

Prison

Christian Reflection

A SERIES IN FAITH AND ETHICS



BAYLOR
UNIVERSITY

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| GENERAL EDITOR | Robert B. Kruschwitz |
| ART EDITOR | Heidi J. Hornik |
| REVIEW EDITOR | Norman Wirzba |
| PROCLAMATION EDITOR | William D. Shiell |
| ASSISTANT EDITOR | Heather Hughes |
| PRODUCTION ASSISTANT | Elizabeth Sands Wise |
| DESIGNER | Eric Yarbrough |
| PUBLISHER | The Center for Christian Ethics Baylor University One Bear Place #97361 Waco, TX 76798-7361 |
| PHONE | (254) 710-3774 |
| TOLL-FREE (USA) | (866) 298-2325 |
| WEB SITE | www.ChristianEthics.ws |
| E-MAIL | Christian_Reflection@baylor.edu |

All Scripture is used by permission, all rights reserved, and unless otherwise indicated is from *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

ISSN 1535-8585

Christian Reflection is the ideal resource for discipleship training in the church. Multiple copies are obtainable for group study at \$3.00 per copy. Worship aids and lesson materials that enrich personal or group study are available free on the Web site.

Christian Reflection is published quarterly by The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University. Contributors express their considered opinions in a responsible manner. The views expressed are not official views of The Center for Christian Ethics or of Baylor University.

The Center expresses its thanks to individuals, churches, and organizations, including the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, who provided financial support for this publication.

© 2012 The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University
All rights reserved

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 8 |
| Robert B. Kruschwitz | |
| Divine Justice as Restorative Justice | 11 |
| Chris Marshall | |
| The Measure with which We Measure | 20 |
| Andrew Skotnicki | |
| Restorative Justice: The New Way Forward | 29 |
| Lisa M. Rea | |
| Without Hindrance | 36 |
| Heidi J. Hornik | |
| <i>Paul in Prison</i> | |
| Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn | |
| Dehumanized Prisoners | 38 |
| Heidi J. Hornik | |
| <i>Third of May, 1808</i> | |
| Francisco de Goya | |
| When Asked, Who Is My Neighbor? | 41 |
| Emily R. Brink | |
| Worship Service | 44 |
| Emily R. Brink | |
| Sermons in a Swiss Prison | 55 |
| John Thompson | |
| Spiritual Friendship: Portrait of a Prison Ministry | 62 |
| Dick Allison | |
| Reading for Life: Portrait of a Prison Ministry | 67 |
| Alesha D. Seroczynski | |
| Project TURN: Portrait of a Prison Ministry | 74 |
| Sarah Jobe | |

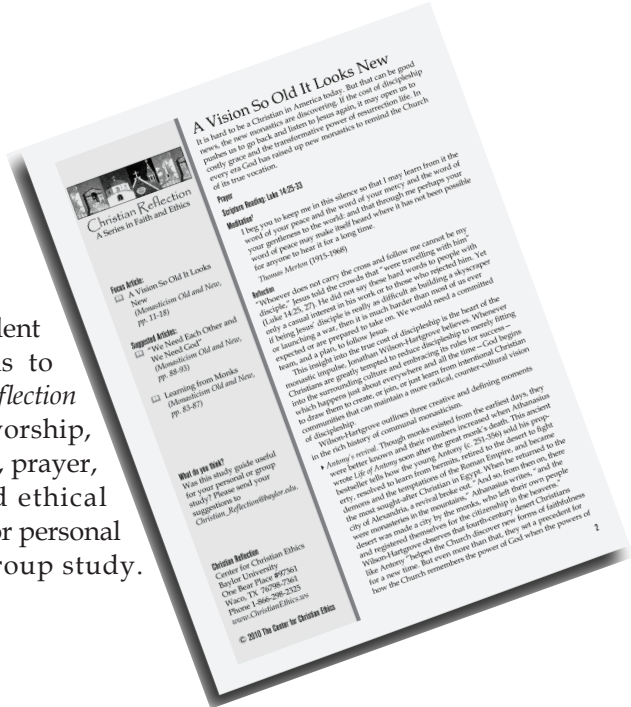
continued


| | |
|--|----|
| The Hospitality House: Portrait of a Prison Ministry Mary Alice Wise | 79 |
| Christian Critiques of the Penal System L. Lynette Parker | 84 |
| Resources for Restorative Justice Kenneth L. Carder | 89 |
| Editors | 94 |
| Contributors | 96 |

Christian Reflection

STUDY GUIDES & LESSON PLANS

These excellent companions to *Christian Reflection* integrate worship, Bible study, prayer, music, and ethical reflection for personal or small group study.



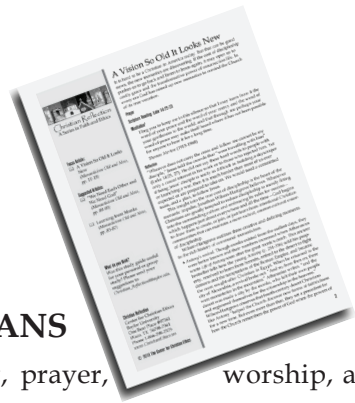
Free  ONLINE www.christianethics.ws. Click on "Free Study Guides."



www.ChristianEthics.ws

STUDY GUIDES & LESSON PLANS

These five study guides integrate Bible study, prayer, worship, and reflection on themes in *Prison*.



DIVINE JUSTICE AS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

While it contains retributive components, God's justice as described in Scripture is fundamentally a restoring and renewing justice. Knowing this, the Church is obliged to practice restorative justice in its own ranks and to summons society to move in the same direction.

THE MEASURE WITH WHICH WE MEASURE

Has the gospel's integrity been sacrificed to sanction the violence that accompanies legal systems? The weight of both New Testament ethical teaching and Church tradition declare there is never a need for Christians to inflict such violent retributive punishment on anyone.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: THE NEW WAY FORWARD

Can we reform the justice system and prisons in ways that restore lives and transform individuals injured by crime? Restorative justice promises to move away from warehousing offenders and toward a system that leads offenders to personal accountability and allows victims to heal.

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP WITH PRISONERS

If those on the outside are unwilling to be on the receiving end as well as the giving end of the relationship with prisoners, they cannot offer spiritual friendship. Such openness is not easy. It rejects the assumption that those in the free world are by definition better folks than those who are locked up.

PORTRAITS OF PRISON MINISTRY

Prison ministry takes many creative forms – reading novels and discussing virtue with juvenile delinquents, providing an oasis of hospitality for those who have traveled far for a short visit with an incarcerated friend or family member, or seminary students and prisoners studying theology together. In each case, as Sarah Jobe writes, "We go to prison not because Jesus told us to, but because Jesus is there."

Christian Reflection

Reliable guidance
in engaging the ethical dimensions
of today's world

PAST ISSUES:

PROPHETIC ETHICS ♦ AGING
GLOBAL WEALTH ♦ CONSUMERISM
PARABLES ♦ SUFFERING ♦ CHILDREN
MARRIAGE ♦ SABBATH ♦ SPORTS
APOCALYPTIC VISION ♦ CLONING
THE PORNOGRAPHIC CULTURE
PEACE AND WAR ♦ MYSTICISM
CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM
FORGIVENESS ♦ IMMIGRATION
WOMEN AND THE CHURCH
PRAYER ♦ SERMON ON THE MOUNT
WHERE WISDOM IS FOUND
MORAL LANDSCAPE OF CREATION
PEACE AND WAR ♦ FRIENDSHIP
INKLINGS OF GLORY ♦ HEALTH
FOOD AND HUNGER ♦ VOCATION
CATECHISM ♦ RACISM ♦ HOSPITALITY
SINGING OUR LIVES ♦ CITIES AND TOWNS
ADVENT ETHICS ♦ HEAVEN AND HELL
SCHOOLS IN A PLURALIST CULTURE
MONASTICISM OLD & NEW ♦ FREEDOM
VIRTUAL LIVES ♦ THE GAMBLING CULTURE
CHRISTMAS AND EPIPHANY ♦ PRISON

FORTHCOMING ISSUES:

THE LETTER OF JAMES
CARING FOR CREATION
DISABILITY

HOW DO YOU REQUEST A FREE SUBSCRIPTION?

Christian Reflection is an ideal resource for discipleship training in the Church. To request a free subscription to this printed version, please contact us through our Web site or by phone. Your free subscription will begin with the forthcoming issue.

www.ChristianEthics.ws
phone (toll-free): 1-866-298-2325

ARE BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE?

Download and print free PDFs of *Christian Reflection* past issues, study guides, and lesson plans from our Web site. Multiple print copies of the current issue and many back issues can be purchased at \$3.00 per copy. Please check our Web site or phone us for availability.

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT CHRISTIAN REFLECTION?

Please continue to pray for this publication series. Share past copies of *Christian Reflection* with your friends, direct them to the Web site for free PDF versions of past issue contents, and encourage them to request their free subscription to the print edition.

If possible, make a financial gift. Simply go to the Web site, click on "Donate," and press the button to enter a secure online form. Because your gift to the Center for Christian Ethics Excellence Fund is a tax-deductible charitable donation to Baylor University, you will receive a grateful acknowledgement from the University.



Introduction

BY ROBERT B. KRUSCHWITZ

The astonishing expansion of prisons today raises troubling moral questions about the treatment of prisoners, the collateral damage to families and communities, and the justice of a penal system that requires ever more prisoners for its financial stability.

The astonishing expansion of prisons in America – where about 1 in 100 citizens are incarcerated – raises troubling moral issues about the treatment of prisoners, the collateral damage to families and communities, and the justice of a penal system that requires ever more prisoners for its financial stability. Too easily we turn our attention in other directions. “Nobody wants to know about prison,” *A Place of Redemption: A Christian Approach to Punishment and Prison* warns. “It is the concern of those behind bars, those who detain them, the members of their families, and a handful of campaigners and professionals. But as a society the rest of us want, metaphorically, to throw away the key.” Our contributors remind us of the problems we face and offer a theological critique of the modern prison system. They invite us to embrace positive responses as Christian disciples.

In *Divine Justice as Restorative Justice* (p. 11), Chris Marshall surveys the biblical approach to corrective justice. While biblical justice contains retributive elements “insofar as it turns on the principles of moral culpability, measured recompense, and the rule of law,” he writes, “God’s justice is fundamentally a restoring and renewing justice. Knowing this, the Church is obliged to practice restorative justice in its own ranks and to summon society to move in the same direction.”

Andrew Skotnicki’s *The Measure with which We Measure* (p. 20) extends the case for restorative justice by reviewing the development of prisons in the Christian monastic tradition. Following Christ’s injunction to correct the errant member, Benedict of Nursia developed a penitential formula “based

on the conviction that the incarcerated need no additional suffering other than that produced in the refusal to honor and love the image of God imprinted upon all of creation and upon themselves." If we would be true to this heritage and the teachings of Christ, Skotnicki argues, we will resist "the deliberate infliction by the state of vengeful, violent punishment (e.g., dehumanizing incarceration or death) upon someone found guilty in a judicial hearing for disobeying the law."

Can society find a better way to respond to crime? In *Restorative Justice: The New Way Forward* (p. 29), Lisa Rea shares snapshots from her career in advocacy for restorative justice principles, which do not see crime primarily as "an offense of a criminal against the state, but an offense committed by one individual (the offender) against other individuals (the victims)." To measure how this victim-centered approach works in practice, she sought out first-hand the stories of crime victims. She concludes, "Restorative justice promises to move us away from warehousing offenders and toward a system that leads offenders to personal accountability and allows victims to heal."

Even as they advocate for changes to the penal system, Christians are finding innovative ways to restore dignity to those who are imprisoned and to care for their friends and families. In a remarkable set of sermons preached in Basel Prison, the theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968) charted the course for Christian ministry to prisoners, as John Thompson explains in *Sermons in a Swiss Prison* (p. 55). "Barth challenges us to find solidarity with prisoners. To do so is to follow Jesus who identified with prisoners. Barth is only asking us to do the same as Christ's disciples," Thompson writes. Barth did more than offer instructive sermons; he prayed and shared Communion with his friends in prison, for this made the Church a "mobile brotherhood."

In a series of articles that we call *Portraits of a Prison Ministry*, four contributors share how they practice Christian solidarity with prisoners and their families. When Dick Allison outlines the different ways he has developed friendships with those in prison, he notes they share one thing in common: the benefits of the relationship must extend both ways. "If those on the outside are unwilling to be on the receiving end as well as the giving end of the relationship with prisoners, they cannot offer spiritual friendship," he writes in *Spiritual Friendship* (p. 62). "Such openness is not easy, for it rejects the assumption that those in the free world are by definition better folks than those who are locked up." In *Reading for Life* (p. 67), Alesha Seroczynski explains a successful reading program for juvenile offenders, which is inculcating cardinal and theological virtues through the integrated reading of novels, discussions with mentors, and community service. Sarah Jobe's *Project TURN* (p. 74) takes us into theology classes held in prison for Duke Divinity School students and prisoners. She explains, "Together they are seeking the pieces of theological reflection that become missing in a society willing to silence huge swaths of its population through incarceration." And in *The Hospitality House* (p. 79), Mary Alice Wise describes a growing mission to serve

those who must travel long distances to visit a family member or friend incarcerated in the cluster of state prisons in Gatesville, TX. Wise and her husband are chapel counselors for Women's Death Row, and they invite their friends there to speak directly about the importance to them of regular visitation.

Several authors reflect on Jesus' parable in which a king tells puzzled followers "I was in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25:36). Sarah Jobe explains that her divinity students "go to prison not because Jesus told us to, but because Jesus is there." In *Dehumanized Prisoners* (p. 38), Heidi Hornik notes this theme of seeing Christ in the prisoner is a key to interpreting Francisco de Goya's disturbing painting, *Third of May, 1808*. Hornik's *Without Hindrance* (p. 36) traces another biblical theme—the spiritual freedom of an unjustly accused martyr—in Rembrandt's painting *Paul in Prison* (cover).

Emily Brink's worship service of confession and praise (p. 44) unites key themes in this issue—a passion for justice, and solidarity with prisoners and victims. Her new hymn, "When Asked, Who Is My Neighbor?" (p. 41), becomes a plea to God for justice for the victims of "wickedness displayed," for forgiveness for all of us who "struggle to repent," and correcting judgment for our society that neglects the neighbor.

In *Christian Critiques of the Penal System* (p. 84), Lynette Parker traces common themes running through four theological reflections on the problems of the current prison system: *A Place of Redemption: A Christian Approach to Punishment and Prison* issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Andrew Skotnicki's *Criminal Justice and the Catholic Church*, T. Richard Snyder's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment*, and James Samuel Logan's *Good Punishment? Christian Moral Practice and U. S. Imprisonment*. She finds broad agreement on the problems—"institutional forces benefit from a destructive status quo; the public view of prisoners makes citizens indifferent to their plight; and an emphasis on individual responsibility fails to take seriously the systemic injustice that prisoners face"—and proposed solutions—"remember that prisoners, too, are made in the image of God; address the systemic causes of crime; and learn to love the people touched by crime."

Kenneth Carder's *Resources for Restorative Justice* (p. 89) commends key texts in the restorative justice movement. Included here are a classic overview, Howard Zehr's *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, and a more detailed presentation of the movement by Karen Heetderks Strong and Daniel W. Van Hess in *Restoring Justice: An Introduction to Restorative Justice*. These are richly supplemented by Lawrence W. Sherman and Heather Strang's *Restorative Justice: The Evidence*, which tracks the efficacy of restorative justice programs in Great Britain, and by Christopher Marshall's *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment*, which offers "a compelling biblical and theological foundation for a restorative means of dealing with crime." Carder concludes that this movement invites us "to journey toward a justice that more accurately reflects God's covenant justice that is 'satisfied by the restoration of shalom.'" ❖

Divine Justice as Restorative Justice

BY CHRIS MARSHALL

While it contains retributive components, God's justice is fundamentally a restoring and renewing justice. Knowing this, the Church is obliged to practice restorative justice in its own ranks and to summon society to move in the same direction.

Christians consider the Bible to be a uniquely important source of guidance for matters of theological belief and moral practice. The Bible serves as the normative, though not exclusive, reference point for discerning the will and ways of God. What the Bible says about justice, therefore, ought to be of great significance for shaping Christian thought and action on justice issues today.

Yet coming to grips with biblical teaching on justice is by no means easy. The sheer volume of data to be considered is daunting. There are hundreds of texts in the Old and New Testaments that speak explicitly about justice and righteousness (terms that coincide and overlap in meaning), and hundreds more that refer to justice implicitly. The biblical data is also very diverse. Different biblical writers sometimes take different positions on what justice requires in differing circumstances.

It is also important to recognize that biblical reflection on justice takes place within a larger cultural and religious worldview that is quite unlike that of modern secular society. To understand the justice theme in the Bible requires us to cross over into a very different social and political world than our own. Then, having crossed over, we need to decide what to bring back that is pertinent to our world. This is a task requiring considerable hermeneutical sophistication.

Added to these complications is the complexity that surrounds the con-

cept of justice itself. What actually *is* justice? How should we define it? Where does it come from? Does justice have an objective existence or is it simply the product of social agreement? Is there some stable essence to justice—such as fairness or equality or just deserts—or does justice mean different things in different contexts?

These are very difficult theoretical questions to resolve. They cannot

“Retributive justice” is dogged with imprecision. When “retribution” is used alone, it evokes the idea of vengeance or retaliation. Paired with “justice” however, it implies a measured delivery of punishment as due recompense for wrongdoing.

detain us here, though some points are worth making. Certainly, as far as the biblical writers are concerned, justice *does* have an objective existence, because justice derives from God (Deuteronomy 32:3-4; Psalm 89:14; 145:17), and God exists apart from human speculation. Justice is objectively real because God is real. Justice is not simply a product of social consensus. It is a divine attribute. There is

no trace in the Bible of the moral and epistemological skepticism that plagues contemporary philosophical discussion about justice.

Neither is there any simple-minded objectivism at work. Just as our human capacity to know God and the truth about God is limited by sin (cf. Romans 1:18-23), so too is our capacity to know fully the nature of God’s universal justice. Our ability to grasp the meaning of justice is constrained by our creaturely finitude. It is also constrained by historical circumstance. Our experience of justice and of reality in general is always mediated through particular cultural and historical traditions. It is therefore unavoidably contextual. It can only be partial, fallible, and provisional. This is an important warning against seizing on selected biblical texts or practices to do with justice (such as those mandating capital punishment or chattel slavery), isolating them from their historical context and canonical setting, and absolutizing them as an unchangeable expression of God’s eternal justice.

A COMPLEX VIRTUE

Since ancient times it has been recognized that justice is a complex or multi-dimensional value that applies to a broad range of human endeavors in varying ways. At the most basic level, a distinction exists between *distributive* or *social* justice, which deals with how goods and resources are justly distributed between parties, and *corrective* or *criminal* justice, which deals with how wrongdoing is identified and penalized. Biblical teaching has much to say about both spheres, though here our focus is only on corrective justice.

But it is vitally important the two domains are not viewed in splendid isolation, especially when seeking to apply biblical insights and priorities to our context. Much of what the Bible says about *social* justice has direct relevance to the *criminal* justice domain. If we took more seriously the biblical imperative to care for the poor and dispossessed, to avoid the unjust accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of the few, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed by debt or exploitation, we would have less cause to employ criminal sanctions against those on the margins of the community who feel they have no stake in society.

BIBLICAL JUSTICE AS RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

It has often been asserted that the Bible articulates and endorses an essentially *retributive* conception of corrective justice. But is this so? The answer is not as simple as some assume. Discussion is complicated by the fact that the phrase “retributive justice” is dogged with ambiguity and imprecision. It is one of the most confusing and misunderstood concepts in criminal jurisprudence, and this confusion spills over into biblical studies as well.

The word “retribution” (from the Latin *retribuere*) simply means “repayment” – the giving back to someone of what they deserve, whether in terms of reimbursement, reward, or reproof. Usually the term is used in the negative sense of punishment for wrongful deeds rather than in the positive sense of reward for good behavior. When the word is used in isolation, it tends to evoke the idea of vengeance or retaliation. When it is paired with the word “justice” however, it implies a more measured delivery of punishment as due recompense for wrongdoing.

As a justification for inflicting punishment, retributive justice requires that the recipient must be *guilty* of wrongdoing (the principle of deserts) and that the pain of the penalty must be *proportionate* to the seriousness of the crime (the principle of equivalence). In these circumstances the imposition of punishment is not only appropriate, it is morally *necessary* in order to satisfy the objective standards of justice (the principle of justice). Understood in this way, many justice theorists conceive of retributive justice as a moral alternative to revenge and as a check against arbitrary or excessive punishment.

Other theorists are not so sanguine. They remain deeply uncomfortable with the undercurrents of revenge or reprisal that are still implied by the terminology, and regard the concept of retributive justice as virtually synonymous with vengeance and barbarism. They see the retributive principle of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Leviticus 24:19-22; Deuteronomy 19:18-21; Matthew 5:38-40) not as a statement of just proportionality, as retributive theorists do, but as a warrant for brutal retaliation.

In my view, there can be little doubt that biblical teaching on justice includes a definite theme of retribution. Most basically, the Bible recognizes that human deeds carry inescapable consequences. There is a kind of inbuilt law of recompense in the universe that means people “reap whatever they

sow" (Galatians 6:7, cf. Ecclesiastes 10:8; Proverbs 1:32; 26:27; Psalm 7:15-16). In addition, the basic retributive concepts of guilt, desert, proportionality, and atonement are widely attested in the Old Testament legal and cultic system, and undergird moral and theological teaching in the New Testament as well. Furthermore, since God is inherently just, and God's judgments are never capricious, biblical accounts of divine judgment on sin, both within history and at the end of time, may also be regarded as demonstrations of retributive justice. The biblical story ends with an affirmation of the retributive principle of just deserts: "See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work" (Revelation 22:12).

Accordingly, biblical justice is retributive justice insofar as it turns on the principles of moral culpability, measured recompense, and the rule of law. It would be a mistake to conclude, however, that biblical teaching on justice is wholly or solely controlled by some impersonal metaphysical principle of measure for measure. Instead it has a distinctively personal and relational character. Justice in ancient Israel involved doing all that was needed to create, sustain, and restore healthy relationships within the covenant community. Criminal offending was considered wrong, first, because it breaches the relational commitments that hold society together and, second, because the wrongful deeds themselves unleash a disordering power in the community that threatens to trigger a chain-reaction of ruin and disaster unless it is arrested.

One way of arresting this negative power, especially in situations of very grave interpersonal and religious offending, was by redirecting the destructive consequences of the deed back on to the perpetrator by way of judicial or divine retribution. The punishment served simultaneously to dramatize the catastrophic consequences of evil deeds and to "purge the evil from Israel" (Deuteronomy 17:12). When this happened, justice was vindicated, not by the act of retributive punishment per se, but by the fact that the community had been delivered from evil and restored to wholeness.

Yet both biblical law and biblical narrative repeatedly indicate that retributive punishment was not invariably *required* in order to secure or satisfy justice. Alternatives to retribution, such as reproof, repentance, restitution, and forgiveness, are constantly solicited and celebrated in Scripture (Exodus 34:6-7; Ezekiel 33:11; Micah 7:18; Psalm 103:2-3, 10). These alternatives do not contradict the demands of cosmic justice (as they do in a strictly retributive theory of justice), for they serve to restore relationships and hence vindicate the true character of justice.

In the New Testament, believers are expressly summoned to forego retribution or retaliation in favor of forgiveness and reconciliation and to leave issues of ultimate justice to God (Matthew 5:38-48; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Peter 2:21-23). Divine retribution may sometimes be activated providentially in the world through human agents and political institutions (Romans 13:4; 1 Peter 2:14). But repeatedly in the biblical record, and supremely in the events of

the Christian gospel, “mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13) as the means of vindicating justice by restoring right relationships.

God’s justice is retributive, then, inasmuch as it is never prejudiced, arbitrary, or impulsive, and is always morally attuned to human deeds and deserts (Romans 2:1-16). But what ultimately “shows” or “proves” God’s justice (Romans 3:26) is not the ineluctable imposition of retribution on wrongdoers but the restoration of right relationship made possible by “his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (3:24).

BIBLICAL JUSTICE AS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Biblical justice includes retributive components, but it cannot be adequately characterized principally as retributive justice. It is better described as a *relational* or *restorative* justice. The fundamentally restorative character of biblical justice is evident at four main levels of the biblical material.

It is visible, first of all, at the *linguistic level*. As already noted, the terms “justice” (*mishpat*) and “righteousness” (*sedeqah*) in the Bible coincide and overlap in meaning, and frequently occur in synonymous parallelism (e.g., Amos 5:24; Isaiah 16:5; 32:1). It is particularly important to recognize the justice connotations of the righteousness language of the New Testament (*dikaios, dikaioun, dikaiosunē*), which is pervasive and significant. When, for example, Paul describes the gospel as the “revelation of God’s righteousness” (Romans 1:17; 3:21), he is depicting it as the definitive manifestation of God’s saving justice. The death and resurrection of Christ is, for Christians, the controlling frame of reference for comprehending the true meaning of divine justice.

The biblical notion of righteousness refers broadly to doing, being, declaring, or bringing about what is right. Righteousness is a comprehensively relational reality. It is not a private moral attribute one has on one’s own. It is something that inheres in our relation-

ships as social beings. To be righteous is to be true to the demands of a relationship, whether that relationship is with God or with other persons. To be unrighteous – say, through criminal activity – is to violate the meaning of the relationship.

When such violation occurs, offenders stand in need of restoration. Biblical law often prescribes punitive counter-measures that are intended to

God’s justice is retributive inasmuch as it is never prejudiced, arbitrary, or impulsive, and is always morally attuned to human deeds and deserts. Yet it focuses not on imposition of retribution on wrongdoers, but the restoration of right relationship.

denounce the wrong, arrest its power, and rectify its damage. Penalties may be imposed on the guilty party. But the goal of the punishment is not to maintain some abstract cosmic balance, but to put right what has gone wrong, to protect the community, and to restore the integrity of its life and its relationship with God. Justice is satisfied by the restoration of peace to relationships, not by the pain of punishment per se.

Then justice (*mishpat*) will dwell in the wilderness,
and righteousness (*sedeqah*) abide in the fruitful field.
The effect of righteousness will be peace (*shalom*),
and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.

Isaiah 32:17 (cf. *Psalm 85:10*)

Second, the restorative character of biblical justice is also evident at the *macro level* in the overall direction of the canonical story. The biblical meta-narrative can be read as one large story of God's restorative justice at work. God creates a perfect, harmonious world, one in which everything is as it ought to be, where human beings live in right relationship with one another, with God, and with the wider created order.

But humankind violates these relationships. In a sense, humanity commits a crime against God, and inherits the damaging and enslaving consequences of doing so (cf. *Romans 5:12-21*). It is a crime against God's love as much as against God's law (*Genesis 3:8-9*). Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden: they are alienated from relationship with God, with each other, and with the very ground of their origin (*Genesis 3:22-24*).

But God, the righteous judge (*Genesis 18:25*; *Romans 3:5-6*), sets in motion the long historical process of recovery. God undertakes to do all that is necessary to restore humanity to its rightful place in creation and to repair the damage inflicted. Through the preservation of Noah, the call of Abraham, the election and liberation of Israel, the choice of Judah and the house of David as bearer of the messianic seed, and the return of Israel from exile and defeat, God patiently works to restore justice to the world.

Finally through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God liberates humanity from its subjection to the dominion of sin and death and renews human nature from the inside out. The first benefits of this great act of cosmic restoration (cf. *Colossians 1:15-20*; *Ephesians 1:8b-10*) are made available in the present to all who participate in Christ through repentance, confession, faith, and baptism, while awaiting expectantly its future completion (*Romans 6:1-14*). God has done all this in the present time, Paul says, "to prove...that he himself is righteous [i.e., just] and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus" (*Romans 3:26*).

The consummation of God's restorative action will be achieved when sin and death are finally abolished forever (*1 Corinthians 15:50-57*) and all creation is set free from pain, corruption, and frustration (*Romans 8:18-25*). This

is pictured most evocatively in Revelation 21:1-5. The “new heaven and new earth” described in this vision is not some replacement planet. It is *this* world purged of pain, suffering, and tears and permeated with the presence of God. In the book of Revelation, God is repeatedly described as the One who is Faithful, Just, and True (e.g., 15:3; 16:7; 19:2, 11) and God’s justice is finally vindicated by “making all things new” (21:3-5).

Next, within this macro-story of restoring justice there are numerous individual scenes and episodes of restorative justice at work. I refer to this as *the legislative level* because the most significant of these episodes reveal how restorative considerations permeate Old Testament legislation. In Numbers 5:6-7 and Leviticus 6:1-7, for example, covenant law spells out what is required of those who “break faith with the Lord” by wronging others in the community through deception, fraud, robbery, or theft.

Four obligations devolve on offenders. The first is recognition or remorse, the need to acknowledge guilt or confess the sin (Leviticus 6:4; Numbers 5:7). The second is repentance, the determination to make amends, to put things right, to display “fruit worthy of repentance” (Matthew 3:8).

The third obligation is restitution to the victim, plus additional compensation (Leviticus 6:5; Numbers 5:7). Restitution is prescribed frequently in biblical law, based broadly on equivalence of value (Exodus 21:26-36). Levels of compensation vary according to the seriousness of the offence and the attitude of the offender (Exodus 22:1, 4, 9; cf. Proverbs 6:30-31; Luke 19:8). If remorseful, the thief must

restore what is stolen plus a fifth more. If the thief is caught with the goods on him, he must restore double. If he has already disposed of the goods or tried to conceal the offence, he must restore four or fivefold. If he could not pay, the thief may be taken as a slave by the injured party until he has worked off the debt (Exodus 22:1b). Enslavement could only last for a maximum of six years, however, or until the year of Jubilee (Exodus 21:1-6; Deuteronomy 15:12-17; Leviticus 25:39-55), and slaves enjoyed a range of rights and protections. Arguably, Hebrew slavery was a more humane institution than is its modern equivalent of imprisonment.

Here we see the restorative priorities of biblical legislation. For most offences, justice was secured through recognition, repentance, restitution, and reconciliation—things that served to repair relationships and restore community.

The fourth obligation on offenders is reconciliation. The crime itself, though perpetrated against another citizen, is perceived also to be a breach

of faith with God and a trespass against the Lord (Leviticus 6:2; Numbers 5:6). Before God's forgiveness can be secured through sacrificial offering, reconciliation must be made with the injured party by means of restitution. Jesus captures the logic perfectly. "So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

Here, then, we see the restorative priorities of biblical legislation. True, some serious crimes were deemed worthy of death, though the penalty was not always carried out. But for most other offences, justice was secured through recognition, repentance, restitution, and reconciliation—things that served to repair relationships and restore community.

Finally, the restorative character of biblical justice is evident at *the ecclesial level*. Most of the teaching on corrective justice in the New Testament concerns relationships within the community of faith. Little is said about the administration of criminal justice in general society, though there is frequent comment on the brutality and injustice of penal practices in the wider world. But the central concern of the New Testament writers is to shape their own Christian communities in ways that reflect their experience of God's restorative justice in Christ.

Two texts may be cited by way of illustration, though countless others could be mentioned. In Galatians 6, Paul counsels: "My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted" (6:1). Paul highlights two marks of having received Christ's Spirit: a willingness to *restore* offenders to community "in a spirit of gentleness" and a humble recognition of one's own susceptibility to similar failure ("take care that you yourselves are not tempted"). Christian justice focuses normatively on solidarity with sinners and their restoration, not on harsh punishment and rejection.

This is also clear in Paul's instructions to the Corinthians concerning their treatment of someone who had violated community standards by offending, in this case, against Paul himself. The community had previously punished the offender, presumably by expulsion, but Paul is concerned that punitiveness does not have the final say.

This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person; so now instead you should forgive and console him, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. ... Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ. And we do this so that we may not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

2 Corinthians 2:6-8, 10-11

The penalty had succeeded in engendering in the offender “a godly grief that produces repentance” (7:10). Now it is time for the forgiveness and consolation of the offender so that he is not debilitated by grief and shame. The community must reaffirm its love for him by reintegrating him in their midst. If they fail to do so, if the church clings self-righteously or angrily to its punitive stance, it risks being “outwitted by Satan,” whose destructive designs are no secret.

Christians today often suppose that ecclesial ethics—how believers are to treat one another within the community of faith—have no pertinence to the ethical standards and legal practices that apply in mainstream society. Church and world are assumed to be entirely separate domains with their own distinctive norms. As a result, conservative Christians in America often rank among the strongest supporters of the current, highly retributive penal system, with its galloping rates of incarceration and its enduring, shameful reliance on capital punishment. They sense no tension between their support for a relentlessly punitive criminal justice system and the incessant call in Scripture to practice forgiveness and reconciliation, a call they conveniently confine to the sphere of interpersonal relationships within the Church.

But such incongruity is theologically indefensible. The Church is called to bear witness to the reality of God’s saving justice in Christ, both by proclaiming it verbally in the story of the gospel and by putting it into practice in the way it deals with offending and failure in its own midst. Knowing God’s justice to be a restoring and renewing justice, the Church is obliged to practice restorative justice in its own ranks *and* to summons society to move in the same direction. There can be no justification for saying one thing about God’s justice in Church and advocating the opposite in the world.

If Paul were to come among us today, singing of God’s amazing grace on Sundays while on Mondays supporting, or being indifferent to, the retributive degradation of the present penal system, he would say what he said to the Ephesians who were being seduced by the standards of wider society: “That is not the way you learned Christ! For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus” (4:20-21). The truth of God’s justice is in Jesus, and that justice is a liberating and restoring justice. The Church fails in its vocation if it fails to proclaim, to embody, and to advocate the principles of restorative justice in every sphere of life.



CHRIS MARSHALL

is Head of School at the School of Art History, Classics, and Religious Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

The Measure with which We Measure

BY ANDREW SKOTNICKI

Does retribution—the infliction by the state of punishment on someone found guilty in a judicial hearing for disobeying the law—have any place in a Christian ethic? The weight of New Testament ethical teaching and Christian tradition resist any notion that we can willfully and morally bring harm upon another.

Despite a host of objections from people around the world, including Pope Benedict XVI, Troy Davis was executed by lethal injection at a state prison in Georgia in September, 2011. There were the usual post-mortems. A relative of Davis's alleged victim felt peace; proponents of retributive justice were satisfied that the giving and getting ratio had been balanced; others lamented the death of a man who, after twenty years, hardly resembled the young adult who first entered prison and whose conviction for killing an off-duty police officer during an altercation was based on the testimony of some witnesses who later recanted their statements. The most striking comment on Davis's fate, in my opinion, came from the noted theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, who rightly articulated the meaning of the event fully within the orbit of Christian ethics: "As Christians, we receive our salvation from the justifying righteousness of God. We reject all forms of retributive justice. We reject the death penalty in the name of God."¹ Whatever our own belief concerning the position taken by Moltmann on the legitimacy of what he calls "retributive justice," he challenges Christians to remember that we are first of all followers of Christ and, as such, must make him the measure against which we measure all that we do.

Admittedly, the phrase “retributive justice” is a slippery term.² To dispel any definitional uncertainty, in this essay I understand retribution to be the deliberate infliction by the state of vengeful, violent punishment (e.g., dehumanizing incarceration or death) upon someone found guilty in a judicial hearing for disobeying the law. I will argue that retribution in this sense has no place in an ethic that is faithful to the teachings of Christ and, I would add, to what we as members of the Church often have been and ought to be.

I would like to emphasize two points prior to beginning our discussion. First, in the rather antiseptic vocabulary and procedural formality of Western law and justice, it is important to remember that punishment is an act of violence. The late Robert Cover, noted professor at Yale Law School, has written: “Judges deal pain and death. That is not all that they do. Perhaps that is not what they usually do. But they *do* deal death, and pain. From John Winthrop through Warren Burger they have sat atop a pyramid of violence....”³ Second, in our judicial methodology the amount of punishment is determined and orchestrated in a subject/object duality: the offender must be presented and viewed primarily as a lawbreaker who is required to suffer at the hands of the state and its agents if found guilty of the culpable offense. It is vital to consider the troubling ambiguities in these juridical rituals and in the moral assumptions underlying them. Ronald Dworkin gives voice to the moral ghosts that haunt the daily determinations of the proper quantum of pain to which the legally culpable must be subject: “Day in and day out we send people to jail...or make them do things they do not want to do, under coercion of force, and we justify all of this by speaking of such persons as having broken the law.... Even in clear cases...we are not able to give a satisfactory account of what that means, or why that entitles the state to punish or coerce.”⁴

I will attempt to answer Dworkin’s conceptual challenge about the meaning of breaking the law by proposing what punishment ought to mean, at least to Christians. I will first argue that modern systems of law, and the punitive function at their core, operate in an antithetical relationship to the message of Christ—one that I take to be unconditionally receptive and compassionate toward both offenders and victims. We are called to *do* the same; and we are called to *be* the same. Second, concerning the meaning of punishment, I will insist that when we are any less than “perfect...as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48), we suffer. We suffer alienation from our true self “hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3); and we suffer alienation from one another and from the body of Christ of which we are a part. That is suffering enough—all the suffering to which Christians can rightfully give assent.

MODERN SYSTEMS OF LAW ARE NOT CHRISTIAN

The conversation on punishment stimulated by Moltmann’s statement reflects two fundamental questions that at first appear to be synonymous

but often elicit competing motivations: how can we be committed *followers of Christ* paying attention to what we believe God is telling us in the New Testament, and how can we be committed *Christians*, paying attention to what we believe God is telling us through our own experience and through the tradition and teaching of the Church? Allow me to assume that we agree that we do not wish to affirm any dualist notion that those terms – that is, following Jesus and being a Christian – are, to any significant degree, mutually exclusive.

If we agree with that assumption, there are two options available to us concerning retribution (as defined here): If it is morally legitimate, we have to argue that both the weight of New Testament ethical teaching (not a few specific passages) and Christian tradition (not a few quotes from a catechism or some other authoritative source) provide sanction for the infliction of violent punishment. If we believe that retribution is not morally legitimate, we have to argue that the weight of New Testament ethical teaching (not a few specific passages) and the weight of Christian tradition (not a few quotes from authoritative sources) resist any notion that we can willfully and morally bring harm upon offenders.

Since I have declared that the second option is the proper choice for Christians, let me offer my own explanation as to why the first position is not only unfavorable but leads precisely to the kind of polarized identity that we wish to avoid. First, the weight of Scripture leans strongly toward mercy, forgiveness, and love over any form of retribution toward those who do us harm.⁵ Attempts to elevate discrete sayings in the Gospels that hint at anything less than unconditional regard for all distort the unity, simplicity, and benevolence of the message of Christ.⁶ Paul's advice to hand the incestuous Christian over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5; cf. 1 Timothy 1:19-20) must be measured against the many injunctions to care for those who have fallen into sin, and against his wise reminder that the sufferings of the penitent heart are greater than the temporal and corporal inflictions made by one human upon another (Galatians 6:1; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; 7:9-10; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).⁷ The well-known passage in Romans 13:1-7 (echoed in 1 Peter 2:13-14) that God has ordained and blesses coercive action by the state against the lawless has been viewed by a litany of scripture scholars either as a reference to household ethics or an anomaly (perhaps inserted by a later redactor) in a sequence of guidelines in which, among other things, Christians are cautioned to avoid all forms of vengeance (Romans 12:19-20).⁸ Despite this, the verses in question are often given more ethical prominence by many Christians than the Sermon on the Mount. It was not until the second millennium that some medieval theologians and significant figures like Martin Luther elevated the passage to a place of prominence in Christian ethics, using it to confer divinely legitimated violent power upon the secular realm.

Second, the history of the Church – certainly before the twelfth century and, in many respects, thereafter – demonstrates wariness, if not fear, among

Christians to bring harm upon the guilty. Prior to the creation of canon law and its inquisitorial legal method (case and procedural law, a professional judiciary, law schools, etc.), all offenses were interpreted and adjudicated by representatives of the Church under the adversarial system. There was no distinction between sin and crime (adultery was as much a crime as theft was a sin). An offense was solely an offense against another and against God. As the Germanic tribes came under the influence of the Church, the ancient blood feud was replaced with the “moot,” wherein mediators attempted to settle a dispute by building trust between the contending parties.⁹ Where such mediation failed and the case was sufficiently serious, no punishment could be meted out without the sworn testimony of reliable witnesses. The difficulty repeatedly faced at that time was not that trustworthy people with sufficient knowledge of the details of the case were lacking. Their reticence to testify was based upon their faith in the Scriptures wherein Christians are cautioned against judging the speck in the eye of another knowing full well that a log is lodged in their own (Matthew 7:3), that the measure with which they measure will be measured back to them (Luke 6:38), and wherein Christ himself stated, “friend, who set me to be a judge or arbiter over you?” (Luke 12:14).¹⁰

As a result of this refusal to cooperate with the mechanics of retribution, the ordeal became the common way to determine judicial outcomes in the early Middle Ages. In brief, the defendant would be taken to the local church; a special oration would be made by the priest invoking God’s intervention in determining innocence or guilt; the culprit would have to grasp a red hot iron or submerge a hand in boiling water; the wound would be bandaged and after several days, again in church, the bandage would be removed. If healing was taking place, the defendant was innocent.¹¹ As legal historian James Whitman insists, the

ordeal was not instituted in order “to get the facts straight about the incident in question,” but in order to “spare human beings the responsibility of judgment.”¹² The same explanation holds for the origins of trial by jury. It was not a reform aimed at improving judicial procedure or a sign of democratic sentiment, it was a way for rulers and magistrates to compel others to engage in the morally fearsome task of judging and bringing harm upon another, thus sparing themselves from what they believed would be the judgment of God upon them. Simply put, our Christian ancestors were at that time by and large convinced that only God could judge another, and only a direct sign from God could justify bringing harm

The weight of the New Testament leans strongly toward mercy, forgiveness, and love over any form of retribution toward those who do us harm.

upon another, no matter how transparent or heinous the person's guilt.

To put it back in contemporary terms, as long as an offense, such as that attributed to Troy Davis, was understood in light of the gospel, many Christians could find no justification outside of an act of God to do violence to another. The decisive factor in overturning not only the ordeal, but the fear of Christians to will the punishment of others, was the inauguration of systems of law – first canon law

As codes of law were established, a new source of moral accountability not only competed with the gospel but routinely trumped its authority. The gospel's integrity was sacrificed to sanction the violence that accompanies legal systems.

which began its development in the late eleventh century and, in its wake, secular legal systems. With this epic turning of the moral tide, a third factor was brought into the equation of viewing human weakness: an offense was not only an affront to God and to the victim, it was also an affront to the law. In light of this legal revolution, perhaps the most influential revolution in Western history, the

meaning of human acts against their fellows took on a new appellation and gravity. They were not only sins that required forgiveness by a priest in confession, they were also crimes, and the offender had to be punished because he or she had broken the law.

I am arguing that this development, more than any other, is at the heart of the systematic divide in Christian consciousness between seeing the world and its institutions in light of the teaching of Christ, and seeing the teaching of Christ in light of one's membership in specific institutions. The advent of Christian legalism through canon law marked a day as regrettable as any in the history of the Church when, at least in effect, the absolution given in the sacrament of confession for a public offense bestowed forgiveness from God, but was insufficient to merit forgiveness from the Church. Secular polities based not only their legal codes and the punitive sentences that are their necessary complement upon canon law, they also, like the Church, helped to remove Christ more and more from the equation in understanding the meaning of a criminal act. As both Marcel Gauchet and Charles Taylor have argued, the vacuum created when the explicit teaching of Jesus against judgment and violence ceased to be imperative was soon filled by the coercive power of Church and state.¹³

Ever since codes of law were established, a new source of moral accountability not only competed with the gospel but routinely trumped its authority. To avoid any transparent dualism, more and more of the integrity of the gospel had to be sacrificed to satisfy the demands of order and sanction the

violence that must accompany legal systems to give them any authoritative legitimacy. More and more, Christian ethical accounts granted modern law and its punitive function a primary place in determining the demands incumbent upon Christians and the legitimate means to do violence to those who broke the law.

SIN IS PUNISHMENT ENOUGH FOR ANYONE

Both Scripture and Church tradition remind us that we cannot escape the internal reckoning with what we have done: “Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?” (Psalm 139:7). Christian anthropology is based on our creation by God in Christ: we were created “through him and for him” (Colossians 1:16-17). Sin is not a violation of laws, but a failure to honor the relationships that most truthfully define who we are: our intimate relation to Christ and, through him, to everything in creation. To fail to honor these sacred bonds is to dwell in darkness like the dead long forgotten (Psalm 143:3), to live a life worse than that of swine (Luke 15:16); it is, briefly put, to experience hell. At the core of the Western moral and penal tradition is not only the belief that all sin can be forgiven, but that the culture of monasticism reveals the blueprint for drawing the Spirit out from a heart encrusted with its own petty and destructive desires and hurts.

In the West, the prison is a relatively late invention, at least as far as the secular world is concerned. Prisons were largely unheard of until the thirteenth century, and the real growth of imprisonment as the primary means of social censure did not begin until the nineteenth century. That was not the case, however, in the Church. The first prison was built when the first monastic rules were written—especially that of Benedict of Nursia in the sixth century—that required all monks to take a lifelong vow of stability. Monks were confined for life; and in cases where they fled the enclosure, they were apprehended and sent back to their monasteries.¹⁴

The revolution in penology that developed from this was stimulated by the question of what to do with monks who violated seriously the norms of conduct required for the communal life, not to mention the Christian life. The answer was confinement. However, confinement was not generally conceived as a retributive punishment administered upon the morally ailing brother; it was the culmination of the correctional process that Christ enjoins on his followers (Matthew 18:15-17): the offender is addressed by the aggrieved party; resistance to the petition leads to others beseeching the person to amend the disruptive behavior; finally, the matter is brought to the community where further recalcitrance merits “excommunication.” In the monastic context, that meant confinement in a cell wherein the offender would have to confront his alienation and suffer the journey to wholeness before reincorporation into the brotherhood. St. Benedict reveals in his thoughts on this process that one thing is essential: the love of the shepherd for the lost sheep. The monk must not be made to endure a suffering that stifles conver-

sion and furthers isolation. Rather, Benedict ordered that each prisoner must have a wise and holy monk to accompany him through the labyrinth of penance and the necessary pain that accompanies the journey to spiritual and communal health.¹⁵ In effect, Benedict understood the meaning behind Christ's counsel that the excommunicated Christian be treated like a pagan or a tax collector (Matthew 18:17), for it was precisely to such as these that the Reign of God belongs.

Benedict of Nursia's penitential formula is based on the conviction that the incarcerated need no additional suffering other than that produced in the refusal to honor and love the image of God imprinted upon all of creation and upon themselves.

This penitential formula is based on the conviction that the incarcerated need no additional suffering other than that produced in the refusal to honor and love the image of God imprinted upon all of creation and upon themselves. It also is based on the certainty that silence, solitude, prayer, work, and spiritual counsel are the soul's great healers, and that they alone can bring persons to their true

selves hidden with Christ in God. Throughout the history of the Church, revered saints have testified to the efficacy of creating the conditions for penance. They realized the penance would be difficult not because of suffering imposed by another but due to the suffering that takes place within the heart of every sinner. St. Cyprian never questioned whether those who had renounced their faith in order to escape persecution could be forgiven and welcomed back into the community of faith; he simply stated that they needed time apart to address "the wounds they are dying of."¹⁶ St. John Climacus spent a month living in the prison in his own community and was transformed by the experience of observing the pained cries of his brothers who beseeched God with nothing but "a speechless soul and a voiceless mind." He wrote that he considered those "fallen mourners to be more blessed" than other righteous Christians because they had more fully confronted and grieved for their sin.¹⁷

I believe that the weight of the New Testament and of the tradition of the Church declare that there is never a need for Christians to inflict violent retributive punishment on anyone. There have been many justifications for such punishment proffered by theologians and church officials but one notices that they inevitably trade in the currency of law, not gospel. For example, within my own tradition, the Catholic Church has largely repudiated its earlier assent of capital punishment but still cannot make the ban a total one because it sees its moral duty to support the right of the

state to punish legal violations.¹⁸ Readers may wish to consult their own faith tradition to see whether justifications for punishment rely on Scripture or statements by church leaders. It is my studied opinion that such justifications normally hallow the state as a necessary bulwark against disorder, law as a source of moral legitimacy, and Scripture as accommodating both.

The only thing we can be sure of each day as Christians is that we are obliged to bear our individual crosses and follow in the footsteps of Christ, making him the measure against which we measure all that we do. The cross is not a symbol of security, a talisman against suffering, and certainly not a weapon against the lawless; it is the sign that a life of dying to self makes one, to quote St. John of the Cross, a living flame of love who wills harm upon no one. All deaths are hard, none harder or more painful than the death of the false self; and it is only the false self in me that wills the suffering of those who have sinned, including those “dead men walking,” waiting their day with the executioner, whose sins are no worse than my own.

NOTES

1 Tobias Winright, “Jürgen Moltmann on Capital Punishment,” *Catholic Moral Theology* (October 24, 2011), accessed November 29, 2011, catholicmoraltheology.com/jurgen-moltmann-on-capital-punishment/.

2 See the brief discussion of this ambiguity by Chris Marshall in “Divine Justice as Restorative Justice,” *Prison, Christian Ethics: A Series in Faith and Ethics*, 42 (Waco, TX: The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2011), 11-19.

3 Robert M. Cover, “Violence and the Word,” *The Yale Law Journal* 95 (1986), 1601-1629, here citing 1609.

4 Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 15.

5 In “Divine Justice as Restorative Justice” in this issue, Chris Marshall traces these themes of mercy, which he calls “relational or restorative justice,” through four levels of the biblical material—the language of justice and righteousness, the overarching biblical narrative, the moral guidance for law, and the functioning of the early Christian communities. Here I briefly explore the fourth level, which Marshall calls the “ecclesial level,” and extend the survey through the history of the Church in the Middle Ages.

6 Mark E. Biddle, *Missing the Mark: Sin and Its Consequences in Biblical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 95; and Paul F. M. Zahl, *Grace in Practice: A Theology of Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 55.

7 E. P. Sanders writes that despite Paul’s at times fiery denunciations of licentious and divisive conduct among members of the communities he founded, “we are still in quest of an instance in which a sinful *deed* is unmistakably said by Paul to lead to permanent exclusion or condemnation.” See *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), 110.

8 Luke Timothy Johnson writes that the passage has been used “to justify totalitarian and wicked regimes.” He adds that it is “too much weight for a few words of contingent remarks to bear.” See *Reading Romans* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 185 and 189-190. Ernst Kasemann states the words are largely “an alien body” in the corpus of Paul’s writing that were subsequently used by Christians to open doors “not only to conservative but also to reactionary views even to the point of political fanaticism.” Kasemann contends that Paul is “not so much thinking of institutions as of organs and functions ranging from the tax

collector, to the police, magistrates, and Roman officials." See *Commentary on Romans*, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromily (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 351 and 354. See also Roy A. Harrisville, *Romans* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), 203-204; and Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 791.

9 Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 56-57.

10 James Q. Whitman, *The Origins of Reasonable Doubt: Theological Roots of the Criminal Trial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 57.

11 Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1986).

12 Whitman, *Origins of Reasonable Doubt*, 56.

13 Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, translated by Oscar Burge (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 34-38; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 233.

14 Gregory the Great, Epistles XLI and XLII, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Volume XII (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956), 87.

15 *Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary*, translated by Terrence G. Kardong (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), chapters 23-27.

16 St. Cyprian, *The Lapsed*, *Ancient Christian Writers*, 25, translated by Maurice Bévenot, S.J. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1957), chapter 15.

17 St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, translated by Lazarus Moore (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), Steps 5 and 7.

18 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), §2266.



ANDREW SKOTNICKI

is Professor of Religious Studies at Manhattan College in Riverdale, New York.

Restorative Justice: The New Way Forward

BY LISA M. REA

Can we reform the justice system and prisons in ways that seek to restore lives and transform individuals injured by crime? Restorative justice promises to move us away from warehousing offenders and toward a system that leads offenders to personal accountability and allows victims to heal.

Most of us know someone injured by crime. They are offenders, ex-offenders and their families, or crime victims and their families. How should we as a society view prisons, corrections, and justice? How should we respond in ways that seek to restore lives and transform individuals injured by crime?

Let me share a few snapshots of victims of crime and offenders from my own experience to help frame this issue. I began working in the field of restorative justice in 1992 for Justice Fellowship, a sister organization of Prison Fellowship, serving as its state director in California. Our mission was to work to reform the justice system by introducing restorative justice principles to the system through the legislative process.

Restorative justice is a new vision for the justice system that puts the crime victim in the center of the system while stressing offender accountability to restore victims and communities as much as possible after crimes are committed. I was deeply troubled by the plight of the prisoner, seeing these individuals as some of the most forgotten men and women in society and often the most despised. I really did not know much about how the justice system worked, but learned through many mentors and meeting both

victims and offenders. Through this work I have developed a passion for restorative justice that does not lessen with time.

I felt it was important, if I were involved in legislative advocacy to promote restorative justice, to go inside a prison first. I found a chaplain who was immediately receptive and set up an appointment to bring me into California's Folsom State Prison. I was so nervous that first time I entered a prison that I had to find a convenience store after my visit for medicine to calm an upset stomach. I went into prison with a respected chaplain, so there certainly was no threat of violence or danger to me. Yet, the experience was upsetting as the doors slammed shut, we went through the metal detector to get cleared, and inmates stared as I crossed "the yard" with the chaplain. I never had that experience of fear again. I guess after that I just learned the ropes. It became normal, or as close to normal as you get inside a prison.

Another snapshot. I visited an inmate at San Quentin State Prison. During this experience, I went in alone just as a visitor. There are no special privileges when you visit an inmate here in California, which is largely true around the globe, unless you are a public official or a special visiting guest. As I waited to go inside, I noticed how many women and children were waiting to see their loved ones or friends. On one particular visit around Christmas time, I noticed the visiting room was like a microcosm of the outside world. The inmates and their families were trying to make things seem as normal as possible. The visiting room was decorated for Christmas with the usual holiday fare you would find in an office on the outside. Children were running around as if they were playing outside. This was their normal. (The holiday situation would be much different today, for in California inmate visits with families and friends have become severely restricted to certain times and days.) I remember thinking, as I watched these children, that this is the next generation. These children might very well become like their fathers or mothers – inmates of the state. They, too, might become all too familiar with living inside the walls of a prison.

Because restorative justice is victims-centered – it holds offenders accountable for wrongdoing, urging them to make things right, as much as possible, with their victims – I realized that I needed to learn far more about the pain experienced by crime victims. It is one thing to read the stories of victims of violent crime, but it is another thing to meet crime victims in person and hear them tell their stories.

Another snapshot. When Roberta Roper came from Maryland to speak at a justice reform conference where I also was speaking in 2000, we planned to meet for dinner. I knew a few details of how Mrs. Roper's daughter Stephanie had been viciously murdered. That night at dinner I asked the simple question that is so important to ask a victim of crime, "Will you tell me your story?" Mrs. Roper explained the unimaginable violence that took her daughter away from her in 1982. Stephanie's car had broken down on a rural road not from far the family's property as she was returning from college. She was

kidnapped, raped, tortured, and murdered, and then the offenders set her car on fire. I will never forget the visceral effect of hearing this story from this distraught mother. Tears ran down my face during that meal. I have heard many stories from many crime victims, but the pain in the face of that mother was wrenching. I could only listen and sob. It struck me how often Mrs. Roper must tell this story and thus relive it herself each time.

A few years earlier after speaking at a restorative justice conference at Fresno Pacific University on the need for more opportunities to bring victims and offenders together, I was approached by a woman from the audience. She began to tell me her story. Her son had committed a heinous murder, killing the victim with a baseball bat. With great pain in her face, this mother explained how she tried to reach out to the family members of the victim of her son's violence. She wanted to tell them how very sorry she was for her son's horrible actions. When she reached out to the family in a courtroom setting, she was rebuffed, and it was a very painful moment for her. This mother of the offender told me how important it was to move the justice system towards restorative justice, to bring victims and offenders together to meet. I will never forget that day.

Last snapshot. Dan Van Ness, my friend and colleague at Prison Fellowship, forwarded to me an email from Steve Watt, a former Wyoming state trooper who almost died after being shot multiple times by a fleeing bank robber in 1982. Explaining that he had forgiven the man who shot him, Mr. Watt said in the email, "I have a story to tell." A Wyoming newspaper account of the shooting was even more astounding than the email: it explained that Watt had offered the offender forgiveness, but not before Watt experienced anger and rage over the attack. The violent attack took away his childhood dream to be a law enforcement officer and left him with injuries that would plague him the rest of his life. Yet Watt now calls the offender, Mark Farnham, his friend. He believes that Farnham, who received a 55- to 75-year prison sentence for shooting and maiming a highway patrolman, has served enough time in prison and should be released.

Because restorative justice is victims-centered, I needed to learn far more about the pain experienced by crime victims. It is one thing to read their stories, but another to meet crime victims in person and hear them tell their stories.

While he was visiting in Northern California, I met Steve Watt at a restaurant. This very large man, wearing a black patch over one eye, limped

towards me with a big grin. One bullet had taken out his eye and the other four bullets had hit him up and down his spine. I thought, "This is a picture of the walking wounded." Some crime victims like Steve Watt wear the effects of violence on their bodies for all to see. Others like Roberta Roper are severely injured as well, but the effects of the violence are not immediately visible. Steve told me the rest of his story that day over lunch – how he had felt after the violence, but also the steps he took towards reconciliation with the offender. How did Steve get to a place where he had healed? How did he forgive? The testimonies of individuals like Steve Watt can help us evaluate the justice system and transform it for the better. Without the needed reforms, we are living with a dysfunctional justice system that injures victims, offenders, and communities.



Some might argue that our prison system was never meant to positively affect victims and communities. I will not analyze the original purpose of prisons in society, but we know that prisons have become something far different than what they were intended to be. Most societies have incarcerated individuals who were deemed to be a violent threat to others, but the United States prison system today has grown immensely beyond this rationale. As a result, the American state and federal prison population has expanded dramatically. During a twenty-year period when the general population grew less than 22%, the prison population more than doubled, from less than 700,000 in 1989 to over 1,500,000 in 2009. A total of 7,225,800 adults, or 3.1% of the U. S. adult population, were under correctional supervision – either on probation or parole, or in jail or prison – in 2009.¹ With 743 per 100,000 of its citizens in detention, the U. S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world.² The financial costs, not to mention the social costs to communities, are staggering. In California, for instance, it costs about \$47,000 to incarcerate one prison inmate for one year.³

Restorative justice principles invite us to reconsider the nature of crime: it is not an offense of a criminal against the state, but an offense committed by one individual (the offender) against other individuals (the victims). For this reason, the justice system should hold offenders accountable (as directly as possible) for restoring (as much as possible) the victims or their families. Restorative justice acknowledges that crime breaks the peace within communities. Offenders, therefore, must make things right with the community as well, if possible.

The American justice system, like most justice systems worldwide, does not work well for victims, offenders, and communities, which is why many people are seeking to embrace something new. Restorative justice provides the vision for change precisely because it brings to light the human impact of our failed policies. But it does not stop there. It proposes ways to build a bridge between the victim and the offender. Some might wonder whether

victims would want contact of any kind with their offenders. However, crime victims increasingly are seeking that contact, largely because the current system does not adequately acknowledge the impact violent crime has on victims, or hold offenders accountable to their victims in meaningful ways.

The story of Stephen Watt illustrates how he sought to have contact with his offender. Some would say his story is an anomaly. Yet, throughout my work the number of victims who are seeking to participate in some kind of restorative justice dialogue is increasing. The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP), which I founded in 2001, sought to organize victims around the cause of restorative justice and allow them to tell the stories of their experience of restorative justice. As victims told their stories publicly to lawmakers and through the media, more victims wanted to learn about the value of restorative justice. Victims might choose restorative justice for different reasons, but they had reached the same conclusion about the traditional justice system: it was not working for them. Watt's case was somewhat unique in that he did not formally participate in a victim offender dialogue program. He met his offender on his own, but with the support of a chaplain and his wife.

Crime victims often speak of feeling left out of the justice system. Some have told me they feel used by the system, like they are just pawns in its game to convict and sentence the offender. Crime victims have questions that go unanswered unless there is some kind of contact with the offender. They want to ask questions such as these: Why was I, or my family, targeted? How did my loved one die? Was she in pain? How long did it take for her to die? They want to know answers that only the offender knows. That is the primary reason that crime victims take part in a restorative justice dialogue. They also express fears about the offender committing another crime against them or their family, when or if the offender is released. Victims want to see offenders take responsibility for their actions; many hope offenders will express remorse. All these questions and concerns motivate victims to seek restorative justice because they hold out some hope for healing, not closure—a word often used by the media, but used less often by victims themselves.

Restorative justice principles invite us to reconsider the nature of crime: it is not an offense of a criminal against the state, but an offense committed by one individual (the offender) against other individuals (the victims).



Today more programs are being created throughout the United States to respond to the needs of crime victims and assist them in experiencing restorative justice. These include in-prison programs like Bridges to Life and the Sycamore Tree Project that bring together (surrogate) victims and offenders to talk in small groups about crime.⁴ The value of in-prison restorative justice programs cannot be understated since it moves the justice system towards an orientation that acknowledges the effect of crime on victims.

When I directed the Texas Sycamore Tree Project, I had contact with each inmate who participated. I learned through these conversations that often inmates do not think about their victims. This should not surprise us at all, because the current system does not require that offenders consider the impact their crimes have on their victims. It sends offenders to prison to pay back the state or society; it does not require prison inmates to face their victims and seek to make things right with them. Many states prohibit and most all of them discourage contact between prison inmates and their victims. Yet, it is precisely through this type of victim-offender dialogue that many offenders may express remorse to their victims, who are no longer faceless, and may be transformed by taking responsibility for their actions more directly. The transformation of offenders is evidenced by the reduction of recidivism rates (i.e. offenders committing more crimes). Research also shows that victims experience greater satisfaction when they participate in restorative justice processes than through the traditional justice system.⁵

Restorative justice promises to move us away from warehousing offenders and toward a system that leads offenders to personal accountability and allows victims to heal. It needs the support of all who are committed to doing justice, to restoring the lives of victims, and to transforming the lives of offenders. It requires champions who advocate for public policy changes to make restorative justice a reality throughout our justice system.

NOTES

1 Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Correctional Populations" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2010), accessed December 6, 2011, bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/glance/tables/corr2tab.cfm.

2 Rwanda and the Russian Federation are in distant second and third places with about 595 and 542 incarcerated persons per 100,000 citizens. By contrast, the highest rate in Western Europe is 156 per 100,000 in England and Wales. These figures include people in pretrial detention as well as those sentenced to prison. "Entire World – Prison Population Rates per 100,000 of the National Population," *World Prison Brief Online* (London, UK: International Centre for Prison Studies, n.d.) accessed December 6, 2011, www.prisonstudies.org/info/worldbrief/wpb_stats.php?area=all&category=wb_poprate.

3 "California's Annual Costs to Incarcerate an Inmate in Prison" (Sacramento, CA: Legislative Analyst's Office, 2010), accessed December 6, 2011, www.lao.ca.gov/laoapp/laomenus/sections/crim_justice/6_cj_inmatecost.aspx?catid=3.

4 Lisa Rea and Theo Gavrielides, "Restoring Victims and Communities," *Freedom from Fear* (New York: United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Institute, 2009), accessed December 6, 2011, http://213.254.5.203/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=60:restorative-justice&catid=39:issue-3&Itemid=182. I directed the Sycamore Tree Project, one of the first intensive victim offender programs of its kind envisioned by Dan Van Ness of Prison Fellowship International (PFI) and tested as a pilot program in 1998 at a Texas medium security prison. Sycamore Tree has been replicated with great success in some twenty-seven countries. The Bridges to Life (BTL) program in Texas was founded by crime victim John Sage after participating in the initial 1998 Sycamore Tree Project. BTL currently runs victim-offender programs throughout the Texas prison system.

5 Lawrence Sherman and Heather Strang, *Restorative Justice: The Evidence* (London: Smith Institute, 2007), accessed December 6, 2011, www.sas.upenn.edu/jerrylee/RJ_full_report.pdf.



LISA M. REA

is a restorative justice and government relations consultant at Rea Consulting, founder of The Justice & Reconciliation Project, and blog correspondent for Prison Fellowship International.

Due to copyright restrictions,
this image is only available
in the print version of
Christian Reflection.

Rembrandt famously depicts Paul's incarceration. Even though the apostle is impoverished and under house arrest due to his preaching, his ministry is undeterred.

Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (1606-1669), PAUL IN PRISON (1627). Oil on panel. 72.8 x 60.3 cm. Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany. Photo Credit: © Scala/Art Resource, NY. Used by permission.

Without Hindrance

BY HEIDI J. HORNICK

The New Testament scholar Raymond Brown observes, “Next to Jesus Paul has been the most influential figure in the history of Christianity.”¹ Most scholars believe Paul was raised and educated in Tarsus in south-central Asia Minor. He wrote good Greek, had basic Hellenistic rhetorical skills, quoted from the Scriptures in Greek, and knew deuterocanonical books composed or preserved in Greek.² Due to the tremendous influence of the letters Paul wrote to early churches, Brown concludes, “Whether or not they know Paul’s words well, through what they have been taught about doctrine and piety, all Christians have become Paul’s children in the faith.”³

We read in Acts 21:15-28:31 how Paul suffered arrest in Jerusalem, imprisonment in Caesarea, and a hazardous sea journey to Rome as a prisoner. Rembrandt, the Dutch Baroque master who painted *Paul in Prison* at the young age of twenty-one, depicted the apostle (according to the iconographic tradition) with a long beard, bald head, pen in hand, and sword. Paul has paused a moment and is lost in thought as his left hand holds a pen and book. The light streams through the bars of the window into an otherwise gloomy cell, casting a warm glow on the wall behind the bed. The light creates a diagonal leading down to letters or folios strapped tightly in a leather cover, a sword, and an open book at the foot of the bed. These visual elements tell Paul’s story. The pen and folios remind us that several of Paul’s letters were written while he was a prisoner. The sword indicates the tradition that the apostle was beheaded by Roman soldiers during the reign of Nero. In addition to being the instrument of his martyrdom, the sword may be a reference to Paul’s previous life as a persecutor of Christians. Also, in a letter Paul calls God’s word “the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17).

The book of Acts concludes with this description of the apostle incarcerated in Rome: “He lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:30-31). Even though Paul is a prisoner, yet he is free.

NOTES

1 Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 422.

2 Ibid., 435-36.

3 Ibid., 422.

Due to copyright restrictions,
this image is only available
in the print version of
Christian Reflection.

Goya confronts viewers with the dehumanization of prisoners in modern warfare. The eerie darkness of the night and of the distant church calls attention to the anonymity of the prisoners and their executioners.

Dehumanized Prisoners

BY HEIDI J. HORNICK

Francisco Goya's *Third of May, 1808, in Madrid: The Executions on Principe Pio Hill* depicts the mass execution of Spanish prisoners by Napoleon's troops on that date. It is one of numerous compositions the artist painted between 1810 and 1815 to decry the French occupation of his homeland Spain.

The Spanish royal family, which had been officially allied with France, was corrupt. In 1807, the Spanish king Charles IV was forced to abdicate the throne and was replaced by his son Ferdinand. In the following year, taking advantage of this internal weakness, French forces invaded Spain, deposed Ferdinand, and put Napoleon's brother, Joseph Bonaparte, on the Spanish throne. At first many citizens hoped that the "enlightened" French leaders would help them bring political reform; however, soon they became disillusioned. A group of rebels in Madrid began an uprising that spread through all of Spain within days and lasted six years.

Goya's painting, completed in 1814 after Joseph Bonaparte had been deposed and Ferdinand reinstated, commemorates the first of many events in which the occupying French troops dehumanized their Spanish prisoners. The rebels depicted here had been captured the day before (in an event depicted in a companion painting by Goya), and now have been taken outside the city walls of Madrid to be executed.

The picture is huge – more than eleven feet wide – and very different in tone from the previous artistic style of Neoclassical history painting, which emphasized the themes of nobleness, morality, and strength. Goya's *Third of May, 1808* introduced the world to the spontaneous, highly emotional style of Romanticism and illustrated the themes of violent punishment, death, and the senseless brutality of war.

Goya's portrayal of the French soldiers as faceless shooters in a sharp, linear formation, which recedes diagonally from the front center to the right background, contributes to the theme of the anonymity of war. The lantern in front of them illuminates the rebel about to be killed at point blank range. If that light were to be extinguished, there would be nothing else – no stars, no light, no relief from the city in the distance. This central prisoner wears a white shirt and yellow pants – the colors of the papacy – and stands in the pose of Christ on the cross. A wound is visible on his open, right hand sug-

gesting a stigmata, or open wound that resembles Christ's woundedness. These prisoners are not Christian martyrs, however; they are fearful of the torture and death that is about to happen to them. A church building is visible in the background, but it is in darkness both compositionally and in the minds of those awaiting certain death. The foreground contains a heap of bloody corpses, which further affirms this is a mass execution in a drastic attempt to stop the Spanish uprising.

The anonymity of death is apparent on both sides of this scandalous event, among the Spanish rebels as well as the French soldiers. Both groups are imprisoned by what they think is their duty to the modern nation state – to save and defend Spain, or to serve France and its brutal expansionist policy.



HEIDI J. HORNİK

is Professor of Art History at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

When Asked, Who Is My Neighbor?

E M I L Y R . B R I N K

When asked, Who is my neighbor? We hear the Savior say:
the one in need of mercy, both near and far away.
O Christ, still come in mercy to everyone in need,
your Spirit working through us, your love in word and deed.

Some live this day with anger at wickedness displayed.
Some live this day with grieving that justice is delayed.
O God of every neighbor, on both sides of the walls
that shield us from each other, bring justice to their cause.

Some rue the day that brought them to live with deep regret,
some cannot shake their sorrow, some struggle to repent.
O God of love and mercy, we long for your embrace.
You offer us forgiveness; help us receive your grace.

Corruption in high places, those choosing not to see
the violence of power, effects of poverty —
O God, see our frustration; rise up and stop the wrongs
of neighbor against neighbor to whom our love belongs.

Remember now your promise to come again in might
to take away all sorrow, to set all things aright.
O God, show us your glory; turn evil into good
until your love and justice reach every neighborhood.

When Asked, Who Is My Neighbor?

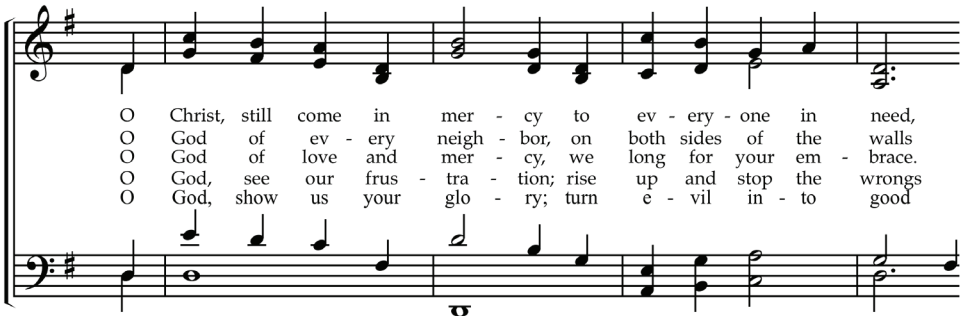
EMILY R. BRINK

HAL H. HOPSON

When asked, Who is my neigh - bor? We hear the Sav - ior say:
 Some live this day with an - ger at wick - ed - ness dis - played.
 Some rue the day that brought them to live with deep re - gret,
 Cor - rup - tion in high pla - ces, those choos - ing not to see
 Re - mem - ber now your prom - ise to come a - gain in might

the one in need of mer - cy, both near and far a - way.
 Some live this day with griev - ing that jus - tice is de - layed.
 some can - not shake their sor - row, some stug - gle to re - pent.
 the vi - o - lence of pow - er, ef - fects of pov - er - ty
 to take a - way all sor - row, to set all things a - right.

Tune: MERLE'S TUNE
7.6.7.6.D.



O Christ, still come in mer - cy to ev - ery - one in need,
 O God of ev - ery neigh - bor, on both sides of the walls
 O God of love and mer - cy, we long for your em - brace.
 O God, see our frus - tra - tion; rise up and stop the wrongs
 O God, show us your glo - ry; turn e - vil in - to good



your Spir - it work - ing through us, your love in word and deed.
 that shield us from each oth - er, bring jus - tice to their cause.
 You of - fer us for - give - ness; help us re - ceive your grace.
 of neigh - bor a - gainst neigh - bor to whom our love be - longs.
 un - til your love and jus - tice reach ev - ery neigh - bor - hood.

Words © 2012 The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University

Music © 1983 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved.

Used by permission. Permission to reproduce this music must be obtained from Hope Publishing Company. Phone: 800-323-1049. Website: www.hopepublishing.com.

Worship Service

BY EMILY R. BRINK

GATHERING

Prelude

Gathering¹

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22-23

Call to Worship: based on Psalm 118

Let those who fear the LORD say,
"Our God's steadfast love endures forever."
Out of my distress I called out,
the LORD answered me and set me free.
**The LORD is my strength
and my song and my salvation.**
I shall not die but I shall live
and recount the deeds of the LORD.
Our God's steadfast love endures forever.

**This is the day the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

Greetings and Welcome

God greets us with these words from the prophet Isaiah:

I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 42:6-8

Welcome to all who have come to join us in worship today. Whether you are a life-long member or first-time visitor, we pray that that you will know the love of God in this service.

Our focus today is on Jesus' call to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. That command extends to those whom, we might think, are not deserving of our love, even those in prison. Let us sing our great Redeemer's praise.

Hymn of Praise²

"Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing!" (verses 1, 4, 5, 6, and 8)

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

He breaks the power of canceled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean,
his blood availed for me.

He speaks, and, listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive,
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.

Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
your loosened tongues employ;
ye blind, behold your Savior come,
and leap, ye lame, for joy.

Glory to God, and praise and love
be ever, ever given,
by saints below and saints above,
the church in earth and heaven.

Charles Wesley (1739)

Tune: AZMON

Prayer of Adoration

Loving God,
we thank and praise you for calling us your children,
for taking us by the hand and protecting us,
showing mercy to the poor, to those in prison,
and to all in need of your love.

Accept our praises,
hear our prayers,
and equip us for service in the world you love.

We offer you now our hands and our hearts,
all that we are,
that you may receive all the glory,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Call to Confession³

“God Gave Us Hands”

When God made us humankind, God gave us hands.

God gave us hands to build, *but we learned how to damage.*

God gave us hands to stroke, *but we learned how to hurt.*

God gave us hands to help, *but we learned how to wound.*

God gave us hands to give, *but we learned how to steal.*

God gave us hands to invite, *but we learned how to reject.*

God gave us hands to care, *but we learned how to be indifferent.*

God gave us hands to protect, *but we learned to kill.*

God gave us hands to pray, *but we learned to curse.*

For this, God sent someone whose hands
build,
stroke,
help,
give,
invite,
care,
protect,
and bless.

But the rest of the hands nailed him to the cross –
Pilate's hands,
powerful hands,
religious hands,
betrayers' hands,
our hands,
my hands.

Silent Reflection

Prayer of Confession

All are invited to open their hands as we pray.

Merciful God,
We come before you with open hands, dirty hands.
For the times we have caused hurt,
for the times we have rejected others,
for the times we have cursed in our hearts,
for the times we have condemned others,
forgive us we pray.
Wash us clean, so that we may learn to be your loving people.
Thank you for holding us and the whole world in your hands.
We pray in the name of Jesus, our crucified and risen Lord. **Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear this good news:

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:16-17

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Song of Praise

"I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me"

I'm so glad Jesus lifted me,
I'm so glad Jesus lifted me,
I'm so glad Jesus lifted me,
singing glory, hallelujah,
Jesus lifted me.

Satan had me bound; Jesus lifted me,
Satan had me bound; Jesus lifted me,
Satan had me bound; Jesus lifted me,
singing glory, hallelujah!
Jesus lifted me.

When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
singing glory, hallelujah!
Jesus lifted me.

African-American spiritual

Tune: I'M SO GLAD



PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

Prayer for Illumination

God, our Rock and our great Redeemer,
by your Holy Spirit open our minds
and lead us into your truth,
for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ,
in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 23:1-9

You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with the wicked to act as a malicious witness. You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing; when you bear witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with the majority so as to pervert justice; nor shall you be partial to the poor in a lawsuit.

When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back.

When you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden and you would hold back from setting it free, you must help to set it free.

You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits. Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or those in the right, for I will not acquit the guilty. You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Psalms 146

"Praise the Lord! Sing Hallelujah!"

Praise the Lord! Sing Hallelujah! Come, our great Redeemer praise.

I will sing the glorious praises of my God through all my days.

Put no confidence in princes, nor on human help depend.

They shall die, to dust returning; all their thoughts and plans shall end.

Happy is the one who chooses Jacob's God to be his aid.

They are blest whose hope of blessing on the LORD their God is stayed.

Heaven and earth the LORD created, seas and all that they contain.

He delivers from oppression; righteousness he will maintain.

Food he daily gives the hungry, sets the mourning prisoner free,
raises those bowed down with anguish, makes the sightless eyes to see.
God our Savior loves the righteous, and the stranger he befriends,
helps the orphan and the widow, judgment on the wicked sends.

Praise the Lord! Sing hallelujah! Come, our great Redeemer praise.
I will sing the glorious praises of my God through all my days.
Over all God reigns forever; through all ages he is King.
Unto him, your God, O Zion, joyful hallelujahs sing.

Psalm 146, versified in *The Psalter* (1887), alt.
Tune: RIPLEY⁴

New Testament Reading: Luke 10:25-37

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Sermon

**RESPONSE***Hymn of Response*

“When Asked, Who Is My Neighbor?”

When asked, Who is my neighbor? We hear the Savior say:
the one in need of mercy, both near and far away.
O Christ, still come in mercy to everyone in need,
your Spirit working through us, your love in word and deed.

Some live this day with anger at wickedness displayed.
Some live this day with grieving that justice is delayed.
O God of every neighbor, on both sides of the walls
that shield us from each other, bring justice to their cause.

Some rue the day that brought them to live with deep regret,
some cannot shake their sorrow, some struggle to repent.
O God of love and mercy, we long for your embrace.
You offer us forgiveness; help us receive your grace.

Corruption in high places, those choosing not to see
the violence of power, effects of poverty –
O God, see our frustration; rise up and stop the wrongs
of neighbor against neighbor to whom our love belongs.

Remember now your promise to come again in might
to take away all sorrow, to set all things aright.
O God, show us your glory; turn evil into good
until your love and justice reach every neighborhood.

Emily R. Brink (2012)

Suggested Tunes: MERLE’S TUNE or MUNICH

(pp. 41-43 of this volume)

*Testimony*⁵

Prayers of the People

Loving God, we praise and thank you for the love and mercy you have shown each of us in Jesus Christ. You have fed us with your Word, and challenged us to love our neighbors as ourselves. We thank you for the testimony we have heard, and for the testimonies we could all offer of times when people reached out a helping hand to restore us to a right path and to provide care when we were in need.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, all of us have been in need of mercy, sometimes when we did not even know it. Sometimes we think we are just fine on our own—when we are young and strong, or in good health, or with good employment, and especially when we have good models to lead and guide us according to your Word. For these good gifts we give you thanks. But we acknowledge that these are gifts that not all have. Many have learned the hard way how dependent we are on you and on our neighbors. We pray for all those who have recently and suddenly lost the security they have been used to.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, we also intercede for all those who need fresh assurances of your love and mercy. We pray for the sick and sorrowing, the lonely and those who are far from their loved ones. From our own community of faith we pray for your compassion on [*names from the congregation*]. May they know your love through our love shown to them.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of justice, we remember before you all prisoners and those who care for them, that they may see in each other your image. We especially pray for prisoners who have been unjustly accused. May those in positions to review evidence seek justice for all, so that your will be done.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of the nations, we pray for all those persecuted because of their religious or political beliefs, or their ethnic identity. Protect them we pray. We also pray for leaders of the nations and communities of this world, that they know their authority comes from you. Move all, we plead, to seek peace with justice, not with violence, so that all your people may live in safety.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Incarnate God, we pray for all refugees displaced by conflicts and natural disasters – so many in so many places around the world. We also pray for those who sought to find work far from home, only to become victims of human trafficking and sex trafficking. Thank you for all who do the difficult work of seeking new homes of safety and shelter. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray all these things in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, who was also a refugee, who was persecuted, who died that we might live, who rose to reign as the King of Kings, and who will come again to establish his reign of perfect peace. **Amen.**

Offering and Offertory

Doxology

“Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven” (verses 1, 2, 3, and 5)

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
to his feet your tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
evermore his praises sing.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise the everlasting King.

Praise him for his grace and favor
to his people in distress;
praise him, still the same forever,
slow to chide and swift to bless.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like, he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Widely yet his mercy flows.

Angels, help us to adore him,
you behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise with us the God of grace.

Henry Francis Lyte (1834)

Suggested Tunes: LAUDA ANIMA or LAUDA ANIMA (Andrews)

Blessing

Go now in peace to love and serve our God and each other.

May the grace of Christ, which daily renews us,
the love of God, which enables us to love our neighbors,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which unites us,
fill you with all peace. **Amen.**

Postlude

NOTES

1 An option is to sing this Scripture text as adapted by Edith McNeill in “The Steadfast Love of the Lord,” copyright © 1974, 1975, 1986, Celebration (CCLI #522161).

2 In the spirit of “a thousand tongues,” consider singing this hymn in several languages. Settings in English, French, and Spanish can be found in *Global Songs for Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2010).

3 The origin of this dramatized call to confession is unknown. I first saw it in an ecumenical service planned by African Christians; the leader of that service said he had received it from Hungarian Christians. For a dramatized performance of this call to confession and the following prayer of confession, see the closing service of the 2011 Calvin Symposium on Worship online at <http://vimeo.com/19672086> (beginning at 24:11). You will note that “hands” played a large part in the visual aspects of the service.

4 This text has been associated with RIPLEY since their pairing in *The Psalter* (1887). Alternate 87.87 D tunes like ABBOTTS LEIGH and HYFRYDOL provide options for organ preludes.

5 Invite one or more members of your congregation or community to give their testimony about how God provided a Good Samaritan for them. The testimony in the context of this service might involve a returning citizen (a term much to be preferred over “ex-offender”) or a prison chaplain.



EMILY R. BRINK

is Senior Research Fellow of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Sermons in a Swiss Prison

BY JOHN THOMPSON

Karl Barth, the Swiss Reformed professor and pastor once described by Pope Pius XII as the most important theologian since Thomas Aquinas, exercised a remarkable ministry from 1956 to 1964. While teaching at the University of Basel, Barth regularly visited and preached to the inmates at Basel Prison.

Karl Barth (1886-1968) was one of the most astute theological minds of the twentieth century, famed for such enduring works as *Church Dogmatics*, *Commentary on Romans*, and *The Humanity of God*. The Swiss Reformed professor and pastor, once described by Pope Pius XII as the most important theologian since Thomas Aquinas, exercised a truly remarkable ministry from 1956 to 1964. While teaching at the University of Basel, Barth regularly visited and preached to the inmates at Basel Prison. He preached in the prison because he believed that “there people need firm contact with real life; at the same time the gospel becomes remarkably relevant and natural of its own accord.”¹ Barth preached within the walls of Basel Prison twenty-eight times in all. Because the prison’s pulpit was one of the only pulpits Barth occupied late in life, some ventured that in order to hear the famous theologian preach one had to commit a crime and be put in jail.

Fortunately, we do not have to travel behind the doors of Basel Prison for edification from Barth, but need only to open the remarkable little book *Deliverance to the Captives*, a collection of his prison sermons. Barth invites readers of the sermons to “share in these services” in Basel Prison.² It is in this “sharing” that Barth’s sermons can help us understand our relationship to prisoners today as captive brothers and sisters in need of deliverance whether we spend our days in a prison cell or not.

ORDER OF SERVICE: EVERY ACT A PART OF THE MISSION

Barth's prison services are not theological lectures as if he were still in the halls of the university. Instead they are worship events with several elements: prayers that bookend each sermon, a brief Scripture verse, the homily, and Communion. Each one of these elements contributes to Barth's mission — to remind prisoner and non-prisoner of the common brotherhood they share through Jesus Christ. Much more needs to be said concerning this mission and how it helps us understand how we might relate to those in prison, but let me first describe in more detail the four elements of Barth's worship services.

The prayers, Barth says in the foreword to *Deliverance to the Captives*, are "as essential as the sermons themselves" (p. 11). They serve as the overtures and finales of the sermons. Barth is not merely introducing the theme of the sermon in the opening prayer and then reiterating it in the concluding prayer; instead, each prayer hints at the larger purpose of his prison ministry, proclaiming the brotherhood of all Christians. Consider, for example, this closing prayer to Barth's 1958 Christmas sermon:

We remember before thee all darkness and suffering of our time; the manifold errors and misunderstandings whereby we human beings afflict one another; the harsh reality which so many must face without the benefit of comfort; the great dangers that hang over the world which does not know how to counter them. We remember the sick and the mentally ill, the needy, the refugees, the oppressed and the exploited, the children who have no good parents or no parents at all. We remember all those who are called on to help as much as men can help, the officials of our country and of all other countries, the judges and civil servants, the teachers and educators, the writers of books and newspapers, the doctors and nurses in the hospitals, the preachers of thy word in the various churches and congregations nearby and afar. We remember them all when we implore thee to let the light of Christmas shine brightly...so that they and we ourselves may be helped. We ask all this in the name of the Savior in whom thou hast already hearkened to our supplications and wilt do so again and again. Amen. (p. 143)

In this prayer Barth and the Basel prisoners prayed quite a litany of petitions. Remarkably, Barth's prayers generally include almost all of these prayer requests and more. Barth, and the prisoners praying with him, often prayed for the church universal "gathered wherever they may be,"³ for all prisoners, all poor, all sick, for doctors and nurses, for government officials around the world, for teachers and students, for all parents and children, for judges and those facing judgment, for journalists, for the people of Basel and Switzerland and "all people everywhere," for other clergy and missionaries, for employers and employees, for young and old, and for the humiliated and exploited and those doing the exploiting.

If these prayers are as important as Barth claims them to be, the breadth of these petitions must be a significant point. I believe the significance is that the prayers enclose Barth's proclamation within the claim of common brotherhood. They are the battle cry that reminds those praying, then and now, that the boundaries we often set up between one another must be torn down in the light of our common discipleship of Jesus Christ.

After an introductory prayer, Barth began each sermon with a reading from Scripture. For his prison sermons Barth usually selected short texts — for instance, one sermon is simply on the phrase “My grace is enough” taken from 2 Corinthians 12:9. While not much is striking about each verse, when comparing them it is immediately noticeable that his selected verses, from both the Old and New Testaments, are Christologically centered. This Christological centering is the foundation of each of Barth's sermons which emphasize “the wonderful and mysterious fact that God has spoken to us in his Son, Jesus Christ” (p. 9). This fact, Barth contends, is at the core of all reality; it is a truth that humanity needs to recognize.

This evangelical focus of Barth's sermons draws some criticism from contemporary prison chaplains. One writes, “It is admirable that Barth preaches the gospel, yet in doing so he often doesn't meet prisoners where they are.”⁴ However this criticism fails to take into account the larger context of the sermons. Both the other components of Barth's prison services and his pastoral visits with prisoners defy this hasty dismissal.⁵

Barth's sermon and concluding prayer usually were followed by Communion, not as a ritualistic afterthought to the worship service, but as its crown. The communal celebration of the Lord's Supper was a further testimony to the common

brotherhood between all present. Throughout his theological writings, Barth emphasizes the importance of the practice of Communion for the Church. In *Church Dogmatics* he writes that Communion is the practice that unites all Christians. Indeed, “They are so linked together by Christ who links himself to

them that they ‘mutually adapt themselves to be one organism which can be used in the world in His service.’”⁶ For this reason the service of worship “reach[es] its climax in the celebration of the supper.”⁷ For Barth, Communion is what makes the Church a “mobile brotherhood.” The celebration of Communion at the conclusion of the worship services at Basel Prison included those labeled “criminal” as a part of this family.

For Barth, Communion is what makes the Church a “mobile brotherhood.” The celebration of Communion at the conclusion of worship services at Basel Prison included those labeled “criminal” as a part of this family.

Deliverance to the Captives presents carefully crafted services that proclaim a specific message: prisoner and non-prisoner are brothers in Jesus Christ. This message is the mission of Barth's prison ministry. Each element of the service – the prayers, the Scripture reading and sermon, the concluding Communion supper – uniformly asserts this common brotherhood. The declaration of common brotherhood is meant to be heard not just by those in Basel Prison, but by the present day reader. We too are reminded of this relationship and challenged to enact it. This is Barth's invitation.

A TYPICAL SERMON: "THE CRIMINALS WITH HIM"

While I hope I have made clear the importance of each element of the worship service for contributing to Barth's overall prison ministry, special attention needs to be given to the written sermons as they most plainly illuminate our relationship with those who are imprisoned. The sermons are unambiguous proclamations about humanity's common condition. As Oxford University theologian John Marsh, a contemporary of Barth's, put it, "Barth knows that when he preaches to prisoners he is but preaching to himself, to them and to himself as dying sinners and yet as men redeemed from death by the gracious act of God" (p. 9). We are all prisoners, Barth argues, some of us just spend time in iron and concrete cells. Therefore, Barth's sermons are not just for the Basel Prison inmates but "for the countless crowd of those unaware that they themselves are prisoners" (p. 43).

This theme of the universal condition and brotherhood of all humanity is particularly salient in the sermon entitled "The Criminals with Him." This sermon is an explication of Luke 23:33, "They crucified him with the criminals, one on either side of him." Barth declares that this gospel verse describes "the first certain, indissoluble and indestructible Christian community." These two criminals were with Christ the first church. Not even the apostles could lay claim to this distinction. In his sermon Barth anticipates the objection that one of the criminals mocked Jesus rather than asked for fellowship. While this is a notable distinction between the two criminals, this action, Barth proclaims, was "not important enough to invalidate the promise given so clearly and urgently to both of the prisoners without distinction." That promise is that "Jesus died precisely for these two criminals who were crucified on his right and on his left and went to their death with him. He did not die for the sake of a good world, he died for the sake of an evil world, not for the pious, but for the godless, not for the just, but for the unjust, for the deliverance, the victory and the joy of all, that they might have life." The thieves crucified with Jesus remind us that to follow Jesus we must begin to see ourselves as crucified criminals who are brothers and sisters with those bound in real chains. We must identify ourselves with rather than apart from prisoners for, "If anyone identified himself with prisoners it was [Jesus Christ].... That is the Lord who has mercy on you: this prisoner who is your liberator, the liberator of us all" (pp. 75-84).

“The Criminals with Him” is only one of many sermons in *Deliverance to the Captives* that emphasize the common brotherhood between prisoner and non-prisoner. In this sermon Barth challenges the readers to find solidarity with prisoners; to tear down any dichotomy between the two categories. To do so is to follow Jesus who identified with prisoners. Barth is only asking us to do the same as Christ’s disciples.

DELIVERANCE TO ALL: BROTHERHOOD OF THE CRIMINALS

During his only visit to America, Karl Barth was asked by a student-skeptic if he could sum up everything he had learned in a lifetime of study. Quite seriously, but presumably with a twinkle in his eye, Barth gave this answer: “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” In the many pages of Karl Barth’s daunting theological writings, this simple message is repeated again and again. This is the good news made known by the Word of God, Jesus Christ, who comes to each one of us. This message is both intimately personal and profoundly universal. In his sermon “Nevertheless I Am Continually with Thee,” Barth proclaims to the Basel inmates God’s promise of abiding presence. He concludes his sermon with a question: “Who are you? Who am I? The answer,” Barth says, “is one whom God holds by his right hand, on whose heart and lips God has laid the confession of faithfulness and the great comfort” (p. 18). The comfort of God holding our hand is the good news to all. It is the ultimate marker of humanity as children of God. This common message unites us under a common brotherhood that extends to all regardless of race, gender, or social station. It includes sick and healthy, poor and rich, and free and imprisoned.

We are each one of us called by God to be a part of a great fellowship created and sustained by God’s enduring presence.

Deliverance to the Captives bears witness to the great gift we might receive when visiting those in prison; a gift that can be known only by those who are willing to follow Jesus behind

walls of concrete and bars of iron. To look upon the incarcerated and see not criminals or convicts but rather brothers and sisters, for this is how Jesus sees them, reminds us of the great grace given to us which offers freedom from our chains. Jesus came to free us from our captivity. As we are all delivered captives, we are also all brothers and sisters. This is the gift Karl Barth proclaims. It is a message which he saw as his “task and privilege

In “The Criminals with Him,” Barth challenges us to find solidarity with prisoners. To do so is to follow Jesus who identified with prisoners. Barth is only asking us to do the same as Christ’s disciples.

to tell [us] that God himself said so and says so until this day” (p. 65).

Toward the end of his life, Karl Barth humbly reflected upon his astounding impact on twentieth-century theology by recounting a dream he often had. In his dream Barth was now in heaven toting his many volumes of the *Church Dogmatics* in a wagon behind him. Instead of standing in awe, the angels begin to laugh and mock Barth saying, “Look here he comes now with his little pushcart full of works of the *Dogmatics*.” Barth knew that his work, great as it was, was only a shadow of a full understanding of the deep mysteries of God.⁸ The angels laughed at Karl Barth’s attempts to understand God, but perhaps they stood in awe of his ministry within Basel Prison. Perhaps the angels knew the name of Karl Barth not for his erudition but for his compassion toward the incarcerated. In an apocryphal take upon Karl Barth’s dream one writer ponders that Barth, after the angels’ mockery, learns that a great welcoming feast has been arranged in his honor. This feast is not given by theologians or philosophers or church officials. Instead Barth’s heavenly arrival is celebrated by the many prisoners whom he visited those Sunday mornings. These visits, not his theological scholarship, are why all of heaven knows and honors his name.⁹

God calls us all to a ministry toward the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned (Matthew 25:34-40). Among prisoners is where Christ died upon the cross, the first Christian community. This is one place we are invited to find Christ today. Barth knew this call well, so he put down his pen, left the university, visited Basel Prison, and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. Barth spent time with the inmates of Basel Prison because he understood that he was no better than any of these men. He understood that he was in need of graceful deliverance just as they were. Barth’s prison ministry should serve as a paradigm for our own ministry to prisoners. It is easy to differentiate with pejorative labels of “us” and “them.” However, the gospel tears down the dividing walls that these labels construct, and reminds us of the truth that the real prison is in the heart of each one of us. The good news is that God offers deliverance to all captives through Jesus and fashions us as family, as a common fellowship of crucified criminals. *Deliverance to the Captives* merely gives us an example of how we might enact this relationship.

NOTES

1 Quoted in Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 414.

2 Karl Barth, *Deliverance to the Captives* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1961; reprinted Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 18. Further page citations to this book will be in the text.

3 Interestingly enough for a man who is often charged with being anti-Catholic, mostly due to his argument against natural theology as “the tool of the anti-Christ,” Barth prays specifically for Roman Catholics including a prayer in his 1959 Easter sermon for “the new man now at the head of the Roman Catholic Church,” Pope John XXIII (*Deliverance to the Captives*, 150).

4 Chaplain Dave Nickel, a minister to prisoners in Orange County Correctional in Hillsborough, NC, in personal communication to the author.

5 In his masterful biography of Karl Barth, Eberhard Busch writes, “Barth did not want merely to preach to his audience. In order to preach to them properly he also wanted to get to know them personally, and so he often went to visit them in his cells. For instance, he once reported that ‘this morning I listened at length to three murderers, two confidence tricksters and one adulterer, added the odd remark here and there and gave each a fat cigar’” (*Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 415).

6 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.2, edited by G. W. Bromley (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), 635-636.

7 *Ibid.*, 639.

8 Quoted in George Casalis, *Portrait of Karl Barth* (New York: Doubleday, 1963), 3.

9 Benjamin Myers, “The Great Theologian: A Parable (Based on a True Story),” *Faith and Theology* blog (May 25, 2009), accessed December 30, 2011, www.faith-theology.com/2009/05/great-theologian-parable-based-on-true.html.



JOHN THOMPSON

is a freelance writer in Texarkana, Texas.

Spiritual Friendship: Portrait of a Prison Ministry

BY DICK ALLISON

If those on the outside are unwilling to be on the receiving end as well as the giving end of the relationship with prisoners, they cannot offer spiritual friendship. Such openness is not easy, for it rejects the assumption that those in the free world are by definition better folks than those who are locked up.

As a volunteer correspondent, receiver of numerous collect calls, and visitor with fifteen men who are currently incarcerated, I sometimes think that I am obsessed with prison ministry. If so, it is for me a magnificent obsession. I am not an expert in prison ministry. Nor do I pretend to know how to advise others in their ministries to prisoners. My one-on-one ministry with fifteen men in eight prisons in Mississippi, one in Louisiana, and one in Georgia, is best characterized as spiritual friendship. I have come to see spiritual friendship as the single most important thing about any type of prison ministry. We may be able to do practical things which are very helpful to prisoners (like teaching classes and conducting worship services, and so on) without developing spiritual friendships, but can that be called a Christian ministry?

Friendship, of course, works both ways, with its benefits extending to both parties. If those on the outside of prisons are not willing to be on the receiving end as well as the giving end of the relationship, they really have nothing to offer that is authentic spiritual friendship. But that kind of openness is not easy. We must get rid of stereotypes. We must get rid of pride that assumes that those in the free world are by definition better folks than those who are locked up. That change of attitude is not something we can

fake. Virtually all the prisoners I have ever known have experienced treatment inside and outside the prison system designed to make them feel less than human. Thus they recognize immediately whether an offer of spiritual friendship is genuine.

There are numerous avenues through which spiritual friendships can be developed, and I will briefly comment on those I have personally experienced and observed. However, none of these avenues will lead to such friendships if there is not mutual respect. Everyone involved in a spiritual friendship has “sinned and come short of the glory of God.” It is equally true that everyone involved is a person of worth, created in the image of God and the object of God’s redeeming love in Jesus Christ. Self-righteousness vitiates the possibility of genuine spiritual friendship.

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH VISITATION

Prisons do not make visitation easy, though it is less difficult in some of them than others. Understandably, security is tight everywhere and getting the necessary permissions may take a tremendous amount of time. Visitors must to be very committed just to go through all the stuff that is required. For instance, recently a colleague and I visited a friend on death row. We had to drive about eight hours round-trip. We had to leave all our valuables in my automobile. We were frisked three times. We had to take our shoes and belts off twice. I had to leave my car keys with an officer. Our friend, in turn, had to sit and wait for forty-five minutes in the visiting area while we were going through the long processes of getting in. When we met together, a glass partition separated us from any physical contact with him. We talked to one another through a phone. For two hours he was in chains that made holding the phone uncomfortable for him. The noise in the visitation room was overwhelming, but we did not complain because we could look each other in the eye, smile and laugh, cry and pray. We prayed for him and he prayed for us. We knew that we were not just acquaintances; we were partners in a spiritual friendship.

Most of my incarcerated friends are so far away that any kind of regular visitation is impossible. Fortunately, I have been able to visit everyone at some point. Six of them I first met when they were patients in the large regional hospital where I serve as a staff chaplain. There I had considerable freedom to visit regularly and get to know them. There were guards in the rooms where they were patients, but generally speaking those guards were supportive of visits by me and other chaplains. Visiting my friends in the prisons of Mississippi is complicated because I am only allowed to be on the regular visitation list of one MDOC inmate, and that happens to be the one who is on death row. In order to visit the others, I have to go through the prison chaplains’ offices and visit strictly as an ordained minister. Some chaplains are more open to that kind of arrangement than others. In a prison ninety miles from my home where I have three inmate friends, the chaplain

has allowed me on several occasions to visit all three of them on the same afternoon, one at a time, for which I am most grateful. However, those visits are limited to about one hour each, so we have to make the most of our time. My three friends have no other outside visitors as they are virtually cut off from their families. That is also true of several of the men in other prisons in the state.

Do those visits matter? Without a doubt they matter! I am convinced that even rare visits nourish spiritual friendship.

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH PHONE CONVERSATIONS

Thank God for telephones! How I wish the prisoners could call free of charge, but that is not how it works. Collect calls from prisons are expensive, so for the most part I have to limit calls to one call a month from each inmate, and the men understand that limitation. But telephone conversations really are an aid to deepening spiritual friendship. We are able to pray together and for each other. Several of these men constantly ask me to pray about specific issues in their lives, but they also want to know what is going on with me and my family, and how they can be supportive in prayer. In all honesty, I share things with them that I do not share with lots of folks on the outside, because as I have already mentioned, spiritual friendship works both ways.

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH CORRESPONDENCE

Probably my biggest single investment of time in this ministry is through correspondence. I write at least six or seven letters a week. It is extremely important that each letter be personal. I try very hard to address the “up-against” issues that each person has told me about, as well as sharing the celebrations in each of their lives. We talk about our hopes and fears, faith and doubts, victories and defeats. We are Christian friends and we write about things that matter in our lives.

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH NEWSLETTERS

The University Baptist Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, publishes a monthly prison newsletter. The eight of us on the Prison Ministry Support Team take turns writing brief articles, poems, prayers, and sometimes jokes. Just as importantly, the prisoners take turns writing for the newsletter. They share their testimonies, prayer requests, and so on. One man is an accomplished writer who wrote an intriguing short story a few months ago; other men have written poetry. While the majority of pieces that have been submitted are specifically Christian testimonies, we encourage the men to write about anything they want to share. Obviously, we retain the right to editorial control, but so far that has only amounted to grammatical and spelling corrections. The newsletters are distributed to all members of our church who attend Wednesday night services, so many members are becoming aware of a vital spiritual friendship that is growing between the congregation and the prisoners.

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Six of the fifteen men who participate in our prison ministry are members of University Baptist Church. Two of them were members here before they were incarcerated, one of them having grown up here. Four have been received into the membership since their imprisonment. I had the privilege of baptizing three of those men in prison horse troughs following their declarations of faith. The other one, who is in prison in Georgia, will be baptized as soon as it can be arranged. He is utterly serious about his commitment to Christ and to the Church. Knowing that I have baptized the others during their imprisonment, he says, "I want to become a member of the Horse Trough Fraternity of Baptized Believers."

There are two other men in the group who are not members of University Baptist Church, but who have had connections with the congregation through the years preceding their incarceration. They too have been blessed by the church's concern. There are different levels of spiritual friendship, but it is fair to say that being a part of a body of believers has a profound influence on those who ask for membership. One of the men that I baptized four years ago talked about it again in a letter just a few days ago. And all of them have expressed on numerous occasions what a joy it is to them to feel like they "belong to a real church." One says that it is the first time he ever belonged to anything except a "gang of skinheads."

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH ADVOCACY

From time to time, we are asked to be a voice on behalf of prisoners' rights. Currently, there are two situations with which we are involved.

One of the men fell in the shower room recently and broke his hip. He was taken to the regional hospital in same city where he is incarcerated. Following the surgery and a couple of days of recuperation, he was returned to the prison with the promise that he would receive rehabilitation there. As of the day of this writing, he has been

back at the prison for two months and received no such help. I have been making calls to personal injury attorneys in that area, but thus far have not found one who can or will help.

Another man is in a federal prison on a computer-based sex offense charge. He is serving a ten-year sentence, which is longer than some who have been directly involved in sex acts with underage children. The United

It is extremely important that each letter be personal. We talk about our hopes and fears, faith and doubts, victories and defeats. We are Christian friends and we write about things that matter in our lives.

States Sentencing Commission, the group responsible for presenting information on sentencing standards and guidelines to Congress, is currently accepting letters asking for changes in this unjust policy. Several members of our congregation, along with others in the community, have written letters.

It remains to be seen what we can accomplish, but I am convinced that Christians speaking up on their behalf are acts of spiritual friendship that the prisoners recognize and appreciate.

CONCLUSION

I asked one of my incarcerated friends to offer his perspective on prison ministries. He shared a list of constructive but pointed criticisms. First, most prison ministers do not spend the time required to really listen to a man and get to know what that man's needs are. Second, he noted that in Jesus' ministry his procedure was different in each individual case. This should remind a prison minister that no two cases of conversion are exactly alike. Third, the "once a month" preacher rarely preaches the simple gospel and then leaves it to soak in; rather, it is followed by a forced request to say the salvation prayer. This is selfish beyond belief. Fourth, prison ministers should spend time equipping men on the inside to do the real work of evangelism. And, finally, it is important for the prison minister to care about the wide range of personal needs of inmates.

My friend did not use the term "spiritual friendship," but is he not in fact asking for true spiritual friends who care for and respect those to whom they minister?



DICK ALLISON

is retired pastor of University Baptist Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Reading for Life: Portrait of a Prison Ministry

BY A L E S H A D . S E R O G Z Y N S K I

**Reading for Life draws these two strands together—
virtue theory in the Christian tradition and the role
of literature in shaping moral imagination—to foster
restoration, remediation, community service, and
affiliation in juvenile offenders.**

Scripture admonishes us to develop good character: “make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love” (2 Peter 1:5-7). In the Reading for Life program, we work to foster character development in juvenile offenders through narrative, journaling exercises, and small group discussions; and we utilize many of the virtues described by Peter to facilitate those positive behavior changes.

In the Christian tradition the focus falls on seven primary virtues or character traits necessary for a life of discipleship: faith, hope, love, justice, prudence, temperance, and courage. The first three traits—the theological virtues—derive from the Apostle Paul’s teaching that “faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love [*agape*]” (1 Corinthians 13:13). The last four traits—the cardinal virtues—have a venerable origin in ancient Greek philosophy. Thus it is not surprising that Christian theologians like Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) integrated these two lists of virtues to obtain a more complete description of the moral character required for a good life. This forms the basis of the virtue theory that we have inherited.¹ Goodness is more than simply doing the right thing. We should be concerned with the moral agent over the moral action, believing that the cultivation of virtue in a person will produce moral action.²

Recently there has been a revival of interest in using stories to cultivate virtue. Literature is uniquely suited to facilitate moral development because it provides us with vicarious experiences and characters of moral import.³ In stories we meet characters who feel, think, and act as we would like to; our imaginative identification with a moral hero helps us to imagine our own virtuous behavior.⁴

Reading for Life draws these two strands together – virtue theory as it developed in the Christian tradition and the role of literature in shaping moral imagination – to foster restoration, remediation, community service, and affiliation in juvenile offenders. After completion of a baseline assessment, students are assigned to groups based on their reading abilities. Under the guidance of two trained mentors, students select one or more novels to read together. For the next ten weeks, they spend two sixty-minute sessions each week learning about the seven virtues, reading some of the novels, journaling on questions developed by the mentors from the readings, and discussing virtuous character implications found in the readings and their writings. Around week nine, students begin to explore community service options, again facilitated by the mentor. These projects are consistent with themes found in their reading, and mentors use students' suggestions as much as possible. For example, after reading *The Graveyard Book*, Neil Gaiman's Newberry Award-winning novel about an orphaned boy named Bod who is raised by ghosts, a group of boys and their mentors chose to visit Our Lady of the Road, a facility that serves homeless individuals in our community. They cooked and served meals, helped with the laundry facility, and talked to many guests. As one student from this RFL group explained, "We went to The Road because if the ghosts had not raised Bod, he would have been homeless, too."

During week twelve, the students and their parents complete posttest assessments, and students give a presentation to their parents about their experience in Reading for Life and their community service project. To date, 95% of RFL participants have remained out of the juvenile justice system up to one year (versus 75% of referrals in the control condition).⁵ In addition, parents of RFL youth consistently tell us that they see persistent and positive behavior changes. These adolescents *are* learning to become more virtuous people, and they are returning to their homes and schools with a renewed sense of hope.



How do RFL mentors avoid perpetuating the dehumanization of juvenile offenders so often found in the justice system? What are the elements that make RFL a success with youth? In addition to the theological, virtue-laden orientation of the model, there are at least three ways the program restores human dignity to these youth who have lost their way.

First, *we meet kids where they are*. The mentoring relationship is nothing

without a foundation of trust, and adolescents, especially those at-risk, do not trust easily because they have been hurt so often. One way to facilitate a healthy relationship between adolescents and mentors is to select a value-neutral location to meet. This means that we do *not* hold sessions in schools or churches, two locations where students have most often met rejection and disappointment. We also do not dictate a list of behavior regulations, like dress or language codes. We really have just two rules: be on time, and read the book. Most kids respond with respect, although we do see a range of both overt and subversive disrespect. It is very important that adult mentors not pass judgment, display shock, or express disappointment—especially until they build a trusting relationship with the student. We respond positively to the virtuous behaviors we want to see, and ignore the insolent ones we don't.

One recent RFL graduate is a shining example of why it is so important for us to redirect our focus from the superficial to the eternal. Steve came to his first group with an attitude of quiet disrespect. He sat as far from his mentors as physically possible, refused to remove his jacket, kept his arms crossed, and lowered his flat-brimmed hat over his eyes. He barely spoke the first hour, except to obtain clarification about expectations (e.g., “You mean there are no tests?”) and express some surprise over the format (e.g., “Well, this is different”). Despite his non-verbal protests, he liked our book options and found himself more emotionally engaged than he expected or perhaps even desired. His mentors said nothing about his jacket, hat, or posture, although they could hardly see his face the entire hour. Steve wore his hat to the next session, but removed it as he took his seat. He kept his long locks low and his eyes down; that is, until we started discussing Aristotle and the history of virtue theory. Steve had taken

one philosophy class in high school, and remembered quite a bit about people, places, and ideas. His eyes lit up as he realized that what he was reading and learning with us might have some bearing on what was happening in the rest of his life; and as his mentors began

to respectfully converse with him as a burgeoning young adult (which all adolescents are), he responded with generosity, kindness, and enthusiasm. For example, after the third session, he asked one of his mentors how we could afford to just give them books. Steve read eight novels in ten weeks, and indeed he would have finished more if we had received them from book stores quickly enough. He stayed twenty to thirty minutes after every session

**In stories we meet characters who feel,
think, and act as we would like to; our imaginative identification with a moral hero helps us to imagine our own virtuous behavior.**

to converse with his mentors, and expressed extreme disappointment that his graduation from RFL was drawing near. He even suggested meeting with one of his mentors to continue “book club” at a library near his home, which he had not visited since grade school! We never saw the hat again.

Second, *we listen – and not just long enough to get in the last word*. The volunteer mentors in Reading for Life are trained extensively in active listening and reflective questioning skills. As parents of teenagers know all too well, these things are tough to do. Often we can see exactly what a young person should be doing (or *not* be doing, as the case may be), and it is both expedient and convenient to just tell them so. This is not, however, the most effective way to change their immediate behavior, or to get them to want to behave differently in the future. Young people need to be heard; and we need to be patient enough to hear them without judgment or condescension, without having all the answers. It is very important that they find the virtuous path themselves.

Recently a group of heavy readers decided to read Scott Westerfeld’s *Uglies, Pretties, Specials* series. These post-apocalyptic novels give adolescents an excellent opportunity to explore ethical issues such as genetic engineering, population control, cultural expectations of beauty, and harmful behaviors like alcohol and other drug use. Some of the young people in these creative novels engage in excessive cutting, both as a pseudo-religious ritual and for a personal high. Cutting is a very serious issue for many adolescents, so the mentors of this group decided to bring in as a guest speaker another RFL mentor and undergraduate psychology major who had done extensive research and writing on the topic.

Prior to this session, Michelle had been an engaged and active contributor to the group. Her dress and demeanor suggested that she existed on the fringe of social networks at her school, but her quick wit and extremely bright intelligence had endeared her to mentors. She was a completely different person during the session with this guest speaker. She rarely looked up from her book, shifted uncomfortably in her seat, and departed quickly after speaking only a few words the entire hour. Her mentors were understandably concerned; even the guest speaker noticed her reticence. The topic clearly disturbed her.

At this point her mentor was faced with the difficult decision of confronting the behavior head-on or waiting for a good opportunity to discuss the topic, hopefully at the student’s prompting. When Michelle unexpectedly missed the next session and did not broach the topic, her mentor decided to pursue the first course of action with caution and sensitivity. She asked to meet Michelle for coffee outside of the group, and used the observations of Michelle’s contrasting demeanor discussed above to see if Michelle might talk. The mentor did not mention cutting per se, but suggested that there was “one particular session when [Michelle] did not seem to be [herself].” Michelle nodded in comprehension, and volunteered the specific topic. She

then followed with a lengthy account of her own cutting history and successful abstinence, as well as her concerns about a close friend who had some serious identity issues and was at least partially, and unhealthily, resolving those with cutting. When we place ourselves in a position of receptive listening, adolescents will talk.

Finally, *we expect much from students, but never more than they are capable of bringing to the table*. Delinquents are notoriously poor readers. Statistical documentation to this effect has been available since the 1930s,⁶ and recent reviews confirm that a growing body of sophisticated research supports this contention.⁷ Little effort, however, has been made to systematically remedy the problem. We address this issue head on by assessing reading ability during our first meeting, and sorting the students into groups accordingly, effectively ensuring that students are in an environment that supports better reading comprehension and personal life application.

One of our earliest, and most encouraging, success stories comes from a young adolescent boy who was referred to us with extremely poor reading skills and even worse academic prospects. His mentor was a former schoolteacher who specializes in students with reading difficulties, and she worked individually with Darnell. The novel he chose was Christopher Paul Curtis's Newberry winner *Bud, Not Buddy*, a poignant story of an African-American boy who sets out across Depression-era Michigan, with just a shoe box of his mother's belongings, to find his missing father. For perhaps the first time in his young life, Darnell encountered a protagonist with whom he could relate, and a "teacher" who was willing to

work within the limits of his reading ability and help him build better comprehension skills. They read together; he read independently. She asked questions; he answered and she listened. As Darnell discovered small achievements in the RFL group, he began to apply those skills at school and found that he could be successful there as well. His

grades improved dramatically; he made the basketball team; he even won a scholarship to spend a week at a local campground the following summer—something he had never done before. He became a model student and camper: he is now consistently on the honor roll, a varsity basketball star, and junior camp mentor. Recently we saw his mother, who shared that although Darnell has read many great novels since RFL, he still "carries that book

Young people need to be heard; and we need to be patient enough to hear them without judgment or condescension, without having all the answers. It is very important that they find the virtuous path themselves.

around with him everywhere." He met our realistic, yet challenging expectations and then just soared.



"Why do you do this? Why did you help my son?" the parent of a Reading for Life student asked me.

"Two reasons," I replied. "One, I don't think that just because you mess up once that society should just lock you up and throw away the key."

"You mean like what happened to me," he interjected. I shrugged as tears came to my eyes, imagining what this father's life experiences must have been.

"The second reason is this: I believe in the infinite value of every single human being. Your son is worth it. Evan is better than this (i.e., a life in the justice system)."

There is no doubt that many of the students we work with need a relationship with Christ. Yet efforts to share the gospel with them have often been short-sighted at best and mean-spirited at worst. For example, one of our students recently asked her mentor, with furrowed brow and disgusting sneer, "Are you a Christian?"

"No," her mentor, Brooke, replied, "not in the way that you think of that kind of Christian. I am definitely *not* that."

This honest exchange opened the door to several weeks of readings and discussions about Christianity, the Bible, the Church, and people in it. In the process, Brooke learned that this girl had been kicked out of church by her youth pastor. His parting words: "You just need to get saved."

"I don't even know what that means!" the girl told her mentor in exasperation.

At-risk youth have very real and corporeal physical needs that should take precedence over any immediate experience of salvation. Our mentors must *be* Christ, so that our youth can actually *see* Christ. Christ is perfectly capable of working their salvation out in his own, divinely providential time.

As Paul reminds us, sometimes the development of virtuous character requires suffering, however ill-wrought it may be: "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us..." (Romans 5:3b-5a). He well knew that only those who have truly suffered can find genuine, supernatural hope – that is, the hope of Christ. Our students are learning this, too, and we are all the beneficiaries.

NOTES

1 For an overview of virtue theory in the Christian tradition, see Peter Kreeft's *Back to Virtue* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986) and *Summa of the Summa* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990); C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1943), especially Part III, "Christian Behavior"; Gilbert Meilaender, *The Theory and Practice*

of *Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1984); and Josef Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1966). The recent revival of virtue theory owes much to the work of the Christian philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1984).

2 Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 16.

3 Anthony Cunningham, *The Heart of What Matters: The Role for Literature in Moral Philosophy* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001); and Paul Vitz, "The Use of Stories in Moral Development: New Psychological Reasons for an Old Education Method," *American Psychologist*, 45 (1990), 709-720.

4 Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 9. Bettelheim notes, "It is not the fact that virtue wins out at the end which promotes morality, but that the hero is most attractive to the child, who identifies with the hero in all his struggles...and the inner and outer struggles of the hero imprint morality on [the child]."

5 Students in the control condition are expected to complete twenty-five hours of community service, and participate in a final assessment meeting within sixteen weeks of their initial assessment. This gives them approximately the same number of community contact hours as Reading for Life students.

6 Norman Fenton, "Reading Interests of Delinquent Boys," *Journal of Juvenile Research* 15 (1931), 28-32.

7 Michael P. Krezmien and Candace Mulcahy, "Literacy and Delinquency: Current Status of Reading Interventions with Detained and Incarcerated Youth," *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 24 (2008), 219-238; and Diana Rogers-Adkinson, Kristine Melloy, Shannon Stuart, Lynn Fletcher, and Claudia Rinaldi, "Reading and Written Language Competency of Incarcerated Youth," *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 24 (2008), 197-218.



ALESHA D. SEROCZYNSKI

is Director of Reading for Life in Notre Dame, Indiana.

Project TURN: Portrait of a Prison Ministry

BY SARAH JOBE

Through Project TURN, divinity school students join inmates in classes held in prison. Together they are seeking the pieces of theological reflection that become missing in a society willing to silence huge swaths of its population through incarceration.

The most faithful Christians I know turn to Matthew 25:31-46 for their marching orders: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, care for the sick, and visit those in prison. This passage is one of the only times in which Jesus talks about eternal life, and he does not mince words in explaining that eternal life in God's kingdom will be reserved for those who have done these works of clothing, feeding, and visiting. It is no wonder, therefore, that these "works of mercy" have become a tool to assess how closely our lives match up to Jesus' expectations.

But despite appearances, Matthew 25 is not primarily a to-do list. Jesus does not offer eternal life because his followers have done these works of mercy. He does not offer life because they have followed orders. Jesus offers his followers a place in God's kingdom because they have fed, clothed, and visited Jesus himself. Matthew 25 is not a to-do list; it is a list of places where we can go to meet Jesus in our world.

The Bible offers Matthew 25 as a roadmap for those of us looking for Jesus, and, as it turns out, Jesus is always right around the corner. To those seeking him, Jesus explains, "I'm standing in line at your local food pantry; you're welcome to come stand with me. I'm confined to a hospice bed, so you'll have to come to my house to visit. I'm locked up at your local prison, and I'm desperately in need of friends."

We go to prison not because Jesus told us to, but because Jesus is there.



Every Thursday night I enter Raleigh Correctional Center for Women (RCCW) expecting to meet Jesus. I drive from my home in Durham with a handful of students from Duke Divinity School. At the main desk, we sign-in and show our IDs. Sometimes we are asked to spread our arms and legs while a corrections officer waves a wand around our bodies, searching for items that have not been approved. Sometimes they know we are coming. Sometimes they cannot find the memo explaining our presence, and we wait while phone calls are made around the facility. Jesus can be hard to get to, even when you know where he is.

We pass through administrative offices, an outdoor quad, and the volleyball court, and past the trailers that serve as dorms. Through the windows we see the rows of bunk beds that leave our friends and classmates very little privacy. At the very back of the facility we get to a double-wide trailer with an inviting wooden porch. This is the Hope Center where we hold our seminary-style classes every Thursday night for two hours. This is where I go to meet Jesus.

I direct a program called Project TURN that teaches seminary-style classes in North Carolina prisons. RCCW was the first prison to welcome our program, but we also offer classes at Durham Correctional Center, a minimum security men's prison. Our professors are pastors, published authors, and faculty from Duke Divinity School. All of our classes are offered on-site at local prisons, but only half of each class is comprised of incarcerated men or women. Many of our non-incarcerated students are from Duke Divinity School, and they are taking Project TURN classes for credit toward their degrees. These students come into the prison each week to study alongside their incarcerated brothers and sisters.

Every Thursday night I go into RCCW expecting to see Jesus. Just a few years ago, this was not the case: I entered the prison with anxiety – afraid I would unthinkingly bring my cell phone in and be banned from the facility, afraid I look like a naïve outsider to the women incarcerated there. I was surprised, week after week, when I was met by warm smiles, hugs, and inquiries about how my week was going.



A few years before that, I just did not think to look for Jesus in prison at all. While I might have felt some responsibility to *bring* Jesus into prisons, I certainly would not have gone there looking for him.

I would not have looked for Jesus in prison because I live in a society that understands “inmates” to be fundamentally different from “the rest of us.” I have been taught that inmates are so different from “the rest of us” that “the rest of us” do not really have to treat them like humans at all. I have come to call this prevalent idea that incarcerated people are fundamentally different

from non-incarcerated people a “criminal anthropology.” Once I had eyes to see it, I could see this criminal anthropology at work everywhere: in our language, in our legal system, even in our missions.

“Anthropology” is a fancy word for what we believe about the fundamental nature of human beings: who people are and what they can become. “Criminal anthropology” indicates who we believe incarcerated people are and what they can (and cannot) become. The criminal anthropology at work in our culture starts by separating people who have been incarcerated into a permanent sub-category. Being in this group becomes one’s primary label. We label these people felons, offenders, criminals, convicts, and inmates. Even after incarceration ends (if it ends), people in this category continue to be labeled and categorized in this way. Once a felon, always a felon. Once an offender, always an ex-offender. Once a convict, always an ex-con.

As the story goes, this group shares common characteristics. They are manipulative, deceptive, and untrustworthy. They have a “criminal mentality,” a phrase that indicates that the minds of people in this group function in fundamentally different ways than “the rest of us.” As the label of incarceration follows for a lifetime, so does the label of these characteristics. Once incarcerated, never again to be trusted. This label renders finding a job after incarceration a herculean task.

Criminal anthropology serves a very important social function. By marking this group of people as “not quite so human as the rest of us,” it allows those of us who are not incarcerated to treat other men and women inhumanely without any guilt over our inhumane actions. Being a “criminal” means a woman can be ripped away from her children, partner, friends, and family. If a man is a “criminal,” he can be denied his right to vote. “Criminals” can be locked in cages—concrete boxes the size of a small bathroom—without access to natural light or human contact. Particular sorts of “criminals” can even be killed.

One problem with this story we tell about “criminals” in our society is that it is not true. It is not true that incarcerated people are fundamentally untrustworthy, twisted, and beyond change. It is not true that they are somehow less human than “the rest of us.”

For Christians, there is a second problem with criminal anthropology; namely, that it stands in direct contradiction to what the Bible says about who people are and what they can become. Genesis 1 tells a story about people being created in the image of God. The Bible suggests that when we look at one another, we should be able to see the face of God shining out. When we learn to see the shocking beauty of God in another person, we learn to see their immeasurable worth.



Project TURN witnesses to God’s story about who people are. In each of our classes, we break open a space where people can experience one another’s

worth. Duke Divinity School students are not invited into the prison as volunteers, chaplains, teachers, or mentors. They are invited to be fellow students, who sit with, listen to, and learn from those who society claims have nothing to teach and nothing to give. Each student in the class is invited to learn that they are nothing more or less than the image of an utterly worthy God.

Though some of our students are incarcerated and some are not, some have spent their whole lives in schools and some dropped out of high school, they all do the same reading and the same written assignments. We do not pretend that the different experiences of our students will not affect their performance. Instead, we create a classroom environment in which everyone's gifts can be highlighted, and everyone's weaknesses can be confronted and strengthened.

For example, we ask students who have easy access to computers to handwrite their work, out of respect for their classmates who do not have access to computers. This proves a particular challenge as we have come to favor assigning multiple drafts of the same written assignment over the method of assigning multiple papers during the semester. We find that a process of revising the same written piece over the course of a semester levels the playing field between students of different educational backgrounds.

We do not pick reading materials that unduly favor the gifting of only half the class. For instance, we assign only as much reading as students can be expected to complete, and do not favor academic articles over other genres of communication. Instead, we assign reading materials from a range of genres that will challenge everyone in the class to think in new and fresh ways.



Our classes are not the answer to a broken social system. While most of us would support drastic reform of our nation's rampant incarceration practices, Project TURN does not engage in advocacy work. Instead, we create demonstration plots in which people might imagine different ways to exist with one another across social divisions. Our hope is that students will leave the brief experience of our classes and bring a more just imagination to whatever task God calls them. In the past four years, we have seen signs that this is a realistic hope.

A few semesters ago, one of our students was placed in solitary confinement over alleged charges involving her prescription medication. I watched her classmates support her through a harrowing nine months in solitary. Her letter-writing with her classmates is, without exaggeration, the most consistent interaction she had with other human beings in those months. Their relationship as classmates has become an astonishing friendship that seems to be changing and sensitizing each of the women involved.

While incarcerated women do not currently receive Duke University course credit for their participation in our classes, I was encouraged that one of our graduates was invited by Duke's Center for Reconciliation to join in a

week-long Summer Institute. She was offered a full scholarship to participate in a track entitled “Reconciliation in the Prison Context.” At the end of the week she reported on her track to the entire Institute. With tears in her eyes, she testified to the God of astounding possibility who could bring her to the center of Duke University only three weeks after her release from prison.

The razor-wire walls between prison and academy should become more fluid. Our theological thinking is not complete when large segments of our population are barred from participation. We hope that as we bring small groups of Divinity School students into prison each week, both prison and academy will be reshaped to allow for more truthful and more faithful theological reflection in which all voices are invited to the table.

TURN stands for “Transform, Unlock, ReNew.” We take our name from Romans 12:2 in which the Apostle Paul pleads that we no longer conform to the patterns of the world, but instead be transformed by the renewal of our minds. Paul thinks this mind-renewal will yield a “sober judgment” about ourselves and the people around us: this transformation through learning will mean that “you [do] not... think of yourself more highly than you ought,” but are freed to see yourself as a member of a body in which each person has particular, God-given gifts. Paul imagines that this body cannot function without all of its members (Romans 12:3-8).

Project TURN imagines the same. So, each week we go into prison seeking the members of the body that have been cut off. We go into prison seeking the pieces of theological reflection that become missing in a society willing to silence huge swaths of its population. We go into prison to see Jesus. And by the grace of God, we are less and less surprised each week that we continue to find him there.



SARAH JOBE

is Director of Project TURN and a member of Rutba House in Durham, North Carolina.

The Hospitality House: Portrait of a Prison Ministry

BY MARY ALICE WISE

In a small Texas town that is home to six state prisons, Central Texas Hospitality House is an oasis of rest, food and drink, and needed clothing for those who have traveled far for a short visit with an incarcerated friend or family member.

The stigma of imprisonment affects the whole family. Can you imagine the pain felt by mothers who have daughters in prison? What would you do if you learned that your first grandchild was to be born while your daughter was serving time? What if you were a child and had to explain to schoolmates why your mom could not be a room mother along with their mom? What if you knew your mother would not be at home with you for twenty years? What if you had spent your last dime to get to the prison for visitation and found that you could not go in because you were wearing shorts?

Each weekend at Central Texas Hospitality House (CTHH) we see faces with painful expressions from such situations. CTHH is a non-profit organization formed in Gatesville, TX, in 2000 to soften the pain of families and friends visiting individuals who are currently incarcerated.¹ Gatesville is a small town, but it is strategically located: it is home to six state prison units with approximately 9,000 inmates, including the Mountain View Unit that has the state's death row for women.

The founding members of CTHH include a current warden, a former correctional officer, and a senior citizen who never dreamed that his grandson would be born in prison or that he and his wife would be frequent prison visitors. They saw the importance of visitation in the lives of the incarcerated ones and their families as well. CTHH now includes a board of directors

with two of the original group, and a faithful band of weekend volunteers.

With contributions from the Baptist General Convention of Texas, a local church association, several congregations, individuals, and ministries, CTHH is well on its way to a dream of building an overnight facility on five acres of land near several of Gatesville's prison units. Currently a small modular home serves as a Welcome Center. One of its rooms is filled with clean, used clothing that is distributed to those who come to visit inmates, not knowing the dress code for visitation. In another room, family members and friends sit and read quietly while they wait for their scheduled two-hour visit in the prisons. Sometimes in that room there is a guest sleeping on a floor pallet, exhausted from an overnight drive from a far point of Texas. A children's room has toys and books to fill the hours of waiting. Free snacks and light meals are available to help the time go by, or fill in where a meal was missed.

A much larger facility is on the drawing board to serve guests who travel from over 300 miles away. It will have nineteen bedrooms, bathrooms on the hall, a double kitchen, a dining room, a glassed-in play area and outdoor playground for children, a laundry room, a clothing room, an office and apartment for a director, and a room where a social work intern can meet with the families. The great room will serve as a day-visitor room. Local ministries will be invited to offer Christian movies, music, testimonies, and other activities for guests on the weekends.

Describing the plight of the children of prisoners, Byron Johnson has noted, "When parents are incarcerated, the lives of their children can be disrupted in many tragic ways. A change in the child's caregivers or addition of a new member to the household can be quite traumatic."² CTHH is searching for ways to help these children. The new facility will enable families to help one another cope with the enduring complications of their lives, and their children can look forward to a Saturday fun-day, along with their visit to the prison.

CTHH partners with the chaplains and ministries who offer discipleship programs in the nearby prison units. For instance, one unit has a faith-based dorm in which fifty ladies voluntarily commit to hours of study and to disciplines that can change their way of life. They are learning how to be free, even if they should spend the rest of their lives in prison. The Hospitality House is seeking ways to support the families of these women, so that when inmates return home, they find healthy support for those changes and do not revert to old habits.



My husband and I have been prison volunteers for thirty years. After we started with ministry to the general population, the chaplain invited Charles and me to be the chapel counselors for Women's Death Row. Because we make weekly two-hour visits to a smaller number of the prisoners — usually

there are eight to nine women on the row – we have seen clearly the impact of visitation upon these women. Recently we invited the four who regularly attend our small group to describe how visits help them.

Chelsea was the first to send us a lengthy letter, pouring out her heart about the impact of visitation upon her life.

Visits do many things for us locked up! They are a life line, because the people that come to see us are really our only contact with the world, besides our letters. They are an incentive to stay out of trouble, to keep hanging in there when we want to give up; a highlight to our day, week, month, and (for some) years. They are as a family reunion or a holiday with your beloved family and friends. A reminder that we do matter; that we are not alone, we are not forgotten, and we have a chance to refocus our minds and goals. We live in a place full of drama, pressures, stress, no privacy, and where it is so easy to feel forgotten, alone, hopeless, and to fall into despair. The Hospitality House blesses our visitors to be able to have a place to go, to be provided with clothes, a rest area, and a place to feel safe and welcome. A respite on an often long or tough journey, like a caravan in the desert before you make it to your oasis: a visit!³

Lisa wrote, “Seeing my family and friends lets me know that I’m not forgotten; and that I am loved and cared for. It’s like sunshine...it brightens my lonely, sad days. And brings a smile to both my heart and face.”⁴ And it does. We see the effect upon her life after she has visited with her son and felt that assurance. He can share his ups and downs with her, and she feels like a mother for that small amount of time.

Linda wrote, “As water is to three days of continual running, so are visits to an incarcerated inmate.”⁵ That is a good description. Linda’s family has been through births, cancer, and many complications. They have been faithful to drive a long distance to see her, even though visitation times for death row can be inconvenient, since they must be scheduled when the other prison visitation is closed.

Darlie said that “visits from family and friends are like having hugs wrapped around my heart.” She called it “a connection of heart strings.”⁶ Those on death row cannot have any contact visits. Glass and wire form a barrier. Seeing her loved ones helps her keep focused and fight for the truth.



Working as a volunteer for the Hospitality House, I have heard stories first hand that tug at my heart. One farmer from near Amarillo shared his plight with us recently. He had become tired during a four-hour visit with a niece who is in prison, and when he went to his vehicle for a break and tried to return, the officer who discovered a nail-cleaning part of his key ring had

denied him another entrance. When he asked for a restroom, the officer told him about the Hospitality House. This man told me that for a living he farms for another man, working from sunup to sundown. Earlier when his wife was imprisoned, he had saved for six months to accumulate the \$500 that allowed him to visit her twice a year. During this time he had cared for her three sons—ages two, four, and thirteen. He said that even though he had never been a part of a crime and had no criminal record, Child Protective Services checked him out to determine whether he was suitable to care for her children. Fortunately, his wife had been released from prison and, with the computer skills learned in prison had started a new job. Now a niece was in prison and he was back with other family members to visit her. This family's story is similar to many others.

Another man drove up to the Welcome Center as we opened at 8:00 a.m. one Sunday, asking if he could get free pants for his thirteen-year old boy to wear for visitation. The boy mistakenly had worn short pants. I ushered them to our clothing room and quickly found some appropriate pants from our collection. As the young man tried on the pants in the bathroom, I asked the father how many children he had. "Six children," he answered; the oldest was still in Houston, but he brought the five other sons regularly to visit their mother. I said, "I'm sure that raising six children by yourself is hard. I hope you have a church to help you." He replied, "I need to get back to church." When I asked the thirteen-year-old if he owned a Bible, he told me he wanted to have his own. So, I picked up a new Gideon Bible, which has study helps all lined out in the front of it, and gave it to him along with a hug as he left to join the other children. The dad and son had big smiles on their faces. They were ready for their two-hour visit and four-hour return to Houston. All this was done with a prayer for the Lord to bless that small chance to plant a seed in a heart.

In the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus tells us that when the Son of Man returns to reign "on his glorious throne" (Matthew 25:31), he will say to the ones invited to join his kingdom: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." And when they are puzzled, he will explain that "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:35-36, 40, NIV).⁷

This is the mission of Central Texas Hospitality House. We offer food and drink, a place of comfort for the hours while waiting to go into prison, needed clothing for visitation, and a quiet place for someone who feels ill. Often when I return home from volunteering at the Hospitality House, I think "I absolutely know that I have been where Jesus wanted me to be for this day." Serving as a volunteer is an adventure, for we never know who will walk in the door. It is fun to watch and see what the Father is doing in love, and join Him.

NOTES

1 For more information on Central Texas Hospitality House, see the organization's website www.cthhouse.org.

2 Byron R. Johnson, *More God, Less Crime: Why Faith Matters and How It Could Matter More* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2011), 29. Johnson refers to Elizabeth Inez Johnson and Jane Waldfogel, "Children of Incarcerated Parents: Cumulative Risk and Children's Living Arrangements," Joint Center for Poverty Research Working Paper #306 (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University / University of Chicago, July 17, 2002), accessed December 8, 2011, http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/jcpr/workingpapers/wpfiles/johnson_waldfogel.pdf.

3 Chelsea Richardson, personal letter to author, August 23, 2011.

4 Lisa Coleman, personal letter to author, August 28, 2011.

5 Linda Carty, personal letter to author, August 28, 2011.

6 Darlie Routier, personal letter to author, September 6, 2011.

7 Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™



MARY ALICE WISE

is a founding member and secretary of Central Texas Hospitality House in Gatesville, Texas.

Christian Critiques of the Penal System

BY L. LYNETTE PARKER

As public policies exclude more and more people from community life through incarceration, it is often asked, “Does the criminal justice system work?” The four books reviewed here propose an alternative vision for justice.

Conversation on crime and justice often carries a punitive tenor demonizing those called “criminals” and decrying the “leniency” of justice responses. Much political debate focuses on “being tough on crime” and creating increasingly harsher punishments. As those public policies are adopted, more and more people are excluded from community life through incarceration and other sanctions. In 2009 over 7.2 million people in the United States were subject to some form of probation, incarceration, or parole according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.¹ Beyond the numbers of people under correctional control, the response to criminal activity significantly impacts the social cohesion of communities and families as well as the personal development of individuals. Given this reality, an oft asked question is “Does the criminal justice system work?”

The four publications under review explore this question through the lens of Christian theology and propose an alternative vision for justice. In *A Place of Redemption: A Christian Approach to Punishment and Prison* (Burns & Oates, 2004, 128 pp.), available online at http://catholic-ew.org.uk/media/files/cbcew_publications/a_place_of_redemption, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales explore the realities of the British prison system, the characteristics of the populations that come under criminal justice sanctions, and the social impact of incarceration. They discuss how applying the idea of *imago Dei*—that human beings are created in the image of God—to the justice system would change the way we treat victims, offenders, and community members.

In *Criminal Justice and the Catholic Church* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007, 174 pp., \$24.95), Andrew Skotnicki develops a uniquely Catholic understanding of the purpose of imprisonment based on disciplinary practices of the church, especially the monastic prisons. He discusses how a lost understanding of Christ as the prisoner opens the door to more harsh and inhumane treatment. T. Richard Snyder, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000, 172 pp., \$18.00) argues that the Evangelical Protestant concentration on individual salvation creates a cultural understanding of the offender as "other" in which the underlying social causes of crime can be ignored. This individualistic focus also disregards the social impact of incarceration on communities, families, and the broader society.

James Samuel Logan's *Good Punishment? Christian Moral Practice and U. S. Imprisonment* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008, 261 pp., \$20.00) traces the convergence of social, political, and economic factors that feed the incarceration boom in the United States, further marginalizing minority populations. He discusses the problems presented by the prison industrial complex and scapegoating before going on to develop a vision for "good punishment."

While approaching the issues from different theological and philosophical traditions, the above authors nevertheless agree on the problems with contemporary criminal justice and together begin to trace the outlines of a solution. The problems: institutional forces benefit from a destructive status quo; the public view of prisoners makes citizens indifferent to their plight; and an emphasis on individual responsibility fails to take seriously the systemic injustice that prisoners face. The solutions: remember that prisoners, too, are made in the image of God; address the systemic causes of crime; and learn to love the people touched by crime.

All four authors find that the current criminal justice system fails to facilitate or encourage the transformation/restoration of individuals and communities. It could be doing much more. In discussing his journey to understanding the problems of the criminal justice system, Snyder recounts his surprise in learning of alternatives to incarceration known to be more humane and more rehabilitative. He describes arriving at the conclusion that alternatives are not more widely used because our culture is "held captive to a spirit of punishment" (p. 3).

One stream of influence that helps maintain punishment's domination is the "prison industrial complex." Logan starts his critique of the justice system by explaining how political and business interests come together to create a hunger for longer and harsher sentences, more prisons, and more prisoners. Not only do politicians use "tough on crime policies" to manipulate citizen's fears into votes, but private companies benefit from prisons in three ways: private prison management, private sector development, and private services provision. For each of these sectors, prisoners mean profits. One special interest group Logan does not address is the correctional officers unions. According to Joshua Page, the California Correctional Peace

Officers Association (CCPOA) lobbies heavily in opposition to legislation or policies that would lower the number of prisoners. Further, it sponsors a crime victims' organization that is particularly punitive in its demands.²

Images of the offender play a significant role in legitimizing and justifying harsh criminal justice responses. As Skotnicki points out, when we see the prisoner as "a political or moral threat" (p. 23), we open the door for any type of punishment to be imposed. Viewing offenders as less valuable allows us to warehouse and not help them. For Snyder, the Evangelical understanding of "personal salvation" reinforces the foreignness of those caught up in criminal behavior, or "othering," which in turn enhances the neglect of the marginalized communities from which they came.

This "othering" becomes quite visible when one considers the overrepresentation of minorities in the prison system. Both Logan and Snyder explain how the American drug laws affect whites and African Americans differently. Logan discusses the development of racism in the United States and how penal sanctions have varied by racial group over time. He quotes a 2003 report showing that "4,810 black males per 100,000 U. S. residents were incarcerated compared to 649 white males" (p. 69). Yet, the problem is not limited to the United States; the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales notes the number of black prisoners went up by 51% from 1999 to 2002, while the overall prison population only rose by 12% (p. 30).

Furthermore, many prisoners come from difficult backgrounds with a large percentage of female offenders having experienced sexual or physical abuse. According to Logan, 75% of U. S. prisoners have a history of drug or alcohol abuse (p. 98). In describing prisoners in England and Wales, the Catholic Bishops' Conference reports that 70% of young offenders had the reading level of a seven-year-old (pp. 21-25).

In addition, incarceration often negatively impacts prisoners' communities. Logan discusses this community destabilization as "collateral consequence" of mass incarceration. When going to prison becomes as common as going to school, it becomes simply a right of passage earning offenders respect. The return of ex-prisoners transfers prison terminology and other communicative symbols to their streets and families.

Incarceration of parents contributes to the corrosion of family relationships, causing children to develop low self-esteem and experience the social stigma of having a relative in prison. Children of prisoners often face the lack of basic necessities, negative peer relationships, and the development of anti-social behaviors. These negative consequences of incarceration can be found throughout the world.³

Personal responsibility is appropriate and important. But an exclusive focus on individual responsibility and the offender as law-breaker allows policy-makers, criminal justice professionals, and society in general to ignore the social causes and consequences of mass incarceration.

In contrast, each of the four writers offers a vision of justice focused on

human flourishing. It begins with a new view of prisons, one that can be summed up in the Catholic Bishops' Conference's reference to *imago Dei* as the basis of respecting human dignity. This is a way of viewing all people as inherently valuable regardless of behavior, social status, or race. In this vision, the purpose of punishment is not retribution but rather the protection of public safety and rehabilitation of offenders. Justice authorities would target the needs of both victims and offenders so that each could move beyond the offense in a healthy way and become full members of the community.

Skotnicki approaches this somewhat differently by focusing on the idea of Christ as prisoner. He argues that this recognizes "the sacredness of each human being, the freedom of the will, the centrality of virtue in the moral life, the duty of forgiveness, and the need for reconciliation" (p. 12). If we take this seriously then we will insist on prisons being places to foster repentance, reflection, and transformation.

One consequence of this view is that crime prevention would focus on improving services to marginalized communities instead of harsh punishment and "tough on crime policies." Snyder argues for collective grace which sees "redemption as corporate, political and communal while at the same time deeply personal" (pp. 62-64). In developing his account of "good punishment," Logan explains that it is focused on penance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. He uses the term "care-fronting" to speak of communities addressing wrong doing in such a way that the offender understands the impact of his behavior. But it must go beyond that to raising sincere concern for the offender's well-being.

This focus on meeting needs and creating an atmosphere conducive to transformation fits well with the theory of restorative justice—an alternative that Snyder, Logan, and the Bishops' Conference explore as a better way of doing justice. According to Daniel W. Van Ness, there are three competing views of restorative justice: an encounter between victims and offenders to discuss the crime and the response; repair of harm caused by crime with active participation from offenders; and transformation of victims and offenders while also revealing the injustices of society that must be transformed. Van Ness argues that this is a more biblical view which "asserts that justice... needs to be contextualized/discovered in each circumstance. This should be done by the parties themselves, when possible, in a moral dialogue that incorporates not only what they think, but also the values of their communities."⁴ In this way, restorative justice meets many of the characteristics outlined above for a Christian justice: respect for each individual; redemption as corporate as well as individual; and drawing out the values of penance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Restorative justice theory and practice also offer practical mechanisms for implementing justice in the broader secular society.

The relational nature of justice is explained by the Catholic Bishops' Conference when they speak of love. While incarceration should be reserved for offenders who offer a genuine threat to the community, we can still love

them, and this can have a profound transformational impact. This is what a Brazilian Catholic lay movement, the Association for Protection and Aid to the Convicted (APAC), discovered over thirty years ago. It defines crime as “the tragic refusal to love,” which turns the idea of an effective prison environment on its head. If failure to love is the problem, then teaching prisoners to love is the solution. Their process – human valorization – seeks to help each person understand her value as a human being as well as the value of other human beings. This foundation permeates every aspect of APAC facilities by ministering to needs such as medical care, legal aid, social work, educational and vocational training, and employment assistance; offering opportunities for spiritual transformation; addressing the need to restore and strengthen family relationships, and to integrate prisoners positively into society; and helping prisoners understand the impact of crime on victims and to take steps to make amends, either to their direct victim or others in the community who have been victimized.⁵

The APAC methodology provides a concrete example of how to apply the vision of justice proposed by most of the authors. All four provide a valuable exploration of the problems in the current prison system. Their responses give us helpful guidance in how to construct a better vision of justice leading to a better response.

NOTES

1 Lauren E. Glaze, “Correctional Populations in the United States, 2009” (Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Justice, 2010), accessed September 30, 2011, <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus09.pdf>.

2 Joshua Page, “Prison Officers, Crime Victims, and the Prospects of Sentencing Reform,” California Progress Report (March 22, 2011), accessed September 30, 2011, <http://www.californiaprogressreport.com/site/node/8796>.

3 In addition to Logan, *Good Punishment?* 75-93, and Catholic Bishops’ Conference, *A Place of Redemption*, pp. 29-30, see Prison Fellowship International Asian Commission, *Children of Incarcerated Parents: They are in our midst and in need of our help. A Background Paper Exploring Issues Affecting Children of Incarcerated Parents*. (Washington, DC: Prison Fellowship International, 2011), accessed October 3, 2011, www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/Discussion2011_submissions/PFI/ChildrenofIncarceratedParentsPFI.pdf.

4 Daniel W. Van Ness, “How is Justice Restored?” personal correspondence with Andrew Skotnicki, 2010.

5 Lynette Parker, “Prisons, Rehabilitation and Justice,” Restorative Justice Online (Washington, DC: Prison Fellowship International, 2010), accessed October 3, 2011, www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/prisons-rehabilitation-and-justice.



L. LYNETTE PARKER

is Programme Manager for the Centre for Justice and Reconciliation at Prison Fellowship International in Washington, DC.

Resources for Restorative Justice

BY KENNETH L. GARDER

**Restorative justice offers a broader lens, different goals,
and alternative practices to retribution and incarceration.
The books reviewed here invite us to journey toward a
justice that more accurately reflects God's covenant
justice that is "satisfied by the restoration of shalom."**

How should society respond to wrongdoing? Every society develops procedures, processes, and institutions in response to violations of its behavioral norms. The criminal justice system is a complex web of laws, enforcement and judicial personnel and procedures, and correctional institutions devoted to countering unlawful activity. The criminal justice system in the United States confronts enormous challenges that call into question the fundamental principles on which the system is built. These challenges cause us to reexamine the lens through which we view response to offenses.

The extraordinarily high rate of incarceration and the continuing use of state-performed executions signify the foundational role played by punishment as the preferred means of responding to wrongdoing in American society. Identifying, apprehending, convicting, and punishing offenders are the goals. Justice is served when the perpetrators are punished in proportion to their offenses. Justice, therefore, is viewed through the lens of retribution.

Increasingly, questions are raised as to the cost and effectiveness of the current criminal justice system. The cost of incarceration is forcing states and the federal government to look for alternatives to imprisonment. The disparities in sentencing driven by race and class raise serious questions about the fairness and equality of the current system. The high recidivism rate demonstrates that "correctional institutions" seldom actually correct wrongdoing. The growing number of victims' rights organizations is indica-

tive of the inadequate attention given to victims in the current focus on laws and offenders. Senator Jim Webb of Virginia is drafting legislation which calls for a complete review and overhaul of the system. The time is right for challenging current practices and offering an alternative approach to crime and punishment.

A growing number of criminologists and theologians advocate restorative justice as a viable alternative to the current system built on retributive punishment. While the concept represents what Howard Zehr calls “a compass, not a map,” it provides a different set of principles, questions, practices, and goals than those which guide the current criminal justice system. In *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (Good Books, 2002, 64 pp., \$4.95), Zehr distills in concise and accessible language the core principles and practices of the restorative justice “compass” or “lens” that he has been instrumental in developing. The book is intended to be a brief overview of the principles and philosophy that guide restorative justice practices. He defines restorative justice as “a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible” (p. 37).

The current criminal justice approach defines crime as a violation of the law and the state. Restorative justice, on the other hand, deems crime to be a violation of people and relationships. According to the dominant practice, justice requires the state to determine blame and impose punishment. Proponents of the restorative alternative understand that justice involves victims, offenders, and community members in an effort to put things right. The central focus of criminal justice is “offenders getting what they deserve” while restorative justice focuses on the victims’ needs and the offenders’ responsibility for repairing harm.

Zehr acknowledges evolution in his own thinking about the role of retribution. While he once viewed retributive and restorative as polar opposites, Zehr now argues that real justice is a continuum and retribution plays an important role. However, he stops short of adequately describing the appropriate role of retributive punishment as a component of justice and restoration.

While Zehr offers a brief overview, Karen Heetderks Strong and Daniel W. Van Hess in *Restoring Justice: An Introduction to Restorative Justice*, fourth edition (Matthew Bender & Company, 2010, 380 pp., \$43.95), provide a more extensive summary of the history, principles, goals, and practices of restorative justice.

Since responding to crime has been a part of every society, the patterns of thinking about justice have evolved throughout human history. Although Strong and Van Hess oversimplify the history, they sketch the antecedents to the existing patterns of thinking. Among ancient peoples crime was viewed as against victims and their families, and restitution was expected. By the middle of the ninth century, the interests of the victims began to be replaced by upholding the authority of the state. Punishment by inflicting

pain replaced restitution to victims; whatever restitution was extracted from the offender went to the state or the king, not the victim. By the eighteenth century, isolating offenders from their communities was adopted as a method of treating and correcting offenders. With support from some faith communities, the modern penitentiary emerged as an alternative to stockades, flogging, and corporal punishment. As the name implies, offenders were confined in penitentiaries as an opportunity to reflect on their wrongdoing with the goal of penitence.

Victims are the forgotten persons in the current system as crime is treated as offense against the state. The state through the police and courts determines guilt and punishment with little, if any, attention given to the needs of victims and their families or of offenders and their families. Justice is considered served when punishment is administered, with incarceration as the preferred sentence. Healing, transformation, and reintegration are left unaddressed. In this sense, Strong and Van Hess affirm, the current criminal justice system represents “theft by the state” from the victim of the offender’s harm, and the theft compounds the wounds of both victim and offender (p. 13).

The overarching goal of justice from the restorative perspective is the healing of victims, offenders, and communities, with emphasis falling on the needs of victims and the obligations of the offender and community to respond to those needs. A restorative response involves three essential components—encounter, amends, and reintegration. Although there are many variations of these components, they include these basic elements: noncoercive participation by victims and offenders and other stake holders; facilitated mediation, with adequate preparation; acceptance of responsibility by the offender expressed in apology, changed behavior, and restitution; and reintegration of victims and offenders into the community in ways that provide safety, dignity and respect, material help, and moral and spiritual guidance.

Strong and Van Hess affirm a role of faith communities in the restorative process, although the contribution seems to be limited to the reintegration phase. Christopher Marshall, on the other hand, provides a

comprehensive theological critique and vision in *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001, 362 pp., \$26.00). Marshall brings to the analysis his skills as a New Testament scholar and experience as a restorative justice facilitator. The result is a compelling biblical and theological foundation for a restorative means of dealing with crime, though the arguments are sometimes unnecessarily repetitive.

Restorative justice involves victims, offenders, and community members in putting things right. It highlights both victims’ needs and offenders’ responsibility for repairing harm.

While faith communities have supported and theologically rationalized the system of retributive punishment, they have also spawned the restorative justice movement. Marshall lets the reader know that he considers the Christian gospel as formative in understanding and practicing justice.

My premise is that the first Christians experienced in Christ and lived out in their faith communities an understanding of justice as a power that heals, restores, and reconciles rather than hurts, punishes, and kills, and that their reality ought to shape and direct a Christian contribution to the criminal justice debate today. (p. 33)

Justice from a biblical perspective is shaped by God's action in history, supremely in Jesus Christ. God's justice is expressed in God's saving action in creating shalom within a covenantal community. Therefore, biblical justice involves covenant, redemptive action, and community empowered by and directed toward a vision of shalom. As Marshall affirms, "The justice of God is not primarily or normatively a retributive justice or a distributive justice but a restorative and reconstructive justice, a saving action by God that recreates shalom and makes things right" (p. 53).

Marshall helpfully explores the role of punishment in the pursuit of justice and restoration. He notes, "the New Testament writers see a valid place for punishment in the administration of justice, though in nearly every case it serves a predominantly redemptive rather than retributive purpose" (p. xv). "Restorative punishment" serves to demonstrate a society's moral boundaries, call for repentance, and facilitate reparation. Punishments employed as part of the early church's discipline were inflicted out of equal concern for the integrity of the community and the spiritual welfare of the offender, not out of vengeance or a means of inflicting pain.

While there is a proper role for "good punishment," Marshall concurs with James Logan that many punishments employed in the current penal system are inherently destructive rather than restorative. Capital punishment is incompatible with a vision of redemption and reconciliation, and it contradicts basic foundational principles of restorative justice.

Marshall concludes that forgiveness is the consummation of justice and is grounded in God's forgiveness as expressed in Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is not a superficial act of letting wrongs go without impunity or forgetting the past. True forgiveness, revealed in Christ, takes seriously the harm done and enters into the painful process of repentance and reconciliation within the context of covenant community. Marshall insightfully identifies key components of forgiveness and describes the dynamics of the process.

Changing the lens through which society views criminal justice requires evidence that a restorative model is an effective alternative. Restorative justice has yet to be adopted on a large scale by a contemporary society; however, innovative programs have been initiated which point to the efficacy of restorative justice. Lawrence W. Sherman, professor of criminology at the

University of Cambridge, and Heather Strang, Director for Restorative Justice at the Austrian National University and lecturer in criminology at the University of Pennsylvania, have studied the role of restorative justice in the British youth and criminal justice system. Their *Restorative Justice: The Evidence* (London, UK: The Smith Institute, 2007, 95 pp.), available online at www.sas.upenn.edu/jerrylee/RJ_full_report.pdf, contains statistical and case study data that restorative justice programs substantially reduced repeat offending in some offenders and reduced crime victims' post-traumatic stress symptoms and related personal and financial costs. Additionally, restorative justice practices reduced victims' desire for violent revenge and reduced recidivism more than incarceration among both adults and juveniles.

The most important conclusion reached by Sherman and Strang is that restorative justice works differently on different crimes and different kinds of people. Restorative justice seems to reduce crime more effectively with more, rather than less, serious crimes and more consistently with crimes involving personal victims than with so-called property crimes. This conclusion runs contrary to the more widespread assumption that restorative justice practices should be limited to minor offenses. While the authors are reluctant to make sweeping claims from the limited available data, they affirm, "There is far more evidence on RJ [restorative justice], with more positive results, than there has been for most innovations in criminal justice..." (p. 8).

Christopher Marshall begins his book by declaring, "Few issues evoke such powerful emotional responses today as crime and its consequences" (p. 1). Preventing and responding to crime requires more than political slogans or programs that leave unattended the complex causes and multifaceted remedies. The evidence clearly indicates that the current criminal justice system with its over-reliance on retributive punishment merits critical critique and creative reform. While restorative justice is no simple panacea, it does offer a broader lens, different goals, and alternative practices to retribution and incarceration. Communities of faith are uniquely equipped with a narrative of restorative justice to contribute to the conversation.

Many scholars and theologians have already entered the conversation and are contributing to the shaping of a new vision. The authors of these reviewed volumes invite us to join the journey toward a justice that more accurately reflects God's covenant justice and is "satisfied by the restoration of shalom."



KENNETH L. CARDER

is the Ruth W. and A. Morris Williams Professor of the Practice of Christian Ministry at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina.

Editors



ROBERT B. KRUSCHWITZ

General Editor

Bob Kruschwitz is Director of the Center for Christian Ethics and Professor of Philosophy at Baylor University. He convenes the editorial team to plan the themes for the issues of *Christian Reflection*, then he commissions the lead articles and supervises the formation of each issue. Bob holds the Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Texas at Austin and the B.A. from Georgetown College. You may contact him by phone at 254-710-3774 or e-mail at Robert_Kruschwitz@baylor.edu.



HEIDI J. HORNİK

Art Editor

Heidi Hornik is Professor of Art History at Baylor University. With the M.A. and Ph.D. in Art History from The Pennsylvania State University and the B.A. from Cornell University, her special interest is art of the Italian Renaissance. With Mikeal C. Parsons she coedited *Interpreting Christian Art* and coauthored the three volume *Illuminating Luke*. Her most recent book is *Michele Tosini and the Ghirlandaio Workshop in Cinquecento Florence*. You may contact her by phone at 254-710-4548 or e-mail at Heidi_Hornik@baylor.edu.



NORMAN WIRZBA

Review Editor

Norman Wirzba is Research Professor of Theology, Ecology, and Rural Life at Duke Divinity School. Norman holds the M.A. and Ph.D. in philosophy from Loyola University of Chicago, the M.A. in religion from Yale University, and the B.A. from the University of Lethbridge, Alberta. He is the author of *The Paradise of God* and *Living the Sabbath* and editor of *The Essential Agrarian Reader*. You may contact him by phone at 919-660-3400 or e-mail at nwirzba@div.duke.edu.



WILLIAM D. SHIELL

Proclamation Editor

William D. Shiell is Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee. He has served on leading committees of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. After receiving the B.A. in religion from Samford University, he earned the M.Div. in theology from George W. Truett Theological Seminary and Ph.D. in religion from Baylor University. He is the author of *Reading Acts: The Lector and the Early Christian Audience* (2005) and *Sessions with Matthew* (2008). His weekly sermons are published online in audio format at www.fbcknox.org. You may contact him by phone at 865-546-9661 or e-mail at shiell@fbcknox.org.

Contributors

DICK ALLISON

Retired pastor, University Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, MS

EMILY R. BRINK

Senior Research Fellow, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Grand Rapids, MI

KENNETH L. CARDER

Ruth W. and A. Morris Williams Professor of the Practice of Christian Ministry, Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC

HEIDI J. HORNİK

Professor of Art History, Baylor University

SARAH JOBE

Director of Project TURN and member of Rutba House, Durham, NC

ROBERT B. KRUSCHWITZ

Director, Center for Christian Ethics, and Professor of Philosophy, Baylor University

CHRIS MARSHALL

Head of School, School of Art History, Classics, and Religious Studies, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand

L. LYNETTE PARKER

Programme Manager, Centre for Justice and Reconciliation, Prison Fellowship International, Washington, DC

LISA M. REA

Restorative justice and government relations consultant, Rea Consulting; founder, The Justice & Reconciliation Project; and blog correspondent, Prison Fellowship International

ALESHA D. SEROCZYNSKI

Director, Reading for Life, Notre Dame, IN

ANDREW SKOTNICKI

Professor of Religious Studies, Manhattan College, Riverdale, NY

JOHN THOMPSON

Freelance writer, Texarkana, TX

MARY ALICE WISE

Founding member and secretary, Central Texas Hospitality House, Gatesville, TX