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**An exploration of the potential significance for the mission and ministry
of the church in England of the recent growth in forms of chaplaincy in
community contexts.**

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Abstract

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An exploration of the potential significance for the mission and ministry of the church in England of the recent growth in forms of chaplaincy in community contexts.

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Over the past decade there has been a marked but unquantified growth in 'chaplaincy' as a form of ministerial engagement in community contexts yet there is little or no research in this area of practice. The review will elucidate the potential significance of this growth by exploring the concept of 'chaplaincy' in its historical and contemporary meaning and engaging it in dialogue with three relevant contexts: the contemporary ecclesiological context; the contemporary cultural context and the discipline of practical theology.

Context is a key concept in this investigation. Focussed in the structures of society rather than the church, chaplaincy listens to people's lived experience and is by nature contextual and dialogic: practice is shaped by the context of engagement and is constantly in dialogue with both the 'church' and the 'world'. Practical theology, by nature interdisciplinary and focussed on critical and dialogic reflection on practice and lived experience, is therefore an ideal locus for this exploration.

By engaging chaplaincy in dialogue with the contemporary cultural and ecclesiological context within the discipline of practical theology the review will point to the potential significance of the growth in chaplaincy for the mission and ministry of the church and the need to research this phenomenon in order to inform praxis.

1. Introduction

Over the past decade there has been a perceived but unquantified growth in the demand for chaplaincy services from secular organisations such as retail outlets, care homes and sports clubs and a renewed interest in chaplaincy from different church denominations. This is evinced, for example, by the recent Methodist Church chaplaincy feasibility report (Culver, 2009) and an Anglican report into chaplaincy in rural contexts (Still, 2007). As Ballard notes in *Locating Chaplaincy: A Theological Note* (Ballard, 2009), the growth in chaplaincy is reflected in the increasing number and variety of chaplaincy posts advertised in the church press that are of interest to people from a wide theological spectrum. The trend towards the development of chaplaincy posts is clear, yet although there is literature relating to the practice of chaplaincy in institutional contexts such as Healthcare (Mowat, 2008; Swift, 2009) or Higher Education (Church of England, 2002), there is no literature relating to the theological, ecclesiological or cultural significance of the current re-emergence of interest in chaplaincy in community contexts. Why this sudden growth and interest in chaplaincy? What is its significance?

1:1 The context of the research

I am undertaking this research in my role as Research Officer at The Oxford Centre for Ecclesiology and Practical Theology tasked with developing the theological understanding and praxis of chaplaincy. I also have many years experience as a full time Healthcare Chaplain in institutional and community contexts. Having listened to the experiences of chaplains in different contexts, most recently as part of a scoping survey of chaplaincy in community contexts (Slater, 2009), a consistent theme has emerged: many chaplains do not feel that the institutional church values, validates or understands their work in the same way that it does parish or congregational ministry. This is echoed in Woodward's experience leading him to believe that 'sector ministry is both misunderstood and undervalued by the

church.’(Woodward, 1999, p.165). Swift in *Hospital Chaplaincy in the Twenty-first Century* refers to it as:

‘The silent exile of the chaplains from the central preoccupations of the Church.’ (Swift, 2009, p.173).

Why is there this lacuna between the theology and concerns of the Church and those of chaplains who work within the social structures of society? The recent growth in chaplaincy as a form of ministry and the declining trend in congregational numbers explored, for example, by Heelas and Woodhead in *The Spiritual Revolution* (Heelas, 2002), reveals the need to understand the relationship of chaplaincy with the contemporary cultural and ecclesial context in order to begin to understand and articulate its significance both for practice and for the mission and ministry of the Church.

In order to address this, the review aims to explore the concept of chaplaincy in its historical and contemporary meanings and then, within a practical theological approach, to engage it in dialogue with the contemporary cultural and ecclesiological context in order to illuminate its potential significance and to point to the need for research in order to inform praxis.

2. What is chaplaincy?

Chaplaincy has a long history within Christian churches in the West. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a chaplain is:

‘The priest, clergyman or minister of a chapel; in Middle English a chantry priest.’

The term came to refer to:

‘A clergyman who conducts religious services in the private chapel of a sovereign, lord or high official, of a public institution, or in the household of a person of quality’ (Onions, 1973, p.314)

Stemming from a medieval social order, this definition no longer describes the reality of chaplaincy in today’s plural and multi faith society. The entry for ‘chaplain’ on Wikipedia (Wikipedia, 2010) reminds us that despite the Christian origins of the word it is now adopted by practitioners from different faiths and by humanists. Today, a Christian chaplain may be ordained or lay, male or female, paid or voluntary and is generally understood to be someone authorised by a church community to minister as a representative of that community in a non parochial context. However, it is not easy to articulate what is distinctive about the role. The American *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling* defines a chaplain as a clergy or lay person:

‘who has been commissioned by a faith group or an organisation to provide pastoral services in an institution, organisation or government entity.’ (Hunter, 2005, p.136)

It suggests that the role may include:

‘crisis ministry, counselling, sacraments, worship, education, help in ethical decision making, staff support, clergy contact and community or church coordination.’

Giles Legood in *Chaplaincy: The Church’s Sector Ministries* (Legood, 1999) understands the functions of chaplaincy as concerned with:

‘pastoral care, spiritual nurture, leading worship and helping the laity in their mission in the world.’ (Legood, 1999, p.x)

However, without the work being contextualised, these descriptions of what chaplains do remain generalised lists of activities that could be equally characteristic of parish clergy. As Legood acknowledges:

‘The difference lies in the environment within which each operates.’
(Legood, 1999, p.xi)

Context is key to understanding the distinctiveness of chaplaincy as a form of ministry.

Legood acknowledges the difficulty of defining what chaplaincy is (Legood, 1999) and of locating it in relation to the church: this difficulty is acute in relation to chaplaincy emerging in community contexts. ‘Chaplain’ has become an umbrella term used to denote anyone from a church with involvement in a community setting. It is used to refer to anything from part-time pastoral visiting to the provision of a formalised ‘professional’ and accountable service to organisations such as colleges or nursing homes. Until there is some articulation of what is distinctive about chaplaincy and of the relationship between practice, context and theology the significance and value of chaplaincy will remain inaccessible.

2.1 The importance of context

Paul Ballard’s recent characterisation of contemporary chaplaincy is more sensitive to contextual issues. In *Locating Chaplaincy: A Theological Note* (Ballard, 2009), Ballard suggests that the current growth in interest in chaplaincy is a symptom of the church adapting to the fluid and dispersed character of post modern life. As people move constantly from one sphere and role to another and geographical locatedness declines in significance:

‘The chaplaincy model is ... an attempt to express the relevance of the gospel to every facet of life, each of which demands its particular response.’ (Ballard, 2009, p.19)

This view of chaplaincy as ecclesial adaptation to cultural context is compelling. It casts chaplaincy as the re-enculturation of the Gospel in contemporary society raising the question: is chaplaincy becoming the culturally acceptable expression of institutional religion? By locating chaplaincy contextually, rather than detailing functions, Ballard presents the key characteristic of chaplaincy as having its primary context in the world rather than the church and the defining characteristic of chaplains as being ‘embedded’ in social structures. Whilst the parochial minister works mainly in, with and from the structures and culture of the church and reaches out to the community, the chaplain, whilst having links with the church:

‘is situated in the structures of the wider society...which provides the matrix that shapes the job.’ (Ballard, 2009, p.20)

Ballard sees the first characteristic of chaplains as their being public theologians doing practical theology. As a practical theologian:

‘the one who works out the theological reality in the particular’ (Ballard, 2009, p.23),

the chaplain works out public theology addressing social concerns not from the remove of the academy or the relative safety of the gathered Christian community but *alongside* people ‘in the abrasive rub of everyday affairs.’ The task therefore is to articulate theological insight, perspective and challenge in a way that is accessible to those *outside* the faith community. This relates fundamentally to what the chaplain ‘embodies’ because, as Percy recognises, what ‘speaks’ to people with authority today is the character and depth of

discipleship that manifests God's love in and for Creation (Percy, 2005) The second characteristic is the prophetic. Chaplains are required to reflect on experience in the light of revelation so that it both illuminates and is illumined by the particular context. The prophet is a positive presence 'representing the possibility of hope and change' by living among the people, sharing their communal life:

'for the sake of the people and the world God loves (John 3.16).'

(Ballard, 2009, p.23).

3. The Context of Practical Theology

If, as Ballard suggests, chaplains are practical theologians, the study of chaplaincy, situated at the interface between the church and contemporary culture, is ideally located within Practical Theology. Taking the grounded reality of Christian engagement with the world as its starting point, according to Tracy in *The Analogical Imagination*, practical theology is less concerned with theories than systematic or fundamental theology but rather focuses on praxis and experience as potentially revelatory of theological insight, always keeping in view the possibility of transformation. Praxis, says Tracy, is:

'here understood as practice informed by and informing, often transforming, all prior theory in relationship to the legitimate and self-involving concerns of a particular cultural, political, social or pastoral need having genuine religious import.' (Tracy, 1981p. 57)

Given the complexity of the contemporary cultural context, the approach recognises that in order to describe and understand practice, it needs the help of other disciplines. It is therefore hospitable, seeking out conversation partners from outside theology as well as bearing faithful spiritual and hermeneutical witness to the Christian tradition (Percy, 2005).

Percy's culturally engaged and contextually aware practical theological approach makes his work an illuminating conversation partner for the study of chaplaincy. *Engaging with Contemporary Culture* (Percy, 2005) explores the way culture shapes contemporary Christianity and the contribution that theology can make to public life; *Clergy: The Origin of Species* (Percy, 2006) looks at the key cultural drivers that shape ministry and ecclesiology whilst *Shaping the Church* (Percy, 2010) considers the 'implicit' cultural factors that shape ecclesiology. Taking seriously the need for Christian engagement with culture, both practical theology and chaplaincy hold the possibility of restoring:

'some sense of public theology as a critical yet affirming discourse that is engaged with contemporary culture.' (Percy, 2005, p.9)

Methodologically, practical theology accounts experience as a valid theological source. Because, like chaplaincy, it is a listening and reflective discipline, it does not need to be dogmatic in its engagements but can risk genuine dialogue on the optimistic assumption that this can be the source of faithful change. Like chaplaincy, it understands that engagement can no longer take place out of the privileged certainty of an inherited discourse but has to be on the basis of genuine participation within conversations and encounters.

Given the importance of context to the understanding of chaplaincy, contextual theology provides another significant conversation partner. Bevans in *Models of Contextual Theology* (Bevans, 2002) and Bevans and Schroeder in *Constants in Context* (Bevans and Schroeder, 2004) have made a significant Roman Catholic contribution to understanding the interaction between the gospel, theology and culture. Like practical theology, contextual theology looks to both tradition and present human experience as legitimate sources of theological insight. Contextual theology is therefore subjective

and hermeneutical: reality is understood as being mediated by meaning given in the context of culture and history and interpreted from our own horizon and in our own thought forms. Given that the main concern of chaplaincy is how to respond and represent the Gospel creatively and faithfully in a given context, a contextual, hermeneutical approach that takes seriously both tradition and contemporary experience is well placed to contribute to understanding chaplaincy.

According to Woodward and Pattison in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, practical theology is:

‘a prime place where contemporary experience and the resources of the religious tradition meet in critical dialogue that is mutually and practically transforming.’ (Woodward and Pattison, 2000, p.xiii)

It is also inclusive and democratic in scope and not necessarily located within the academy or church. The study of chaplaincy is at home in this context because, like practical theology, it concerns:

‘how theological activity can inform and be informed by practical action in the interests of making an appropriate, effective Christian response in the modern world.’ (Woodward and Pattison, 2000, p.2)

4. Chaplaincy in community contexts: available literature

The only published text on chaplaincy practice in varied contexts is Legood’s *Chaplaincy: the Church’s Sector Ministry* published in 1999. In the introduction, Legood acknowledges that the terminology of ‘sector ministry’ is contestable; it is contested by Ballard’s argument that the whole of life is now lived in different ‘sectors’, including religion, and the term has outlived its usefulness. Avis, in the chapter ‘Towards a Theology of Sector Ministry’ locates chaplains – understood as ordained ministers- within the catholic

order of the Anglican Church whose ministry participates in the *Missio Dei* (Avis, 1999). From a sociological perspective, Sophie Gilliat-Ray sees the experience of chaplains':

'profound and committed engagement with the world beyond the boundaries of the local church as challenging the church to question what is happening in society and to think about an appropriate response.' (Gilliat-Ray, 1999, p.146)

Legood's book offers further sections on contexts for ministry whilst Torry's *Bridgebuilders* offers a history of Workplace Chaplaincy presenting it in its present diverse forms as an 'effective response to secularization.' (Torry, 2010, p.193)

Community theologian Ann Morisy is the only person to consider chaplaincy in the context of the church's engagement with local communities. In *Beyond the Good Samaritan* (Morisy, 1997), Morisy develops a model of Community Ministry drawing on insights from Liberation Theology. Mission is understood as the call to participation in the *Missio Dei* for the establishment of the Kingdom. This involves a commitment to struggle and to public action on behalf of the poor and marginalised as the expression of authentic discipleship. In *Journeying Out* (Morisy, 2004) there is a new note of wariness about the call of the church to be alongside the poor: it must not be patronising engagement based on 'needs meeting' but rather about participation and genuine encounter with the other, the results of which may be mutually transformational. Morisy presents a model for a 'community chaplain' to a church centre seeing the role as being about:

'representing and, occasionally, speaking of God's alonsideness in relation to daily life.' (Morisy, 2004, pp.187-9)

Morisy develops the idea of ministry in communities as liminal or marginal in that it takes place outside church structures engaging with people's lived experience. She develops the concept of the *foundational domain* – distinct from the *explicit* domain of the gathered church community – where the task is to help people engage with the intimations they have of an enduring reality (Morisy, 2004). Ministry in this domain involves attending to people's personal experience and creating '*apt liturgies*' (Morisy, 2004, p.156) working with that experience rather than utilising authorised liturgies. People's religious experience is taken seriously as the starting point for engagement so that 'apt liturgy' expresses the 'alongsideness' of God in people's lives. Morisy's work, like chaplaincy, focuses the core question of how the church should respond to the contemporary cultural context.

5. Chaplaincy, Church and World

The pressing task for the church is to discern how to fulfil its mission in and to the world. Faced with the marked demographic, social and cultural changes of recent decades, it has sought to reconfigure itself in order to maintain a place in public discourse and to find ways of connecting with people who are closed to institutional belonging but open to 'God' and the transcendent.

The Church of England report *Mission Shaped Church: Church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context* (Archbishop's Council, 2004) recognises that the church needs to adapt to its context in dialogue with the prevailing culture in order to remain faithful to its mission. However, it is ultimately ecclesologically conservative focussing on evangelisation rather than mission. As Hull's response stated, it is more about 'church shaped mission' than 'mission shaped church':

'The church is not the fulfilment or flowering of mission. The flowering of mission is the Kingdom.' (Hull, 2006, p.2)

Nevertheless, the report is part of an ongoing process of discernment and adaptation that has issued in the idea of a 'mixed economy' (Bayes and Jordan, 2010), the movement of 'emerging church' and the training of 'pioneer ministers'. This represents an attempt by the church to re-enculturate the Gospel. Contemporary culture has set an ecclesiological imperative to renegotiate the relationship between the church and the world.

In *Street Church: Fresh Expressions and beyond?* (Steddon, 2010) Steddon posits two theological approaches to engagement with culture each reflecting assumptions about the nature of mission. 'Host' theology engages in order to say 'Come to our place and do as we do' whilst 'guest' theology asks 'Please may I come to your place and be part of what you do?' (Steddon, 2010, pp.11-12) He locates chaplaincy within the latter asking, 'Is church only church when gathered?' Whilst chaplains may not be highly visible from the perspective of the mainstream church:

'Liminality cuts both ways. If the church by and large is on the edge of society, then what looks to be 'on the edge' as far as church is concerned, may be plumb centre from where civil society stands.'
(Steddon, 2010, p.26)

This reflection typifies what Percy in *Clergy: the Origin of Species* terms the revisionist approach to ecclesiological enquiry (Percy, 2006). Rather than generating purist internal traditional accounts of ministry with an ideal blueprint of the church, revisionist explorations draw on disciplines such as sociology, practical theology and ethnography. In *Engaging with Contemporary Culture*, Percy contends that:

'ecclesiology itself is a kind of social theory' (Percy, 2005, p.8).

This requires a sociologically informed ecclesiological approach that parallels the hospitable, dialogic character of practical theology recognising the need for genuine dialogue between ‘church’ and ‘world’:

‘most ecclesial communities in late modernity are beginning to discover afresh that they are increasingly reacting to and evolving with the environments in which they find themselves rather than shaping them from some position of inherited privilege.’ (Percy, 2006, p.105)

If chaplaincy is a major locus of the church’s engagement with people’s lived experience, listening and conversation necessarily become major modes of theological and ecclesial engagement. In today’s cultural context, theology and ministry largely depend on the quality of their social, intellectual and cultural engagement for their value as public discourse:

‘a theology of engagement needs to be continually committed to dialogue, overhearing that is patient and attentive, listening to the conversations of the world in which the churches and theology are habitually not included, and to an encounter and event based mode of praxis.’ (Percy, 2005, p.81)

I contend that it is this commitment to authentic engagement and dialogue with the grounded reality of life that characterises chaplaincy. In *An Experiment in Providence: How Faith Engages with the World*, Timothy Jenkins suggests that the Anglican Church lives out its relation to the polity in two related forms: ‘territorial embeddedness’ at levels of parish, diocese and nation and a ‘conversational mode’ (Jenkins, 2006, p.112): the former he relates to the gathering of congregations and the latter to chaplaincy. This is a reductionist classification but it does usefully distinguish ‘chaplaincy style’ ministry – being out and about in conversation with the world – as a

characteristic form of Anglican work distinct from 'being a chaplain' embedded in a particular non church context. Jenkins contends that these ways of being church are not in opposition but are complementary: engagement with the world and worship of God resource each other. In *Engaging with Trends in Chaplaincy* (Todd, 2007) Todd suggests that if a practical and dialogical engagement with the world is now an urgent necessity for the church, given that chaplaincy operates in this mode, it may be indicative of the future shape of the church.

6. Chaplaincy and the Mission and Ministry of the Church

If this is the case, it is necessary to understand how chaplaincy relates to understandings of mission and ministry. In *Transforming Mission* (Bosch, 1992) Bosch develops a Protestant, holistic theology of mission grounded in the concept of the *Missio Dei*. Bosch describes mission as:

'the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.' (Bosch, 1992, p.519).

Mission is the *Missio Dei*, and the mission of the church is to serve the *Missio Dei*. This work is built on by Bevans and Schroeder in *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Bevans and Schroeder, 2004). This complements Bosch with a Roman Catholic perspective on different paradigms of mission from the Middle Ages to the modern era. The focus is on how the church has sought to remain faithful to the 'constants' of the tradition whilst responding creatively to the 'context' in which it finds itself.

In the *SCM Study Guide to Christian Mission* (Spencer, 2007), Spencer explores the concept of *Missio Dei* in Western theology to present mission as grounded in the Trinitarian life of God characterised as participative relationship: just as the three persons of the Trinity coinhere in a dance of mutual participation (perichoresis), so mission is the outpouring of this dance-

like life into the world, inviting and drawing others to share in its life-giving exchange. If mission is grounded in participative relationship, it can never be one way because the Holy Spirit is already, always and everywhere at work in the world. This relates directly to the participatory nature of chaplaincy and to the context of post modernity which is its milieu. Referring to Bonhoeffer and to Donovan's missionary strategy in *Christianity Rediscovered* (Donovan, 1978), Spencer's final paradigm of mission addresses 'mission within postmodernity' characterised as 'finding hope in local communities'. Spencer states:

'The common theme found in Bonhoeffer and Donovan is of the Church laying aside its power and wealth and becoming vulnerable to the local community, listening before witnessing, changing and being changed by the encounter.' (Spencer, 2007, p.175)

In the post modern, multi faith context, dialogue and witness need to enter into dialectic: it is often in genuine encounter and dialogue that the opportunity occurs for authentic witness.

In this paradigm, Christian witness is expressed through Christians offering themselves to local communities:

'so that they may give and receive hospitality and care and so that genuine dialogue and witness may take place.' (Spencer, 2007, p.180)

Listening before witnessing, humility, mutuality, encounter, dialogue and depth of discipleship are important components of mission in the post modern context. According to Bosch (Bosch, 1992, p.375), we need to speak of the church 'with' others rather than 'for' others, part of God's turning to and identification with the world in the Incarnation.

In *Blurred Encounters* (Reader, 2005) Reader explores, with reference to postmodern philosophy, the increasingly permeable boundaries between 'church and world' and 'faith and culture' and considers how this process can be evaluated. In this context, mission is seen as contained in the capacity for and openness to genuine encounter with the 'other', a key touchstone of postmodern philosophy. Real encounter must risk compromise, appropriation, a possible loss of identity and integrity in order to be genuine and potentially transformative.

This focus on the relational character of mission looks back to Taylor's *The Go-Between God: the Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (Taylor, 1984). This presents a contemplative exposition of mission issuing a call to the churches to attend to the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, in the extraordinary ordinariness of people's lives. For Taylor, mission is participation in the life of God in the world and:

'the heart of mission is communion with God in the midst of the world's life.' (Taylor, 1984, p.227)

The essential missionary activity is to live in prayer so that the whole of our lives bear witness to faith. Taylor's belief that how we are with our neighbour mirrors our relationship with God reflects Martin Buber's thinking. In *I and Thou*, Buber states that:

'The relation with man is the real simile of the relation with God.'
(Buber, 1958, p.132)

The life of the Spirit is manifested between persons who enter into relationship with their whole being; relationship therefore is a prerequisite of living the life of the spirit. This sacramental understanding of the world as the

arena of God's activity and of relationships as transformative and revelatory of the Spirit provides a philosophical underpinning of the concept of *Missio Dei*. The work of Taylor and Buber is relevant to the study of chaplaincy because, whether considering community or personal relationships, it is the quality of and approach to relationships that holds the potential to bear witness to faith and to be revelatory of God's presence at the heart of Creation.

7. Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care

Recognition of the significance of the relational dimension of mission leads to a consideration of pastoral care and chaplaincy. In the *Dictionary of Pastoral Care* (Hunter, 2005), the Pastoral Care entry gives an historical overview of the different understandings of pastoral care from the early church to the present day. It begins by locating it within the 'cure-of-souls-tradition' meaning carefulness for the soul defined as:

'the animating centre of personal life and the seat of relatedness to God.' (Hunter, 2005, p.836)

The survey then traces the different emphases in pastoral care in relation to historical, social, cultural and religious contexts through the Reformation to the growing influence of the psychological sciences in the Twentieth Century, particularly the work of Carl Rogers and Client Centred Therapy. Whilst acknowledging the valuable insights with which the psychological sciences have illuminated pastoral care, the article ends by noting the growing concern from pastoral theologians to reclaim the place of pastoral care in the 'cure of souls' tradition and to understand its tasks as intrinsically theological. On this view, pastoral care seeks its roots in a theological world view whilst paying attention to the contemporary context. This overview bears witness to the varied history, traditions, models and definitions of pastoral care that have

been in play down the centuries in relation to different historical, cultural and ecclesiological contexts.

Pattison's substantial body of work relating to pastoral care can be located within the contemporary concern to reclaim its Christian theological character. In *A Critique of Pastoral Care* (Pattison, 1988) he acknowledges that:

‘It is appropriate that pastoral care should have a somewhat chameleon-like character so that it can be related to particular human needs at different times and in different places.’ (Pattison, 1988, p.17)

However, this makes it difficult to define how it is distinct from other forms of ministry and therefore Pattison is keen to establish core characteristics. In *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (Clebsch and Jaekle, 1975), Clebsch and Jaekle see the core forms of pastoral care as healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling to which Pattison adds ‘nurturing’ taken from Clinebell's *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counselling*. (Clinebell, 1984). Pattison defines pastoral care as:

‘that activity, undertaken especially by representative Christian persons, directed towards the elimination and relief of sin and sorrow and the presentation of all people perfect in Christ to God.’ (Pattison, 1988, p.13)

This roots it firmly in the Christian tradition looking to Col. 1:28 and to the *cura animarum*. Pattison is keen that it should guard against both individualism and any Christian isolationism that concerns itself only with the community of faith. Influenced by Liberation theological models, he is clear that pastoral care is for the world and that its aim is the transformation of social ills and injustice as well as individual suffering. Echoing Marx, he states:

‘Pastoral care is part of changing the world as well as simply being in it.’ (Pattison, 1988, p.14).

Pattison does acknowledge that pastoral care is about quality of *being* as well as *doing*. He notes the contribution made by Wright in *The Pastoral Nature of the Ministry* (Wright, 1980) and Campbell in *Rediscovering Pastoral Care* (Campbell, 1981) to redressing an activist emphasis on skills and methods of pastoral engagement by highlighting the importance of the vision and quality of personhood of the pastor as central to the efficacy of pastoral care. He acknowledges the importance of the pastor’s identity in maintaining the integrity of pastoral care in plural and secular contexts:

‘pastoral carers should maintain a Christian vision, a spiritual life and a sense of being rooted, grounded in and oriented toward God, whatever the means they use to undertake their caring.’ (Pattison, 1988, p.15)

Pattison reminds us that pastoral care is never value free. This perception is developed from a Feminist and Liberation theological standpoint by Elaine Graham in *The Sexual Politics of Pastoral Care* (Graham, 1993). Graham explicates the way in which social power relations are always at play within helping relationships. In this Feminist theological model, pastoral relationships are seen as reflecting the divine nature, as being disclosive of God:

‘Christian pastoral practice has the potential to reveal a God who is startlingly present in human encounter.’ (Graham, 1993, p.220)

The emphasis is on mutuality, vulnerability, relationality, interconnectedness and the importance of context.

Writing from the Reformed tradition, in *Integrity of Pastoral Care* (Lyll, 2001) Lyll seeks to establish its integrity as a discipline in its own right, rooted in communities of faith and the witness of Scripture and as an 'integrating paradigm' able to shed light on the different aspects of the life and work of the church. As for Graham, grace is communicated through the quality of the pastoral relationship which is itself parabolic:

'pointing gracefully beyond itself to the available God.' (Lyll, 2001, p.158)

Pastoral identity and integrity lies in being rooted in the Christian narrative; with this resource at the centre of identity, Lyll maintains that the pastor is able to work on and across boundaries, between the church and the world, faith and culture. (Lyll, 2001, p.162)

Pattisons' more recent concerns have been with the practice of pastoral care in particular contexts exhibiting a concern to maintain its distinctiveness in relation to particular cultural and ecclesial contexts. In *Dumbing Down the Spirit* (Pattison, 2007) he addresses the place of religious discourse within the public domain of healthcare. He calls for chaplains to articulate the distinctiveness of the Christian tradition as a contribution to the discourse of spirituality in healthcare over against the concept of "spiritual care" in the generic, secularised sense that seems now to be prevalent' (Pattison, 2007, p.133) In *Is Pastoral Care Dead in a Mission-led Church?* (Pattison, 2008) he outlines the current ecclesial situation as he sees it. He laments the fact that in the 1980's pastoral care seemed to be 'at the cutting edge of practical theology and Christian ministry' thinking that it has since been marginalised and attenuated in a 'mission-led' era: a pastoral vision that was:

'informed by a determination to encounter and nurture the divine wherever it was found in human individuals and communities'

has been:

‘returned to the personal, the private, the passive, the introverted, and the individually pathological.’ (Pattison, 2008, p.8)

This underlines Pattisons’ plea for pastoral care to remain inclusive, providing:

‘a spacious room for those who want to address the needs of the people and world they inhabit in the light of God’s mission to humanity.’

Pattison sees pastoral care as the cutting edge of mission:

‘You can’t have too much humanity in mission – that is the message of the incarnation.’ (Pattison, 2008, p.9)

This understanding of pastoral care as inclusive, contextually aware transformative missional encounter relates well to the practice of chaplaincy. One of the most significant contexts of chaplaincy and pastoral care is the rise to prominence of ‘spirituality’ in contemporary culture.

8. Chaplaincy and Contemporary Spirituality

In *Dumbing Down the Spirit* (Pattison, 2007), Pattison calls Healthcare Chaplains to articulate the Christian spiritual tradition in the context of the prevalent discourse of ‘generic spirituality’ located in personal experience and not necessarily related to a faith tradition. Pattison sees ‘generic spirituality’ as irremediably individualistic and the discourse around it as lacking intellectual coherence. Here, Pattisons’ approach represents a separatist relationship between the Christian tradition and the prevailing cultural context

of healthcare which has developed an increasingly self confident discourse of Spiritual Care. In contrast, James Corkery, writing on spirituality and culture in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Corkery, 2005), seeks a model for relating spirituality and culture that respects both the plurality of spiritualities in post modern culture and Christian specificity. Corkery suggests a model based on genuine dialogue in which Christian spirituality, whilst not losing its discernment, is open to the cultural context and vice versa. The underlying assumption is that God is already present in the yearnings of the human spirit, however expressed, and that Christian spirituality needs not only to be willing to challenge prevailing discourse but also to be Kenotic, 'stooping' to make its home in those elements of the culture that can house Christian faith today. Corkery argues that cultures are likely to be open to the gift being offered in this sensitive way and thus converted within the dynamics of a graced relationship in which kenosis and conversion are the partners in dialogue. Both these writers wrestle with the question of the relationship between Christian spirituality and the prevailing culture. I suggest that how the churches understand and engage with the widely accepted phenomenon of the turn from religion to spirituality is of central importance for the mission and ministry of the church and for chaplaincy in particular.

In an essay on *Contemporary Spirituality* in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Lesniak, 2005) Valerie Lesniak addresses the well documented rise in interest in spirituality and the decline in interest in institutional religion over the past fifty years. Lesniak notes that any spirituality is embedded in culture and argues that 'spirituality' is more conducive to the post modern temperament because by attending to:

'lived human experience, spirituality is viewed as a more inclusive, tolerant and flexible canopy [than religion or systematic theology]

under which to pursue the mysteries of the human spirit and the sacred.’ (Lesniak, 2005, p.8)

Spiritual seekers have sought alternative visions of authenticity espousing practices and contemplative resources from different traditions. This has made it possible to envision – and practice – an authentic spirituality detached from church affiliation.

In the context of the Christian academy, Sandra Schneiders has made a major contribution to engaging with this cultural phenomenon. In her essay on *Christian Spirituality* (Schneiders, 2005), she distinguishes between and defines both the human experience denoted by the word and the academic discipline which studies that experience. Spirituality as lived experience is defined as:

‘conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives’
(Schneiders, 2005, p.1)

She describes Christian spirituality within this framework before outlining the methods used by spirituality as an academic discipline. In *A Hermeneutical Approach to the Study of Christian Spirituality* (Schneiders, 1994) and *The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline* (Schneiders, 1998) Schneiders laid the foundations of spirituality as an area of academic research.

The rise of spirituality has led to much cultural and religious analysis. Paul Heelas in *The Spiritual Revolution: from ‘religion’ to ‘spirituality’* (Heelas, 2002) presents the theory that a ‘spiritual revolution’ is under way: more people now favour the language of ‘life-spirituality’ based on personal experience to that of traditional religion and in *The Spiritual Revolution: why*

religion is giving way to spirituality (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005) the theory is tested empirically through research into religious involvement in the UK and the USA. The research finds that traditional forms of religious association are giving way to and being influenced by new forms of spirituality: engagement with personal experience is a key component of spiritualities and types of churches that are thriving. This mirrors the subjectivism of contemporary culture within which conformity to external obligations or dogma has become less important than sensitivity to inner life and well-being.

The recognition of the culturally expressive nature of spirituality is amplified by Carrette and King in *Selling Spirituality: the Silent Takeover of Religion* (Carrette and King, 2005). This is a political response to what the authors see as the cultural hegemony of neoliberalism with its apotheosis of capital market forces. For Carrette and King, spirituality represents:

‘all that is banal and vague about New Age religiosity’

whilst:

‘signifying a transcendent quality, enhancing life and distilling all that is positive from the traditional religious institutions.’ (Carrette and King, 2005, p.2)

They contend that spirituality has been colonised by the capitalist agenda and has in turn colonised the public space previously occupied by religions: spirituality has been relocated ‘within a privatized and conformist space’, serving the needs of corporate culture. In this process, the ethical and social dimensions of the religious traditions that spirituality draws on have been lost. The aim of the essay is to offer a counter discourse, grounded in an emphasis on social justice and compassion, which can displace, or at least

destabilise, the privatised and neo-liberal framing of spirituality that they discern.

This socio-economic reading of the place of spirituality in contemporary culture is complemented by David Tacey's approach in *The Spirituality Revolution: the emergence of contemporary spirituality* (Tacey, 2004). Tacey analyses the phenomenon from the perspective of depth psychology. He understands contemporary spirituality in all its manifestations as expressing the longings of the contemporary world for sacredness, spiritual meaning, security and personal engagement with spirit. This optimistic and nuanced account of the contemporary situation listens to the various discourses of spirituality and to religious traditions. Contrary to Carrette and King, Tacey advocates seeing beyond the superficialities of some expressions of spirituality to the deeper human concerns of which they are a symptom. He contends that contact with the sacred brings a *metanoia* within the personal self compelling the scandal of living otherwards and of being other-directed, involving social responsibility and commitment. Like Heelas and Woodhead, Tacey recognises that religious traditions need to take account of personal experience if they are to continue to thrive in the post modern context and they need to accept personal experience as a source of revelation. Holding spirituality and religion together, he suggests that just as Christ moved into the world, binding secular lives to the sacred, so the churches need to focus on revealing the presence of God in the everyday and ordinary by offering guidance, support and spiritual discernment in the scattered community (Tacey, 2004, p.197). This model of engagement with contemporary spirituality seeks to discern the deeper movements in society that it represents and to engage in genuine dialogue holding the theological presupposition that God may be at work in this upsurge of interest in the spiritual and that the church may have something to learn from it:

‘We can’t afford to have religions declare a monopoly on the sacred nor to dismiss them from the post modern scene since they are the historical containers of spiritual wisdom.’ (Tacey, 2004, p.203)

How the tradition engages with contemporary spirituality is a core concern of chaplaincy in community contexts because its practice exists between the discourse of tradition and that of contemporary spiritual experience. Chaplaincy is characterised by: being alongside people in their context; listening seriously to their experience and engaging in genuine dialogue as the prerequisite of transformative missional encounter.

Conclusion

The growth of chaplaincy in community contexts is an unresearched area with little related literature. Chaplaincy in general can be characterised as a frontier ministry, focussed in social rather than ecclesial structures and directly engaged with peoples’ lived experience. It can be understood as a prime locus of the church’s participation in the Mission of God in the world for the building up of the Kingdom and the flourishing of all God’s people. By nature it is involved in a critical dialectical relationship with a context, the tradition and contemporary culture focussing on praxis.

The context of practical theology enables an exploration of the significance of this phenomenon in relation to contemporary ecclesiological and cultural contexts with particular reference to contemporary spirituality. The aim of the research is to elucidate the significance and integrity of chaplaincy within the mission and ministry of the church and so to provide a basis for developing and transforming practice.

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