

Prison Chaplaincy, Church and 'The Cure of Souls'
A personal narrative perspective.

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1. Context: 'Drugs, Wreckers and Wrecks?'

You may recall the story of a preacher who began a sermon about Satan with a summary outline:

'Who the devil he is, what the devil he does, and why the devil he does it'

I shall essay no answers to that, but note two subsidiary applications: firstly, of course, offenders: who the devil they are, what the devil they do and why the devil they do it? My tabloid-style sub-title already hints at a part answer to the mystery of criminal iniquity in its first word: drugs. In my prison experience 'wrecks and wreckers' also signifies what in reference to the Methodist Temperance movement, the late Lord Soper referred to as "the devil in solution". Alcohol abuse or dependency, and drug-addiction, are dominant factors in criminal activity, both through resultant behaviours in fuelling crimes from petty thefts and robberies to fund dependencies, and through violence and killings among rival gangs in the supply trade, so-called 'turf-wars'.

Common human aggression and capacity for anger, aggravated by acutely adverse circumstances and/or chronic psychic frailty become dis-inhibited and unconstrained through excessive alcohol, perhaps in a cocktail mix with other drugs. That accounts for most crimes of violence.

The relatively smaller proportion of violent crimes, familiar in the tragic chronicles of 'dangerous and severe personality disordered offenders' are of socio-pathological and/or psycho-pathological origin and are unrelated to abuse of drugs or alcohol.

I am not suggesting that alcohol and drugs are intrinsically 'evil'. It may be argued that "both have great healing powers" and that from a contrary perspective, "the addict is making an attempt at self-medication" ⁽²⁾ however unadvisedly and counter-productively.

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Crimes associated with serious sexual deviancy—particularly those on the paedophilia spectrum—are in an especially distressing category both of causes and of consequences. These involve highly specialist strategies for treatments in custody and structured management and support on release, through Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) panels.

This is of critical, though discreet, importance in the life and ministry of the Church and a continuing challenge to our understanding of, and pastoral engagement with contemporary understandings of sexuality.

This entire conspectus belongs with the study and praxis of both criminology and the psychology of criminal behaviours.

2. Institutional Overview

The Prison Acts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries instituted a publicly funded Chaplain of the Established Church in every English and Welsh prison.

The Chaplain was the Governor's 'right hand man', forming, with the medical officer, a benign triumvirate. The Chaplain embodied a moral and spiritual authority conferring an ostensible religious legitimacy for both punishment and reformation of offenders.

Here is an account from the Hampshire Chronicle of 1856 relating to the newly-opened Gaol (now HMP Winchester):

"The extreme penalty of the law will be carried out on the convict Abraham Baker on Tuesday morning at 9 o'clock, the execution in consequence of Calcraft, the executioner not being able to attend earlier. The death-warrant it is stated, was received yesterday from the Home Office by the High Sheriff.

"The condemned sermon was preached on Sunday morning by the Reverend Chaplain of the Prison, whose efforts on behalf of the unhappy criminal appear to have been received by him with becoming attention. The prisoner has continued regular in the observance of religious duties from the time of his condemnation. He has had an interview with his late mistress (Mrs Poyner of Southampton) and the clergyman at St John's Newport, but nothing is known of anything of importance having passed on these occasions.

"The execution of Baker on Tuesday, if carried out, will be the first infliction of capital punishment at the New Prison. The last execution in this city was in August 1848 when William Atter was hanged for the murder of one of the convict-guards in Portsmouth Dockyard"

Until relatively recently the chaplain represented the 'conscience' of the prison both to senior operational managers and implicitly no less to a high proportion of prisoners of all faiths and none. This lingers to a remarkable though rapidly diminishing extent in our secularised society. The Chaplain could also be perceived as colluding in and sanitising a system of rough justice within an unjust society, a perception with which I have often wrestled. Yet paradoxically, is that not also a facet of the 'conscience' of the prison?

When I joined HM Prison Service Chaplaincy in May 1991 the Prison Service was a department integrated within the Home Office; so it had an old-fashioned Civil Service management structure. The Anglican Chaplaincy had an independent parallel line of command from the Chaplain-General and his five regional Assistant Chaplains-General with a shadow Roman Catholic and Methodist administration, the latter wholly part-time. There was less formal involvement from 'Other Faiths' but the Anglican establishment acted as 'honest broker' in facilitating and supervising the ministrations of Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu 'visiting ministers' as needed. Initial and subsequent in-service training was delivered residentially either at the Prison Service College at Newbold Revel near Rugby or at another of the various central England retreat houses. For me this included an elective eight-day Ignatian Retreat at St Beuno's, where I met a retired Bishop of Southwark who having enquired about my present position exclaimed sympathetically, "Ah, that's rather a Cinderella ministry!"

3. A Seminal Moment

In September 1999 amidst the pre-Millennial hopes, what proved to be the last-ever exclusively Christian prison chaplaincy residential conference was held with no expense spared at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. Princess Anne, Prisons Minister Paul Boateng, and Director-General Martin Narey, addressed us in turn. Ken Dodd as an after-dinner speaker kept us in stitches until midnight! The 'Cinderellas' were enjoying their Ball.....

But it was the then HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, General Sir David (now Lord) Ramsbotham, son of a former Bishop of Pontefract, who spoke of the Prison Chaplaincy not as a 'Cinderella ministry' but rather as 'The jewel in the crown of the Prison Service'. Affirmation indeed! 'Cinderella' or 'Jewel in the Crown'? Prison chaplaincy was and still is truly something of both. Along with our robed ecumenical procession from the Adelphi Hotel to 'Paddy's Wigwam' (Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral), the event proved to be *fin de siècle*. It seemed to enjoy a privileged status—but not for much longer.

Let me explain how and why. The national Head of Regimes at Prison Service Headquarters introduced to our gathered throng of Anglican, Roman Catholic and Free Church chaplains, the newly appointed—and first-ever—full time Muslim Advisor to the Prison Service. His task was to coordinate, develop and promote adequate provision for the religious and cultural needs of Muslim prisoners. The Brixton Chaplaincy Team had produced their draft multi-faith mission statement, and placed a yellow-paper copy of their statement on every seat of the Liverpool conference room without permission. This was immediately denounced by the then Chaplain-General as a premature 'railroading' or even 'hi-jacking' of the conference.

At that time I was acting as London South Area Chaplain. I realised at once that the Brixton initiative was an embarrassing incursion coincidental with an agenda previously canvassed from the north by a prison chaplaincy team where a full-time Imam was sharing fully in generic not solely faith-specific duties. I sensed that the timely initiative of the Director of Regimes had been scheduled with limited consultation and imposed on our Christian hierarchy.

By some accounts our then Chaplain-General had resisted the inclusion of the Muslim Adviser within his headquarters team of five Assistant Chaplains-General, Principal Roman Catholic and Methodist Chaplains. So within a year, he had in his own words 'taken an early bath' and resigned. His eventual successor was Coordinating Chaplain at HMP Full Sutton where a multi-faith model of generic chaplaincy was in operation.

4. A Critical Turning Point

On 21 March 2000, six months after the Liverpool Conference, there occurred the dreadful in-cell murder of Zahid Mubarek at the Feltham Young Offenders Institution by a known self-confessed white racist cell-mate. The ensuing enquiry concluded that this was a preventable tragedy caused by culpable negligence.

Scarcely a year had elapsed since publication in February 1999 of 'The Macpherson Report' concerning the previous tragic case of Stephen Lawrence. In April 1993 Stephen Lawrence had been fatally stabbed near a bus stop in Eltham. One of his assailants had been heard to yell a racial slur including the word 'nigger.' Stephen, stabbed in the chest and shoulder, had suffered two deep wounds severing major arteries and veins and penetrating a lung. He had tried to escape but had collapsed after stumbling a hundred metres, bleeding to death.

The Crown Prosecution Service [CPS] had brought a case with some rapidity but abandoned all charges in July 1993 after deciding there was insufficient evidence to provide a realistic chance of conviction. There was dismay within and well beyond the Black and Minority Ethnic [BME] metropolitan communities. Stephen's parents Doreen and Neville Lawrence initiated a private prosecution, but without success. Home Secretary Jack Straw ordered a public inquiry under Sir William Macpherson in 1997 which reported two years later alleging 'institutional racism' within the Metropolitan Police and making seventy recommendations for the police and the wider public service.

At that time an implicit 'institutional racism' could be found in chaplaincy structures as well in, no doubt, some other people's explicit negative attitudes to racial or religious minorities. A disproportionate amount of public finance went into Christian chaplaincy, compared with sums aimed at serving the needs of the increasing numbers of Muslims and Sikhs amongst the prison population.

The Liverpool initiative by the Head of Regimes, introducing the newly appointed Muslim Adviser, was clear evidence of the urgent seriousness requiring a Government response. Indeed, within a short period, 'Race Equality and Diversity' came second only to 'security' in Prison Service management priorities.

The obvious implications for chaplaincy duly followed. The job description of the next Chaplain-General to HM Prisons was revised to include the development of an inclusive multi-faith chaplaincy service. This was both a reactive and prescient political development in the later shadow of '9/11' even though—for many a whole-time Anglican chaplain—it has been a period of considerable dislocation in an unstable and ever changing kaleidoscope.

5. Institutional Change

In the early to mid 1990s the Conservative government promoted the creation of 'next step agencies' where former Government departments (Highways, Met Office, Royal Mail etc.) were 'hived off' from Ministerial and Civil Service management. Thus began in the Prison Service a process of structural and cultural change. The old bureaucracy and quasi-military command structure rapidly adapted to a business model. Responsibility and authority for decision making and budgeting was devolved to Area Managers and to Establishment Governors. Business plans, annual establishment contracts, service level agreements, key performance indicators and targets, and the progressive devising of auditable Standards for every function including Religion (Standard 51) were phased in while the prison population continued to rise from 50,000 to 75,000. That number has risen to 86,000 by 2012. Meanwhile in 2009 Standard 51 was withdrawn pending still-awaited revision. I judge it to have been substantially redacted and subsumed with the 'single-strand' annual Equality (Access to Religion) Assessment.

The days of apparent and oft-seeming paternalistic Anglican privilege, albeit also of dedicated service, are gone. But for its enshrining *qua Church of England* in the Prisons Act, the Chaplaincy might well have been more radically 're-structured'. As of 2012 this has happened with the retirement of the Chaplain-General and uncertainty around the job description and specification for a successor. The post no longer carries any line management of whole time Chaplains, or involvement in recruitment, selection or deployment.

The changed institutional framework and generational transition means the disappearance of those many prison governors, managers and others with a faith-informed or faith-shaped sense of vocation. Their successors have necessarily been formed by business model managerial priorities and performance targets, balanced by a culture permeated by auditable standards of Decency, Diversity and Equality.

Increasingly, governing Governors have delegated the line management of chaplains and chaplaincy teams to sometimes reluctant subordinate managers—even though, notably, the present Prison Service Director-General is a Methodist lay preacher. But for the stringent demands for religious provision by many non-Christians inside and 'on the out' and for 'diversity and equality' legislation, what I term mechanistic secularism might well have overtaken us.

It is ironic that (buttressed by the incorporation of the Human Rights Charter) it is religious provision for prisoners of other 'world faiths' that has arrested the secular tendency towards the marginalising of religion in the Prison Service. Arguably, multi-faith chaplaincy has been less a threat than an enrichment and creative opportunity. Close encounters of an inter-faith and multi-faith character have stimulated greater curiosity and openness to the spiritual dimension of life.

A major concern remains the tackling of religious extremism, not least in the Young Offender estate. Here team working and sometimes team leadership by Muslim chaplains has proved invaluable.

6. The Cure of Souls—Chaplaincy Function and Goals.

Security is the first priority of custody: but safer custody is part of the humane care of prisoners through seeking to prevent bullying and self-harm, through 'pro-social modelling', decency and respect; and through emphasis on the objective: 'helping prisoners to live law abiding and useful lives on release'. Typically in local prisons (those intended for remand and short term convicted prisoners) the chaplains' role hinges around much 'ambulance' work in ameliorating distress, marked by brief and sometimes oft-repeating encounters.

Revised priorities five or six years on led to a re-branding of the Director of *Regimes*—an intra-mural focus—to Director of *Resettlement*, acknowledging the vital importance of an extra-mural focus.

Prisoner education, training and offending behaviour programmes are closely coupled with links and partnerships beyond the walls. Family, housing and employment are key elements for effective resettlement and reduction of re-offending. These initiatives are now refined into seven so-called 'Resettlement Pathways' at least one of which, 'Attitudes, Values and Thinking' is immediately relevant to Chaplaincy activity.

Millions of pounds have been invested over the last fifteen and more years on Offenders' Learning and Skills, on Drug Strategy to combat drugs incursions into prisons and penalise those complicit or testing positive in random mandatory urine-tests, and on seeking to provide cognitive and therapeutic treatment programmes.

In fact the political priority of crime and re-offending-reduction has issued not only in offending behaviour courses but no less in building or maintaining bridges between the inside and 'the out'. HMP Winchester was the first to brand itself a 'Community Prison' concerned with remand or short-term prisoners along the lines envisioned by Lord Woolf's Report in 1991. In recent years efforts have been made at Winchester to contact landlords, employers or other agencies in the hope of maintaining these key provisions for family and offender should custody prove short-term.

The hidden costs of imprisonment are far higher than the £38,000 per prisoner per annum then calculated, or even the £45,000 calculated by 2012. Hidden costs include disruption to family, to dependents and to the typically fragile 'ecology' of many offenders.

Indeed the Chaplaincy across several faiths has a role in this, beyond intra-mural ministry. In the Anglican Ordinal a responsibility is specifically laid upon Bishops to Chaplaincy at HMP Dorchester included a Community Chaplaincy offering support to ex-offenders returning to a Dorset domicile. At HMP Winchester the Prison Chaplaincy secured funding for a Fresh Expressions Church Army appointment to develop such networks within Hampshire. Such resettlement strategies will be competing for Treasury funds along with partner third sector agencies amidst a lasting fiscal contraction.

Bridging the gap between custody and after-release is crucial to effective resettlement. To fail there is to undo any good work that may, despite all the odds, have been achieved 'inside'. This priority informed the creation of the National Offender Management Service [NOMS] intended to create a seamless management of offenders 'from custody to supervision'.

7. Some Critical Socio-economic and Theological Observations

a) Socio-economic Observations

I spoke earlier of my periodic wrestling with a perception of 'legitimising' or indeed being personally and professionally parasitic on a penal system heavily weighted against sections of the population who are among the most disadvantaged. This can be illustrated by reference to Social Exclusion Unit statistics from several years ago, but from which there are no grounds to presume significant change.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNIT STATS	GENERAL POPULATION			PRISONER POPULATION		
	male	female	overall	male	female	overall
PROBLEM						
Ran away from home in childhood			11%	47%	50%	
Taken into care as a child			2%			27%
Truanted from school			3%			30%
Excluded from school			2%	49%	33%	
Numeracy at or below Level 1 at age eleven			23%			65%
Suffer from 2 or more mental disorders	5%	2%		72%	70%	
Alcohol abuse	38%	15%		63%	39%	
Drugs abuse	13%	8%		66%	33%	
Drugs related offences						55%
Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) people			11%			25%
IMPRISONMENT				PER 1,000 POPULATION		
Britain						145
France						91
Germany						96

These statistics beg the perennial question of the purposes of penal custody which many critics rightly deem dysfunctional beyond the temporary removal of social nuisances or the removal of dangerous persons. What hope is there of any genuine reform or rehabilitation for such damaged or distorted lives?

b) Theological Observations

Is Prison Chaplaincy complicit in the 'rhetoric of salvation' described by T Gorringe in *God's Just Vengeance* (1996), amounting to empty piety or ethereal eschatology with no impact on the here and now? There is much of that kind of theology in some elements of chaplaincies, mostly amongst volunteers, just as among many churches 'on the out'.

The Christian Doctrines of Atonement centre on the saving death of Jesus which is expressed in varying metaphors or theories, both in the New Testament and in later thinking. One of these, the so-called 'Penal Substitution and Satisfaction', is emphasised by conservative Evangelicals to the exclusion of any others. God sets forth his Son to suffer the cruel *punishment* our human wickedness deserves. Instead of punishing you and me, once and for all, God offers his dearest and best, sparing us out of his love.

Pastorally, it might 'work through' for a deeply guilty person, as a construed measure of the cost of forgiveness to a God lovingly self-identifying with both perpetrator and victims. A popular allegory depicts the sentencing judge descending to the dock and accepting the death penalty in substitution for the convicted person.

Founded partly on an abstract concept of a balancing retributive justice ('tit for tat' or 'lex talionis') the theory has been critiqued for its influence over centuries of penal practice as enshrining violence in the guise of a redemptive transaction.

More is going on and more was being worked out than allowed for in this (to my mind and heart) crude interpretation based on certain Old Testament and other ancient archetypes. *Substitution* there is, but it needn't be a 'God-ward' wrath-assuaging penalty alone. There is a 'man-ward' dimension by which Divine Passion absorbs our human hostilities, hatreds and their consequences, without revenge or pay back. Jesus is humanity's Victim (or our inhumanity's Victim), rather than God's.

8. The Cure of Souls—Love and Forgiveness in Extremis.

Though quaint sounding to materialist contemporaries, the 'cure of souls' is a classical term of Christian spirituality concerned with the vital well-springs of personal 'inner life' and their nurture through en-graced encounter with opposing inner forces. The term continues in Anglican usage in the installation by a Bishop

of a priest upon whom is delegated overall an pastoral charge: 'the cure of souls'. The term connotes a dynamic process of spiritual awareness and growth.

My contention is that this should be a central priority in Chaplaincy engagement but is too often excluded or sidelined by a bland, facile or superficial evangelistic rhetoric. The association of the Lawrence surname with the momentous political and institutional reverberations following the murder of Stephen, should not eclipse another tragic murder of an unrelated victim of the same surname.

Anyone who heard of it will have been profoundly moved by the deep distress and grief of Mrs Frances Lawrence when interviewed on the Radio 4 Today programme years after her late husband Phillip was killed in December 1995. Phillip had been fatally stabbed by a gang member at the gates of North Westminster Roman Catholic School where he was the caring and devoted head.

Near the end of a summer marked by a spate of serial teenage-on-teenage stabbings and shootings, Frances Lawrence was interviewed about the Italian-born perpetrator's successful appeal against an deportation order made on his eventual parole release. Setting aside any 'pros and cons' in that regard, what registered were the raw wounds of Mrs Lawrence's continuing anguish and her re-kindled anger at his 'reprieve'.

This instanced a fault-line in our penal system. Cherie Booth QC addressed this issue in her BBC Radio 4 Lent Talk several years ago. The Archbishop of Canterbury has addressed it at several venues, including the Prison Reform Trust, the General Synod of the Church of England and in a debate he initiated in the House of Lords. Ex Chief Inspector of Prisons Lord Ramsbotham has frequently spoken about it.

The post-1997 Labour Government sought a part-repair of the breach through statutory procedures by which victims of serious crimes would no longer be treated merely as prosecution witnesses but would be given statutory rights under a Victims Charter. The Victims Support Service was, some 25 years ago an entirely volunteer-based charity and network, along the lines of The Samaritans. It still is a voluntary service, with professional managers combining the nurture and supervision of the skills base for the core activity, with continual funding bids.

9. The Cure of Souls—Restorative Justice

In 2007 at Kingston Chaplaincy, prompted by prisoner demand, I organised a 'Victims Awareness' morning. Forty of our men attended, making their contributions as well as listening and responding to a guest panel. The panel comprised the area manager of Victim Support Hampshire and Isle of Wight; two of their volunteers; a member of the charity AFFECT (Action for Families Affected by Criminal Trauma—relatives of serious, high profile or any offenders); a

Probation Officer responsible for victims issues; a lecturer from the Criminology Faculty of the University of Portsmouth; and myself. The subject for the morning (though not its title) was 'Bridging the gap between offender and offended' leading to discussion about the concept and practice of 'restorative justice'.

Frances Lawrence's engrained grief, hurt and bitter resentment remained unassuaged after nearly seven years despite her best efforts as a devout Catholic woman. Few if any, in St Francis' Chapel that Friday morning would blame her! It isn't solely the surviving victims who seek healing. Offenders and perpetrators can search for a reparative forgiveness and have to live with a painful awareness of the ripple-effects far beyond their identified victim.

Almost twenty years previously, while a parish priest in the London Borough of Newham, I had encountered the pioneer founder and trainer psychologist of Redbridge Victim Support. Then during my first year at HMP Wormwood Scrubs I was able to contact Hammersmith & Fulham Victim Support Service. In liaison with the Senior Psychologist (Dr A. Leonard) we planned an evening forum with main first-stage life-sentenced men, chaplaincy visitors and Victim Support volunteers. There was a great degree of predictable apprehension on the part of the volunteers. The prospect of a first encounter with perpetrators of murder would be aggravated by their experiential empathy for victims. The forum was structured thus: I welcomed them and introduced their coordinator, who outlined the scope of their voluntary work. The assembly was then divided into groups of six or seven prisoners and guests charged with consideration of these questions:

- Who is a victim?
- What makes her or him a victim?
- How might a victim be helped?

Restorative justice bridges the gap through carefully conducted mediation processes which may lead to an eventual face-to-face encounter. The South African 'Truth and Reconciliation' process facilitated by Archbishop Desmond Tutu is a classic example. Might such opportunity have helped Mrs Lawrence? Was it ever considered or proposed? If she *had* been willing, should the author of her husband's tragedy have had any right to refuse? Might it have helped him to experience a costly forgiveness?

All this lies at the heart of the Gospel of Christ and should be at the pastoral heart of the ministry and witness of Christ's Church. This 'Cruciality of the Cross' exemplifies my firm conviction that the criminal justice system in its processes and outcomes, of which prisons are a major but too dominant element, has signal theological saliency.

10. The Cure of Souls—Forensic-Therapeutic Spirituality

Key concepts both in the Scriptures and in Church tradition need to be much more than mere ideas in the head, or dogmas confined to envisioned 'end-times'. They, like much else in the Gospel, cry out for our practical engagement. Remorse and repentance are hard enough; revenge and retribution are natural enough; reparation, reconciliation and redemption need to be more than *mere rhetoric*.

The engagement of Victim Support workers with those traumatised by others' crimes is profoundly spiritual and theologically salient. Are they not involved in reparative activity with victims of crime? In so doing, are they not, albeit unknowingly, *substituting* for the perpetrator in an atonement paradigm?

Mindful of Fresh Expressions and Back to Church Sunday it was in the work of prison chaplaincy that I first realised the increasing gap between Christianity and 'spirituality'. Not simply because many think they are not 'good enough' to be Christians, but the reverse. The standard forms of Christianity appear not 'good enough' for them.

The 'religious' and the 'spiritual' agendas are no longer concurrent or co-terminous, so part of our Christian task both 'inside' and 'outside' is to explore how this divergence might be addressed and retrieved. Attentive listening and a spiritually sensitive apologetics are needed as much as any evangelistic courses such as Alpha.

The Prison Fellowship 'Sycamore Tree' programme (inspired by the Zacchaeus story in Luke Chapter 19) is an accredited mini-restorative justice course, easily adapted and effectively delivered. Then again, based on HMP Cardiff initiatives, Prison Service Chaplaincy has developed a course, 'Supporting Offenders by Restoration Inside' [SORI]. Note the dual connotation of 'restoration Inside'.

The Muslim Chaplaincy has developed a similar Quranic programme. All three of these each require a part-time resource base available for training, plus a target group to sustain a rolling programme in order to ensure proficiency and justify the investment.

A faiths-based intervention 'Belief in Change' (another dual connotation) has been jointly developed by the Chaplaincy and Psychology Division at Headquarters, but delivery at establishments will depend on available funding.

11. The Cure of Souls—'Truth will do'

Truth will do. So reads the motto of the Therapeutic Community within HMP Dovegate. Any conscious reference to John chapter 8 verse 32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free", may be doubted.

Truth will do. Pontius Pilate might well ask “do what?” The reply from a 1970s Argos poster would read “ ... make you free, but first it will make you miserable.”

Joining the Prison service chaplaincy at HMP Wormwood Scrubs in 1991, I discovered a tiny unit above the Heath Care Centre in B Hall. This unit owed its establishment to the pioneering initiative of Dr Max Glatt⁽³⁾ a consultant psychiatrist to the Prison. Its precarious continuing existence within a large main prison depended upon the support of the enlightened governing Governor Mr James Perriss, and the committed leadership of the (pre NHS) prison service psychiatrist Dr Judith David. She confided in me before she retired that she had no previous training in group or individual psychotherapy, and that some of her experiences in the work had been “little short of religious.”⁽²⁾

‘The Annexe’, that tiny unit, was a democratic therapeutic community addressing factors underlying addictions to alcohol, drugs or sexual deviations. Prisoners signed up to a compact including expectations of behaviour, boundaries of honesty and conflict management. Judith’s admirable leadership was congruent with that ethos and structure. She was supported part-time by a young forensic psychologist from the Psychology Team and a probation officer from the Probation Team who attended each of the four weekly therapeutic group meetings. A weekly review of the common life took place every Wednesday morning, resembling a ‘Chapter of Faults’ as practised by Christian religious communities, though with more open antagonisms.

I was privileged to be welcomed to attend (in my role and office), primarily as observer, and would stay on to share in the staff de-brief.

It was a privilege to know and be trusted by many of the men in their experiences of varied grief, guilt and damage in my symbolic role as priest with its potential entail of authority, judgement and mercy and no less as an empathic fellow-man.

I regarded my attendance as honouring the most authentically spiritual (and implicitly *of the Gospel*) ‘non-religious’ group activity in the Prison. I was sorry that Chaplaincy colleagues failed to appreciate this, one even referring to “a load of scallywags”. Maybe; but qualities of astringency and challenge were exemplified, coupled with vulnerability and respect.

12. An Epochal Initiative

Not too long after my transfer to the relatively new HMP Downview (opened 1989) and adjacent HMP Highdown (opened 1992), Downview’s Governor Derek Aram was approached by Mr Peter Bond. Peter had drifted into alcoholism many years earlier. In the USA he had encountered addiction treatment programmes based on the Twelve-Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous and sought opportunity to pilot such a course in a British prison.

Given use of an office and access to prisoners there was rapid development. Influential patrons and donors formed The Addictive Prisoners Trust.

On 15 December 1993 in the presence of Prisons' Minister, Tony Lloyd, Dr Max Glatt, Lords Longford and Goodman, I said the 'serenity prayer', formally blessed the 'Serenity Shack' and cut the opening ribbon together with Anthony Hopkins. A Press Conference followed in St Luke's Chapel.

A short version of the serenity prayer

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Following earlier legislation, 1995 saw the phased introduction of random mandatory drug testing in prisons. The initial target was ten percent of the prison population (remand and convicted) on a rolling programme to monitor the degree of drug use. From this would develop a strategy for drugs treatment. Downview pioneered a drugs-free landing, which gradually expanded to a wing and finally everyone signed up to voluntary drugs testing and a compact: three positive tests resulted in a 'ghosting' return to a Category B prison.

From his base and experience at Downview, Peter Bond reached out to other prisons offering training on addressing addictive and criminal behaviours, the methodology and structuring of a substance abuse treatment programme. So was launched the embryo of what evolved into the Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust [RAPT]. RAPT expanded its influence—first to Wandsworth, then to Coldingley, and onwards to prisons in the north, the east and the west as the principal partner in the Drugs Strategy adopted by the Prison Service and NOMS.

The challenging combination of pastoral care and religious provision with an astringent and empathic goal of spiritual development became my integral aim and aspiration.

However, I realised with increasing and costly dismay that this particular seriousness of purpose was not more generally associated with the chaplaincy, of which there seemed somewhat 'lighter' expectations. Yet how could a 'pastor of souls' offer mere inattention to the damaged, damaging and wounded humanity of men and women in prison?

Around this time I heard a sermon in which a priest characterised much of the Christian Churches' apparent stance in the face of human complexity, both collective and individual, as too often 'all hide and no seek'. By contrast the demands and expectations of The Annexe, as in its many present equivalents,

not least at their best, such hidden groups as Alcoholics Anonymous may perhaps be 'all seek and no hide'?

It is noteworthy that a Church Publication *Building Missionary Congregations* (Robert Warren, Church House 1996) estimated the combined membership of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous in England & Wales as equivalent to the attending membership of an Anglican diocese.

Twenty-five years ago HMP Grendon Underwood was the sole and long-established experimental therapeutic prison. When I transferred to HMP Winchester in 2002, Governor Jim Gomersall had plans for a 'mini-Grendon' for women prisoners at the separate West Hill section of his Prison. Jim had started his career at the therapeutic HMP Grendon. He confided that though not a Christian, he was a 'spiritual person' and deeply appreciative and supportive of his Chaplaincy. I anticipated focussing a Chaplaincy pastoral and spiritual engagement with the Unit. Whilst the unit was still at an early stage of development, Jim left to take up a post at the Prison Inspectorate. Soon afterwards, in a headquarters review of the women's estate, the project was aborted. With a speedy re-role of West Hill from female to male, the embryonic unit migrated to HMP Send in Surrey.

13. Conclusions

The January 2010 edition of The Prison Service Journal included an article "Breathing Space: Spirituality in Prison" (Rose Parks) in which the Chaplaincy received a passing reference in the context of the long chronicled (see ante) rejection of the religious in favour of the spiritual. "It is not denied that religions encompass a spiritual dimension, but in an increasingly diverse and individualistic society, many people have turned from orthodox religion to something less collective and doctrinal." Empirically true. Later, she continues: "It can be argued that this loss of dominance for Christianity [through the mainstreaming of multi-faith provision] *has opened up the space for the spiritual, which includes meditation and yoga.*"

That this should be true is to my mind a scandalous judgement on our Chaplaincies particularly in 'training prisons'. I could plead that many Anglican chaplains had become so dominated by administrative responsibilities that the requisite energy and time were crowded out by other imposed and audited priorities. But skilled lay resources are to be found in many churches and need not be the preserve of the Prison Phoenix Trust ⁽⁴⁾ alone. Some chaplains will be aware of the World Community for Christian Meditation ⁽⁵⁾ and accessible resources.

Prisons can be noisy places even during day or night 'patrol' states of lock-down. Periods of silence facilitated in shared exterior space is a vital element in the

cultivation of that interior silence which is the spiritual portal for growth into deeper awareness beyond 'ego-self', even for Christians.

Furthermore the dominance of conventional and evangelical expressions of Christianity among most volunteers brings ignorance, fear, and suspicious resistance of the spiritual and depth-psychological pathways underlying much of classical and contemporary Christianity.

Many are less morally experienced and insightful than prisoners whose life-experiences and offending behaviour courses have awakened a deeper and far from comfortable self-knowledge.

The root meaning of the biblical Christian term 'salvation' is to 'make whole', carrying the New Testament connotations of recovery, restoration, and re-integration, both personal and communal. It signifies that just re-ordering of our humanity announced as the in-breaking kingdom (or rule) of God and inaugurated by Jesus Christ. His life, passion, death and resurrection form the paradigm of a living Christian spirituality.

Finally, I will quote an article by Andrew Coyle, a former Roman Catholic priest who became successively Governor of HMP Peterhead in the far north of Scotland, afterwards a great reforming governor of HMP Brixton, and latterly Director of the Centre for International Prison Studies at King's College, University of London.

Andrew tells us he "was constantly reminded that Jesus Christ spent his last days on this earth, first as a remand prisoner, finally as a convicted prisoner. Any sympathy, admiration and support which Our Lord had built up within his community over three years was virtually forgotten. Accused by the leaders of his own people, and found guilty by the establishment, popular support evaporated. Even his own followers deserted him and he was executed between two other criminals. In crude prison parlance, 'grassed up, stitched up, and strung up'.

May we never forget that Jesus Christ spent his final hours as a remand prisoner and then as a condemned criminal. He was crucified, not between two candlesticks but between two criminals, one of whom was the first to be promised, "Today you will be with me in paradise".

11 November 2012 Paul A Newman

[Footnotes appear on the following page]

Footnotes

(1)

The early 1990s witnessed the development of Sex Offender Treatment Programmes (SOTP), of which a house block at HMP Highdown became a pilot site. Though primarily directed by the psychology team, it is noteworthy that the opening Senior Probation Officer from 1993 was Donald Findlater who subsequently specialised in such work at Wolverton Clinic in Epsom, until its closure and since with the (Baroness) Lucy Faithful Foundation.

(2)

Comment by Dr Judith David in correspondence (2012); Dr David attended a one-year-long weekly course at the Institute of Group Analysis.

(3)

Dr Max Glatt (1912-2002) had an adventurous escape from Nazi Europe and was interned as an enemy alien first on the Isle of Man and then in Australia. He later pursued a distinguished and pioneering career in Great Britain demonstrating that alcohol addiction was a psycho-medical illness rather than sheer moral failure. "He rubbed shoulders with pillars of the establishment whilst treating them for their various and manifold addictions. A devout Jew, on holy days he determinedly walked the considerable distance from his home to HMP Wormwood Scrubs W12." (letter from Dr J David. cf. Daily Telegraph Obituary June 2002)

(4)

The Trust promotes the practice of Yoga based personal meditation by prisoners by correspondence and a bi-monthly bulletin.

(5)

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