Reflections On Some Theologico-Ethical Norms For Prison Ministry

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SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS

Inasmuch as my reflections are informed by the basic tenets of personalism, e.g., the principle of the inherent, intrinsic worth of persons, it might be said that this essay is a personalistic reflection on some theological and ethical norms for prison ministry. Or, because I am also influenced by the basic principles of liberation theology, e.g., the total liberation and empowerment of people forced to the margins of society, it might also be said that this is a bird's-eye view of how one African American liberation ethicist thinks about the tragedy that is the American penal system and the general failure of professedly Christian peoples and their institutions to respond with a sense of moral outrage and urgency both verbally and substantively. Either way, this essay intends to address two questions: What are some of the fundamental norms that ought to inform the theological social ethicist's and prison minister's thinking about prison ministry? What are some implications of these norms? Before explicitly addressing these questions I want to make several preliminary comments.

Many churches already engage in what they too confidently fancy to be prison ministry. Generally this tends to mean little more than a weekly or monthly visit to the local jail or prison facility to hold a service and pass out tracts. My intention is not to be unduly critical of such efforts, since they may produce some good, however minuscule. Indeed, the Bible commands that we visit those in prison, but does not give us a recipe to follow once we get there. It does not tell us what to do and how best to do it. However, a basic point that we

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often forget is that we are to use some common sense and be guided by the spirit of the gospel as we consider best possible ways of ministering with those in prison and to those prisoners who have been returned to the community.

For example, if we remember that we are—regardless of race, gender, class, age and health—one people united by the will and love of the One God who has imbued us with the divine image, it should not be difficult to see that a weekly or monthly sermon or Bible study at the local jail or prison is only the bare minimum of what prison ministry should be. However, if we conclude from our reading of the Scriptures that a basic insight therein is that of the interrelatedness and interdependence of all persons in Love (God), then it must occur to us that what is happening to our sister or brother at any given time is also happening to us. But even more, it is happening to the God who creates and sustains us. Therefore, when I think about prison ministry, I know that such ministry is as much about me and God as those who are behind prison bars and those who have been released into the wider prison of this society.

What I am suggesting is that any efforts at prison ministry (or any ministry, for that matter!) are based on spoken or unspoken theological and ethical assumptions or norms. That is, prison ministry is very much linked to our idea of God, God's relation to human persons and the world, and our relation to God and each other in God's world. The serious Christian, Jew, Muslim, etc., must be clear about her or his theologico-ethical assumptions and consider the implications for prison ministry that are relevant to the magnitude of the tragedy that confronts us today; this offers a radical and creative vision of new ways of thinking about prison ministry that are consistent with Jesus' proclamation that the Kingdom of God is at hand—right now.

If one of our assumptions is that God created the world and us, set all things in motion, and then went off into some distant part of the universe to contemplate divine thoughts—that God is little more than a distant spectator who does not really care about us and the world—this will have a profound effect on the way we think about and engage in prison ministry. If we cannot see how we are connected with God, each other and the world, we may well conclude that an ethic of individualism is the most we can achieve. Since the assumption that God is a distant spectator implies that God does not care about us and the world, why should we? Why not consistently do whatever is necessary to promote our own individual good at the expense of whoever and whatever gets in our way?

Or, if one of our basic assumptions is that God, although the creator of all persons, bestows unequal portions of God's image, it would be easy to conclude that God is a respecter of persons; that God loves and values some persons or groups more than others. And if this is so with God, why not with us? Indeed, this seems to be one of the basic assumptions that informs the way many professed Christians think about prison ministry. Many Euro-American Christians, for example, do not appear particularly alarmed that nearly fifty percent of the

total prison population in this country are African American men. This is an exorbitant percentage in light of the fact that blacks comprise but twelve percent of the nation's population. In addition, the middle, managerial and corporate classes of all races in this society are not especially disturbed that the majority of those in the penal system are the poor. Indeed, as Clarence Darrow said in his classic "Address to the Prisoners in the Cook County Jail" (1902), "First and last, people are sent to jail because they are poor."[1] Historically there have been exceptions to this claim, but they have been few indeed when we consider the number of poor people incarcerated.

If we assume that God is somehow a respecter of persons and thinks more of one person or group than another, this will affect both the way we think about and do prison ministry, as well as who we think should be imprisoned. It is imperative that all who claim to be called to ministry make a concerted, decided effort to identify the operative assumptions or norms in their thinking about prison and other types of ministry.

I now want to propose, in outline form, several of the fundamental norms that inform my thinking about prison ministry. But in order for these to receive the maximum radicalizing effect, it is important to observe that they must be guided by "ideal conceptions which condition their application."[2] These are three: *the highest conceivable estimate of the worth and destiny of persons; the highest possible conception of the value of the plant and animal kingdom; and a general theory of reality and conception of God* which adequately grounds the intrinsic worth of persons first and foremost.

FACTORS WHICH CONDITION AND MORALIZE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

What we think about the worth of persons, nature and the animal kingdom will have much to do with the way we treat them. If our estimate of their worth is low, we will generally treat them accordingly. We cannot, in all honesty, claim to respect persons, other life forms and the environment, for example, while maliciously and selfishly demeaning or destroying them for economic or other gain. That the environment is being decimated, that various members of the animal kingdom are threatened with extinction, is evidence enough that many persons possess low estimates of their worth.

Similarly, we cannot honestly claim to be lovers of humanity and respecters of the inherent sacredness and inviolable worth of all persons when we imply through our actions that the worth of women is less than that of men. That black, brown and red peoples and the poor in this country continue to be brutalized on a massive scale is indicative that the powerful and privileged have a very low conception of their dignity and worth. We seem to think, albeit mistakenly, that it is we, human beings, who have the power to determine the essential worth of particular groups of persons and other forms of existence. We fail to understand that the most we can do in this regard is to pass value judgments on the worth of

particular persons and groups. This is why we need that other conditioning factor: namely, a theory of reality and God that adequately grounds the ideals of the dignity and worth of persons as such. At any rate, it should be pointed out that a high conception of the value and worth of persons and the animal and plant kingdoms will generally result in corresponding behavior toward them.

The personalist, Borden P. Bowne (1847-1910), saw clearly that if one possesses a low estimate of the worth of persons it is conceivable that she or he may verbally espouse the highest ethical principles (e.g., love, justice and righteousness), while simultaneously exhibiting disrespect for others. This, he believed, was the major problem with both Plato and Aristotle. After praising their ethical systems, Bowne concluded that both men held a low conception of the essential value of persons as such. Plato, for example, saw no contradiction between his ethical system and his support of infanticide and the killing of the elderly and helpless. Aristotle, on the other hand, saw nothing wrong with human slavery. "The trouble in these cases," Bowne wrote, "was not in their ethical insight, but in their philosophy of man, or in their conception of the worth and destiny of the human person."[3] It does not matter that one espouses principles of love and justice if she or he does not adhere to the highest possible ideal of the dignity of the person. Such a conception is needed to condition ethical principles in order to insure the best possible treatment of persons.

In addition, our theory of reality or conception of God is extremely important as a conditioning factor. Through an adequate doctrine of God we can effectively ground the norms of good will and respect toward persons; equal rights for all persons; preferential option for the least or marginated; and the interdependence and interrelatedness of persons in community. In other words, an adequate conception of God gives us grounds for possessing the highest possible estimate of the worth of persons and other aspects of creation. Such a conception of God allows us to see the unity of all persons in God, but in such a way that no created person loses her or his individuality which is necessary to guarantee their sense of freedom. We find plenty of support for this view in the Scriptures. Cain Hope Felder points to this in his discussion of the law of love in the New Testament in reference to the neighbor.

Felder shows that the nine references to love with respect to the *neighbor* in the New Testament refer to "another human being, irrespective of the person's race or class, and, in some instances, of gender."[4] He finds this to be particularly the case in the Gospel of Luke. "Luke's hermeneutic is noteworthy, because the clear implication is that *one's neighbor is not necessarily one's fellow Christian*."[5] The neighbor may be one who is outside the Christian community. This implies a kind of unity or interrelatedness of all persons, with God at the center. And of course there is that profound passage in Galatians where Paul reminds us that in Christ there is neither Jew, Greek, slave, free, male or female, for all are one in Christ Jesus (3:28).

Charles Hartshorne takes the idea of the oneness of all persons in God to new heights, making it clear that, based on this conception of God, whatever is done or not done to any member is not only done or not done to all others, but to God as well. This is similar to Jesus' criterion for the last judgment in Matt. 25:31-46 where he establishes that what we do or fail to do to the least of the sisters and brethren he will take as done or not done to Him. This, He proclaimed, is the chief criterion for entering the Kingdom. All of this implies Jesus' total commitment and solidarity with those counted among the least.

Hartshorne contends that God's love is much deeper than benevolence or well-wishing. At bottom it is *sympathy*, "taking into itself our every grief." It is God in solidarity with the sufferings and joys of persons through "a feeling of sympathetic identity."[6] When the homeless are seeking shelter, it is not merely they who seek shelter. When those imprisoned in the penal system and others in the society are crying out for justice and the right and opportunity to live fully human lives, it is not they alone who cry out. When African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans demand total liberation and empowerment, it is not merely they who do so. Rather, in every case it is the very God of the universe who cries for justice and comprehensive empowerment. As if writing a commentary on the Gospels, Hartshorne says:

> That other fellow (of whatever social class) whose sonship to God we may abstractly admit, is not just a product of divine power, or just an object of divine well-wishing, but *a very fragment of the life of God* which is made all-inclusive through sympathy. *We ourselves are valuable only because we, too, are caught in the same unity of love.* Men seem outside each other, and they imagine they are all outside God....All is within the divine sympathy. *We are members of one another because we are members of the living whole,* bound together by solidarity of feeling, a solidarity imperfect in us but perfect and absolute in God. *If we even inconvenience our fellows, we inconvenience God; if we torture our fellows, we torture God;* as used to be said, we re-crucify Jesus....[7] [emphasis added]

All persons are so related and connected through God's *sympathy* that any injustice done to any one of us is an injustice done to each other *and* to God. Such a conception of God provides adequate warrant for the four norms that shape my thinking about prison ministry.

SOME THEOLOGICAL-ETHICAL NORMS FOR PRISON MINISTRY

The assumptions or norms that guide my thinking about ministry with prisoners and ex-prisoners in this society are rooted deeply in African American and Jewish-Christian thought, and undergirded by the long-neglected philosophy and ethics of personalism. Although strands of personalism date back to ancient African, Oriental and Greek thought, this particular world-view, way of life, and

living together in the world was given its most systematic and methodological formulation by a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Borden Parker Bowne. Bowne began formulating this philosophy before he was called to Boston University in 1876 as professor of philosophy and the first dean of the Graduate School. By 1907 he was a confessed personalist. Indeed, in a letter to his wife on May 31, 1909, he said: "I am a *Personalist*, the first of the clan in any thoroughgoing sense."

Personalism is any philosophy for which the person is the dominant reality and the only intrinsic value. In other words, personalism holds that reality is personal and persons have infinite dignity and worth. Although there are at least eleven types of personalism,[8] and not all personalists have been theists,[9] the type that informs my thinking most is profoundly theistic, freedomistic and empirical; its method is synoptic and analytic; its criterion of truth is growing empirical coherence, and its theory of knowledge is activistic and dualistic. This is personalism in its most typical and theistic form. Were I to continue this line of thought we would see that there are numerous affinities between personalism and the basic beliefs of the Christian faith.

L. Harold DeWolf (1905-1986), a third-generation personalist theologian, wrote a major book on crime and justice in 1975. In his attempt to develop ethical norms of criminal justice, DeWolf considered the basic ethical truths of Jewish, Christian and secular philosophical traditions to determine whether a useful consensus may be reached.[10] After considering each tradition, he suggests the following as norms to be used as criteria for determining the ethical acceptability of a given philosophy of criminal justice: (1) Consistency in the substance and procedures of the law; (2) Benevolent good will and respect toward all persons; (3) Equal rights for all persons; (4) Presumption of innocence; (5) Special care to protect the least, the poor, the weak and the unpopular from unfair treatment; (6) Restoration of community when disrupted; and (7) Responsibility of all individuals for the community.[11] I think it reasonable to appropriate several of these norms for any adequate thinking about prison ministry. I will not concern myself with policy and practical implications of these, although I think some of these will be evident from the discussion of the norms or assumptions to be considered.

For my purpose at least four norms must inform our thinking about and engagement in prison ministry whether with those imprisoned or with those released to continue struggling to find wholeness in life. These include: (1) Good will and respect toward all persons; (2) Equal Rights for *all* persons; (3) Preferential option for the well–being and protection of the systematically, massively oppressed; and (4) The interdependence and interrelatedness of persons, and consequently the primacy of persons in community.

Good Will And Respect Toward All Persons

There have been periods in American history when African Americans and

Native Americans were not considered by whites to be persons. At best they were thought to be subpersons with backward, inferior cultures. Although such a view is inconsistent with both the basic principles of personalism and the best in the Jewish-Christian tradition, there have been proponents of these who have held such truncated views. At any rate, I underscore *all* in this first norm because it is important that we recognize that those who truly believe that there is one Creator who imbues us with the divine image, can only conclude that all persons—not a select few—have infinite dignity and worth because they are created and loved by God. God is therefore no respecter of persons. God loves us all, although God, like our earthly parents, knows that we have different needs. As God is not selective about who to love, we are not to be selective.

To the extent that Christians claim to be recipients of God's grace and love, we have no choice in who we will love. If we have truly surrendered ourselves to God, we will do what God requires of us, namely to love and respect one another unconditionally. There are no exceptions. By virtue of their humanity and the image of God in them, we owe the imprisoned unconditional love and respect as well.

One of Bowne's most insightful statements was that whenever and wherever *any* two persons meet anywhere in the universe, they owe each other good will and respect[12] as a matter of course. It does not matter what is their race, gender, class, age, health or prison record. This principle of respect for the inherent dignity and sacredness of persons is based on belief in God as Creator and Sustainer of all persons. Into the nostrils of every person God breathes the fragrance of the divine.

Equal Rights For All Persons

Here again I underscore *all.* As believers of whatever religious persuasion, we cannot pick and choose those for whom we will work to ensure equal rights. The highest conceivable estimate of the worth of persons, and our faith in the God in whom we live and move and have our being, requires that we appropriate and apply the norm of equal rights on behalf of all persons.

Preferential Option For The Least

This is the point where traditional conservative *and* many liberal believers feel they must part company with liberation ethicists. It is difficult for them to understand how a God who has created all persons in God's image and loves all can have a *preferential option* for the poor and the oppressed, and consequently that we are required to do the same. If Jesus did not have what amounts to a preferential option for the poor, imprisoned, the widow and the orphan, it is difficult to understand why He went to such great lengths to make it clear that the mistreatment of these will be taken as mistreatment of Himself. Indeed, why would Jesus Christ focus in His inaugural address on preaching the gospel to the poor,

healing the brokenhearted, preaching deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind and setting at liberty them that are oppressed, if these did not have some special endearment to Him (Luke 4:18-19)?

That the gospel proclaims a preferential option for the poor and oppressed does not mean that the rest of humanity—including oppressors!—is loved any less by God. Peruvian priest and liberation theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, tells us that "*Preference* for the poor is written into the gospel message itself," and that "it is precisely this preference that makes the gospel so hard and demanding for the privileged members of an unjust social order."[13] Reflecting on the Puebla Conference[14] held in 1979, Gutierrez points out just as quickly that *preference does not imply exclusivity*, i.e., that God loves the poor and oppressed exclusively. Rather, the emphasis is on "the special place the poor have in the message of the Bible and in the life and teaching of Jesus and the position they ought, therefore, to occupy among those who consider themselves His disciples."[15] Although St. Irenaeus was right when he said, "The glory of God is the living person," the late Archbishop Oscar Romero added a special emphasis that makes the point of this third norm: "The glory of God is the living *poor* person"[16] [emphasis added]. Indeed, when empirical observation reveals that certain groups are systematically mistreated and beaten to the ground, this would seem to further legitimize Romero's emphasis. DeWolf admonishes that the only way to conform to the norm of equal rights for all persons is to take special measures to give such groups a fighting chance to live fully human lives and all that that requires. Otherwise the norm of equal rights for all persons is a mockery.[17]

The Primacy Of Persons–In-Community

This final norm is more important than at first appears. It has already been implied in norms one and two, i.e., good will toward all persons, and equal rights for all persons. In addition, the conception of God referred to earlier has obvious relational and communal overtones. According to the conception of God discussed earlier, there is an inextricable interdependence between God, created persons and the rest of creation. Nels Ferré a third–generation personalist, held that the very stuff of reality is social.[18] According to Ferré, "the origin, content and function of consciousness are social in nature." Therefore, the individual must never be treated as if she or he exists in isolation, but in the context of her or his community.[19] Similarly, Edgar S. Brightman held that reality is a society of interacting and communicating persons united by the will of God.[20] In each of these instances we see a strong focus on the communal or relational nature of reality and the person.

Although the eighth-century prophets made the nation rather than the individual the basic moral unit,[21] implicit in many of their proclamations was a fundamental respect for the individual. Surely we can see this in Amo's denunciation of social injustice. In any event, we can surely say that Jesus went beyond

the prophets in the emphasis he placed on the individual and human values.[22] There can be no community without persons. But conversely, we may not hope for full-blown persons without community. Personalism at its best stresses the idea of *persons-in-community*, a term popularized in the work of Walter G. Muelder.[23]

A basic theologico-philosophical concept of the African world-view captures this idea of the primacy of persons-in-community, relationality or community very well. Rejecting Descarte's statement, "Cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am), with its focus on the individual, Africans prefer to say, "Cognatus ergo sum"—I am related by blood, therefore I exist, or I exist because I belong to a family.[24] Or, stated differently, I am, because we are. The emphasis in African thought is unmistakably on community rather than isolated individuals. Indeed, Gabriel Setiloane contends that in African tradition community "is *the very essence of being*"[25] [emphasis added]. The entirety of the African world-view stands "on the principle that 'You cannot be human alone.' *Motho ke motho ka batho*: Our humanity finds fulfillment only in community with others."[26] Archbishop Desmond Tutu contends that this same principle is pervasive in the Scriptures. "According to the Bible," he said, "a human being can be a human being only because he belongs to a community. A person is a person through other persons...."[27]

If we take this norm seriously we must see that not only are all persons responsible for the community, but the community is responsible for each individual. I am because we are; we are because I am. This norm is right in line with the conception of God noted earlier. The emphasis on community and interdependence means that whatever happens to one member happens to all. If one is imprisoned unjustly or because of extraneous socio-economic circumstances not under one's control, we are all imprisoned. Do we not see this idea expressed in Heb. 13:3? Here the original Greek reads: "Remember those in prison, *for you are prisoners with them yourselves*"[28] [emphasis added]. This is so because of God's radical love, sympathy and solidarity with us. Therefore, any denial of our sisterhood and brotherhood—our relatedness with prisoners—is a denial of self, other selves and God.

Reflecting on the tragic case of Bradford Brown, an African American accused in 1975 of a murder he did not commit, Carolyn McCrary underscored the principle of interdependence and the significance of the responsibility of all persons for the community. She said: "'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.' Not only am I Bradford Brown, but I am all of the incarcerated. They are all of us, and we are them."[29] And to be sure, those of strong theistic faith are justified in proclaiming that I am—indeed, we are—because God is!

CONCLUSION

Ministry with prisoners and those in "transposition from prison cell to church

pew and service to God and world"[30] needs to take on an entirely new look. This may become a reality if we take seriously and apply the conditioning factors and the norms discussed in this article. What is really called for is a totally new order of things, not less significant than Jesus' proclamation that the Kingdom of God is at hand, not tomorrow or after a while, but right now! So there is really no time for us to trip over ourselves trying to form a committee or commission to consider the matter of what prison ministry would look like in a new order. The Kingdom of God is at hand, right now!

David Buttrick tells us that Jesus was much, much more than "the therapeutic carer" that so many have grown to love and worship. For, if that is all or even primarily what Jesus was (is) about, His crucifixion makes no sense. Writes Buttrick:

> Ultimately the fact of the cross judges all our preaching. If we declare Jesus a therapist for a hurt humanity, and a living revelation of God-love, how on earth can we account for the mounting hatred that hustled him off to Golgotha?[31]

It was not Jesus' peacekeeping, healing and caring that got Him crucified. Jesus' demise had more to do with "the powers and principalities converging on Calvary."[32] According to Buttrick, two words got Jesus into serious trouble with the people of his day when He came preaching that the Kingdom is at hand: "new" and "now."[33] A new order of things, right now! Today!

We may surmise that had Jesus not preached this message with a sense of urgency His would have been a different fate. Indeed, that so many pastors, denominations and lay leaders are so popular today suggests that they skillfully avoid doing what Jesus did. There is nothing urgent about the gospel they preach; nothing urgent about the message of liberation for the imprisoned and what professed Christians and other believers ought to be doing to effect that liberation. This is the case, in part, because so many sell their souls to the powers that be, thereby forfeiting their autonomy and freedom to preach "thus saith the Lord." Too many pastors and laypersons work hard at gaining the acceptance and approval of the mayor, the governor, corporate executives and so on. Too many want to celebrate and be recipient of honors and awards before there is reason to celebrate and be decorated.

The real challenge to those involved in prison ministry is to recognize that most of their efforts will be futile if they do not catch God's vision—not George Bush's!—for a new order of things.

That we may not now know the best means of achieving this does not diminish the significance of the vision itself. In every generation persons have known how difficult it is to establish a new order. Indeed, even Niccolo Machiavelli pointed to this difficulty in the sixteenth century:

> It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new order, this lukewarmness arising partly from fear of their adversaries, who have the laws in their favor; and partly from the incredulity of mankind, who do not truly believe in anything new until they have had actual experience of it. Thus it arises that on every opportunity for attacking the reformer, his opponents do so with the zeal of partisans, the others only defend him half-heartedly, so that between them he runs great danger.[34]

The believer bent on taking seriously God's vision for the world may not expect to be popular nor to receive an outpouring of support and encouragement. The difficulty of establishing the new order notwithstanding, it is God's vision of a new order for the world that we must capture and internalize. This should fuel and inspire any desires we have to take concrete steps toward the realization of the new order.

NOTES

1. Clarence Darrow, "Address to the Prisoners in the Cook County Jail," ed. Irving S. Abrams, *Crime and Criminals* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1975 [1902]), p. 29.
2. Borden P. Bowne, *The Principles of Ethics* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892), p. 190.
3. Ibid., p. 193. Etienne Gilson made a similar critique of Plato and Aristotle. "Neither Plato nor Aristotle, although they held all the necessary metaphysical principles in their hands, ever had a sufficiently high idea of the worth of the individual as such, to dream of any such justification" [*The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Scribner's, 1940), p. 190].
4. Cain Hope Felder, "Toward a New Testament Hermeneutic for Justice," *The Journal of Religious Thought*, Volume 45, Number 1, (Summer-Fall 1988) 45:17.
5. Ibid., p. 18.
6. Charles Hartshorne, *Reality As Social Process* (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1971), p. 147.
7. Ibid., pp. 151-152.
8. These include, but may not be limited to: atheistic, pantheistic, absolutistic, relativistic, teleological (or ethical), realistic, panpsychistic, anthropormorphic, political, typical theistic, and african american personalism.
9. For example, the British logician, J.M.E. McTaggart (1866-1925) was an atheistic personalist. See his book, *Some Dogmas of Religion* (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), chap. 4 and 5.
10. L. Harold DeWolf, *Crime and Justice in America: A Paradox of Conscience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 133-154.
11. Ibid., pp. 154-156.

12. Bowne, *The Principles of Ethics*, pp. 190-191.
13. Gustavo Gutierrez, "Liberation and the Poor: The Puebla Perspective," ed. Deane Ferm, *Third World Liberation Theologies: A Reader* (New York: Orbis, 1986), p. 25.
14. This was the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops.
15. Gutierrez, *Liberation and the Poor*, p. 26.
16. Cited in Jon Sobrino, *Archbishop Romero: Memories and Reflections* (New York: Orbis, 1990), pp. 15, 16, 148, 197.
17. DeWolf, *Crime and Justice in America*, p. 155.
18. Nels Ferre, *Return to Christianity* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943), p. 44.
19. Ferre, *Christianity and Society* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 118.
20. Edgar S. Brightman, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Holt Rinehart Winston, 1963, rev. ed.), p. 314.
21. See Albert C. Knudson, *The Prophetic Movement in Israel* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1921), p. 124.
22. See Francis J. McConnell, *The Prophetic Ministry* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1930), pp. 269, 286.
23. See Walter G. Muelder, *Moral Law in Christian Social Ethics* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1966), Chap. 2. The principles of community developed in this work and in L. Harold DeWolf, *Responsible Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) were first suggested by one of DeWolf's graduate students, Glen Trimble [See DeWolf, "Ethical Implications for Criminal Justice," ed. Paul Deats, Jr. and Carol Robb, *The Boston Personalist Tradition* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), p. 223]. It is interesting to note that as early as 1947 the British personalist, Herbert H. Farmer, introduced the term persons in relationship, a term which had the same emphasis as Muelder's term, *persons-in-community* [See Farmer, *God and Men* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), pp. 38, 55].
24. John S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), p. 49.
25. Gabriel M. Setiloane, *African Theology: An Introduction* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1986), p. 41.
26. Ibid.
27. Desmond Tutu, *Crying in the Wilderness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1982), p. 99. Herbert H. Farmer makes a helpful and insightful contribution in this regard, claiming that God never enters into relationship with any individual person without simultaneously entering into relationship with other persons. Farmer contends that the best way to express this principle is "by saying that when God created man He *eo facto* created an order or structure of persons in relationship with Himself and with one another. This is the ultimate secret of finite personal nature, of specifically human nature. Only as a man is part of, held in, that structure is he distinctively man....To come into existence as a man is to be incorporated in this world of the personal, to be in relation to persons—the divine person and human persons—and existence as a man is not possible on any other terms" [Farmer, *The Servant of the Word* (New York: Scribner's, 1942), p. 38].
28. Cited in Gerald Austin McHugh, *Christian Faith and Criminal Justice* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 194.
29. See her response to Henry C. Gregory, III, "Incarceration and Rehabilitation: A Challenge to the African American Church and Academy," ed. Gayraud Wilmore, *Black Men in Prison: The Response of the African American Church* (Atlanta: ITC Press, 1990), p. 28.

30. This phrase was the theme of the Conference on the Black Church sponsored by the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia, June 3-5, 1992.
31. David Buttrick, *Preaching Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), p. 29.
32. Ibid., p. 51.
33. Ibid., p. 41.
34. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince/The Discourses* (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 21-22.