

A Theological Perspective of Incarcerated Inmates as *Imago Dei*

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Every human being is created in the image of God, and this includes those mentioned in Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:18-19: the poor, the captives, the blind, the prisoners, and the oppressed. Jesus claimed in the Lukan passage that the Spirit of the Lord had anointed him to proclaim the good news to these groups of people. Since Christians are his followers who have received the Greatest Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 to go and make disciples of all nations, to baptize them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and to teach them to observe all that he has commanded us, this means Christians should also preach the good news to these groups of people. Hence, there is a need to learn to look at them through the eyes of Jesus with compassion and love. Among the groups are prisoners who have committed a crime and hurt others and society. In the eyes of the law and of people, they deserve to be punished. However, Jesus included them among those he loves and cares for, which can be a challenge for his followers.

This article intends to establish the connection between restoring incarcerated inmates and God's compassionate nature of extending his grace and mercy to restore fallen humanity to his original design. It discusses the theology and the psychology of personhood, the theology of the Kingdom of God, the role of the church in jail and prison, and the role of the jail and prison ministry. All the names of the inmates quoted in this article were withheld by mutual agreement.

Theology and Psychology of Personhood

The first section of this article discusses the theology and the psychology of personhood, intending to integrate both studies to understand human beings. Hence, it is important to know the definition of both terms. The *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible and Theology Words* defines "theology" as

“the study of God” (DeMoss and Miller 2002, 241). According to Kirwan, “psychology is the science of mental processes and behavior” (1984, 24). Since God is the Designer of human beings, including their mental processes and behavior, it is worth understanding human beings from both perspectives. For this article, the term “personhood” refers to “human beings.”

The Theology of Personhood

The average citizen considers prisoners as outcasts of society with no hope for a new life. They regard these criminals as inferior human beings who deserve to rot in prison. However, God has a different way of looking at these incarcerated inmates. God created them in the same way he made everyone. Therefore, the theology of personhood that applies to the average citizen also applies to the incarcerated inmates.

Imago Dei is Relational

The Bible tells us (Gen 1:27) and every Christian is aware of the fact that humanity is created in the image of God or the *imago Dei*. According to Balswick, King, and Reimer (2005), *imago Dei* connotes the idea that humanity possesses some qualities of God, particularly his relational quality as manifested in the Trinitarian relationship (31). Genesis 2:18 says, “It is not good for man to be alone,” suggesting that even before the fall of man, God already singled out the importance of man’s social needs” (Kirwan 1984, 38). Therefore, humans as *imago Dei* are relational, and they are a unique creation living in a relationship with God and with others. Furthermore, God’s goal in creating humans is for them to establish a relationship with him and with other humans. “We were intended to be related to our Creator and other human beings in a unique and fulfilling way” (Kirwan 1984, 38). Therefore, if humans are to live according to the intention and design of God, they must strive to build a good relationship with God and with others. Thus, forming relationships is the goal of human development.

According to De Mesa (1991), the description of a lowland Filipino’s inner self (*loob*) depends on how he or she relates with others. He or she is said to have a good inner self (*mabuti or magandang loob*) if he or she

relates well with others. Hence, the inner self (*loob*) “is a relational understanding of the person in the lowland Filipino context” (45). Likewise, an incarcerated inmate, as *imago Dei*, is also relational and needs to build a good relationship with God and with others.

Free Will

Balswick, King, and Reimer (2005) acknowledge the consistent belief of Albert Bandura that human beings do not simply react passively to external stimuli but can think reflectively and plan their actions with his model of the reciprocating self (80). From this point of view, we can assert that when God created humans, he gave them the free will to choose to obey or disobey him; therefore, humans are active agents, having the capacity to make choices and decisions. Given this, humans are responsible for the consequences of their choices and actions. They will be personally accountable to God for these choices and actions. The reason why God allows humans the freedom to choose and to decide is for them to engage their free will actively in responding to God and not as mechanistic robots programmed to accept God’s love and mercy. God desires to establish a meaningful reciprocal covenant relationship with humans. Hence, in application to incarcerated inmates, humans are free to choose whether to resort to criminal activities or not.

Fallen Nature

Adam and Eve’s choice of disobedience in the Garden of Eden indicates humanity’s weakness and fallen nature. Hence, Christian theology supports the concept of sin and depravity and that mankind is born with the original sin and needs salvation (Clouse 1993, 362). According to Pazmino (1997), humans’ fallen nature affects their reasoning capability and other faculties, such as the cognitive and the affective, that ultimately influence the course of their actions (199). Hence, the average citizen and criminal possess the same kind of fallen nature. In terms of relationships, Kirwan (1984) claims, “After the fall, not only was the need for close relationships magnified, but the relationships which remained had become severely distorted” (38).

Restored by Grace

Although humans have fallen short of God's glory and broken their relationship with their Creator, they still have the chance to restore such a relationship through the gracious act of Jesus Christ. "When Adam and Eve fell, they lost their sense of identity. Nevertheless, God had a plan to restore it. The Scripture unfolds this plan of redemption, which culminates in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ" (Kirwan 1984, 93). A positive response to what Christ had done for humanity, dying on behalf of their sins, will lead to the restoration of humans' identity and their relationship with the Creator. Through the response of faith to the person and work of Christ on the cross, humans can recover their lost identity. If there is no such response of faith, any attempt to recover human identity will prove futile (93-94).

Capable of Transformation to Forgive, Heal, Rehabilitate, and Reconcile

Even though humans are by nature sinful, they are capable of experiencing conversion and transformation into the persons God designed them to be (Pazmino 1997, 192). This applies to everyone, both criminals and non-criminals. Balswick, King, and Reimer (2005) believe that there is an internal tension in humans with their being *imago Dei* struggling against their sinful nature (86). Psychology gives a very clear explanation of how internal tension brings about transformation within a person. According to Loder (1998), the human spirit has a transforming potential (55-59). This transforming capability is due to its complex being, which includes the cognitive (head) and the affective (heart) aspects. Both these aspects are actively functioning within a person and must be in balance with each other or be in a state of equilibrium. A state of disequilibrium between the two results in internal conflict or struggle. Though this is a psychological explanation, it remains a fact that it is very much part of God's creative design, and it is God who built into humanity the aspects of the head and the heart with the capacity to strike a balance between them. Kirwan tries to explain the connection between cognition and emotion by presenting these physiological facts.

The brain's role regarding our feelings is complex. The human being is the only member of God's creation with frontal lobes, which give us the

unique ability to reason logically, worship, and pray. Frontal lobes, with their capacity to reason, are dependent on the involuntary or limbic system of the brain, the center of our feelings. The rational part of the brain, the cerebrum, overlays and is dependent on the lower part of the brain, the limbic system, and the brain stem. The reason for belaboring these physiological facts is to show that the cognitive and the emotional or affective aspects of the brain are inextricably bound to one another. “Facts” and “feelings” are part of the same process. The brain does not separate feelings from facts or facts from feelings (Kirwan 1984, 50).

Loder (1998) explains that when the inferior aspect strives to pull alongside the dominant aspect, it will cause people to realize that there is a need to reevaluate their actions (55-59). It is after self-evaluation that they can accept healing and thus encounter God. An illustration would be the crime of murder. When a person is provoked to anger, his or her affective aspect fires up, making it the dominant one, which influences his or her choice of committing murder. Only when the inferior aspect, in this situation, the cognitive, catches up does the person rationalize the consequences of his or her action. As a result, the person is capable of admitting his or her misconduct, maintaining clarity of mind, understanding the situation, forgiving his or her aggressor, accepting healing, and pursuing reconciliation.

Moreover, Loder also contends that it is important for both the head and the heart to be in balance with each other to avoid false visions. When the cognitive aspect is too strong, the person may only accumulate head knowledge without personal experience, which will lead to genuine transformation. The person may only know and remember the facts without any significant relevance since there is no personal encounter or situation that will validate the information that he or she has obtained. On the other hand, if the affective aspect is too strong, the feeling has no firm foundation or basis to stand on. Such feelings may be subjective and may just come and go. This may lead the person to develop false faith. The outcome can be a temporary transformation, and people may tend to switch back to their old ways when they face a crisis that is beyond their capacity to bear. Consequently, the cognitive and the affective need each other. Moreover, there is a need to hook both the head and the heart on God’s Word for a stable transformation.

In conclusion, since “human uniqueness in God’s creation is primarily due to the capacity for covenantal relationships” (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 24), people can transform and reconnect with God and with others through the process of forgiveness, healing, rehabilitation, and reconciliation. Thus, transformation takes place when people encounter God and are capable of restoring relationships.

Encountering God

A person can achieve an authentic process of transformation only through an encounter with his Creator—our almighty God. “Those whose *loob* (inner self) is pure, serene, and controlled have ‘special powers’ granted to them by Christ” (De Mesa 1991, 46). It is through going back to the Creator’s original intention and design of creation that one can live with real peace and harmony with God, with the self, and with others.

Loder (1998) suggests four subdivisions for spiritual development that process transformation, focusing on a person’s internal condition. The first process is *awakening* to the fact that there is a gap between people and God due to the fallen nature of humans. This process takes place when people realize that they need God in their lives. The second process is *purgation*, or the dying of oneself to move closer to God. This process liberates people from their blindness before their awakening. The third process is *illumination*, when people start to develop faith in God and accept his gift of salvation. At this stage, a person becomes secure in God and willingly becomes what God has called him or her to be. The last process is *unification* or the spiritual union with Christ, which becomes people’s ultimate longing (48-54). Slobodzien (2004) and Kirwan (1984) refer to Loder’s first and second processes of *awakening* and *purgation*, respectively, as the stage of justification. They identify the third stage of *illumination* as the stage of sanctification and the final process of unification as the stage of glorification.

Restoring Relationships

The process of transformation that Loder (1998) suggested unifies humans with God (48-54). However, the process does not end there because the stage of unification also aims to restore human relationships. God’s concept of relationship is both vertical and horizontal. Matthew 25:35-46 records that God made it clear that we cannot have a vertical relationship with him

without a horizontal relationship with our brothers and sisters (Smarto 1993, 116). Hence, a person is supposed to reciprocate not only with God but also with fellow human beings. For Balswick, King, and Reimer (2005), a healthy reciprocating relationship must respect diversity in unity (31). This means that each person must have the space to be who he or she is and to express his or her uniqueness yet be in a harmonious relationship with each other, promoting unity. The Holy Trinity is the best model since each member of the Trinity is distinct from the other as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, yet they are one and in unity. Concerning God's relationship with humans, God allows humans to enter into an intimate relationship with him where they can freely admit both their strengths and weaknesses and accept his healing. Despite human weaknesses, God continues to initiate an unconditional covenant with him and waits for him to respond. God strengthens the covenant relationship by extending his mercy and grace to humans. God models the four elements that nurture reciprocal relationships for us to imitate: unconditional covenant/commitment, grace, empowerment, and intimacy.

Personhood and the Incarcerated Inmates

Theology contends that the sinful nature of humans weakens them in resisting the temptation to sin. Instead of giving regard to the standards of God, humans reduce their sense of morality to their personal preferences (Colson 1999, 61). This is what is happening in today's society. The "what makes you feel good" subjective standard now replaces God's objective standard for right and wrong. In government, "what is legal" becomes the right thing to do. Society has set aside moral and biblical issues. Divorce, homosexuality, premarital sex, abortion, etc. become the norm. For this reason, we are today witnessing broken families, negligent parents, abandoned children, jobless people, and all sorts of societal illnesses. People trapped in these harsh situations most likely end up committing criminal activities to survive. Hence, crime is a result of human sinful nature.

Despite their sinful nature, God created people to be transformative and extends his grace and mercy so they will have personal encounters with him, rebuild their broken relationships with him, and undergo the process of transformation, restoring God's original design for them. Some inmates stated,

I thank the Lord for accepting me despite my past so that I may have a second chance to live my life according to his teachings. I do not regret my arrest because I deserve this. I am not in a hurry to get out of prison because I know that while I am still here, the Lord is still working on me and preparing me for my release.

When I get out of here, the first thing that I will do is look for a church so that I can continue to grow and change for the better. I will also come back to the Correctional Institute of Women to help the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism in ministering to the other prison inmates just like how they ministered to me.

I now realize that if it was not because of imprisonment, I could not have known Christ.

The Psychology of Personhood

God created man and woman in his image and loves and established an intimate relationship with them, yet the fall of man and woman led them to bear a sinful nature for which God extends his grace to redeem his image in them. “Through the fall, Adam tainted the destiny of all who would follow him. A significant result of the fall is mental and emotional suffering, formally labeled psychopathology” (Kirwan 1984, 38). However, the relationship between God and people can be restored through the death of Christ, and his resurrection brings to us a message of healing and hope.

However, not everyone responds positively to God’s act of redemption; therefore, his or her self-image remains distorted. Consequently, it is the task of Christian ministers and educators to help incarcerated inmates acknowledge their need for God’s redemption to transform back into the image of God and to restore their relationship with their Creator.

Psychology as a Tool for Understanding Development of Self-Image

Although genuine transformation can only take place through Christian conversion, we must not discount the importance of psychology as a tool for understanding and identifying factors affecting a person’s self-image so

that Christian ministers and educators can know how to approach incarcerated inmates in helping strengthen their inner selves. Kirwan (1984) also maintains, “Identifying the unique factors which have shaped a troubled individual’s psychological makeup, knowing precisely where that person is, will help the counselor determine which theological points fit the particular situation” (189). Furthermore, Kirwan suggests that God includes the psychological aspect in the design of his creation.

Similarly, in discussing our meaning, purpose, and responses to God, the Bible assumes those principles of psychology that are essential to the definition and understanding of human personality. Studying psychology, which is a God-created category, is therefore legitimate and proper, provided one remembers that it is part of a much larger whole of spiritual laws governing humans that encompass far more than psychology (37).

The Issue of Nature versus Nurture and Human Development

As early as the sixteenth century, several proponents of child development emerged. The theories of John Locke and Jean Jacques Rosseau gave rise to the issue of nature or genetics versus nurture or environment. Locke believes that children’s minds are like blank slates that need input from the environment to learn, while Rosseau believes that children are born with the capabilities to create and to learn but that the environment can hamper their creativity and abilities. Both Locke and Rosseau have their adherents who later followed through each of their works, developing several theories on human development (Berk 1996, 10-11). For the sake of looking into the interplay between the environment and the individual self, we will look at some of these theories.

Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development

According to Berk (1996), Bronfenbrenner suggests that children “develop within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment” (27). The innermost and immediate is the microsystem, where all relationships are bidirectional and reciprocal, which means that the environment affects a child’s behavior and vice versa. It consists of the home, school and peers, playground, and religious institutions. The next is the mesosystem, which refers to the connections among the

microsystems. The next level is the exosystem, which is the social setting that does not contain the children but that affects their experiences in the immediate setting. These are the extended family members, parents' workplace, family social networks, neighbors, mass media, and community services. The outermost level is the macrosystem, which refers to the values, laws, customs, attitudes, and ideologies of a particular culture. Though the macrosystem is the outermost level, the changes in this system are particularly important because they affect all the other levels (27). Lastly, the chronosystem refers to the dimension of time as it influences the child's environment. This can be the time of the parent's divorce or a parent's death. Children can respond differently based on the age they are in when the incident occurred (Berk 1996, 23-38). Another example of a chronosystem is the worldview the child is taught as the norm, such as the generation he or she is born into.

Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Human Development

Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory presents the eight stages of human development. According to him, every person encounters an inner conflict at each life stage. The ability of the person to resolve this inner conflict positively or negatively at each stage depends on the individual's interaction with his or her environment. A positive environmental experience will lead to a positive outcome, while a negative environmental experience will lead to a negative outcome (Berk 1996, 17-18).

Hence, Bronfenbrenner and Erikson recognize the crucial role of social interaction in the development of self-image. De Mesa's view also agrees with this contention. "*Loob* (inner self), as man's core, is also an appropriate concept to describe a person in relationship to others because it provides an insight as to what kind of person one is" (De Mesa 1991, 57). Given this, there is a need to develop one's ego strength and moral reasoning ability to counter this effect. Hence, there is a need to explore the work of psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson for the building of ego-strength, as well as Lawrence Kohlberg on the development of moral reasoning ability.

Sigmund Freud's and Erik Erikson's Psychoanalytic Theory of Human Development

Sigmund Freud's psychosexual theory presents three portions of the human

personality: the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. *Id* is the largest portion of the human mind, is present at birth, and is the source of basic biological needs and desires. *Id* operates on the pleasure principle and seeks to satisfy a person's instant impulses. The *superego* is the seat of the conscience aiming to conform to the demands of society. The *superego* develops from social interaction and as a person matures. It is at the other end of the continuum and is always in conflict with *id*. The *ego* is the conscious and rational part of the human mind and serves as the mediator between the *id* and *superego*. The task of the *ego* is to make sure that the gratification of the *id*'s desire follows reality and is socially acceptable (Berk 1996, 16-17). In their book, *The Problem of Evil*, Colson and Percy (1999) also acknowledged the contribution of Sigmund Freud.

In Freud's theory, people are not so much rational agents as pawns in the grip of unconscious forces they do not understand and cannot control. A committed Darwinist, Freud proposed an evolutionary scheme in which our primitive impulses (the *id*) belong to the oldest, most animal part of the human brain, while the rational mind (the *ego*) is a later development from the more highly evolved cerebral cortex (47).

There are times when the *id* must dominate; otherwise, life would be so stiff, rigid, and dull, leading to obsessive compulsion. On the other hand, in some cases, the *superego* must dominate; otherwise, this world would be without order if everyone were free to go his or her own way all the time. Hence, the development of the *ego* must be healthy and strong. Extending the work of Freud, Erikson proposes that negative or positive social experience at each life stage determines healthy or maladaptive development of ego strength (Berk 1996, 17).

Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

However, developing a person's rational portion of personality alone is not enough. It would be best if such reasoning power could progress alongside the advancement of moral understanding. Hence, we recognize the work of Lawrence Kohlberg on the theory of moral development. Kohlberg extended Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development by providing a more complete description of the changes that occur in moral reasoning from childhood to adulthood. According to the theory of moral development, the

same factors that promote cognitive growth also affect the development of moral understanding. He believes that when a person actively struggles with moral issues and notices the weaknesses in his current thinking, it will promote the ability to reason morally. Likewise, when a person advances in perspective-taking skills, he or she will be better equipped to resolve moral conflicts in more complex and effective ways. He or she focuses more on how to reason out his/her moral judgment (Berk 1996, 592-593).

Integration of Psychology and Theology in the Development of Self-Image

From the above discussion, both theology and psychology stress the importance of the self-image. Theologically, God's image created in man and woman is the ideal self-image that everyone is supposed to have. Kirwan (1984) states,

Let us note Adam and Eve's mental and emotional condition before the fall. At first, they had a clear sense of their own being or selfhood. To put it another way, we could say that they had a strong self-image. Self-identity is basically each person's answer to the question "Who am I?" (74)

Another requirement for establishing a strong sense of self-identity is a frame of reference through which the self and the world can be accurately viewed. The particular framework within which Adam and Eve had been created enabled them to see God, the world, and themselves perfectly. For they had been created in the image of God, God was their reference point in everything (76).

Unfortunately, the fall of man and woman distorted their original image of God. According to Kirwan (1984),

Adam and Eve lost their sense of self because they rebelled against God. They were no longer united with God in fellowship and love. God's image in them was defiled, although it still existed. God expelled them from his presence, and so they lost God as their reference point. They had to look to themselves for some kind of integration. Their egos became the axis

around which their thinking, feelings, and actions revolved. Their identity, no longer God-centered, became self-centered. The human being instead of God became their standard of truth. Such truth is only assumptive at best, not absolute (78).

After the fall, Adam and Eve's perceptions changed. No longer did they have an absolute knowledge of reality; their vision of reality was blurred. The distortion was both external (what they saw) and internal (how they felt); it encompassed everything (79).

Psychologically, Bronfenbrenner and Erikson claim that a human's social interaction with the environment affects his or her self-image. The environment, as a reflection of one's self-image, is most likely a distortion. From the psychological perspective, rationalization is a way of changing and correcting a person's belief system. We can acknowledge the contribution of Kohlberg's moral reasoning theory and the Psychoanalysts' (Freud and Erikson) suggestion for strengthening the rational ego part of personality.

From the theological perspective, Christian conversion must be the foundation for the development of the self-image involving the processes of justification, sanctification, and glorification. The process of justification (repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior) restores the image of God in a person and his or her relationship with the Creator.

Therefore, the contribution of psychology can help Christian ministers and educators understand the factors affecting self-image, such as one's environment, and how to help the person build healthier ego strength. Understanding these factors helps Christian ministers and educators plan how to approach the person and what method of evangelism to use to help change one's belief system. The lifetime journey of sanctification (transformation into Christ-likeness) is a lifetime of training on how to deal with one's sinful nature, such as anger, bitterness, jealousy, revenge, and immorality, based on a Christian rationale. Understanding that one's moral reasoning ability depends on cognitive maturity encourages Christian ministers and educators to consider the cognitive level of a person and how to help the person advance to the next higher level of moral reasoning based

on biblical teachings, thus developing the ability for Christian moral reasoning. This will enable Christian ministers and educators to know how to journey with incarcerated inmates as they undergo discipleship and counseling. The process of glorification serves as the reward for a person's effort to sanctify him or herself, giving him or her the hope of eternal joy.

Hence, religious therapists show interest in integrating psychology and the Bible to help people cope more effectively with their emotional problems. "Through this conversion experience and subsequent Christian Psychotherapy, incarcerated believers are able to receive enough security in the love of God and significance in God's plan for their lives to overcome their past feelings of inferiority and inadequacy for healthy self-image and a future free of crime" (Slobodzien 2004, 48).

Even though theology has considered psychology as a tool to understand human personality, it is still a part of the spiritual laws that govern the human being, as suggested by Kirwan (1984). Therefore, psychology alone is not enough to bring about real transformation because absolute authority and truth are still found in the Kingdom of God. Hence, there is a great need to explore the Kingdom of God.

The Theology of the Kingdom of God

It is important to note four important questions concerning the Kingdom of God. The first question is, *what* is the Kingdom of God? The word *kingdom* indicates sovereignty; hence, the Kingdom of God means the *reign or rule of God*. It is, therefore, the complete submission and surrender to the authority of God. Furthermore, according to Stassen and Gushee (2003), the Kingdom of God is about God's performance and people's participation in God's work. It is active and not passive (20-21). This means that God is actively reigning in his Kingdom and that his subjects actively participate in joining him in his reign.

The second question is, *when* is the Kingdom of God? Jesus began his preaching by telling the people to repent because the Kingdom of God is near (Matt 4:17, Mark 1:15). This means that the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated at the birth of Christ, yet its consummation will take place in

his second coming. Therefore, we are living between the inauguration and the consummation of the Kingdom of God, which means that it already exists and is nearby. It is not yet perfect or fulfilled but is in the process of perfection and fulfillment.

The third question is, *where* is the Kingdom of God? A kingdom requires a territory; where, then, is the territorial sovereignty of God? The world is the creation of God. Therefore, his reign is supposed to be in the world, which means that the Kingdom of God has started since the beginning of creation. However, when evil entered the world, it became contaminated, and thus, the Kingdom of God ceased in certain ways to be in the world. In Romans 12:2, Paul commanded us “not to conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” God’s reign is absolutely holy and pure; as a result, his Kingdom cannot be of this world, that is, of this worldly order. Since God’s Kingdom already exists, it exists in the hearts of his people, who acknowledge his sovereign authority over them. Thus, when these people gather to be involved actively in God’s reign, his Kingdom is established. In summary, the Kingdom of God is the reign of God already in process where God’s people, in complete submission, respond to his call to participate actively and join God in building his Kingdom.

After establishing the first three questions concerning the Kingdom of God, the last question would be to ask *how* we could build God’s Kingdom in a prison facility for the inmates. When God’s justice expands throughout society, his Kingdom will also expand. Hence, God’s Kingdom can expand in jail and prison by making the conditions of inmates bearable.

Calling for People of God

From the perspective of the prophet, Isaiah 61 is about the restoration of Zion; however, Jesus quoted it as referring to his mission (New American Bible, 1991). Verses 1 and 2 call for the people or servants of God to continue the ministries of Jesus. Verses 3 and 4 listed several caring ministries and mentioned the rebuilding of communities, respectively. Among the caring ministries of Jesus that God’s people must continue is to release the prisoners from darkness. Hence, there is a mandate for the people of God

to help the incarcerated inmates see the light through caring for them and rebuilding them, just as how God cares for us and is constantly rebuilding us. The attainment of personal salvation through God's forgiveness and redemption should serve as the starting point in bringing the inmates out of the darkness, transforming them, and leading them to the Kingdom of God (Col. 1:13-14).

The loving care of God's people allows the incarcerated inmates to experience the loving care of God that will lead them to acknowledge their need for God and to accept his redeeming grace, resulting in an intimate relationship with him. Their encounter with God and their experience of a loving faith community will help enable and empower them to rebuild their self-image, find hope for transformation, and allow God to reign in their hearts, establishing God's Kingdom in them. For this reason, the active participation of God's people in the kingdom-building activity of God through transformation is relevant and is a mandate.

God's Performance and Man's Participation

When God created the world, he did not simply create and leave it alone. He sustains his creation by developing and engaging himself intimately with it. Furthermore, God's act of grace after the fall did not simply end with redemption. Instead, he continues to work in us by sanctifying and restoring the world to bring it to perfection. Hence, as God's people, Christians are to join God in his work by building the church and the human community. There must be an integration of evangelism and social action. This entails long-term commitment, just as how God is committed to sustaining his creation eternally. The implication is for jail and prison ministers and workers to integrate their evangelistic mission by paying attention to the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs of inmates. Moreover, the caring ministry to the incarcerated inmates must be a long-term and sincere commitment.

The Role of the Church in Jail and Prison

Pope John Paul II, in the Roman Catholic Council document *Redemptoris Missio*, dated December 7, 1990, has a Latin title, *Ad Gentes*, which means

to all peoples, implying that salvation is for all people (169). It argues,

Nevertheless, there must be no lessening of the impetus to preach the Gospel and to establish new churches among peoples or communities where they do not yet exist, for this is the first task of the church, which has been sent forth to all peoples and to the very ends of the earth (172).

Likewise, the evangelical document *Lausanne Covenant* (1974) also claims, “We believe that the gospel is God’s good news for the whole world, and we are determined by His grace to obey Christ’s commission to proclaim it to every person and to make disciples of every nation” (253).

Biblical Response to Sin and Crime

Holt (1993) maintains that God’s grace releases us from a life of crime and punishment (141). Therefore, it is crucial to bring God’s message of grace and mercy to offenders and nurture the growth of their faith in God, which will set them free from the bondage of sin and crime. This will require the church to engage in a process of evangelism and mentoring. The church’s role is to plant the seeds of God’s love and word through sharing about God’s gift of salvation and to mentor them through follow-up, counseling, Bible studies, etc. However, only God has the power to rehabilitate people because he changes and reforms them from the heart. His love brings hope to the hopeless inmates. This is more effective than building prison cells and thus reduces the crime rate (Colson 1979, 216). In addition to this, the church can help empower the inmates with skills to face the issues of their reentry into society.

The Church’s Calling

Nieves (1993) considers Philippians 2:5-8 as the passage that sets forth the essence of biblical compassion, which is to suffer with those who are suffering (67). Nieves also cited passages where Jesus taught compassion in Matthew 18 and Luke 10:33 (69-70). Jesus did not just teach but demonstrated compassion in Mark 1:41, 5:19, 6:34, and 8:2; Matthew 15:32 and 20:34; and Luke 7:13. Therefore, it is an all-encompassing mandate for the

church to be compassionate as well as to do justice because the two go together.

The way Christian workers view and treat inmates will either manifest compassion or aloofness. Christian workers who treat inmates as people who are hopeless and from an inferior class would be aloof to them. However, those who look at inmates as their fellow creations of God in his image but with sinful nature, just like everyone else, will treat them with compassion. There is a need to learn from Jesus as the model of compassion. They must be like an elder brother and sister to the inmates and not act overbearing or use political power over them (Colson 1979, 211). These inmates need not only professionals but also friends who will listen to them and care for them.

The Role of Jail and Prison Ministry

For transformation to take place, Christians need to participate actively in helping address societal issues instead of just sitting comfortably in the church listening to the preaching of the pastors or studying diligently in seminaries and libraries. Moreover, commitment to societal concerns must be long-term and sincere to bring about transformation. Hence, there must be focused effort and energy in ministering to prison inmates. For this reason, the role of the jail and prison ministers is very crucial.

To Evangelize and Mentor

Smarto (1993) promotes the crucial role of jail and prison ministry in addressing the root cause of crime, which is spiritual drought (165). The author presented two principles for effective jail and prison ministry that Perkins advocated. First, there must be indigenous leadership development, and second, there must be Christian community development. The purpose is to address the needs of inmates upon their reentry into society. There must be a Christian community ready to meet their needs and take care of their wounds (117). Moreover, the role of jail and prison ministry is not just to evangelize but to disciple as well. For mentoring to be possible, there is a need to provide halfway houses and transitional living facilities for inmates upon their release. This will allow the opportunity to pair an inmate with a Christian volunteer inside and outside the jail or prison facility to

boost spiritual growth. Therefore, there is a need for different volunteer groups to work together in evangelizing and mentoring (166-67).

To Educate

The hope of the nation lies at the heart of education. Education prevents people from committing a lifetime of mistakes due to ignorance. Juvenile offenders are most likely to have irresponsible and negligent parents who are ignorant of their parenting roles. Without a nurturing environment to grow up in, these youngsters look for parental love and care elsewhere that usually ends in the arms of deceiving crime syndicates who teach and affirm their performance of criminal activities. Education develops in us the skills to observe, think, analyze, critique, compare and contrast, reflect, evaluate, and create. Therefore, with proper education, people would think twice before plunging into marriage, premarital sex, or criminal activities as they analyze and reflect on the consequences they must face afterward. On a larger scale, they would realize the domino effect of their actions could affect the well-being of a nation. However, the term *education* does not confine itself to the four walls of a formal classroom. Education becomes meaningful when it is relevant to the lives of the people. Hence, jail and prison education must look into what is essential in transforming the inmates. Programs must actively engage the inmates in the learning process through application and ultimately prepare them for reentry to society.

To Equip Christian Volunteers

According to Smarto (1993), Christian volunteers need to understand human nature. They need to admit their sinful nature to enable them to empathize with the inmates and to develop compassion for them (166). Furthermore, this will help them be aware of the inmates' needs for love, support, friendships, respect, and esteem besides the physiological ones. Hence, Christian volunteers need to love and respect the inmates as fellow human beings created in the image of God. However, for volunteers to practice these principles, they need training and equipping. Volunteers must have the proper credentials to work with inmates. In addition to this, they need to be accountable to a proper authority.

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