

A free church perspective on military chaplains role in its historical context



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The waning influence of Christianity in the United Kingdom's armed forces since 1960 and the growing ignorance of personnel who have ties to a particular denomination, gave rise to a new assessment of the military chaplain in a modern and postmodern context. This article gives an overview of the practice during the two world wars and after the 1960s. It also gives an overview of the debate on the current role of the military chaplain, especially the beliefs of Herspring, Zahn, Coleman and McCormack, and eventually set up a role model from a Free Church perspective. It is shown that an operating model that is only defined in pastoral terms does not satisfy. The pastoral and spiritual definition, in terms of a liminal serving as an alternative, is suggested because it frees the chaplain to act more independent and also describes the best practice that has always prevailed in the British army.

Introduction

Since the 1960s, the waning influence of Christianity within the UK military, with most of those who state an allegiance to a particular denomination being ignorant of the content of that faith, has led to a reappraisal of the role of military chaplains in the modernist (1960–1990) and postmodernist (1990 to present) context. The clear corporate definition has been lost, causing individual chaplains to use their personal approach and imagination to define their own role in this changing context:

To say that there exists a degree of confusion as to what the Service Chaplain offers to the Military Machine, and as to what his role is in it, is possibly what some would describe as the understatement of the year. (Annesley 1982:7)

Other chaplaincy commentators believe that the chaplains' role within the military is difficult to define, because 'very little had been written on the function of the chaplain' (Haigh 1983:11). Since the 1980s, more has been written on chaplaincy history and practice, and a serious body of work is being established. Loudon (1996:15), an experienced Roman Catholic chaplain who was aware of some of this work, still concluded that 'the amount of autonomy exercised by each chaplain is almost total' (cf. McKernan 1986:xii–xiii). Lodwick (2009) believes this autonomy is essential to the effective work of the chaplain. He explains:

The ambiguous position of the chaplain allows them to function effectively and in situations which fall outside of the normal problems faced by the army. A more defined role for the chaplain might limit their freedom of action, and inhibit them, preventing them from intervening in spheres that belong to others in the institution. (p. 33)

Lodwick understands that the loss or severe restriction of the chaplains' autonomy will lead to the marginalisation of the chaplain even if these changes occur in the name of professional development. The aim of this article is to review the role debate and determine an effective chaplaincy role model that would be in sympathy with a Christian and Free Church perspective that emphasises the separation of church and state, and puts the emphasis on the autonomy and independence of the chaplain (cf. Allison 2012; 2015 which was used to write the summary of the introductory parts).

The First World War (1914–1918)

In both world wars, the chaplain was expected to lead before and after action services, offer Holy Communion, visit the sick, collect and bury the dead, pastorally care for the forces' personnel regardless of rank, and to teach and advise the chain of command on pastoral, community welfare, moral and ethical issues such as temperance or sexual health. Within this clear functional approach to ministry, different emphases would be seen such as the emphasis placed on preaching and teaching by the Free Churches, and the sacraments by Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics.

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The depth and balance of ministry would depend on the chaplain himself, denominational allegiance, which was a key concern in this period, and the circumstances they found themselves in. The chaplains' role and functions were very clear during the First World War. They were to be Christian ministers or priests, faithful to their sending church polity, offering the sacraments and religious care, preaching the gospel, seeking to restore the fallen and offer salvation to the lost. These chaplains had a clearly defined denominational Christian ministry to the soldiers and sailors of what they believed to be a 'Christian Empire'.

World War Two (1939–1945)

By the time of the Second World War, the emphasis had changed from a more narrow gospel and sacramental ministry to a more apologetic and educational one, although still clearly defined as Christian. The premise of these apologetic and educational initiatives, such as the development of the Padre's Hour in 1942 and 'Universities' in prisoner of war camps, was that Britain was, at least culturally, a Christian nation and there was a Christian foundation to be built upon or strengthened. Even if people had stopped going to church, they held on to Christian traditions and through education they would be strengthened to hold on to the Christian ideology over and against other ideologies, such as fascism and communism, that were considered to be threatening the nation and the foundations of a 'Christian civilisation'. The Second World War was seen as a war of ideas and chaplains were at the forefront of this ideological battle for the soul and mind of the nation.

In both world wars the role and function of the chaplain was clear: they were to be ministers of the Christian religion as defined by their 'sending church' or to advance the faith and give pastoral and moral guidance while embedded within the military context.

Post 1960s

The sexual revolution in the 1960s began to overturn the traditional Christian-influenced understanding of family life and morality, and, in its place, encouraged a more promiscuous approach and openness to sexuality and spirituality. This 'revolution' was the foundation for a radically changed society that continues to affect national, indeed European, life to the present day (Allison 2009:35). The military was required to look after these individuals' spiritual needs and the chaplains would continue to be at the forefront of this care. Opportunities still existed for the chaplain to lead public worship for recruits, even though parade services had been banned in 1946 (Robinson 1999:97). In this period it was easy for the chaplain to be seen as 'little more than glorified social workers' (McFarlane 1986:7). The most common reason for an individual to seek out a chaplain was for welfare rather than for spiritual or religious reasons. This presented opportunities for the chaplain to respond from the depths of his biblically-based pastoral knowledge, but he was not often in a position to minister the gospel in a

clear doctrinal way outside of his regular voluntary services. Therefore, modern chaplaincy tended to be welfare-orientated, and when ministering the gospel it was often apologetic in tone. Drake, who was serving in Bosnia, wrote an appreciation of his chaplain which would sum up what an un-churched person desired from the chaplain in the post 1960s. He (Drake 2001) wrote:

We'd all been forced to go to church and undergo padres' hours – during training the sky pilot was someone to avoid at all costs! The accident [*a helicopter crash killing the crew*] changed all that, from his assistance at the crash site to the way he dealt with those showing early symptoms of post-traumatic stress. He had probably done more than most, he'd seen what we'd seen, gone through the same as us and yet there he was with no concern for himself whilst helping others. If you chatted to him there were no career crippling 'confidential' documents, there was no official set format for discussion and no repercussions should you say something you shouldn't. He wasn't there to debrief you or critique the way you handled it all. His faith or religion never entered the equation if he was sure it was something you didn't want to hear. (p. 26)

In response to these cultural changes and the advent of modern and postmodern thought, the role of chaplains has been a growing source of debate and interest among church historians, sociologists, theologians and chaplains themselves since the 1960s. This article will consider five key 'role models' that have been put forward during this more 'spiritually promiscuous age'.

The role of chaplain as commissar according to Herspring

Dale Herspring had been a US Navy chaplains' assistant and a professor in political science. In his book *Soldiers, Commissars, and Chaplains* (Herspring 2001) he argued that the primary role of military chaplains was similar to the role of communist political officers. They were both to provide not only spiritual comfort, motivation and counselling, but were also responsible for the political socialisation of soldiers. Herspring (2001) wrote:

All chaplains and political officers had one primary goal: convince the soldier or sailor of the rightness of the cause he was fighting for, and how disastrous the situation would be if his country did not win the war. (p. 225)

He does not present any role conflict argument, but argues that, in fact, there is no role conflict. The chaplain serves the state to provide what the state desires, even if this is through religious and pastoral means. He supports this view by concluding that the chaplain's job description does not include changing the soldiers' 'basic value system' (Herspring 2001:225), but rather prepares the citizen soldier to fight for the national cause and be willing to give his life in that service (Herspring 2001:5, 7). Certainly F.L. Hughes, who had been Field Marshall Montgomery's 8th Army Chaplain, believed passionately that the 'padre's way to an army's heart is through conviction that religion assists its fighting' (cited in Snape 2008:303.) Smyth (1968), in his book *In this Sign Conquer*

(the officially sponsored history of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department), comments:

From time immemorial it has been recognised that religion, and religious faith, was a powerful factor in helping men fight nobly for their country; it was important that they should believe in the justice of their cause and that they should feel that God therefore was on their side... the Church, State and Army are inextricably interwoven. (pp. xv, xvii)

It can, therefore, be legitimately argued that the chaplain is not just half military and half church. but he is fully a member of both institutions and at the entire service of the state (Herspring 2001:8) to boost morale regardless of time and place (p. 222). Even the chaplain's pastoral work was used 'to convince soldiers of the need to improve themselves, to become better qualified at carrying out their military duties' (Herspring 2001:223). Herspring (2001:235) argues that the similarity between chaplain and commissar is finally proven when political officers were no longer needed with the demise of Communism in the Eastern Bloc – they were simply replaced by chaplains. However, despite of Hughes' reflections (cf. Snape 2008) and Smyth (1968), there are weaknesses in Herspring's study.

Herspring based his study on the comparison of communist commissars with chaplains functioning within different national militaries in different periods of history. This, in itself, is a weakness, but the key flaw of his argument is that the states' purpose and intent is not taken into consideration: commissars are not chaplains and their intent is quite different. The communist state is an ideological creation that employs commissars primarily to implement and support that ideology within the military. They are authoritative representatives of the state only, and not of the church, which was considered the enemy of the state. Commissars have more in common with social workers in Western society than with chaplains who represent the interests of the sending church, not the state, within the military. Sometimes the intent of the state and church is in broad agreement, and this applied to the Second World War, which was seen as a war of national defence against an ideology that was anti-Christian and threatened British freedoms, including the freedom of religion. The chaplains' key role in the Second World War was to care pastorally for the military personnel and offer religious services. As friend and advisor to all, they would be in a position to advise the chain of command from the Christian perspective even if that, at times, challenged the state's ideas and tactical applications (McCormack 2005:24). Herspring (2001:225) also argued that a chaplain had no obligation to seek to change the 'basic value system' of an individual, but this was a key responsibility of the chaplain who sought to make and sustain Christians. This would be the primary intent of the military chaplain who, through his services, preaching and Padre's Hours, sought to commend the faith, and challenge moral behaviour that was inconsistent with the Christian faith. The autonomy of the chaplain was almost total and his integrity was administratively protected, putting him outside the chain of command. The chaplain worked bottom up rather than, like the commissar, top down.

Role conflict: officer versus minister of religion according to Zahn

Zahn (1969) is the most influential proponent of the 'role conflict' model of military chaplaincy. He would disagree with Herspring and would give more credence to the chaplain's integrity. It is this religious integrity that would actually place the chaplain at the centre of a role conflict. The expectation that chaplains will assist the military in their purpose as well as being faithful ministers representing their sending church, creates, by its very nature, role tension (Zahn 1969:226). War is the clearest example of this when pressure to conform is significant. Zahn (1969) writes:

[The tension] is built into the chaplain's role and when it becomes salient it forces the chaplain to find some solution or interpretation that will enable him to keep the tension at a manageable level. The handiest of these appears to be his simple denial that he is 'really' a military officer at all ... but he is a part of the military establishment so the tension remains. (p. 267)

Certainly most commentators would agree. Moss (1999), an experienced Methodist chaplain, explains:

A chaplain's open access across the regiment provides insight about life at all levels. When injustice is encountered the chaplain should speak out. A difficult action when the chaplain is representative of the establishment. Associated with this, is pay ... Increase in money gives significance, both in my eyes and others. Independence of mind is under threat. Tensions are inescapable for the chaplain with layered loyalties. (p. 108)

Louden saw this role tension as normative. In his study *Chaplains in Conflict* (Louden 1996) he studied chaplains serving in different periods of history and from differing national backgrounds and he concluded:

There is evidence that chaplains, rather than attempting to present war as a consequence of human sin and aberration, could as a consequence of psychological and social pressures present it as a manifestation of the divine will. (p. ii)

In effect, this means that the chaplain has become a commissar. Moss (1999) further describes the role conflict that may be experienced in broader terms:

[When] the military and Christianity meet in worship values clash. Secular clashes with sacred, government authority clashes with gospel authority; there is a clash of expectations, what God expects and what the regiment expects, ultimately there is the clash between war and peace. War is evil, peace should be the normal state of the world ... Military chaplains know not every war is just, yet chaplains are expected to support military action. This support can be seen to legitimise unjust war and cause conflict for the chaplain, who may reduce prophetic utterances. (p. 77)

Wilkinson (2001:17; cf. Annesley 1982:5), who holds to the role conflict argument, presented a lecture to military chaplains, trying to define the tensions explicit in the role of a military chaplain in a lecture entitled *The Paradoxical Chaplain*.

- How can he represent Christ in a military organisation?
- What does it mean to be a non-combatant?
- A symbol of nationalism or catholicity?
- An agent of morale?
- A prophetic role?
- Idealisation of war?

Zahn (1969) reflects on this role conflict:

The pastor in uniform constitutes an affirmation ... that there is no basic incompatibility between the values represented by the religious community and the war being waged by the secular ruler. Even where a nation's Christian commitment stays fixed at the mere giving of lip service to religious and moral values, as is so often the case, there is apparently enough of an active identification left to make even the *show* of Christian commitment effective as a source of inner satisfaction and peace of mind. (pp. 224–225)

Although Zahn may highlight the tensions the chaplain often feels when resisting the commissar role, there is enough evidence to suggest that these tensions need not be given in to. Indeed, the protection given by the military authorities strengthens the chaplain's independent position. John Collins, who served during the Second World War, was able to challenge the carpet bombing policy of the British government. In 1941, Britain decided to bomb urban areas in Germany to disrupt the German war effort whilst also undermining the morale of the German people. Collins was posted to Bomber Command by Air Marshall Harris, who 'respected the prophetic role of this chaplain' (McCormack 2005) and allowed Collins to give a lecture questioning the bombing strategy on ethical grounds. McCormack (2005) concluded that:

Collins had accomplished an amazing feat, he had challenged the policy of area bombing at the very heart of Bomber Command and had caused everyone who either heard the lecture or heard about the lecture to question their personal responsibilities in the bombing campaign. (p. 24)

Collins did what Zahn (1969:296) desired as a 'chaplain who can point out the way to a sharper (Zahn delineation between what may be permitted in war and what must not be permitted'. This 'independence' is starkly illustrated by John Ritson, a Methodist chaplain, after his experience of the Kosovo conflict in 1999. He (Ritson 2001) reflected:

My role is not to motivate men to fight or to act as an apologist to justify the unjustifiable. It is not to bless bombs or bullets. It is to make the soldier realise who he or she is in the sight of God and to make them realise the truth which in the midst of war keeps them and the enemy human. When we lose sight of the humanity of our enemy then we can destroy with impunity unaffected by the horror and enormity of our actions. Then the image in which we are made so precious to God is lost to us. (p. 4)

This view that Ritson presents, is integral to understanding the task of the military chaplain, especially in war (cf. Van Niekerk 2002:46). He is commissioned as a Christian chaplain to minister the gospel in word and sacrament. At the core of his belief system is the conviction that the human being is

made in the image of God and therefore even the enemy is to be treated with dignity. Second World War chaplains illustrated this perspective in their lives and ministry as they served in the British military, but the best of their ministry transcended mere nationalism. Moral guidance is therefore a significant part of the military chaplain's pastoral role and will be included in their prayers. The chaplain's independence has been upheld even when the state sought to interfere. The 1930 National Day of Prayer controversy illustrates this point. The British Government sought to ban chaplains from praying about persecuted believers in Russia in unit and garrison churches. The sending churches challenged this direction and the government eventually backed down, allowing chaplains to pray as they wished (cf. Allison 2014:140–145). Similarly, the Pentagon sought to ban chaplains from praying or commenting upon the partial-abortion debate in 1997. The ban on chaplains was overturned when a priest took the Pentagon to court and it was judged to be an unacceptable level of censorship (cf. Herspring 2001:47–48). As long as the chaplain's 'external voice' continues to be protected, the chaplain can continue to serve without serious difficulties or role conflict, although Coleman (1994:12) accepts 'that there exists the potential for the RAF to commit wrong actions, and therefore a chaplain may well experience tension arising from the constant need to be alert to the possibility'. Certainly the role conflict argument is considered 'simplistic' by Robinson (1999:9) 'as it fails to consider factors like the military context of the chaplains' actions and the extent to which chaplains remain under the influence of their church.' The lack of intrinsic role conflict within British military chaplaincy essentially depends on the role model adopted by the chaplain and whether the state continues to respect the religious independence and autonomy of the chaplain.

Role conflicts according to Coleman

Coleman, an experienced RAF and Army Presbyterian chaplain, sought to answer Zahn's concerns and show that the role conflict model of military chaplaincy was not the norm. Indeed, Coleman (1994:11) points out the need for the chaplains' integrity and that 'if a chaplain discovered that he was mistaken in this perception he would refuse to extend his service'. He clearly puts his emphasis on the chaplain being foremost the servant of the church and in particular his denomination. He (Coleman 1994) writes:

It seems to us to be obvious that when a minister first enters the RAF chaplaincy he brings with him an outlook about ministry shaped by his own experience and background, including his involvement with the civilian church of his particular denomination and his theological training. (p. 127)

Although Coleman recognises that the chaplain is primarily a church minister who serves within the military, he also recognises that there are very different models of chaplaincy practice and lists the following examples:

- The pastoral model.
- The priestly model.
- The prophetic model.

- The evangelistic model.
- The bureaucratic model.
- The reactive model.
- The diseased model.

Coleman (1994:136) believes that the majority of military chaplains would regard their primary work as pastoral in nature and therefore the pastoral model for chaplaincy seems to be the most appropriate with its natural emphasis on care. Coleman (1994) writes:

The theological rationale behind the pastoral model demands that the gospel message is made quite explicit for the person to whom the chaplain is ministering, whether that is done verbally or in some other manner. (p. 137)

This self-giving approach to ministry, often portrayed as that of a 'wounded healer', can lead to emotional and mental burnout (Coleman 1994:137), especially within the context of war. Naturally chaplains following this model must also guard against becoming 'just another welfare worker' (Coleman 1994:142) or counsellor (Gray 1961:20) by holding firm to their religious convictions (Coleman 1994:129).

According to Coleman (1994), the priestly model places the emphasis on priestly or mediatory action and sacramental worship:

The chaplain who adopts the priestly model of ministry will tend to emphasise the importance of sacramental worship as a means of restoring relationships between God and man, believing that it is through the sacraments that forgiveness is best communicated and experienced. (p. 143)

As the name suggests, the emphasis is on religious ritual and the act of Communion, and, when biblically practised, transcends denominational themes and has a proven record of effect upon military personnel (Brown 2001:241). Wilkinson (1978:33) agrees and explains: 'In situations that are totally new and bewildering, rituals can supply boundaries and signposts, so reducing the sense of chaotic novelty.'

The prophetic model places the emphasis on the chaplain being willing, even when unpopular, 'to act as a spokesman on behalf of God and, at the same time, take care to ensure that he conveyed only God's work, and this with complete accuracy' (Coleman 1994:149). It is an absolutist model that seeks to have no compromise with the secular authorities. It exists on its own terms as a religious authoritative model that emphasises preaching or proclamation. Coleman (1994:157) warns that the 'adoption of the prophetic approach as a model for one's entire ministry could make it difficult for a chaplain not to see everything in terms of potential conflict'. This may be the model Zahn (1969) was considering when he spoke of intrinsic role conflict.

The evangelistic model of chaplaincy has a more limited scope than those models already listed, but the advantage of the evangelistic model is, quite simply, 'the way in which it puts the proclamation of the gospel at the top of the agenda

and helps to keep it there' (Coleman 1994:162). Indeed, the individual, seeking help from a chaplain working from this model, 'may want some advice or practical assistance, the chaplain may be uneasy until he can do all within his power to encourage the individual to seek salvation' (Coleman 1994:164). Coleman (1994:165), speaking from a post-1960s viewpoint, believes that 'a chaplain who bases his whole ministry on this model will find himself speaking a language that few can understand'. This was the key model that evangelical and revivalist Free Church chaplains adopted during the First World War (Allison 2013:55).

Coleman (1994:165) then turns his attention to more modern roles for chaplaincy such as the bureaucratic model, which emphasises the chaplain as an authoritative leader 'within his church, managing, directing, ordering and regulating'. Indeed, Coleman (1994) further states:

It is hard to imagine a chaplain in this situation not adopting the same system of organisation as that presented by those around him, meaning that ultimately this bureaucratic model would come to be based on a hierarchal ordering of functions, rather than the simple desire to administer his church affairs as effectively as possible. (p. 171)

I would put this model in the diseased category unless it is paired with the pastoral model with the pastoral welfare of those Coleman has charge of as his key and overarching responsibility. Pastoral aims will enable the senior chaplain to administer wisely, effectively and with genuine care.

The reactive model sees the chaplain with 'a keen readiness to react to needs as they arise' (Coleman 1994:174). Coleman (1994:175) points out that the pastor using this model 'is unlikely to make distinctions between religious, pastoral, welfare or social needs and would prefer not to design priorities to such demands'. Coleman (1994:175) also points out that this reactive model tends to concentrate mainly on the presented 'need itself; once this is met and dealt with the chaplain's involvement largely ceases and he can only hope that growth and faith itself may follow'. Moreover, Coleman (1994:180) criticised the reactive model as being essentially dangerous, placing the chaplain at significant risk of burnout. Also, within the church context, the reactive model could cause continual conflict as each situation is dealt with reactively, ignoring any bigger picture or working towards a greater goal. It also militates against good leadership (Coleman 1994:182), whereas the pastoral model 'is essentially proactive, where the chaplain goes beyond the obvious need to try and foster Christian faith and maturity' (Coleman 1994:175).

Coleman achieves his aim of showing that Zahn's role conflict argument is an aberration rather than the normal experience of the military chaplain. Indeed, for Zahn's idea to be relevant, the chaplain must adopt a diseased model of chaplaincy. The diseased model would be that of a normal officer and minister's role held in equal tension. The chaplaincy role models that Coleman presents are descriptions of chaplaincy practice – most of which, at some point, would be used by the

chaplain depending on circumstances and denominational emphasis. Therefore, the models presented by Coleman, are each too limited to fully describe the role of the military chaplain.

The external voice according to McCormack

Zahn and Coleman sought to describe and define the role of military chaplains, whereas McCormack (2005:3) sought to create a new model for military chaplaincy that would protect the integral place military chaplaincy has within the military in a postmodern and more secular age that no longer lives on the 'spiritual fragments of Christendom' (Roxburgh 1997:37). At first, this may seem to be a development of the royal court jester or clown approach (Annesley 1982:6) that positions the chaplain to *be able* to 'speak truth to power'. McCormack, on the other hand, seeks to develop professionally the chaplain's role, giving him the intellectual content that would give him the *right* to speak to power. Coleman (1994:2) suggests that an 'emphasis upon professionalism is often an attempt to resist marginalisation' and this is no doubt the intention of McCormack's model, which aims to put chaplaincy at the centre of military life regardless of cultural changes and the advent of post-modernism (McCormack 2005:12, 19). This model of chaplaincy, McCormack named the 'external voice'.

In postmodernism, language does not reveal meaning, but it constructs meaning (McCormack 2005:14). Therefore, the 'external voice' needs the 'absolutely basic foundational principle, a sense of centre: centre referring to a set of foundational beliefs or knowledge' that is legitimised by an external body of standing (McCormack 2005:21, 39). If there is no 'sense of centre, it is meaningless to speak of anything being external, let alone an external voice informing, shaping or influencing someone or something' (McCormack 2005:22). To summarise: 'An external voice functions as a lighthouse in a sea of subjectivity, impervious or resistant to the postmodernist cycle of endless and morally valueless construction and reconstruction' (McCormack 2005:22). Obviously, chaplains, seeking to develop the role of the 'external voice', would also need a comprehensive understanding of the organisation they are seeking to serve and significantly influence. In other words, they need to be grounded in reality (McCormack 2005:18). The chaplain, as an 'external voice', must be able to comprehend what the military organisation is able to achieve and what is beyond its scope (McCormack 2005:52). McCormack (2005:24) seeks to develop a professional model of chaplaincy with the ability to inform and influence military opinion that could be applied to all denominations presently sending ministers to chaplaincy services as well as chaplains representing faiths other than Christian. explains that 'while the function of an external voice may be seen as religious or moral, it is not restricted to it or to any one religious group'. Consequently, 'it is a model that is compatible with any of the major faith groups or with appropriate and identifiable secular groups' (McCormack 2005:22). He (McCormack 2005) points out that within the military 'its legitimisation comes from its organic link with the national executive, the

government that commissions its officers and non-commissioned officers' and therefore:

An external voice must ... seek after expert power and acquire the expertise required to have influence with an organisation. In terms of chaplaincy in the Army, and recognising that expert power is largely limited to the area of expertise, this should be in a subject such as ethics. (p. 39)

The 'external voice' role model is an interesting one with its emphasis upon the chaplain proactively engaging with the military authorities on ethical issues. The model is grounded on the chaplain's knowledge that has gained external validation outside of the sending church's recognition, which is a concern to Lodwick (2009:27). His key concern is that the chaplain will become a professional officer who is given the right to speak on the basis of his education rather than as a Christian minister, although the two would not necessarily be incompatible. It would, however, be hard to see how the 'external voice' model could be adopted by chaplains as a definition without compromising their unique work and historical standing within the military. They are representatives of their sending church and are commissioned to work for the church within the military. As Lodwick (2009) explains:

A chaplain has access to a whole body of knowledge and practice: theological, liturgical, scriptural and pastoral, all of which the chaplain draws upon in their ministry. This body of knowledge and the chaplaincy practice that it gives rise to, and which in turn gives rise to further knowledge, puts the provider of pastoral care in a position of domination and the recipient of pastoral care in a position of subservience. Knowledge and the practice that it engenders is what the chaplain has to offer to the army and in turn that is what the army sees as beneficial to its functioning. (p. 11)

Certainly, through confidential pastoral work the chaplain often becomes the 'one person with knowledge of the overall picture' (Lodwick 2009:30). The chaplain has unique authority that the external voice concept could risk limiting, especially when many chaplains could not fulfil this role unless they had particular academic ability. This is why Lodwick, instead of proposing a 'model' to understand chaplaincy, offered a 'metaphor' instead. The metaphor of the chaplain as 'internal conscience' is proposed as a more productive way of making sense of regimental chaplaincy and the negotiation of power (Lodwick 2009:3). Lodwick (2009) simply reworks the pastoral model of chaplaincy in opposition to the external voice concept:

Pastoral care is ... that activity within the ministry of the Church which is centrally concerned with promoting the well-being of individuals and of community. The ultimate aim of pastoral care is ... to increase love between people and between people and God. Its specific functions are healing, sustaining, reconciling, guiding and nurturing ... [Therefore] the subject matter expert on things spiritual, religious and moral in the army is the chaplain. (pp. 14, 39)

There are serious misgivings concerning the external voice model being applied to chaplaincy as presently practised at

the Unit and 'embedded' level, although it must be acknowledged that the development of religious advisors (Civil Servants) representing key religions other than Christianity are definitely developing this concept of chaplaincy as external voice, so it has already been proven to be a workable concept. For Christian chaplaincy as presently practised, the external voice concept is still a model which could be effective in helping the sending churches to understand their role more fully. When applied in this way the model works and demands that the sending church takes its responsibility to engage with the state and military structures seriously but not naively. To do this the sending churches must know what is happening within the military and pro-actively present its perspective.

Liminal Ministry according to Allison

The pastoral model of chaplaincy is the proven foundation of Christian military chaplaincy, but needs to be expanded into a more defined theological model that the 'liminal' concept of ministry tries to do. The ministry of the chaplain, in any period of history, is in a real sense 'other worldly' as the chaplain represents another government not of this world, the Kingdom of Christ, but applies the wisdom, gospel and sacraments of Christ to concrete situations. In the most appalling situation such as war, these embedded chaplains are able to give hope and point beyond mere nationalism to something far greater. Because of this, they hold a position of unique trust as friends and advisors to all within the military, regardless of rank and situation. The chaplains' other-worldly perspective helps them to uphold human dignity and often choose to be where the trauma is greatest and their ministry is most urgently needed. The word *liminal* is most often applied to ghostly experiences, angelic appearances (Allison 2009:7) or is applied to the marginalised church as *communitas* (Roxburgh 1997:49–56; Hirsch 2006:220–222). Initially, it was applied to native peoples who live outside government authority like those living in the jungles of the Amazon (Turner 2009:95). Roxburgh (1997) explains:

Liminality was applied to rites of passage processes in preindustrial cultures. Rites of passage are rituals, usually religious in nature, through which individuals are detached from their established and normal role in society by being placed outside the social nexus in an in-between state; and after some ritualized passage of time, they are returned, inwardly transformed and outwardly changed, to a new place and status. (p. 24)

Turner (2009:95) explains further that 'liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony'. Roxburgh (1997:32) sees this as a place of 'death and loss,' a wilderness experience for the *communitas* where true Christian community can be rediscovered. It is from this marginal place that the *communitas* can be freed to speak with a renewed authority to society.

Unlike the concept of the *communitas* existing outside or apart from society, the chaplain is set in an agency of society.

He has an internal rather than external role – in this case, in the military. He is a uniformed identified member of that organisation and participates in the rigorous training needed to be a soldier. However, he still remains a liminal and 'threshold' figure like a ghost who exists in the living world, but is not fully part of it. The chaplain is in the military but not of it – in effect 'betwixt and between'. He wears an officer's uniform, but has no executive authority; he is in the midst of conflict, but does not carry a weapon; he is a herald of peace and an eternal kingdom in the midst of death and limited horizons. The chaplain has a great deal of freedom to fulfil his ministry, often ignoring military convention and occasionally direction (Gethyn-Jones 1988: 68–69). The chaplain is autonomous, which is a concern for some commentators. Yet, it is this very autonomy that is intrinsic to the chaplain's success and influence, as this liminal position 'is also a place of opportunity, creativity, and transformation' (Roxburgh 1997:45). 'Liminal ministry' therefore best describes what military chaplaincy has been and continues to be when functioning correctly. This 'model' may be accused of being idealistic, but without such an ideal of chaplaincy it will become simply functional, emptied of its spiritual content. Chaplaincy is primarily a spiritual and pastoral ministry moving in and out of Coleman's models depending on situation and intention, but must remain biblical in approach. The military chaplain is a liminal person offering a liminal ministry. Essential elements of this liminal ministry are:

- *The chaplain should recognise that every human being is made in the image of God.* This may seem an obvious statement, but in the context of war and conflict smaller ideologies, such as an unhealthy nationalism, can begin to take precedence even in the chaplain's life and ministry.
- *The chaplain should be able to transcend mere nationalism.* An example of this kind of ministry is found in the work of Henry Gerecke, an American Second World War chaplain, who not only effectively cared for his own troops, but was also able to care for the spiritual and pastoral needs of the Nazi leadership at Nuremburg after being appointed as their chaplain (Grossmith 1998:11–80).
- *The chaplain should recognise that the highest position he could hold is that of chaplain, and career progression cannot be a genuine aim.* The senior chaplain is responsible for the administration and operational direction of the chaplain, but his key responsibility must be for the pastoral care and support of the chaplains within the remit of his direction.
- *Humility is a key mark of the chaplain.* The chaplain must continue to evidence a teachable spirit, seeking to learn throughout his service to others in Christ's name (cf. Phlp 2:3–4). Christ is our example and goal and it is his approval the chaplain should be prayerfully seeking (v. 5–11).
- *The chaplain's core responsibility is for pastoral care and this needs to be his chief skill.* Promotion should require proven pastoral skills as well as administrative and leadership gifting.

- *The chaplain is primarily answerable to his sending church regarding denominational integrity and spirituality.* The sending church is a liminal entity itself, and needs to be engaged with the work of its chaplains as well as with the chaplaincy leadership.
- *The chaplain should not carry arms, even for self-defence.* This is important, because the chaplain represents something greater than a nation at war: he is an officially recognised representative of Christ and his Kingdom.

The strength of the liminal ministry concept is that it is overtly in keeping with Christian and, in particular, Free Church values and principles, and protects biblical and denominational integrity. It also protects the chaplain from the misuse of power by other chaplains that have oversight responsibility, as it places pastoral care as the core skill that the chaplain requires regardless of status, rank or position to avoid their service being merely functional.

Conclusion

It is clear that the best model to describe the key focus of Christian denominational and ecumenical chaplaincy practice is the pastoral one. This, however, does not fully define it, whereas liminal ministry emphasises the pastoral and spiritual nature of chaplaincy without limiting it to that model alone, liberating the chaplain to continue his independent ministry with the freedom to act. This concept will also place a bulwark against the temptations that Zahn points out and will offer an underlying spiritual foundation to McCormack's 'external voice'. Coleman's roles will be taken on to meet the needs of the moment. More importantly, the autonomous nature of liminal ministry will prevent the chaplain from becoming a mere tool of the state, simply restating government policy with religious authority and becoming a kind of commissar as Herspring argued. Not only does liminal ministry define the role of chaplaincy, but also describes what has always been best practice within the British military.

It is fair to say that the *Liminal Ministry* concept of chaplaincy is rooted in the Christian faith and emphasises the Free Church's need for autonomy and independence of chaplaincy even within the conforming nature of the military. Indeed, the more conforming the institution, the more important it is for the chaplain to be independent and autonomous. This approach allows and gives official permission for the chaplain to transcend, for instance, nationalism to represent ideas of a greater humanity in the context of war and conflict. The chaplain embedded in the midst of combat is trusted by the institution that commissions him to pastorally care for all faiths and none. Because of what the chaplain personally and historically represents, he will often be trusted by the enemy. This can obviously be a peace making aspect of chaplaincy that has an operational benefit that would be lost if a secular (a type of commissar or social worker) or a spiritual advisory role (a civil servant) is adopted to define chaplaincy as a whole. Chaplaincy as 'Liminal Ministry' embraces the ecumenical nature of the Christian church and, if not the

theological content, embedded chaplains who represent other religions could certainly adopt the liminal concept of chaplaincy while laying their own theological foundations outworking this role with religious integrity.

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