired are now looked down upon as immoral acts or weakness. The abusive lifestyles and behavior that were once commonplace are now done in secret. At one point in Angola's history, using a needle to inject drugs into one's arm was done in the open without regard to who saw it. Now, this act would only be done behind closed doors. There is a powerful shame factor that has been introduced that was not there previously. The cultural shift looks upon drug use as a weakness in need of help. Even though many prisoners are not practicing Christians, the moral restraint of the believers creates the culture that holds back unbelievers from openly displaying their immorality.

The Bible has usurped the *Convict Code* in large part in determining an inmate's response to his environment. The Word of God has become the point of reference when looking for the final authority in determining whether an action is right or wrong. The *Convict Code* rested heavily on exaggerated images of masculinity by encouraging macho behavior while condemning any perceived weakness. In contrast, the Bible has offered an accurate picture of what it means to be a man and the proper response to life's challenges.

The remarkable cultural shift in ethics that has carried the Louisiana State Penitentiary from a brutal culture to one of relative peace and stability should be a model for American society. The culture war in the United States has been successful in removing the prayer from schools, the Ten Commandments from the court houses, and the Bible as the nation's point of reference for determining what is moral. Today, the American conscious has school shooting, theater shootings, rioting in large cities, high teenage pregnancy rates, plummeting ACT scores, overcrowded prisons, and homosexual marriage to bear.

By placing the Word of God at the center of prison life, many inmates adjusted their lives to the teachings in Scripture. Therefore, less violence and rebellion toward authority is occurring. Inmates have reshaped their thinking by placing God's Word first over their selfish desires. They have learned and now practice restraint. Men's lives have changed because their thinking has changed. "Wherever the mind goes the body follows" (Myer 2006, Lecture). If the men and women of America want a new country, they will have to replace their faulty thinking represented by their worldviews and their accompanying ethics with the new birth experience and a Christian deontological system of ethics. In fact, they must come to terms with the fact that truth exists outside of themselves and everyone is held accountable to it, regardless of what they believe. The following information substantiates these claims and reveals how this system was accepted, implemented, and carried through.

The change occurring at Angola caught the interest of several evangelical figureheads who contacted the warden expressing a desire to minister at Angola. Warden Cain gave everyone in the prison a day off from work in order to listen to Pastor T.D.

Jakes preach in the prison's rodeo arena. Next, Christian speaker and author, Charles Colson, preached in the rodeo arena, and Warden Cain used his influence to invite all the Department of Corrections facilities throughout Louisiana. This event was given the opportunity to impact the entire correctional system. Evangelist Franklin Graham and his father Billy Graham followed suit. Finally, prophet and teacher Kenneth Copeland ministered to a growing body of believers across the Louisiana penal system (Rentz 2014, Interview).

On another occasion, Warden Cain was approached by Joni and Friends, an organization that serves the physically disabled. Through their outreach, Wheels for the World, hundreds of broken wheelchairs are made available to less fortunate countries. The president of this organization asked the warden if he thought the inmate population would be interested in repairing them. Afterwards, the chairs, repaired by inmates, would be donated to handicapped people in third world countries. Recognizing this situation as another opportunity to give, Warden Cain called a meeting with the inmate leaders and explained how the disabled in some countries are dragged around on blankets in order to move from place to place. Once he put the idea before them, the inmates, some moved to tears, responded enthusiastically (Hicks 2014, Interview).

After the location was agreed upon, several inmates were delegated the responsibility for organizing and implementing the procedure to repair the wheelchairs. A few weeks later, wheelchairs began arriving. Eventually, the production for finished chairs rose to 160 a month. These chairs would immediately be shipped out to the needy in third world countries. Warden Cain was overheard while speaking to a group touring

the prison. He said, “We accomplish a lot when we take on a program like this.” He went on to say, “We help people who need help. We show the outside world that our men are interested in making a contribution to bettering the lives of others. And our men gain a sense of real achievement” (Maduro 2013, Interview).

The inmates’ willingness to give would be put to the test and demonstrated once again in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America. As the wave of compassion swept through the country, Angola’s inmates did not miss the chance to give. Warden Cain opened the door of opportunity and allowed the inmate population to fill out the necessary paperwork to have the money donated from their prison accounts. An impressive $15,000 was collected. Considering a field worker at the prison makes two cents an hour and most prisoners have very little outside support, this act was a tremendous show of sacrificial giving on the inmates’ behalf. A few years later in 2005, the prison would contribute prison wide again concerning the Asian Tsunami relief. Inmate and staff also worked together in collecting medical equipment to be cleaned up and packaged to be sent to Africa. Once again, the selfish nature of a criminal was being replaced by a giving heart willing to help others (Sharp 2014, Interview).

With the ethical and cultural shift in full swing at Angola, in 2009 Assistant Warden Cathy Fontenot brought an idea to Warden Cain. After touring a castle used for the production of the Passion of Christ play in Edinburgh, Scotland, Warden Fontenot believed, with the contacts overseas and the inmate Drama Club at Angola, the play could be performed on the prison grounds. Since no state funds were available, creating

costumes, jewelry, and scenery had to be accomplished through the creative ideas of the inmates.

The cast would require seventy prisoners using both male and female actors. In unheard of fashion, the Warden approved the use of twenty female prisoners from Louisiana Correctional Center for Women in the play. To rehearse at Angola, the women had to get up as early as two o'clock in the morning, and after rehearsal make a two-hour trip back to St. Gabriel, Louisiana, where the women's facility is located. Great sacrifice was made on the part of all the participants, which brought support from employees who believed in the endeavor. There was also an outside party that donated a live camel needed for a scene. The camel would be part of a growing list of livestock being used in the production.

This play normally had the audience walk along during the performance to each scene. Because of the cost of speakers, it was decided to use the rodeo grounds and divide the arena floor into each scene. This allowed the general public to attend the play and watch comfortably from the bleachers. Warden Cain would also have the entire Department of Corrections as his guest by opening the door to other prisons. The production, having taken three years in planning, was shown to thousands of prisoners housed at Angola and those from across the state. Mike Barber Ministries also streamed the play live on the Internet from their website, proclaim.tv, allowing thousands to view the spectacle (Rentz 2014, Interview).

In 1995, there were only 700 prisoners out of 5,000 attending religious services throughout the prison. The options were five Christian churches, one chapter of the Full

Gospel Businessmen's Association, one Jehovah's Witness Congregation, and one Muslim organization. In 2013, there were over 2,500 inmates worshiping in over thirty different Protestant services across the prison. The discipleship that has occurred has undoubtedly reshaped the thinking of many inmates with a Christian worldview that gave them a new outlook on life. This new framework of thinking was accompanied by new behavior as well.

Cultures are made of people. An individual's beliefs are expressed in his daily life and create an environment that can be either positive or negative. In reference to a prison culture, Michael Welch, a professor in the Criminal Justice Program at Rutgers University writes, "The term culture refers to shared or common ideas, beliefs, dogma, ideology, values, customs, mores, and language. Since the inmate social system exists as a mini-society, the inmate culture is more accurately termed a subculture" (2011, 135). Recognizing the cultural shift that has occurred at Angola, the attention of this explication will now focus on inmates whose conversion experiences or lack of conversion experiences represent sections of the prison population that make up the Louisiana State Penitentiary's new subculture.

Kenneth Womack

Womack's conversion experience is characteristic of those in Angola who reach an age where crime, or sin, is no longer energizing or fun. In fact, crime becomes a burden to carry. Some criminologists have referred to it as aging out of crime. Once this certain age range between thirty and forty-five years is reached, a criminal's life

stabilizes, and he desists from crime (Conklin 2010, 270–71). In Womack's case, he has been relationally successful and write-up free for over twenty years since his conversion.

In December of 1968, Kenneth Womack was sentenced to life in prison under the Ten-Six rule. The customary practice of Louisiana was to allow him to go free after he served ten years and six months. Unfortunately, forty-eight years later he is still incarcerated in the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Womack survived during a time when chaos and brutality reigned as the dominate culture of Angola. The hardships and madness that made up the day-to-day life would drive almost any person to escape, and that is exactly what Womack attempted. In 1971, he attacked an inmate guard holding a shotgun who was overseeing a field line. After tying the inmate guard up, he took his shotgun and ran across the 18,000-acre prison grounds. Less than two hours later, having discarded the shotgun, he was found running down the drainage canals. An employee, Bobby Oliveaux, leveled a rifle at him and began to fire. Colonel Robert Brian pushed the barrel of Oliveaux's rifle up to keep him from killing Womack. Taking control of the situation, he called out to Womack and said, "Come on out of there, son, so I can keep you from being killed" (Inmate Subject Five 2017, Interview).

After Womack was secured, he was placed in the back of a truck to be transported to lockdown; however, Colonel Brian told those present not to lay a hand on him. Later, he was going to call for Womack to be brought before him and check to make sure no one had harmed him. Once he arrived at extended lockdown, another inmate guard was there to process him into the new living arrangements. While the inmate guard was not looking, Womack took a knife called a black diamond that was taped to his leg and threw

it into the garbage can. A black diamond was Angola's premier weapon, consisting of a file made of black steel that had been placed on a grinder until it was razor sharp. Eventually, the inmate guard noticed the knife and turned it over to the ranking officer present. True to his word, Colonel Brian called for Womack, and he was taken to his office along with the knife.

Those present showed the knife to Colonel Brian and explained how no one had touched the prisoner. The Colonel asked Womack if the knife was his. He told Brian that the inmate guard found it in the trash can. The Colonel, in turn, asked the Captain holding the knife if he had found it on Womack. He replied, "No." Colonel Brian said, "If you didn't find it on him, then it isn't his." He then instructed them to leave him alone with Womack, so he could talk to him. He said, "Son, I don't blame you for running off. If I was in your shoes, I would've ran off, too. I'm not mad at you, but if you decide to do this again, don't take a gun. If you would have gotten in those hills with that shotgun, they would have killed you. I couldn't have saved you. I can't blame you if you do it again. Hell, I would too, but if you do, don't take a gun. Do you understand?" (Inmate Subject Five 2017, Interview). After Womack answered affirmatively, the Colonel dismissed him to walk back to his new housing unit on his own.

After doing ninety days in the cellblocks for his escape, Womack was transferred to Camp H. There, he had a light confrontation with an armed inmate guard. As he was walking in line, an inmate guard poked him in the back with his weapon. The inmate guard said, "Why don't you take this shotgun?" He responded back, "Whenever I decide I want it, I'll get it. You aren't really about it, nigger, because that barrel isn't smoking"

(Inmate Subject Five 2017, Interview). Captain Hilton Butler, who would later become the warden, overheard the interaction. He was impressed by the boldness of Womack, so he held a transfer board on him that day, which landed him in a new housing unit without a job. Womack immersed himself in gambling and taking prescription pills from that day forward. While he was doing his time at Camp H, he got into a confrontation with an officer where he threw lighter fluid on Sergeant Rooker because he called him a profane name and told him to shut up.

Once the incident was brought to Lieutenant R.P. Ducote's attention, he told Womack that he knew what was ahead of him. Womack smiled and said, "Let me go swallow these prescription pills I have saved up; that way I don't feel anything" (Inmate Subject Five 2017, Interview). Since Lieutenant Ducote had to take him to the Captain's office, they both knew he would be beaten physically. The pills would dull the pain. After he was at Captain Joe Lee Norwood's office, the tensions began to escalate until Womack decided to spit in the Captain's face. This action prompted Major York Norwood to hold a transfer board immediately and send Womack to Closed Cell Restriction (C.C.R.) where he was never to be released. C.C.R. was a building with tiers of one-man cells. Those who were sentenced there were considered the worst of the worse and would most likely never be released.

During the middle 1970s, a new program called the Incentive Readjustment program was instituted in Angola to curb some of the abuses that were reported about the use of maximum security confinement. Camp H was renovated to facilitate this new idea. The bottom floor was cellblocks and the top floor housed a dormitory. The program

worked on a point system, and once an inmate had acquired seventy-five points, he could be moved from the cells to the upper dormitory. Eventually, Womack maneuvered through the program and was released to general population again. This newfound freedom was short-lived because he broke into the medication cabinet. Someone informed the security that it was Womack, so Major Pittman asked for the camp's pills back. Womack's answer was not sufficient; therefore, in 1979 he was transferred to Camp C, Wolf Three. A few months later he was called back to Orleans Parish due to appealing his conviction.

In 1983, Womack was sent back to the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Nothing had been resolved with his case. He also went from job to job, never staying in one place long. Over the next few years, he got into many conflicts with multiple black officers where were proving themselves in Angola's new equal opportunity employment. The majority of the employees did not care what a prisoner did as long as he did not bother them. There was a mutual respect that they would leave each other alone. Gambling was often taking place right in front of the security, but Assistant Warden Prentice Butler told the officers, "If they're gambling, leave them alone. As long as they are up for work call, don't mess with them" (Inmate Subject Five 2017, Interview). Womack was once asked by an officer to assist another prisoner who had passed out with a needle still hanging in his arm. The drug he had injected was so powerful it caused him to pass out before he could remove the syringe. The ranking officers would be making rounds soon, and the sergeant did not want to have to deal with this situation.

Eventually, Womack was offered a trustee status, but that endeavor did not last long because he was caught selling marijuana. He made his way back to the Main prison and through several more jobs. In 1990, he was involved in an altercation where he struck an individual in the head with a weapon. Womack was sentenced to ninety days in the cellblocks but soon returned to the Main prison to attend mechanic school. The vocational school did not work out either because he was caught with marijuana again. This time the administration sentenced him to Raven Cellblocks for an unknown period of time. This cellblock was made up of tiers consisting of two-man cells. He was given a medical duty status that kept him from having to participate in the grueling field work each day. As a result, he stayed inside while everyone, including his cell partner, went to work in the fields. This quiet time allowed him to reflect over his life. Having turned forty-five years old in that cell, he realized his life was broken and empty of meaning.

Although he did not read it throughout his entire incarceration, Womack kept a copy of the Bible. Intuitively, he knew he needed God. As a result, he began to read the Scriptures. While he was jogging on the yard one weekend with a friend, the guy turned to him and said, “Kenneth, I need to get my life right. I’m not living right. I’m tired. I’m ready to change.” He responded to his friend positively, recognizing where he was in life. He confessed that he was contemplating the same thing. At the end of 1992, that conversation acted as a catalyst for setting a change in motion. Kenneth Womack made the decision to turn toward God and begin living for Him. He used his remaining time in the cellblocks to study and grow before he was transferred back to Camp C. Upon arriving, he immediately went to the various church services available. Later, he was

approached by a friend who suggested he visit the Church of Christ. After talking with Chaplain Bill Neterville, in 1994 he decided to join the church and be baptized.

About the same time, a new warden, Burl Cain, was allowing a Bible study, called *Experiencing God* by Henry Blackaby, to be taught throughout the prison. Womack and the other group members were the first to take the program. The prison administration was planning to allow them to facilitate the study with other inmates after they completed the course. As soon as Womack finished the program, he was falsely accused of having a knife hidden in the window sill. He had recently moved to another bed, and the guy who lived there before him had the knife stored in the window. When the other guy left for another section of the prison, he failed to take it with him. Fortunately a security officer intervened and revealed some information about the knife. This intervention spared Womack from being placed in solitary confinement for an extended period; instead, he was temporarily locked up and sent to Camp D and placed in general population.

While he was housed at Camp D, Womack began implementing the *Experiencing God* Bible study across the camp. As his spirituality increased, he decided to go before the Louisiana Pardon Board and seek clemency. The board liked the change they saw in his life, so they unanimously agreed to recommend his life sentence be commuted to seventy-five years with immediate parole eligibility. However, Governor Mike Foster left office after two consecutive terms and refused to sign any recommendations from the Pardon Board. This action was showing his commitment to “tough-on-crime.” Womack accepted the news with dignity and grace and continued to support his church and its activities. After being made trustee again, he eventually was placed at Row Crops, the

farming operation of the penitentiary, where he has remained consistently for eighteen years since 1999. While remaining drug-free since his initial commitment to the Lord in the early nineties, he has also gone write-up free for over two decades.

Johnny Robin

Johnny Robin's experience is characteristic of those in the prison system who have encountered a Charismatic phenomenon through outside ministries. A supernatural encounter accompanies the experience where hands are laid on individuals and prayers are prayed over them, or perhaps a word of insight or wisdom from the preacher is given that arrests the inmate's attention and changes the direction of his life. These experiences often have powerful long-term effects, as seen in Johnny's life. He was born again at twenty-six, and he has continued to apply the Bible's teaching to his life since that date.

Robin arrived at Angola in 1983 on Death Row for first-degree murder. By appealing his criminal conviction, several errors were discovered in his case that ultimately overturned his death sentence and instead gave him life without parole. Soon, he was released from Death Row and sent to general population. Even though he was spared the death sentence, Robin still was not prepared to surrender his life to the Lord. His love for drugs and his disdain for those in authority would keep him away from the Lord for many more years. He quickly adjusted to the rough and rowdy prison culture and dared anyone to cross his six-foot-two-inch, 240-pound muscular frame.

Robin's days were filled with either smoking marijuana or looking to appropriate some marijuana. He revolved around the illegal drug trade. The turbulent atmosphere of Angola's horrible past was not completely gone yet. Another inmate heard that Robin

was holding a significant amount of drugs; therefore, he planned to pull a knife on him and rob him of his marijuana. When the inmate pulled his knife, he attacked full force attempting to cut Robin across the head. A sheer animal rage was released inside Robin as he wrestled the knife away from his attacker. In the meantime, someone threw Robin a pipe to defend himself. Discarding the knife, he picked the pipe up and began to beat the individual into an unrecognizable mass of human flesh. Typically, no guard saw anything, and no inmate told what happened concerning the incident. Although the altercation gave Robin respect in the eyes of other prisoners, it would not stop others from seeking to take advantage of him from time to time.

This brutal way of living went on for several years until the early 1990s. The culture was described as, “The strong prey on the weak, and mentally superior prey on the strong” (Focus group One 2017). On one occasion, a full gospel church group advertised through the prison that it would be ministering in the Main prison’s A Building. Robin reasoned if this outside group brought a choir, he might be able to see a beautiful woman. He might even be able to talk her out of her address and phone number if he could ensnare her in a conversation. That evening he dressed and headed to the service. During the opening music, there was something like electricity in the air. He could feel it in a tangible way. Eventually, the ministry team must have transitioned because Robin noticed the preacher was pointing toward him and calling him out. All he remembers is, “The Preacher said, ‘Stop running! God is calling you to minister for Him. Son, believe, pick up your cross and follow Him.’ He then laid hands on me, and I fell out” (Inmate Subject Six 2017, Interview).

Robin had never experienced anything similar to that experience. The drugs he was using did not come close to it. He was not sure exactly who Jesus was or what He had done for him, but he made up his mind to find out. He grabbed a Bible and began to read, but the passages were not very clear to him. He asked a few questions of those in his peer group, but they laughed and thought he was playing a silly game with them. The following month the same group was advertised to minister again, so Robin made plans to get there early to have some questions answered.

By the time he arrived, the music was about to begin. He decided to sit and listen carefully in case some information might be given that would quench his curiosity. Fortunately, the message explained the gospel. The invitation was made to receive the free gift of salvation and be filled with the Spirit. Robin responded by walking forward and raising his hands as the minister instructed. He prayed the prayer as he was led. Then, hands were laid on him in a similar way to the previous service, and he began to speak with tongues as the Spirit gave him utterance. This experience was so impacting; for days afterward, he literally craved to read his Bible. The words and stories were finally making sense to him.

He returned to his peer group only to realize that they were uncomfortable with his newfound faith. At that juncture, his old friends were more comfortable with smoking marijuana than being filled with the Holy Spirit. In his innocence, he assumed they would be as excited as he was to encounter God at a deeper level. He naively went to the first church service available only to be told by those in authority that they did not believe in the experience he was purporting. This continued rejection was disconcerting at first, but

finally the Lord led him to a church whose beliefs coincided with the experience he had. Once Robin had grown in his faith for a few years, the Lord orchestrated some events that would lead to Robin accepting the role as pastor of the inmate led charismatic fellowship at Angola.

For the next twenty-one years, Robin would hold the title of pastor as he ministered and empowered those willing to receive God's Word throughout Angola's Main prison complex. He has labored among the prison population holding God's Word as the final authority when it comes to governing men's lives. Now, in his early sixties, he looks and acts like a man half his age. With a jovial attitude, Robin has a trademark expression where he loudly cries, "Hallelujah!" somewhere in the duration of a conversation. In over two decades of serving the Lord, he has never been written up for a rule infraction, and still today he continues to promote the growth and development of the church.

Troy West

Troy West's experience is characteristic of those who have a gradual conversion experience over a period of time. In other words, the change is a work in progress. Whereas some inmates' conversions are radical, evident, and immediate, West's conversion was gradual and evolved over a longer period of time from age twenty to age thirty-six. As he began to think more about the consequences of his actions, he developed trust in Jesus along with goals and a purpose over this time.

Growing up in the projects of New Orleans, Troy West was under the impression that there were two different worlds in which people lived. The white people had their world with nice things where everything worked out properly, and the black folks had

theirs with the constant daily struggle to survive. West's thinking was shaped by an unwritten street code which governed interpersonal public behavior. The code was to be adhered to at all costs. There was a slavish devotion that often did not take into consideration the long-term effects of one's behavior. An individual's reputation was paramount. If this sacred image of self was diminished by another party in the slightest manner, the situation called for immediate retribution. The response was usually far more violent than the average person would consider appropriate. "It was the law of the jungle. I had to establish myself with everyone, or they would think I'm easy prey" (Inmate Subject Seven 2017, Interview).

In 1993, Troy West, Steve Evans, and Steven Bell were together one evening at a night club. Although they were all involved together in the sales of illegal drugs, West did not trust his partners in crime. In fact, he trusted no one but himself. He understood the unwritten code of the street. If he were to allow himself to become too trusting of others, he would be taken advantage of if not killed. After all, he would be expected to take advantage of anyone "slipping in the game" as well. "It was a dog eat dog world, and only the strong survived" (Inmate Subject Seven 2017, Interview). Later that night, West decided to part ways with his associates, so Bell asked if he would like a ride home. Not wanting Bell to know his place of residence, he accepted the ride, but asked him to drop him off at the apartment of one of West's girlfriends in the Fisher projects.

After dropping West off at Tiaya Anderson's apartment, Bell and Evans saw a rival dealer who owed them money at a convenience store slightly up the road. They both decided to gun him down in the parking lot in front of a crowd of people. Pulling their

vehicle into the parking lot, Evans exited the car with an automatic rifle, and Bell got out with a handgun. Once they were within sight of their target, they opened fire. People began to scatter as the bullets ricocheted around the area. A couple of innocent bystanders were hit while the intended victim was shot repeatedly. While the bullets were flying, West could hear the commotion from inside the apartment. He had no idea what was occurring and wanted to go outside and investigate the commotion. Anderson convinced him otherwise. Once the deed was done, Bell and Evans sped away.

Witnesses recognized Evans and Bell immediately. Once the police questioned those present, an arrest warrant was issued for three suspects, Bell, Evans, and West. Since West had been seen earlier with the two, he was wanted as well. Eventually, Bell and Evans were arrested while West remained on the run from the law. While Bell was incarcerated, he decided to pay off the witnesses to implicate Evans and West instead of himself. Once West was apprehended, he and Evans had no idea that Bell was working the situation out in his favor. Several witnesses had to change their original testimonies once they accepted the payoff money from Bell. The new story was Evans and West had gunned down the unsuspecting victim. Once West realized why he was incarcerated, he chose to be true to the street code and "not rat." He kept his mouth closed and refused to testify against his codefendants while he went to trial for a crime he did not commit.

Around age nineteen, West was convicted of second degree murder and given a life sentence without parole. Within two years of the crime, he was transferred to the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Typically, there were many men who were connected to his previous life on the streets who had gone to the penitentiary before him. When West

arrived, he was immediately accepted into established social circles, and the door was easily opened to the world behind bars. The street code that governed his thinking was no different from the code that governed the prison culture. His previously earned reputation for violence and a willingness to do whatever it took to survive caused him to navigate through the first few years of prison life with few problems.

He was assigned to work as a custodian at the maximum security unit, sweeping and mopping floors. One evening when West was off from his assigned duties, an officer gave him an order to go to work on his off day. He quickly perceived he was being harassed and the situation was unfair. He cursed the officer and refused to go to work. In return, he was placed in solitary confinement and transferred to the Main prison complex. Soon, he decided to become involved making hobby craft; however, inmate Wesley Dyson planted a homemade knife in the area where West and another inmate were working. After he informed the security, both West and his friend were place in solitary confinement and shipped to the maximum security camp. Within a month, information surfaced among the security that the knife did not belong to either of them, so West was released from the one-man cell and transferred back to general population.

Although West was accepted for the most part into the prison culture, he still had to “stand his ground” (protect himself) several times when inmates challenged him for various reasons. He was written up for fighting twice and accumulated a few more relatively minor rule infractions. Around age thirty, an internal change occurred within him that showed him to be noticeably different. He was not allowing things to bother him like he once had. He also found himself putting things in their proper place and not

allowing insignificant issues to be blown out of proportion. Over time, he began to calm down inside and release a lot of anger. Normally, he would respond to challenges and think about the consequences of his actions later. This habit, however, began to change, too. West started thinking about the consequences of his actions and what it would cost him in the long-term. The security noticed his good behavior and rewarded him with a trustee status. This privilege opened up new opportunities throughout the prison.

Eventually, West went through a screening process in order to be placed as a custodian in the prison's Administration Building where female staff worked. His professionalism was noticed as he interacted with employees, and he was often asked to assist with Christmas parties and other special functions. After about eight years of faithfully working at the Administration Building, he realized he did not have any vocational skills that could help him secure employment if he were ever released. West had been going to church and hoping that one day the Lord would free him from his life sentence. His relationship with God had been evolving over the years. He had not experienced a sudden conversion or a miraculous encounter with the supernatural; however, he was often aware of the Lord's presence. He sensed the need for God in his life, and he felt drawn to the spiritual side of life.

In 2015, West requested to be placed in the vocational program at Angola. When the employees in the Administration Building found out that he was seeking a trade, several decided to support his endeavor and helped get his paperwork processed quickly. Soon, West was matriculating through the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (H.V.A.C.) school at the prison. The school was also the location of a new program called ReEntry,

where men were sentenced to complete a trade and other programming. After they completed the requirements, they could go back before their judges and be freed on probation. Since there was only one H.V.A.C. school, West was allowed to attend class with those sentenced to the program. He found himself among prisoners half his age who were only serving a matter of months. Understanding their anger and culture probably better than themselves, he attempted to help them along the way to his certifications.

West's outstanding work ethic and his relational skills were noticed by the director over the vocational schools. Once he had taken his last test for H.V.A.C. certification, West was approached by the staff and asked to remain in school as a mentor and tutor. Not only would he be able to continue developing his skills as an H.V.A.C. technician, but he would also be able to influence young impressionable lives to help them not make the same mistakes he had. West would be allowed to help empower men with vocational skills who would eventually be freed with another chance to live life. He would also receive additional training from one of the chaplains in order to effectively help his mentees grow spirit, soul, and body. "If it were not for God's grace protecting me through the crazy periods of my life, I wouldn't be here today. I owe it all to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has spared me countless times from a devil's hell. I'm eternally grateful for the opportunity to give back to those around me" (Inmate Subject Seven 2017, Interview).

Neil Smith

Neil Smith's experience is characteristic of those whose lives are interrupted with the consequences of their actions and the emotional and spiritual weight of their sin, or

crimes. Having felt the sting of conviction in his heart and mind for the sins he committed, at age twenty he called out to Jesus in faith and repentance to experience his salvation and escape from the future torments of hell. Later, he and prisoners like him received teaching about an experience subsequent to salvation called the Baptism in the Holy Ghost with the accompanying evidence of speaking in tongues.

Neil Smith grew up in a broken home; however, he did not realize it was broken until he decided to play junior league football. After practice, while all the kids were waiting for a ride, Smith noticed all the other youngsters had their dads picking them up. Shortly, his mother arrived in her beat up old car to get him. Undoubtedly, Smith's mother loved him, but she was out of the house continually working to accumulate enough money to pay the bills. While she was absent, he rambled around the neighborhood, and eventually came into contact with some young people slightly older than him. He was young and impressionable, so when they offered him some alcohol to drink, he readily accepted. Within a few short weeks, he was a willing participant in neighborhood vandalism. What began with throwing toilet paper on houses in the middle of the night later turned into vandalism that would cost thousands of dollars once he was apprehended.

By the time Smith was a teenager, he had accumulated several arrests. His mother thought if they moved to another section of town, perhaps that would change his behavior. Instead, he found another group of individuals who had drugs instead of alcohol. Instead of throwing toilet paper around and pouring salt in people's yards, he was introduced to auto theft. While pilfering through parked cars looking for things of value, he noticed keys in the ignition of one of the cars. One of the older kids jumped in

the driver's seat. He cranked the car and asked, "You guys care to take her for a spin" (Inmate Subject Eight 2017, Interview). This would be another juvenile offense on his way to the penitentiary.

Once more, he and his mother moved to another location with the hopes of modifying his behavior enough to graduate from high school. Unfortunately, this dream would not come true because he found a gang who readily received a young chaotic soldier like himself. They embraced him and affirmed his reckless behavior. He found acceptance and a sense of belonging until the police knocked on his door to arrest him for aggravated assault. This charge would have him certified as an adult and sent to the penitentiary at age seventeen. While incarcerated, he would meet serious criminals who would become suppliers for his new trade in the sales of illegal drugs.

His career as a drug dealer would be short-lived because an informant explained to law enforcement exactly what he was doing. The drug enforcement agency in Lafayette, Louisiana, searched a house connected to him and eventually arrested him on drug charges. He was wanted in another state on similar charges, so Louisiana released him to Mississippi's custody. While he was in Mississippi, Smith escaped and went on the run from the law. A drug dealer from New York managed to get in touch with him while he was on the run. He offered him some illegal work, and during the process of handling the job, Smith was shot twice. He awoke in Louisiana custody facing several more charges. Later, in 1995, he was convicted in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on one count of aggravated burglary and multi-billed as a habitual offender. He was sentenced to a lifetime in prison and transferred to the Louisiana State Penitentiary at age twenty.

While facing transfer to the penitentiary, Smith was deeply convicted inside his heart concerning his sins. He was given a Bible by another prisoner who was about to throw it away. Once he read through the passages in Romans, the reality of his situation dawned on him. All at once, the weight of his actions came crashing down upon him. Previously, he never considered who he hurt or the consequences of his actions. Suddenly, the weight of the world felt as though it was on his shoulders. He looked upward toward heaven and asked God to forgive him and deliver him from the weight of guilt and shame. Smith says, "Tears began to stream down my face. I could feel the depression lift from my entire being. It felt as though a weight was lifted off my shoulders. I was being delivered from my sin, and God was coming into my heart" (Inmate Subject Eight 2017, Interview).

During his transfer to the penitentiary, someone slipped him a pamphlet inside his cell that explained the second blessing that a person could experience subsequent to salvation. This experience was called the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the biblical evidence of speaking in other tongues. Considering the emotional encounter he had earlier with God's forgiveness, Smith was ready to believe anything the Bible said. Once he realized the baptism in the Spirit was a free gift extended to all who receive it by faith, he raised his hands upward toward heaven and began speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. He testified, "My cell was turned into a heavenly sanctuary. The presence and power of God was all over me. I could tell He was healing me and empowering me to serve Him" (Inmate Subject Eight 2017, Interview).

After arriving at the penitentiary in 1996, Smith embarked on a one-man evangelistic crusade to win as many inmates to Christ as he could. During that time, the prison's churches were beginning to expand and multiply. He diligently worked in this movement to build and increase the body of Christ. He eventually realized there was an accredited seminary program that would accept him and train him to be sent to another prison to start a church and reach the lost. After several fruitful years of reaching the lost had occurred in Angola, he decided to join the seminary program. Four years later he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree. When the timing of God was right, Smith was transferred to a southeastern prison in the Louisiana Department of Corrections to continue carrying on the call of God he sensed on his life. After planting a church and laboring in the ministry for three years and eight months, he was transferred back to Angola where he continues to live for the Lord's pleasure.

The previous biographical information represents a wide range of conversion experiences that are characteristic of many who have participated in Angola's cultural shift. However, there are others who have rejected the religious movement and continue to cling to their ways of thinking characteristic of them before coming to the prison. Their lives have spoken loudly of their refusal to conform to institutional rules or any religious dogma. The path they have traveled throughout the prison system is littered with flawed thinking, antisocial behavior, and broken lives. The following stories illustrate the difference between the possibly incorrigible and other types of testimony.

Ponycat

Having arrived at Angola in mid-1970s, Ponycat's crime was connected to the Black Panther uprising in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This activist group was responsible for terrorist acts and murder throughout the city. Ponycat was convicted of second degree murder and given a life sentence. After arriving at Angola, he immediately rebelled against what he perceived as the white man's system. He saw life as a war between blacks and the white man's oppressive system. This translated into a lifestyle behind bars filled with drug use and multiple homosexual relationships. The turmoil and chaos that characterized the penitentiary's atmosphere suited his pursuits in life.

Although he did not consider himself a homosexual, Ponycat patrolled the prison grounds searching for any weakness in unsuspecting prisoners. Any perceived weakness would be exploited with the end result of turning out the individual. The conquest and consolidation of sex slaves helped to establish his reputation as a man. Eventually, his eighteen-year-old nephew was sent to Angola with an eight-year sentence for robbery. Ponycat's sister contacted him and pleaded with him to watch out for her young son. She requested that he protect him from the savagery of prison life. Once the young man arrived, Ponycat used the trust the young man afforded him and exploited it. Quickly he turned him into another homosexual slave and prostituted him out in order to make money.

When a prisoner held a homosexual slave under his control, he would eventually be challenged by someone interested in adding him to his collection. The situation resembled bulls in a pasture vying for dominance in order to have their choice of cows to breed. This situation arose with Ponycat when two men verbally threatened him and

demanded he give up control over one of his whores. Unbeknownst to them, he had a butcher knife in his possession and made quick work of them. After he killed them, he was in such a rage that he dared the security to challenge him. The prison's tactical unit was called to bring the situation under control.

After he was taken into custody, Ponycat was charged with two counts of second degree murder. He was prosecuted and given two more life sentences in conjunction with the one he was serving. As a result of his defiance toward the security and his willingness to use a weapon, the administration decided to place him in administrative segregation away from other prisoners. After his stay in a one-man cell, he was eventually moved to the Working cellblocks where drugs and homosexual encounters were more prevalent. Ponycat continued to immerse himself in the depraved culture of rebellion, drugs, and the conquering of weaker prisoners.

One day he was brought to the hospital for a routine checkup. He admitted to feeling fatigued regularly. The doctor decided to take blood and run some tests. Several weeks later, the doctor called Ponycat to his office to inform him that he was Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) positive. Ponycat said, "This be another tool the white man got to bring blacks down. They give us this ****" (Ponycat 2008, Interview). As the years passed, he took the medication prescribed to him, but refused to modify his behavior. He continued to grow more and more paranoid in the process.

Even though the prison was experiencing change and the chaos was not as pronounced, Ponycat's paranoia had increased to the point where he was not stable enough to remain in general population. He constantly thought someone was "out to get

him.” These fits of delusion led him into conflict with the security and fellow inmates. He could no longer remember how many times he had been written up for rule infractions. The security gave him one last chance to live among men in general population just before his death. This researcher was able to interview him and record some of his last words. “Say, young blood. You know I was a soldier, huh? I kept it real the whole time I was here, but you know what? I done played the fool. I’m gone die in the penitentiary. I thought I was doin right. I thought the path I was travell’in was right. I was a soldier! I done played the fool. I’m gone die in the penitentiary.” (Ponycat 2008, Interview). Ponycat died shortly after that interview.

Kenny Woodburn

Kenny Woodburn arrived at Angola with a life sentence for second degree murder. He was a young conman while living in the free world. He also had an insatiable appetite for drugs. Using and manipulating people were almost second nature to him. Once he arrived at Angola, he was placed in the heart of the Main prison complex. After reviewing the social structure and who the influential inmates were, he began surrounding himself with young impressionable prisoners. He was more charismatic than most inmates, so he quickly amassed a following. Once his following was large enough, he successfully took over the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) club.

This inmate led organization gave him the opportunity to connect with people on the outside and obtain illegal contraband. Even though he was selling drugs, his drug use was outpacing his sales. The AA meetings were a front for prisoners to consume drugs, and when outside guests were allowed to participate in meetings, the meeting was a

"front" in order to have a sexual tryst with their girlfriends. This facade carried on until the security smelled marijuana smoke coming from inside the inmate AA club office. When security barged through the door, Woodburn and the vice president were so intoxicated all they could do was laugh uncontrollably.

When he had served his sentence in the cellblocks for getting caught with the illegal drugs, Woodburn decided he ought to join the new Bible College program. This opportunity would offer him a front for continuing his illegal operations. The security was very open to the idea of inmates who were in the Bible College traveling across the prison to meet and minister to other inmates. This situation offered him an excellent opportunity to travel and sell drugs. He would simply inform the security he was going to another section of the prison to minister to people, and most often he would not be checked for any illegal contraband.

For a couple of years, Woodburn had the security deceived into thinking he was a model prisoner who was trying to make Angola a better place. He was savvy enough not to get caught or allow known confidential informants to see him while violating. His closest associates were people who were involved in the criminal elements of prison life. However, the chaplains and the security were pleased with what they thought was his constant outreach to those inside the prison who were involved in the criminal elements of prison life. They could not see through his facade. It would not be until his dorm was surprised in the middle of the night with a urinalysis that the truth would begin to come out. He registered positive for illegal drug use. He was removed from the Bible College and placed in the Working cellblocks as punishment.

Several years passed, and Woodburn decided to get back into the Bible College program. He testified that God was calling him to reach those who were infirmed and in the hospital. Angola had started a unique hospice program, taking care of the terminally ill. He again testified that he could sense the Lord leading him in that direction. Instead of ministering to the sick prisoners, he simply bought their medication. Some prisoners were prescribed Morphine, and this suited his love for drugs. Since those assigned to the hospital ward could not purchase cigarettes, Woodburn would bring them some in exchange for their medication. This manipulation went on for several more years until he was caught having sex with his girlfriend in the visiting shed. His wife was unable to come that day.

He was removed from the Bible College again and transferred to another section of the prison. This time he allowed several years to pass before attempting to get back into the school program. He was required to have a recommendation from an inmate pastor before the administration would allow him back into the program. This plan worked out easy enough for Woodburn since one of the inmate pastors, Charles Grey, owed him for some pornographic videos and some illegal drugs. He would be able to secure the recommendation easy enough. Charles Grey would later be caught in a scandal involving paying off security in order for inmates to have sex with outside visitors on callouts inside the prison. The scandal occurred less than ten years ago; however this researcher has not been able to retrieve *The Advocate* article that covered the incident.

Once Woodburn was reinstated as a Bible College student, he was finally able to finish the degree program and graduate. The four-year program took him fifteen years to finish due to his constant rule infractions. The new assignment as an inmate minister gave

him a new job with virtually no oversight. All he had to do was fill out the necessary paperwork explaining that he had made rounds throughout the prison and talked to people about the Lord. The paperwork took him about ten minutes to falsify each week, and the rest of the time was filled with his newfound pleasure in painting pictures. He discovered he could paint, so he used most of his waking hours to paint in one of the prison hobby shops. His reasoning was this was a legitimate enterprise; who could fault him for this endeavor?

Since he was listed as an inmate minister, he was being called to attend different Christian services once or twice a month. Attending these services was extremely boring to him. He decided he wanted to be free from the expectation of the administration and the Chaplain's department. He talked an administrative official into allowing him to tutor guys in the trustee camp. His argument was that those guys work hard during the day, and the prison could not afford to allow them off from work to go to school. He would teach them general education classes twice a week at night. This way they could keep working and have the opportunity to attend school at night. They agreed, changed his job, and transferred him to the trustee camp.

In his mind, Woodburn saw the three hours two nights a week as a real sacrifice. After working hard and sacrificing, he would treat himself with some illegal drugs and paint. He was careful not to allow the wrong person to see him violating the rules. This routine continued for a couple of years until he was caught having sex in the visiting shed again, only this time, the woman was his wife. He was promptly placed in solitary confinement and transferred to another section of the prison. After remaining at Camp D

for several months, he decided he wanted to join the vocational program and become an H.V.A.C. technician. His associate and fellow drug user, Chester Schneider, was the inmate instructor over the vocational program Woodburn was interested in joining. Therefore, he contacted Schneider and asked for some help getting into the program in exchange for some illegal drugs. The exchange took place between the two, and Schneider went to those in authority requesting Woodburn be allowed to enroll in the H.V.A.C. program. As Woodburn attempted to enroll in the program, Schneider suggested Woodburn would make an excellent addition to the school, so within a few days, he was transferred to the Main prison to attend vocational school.

Chester Schneider

Chester Schneider is a career criminal. All of his adult life has been filled with drugs and criminal offenses. However, his father instructed him personally in the field of Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning. Between drug binges and periods of incarceration, he earned a living as an H.V.A.C. technician. “Every weekend I was staying out all night in clubs, drinking, drugging, and cheating on my wife…. I accumulated four felony convictions, which earned me a life sentence without the possibility of parole as a habitual criminal” (Inmate Subject Nine 2017, Interview). In conversation, he easily blamed his history of crime on drugs and alcohol. If most of what he told this researcher is true about his criminal past, he has gotten away with countless crimes and left a trail of destruction behind him.

When Schneider arrived at Angola, he began collecting disciplinary reports for rule infractions. His boastful attitude often brought him into conflict with other inmates.

Two early disciplinary reports were for fighting. After questioning both sides, there was an interesting difference in their stories. One of Schneider's opponents said, "He had a superior, better-than-thou attitude. He thinks he's better than everyone else" (Inmate Subject Ten 2017, Interview). This ego-driven attitude, energized with drug abuse, would help him collect thirty-five disciplinary reports in his first few years of incarceration.

Using his ability to talk, he convinced the administration to give him a job with maintenance; however, this opportunity would be a front to move drugs and other contraband across the prison. Due to his history of working with his father, Schneider was able to prove himself as a proficient maintenance man. His job allowed him to push a cart loaded with tools across the prison to fix everything from heaters to shower heads. This operation was the perfect cover to place drugs in the tool boxes and transport his packages across the prison. Considering his love for drugs, he could never turn a profit because he used what would normally be accounted for profit. This abuse carried on until an assistant warden became wise to his operation. Inevitably, someone informed the security of his actions.

He was locked in solitary confinement and later transferred to the cellblocks. Once he remained trouble-free for a few months, Schneider was transferred back to the Main prison complex. He convinced the security that he had straightened out his life and was on the right path. He requested to be allowed to participate in an operation in the Main prison gym, making wooden toys for children. This request was simply another mask to hide his true intention. While he was hidden from the sight of the correction officer in the gym, instead of making wooden toys for kids, he had accumulated the

necessary ingredients to make crystal methamphetamine. He opened up a new business, but once again with poor profit margins.

Several inmates across the prison overdosed on Schneider's drug creation. The security was determined to find the source of the contraband, so Schneider decided to close his operation for a period. While he was closed, a new program at Angola called the ReEntry was starting, where the courts were planning to sentence men to obtain high school equivalency diplomas and vocational skills, and attend various programs that address substance abuse and anger management. Once they had accumulated the necessary paperwork, the men would go back before the judge and be released on probation. The courts and the prison administration decided inmates serving life sentences would teach vocational skills to the men sentenced to this program. Schneider saw a way to ingratiate himself with the security and build a new operation. He volunteered to teach H.V.A.C. He was tested, and his past employment records were secured. After a screening process occurred, he was assigned as the new instructor over the H.V.A.C. school.

Once the new students arrived, he carefully watched them. After recognizing the ones who had family support and money, he approached them and offered them the information on the tests and favorable comments to the judge in return for a money order to be deposited in an account. He also threatened those who did not have the money to buy their way through the program with failure if they did not take care of menial tasks he assigned them to do. He painted a wonderful picture of himself for the administration to see while taking advantage of his students in one form or another. Anyone he

perceived as a threat to his hold on power was quickly dealt with. He would approach the security and tell them they were either disrupting his class or doing drugs around the impressionable men. Almost every time, the security acted without questioning the information and transferred the individual.

Out of the thousands of men incarcerated at Angola, there was only one other individual qualified to take over the vocational program. Troy Vollontine was working in maintenance while instructing students on the side. Although Vollontine was not interested in taking over Schneider's class, Schneider did not feel comfortable knowing there was a possible rival who could replace him. Vollontine was a constant drug user and had no desire to be a mentor to anyone; however, he was willing to help students who wanted to learn the trade. In reality, Schneider's position was safe, but he wanted to be irreplaceable. Therefore, he informed the security that Vollontine was using drugs, and they could catch him with a urinalysis. Vollontine said, "I had just scored the dope from Chet [Schneider] and did it with him. He was the only one who knew I was loaded. When I was being escorted off, one of the security officers told me that Schneider wanted me gone" (Inmate Subject Four 2012, Interview).

Once Schneider had removed his perceived threat, he continued to abuse his position and balance his criminal activities with informing the security. Several times he was caught in a rule infraction, but managed to talk his way out of it. Over the years, he collected some enemies; however, when they would inform the security of his various activities, officials would overlook the information. Many assumed having the school was more important to security than responding to some information from a confidential

informant. Unfortunately, on April 21, 2017, some of the security may have regretted their efforts to protect Schneider because he was found with a young impressionable mentee overdosed on illegal drugs in Schneider's hobby shop area. One of the inmates who found them said, "I was scared to leave them like that. They were both unresponsive and turning blue. I had to do something. I couldn't let them die. I had to let security know, you know, to get some help or something" (Inmate Subject Eight 2017, Interview).

The previous cases are obvious contrasts to the authentic conversion experiences mentioned before them. Although security is often misled, the inmates who reside in Angola most often are not. The prison population generally knows who is involved in the various legal and illegal activities. When addressing church activities in prison, the question of motive is often hard to prove for those on the outside looking into the facility. Even more challenging for those in authority is locating psychopaths among men who are genuinely reformed, but that does not have to be the case. Robert D. Hare, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of British Columbia, Canada writes, "Psychopaths are social predators who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way through life, leaving a broad trail of broken hearts, shattered expectations, and empty wallets." He continued, "Completely lacking in conscience and in feelings for others, they selfishly take what they want and do as they please, violating social norms and expectations without the slightest sense of guilt or regret" (1999, xi). This situation has tremendous implications for the prison church. Are there psychopaths among the believers in Angola? In reference to unbelievers being among believers, Jesus warned, "The kingdom of heaven

is likened unto a man, which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way" (Mat. 13:24–25).

The following case surfaced while researching this study.

Kyle Hebert

At first glance, Kyle Hebert looks like a model prisoner. He arrived at Angola around early 2003 and remained cautious about involving himself in prison activities. Although he claimed to have a history with drugs, Hebert stayed clear of the drug trade in Angola. He managed to avoid confrontations with the administration and security officers. After getting a good understanding of the prison culture and the direction Angola was headed, he decided to join the prison Bible College. He seemed to be a diligent student. He performed well and eventually graduated. He was assigned as an inmate minister, and at this juncture, things started to surface. Often Hebert would tell stories of his previous life as a sinner. The stories seemed to portray him in an almost hero-like fashion. Amazingly, he always came out on top and was involved in the darkest corruptions the world had to offer. If a person listened to him intently and regularly, the stories often changed. Many times they suited the mood, occasion, conversation, or something occurring in society. In one session, he may have been raised in a Catholic school and been educated thoroughly in the Bible. On another occasion, he may have run away from hom, joined a biker gang and become a white supremacist. If a person were to confront him with the inconsistency, he would simply change something or shift to another issue. He was able to handle being caught in a lie as if nothing happened.

An opportunity opened for him to transfer to the ReEntry program to help mentor new prisoners. Hebert talked fast, but he was very persuasive. He used his good conduct record and graduation from the Bible College to secure the assignment. With the first impression, he seemed active in the lives of his mentees, but after closer investigation, he was trying to domineer and control their lives. He wanted to control what they wore, when they got up, and when they cut their hair. Most importantly, he demanded that they make him look good in front of the security and overseers of the program, particularly Judge William Knight, who helped establish the ReEntry program. Hebert was trying to connect with the judge to help secure his help in getting out of prison.

During Hebert's time as a mentor, Baylor University Professor of Criminology Michael Hallet and his associates came to Angola to invest three years to conduct a detailed analysis of Angola's Bible College students and graduates. Hebert managed to get connected to Hallet and become one of the inmates chosen for interviews. Once the study was completed, Baylor published the findings, and Herbert made it into the paper. The testimony that was published, however, reveals conflicts with much of what he has shared throughout the prison and among associates. In fact, many issues that were prison related could have been checked to determine their accuracy, but the researchers failed to follow through and correct the errors. Hallet did check Hebert's prison file and found he has been arrested and convicted ninety-eight times (Hallet, Hays, Johnson, Jang, and Duwe 2016, 60). The present charge he is serving time on is for beating his seventy-year-old aunt nearly to death because she would not give him some money.

Hebert's controlling, manipulative behavior eventually surfaced among the administration connected to the ReEntry program. He was trying to control sections of the prison using mentees to ultimately get his way. Hebert was transferred without notice to another section of the prison. Once he arrived at Camp D, he tried to ingratiate himself to the power structure, but there were already inmates in place who were controlling areas and programming. When Hebert tried to establish himself at the top of the inmate hierarchy, he was quickly brought to the security's attention and transferred to another section of the prison. Hebert was then removed from both the inmate minister program and ReEntry and assigned to a maintenance detail.

While working on the new job, he told this researcher that he was contemplating diving off a ladder head first in order to sue the administration for having him work like he was. When this researcher asked how he was doing spiritually, he said, "My prayer life is great. I'm praying every day for those who did this to me to die a slow painful death and rot in hell" (Hebert 2016, Conversation). After about six months, the prison experienced several consecutive suicides in solitary confinement at Camp J, so Warden Darrel Vannoy sent for every Bible College graduate to have them walk up and down the tiers of cells in order to minister to the people housed there. This situation presented itself in Hebert's mind as an opportunity to get back into good graces with the administration. Suddenly, he told the security that he felt led of the Lord to minister to those unfortunate souls in the one-man cells. He was transferred back to the ministry program and allowed to make rounds on the tiers.

An acquaintance of Hebert confided in him that he was trying to get a highly coveted prison job with many benefits. Not many prisoners knew of the opening or what the position entailed. The arrangement opened the door to a significant amount of freedom and privileges, and whoever was hired would come in contact with powerful people throughout the prison system. Hebert learned that the supervisor over the job had a brother who worked at Camp J, where he was making rounds as an inmate minister. He assured his acquaintance that he would help him get the job by putting in a good word for him when he saw the ranking officer. Instead, when Hebert introduced himself to the man's brother, he explained that he was concerned about his brother hiring the wrong man for the job. He also informed the officer that the other guy had been involved with a female employee previously, but the affair had never been completely proven.

The officer appreciated the information, and he decided to suggest to his brother that he hire Hebert instead of the other guy. Within a few days, Hebert was reassigned to the prison's cattle operation as the clerk. He no longer felt called to serve those in solitary confinement. Now, he was on the side of a lake working in a cabin with cable television, a stereo, and a fully stocked refrigerator. He immediately introduced himself to everyone at the new job as an inmate minister. For the first few days, he would greet everyone with a hearty greeting, "God bless you brother! I love you" (Hebert 2017, Conversation). Soon, this greeting began to wear thin on the feelings of those at the job site. His fellow inmates would hear him talk about God in one breath and curse someone a couple of sentences later. One inmate remarked, "It's like he's reading lines. It's fake. He doesn't mean it. It's just something he says, like hello" (Range Crew Employee 2017, Conversation).

A few months after having the job, a fellow inmate commented on Hebert's hypocrisy. He pointed out to Hebert that he would talk nice to someone on the phone and hang up and begin cursing them. On other occasions, he would claim to be a minister, and then, in the next breath, he would talk about killing someone. The guy informed him that could not have it both ways in life; he was either a minister or a killer. He could not be both. As a result of this rebuke, Hebert punched him and knocked half his front tooth out. Since there was no security there to witness the incident, they concocted a lie to cover up the other guy's missing tooth. When this researcher questioned Hebert about the incident, he responded, "Man, these dudes don't know who they are messing with. I can break bones. Man, these dudes just don't know. Man, I'm telling you!" Later, as this researcher left the cattle operation to get back to his dorm, Hebert said, "God bless you brother! I love you. If there's anything I can do for you, just let me know" (Hebert 2017, Conversation).

If it were not for the chilling reality of some of these stories and their connection to dangerous men, they could almost be laughable at times. However, some of these men pose an honest threat to law abiding citizens. The sobering reality is there are men incarcerated who have not changed and most likely will not, but that reality should not prohibit the state from taking an honest look at each man to determine if they no longer possess a criminal mindset. The fact is, there are changed men among the possibly incorrigible. Each man's life in prison tells a story. If someone looks intently enough, he can read the pages, because an inmate's actions speak as loud as words. Jesus said, "For the tree is known by its fruit" (Matt. 12:33).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The Criminal Mind

All the prisoners who were interviewed for this study shared a common mindset that ultimately led to their criminal actions. Common to each inmate was a framework of thinking that expressed itself throughout their daily lives. Although their crimes may have differed, the underlying thinking that promoted them was very similar. Psychologist Howard B. Kaplan thinks that criminals suffer from low self-esteem. As a result, criminal actions flow from this lack of esteem (1980, 21). This researcher, however, found just the opposite to be true in the criminals studied for this explication.

Prior to their conversion experience, each inmate possesses a high view of himself as special and powerful. In fact, they often lie to protect this perceived image of self. They are uncompromising when pursuing an objective and oblivious to the collateral effects of their behavior. Their lack of empathy enables them to simply use people and manipulate them to achieve their desired end. They walk consistently through life with a hypersensitive attitude simmering with anger. They quickly react to the smallest perceived slight to their special unique image. When people fail to satisfy their unrealistic expectations, they react as though their entire self-image is compromised. Anger is a constant companion because people are not conforming to what they desire, and they are unable to control them (Focus Group Three 2017).

The idea of ethics, rules, or laws does not apply to them. They live in a dimension outside of regular society where only their will is paramount. These criminals believe they are entitled to what they want; they believe they are unique and can ignore rules that apply to others. If they believe they are entitled to something, they take it without regards to who it hurts. When they are pursuing a criminal endeavor, there is an insatiable desire for more of what they are seeking. Even if they commit a crime and are not apprehended, their appetite is never satisfied. They are extremely self-centered people who build themselves up by tearing others down, overlook financial and personal obligations, and blame other people for their wrongs. Their behavior is a product of their thinking (Focus Group One 2017).

A criminal's antisocial thought process nearly guarantees that he will behave in a manner that injures another party. He desires power for its own sake and will go to great extremes to achieve it. People only exist to serve his agenda. His lack of empathy enables him to exploit people and situations to further his goals. The criminal lacks a sense of obligation to anyone or any set of rules. His image is paramount. His sense of entitlement empowers him to take advantage of each situation, so that he may achieve his desire at the expense of others. People and circumstances exist as stepping stones to get him where he desires to go. Assuming everyone is out to get him, he is perfectly justified in doing what he does. After all, "It's a dog eat dog world" (Inmate Subject Seven 2017, Interview).

Each crime achieves a purpose when committed by a criminal. According to Seymour L. Halleck, psychiatrist and professor of law at North Carolina University, when someone who feels alienated from society commits a crime, it offers him a sense of power and purpose (1971, 78). Kenny Woodburn said he often commits crimes as a cure for his

boredom (Inmate Subject Eleven 2017). Therefore, elements of power, purpose, and excitement are connected to committing a crime; when a crime is often thought to be purposeless, the purpose is most likely to achieve a sense of power, control, and excitement. Criminals can easily suppress their consciences to do whatever they desire against social norms and experience no lasting remorse. Although a criminal may experience fleeting regrets, these feelings do not deter him from pursuing future criminal endeavors. “The more you do it [crime], the easier it gets” (Inmate Subject Two 2014, Interview).

The criminal’s belief that he is special and unique often drives him to establish himself as the head in social settings. More than likely, he will refuse to subordinate himself to anyone unless it is to achieve a criminal objective. “I can’t bow down to nobody. I’ll lose who I am” (Inmate Subject Three 2014, Interview). Since he thinks he is smarter than everyone else, he can rarely take advice. Being subordinate is out of the question, because he expects others to fulfill his requirements, and if they do not fulfill his desires, he will abuse them or undermine them. Therefore, quitting or dropping out is often characteristic of his approach to organizations, social events, and jobs. “If I can’t run it, there’s no place for me” (Inmate Subject Nine 2017).

Because a criminal thinks he is special and unique, sometimes irresistible, a dangerous combination occurs when this belief combines with his desire for power. If a sexual conquest does not validate this assumption, he or she presents a challenge. The criminal must use his mental superiority to talk the person into sex or resort to brute force. The core issue is the excitement the criminal gets by conquering his victim.

Whether he is seducing, manipulating, or using brute force, his objective is to exert power over the individual. The physical sex act is not primary. If this individual chooses to have an ongoing relationship with a sexual partner, he expects the partner's utter devotion, but he is free to sleep around or continue his predatory behavior. If his sexual partner presses for a commitment in their relationship, he will quickly end the relationship because he refuses to be controlled by anyone (Focus Group One 2017).

Criminals do not spend much time considering the long term effects of their illegal decisions. Impulsive acts are characteristic of their temperament. Whether it is a temper tantrum, vandalism, or an act of murder, impulsive acts play a central role in the criminal's behavior by achieving immediate satisfaction, pleasure, or relief. Besides being impulsive, criminals are highly reactive to insults or anything that challenges their view of self. Their internal ability to suppress unruly emotional outbursts is weak. The smallest form of perceived disrespect will cause them to have an aggressive temper tantrum where they respond to frustration, failure, discipline, and criticism with sudden violence, threats, and verbal abuse. They take offense easily and become angry and aggressive over what the average person would overlook. Oddly enough, as extreme as their outbursts may be, they are over them quickly, and the criminals are ready to move on as if nothing out of the ordinary happened (Focus Group Two, 2017).

Criminals can come across as arrogant, shameless braggarts who are self-assured, opinionated, domineering, and cocky. They love to have power and control over others and seem unable to believe that other people have valid opinions different from the ones they hold. However, these same devious individuals can also have charismatic

personalities coupled with the ability to speak persuasively. Instead of alienating people, they are gregarious and charming. Even though most criminals are bullies in practice, some are more cunning in their approach to crime than the average ruffian (Focus Group One 2017, Interview).

Some criminals will assess people and tell them what they want to hear through flattery so victims will think highly of the criminal. This method engenders rapport with people in order to take advantage of them. Lying, deceiving, and manipulating are innate talents for criminals. Employing the power of their imagination, criminals engrossed in themselves tell lies without the slightest concern of ever getting caught. When they are caught telling lies, they are seldom confounded or embarrassed. They often rework the story or manipulate the facts to appear consistent with the lie. This action generally translates into a series of contradictory statements and a confused listener (Focus Group Three 2017).

Even as a child, a criminal is sure he is smarter than other people. While a teacher attempts to instruct him, the rebellion in his heart toward authority will be evident. He will have a hard time following instructions by an authority figure. If a subject does not interest him, it will be equally difficult for him to pay attention, concentrate, and stick with a task that seems difficult. He will take short cuts, lie about what he has done, and expect others to acquiesce to his expectations rather than acquiescing to theirs. When it comes to sustained effort and doing things on others' terms, the criminal will give up on school long before school gives up on him. Whether it is an organization or school, the youth will quit if he does not receive the recognition he thinks he deserves (Focus Group One 2017).

The prisoners interviewed for this project who were still involved in criminal behavior or unrepentant about their initial crime told this researcher that they believed they were good people. In fact, they often suggested they were misunderstood by most of society. Whether the guy was a murderer, rapist, or armed robber, he unquestioningly declared he was good at heart. This thought expressed itself in some unusual ways. For instance, several armed robbers and murderers this researcher interviewed expressed their judgmental attitudes toward sex offenders. In essence, they excused their own crimes against people and looked down on the sex offenders for their crimes. These convicted felons considered another prisoner below them in their social hierarchy (Focus Group Two 2017). One inmate said, “I might have made a mistake, but I ain’t no baby rap[ist]” (Inmate Subject One 2014, Interview).

The criminal thinking patterns established above were written through interacting with one-on-one interviewees and Focus groups for this study. This criminal mindset is validated by a body of research administered in state and federal prisons, where psychologists have administered personality questionnaires such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) to inmates. The evidence from these studies shows that criminals typically are more impulsive, hostile, self-centered, and immature than noncriminals (Laufer and Day 1983). In addition, Psychiatrist Samuel Yochelson and Psychologist Stanton E. Samenow studied criminals in the Forensic Division of St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in Washington, D.C. Their expert opinions were published in a joint project called *The Criminal Personality*, in which they purport criminals share abnormal thinking patterns that lead to

a decision to commit crime. They suggest criminals are angry people who feel a sense of superiority, expect not to be held accountable for their actions, and have a highly inflated image of self. Any perceived slight against their glorified self-image elicits an overreaction, often resulting in violence (1976). In 2014, Samenow revised and updated *Inside the Criminal Mind*, in which he sets forth his depiction of the criminal's thinking process. He lists seven criminal characteristics substantiating the qualitative data gathered through this researcher's interviews. They are, "1. The lack of concept of injury to others. 2. Claiming to be a victim and blaming others when held accountable. 3. An ability to shut off conscience. 4. An extreme sense of entitlement. 5. A sense of uniqueness. 6. The lack of a concept of obligation. 7. An ability to shut off fear" (2014, 113).

Evidence of Transformation

The previous characterization that occurred through interviews illustrates the depravity of the criminal's thinking; however, there are degrees in which criminals are committed to these positions. Professor John Robson, previous director of the Joan Horner Center of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary at Angola, states, "We are all sinners, but we are not sinning as much we have the potential for because of elements placed in our lives by the restraining grace of God" (2010, Lecture). This concept will be explored later in this paper through Travis Hirschi's Social Control theory. One can imagine a pendulum that moves from mild to extreme in explaining the outworking of criminal behavior. Regardless of where a person finds himself on the pendulum, he can always increase or decrease his criminal tendencies. Sociologist Charles R. Little, who specializes in crime and deviance writes, "The inhibiting effect of

social and psychological integration with others whose potential negative response, surveillance, and expectations regulate or constrain criminal impulses" (2001, 65).

Based on a Freudian perspective, Criminologist Frank Schmalleger suggests, "We are, each one of us, potential murderers, sexual aggressors, and thieves—our drives and urges kept in check only by other controlling aspects of our personalities" (2014, 67). Recognizing what is inside of man potentially, the apostle Paul indicts the entire human race with these words:

> Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whispers, backbiters, haters of God despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death not only do the same, but have pleasure in those that do them. (Rom. 1:29–32)

Jesus concurs stating, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:19). In addition, Jesus reveals that if a man has simply thought of committing an immoral act in his heart, he is guilty before God and judged a sinner (Matt. 5:28). The idea of the inherent sinfulness of man, which leads to criminal behavior is further reinforced through Paul writing:

> They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongue they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of Peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes . . . For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:12–19, 23)

In reference to the id, ego, and superego of Freud's Psychoanalytic theory, Psychologist and Professor Kevin Brown suggests a criminal's conscience is perhaps too

weak. The conscience, or superego, is so weak or defective that he is unable to control the impulses of the id. The id consists of powerful urges and drives for gratification and satisfaction. Because the superego is essentially an internalized parental image, developed when the child assumes the parents' attitudes and moral values, it follows that the absence of such an image may lead to an unrestrained id and thus to criminal actions. Furthermore, another insight into the deviant behavior of a criminal is the insatiable need for immediate reward and gratification. A defect in the character formation of a criminal drives him to satisfy his desire immediately without considering the ramifications of his actions. This urge, which Brown attributes to the id, is so strong that relationships with people are important only so long as they help satisfy it (2017, Lecture).

The state of Louisiana has a culture, widely accepted beliefs, and codified laws that the citizens have largely agreed to uphold. This is referred to as the Consensus model. "The model assumes that members of a society by and large agree on what is right and wrong and that the codification of social values becomes law, with a mechanism of control that settles disputes that arise when some individual strays too far from what is considered acceptable behavior" (Alder, Mueller, Laufer 2010, 14). These beliefs, laws, and culture help provide structure and order to the lives of everyday people. Effort must be taken to inculcate someone to these societal rules early in their development. Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Robert D. Hare, writes:

> Learning to behave according to the rules and regulations of society, called socialization, is a complex process. On a practical level it teaches children 'how things are done.' In the process, socialization—through parenting, schooling, social experiences, religious training, and so forth—helps to create a system of beliefs, attitudes, and personal standards that determine how we interact with the world around us. (1993, 75)

Proper socialization seems to be the missing element suggested by Kevin Brown in reference to the weak development of the superego, or conscience. Taking these concepts over into the area of theology, the apostle Paul writes, “And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). Paul instructs the reader to utilize the Word of God and structure his thinking accordingly. Hare continues:

> Socialization also contributes to the formation of what most people call their conscience, the pesky inner voice that helps us to resist temptation and to feel guilty when we don’t. Together, this inner voice and internalized norms and rules of society act as an ‘inner policeman,’ regulating our behavior even in the absence of the many external controls, such as laws, our perception of what others expect of us, and real-life policeman. It’s no overstatement to say that our internal controls make society work. (1993, 75)

Once some of the criminals who were a part of this study were introduced to the gospel of Jesus Christ, they experienced a conviction in their conscience for having fallen short of God’s intended moral standard. There was a distinct recognition that they were sinners or law breakers and would be held accountable by the eternal Judge of Heaven and Earth. Having also seen the free gift of salvation through faith in Jesus’ finished work on the cross, many responded to the offer and embraced Jesus as their savior. They confessed Him as Lord of their life and placed their faith in Him that God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 10:9–10). Psychologist Shadd Maruna and associates state, “For prisoners, religious conversion can be seen as an adaptive mechanism that helped to resolve psychological conflict, resolve ‘emotional ambivalence,’ and unify a previously divided self” (Maruna, Wilson, and Curran 2006, 174) This action may occur dramatically, or it may occur over a period of time. Director of Behavioral Medicine at Floyd Medical Center, J. LeBron McBride, recognizes how people transition from their

old way of thinking and doing things to the correct way. He comments, “Some belief transitions are dramatic and are described well by the word conversion. A person may be radically transformed and the evidence is readily seen by all. Other belief transitions are more subtle and may occur as a gradual process over many years” (1988, 71).

Having experienced this paradigm shift and transfer of loyalties, the criminal expresses faith in Christ and experiences the new birth. Early on in His ministry Jesus commands, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). The word repent comes from the Greek word *metanoeo.* It means, “to think differently” (Strongs 2012, 47). Therefore, as the gospel is delivered to the prisoners, it is demanding that they turn to God and think differently. There is also a power resident within the message of faith not only to enable the sinner to respond and come out of his present situation but also to behave differently (Acts 26:20). Paul writes, “The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). Christian author and speaker John Stott concisely captures this argument with the following words, “Conversion involves a twofold turn, a turn from idols and from sin on the one hand, and a turn to the living God and the Savior or Shepherd of souls on the other. The ‘turn away’ the New Testament calls repentance; the ‘turn toward’ the New Testament calls faith. So repentance plus faith equals conversion, and no man dare say he is converted who has not repented as well” (1995, 199).

After their conversion experience, Womack, Robin, West, Smith and many others in Angola acted on Romans 12:1-2 and were able to jettison their criminal thinking patterns and restructure their framework of thinking with a Christian worldview complete with a healthy set of biblical ethics. These men literally acted on this passage, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given unto me, I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with a sober judgment” (Rom. 12:1–2). Instead of carrying around a huge ego and being hypersensitive, these men have been able to take into account a reasonable view of themselves and recondition their thinking to respond differently to life’s challenges. Now, they practice the words of Peter, “Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:6).

Tufts University criminology professor John E. Conklin recognizes, as offenders age, they experience two types of change, orientational change and interpersonal change. These are characteristic of healthy citizens. Conklin suggests four elements are involved in orientational change:

> 1. A new perspective on the self. Offenders become more critical of their past behavior and more detached in evaluating how they behaved when younger. 2. A growing awareness of time. Offenders see time as a diminishing resource, viewing life in terms of number of years they have left rather than in terms of how many years they have been alive. Offenders begin to plan how to use the rest of their lives. Sometimes change is related to fear of dying in prison. 3. Changing aspirations and goals. Offenders reduce their expectation of material well-being and assign greater priority to good relationships with others, peaceful life, and a legitimate job. 4. Offenders come to fear injury or death to a great degree and become more wary of betrayal by crime partners. They feel they have slowed

> down relative to other offenders and inmates and must be careful of being victimized by them. Offenders also grow weary of fighting the more powerful criminal justice system. (2010, 270)

Interpersonal change is also important in connection to ceasing from criminal behavior. Interpersonal relations involve two elements: "1. Ties to another person. Offenders seek mutually satisfying relationships with members of the opposite sex or with members of their family. 2. Ties to a line of activity. This typically involves finding a satisfying job, which provides direct rewards to the offenders and reinforces their noncriminal identity. A job occupies their time, leaving little time for criminal activity" (270).

Clinical Psychologist and researcher Shadd Maruna did a study of desistance from crime with inmates who were incarcerated in England. Maruna states that a common thread among the prisoners he interviewed for his study is, "Most insisted that they have not changed at all. They were good people 'all along' (they simply behaved badly for a decade or so)" (2001, 167). This finding is in stark contrast to the study Baylor University did of Angola while utilizing 2,400 survey responses from inmates along with 100 life-history interviews of inmates. "Participants in our project at Angola—adult male converts to Christianity—tend to see their past selves quite negatively, as 'sinner' with a negative 'core self' that has been transformed" (Hallet, Hays, Johnson, Jang, and Duwe 2016, 158).

When an inmate recognizes he has sinned before God and takes responsibility for his actions, this is the first step toward the new birth experience and truly changing his behavior. Clinical Psychologist and criminal expert, Stanton E. Samenow comments, "The criminal's view of himself as a decent person constitutes a major barrier to change" (2014, xiv). Once the criminal acknowledges he is a sinner and turns to the Lord in

repentance, he can become a born-again believer with a new self-image. First Corinthians 5:17 reveals, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (1 Cor. 5:17). Pastor and author, Tony Evans explains this new creation with these words, “Salvation not only brings such a complete change that we are born again spiritually and raised from the dead, but we are completely remade people. It’s as if God started the process of our creation all over again and re-created us into such totally different people that all things we knew or cared about before are gone, everything is new” (2002, 97). Having been re-created and given a new self-image, the following stories will illustrate Conklin’s orientational and interpersonal change.

Smith related a story of walking into Angola’s old Education building before a fire destroyed it. He noticed a sign on the wall that read, “Instead of serving time, let time serve you. Get an education” (Inmate Subject Eight 2017, Interview). This sign was not only an inspiration to pursue an education while incarcerated, but the sign also provoked him to consider time and how much of his life was left. He was distraught over the time he had wasted on criminal and immoral pursuits. Now that he was a child of God through the new birth, he had a purpose to fulfill. More importantly, he could not waste what time he had left in this world. Jeremiah reads, “For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome” (Jer. 29:11 The Amplified Bible, [AMP]).

West had a combination of experiences that caused him to realize that he had no vocational skills in order to secure a job if he were ever released. First, he attended a class where a Christian inmate instructed him concerning how to fill out a job resume. Later, he

prayed over Troy West to have an opportunity to serve others. Having faith in God, he decided to join the H.V.A.C. school and work toward a future he desired even though he had no chance of being released. He was no longer interested in getting into trouble, so he set his new goal to become an H.V.A.C. technician. He said, "Working toward these multiple certifications has given me a reason to jump out of the bed and face the day. I'm motivated to dive into my books each day and make good grades. Having that first certification handed to me was better than a drug induced high. I did that all on my own. I achieved something that no one else had done in my family" (Subject Four 2017, Interview).

Womack, after getting in trouble for all those years, finally became tired of his immoral lifestyle. While talking to a mutual acquaintance, he realized the path he was traveling was leading to nowhere. He also realized if he continued to display the destructive behavior that had him constantly moving throughout the prison, he may be killed. The drugs were definitely a source that had the potential to kill him or get him into a situation that could lead to his murder. In that burned out state, Womack turned his heart over to Jesus and responded to His invitation. Jesus states, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). He made a decision to put down the drugs and stop rebelling against those in authority. When this researcher asked how he changed his attitude toward those in authority, he said, "Romans 13:1 did it. [Womack quotes it directly from memory] 'Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God'" (Inmate Subject Five 2017, Interview).

Smith relayed a testimony of how he was focused on serving the Lord and fulfilling the purpose for which God saved him when a letter from an old friend arrived one evening. A girl he knew from high school had met some of his family while visiting a friend of hers. Smith's name surfaced during the conversation, and she asked for his information. She planned to write him. Many months have passed since the first letter arrived. She often comes to visit and spend time with him. Both have professed love for each other. If Smith ever gets the chance to be released, he plans to marry her. He comments, "Prior to meeting Jesus, I wouldn't have been responsible or considerate in this relationship. It would have been all about me and getting my needs met. I didn't know how to treat a lady before giving my heart to the Lord. Now I do" (Inmate Subject Eight 2017, Interview). When this researcher asked him how he is supposed to treat a lady, he answered by quoting Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word" (Eph. 5:25).

Johnny Robin accepted the role of pastor over one of the inmate led Christian services in Angola, which tied him to the positive social structure of the prison. This role eventually would afford him the opportunity to travel outside the prison and sing at churches and functions the warden wanted him to attend. This commitment as pastor had many responsibilities that came along with it. He explained, "I woke up one day and realized there were quite a few fellas who were counting on me to keep it together and make sure I was a proper example. The call to pastor gave me a reason to continue

pressing on. No matter how much the storms of life blew against me and knocked me down, I had a reason to get up and keep going on" (Inmate Subject Six 2017, Interview).

Robin told the story of when prior to the cultural change in the penitentiary a homosexual slave wanted to give his life over to the Lord and become a Christian; however, the owner did not like the stigma that might go along with his slave leaving him. Once Robin found out, the church took up an offering to buy the guy from his old man. The owner liked the idea. He could allow the man to go free without appearing weak, and he would be financially compensated. Robin and the slave owner shook hands on the deal, and the church purchased the man's freedom. Robin winked at this researcher and said, "What else is a prison preacher gonna use church tithes for?" (Inmate Subject Six 2017, Interview). Hallett and associates recognize, "Involvement in religious practices help many learn pro-social behavior (i.e., actions that emphasize concern for other's welfare). These pro-social skills may instill a greater sense of empathy toward others and thus lessen the likelihood of committing acts that harm others" (2016, 205).

In contrast, when Chester Schneider was interviewed by this researcher, he confessed, "Every time I got in trouble it was tied to my addictions, my drug binges. If I was sober and clean, I sailed through life" (Inmate Subject Nine 2017, Interview). In conversation, criminals often shift the blame for their behavior to outside substances or situations beyond their control. There are probably as many excuses for criminal behavior as there are criminals in this world. For example, Dan White, a city supervisor in San Francisco, brought a gun into City hall and killed the mayor and a gay leader in the city. He claimed when he was depressed he ate junk food. As a result of the snack cakes,

colas, and chocolates, he experienced a diminished capacity to function properly. The jury gave credence to the argument and reduced the charge to manslaughter. White did a total of five years for the offense and created a new defense called, “The Twinkie defense” (Alder, Mueller, and Laufer 2013, 80).

This form of blame shifting goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden in the book of Genesis. The Lord placed Adam and Eve in the garden with every herb bearing seed and fruit bearing tree, but He gave one law to obey. He forbade them from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When they both broke that law and God confronted them, they immediately shifted the blame to something other than themselves. In response to God’s questioning, Adam said, “The woman that you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (Gen. 3:12). When Eve answered, she said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Gen. 3:13). Both the man and woman failed to admit that they made a free-will decision to disobey God’s command. Nothing was to be blamed outside of their own bad decision to disobey the Lord. This pattern is characteristic of unchanged criminals.

When this researcher questioned Chester Schneider about one of his criminal charges, he had this to say, “It wasn’t my fault. I was a victim of circumstances” (Inmate Subject Nine 2017, Interview). He was drinking at a bar, and a fellow patron bumped into him. As a result of them passing a few words, the encounter escalated into a barroom brawl. According to Schneider, he used a pool stick to strike a couple of guys. As a result, he was charged with assault. On another occasion, this researcher spoke with an inmate about having committed a drive-by shooting that injured several bystanders. He

said, “My boys were counting on me. I live with them in the hood. We see each other every day. What was I supposed to do?” (Inmate Subject Ten 2017, Interview). Another inmate said he discovered his wife was cheating on him, so he shot and killed her. His reasoning was, “Anybody would have done the same thing in my position. I did what I had to do considering the situation” (Inmate Subject One 2014, Interview). While talking to Schneider again, he confessed to a breaking and entering offense that he was never suspected for committing, “No one was hurt. Besides, they had insurance, so who’s tripping. What’s the big deal, really?” (Inmate Subject Nine 2017, Interview). Jason Alonzo was sentenced to forty years for a purse snatching charge. When he spoke of the crime, this researcher had to guard his emotions from being overwhelmed by sympathetic feelings and overlooking a significant problem. Forty years seems a bit harsh to give a cocaine addict for grabbing a lady’s purse and running off with it to purchase drugs. However, Alonzo said, “I bet the judge and the jury have done much worse than what I was arrested for” (Alonzo 2017, Interview).

The field of criminology contains many theories that aid the criminal in denying the responsibility for his actions and shifting the blame to something else. Some believe “the decriminalization of many offenses and enhancement of social programs designed to combat the root causes of crime, including poverty, low education levels, a general lack of skills, and inherent or active discrimination, will result in reduced incidences of crime in the future, making high rates of imprisonment unnecessary” (Schmalleger 2014, 36). However, there are thousands upon thousands of people who are poor in the United States, but they do not commit crimes (Wilson 1975). There are also thousands upon

thousands of people who have little education and lack vocational skills, but they do not commit crimes (Wilson 1975). When dealing with discrimination, there are more freedoms and opportunities that minorities have today, especially African Americans, compared to the period before the Civil rights movement. Considerably less discrimination occurs today than did prior to the Civil rights movement, but there is more crime than there was then. Obviously, discrimination cannot be the key element to crime because when discrimination was public policy there was considerably less crime (Schmalleger 2014, 12–13).

The influence of Secular Humanism on criminology can be recognized when people replace objectivity of the law and truth with relativism and repeat the argument that what is lawful and unlawful for you is not lawful for me. For example, the *Culture Conflict* theory suggests, "The root cause of criminality can be found in a clash of values between differently socialized groups over what is acceptable and proper behavior" (Schmalleger 2014, 93). In other words, since there is no absolute truth, which law should be derived from, one culture cannot tell another culture what is true, or in this case, what is legal. What is legal and good for one group may not be legal and good for another group. Schmalleger points out, "Because criminal laws are based on middle-class values, the social phenomenon called crime occurs when middle-class values are at odds with inner-city or lower-class norms" (2014, 93). One can see the influence of Secular Humanism on this theory, and how closely aligned it is with Marxist criminology. Marxist criminology holds, "The cause of crime can be found in social conditions that

empower the wealthy and the politically well-organized but disenfranchise those who are less fortunate" (Schmalleger 2014, 132).

The obvious shift in American thinking from a Christian worldview to a Secular Humanist worldview has radically changed the culture of the United States. Although most Americans probably would not confess to being Secular Humanists, their thinking has been largely conditioned by this philosophy. "One recent study found that 83 percent of Americans believe that man is basically good" (Kennedy and Newcombe 2005, 205). This belief is naturally reflected in prison systems as well. Psychologist Shadd Maruna completed a study for the American Psychological Association where he interacted with inmates who claimed to have ceased from their criminal activity. He reported, "Although desisting interviewees did admit that many of the things they had done in the past were 'stupid mistakes,' they frequently blame this behavior on circumstances, their social situation, and other factors such as addiction and delinquent friends. Overall, they present themselves as good people 'deep down' who were thrust into bad behavior" (2005, 12). This inaccurate view of themselves is typical of the inmates this researcher has interviewed whose thinking patterns and lifestyles consistently demonstrate criminal behavior.

American sociologist Robert Merton promotes the theory of "Anomie." "His anomie theory emphasizes the importance of two elements in any society; culture aspiration, or goals that people believe are worth striving for, and institutionalized means or accepted ways to attain the desired ends. If a society is to be stable, these two elements must be reasonably well integrated." Adler, Mueller, and Laufer further relate, "There should be means for individuals to reach the goals that are important to them. Disparity

between goals and means fosters frustration, which leads to strain" (2013, 106). Later, Adler and associates conclude, "Merton thus assumes that humans do not have a natural tendency to engage in offending behavior, but that it is strain that causes them" (2013, 163). Once more, men are perfectly good and law abiding, but an outside force, or *strain*, causes them to make bad choices. Chuck Colson remarks, "Modern liberalism regards crime as the outcome of impersonal forces in society and therefore relocates responsibility outside the criminal" (2001, 53).

Clinical psychologist Stanton E. Samenow has studied criminal behavior for over forty years. When he first started in 1970, he subscribed to the prevailing conventional wisdom about criminality that regarded the offender as a victim of forces over which he had little or no control. The typical excuses or causes for criminal behavior were poverty, faulty parenting skills, peer pressure, violence in the media, and various types of mental illness. However, after years of research with psychiatrist Sam Yochelson, Samenow's paradigm was radically shifted by the evidence. He writes:

> None of the widely accepted causes of crime withstood scrutiny. In addition, the offenders with whom we were working exploited our research for causes to offer even more excuses for their crimes. Referring to many months of psychiatric treatment, one man said to Dr. Yochelson in a moment of rare candor, 'Doctor, if I didn't have enough excuses for crime before psychiatry, I now have more than enough after all these years.' Once we extricated ourselves from miasma of searching for 'cause' of criminal behavior, we were able to develop a detailed understanding of how criminals think in all aspects of life, and to develop a process to help some of them change. Behavior is a product of thinking, and so it is incumbent upon anyone formulating policy or working with offenders to understand how criminals think. (2014, xii)

In somewhat of a contrast to Samenow, Travis Hirschi and Michael Gottfredson purported a model of personal and social control designed to explain an individual's

propensity to commit crime. Their research covered violent crimes to white collar crimes. Their position assumes that offenders have far less control over their behavior and desires as Samenow believes. “When the need for momentary pleasure and immediate gratification outweighs long-term interests, crime occurs . . . . What leads to poor self-control? Inadequate socialization and poor child-rearing practices, coupled with poor attachment, increase the probability of impulsive and uncontrolled acts” (Adler, Mueller, and Laufer 2013, 170). Anyone will commit crime and delinquency, Hirschi argues, unless he is bonded to society in four ways: 1. Connected to family, peers, and school. 2. Dedicated to achieving conventional goals. 3. Participation in conventional activities. 4. Belief in the legitimacy of societies laws and norms (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). The underlying issue here is that people are inherently criminal, in other words, sinful. Apart from the restraining forces that God has placed on this earth, man’s depraved nature will show itself in varying degrees.

Recognizing Samenow and Gottfredson and Hirschi’s findings along with extensive interviews with inmates, this researcher has concluded that men are at different positions along the criminal pendulum. All men are sinners, but many are not as sinful as they could be. Sometimes that sin will translate into a criminal offense within the right setting. Whether it is the guy who is late for work and reasons in his mind that he can break the speed limit because keeping his job and providing for his family is important, or the man who walks into a bank with a gun and robs the establishment. However, criminal behavior can be modified. Samenow points out, “Behavior is a product of thinking. The key to habilitation is to help the offender change his thinking” (2014, 290).

In connection to Hirschi's and Samenow's suggestions, the prisoners in this Angola study were called by the gospel out of their criminal thought patterns to exhibit a life of discipleship and service toward their fellow man. The outworking of this call fulfills Hirschi's four points and Samenow's demand to think differently in a unique way through the prison church. The relational bonds forged in the church setting create a surrogate family with ties stronger in some cases than the blood ties to family in society. Within this group, discipleship occurs that is consistent with interaction over information, similar to a classroom setting. From within this healthy structure, inmates develop ideas to become better fathers and husbands, skilled laborers, educated ministers, and productive citizens. The prison offers vocational, educational, and civic programs to facilitate these desires. Church discipleship fuels the growth and development of these endeavors while instilling a healthy respect for the law and a moral framework for thinking in order for the aspirations to one day become a reality that can be maintained. Criminologists Byron R. Johnson and Sung Joon Jang recognize the powerful effect religious participation has on limiting criminal behavior. They write:

> Specifically, religious individuals are less likely to commit crime than their less religious counterparts because they are more likely to: (1) fear supernatural sanctions as well as temporal criminal punishments and feel shame and embarrassment associated with deviance; (2) be bonded to conventional society in terms of attachment, commitment, involvement, and beliefs; (3) exercise high self-control attributable to effective child rearing by their parents likely to be also religious; (4) have frequent and intimate associations with peers who reinforce conventional definitions and behaviors and become a model for imitation relative to those who do not; and (5) cope with life's strains or stressors and their resultant negative emotions in a legitimate, non-deviant manner. Thus, individual religiosity is expected to be negatively associated with crime. (2012, 122)

Once these Angola inmates experience authentic regeneration, an evident transformation begins to take place in their lives. They form community through healthy relationships with each other. Out of these relationships, a church body is created. The results of church growth in prison can be seen in the quality of the disciples along with the quantity of disciples. The chaotic environment of prison life was transformed by the inmates experiencing the new birth and discipleship because inmates largely contribute to the environment. If they change, the environment changes. Author and teacher, Christian Schwarz reveals something important to the success of building a church community in prison. “Goals can only motivate people when they touch on areas which they can personally influence” (2011, 44). There is very little prisoners can physically do; however, they can serve the guy next to them in some expression of Christian love. Schwarz suggests, “To become more loving toward other home group members; to cordially welcome guests at our worship service; to invite unchurched acquaintances over for coffee; to commit oneself to pray at a certain time each day—these are all attainable goals which members can personally influence” (2011, 45). In addition, these acts of service are measurable goals that produce results inside Angola. Hallet and associates point out, “Angola is the only prison in America allowing full operation of inmate-run congregations and the only prison in America operating its own on-site authentic prison seminary—matriculating its graduates into functioning churches” (2016, 26).

In reference to ceasing from criminal activity, Criminologist Fergus McNeil and colleagues comment, “People do not simply desist, they desist into something” (Hallet and associates 2016, 76). When Jesus commanded prisoners to think differently, He also

summoned them to pick up their cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). He modeled a life of sacrifice and service, which would eventually prepare the disciples for a greater mission. In order to fulfill the responsibility, Jesus states, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:19–20). When this commission was presented to the inmate population, it acted as a catalyst in the minds of some of the Angola prisoners creating meaning and purpose for their lives. Maruna and colleagues recognize five notable achievements of religious faith for long-term inmates that are evident in Angola: “1. Creates a new social identity to replace the label of prisoner or criminal 2. Imbues the experience of imprisonment with purpose and meaning. 3. Empowers the largely powerless prisoner by turning him into an agent of God 4. Provides the prisoner with a language and framework for forgiveness 5. Allows a sense of control over an unknown future” (Maruna, Wilson, and Curron 2006, 174) The Great Commission is reflected in these points illustrated by Maruna and colleagues as the church growth movement spread across the prison.

Church consultant Norman Shawchuck and Professor of Church Leadership at Southern California College, Roger Heuser, created a *Systems Approach Model to Management* consisting of eight components that illustrates the strength and effectiveness of the prison church in its attempt to transform inmates. The *Systems Approach Model to Management*, which demonstrates the structure and inner and outer workings of the prison church, suggests that an organization can be studied as a whole, considering the

interrelationships of its parts as well as the relationship between the organization and its environment. “An organizational system is a set of coordinated components working together to accomplish an overall objective that is set within a sufficient boundary to distinguish it from its environment” (1996, 45). This model reflects the dynamics of Angola’s prison church.

The first major issue connected to the prison church in reference to this model is the environment. Originally, the prison environment in Angola was a toxic mix among inmates with various issues: racist attitudes, illiteracy, poverty, and open hostility toward God. Occasionally, there were harsh, inflexible, punitive guards who at times took out their personal frustration with life on the inmates. Within this quagmire of prison life, the prison church groups brought and continue to bring regeneration and healing by reproducing after their kind. “The congregation’s environment is comprised of other systems (political, economic, social, educational, religious), known or unknown, desired or undesired, which exert influence upon the congregation and its ministries. The environment also includes those systems upon which the congregation wishes to influence” (47).

The first component of the *Systems Approach Model to Management* is input. “The input system is comprised of the programs, ministries, and other efforts that the congregation puts together in order to import from the environment the resources it needs in order to achieve its mission and to survive. The inputs include such things as people, money, new leadership, and technology” (47). In prison, inmates are the greatest resource in reaching other prisoners for Christ. The reality is three meals will be served each day, the lights will come on, and a bed is provided. The physical needs are not a pressing

issue. The greatest inroad to a prisoner's heart is someone who effectively expresses empathy toward his pain and communicates the gospel in terms he can understand. In this regard, the men of Angola who have been born again are tremendous input agents. "Without sufficient inputs from the environment, the congregation experiences entropy; it deteriorates, runs down, and eventually dies" (47).

Next, the boundary region of the model is comprised of two parts: the prison congregation's physical boundaries and its sentient boundaries. "The boundary region serves as a filter to let into the congregation that which the congregation wants to let in from the environment, and to keep out that which the congregation wants to keep out, whether consciously or unconsciously. The boundary filter also serves to keep inside that which the congregation wishes to keep from exiting back into the environment" (48). The physical boundary of the prison church is the state appointed chapel; however, the small groups extend the influence of the church into the housing locations and prison yards. The sentient boundaries include years of racism and political oppression toward African Americans. This prejudice hostility is now reversed toward what many black prisoners consider white society. Although these prisoners have been free to live as they choose, some suggest their culture and lack of family structure kept them from obtaining a higher standard of living (Focus Group Four 2017). In contrast, the culture of forgiveness and acceptance has been established among the Christians inside Angola. These inclusive attitudes among these inmates are infectious, capitalizing on men's desires to be accepted and belong to something (Bozeman 2007, 33). Welcoming each other with open arms keeps the racism and division out of the church setting.

"The fundamental purpose of the transforming system is to convert the raw materials taken from the environment into energy, which the congregation needs to survive and to carry out its mission. If the congregation produces energy for outreach, then it can make an important difference in its environment" (Shawchuck and Heuser 1996, 49). Translating this into prison church terms, when a prisoner has been born again and leaves his immoral life and place in the prison culture, this action speaks volumes throughout the prison system. It generates an excitement and curiosity that can translate into more evangelism and growth throughout the prison. Inmates want to know what happened. This component connects easily to the congregation's mission.

"The missional component of the transforming system is the congregation's understanding of its purpose and reason for being. This component includes the congregation's theological beliefs and values that give the congregation its sense of 'call' to be God's people in the community and in the world" (Shawchuck and Heuser 1996, 49). The character of the system and the reason for its existence are greatly influenced by the church's mission and environment. For example, during hurricane Katrina in 2005, many families of the inmates from New Orleans, Louisiana, were lost in the chaos or relocated to another state. Plans were made to capitalize on this environmental factor and serve the needs of the prison population who were from that area. As a result, the church members connected with those prisoners and offered an empathic ear to listen to their pain. Evangelistic plans were employed to win them to the Lord and consolidate them into the church.

"The spirituality and vision component of the transforming process includes the programs, covenants, and disciplines by which the congregation seeks to order its life in a continual awareness of the presence of God in the congregation's affairs" (Shawchuck and Heuser 1996, 49). Every prisoner who joins a small group is looked upon as though he were a leader. The discipleship programs attempt to shape him into a Christlike figure who will reach out to others to duplicate the process. The structure and order of the groups are intended to multiply as evangelism takes place across the prison. As men come together each week in these groups, their gifts are employed to minister to each other and encourage heartfelt service toward God. A Bible study each week featuring a video series or paperback curriculum is offered to further the growth and development of the men. Enthusiasm and passion spread from prisoner to prisoner as each believer lives out his faith.

"The organizational component of the transforming system comprises the various combinations of people, properties, finances, by-laws, and policies that the congregation puts together in order to achieve its mission" (Shawchuck and Heuser 1996, 50). The vision is expressed through the mission and the mission works itself out through the organizational design. This design is simple and meager in prison; however, the greatest resource the prison church has is its people. One inmate pastor said, "When I look through the bars into free society, I see churches with huge reservoirs of financial resources, but they don't seem to be affecting their communities in a positive way. The education levels in the black communities are low, illegal drugs are rampant, and political strife is polarizing people" (Inmate Subject Six 2017, Interview). In contrast, the prison

small group model is tearing down racial barriers, educating men, and freeing them from destructive behaviors through fellowship and developing healthy relationships with Christian prisoners.

"The relational component of the transforming system includes the quality of human relationships within the congregation and morals of the people. To what extent do people live together in covenant community? To what degree do persons share in other's lives" (Shawchuck and Heuser 1996, 51)? Perhaps the confined situation of prison forces men to face this issue and address it. However, the observation is the gospel works. Christian fellowship answers the deep longings of people's hearts for community. Senior Professor of Social Work at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Jeanine Bozeman, writes, "As human beings we have a basic need for interpersonal relationships. God created us with relationships in mind" (Bozeman 2007, 33). This Christian interaction promotes mental and spiritual health and propels individuals toward accomplishing something significant for God.

"Outputs are the influences and resources that the congregation wants to put out into its environment—in order to carry out its mission and to make society more reflective of the congregation's own values" (Shawchuck and Heuser 1996, 51) As the Christian influence spreads in prison through its greatest achievement, healthy relationships, the value system in a prison begins to change. For example, once it was not unusual for a prisoner to use illegal drugs in front of other prisoners, regardless of who saw the action. Homosexuality was also practiced openly. When the Christian influence shifts toward the majority of prisoners, these acts are no longer flaunted openly by

devious prisoners, but are practiced behind closed doors without prying eyes. There is a shame factor and a sense of weakness tied to these two practices, and they are no longer celebrated among inmates. When men live out their faith and make responsible choices, this action is greater than any advertisement the church could hang on the wall. To use spiritual terminology shared among inmates, “As the men’s light began to shine in the prison, the darkness began to flee” (Inmate Subject Three 2017, Interview).

Shawchuck and Heuser suggests not all the congregation’s outputs stay in the environment. These outputs are fed back into the system and become inputs into the congregation. “Two very different types of feedback are generated by the congregation through the mere fact that it exists and is operating. One type of feedback information is statistical and numerative. . . . The other type of feedback is highly fluid and is expressed as amplifying or restricting process” (Shawchuck and Heuser 1996, 52). Obviously, the numerical increase in prisoners professing faith in Christ is part of the proof of the success of the prison church. The increased participation in main sanctuary service and the increased number of small groups are positive feedback testifying to the effective outreach and fellowship. As mentioned above, the restraining presence of moral inmates restricts the practice of immorality among those who are not professing faith in Christ. Those immoral acts are no longer celebrated but outwardly shamed and relegated to closets. This restraining presence is proof of unique feedback.

In the previous model, there is a significant cultural hurdle one must cross to effectively employ the prison church, which leads to transformed lives. The reality of this problem cannot be overstressed; therefore, the following information will deal with the

distrust shared among inmates toward each other. Due to the dangerous environment of prison, the men feel uncomfortable at first moving toward small group settings for cooperative learning and discipleship. However, by tactfully establishing ground rules of respect and confidentiality, the inmate pastor leads them into a rich group experience with fellowship, growth, and development. Author and professor Raymond Wlodkowski writes, "People generally believe they are included in a group when they feel respected by and connected to the group" (2004, 146). Once this atmosphere of respect and connection has been established, the inmates invest their efforts and develop a sense of ownership of the group and work toward the overall success of the endeavor. Wlodkowski concludes, "With a sense of community they can find security, identity, and shared values. Such qualities of connection evoke intrinsic motivation among adults because their social needs are met and they can openly reveal their resources and strengths" (147).

The inmate led church highlights the transformation of the prisoner from an ego-driven selfish criminal to a humble servant giving his time, energy, and resources for the sake of others. Wlodkowski suggests, "People in the groups care about each other as they pursue their joint goal. For people to connect they need opportunities to find common ground and to support one another" (147). Professors Lawrence Richards and Gary Bredfeldt offer this comment that captures the essence of this idea, "By tapping into the experience of a group, teachers can make abstract concepts concrete and can involve adults actively in the learning process" (2004, 247). At this point, the inmates are heavily invested emotionally and spiritually, which translates into a more stable community outside the group setting because in the prison culture the groups are looked upon affectionately as

newly adopted families. Once these relational bonds are established, they have tremendous strength, even more so than the relational bonds they experienced in society.

These Christian inmates who were profiled in this paper represent hundreds of men this researcher interviewed over a twenty-two year period. There is a tremendous overlap in their stories. These men's conversion experiences represent sections of the inmate population who have been transformed into model inmates. Many more conversion testimonies exist similar to the ones mentioned earlier, but space and time will not allow this researcher to include them in this work. Some stories may never be told; however the Angola church believes heaven has them recorded.

In closing, Jesus states, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:16–20). The evidence gathered from the lives of those who are incarcerated in the penitentiary speaks loudly of the change that has occurred in the hearts and lives of many of the men. In contrast, the lives of those who have not been changed speak loudly, too. The politicians and law enforcement officers often said they did not want to release a violent offender. Ironically, none of the Christian inmates who were interviewed wanted a violent man to be released either. They seemed to be as much concerned about society as any elected official. Although some inmates committed a violent act, since their

conversion, they are by no means violent people today, nor have they been violent for decades since their crimes.

Many prisoners spend time on their knees praying for God to move on the communities in order to bring peace and stop the stealing, raping, and killing. If someone was to look carefully at the lives of these men, those who are truly transformed are distinguished from those who are not changed. The eventual release of these changed men is in the best interest of society both socially and economically. “A good man out of the treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit” (Matt. 12:33). The Angola inmates are clearly known by their fruit.

The churches and Bible studies across the prison have created a faith-filled network that promotes ethical behavior as well as emphasizes concern for the welfare of others. The experience in the faith community contributes to the attainment of positive attributes that give those who participate an even greater sense of empathy toward their fellow man, which in turn makes them less likely to commit crimes against others. This research validates the claim that commitment to Jesus can help people to be resilient in obeying the law even when faced with poverty, low education levels, a general lack of skills, and discrimination. In Louisiana, prisoners understand those issues intimately. In answer to antisocial behavior, the inmate led churches have created a sub-culture in Angola that provides instruction and teaching concerning the Christian worldview that, when internalized, helps individuals make socially acceptable choices.

The transformation of the inmates in mindset and actions is very apparent in the institution. Discipline issues are minimal and any study done related to recidivism levels demonstrates that the successful readjustment to the community is a common result. The results of the involvement of the inmates in Christian education, church services, Bible studies, and other activities are an excellent model that can be applied across American correctional systems. When it can be shown that increased sentences do not deter crime, then there must be an available model that will accomplish the task of removing criminality from the community and the lives of men and women in places like Angola. The model of Christian education and involvement in discipleship and other programing being used at the Louisiana State Penitentiary is successful and should be applied as an alternative to simply being “tough-on-crime.”

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Questions Resolved

The original questions postulated early in the study were validated throughout this research project. Personal testimonies satisfied each speculation and data from professionals were included to substantiate conclusions. The information concluded below helps tie this paper tightly together as a unified body of work.

First Question

The first question asks if inmates may have experienced abuse and neglect at an early age that promoted antisocial behavior. This idea does not excuse the person from personal responsibility, but the issue recognizes the internal pressures that may result from abuse or neglect. This issue was clearly seen in the interview processes when prisoners would confess disrespect or hatred toward their fathers. The more abusive the interviewee's father was toward him, the more violent the circumstances of his crime. Simply stated, there was a noticeable correlation between the nature of their crimes and the utter hatred of their fathers. The more intense the abuse, the more brutal and graphic their crimes.

For example, this researcher talked with a male inmate who was charged with the murder of his homosexual lover. When interviewing the offender, he confessed, "When I beat that [sic], I lost it. All the rage I stuffed down for fifteen years came pouring out. I exploded like a volcano. It was weird; it felt like I was a spectator to the event. I was

watching myself beat this person to death with a baseball bat without feeling anything but anger. It was sort of like I was numb in a way" (Inmate Subject Twelve 2015, Interview).

Later, this inmate confided that he was raped repeatedly by his father from time he five years old until he left home as a teenager. In order to keep him quiet, so he did not tell anyone of the sexual abuse, his father regularly beat him unmercifully. This inmate was terrified of his father while he was growing up. For years he longed for the acceptance of this man; instead his father called him a sissy girl, and the father treated him likewise. As he came of age, he was confused about his sexual identity. The first male who showed him attention and affirmed him was a practicing homosexual. This relationship opened the door to a sordid world of sexual relationships with hundreds of men.

One day his present homosexual lover made a remark similar to one his father used to torment him that triggered years of suppressed anger. Impulsively, he acted in an animal-like rage without considering the long term effects of his actions. In that moment, this researcher believes, he killed not only his homosexual lover, but he also attempted to kill the memory of his father who abused him all throughout his childhood. When this researcher asked if he would like to receive the free gift of salvation, he replied, "My own father didn't want to have anything to do with me other than abuse me. What makes you think this Heavenly Father wants anything to do with me?" (Interview Subject Twelve 2015, Interview).

In another interview, Neil Smith explained how his father left him and his mother on their own to avoid the responsibility of taking care of them. He confessed to this researcher, "I always assumed it was my fault that my father left my mother. I thought

something was wrong with me" (Inmate Subject Eight 2017, Interview). Considering Smith's mother had to work both night and day to provide for them, he spent lengthy amounts of time alone. His mother tried allowing his grandmother to watch over him, but she was physically abusive toward Smith. Therefore, his mother decided to allow him to stay at home by himself rather than suffer under his grandmother's physical abuse.

Gottfredson and Hirschi point out the necessity of a child being bonded to society through his connection to family, peers, and school in order to avoid delinquency (1990). The breakdown in Smith's family structure was one of the first steps toward his criminal behavior. Although this reality does not excuse him from personal responsibility, those long hours alone provided an opportunity for him to roam the neighborhoods unsupervised and get into trouble. He confessed, "My sense of rejection from my father drove me to join the first peer group who would accept me. Unfortunately, these peers were doing the wrong thing and headed in the wrong direction, but I seemed to fit right in with them. Their acceptance was like medication" (Inmate Subject Eight 2017, Interview). He naturally followed the rest of the order mentioned in Gottfredson and Herschi's argument. Smith was not dedicated to achieving conventional goals, participating in conventional activities, or believing in the legitimacy of societal laws and norms (1990). This pattern lasted until he was eventually incarcerated in the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Second Question

The second question asks if some prisoners were raised in a culture that promoted an illegitimate worldview and a faulty ethical system that predisposed them toward

criminal behavior. America's push toward Secular Humanism with its socialistic government has not empowered people. On the contrary, socialism and humanistic government intervention in the American culture has brought devastating results concerning their attempt to redefine the family. Secular Humanism has attacked the traditional family and encouraged experimentation, including bisexuality, homosexual marriage, open marriages, pederasty, and abortion as a means of birth control. This Secular Humanist attack on the Christian worldview and promotion of immorality has laid the foundation for many of the current crises the country is experiencing, including AIDS, drug abuse, and crime. Noebel comments:

> The family is the glue that holds society together. As the family goes, so goes the society. Examples of the cause and effect role the family plays in society are everywhere: poverty is epidemic among families headed by single women; young men and women between 17 and 24 years old are far more likely to abuse drugs or commit crimes if they come from fatherless homes; legalized abortion has cheapened human life to the point that Americans are no longer shocked by euthanasia and child abuse rates that have risen along with abortion rates. (2001, 346)

Professor Johnny Bley states, "The family is the original classroom" (1999, Lecture). Here is where the lessons of life are truly learned. Before there was a church, the family existed. Reasonably, the church ought to make the nation. Therefore, the family comprises the church and the church makes the nation. If you want to destroy the nation, destroy the family. Minister Evon Horton writes, "The family! It's the cornerstone of society, nations, civilizations, and churches" (2010, 11). Since this reality is the case, obviously the forces of evil would be interested in redefining the family.

If the family is the foundation upon which everything in society rests, then if someone redefines the foundation that everything is resting upon, society will inevitably

fall. If a person were to mathematically redefine the foundation of the Sears Tower, the tower would collapse. Over seventy-two percent of the Louisiana State Penitentiary's prison population has come from broken homes (Fontenot Speech 2014). The inner cities from which most of these prisoners have come are rife with crime, drug abuse, and teen age pregnancies (Focus Group Four, 2017); (Hallett and Johnson under Resurgence of Religion in America's Prisons). These children being born into this crime-infested environment will most likely reciprocate the behavior being modeled in front of them. Professor Clinton Caszatt points out, "They need a loving example of one who is an encouragement to them and says, 'This is how things are done correctly'" (2014, 85).

Third Question

The third question asks if prisoners who accumulated many rule infractions early on in their incarceration later transition to a stable lifestyle that is evident by their disciplinary record. This suggestion was proven in the lives of many who experienced the biblical new birth and renewed their minds to think differently. Prior to their conversion experiences, Womack, Robin, and West and many others were noted by the guards as rule breakers; however, through the new birth and the mind renewal Paul wrote about in Romans 12, these prisoners transitioned from men with rebellious antiauthoritarian mindsets to peaceful men who work toward solving prison problems instead of creating them. For example, instead of taking advantage of prisoners who did not have needed hygiene items or extra food items, through manipulation or extortion, these born again prisoners shared their resources with the less fortunate prisoners. The book of Romans reads, "For rulers are not a

terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval" (13:3).

As noted earlier in the study, a criminal's antisocial thought process nearly guarantees that he will behave in a manner that injures another party. This action will be documented through the disciplinary system set up within a prison. Considering the criminal does not think the rules that apply to everyone else apply to him, he will inevitably get caught violating the rules of the institution. Whereas the born again prisoner will respect the rules because of his conscience, the criminal will move forward deliberately violating prison policy, thereby collecting disciplinary reports along the way, documenting his rebellion toward those in authority and his fellow prisoners. The difference in these two prisoners' lifestyles is easily recognized by their disciplinary record. Paul's words offer further clarification, "For he [those in authority] is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience" (Rom. 13:4–5).

Fourth Question

The fourth question asks if the biblical new birth experience in Christ has promoted inner healing and emotional health among prisoners. Some prisoners shared with this researcher that the pain they carried with them through life due to abuse and rejection was like an inner drive to lash out at the system (the authority structure) or anyone who got in the way of them achieving their desires. Once they were introduced to the gospel message and responded in faith and repentance, the sense was as if that internal drive and pressure were released. As they received the forgiveness of God, they

extended forgiveness toward those who had offended them in the past. Through this decision, they experienced true freedom and inner healing. One interviewee said, “It was [as] if a valve was opened inside me and all the pressure was let out” (Inmate Subject Eight 2017, Interview).

A biblical passage that frequently surfaced in interviews was 2 Corinthians 5:17. Paul writes, “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). This passage communicates to the born again prisoners who were interviewed that a new identity belongs to the believer (Johnson 2011, 99-153); (Maruna, Wilson, and Curron 2006, 174). The memories of their past failures are no longer able to exert a negative influence over them and hinder them spiritually or emotionally. One prisoner confessed, “I found a new identity in Christ. I was able to forgive myself and let my past failures go. The things that happened to me in the past were no longer relevant. I was forgiven by God. Therefore, I forgave those who caused my greatest pain, so I could move forward in life” (Inmate Subject Twelve 2015, Interview).

These prisoners also found a security in their relationship with Jesus that gave them a reassurance of acceptance that they did not receive before with certain family members. One inmate explained that anytime the feelings of rejection would try to “creep back into his life,” he resists them by quoting this Scripture, “He hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6 KJV). This passage gives him security and emotional strength that he is accepted in Jesus. Any feeling contrary to that one is not allowed to dwell in his thoughts. He meticulously practiced good mental health by rejecting negative thoughts

contrary to his identity in Christ. In order to accomplish this responsibility, he acted on another passage from the Bible. “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5 ESV). Therefore, no criminal thought pattern was allowed to remain in his conscious mind that was contrary to his identity in Christ.

Closing Thoughts

This research project has demonstrated how the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ changed the lives of many prisoners at the Louisiana State Penitentiary. In order to change the culture of a prison, you have to change the people who are housed there because prisoners largely contribute to the environment. When the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are clearly presented to inmates, the power resident within that message is able to convict them of their immoral, antisocial lifestyles. Not only are their hearts and minds grieved over their previous lifestyles, but the message also has the ability to empower them to stop committing crime. Through Ezekiel, God promises, “And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people and I will be their God” (Ezk.11: 19, 20, ESV).

As the gospel is preached, a criminal experiences conviction in his conscience for not having lived according to God’s righteous standard. A distinct recognition exists that he is a sinner or law breaker and will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment. When the free gift of salvation is offered along with the forgiveness of sins, he responds to

Jesus' finished work on the cross by embracing Him as Lord and Savior. Salvation becomes a working reality in his life the moment he places his faith in the resurrection and confesses Jesus as Lord (Rom 10:9-10). Having experienced the transfer of allegiance from self-sufficiency to dependence on God, by placing his faith in Jesus, the prisoner experiences regeneration through the new birth. Early in His ministry, Jesus exhorted, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Again, the word repent comes from the Greek word *metanoeo*. The term simply means, "To think differently" (Strongs 2012, 47). Stated again, the gospel message is demanding prisoners turn to the Lord and think differently. This action naturally leads to a change in their behavior as well.

As prisoners willingly receive God's gift of forgiveness, the Spirit of God comes to reside within the believing inmates. The hearts of prisoners are spiritually regenerated and made alive unto God (Eph. 2:5). Now, the prisoners' inward desires are changed, and they have an inclination to apply God's Word to their actions and follow His will for their lives. In writing to believers at Corinth, Paul explains, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? … For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple" (1 Cor. 3:16 ESV). In addition, each believing prisoner has a new identity in Christ that replaces the person he used to be. This new birth or regeneration opens the door for inmates to release their pasts and look and act positively toward the future. Tremendous amounts of emotional healing can take place at this time.

Pastor Richard Foster recognized the powerful long-term effect of *studying* in *Celebration of Discipline*. This Christian discipline radically attacks the criminal's

antisocial thought process and replaces it with a Christian worldview. In reference to this activity, he writes, “They aim at replacing old destructive habits of thought with new life-giving habits” (1998, 62). For example, Paul writes, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28 KJV). In this passage, the Word of God reshapes the criminal’s mind and gives him a new way of expressing himself by helping others instead of hurting them. Foster writes, “In the devotional reading of Scripture a high priority is placed upon application” (1998, 69). Therefore, the practice of Christian mind renewal is about changing believers’ beliefs as well as their behavior, because men’s behavior is product of what they believe.

The Christian discipline of *submission* strikes a powerful blow to the core of a criminal’s mindset and deals with his lack of empathy. Foster recognizes, “In submission we are at last free to value other people. Their dreams and plans become important to us.... We rejoice in their successes. We feel genuine sorrow in their failures” (1998, 112). This discipline humanizes the criminal and allows him to feel for his fellow man. He is free to give up demanding his own way for the sake of blessing others. This discipline leads naturally into the act of Christian *service*. Foster writes, “Nothing disciplines the inordinate desires of the flesh like service, and nothing transforms the desires of the flesh like serving in hiddenness” (1998, 130). This discipline crucifies the prideful nature of a criminal. Author John Ortberg recognizes, “At the deepest level, pride is the choice to exclude both God and other people from their rightful place in our hearts” (2002, 110).

Acting in service towards others destroys pride and counters the arrogant, selfish expression of the lawbreaker's life.

The discipleship that is offered through Angola's inmate-led churches and inmate-led faith-based programs assists prisoners in developing their new identities in Christ. Discipleship also transforms prisoners into agents of God, or ministers of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). As ministers of reconciliation, prisoners serve others and attempt to fulfill the Great Commission by evangelizing the prison (Mat. 18:19). These pro-social goals make Christian prisoners an asset to any prison or community. Paul writes, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:17–18, KJV).

Instead of looking at themselves through their past criminal actions, prisoners look to the pages of Scripture to develop their new self-images. Since their identities have been changed through faith in Christ Jesus, the Word of God becomes their final authority concerning who they actually are. The Word of God also becomes their point of reference when making ethical decisions. The Christian worldview reshapes their thinking and daily lifestyles. The Scriptures gives their lives purpose and meaning even in the Louisiana State Penitentiary. The inmate-led churches and Bible studies reinforce this self-image and holds believers accountable to one another as healthy relationships are established through the faith-based community.

Two Suggestions for Further Research

1. Criminologist Michael Hallett had a conversation with Jimmy Dukes, the previous Director of Extension Centers for the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, about other states beside Louisiana starting Angola-style seminaries in their penitentiaries. Dukes explained that Prison Fellowship and other interested parties have networked with other seminaries and implemented similar college programs in penitentiaries across the country: "California, Georgia, Mississippi, West Virginia, New Mexico, Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, and Texas have programs in formation at various stages" (Hallett Hays, Johnson, Jang, and Duwe 2016, 15).

The New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary started a Bible college inside the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman and graduated a class with their Associate and Bachelor degrees (Sharkey 2017, Interview). However, Mississippi and all the states listed above have laws and prison policies that will not allow inmates to lead church services and faith-based programs within their penitentiaries. The Louisiana State Penitentiary is the only maximum security facility in the country that allows inmate ministers to lead church services and faith-based studies (Hallett and Associates 2016, 26).

A topic suggested for further study would be to research the difference between the Louisiana State Penitentiary's inmate minister model and the states that have successfully graduated a seminary class with their Associate and Bachelor degrees, but refuse to allow the inmate graduates to lead church services and faith-based studies. What are differences between the two different practices in the violence levels, recidivism, and number of people participating in faith-based programs? Is Angola's model superior? Angola has taken a

calculated risk in allowing inmate-led church services and experienced tremendous success in stabilizing the prison and changing the culture. In comparison to Louisiana's model, what are the results of those states that copied the educational opportunity of the seminary without allowing the inmates' autonomy to minister?

2. The Louisiana Department of Corrections presently has thirty-one inmate minister missionaries serving at seven different satellite prisons across the state. These seminary-trained inmate ministers have been sent to these facilities to start inmate-led church services, lead Bible studies, deliver death messages, and offer grief counseling. This missionary program has been in existence for over fifteen years; however, the sheriffs' facilities across the state have never participated in the program. Recently, the sheriff of Grant Parish was the first sheriff in Louisiana to request for an inmate minister to be sent to his facility. The program was originally designed to send an inmate minister to a satellite prison for two years of service. After completing the two years, he would have the option to return to Angola (Rentz 2014, Interview).

Some inmate missionaries have recently been sent to the prison mission field to replace inmate ministers who have been serving for several years. As the programs in the satellite prisons increased, this situation created a demand for more inmate ministers across the Department of Corrections facilities. A topic for further study would be to research: What kind of effects have the inmate missionaries had on these prisons and their inmate populations? Have they influenced a positive change in violence levels, faith-based participation, and recidivism in the prisons that have employed them? What is

the difference in results in comparison to the prisons run by the sheriffs that have chosen not to employ inmate missionaries?

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