

Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies, St Michael's College, University of Cardiff

Chaplaincy in a Multi-faith Context Conference, 1-2 December 2011

Theology and Chaplaincy in a Multi-faith Context:

A Manifesto

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It is good to be here with you for this important conference on chaplaincy in a multi-faith context. I am fascinated by chaplaincy, and in recent years have had various engagements with chaplains in the armed forces, education, prisons and the health service – the latter largely through my wife being a hospital chaplain. And next week we are both venturing into a new sphere as we go to live in Louisiana State Penitentiary, having been invited there by a chaplain in order to have classes and Bible study sessions with a group of long term prisoners with whom he has been working.

This conference is important because chaplaincy is important, because our context in the country is complexly both multi-faith and 'multi-secular', and because it is quite early days still in the attempts to work out how chaplaincy is best understood and practised in this context. In the Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies the task is being tackled in a pioneering way, and this conference is intended partly to set an agenda for its work. This paper is focused mainly on theology in relation to chaplaincy in multi-faith contexts. I begin by discussing each of the three key terms in my title.

Theology and why it matters

First, what is theology and why does it matter today? Theology is not a term that all religious traditions use, but for now I am using it for the thinking that goes on within, between and beyond religious communities concerning their issues of meaning, truth and practice. There can be many dimensions of this, it can draw on various sources and fields of inquiry, and it can have many aims, but above all I am taking it to be about wisdom-seeking.¹

Theology matters because, to put it at its lowest, not to be thoughtful, or to think and be foolish, can be disastrous for individuals and communities.

¹ See David F. Ford, *Christian Wisdom. Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007) and *The Future of Christian Theology* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 2011); on theology in various traditions see David F. Ford et al. [Routledge piece]; .

Questions continually arise that require responses, and the theology of a community is the result of its responses and debates over many years.

Further, today's major religious traditions are rooted in premodernity. The massive changes of recent centuries have necessitated a great deal of thinking and discussion. This can lead towards two extremes: either assimilation to modernity – in which case the tradition is effectively abandoned – or rejection of modernity, attempting to resist all change. In between these are most religious responses, which attempt to discern what to welcome, what to reject and what to work with in order to transform it into something that is better, or acceptable, or at least tolerable. But if you go this wisdom-seeking way you have to do a great deal of understanding, judging and deciding. Theology matters because this is its task.

Those changes have also helped to produce a society that is more differentiated into diverse spheres, many of them with their own particular ways of understanding, communicating and acting. Think of the civil service, itself made up of many spheres, or the legal system, or a major industry, or financial services, or higher education and its many disciplines and sub-disciplines (many related to specialist professions), or the health service, the prison service, the armed services. If a faith is to cope with modernity it has to engage with such spheres. This means that it has to mediate its understanding of reality in relation to them. To have intelligent, responsible, wise faith requires a labour of thinking and discerning. Above all, our society requires education in order to give the diverse knowledge and know-how it needs to flourish. If religious communities are not also religiously educated and wisdom-seeking communities, if they are not as intelligent and educated in their faith as in their work and culture, then they risk becoming ghettos disconnected from the rest of modern life. A key aspect of this is the need for academically-mediated faith – faith that has been thought through in relation to a range of disciplines and makes sense to educated people. A community might be able to resist this pressure for a while or when it is small, but across generations it has to take education seriously.

I am fascinated by the current development of Pentecostal theologies and educational institutions around the world – what has become, since its beginnings in the early twentieth century, the largest religious movement in history, with perhaps over 300 million people directly involved, is now facing the logic of the need for academically-mediated faith. The early Christian church faced the same logic as it grew in the Roman Empire. In the past term the Oxford University Professor of the Study of Abrahamic Religions, Guy Stroumsa, has been giving a series of lectures in Cambridge in which one of his main points has been about how mainstream Christianity developed its education. It took over much of the educational system of the sophisticated pagan culture in which it lived, supplemented it with the Bible, and undertook the endless task of thinking through how the two might go together. He calls its attitude 'sapiential activism' – wisdom-seeking combined with a vigorous, compassionate ethic. Judaism also engaged deeply with Hellenistic and Roman civilization, and later Islam too developed a sophisticated academic culture with the help of classical sources.

In Cambridge at present there is a three-year old foundation, the Cambridge Muslim College. Its Dean is my Muslim colleague in the Cambridge University Faculty of Divinity, Tim Winter (Abdal Hakim Murad), one of its trustees is Dr Sophie Gilliatt-Ray from Cardiff University, and I too am a trustee. Most of the students have both excellent A-levels and many years (up to seven) of traditional Islamic education. The course they do in Cambridge relates Islam to the British and more broadly Western context, and also focuses on preparation for leadership – the students mostly go on to become imams, chaplains or teachers. This is another version of academically-mediated faith, which draws on history, philosophy, the social sciences, the natural sciences and theologies of other faiths (I recently gave an introduction to Christian theology). Looking to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese and other populous and long-lasting religious traditions we find similar attempts to relate a religious tradition to the best thinking and learning in a civilization.²

In the past century many millions of people involved in these faiths have been through modern educational institutions, and the university has become the most successful European institution worldwide. The importance of academically-mediated faith has never been greater; yet relatively few of those universities take it seriously.³ We in the UK are fortunate in having universities that lead the world in an academic engagement with world faiths that combines two vital dimensions: theology and religious studies. In other words, there can both be the study of religions through all the relevant academic disciplines in the arts and humanities and in the human and natural sciences, and also theological wisdom-seeking that can pursue questions of truth and practice within and between particular traditions, whether religious or secular. Some of our universities, such as Cardiff and my own University of Cambridge, have created spaces where the questions raised between the traditions as well as about them and within them can be responded to not only descriptively, analytically, theoretically and critically but also constructively and practically, in responsibility not only towards a range of academic disciplines but also towards the religious communities and the common good of our society. In other words, we have some universities where the educational and research programmes (and associated debates) which are vital to a complexly multi-faith and multi-secular society can be located. Here the theology needed for an area such as chaplaincy in multi-faith contexts can be debated and shaped. In this country such spaces are rare; in the rest of the world they are comparatively even rarer. That greatly increases the burden of responsibility on us to do it well in this pioneering conference.

As if on cue, the news in the past fortnight has underlined the importance of theology in relation to chaplaincy in the specific multi-faith context of prisons.

² For a wide-ranging account of philosophy in many civilizations, see Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies. A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London 1998).

³ For my thoughts on this see the third Dearing Lecture, 'Christianity and Universities Today: A Double Manifesto' - <http://cathedralsgroup.org.uk/Dearing.aspx>

Monsignor Malachy Keegan has written in *The Tablet*⁴ about why he left employment⁵ in the National Offenders Management Service (NOMS) as part of the headquarters team in chaplaincy in order to become Catholic Bishops' Prisons Adviser employed by his church. I do not want to go into the details of his departure, but as regards theology his concern is clear and, I suspect, uncontroversial: there is a great need in multi-faith chaplaincy teams for what he calls 'inclusive theological reflection accompanied by respect for difference'. His diagnosis of the theological inadequacy of the present situation is simple: it has 'no depth'.

Whatever the truth of this, the question of depth is obviously vital for any multi-faith chaplaincy team, and, unsurprisingly, it is an issue common to the whole field of inter-faith theology (and, indeed, intra-Christian ecumenical theology and its analogues in other religions with deep divisions). It is this: Do you make theological consensus your top priority, aiming at the achievement of common theological ground on which all can agree? Or do you recognize that there are many important matters on which theological agreement is extremely unlikely, but that this makes dialogue all the more important in order to understand each other better and work out how we can in practice collaborate for the common good?

I am very much with the second approach.⁶ I am delighted when there is inter-faith agreement on anything, but my reading of history together with years of inter-faith engagement in many contexts has led me to emphasise the second way. To improve the quality of our disagreements in theology (a phrase I owe to Professor Ben Quash – in a world where so many disagreements are never likely to be settled, this must surely be one of the most important tasks) can greatly assist in mutual understanding and respect, besides assuring each participant that the integrity of their own particular tradition is being respected. If the mainstream rather than just the fringe members of the great traditions are to cooperate with each other for the common good then each needs to be resourced in depth from within their own traditions. The insistence on depth is vital. The people whom chaplains serve are often in crisis situations which cry out for the deep wisdom that comes from the heart of a tradition, and this is only likely to be available to those who are themselves immersed in the wisdom, worship and habitual practices of that tradition. And even those not in crisis deserve to be resourced from depths of a religious wisdom tradition.

Yet this depth is not the only one. There is need to recognize multiple deepenings. As those immersed in different traditions engage with each other there is a summons to attempt to understand more and more of each other's depths. This is an inexhaustible process (just as exploring the depths of one's

⁴ 'Yours Faithfully' in *The Tablet* 19 November 2011, pp.12-13.

⁵ He applied successfully for a voluntary early departure scheme – see the letter to *The Tablet* 18 June 2011 from Ian Porree of NOMS.

⁶ See works in note 2 above, and the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme website: www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk.

own tradition is endless), and one of the most urgent challenges is to find ways to sustain it.

In addition, for those involved together in particular situations, whether a prison, a hospital, an army unit, or a university, there is a further call to in-depth understanding of that situation. Often, attention to the common task will draw out of each tradition riches that stimulate each other even while acknowledging irresolvable differences. And it often happens that agreement on policy and collaborative procedures in specific settings can be based on very different rationales from within each tradition.

So there is that triple dynamic of going deeper into one's own faith, deeper into other faiths and deeper into our shared settings. And there is yet a fourth dynamic that is of special importance for something as team-based as multi-faith chaplaincy work: deepening the life and thought of the team itself. I suspect that in most chaplaincy settings the sheer busyness and multiple demands of the job, the sense that there are overwhelming needs to be met and very limited time and energy to meet them, makes this the most challenging of all. There may even be a reluctance to make team-deepening a priority because of fears about what might emerge and uncertainty about how to go about it. But without risking this deepening it is unlikely that the other three will bear good fruit in multi-faith chaplaincy.

My experience is that the quality of inter-faith understanding and collaboration vitally depends on finding appropriate forms of long term inter-faith collegiality in each setting. I hope that if you go away with nothing else from this session you will take this challenge as something to attempt to meet. There is of course a great deal of generic wisdom around about how to build and strengthen teams: the challenge in multi-faith chaplaincy is to learn from this but also to make sure that the theological wisdom of each tradition is in play – conversationally, critically and constructively.

I now turn to consider chaplaincy more directly - but will continue to weave in theology.

Chaplaincy and why it matters

What is chaplaincy and why does it matter?⁷ As with theology, there is an issue about terminology. I do not want to try to resolve this, but will use chaplaincy in the following sense, recognizing that my definition will not be

⁷ On chaplaincy in the UK today a helpful recent work is Miranda Threlfall-Holmes and Mark Newitt (Eds), *Being a Chaplain* (SPCK, London 2011), in which there is a perceptive, balanced chapter on multi-faith chaplaincy by Andrew Todd. See also Andrew Todd and Lee Tipton, *The Role and Contribution of a Multi-Faith Prison Chaplaincy to the Contemporary Prison Service* (Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies, June 2011), and *Multi-faith Chaplaincy. A Guide for Colleges on Developing Multi-faith Student Support* (Learning and Skills Council in partnership with the National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education, Coventry 2007).

accepted by all. I mean by it a service that draws on the experience, wisdom and practices of specific religious communities in order to serve institutions or other settings that may or may not have a religious affiliation or ethos. This service of chaplaincy relates both to the institutions or settings themselves and to the individuals within them. It has three main dimensions: worship and other specifically religious practices; pastoral care; and 'raising questions of meaning, value and purpose within the institution'.⁸

I want to stress two implications of that definition.

First, it does not separate out one aspect of human life as distinct from the rest and of special concern to the chaplain as a 'religious specialist'. I have nothing against using the term 'spiritual' or 'spirituality' in some ways. But I think one does need to be wary of it being used to divide people into separate parts, with religions only relating to one. This plays into a modern tendency to privatise and interiorise religions, effectively excluding them from the public sphere.

The return of religions to prominence in the public sphere, perceptively analysed as early as 1994 by Jose Casanova in his sociological study *Public Religions in the Modern World*,⁹ has tended to confirm some aspects of secularization theory (such as the differentiation of spheres of society and the consequent need for a variety of mediations of religions such as I have just been recommending) but has falsified others, such as modernity involving the decline of religions or their relegation to the private sphere. To categorise religions as of purely private concern is, of course, a powerful tool of control and even manipulation. There was a short period in the twentieth century during which most Western intellectual elites, and others over whom they had influence, believed that secularization was a linear modern process heading inevitably towards the disappearance of religion, with its exclusion from the public sphere being one welcome step on the way. Some in those elites still seem to be convinced of this, but most would now grant that the religions and their 4 to 5 billion members are likely to be around for a long time, that they have a legitimate public presence, and that while some forms of modernity are resolutely secularist (a term that deserves more discussion than I can give it here),¹⁰ others are more complexly religious and secular or strongly inflected in

⁸ Timothy Jenkins, *An Experiment in Providence. How Faith Engages with the World* (SPCK, London 2006) p.9. This short discussion of chaplaincy by a social anthropologist and priest is superb. Regarding these three dimensions, Revd Derek Fraser, Lead Chaplain in Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge, has in correspondence raised the question of advocacy by chaplains on behalf of others in the institution. It is an awkward fit, though might be considered to fall partly within the second and partly in the third dimension.

⁹ University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1994.

¹⁰ I use 'secular' in a common sense way to refer to contemporary people, groups or attitudes that are not explicitly affiliated to a religious tradition; I use 'secularist' to refer to those that advocate what Rowan Williams calls a 'programmatically secularism' – including the exclusion of religions from the public

line with a particular religious tradition. In other words, we have multiple modernities, and I would argue that in pluralist societies we need to resist the hegemony of a single one – whether Christian, Muslim, secularist, or whatever.

In the sphere of chaplaincy the main religious traditions should, I think, be clear that they are concerned with whole people and the structures that they inhabit. Questions of faith, ethics, meaning, value and purpose relate to all areas of life, and matters to do with the body, time, money and economics, health and medical services, authority and power relations, justice and the legal system, politics and legislation, the media and communications, and education and the formation of young people have always been of deep religious concern. A healthy civil society needs flourishing intermediate institutions in between the individual and the state, and the religious communities are among those. They are also involved with all the others, and they have both rights and responsibilities that are under continual negotiation. In this fluid situation, where new legislation or financial cuts can drastically affect an institution in a very short time (including at the present time in this country all the main areas served by chaplaincy) it is vital for the religious communities to get their act together, both individually and cooperatively, and in this the role of wisdom-seeking theology appropriate to each area is essential.

So the first implication of my definition is the appropriateness of chaplaincy involvement in the flourishing of people in all dimensions of their lives and also in matters relating to the flourishing of the institution or setting served by chaplaincy.

The second implication is that besides the concern for depth, as already affirmed, there should also be a concern for breadth. How one handles the relation of depth to breadth is, I think, at the heart of the current conflict over faith-specific and generic chaplaincy. Generic chaplaincy is variously defined, but let us for now work with Mgr. Keegan's definition, as an approach in which 'any chaplain is seen as being able to provide for most of the pastoral needs of any prisoner'.¹¹ In other words, a breadth of ministry is required that Mgr. Keegan fears might compromise the depth to be found in specific traditions. He also longs for deeper theological reflection between chaplains of various traditions. His ideal seems to be a multi-faith chaplaincy in which as many as possible of the pastoral needs of any prisoner are met by a chaplain of the tradition to which the prisoner belongs (or identifies with), and in which the team of chaplains engage as deeply as possible with each other on the basis of their different faiths. This seems to be in line with my ideal of quadruple deepening – in one's own faith, in the faiths of others, in understanding the chaplaincy setting and in building up the chaplaincy team. But there are some further issues.

realm (as distinct from a 'procedural secularism', which aims at a minimal set of procedures according to which the diverse groups in our pluralist society can live peacefully together).

¹¹ See note 4 above.

First, there are the practical issues of provision within each tradition in each situation. Given limited resources, I presume there will be many situations where the ideal of pastoral care by a chaplain with whose faith one identifies is not achievable. In that case, it would seem appropriate for a chaplain to minister more broadly, and to be educated so that this can be done as well as possible. Further, it may even be that there is much to be gained on both sides of the chaplaincy relationship by complementing worship and other faith-specific provision with more generic pastoral provision, so that a practical necessity might be regarded as a healthy stimulus to inter-faith communication and understanding. It is hard to think that in a team which is developing along the lines of those four deepenings there would not also develop the trust to share pastoral work, especially when accompanied by sensitivity about the points at which a particular prisoner, patient, soldier, student or staff member in an institution needs counsel from someone of the tradition with which they identify – who might, of course, be a trained volunteer.

Second, both emphases on faith-specific provision and on pastoral care need to be complemented by pursuing questions of meaning, value and purpose within the institution. This is a challenge to the breadth as well as the depth of the education and thinking that goes into chaplaincy. It requires grappling with big questions about modern institutions and the spheres of life and society to which they relate. Above all it requires intensive, disciplined study and conversation among those most responsible, including the management of an institution. I do not know the full story of Mgr. Keegan deciding to leave the NOMS headquarters chaplaincy team, but it is hard to think that withdrawal from the centre is a long term solution.¹² There is always a tension between being part of the institution and being freer outside it in certain ways, and there can be occasions for prophetic speech and action. But the complex business of negotiating settlements between religious and other institutions, such as prisons, hospitals, armed forces and universities, requires the risks and tensions of participation as well as the possibility of prophetic withdrawal.

Third, I think the fear that many have of generic chaplaincy is that it will not only become the norm but that chaplains will be trained generically. Rather than being educated primarily in one tradition to which one gives allegiance, complemented by education in others to which one does not belong, the prospect is of a multi-faith education for multi-faith chaplaincy. This might be seen as a 'religious studies' model of professional chaplaincy education in which formation in the faith and practice of one tradition is not included.¹³ I think one flaw in the conception of multi-faith chaplaincy education for generic chaplaincy is that it fails to take seriously the embracing nature of allegiance within the main religious traditions: it is not, for example, possible to be a fully committed practicing Catholic and a fully committed practicing Jew or Muslim or Sikh at the same time. If chaplaincy is not to be confined to syncretists, relativists, fringe members of the major traditions and people who claim to be more professional

¹² I understand that many Roman Catholic prison chaplains have expressed dissatisfaction with the new arrangement.

¹³ So far as I know this is not actually happening much in UK at present.

and 'objective' because they belong to no tradition (but in fact are claiming superiority over all traditions, a bit like speakers of Esperanto looking down on native speakers of English, Russian, Chinese or Icelandic who are immersed in the great literatures and cultures of those languages¹⁴), then it needs to go the way of deep formation in one, complemented by as much depth as possible in engagement with others. The academic aspect of this 'both ... and ...' is the combination of theology and religious studies.

The Multi-Faith Context

I now turn to our multi-faith context. What I have said so far presupposes and has at times been explicit about a way of understanding and responding to this. I see contrary tendencies in the UK context. On the one hand, there is a secularizing trend that wants to lessen the role of the religions in the public sphere and do away with chaplaincy. The ideal here is a 'neutral' public sphere, and where religions are involved they should be required to observe the secularist guidelines laid down by the various institutions. This is programmatic secularism, and its advocates are becoming more vocal. If chaplaincy is allowed for, the most congenial model is generic, with a tendency towards eliminating any specific religious content and subsuming the activity under a general concept such as 'spiritual needs'. On the other hand, there is an opposing trend that encourages religious participation in society, recognizes public roles for religions, appeals to the huge majority of the UK population claiming some religious affiliation in the census, and uses the equality and diversity legislation to support special provision for the religions. The central conception here is not neutral ground (which is rejected because everyone in fact stands for something particular) but shared ground, where there can be mutual engagement and mutual hospitality in full integrity (not ignoring your religious or other commitment).

In this situation, those of us who support the second tendency should, I think, have two broad aims.

The first is the fourfold dynamic of deepening already outlined. In every way possible we should simultaneously be going deeper into our own faith in intellectual, imaginative and practical ways, deeper into the faiths and beliefs of others, deeper into understanding and collaborative action for the common good of our society, and deeper into the multi-religious and secular alliances and partnerships of difference that enable this deepening. Multi-faith chaplaincy in our institutions is a privileged place for pioneering this – and indeed can be a model for other countries.

¹⁴ One might extend this analogy to the fact that Esperanto, for all its claim to be generally accessible, in fact is based wholly on European languages and especially on Latin, thus embodying eurocentrism while aspiring to universality. Likewise, claims to professional 'objectivity' in the area of religion are deeply problematic, and often embody a Western secular ideology.

The second aim should be a broadening of understanding of the religions in our society through the spread of religious literacy. It is dangerous for a pluralist society to have the levels of ignorance, stereotyping, distorted understanding and prejudice about the religions that are present in our society. Fortunately, here too pioneering work is being done. I think especially of the Religious Literacy Leadership Project in Higher Education based in the Goldsmiths Faiths and Civil Society Unit and led by Adam Dinham.¹⁵ This is funded by HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council for England) and now has vice-chancellors, senior management, chaplains and student services personnel from over sixty English universities involved. It has produced excellent literature and runs courses about how to fulfil the spirit as well as the letter of the equalities and diversity legislation, how to create a religion-friendly campus with good campus relations, and how every aspect of university life from admissions and accommodation to student societies and local community relations can be enhanced through sensitivity to the importance of religions and beliefs. This successful programme cries out to be extended to other institutions, and some of us are collaborating with Goldsmiths in order to do so. I suggest that all of the institutions you represent could benefit from learning how to encourage the spread of religious literacy.

Of special interest is a revealing typology of five differing ways universities handle the religions, from the secular or neutral university, through the university with good practice in relation to faith, the religiously responsive university and the university focusing on social justice, to the 'formative-collegial university'.¹⁶ I would suggest as an illuminating exercise that you examine your institution to see where it stands in relation to this typology. Then see how it might be encouraged to move towards the equivalent in your sphere of the

¹⁵ Adam Dinham and Stephen H. Jones, *An Analysis of Challenges of Religious Faith, and Resources for Meeting them, for University Leaders* (2010); idem, *Programme Evaluation Phase I: September 2010-February 2011* (2010). Retrieved from <http://religiousliteracyhe.org/leadership-resources/publications>

¹⁶ On leadership of the formative-collegial university Adam Dinham and Stephen H. Jones write: "This university takes into account the widest experience of its students and staff, seeing their learning and work in terms of their overall human growth and development. This might include recognizing religious dimensions of human life. Faith is not seen simply in terms of requirements or needs which some students have and others do not. Rather, all people's worldviews, both religious and secular, are taken as essential aspects of identity and culture and as potentially enriching dimensions of learning and growth. Its strategy for widening participation emphasizes the personal and intellectual benefits of obtaining a university education alongside people from different traditions and none, in addition to the economic and material benefits. The student experience is not seen as a process of knowledge transfer in pursuit of a 'bankable' academic qualification, but is taken to be a significant component of a broader life-project. Good campus relations are ensured by trying actively to create an environment in which faith is 'at home' on campus, with religious events and forms of expression enjoyed alongside others, and religiously-orientated questions and legacies being on the academic agenda in curricula, teaching and learning. There is outreach to surrounding communities, including faith communities, which are seen as enriching the university experience within and beyond the campus walls.' – *Religious Literacy Leadership in Higher Education, An Analysis of Challenges of Religious Faith, and Resources for Meeting them, for University Leaders* (2010) pp.19-20.

‘formative-collegial university’. What might the analogous religiously literate hospital, prison or army unit be called?

Doing the Theology

What about doing the theology that I have been suggesting needs to be done?

First, how should chaplains be theologically educated so as to be prepared for multi-faith contexts? Much should be obvious from what I have said already. Deep formation in their own tradition needs to be combined with learning as much as possible from and about other traditions, together with the skills required for chaplaincy, many of which are best learned through apprenticeship. Genuine preparation for chaplaincy must above all enter into the most challenging questions of life and death, evil and suffering, disappointment and despair, life-changing decisions, and the abysses of guilt and meaninglessness. The best institutional settings for such preparation are those like Cardiff that can offer a University with theology and religious studies in collaboration with high quality faith-specific institutions and local placements. Might I say, however, about Cardiff University that, having served on a Review Board examining its Religious Studies and Theology a couple of years ago, I have been disappointed that the theology side has not been supported more adequately by the university since then. It seems to me strategically foolish not to maintain both sides of the field strongly; and, if the chaplaincy and other programmes engaged with living religious traditions are to develop, theology (in my sense of the academically-mediated wisdom-seeking of particular traditions in conversation with other traditions and the realities of modernity) will be especially needed.¹⁷

Second, assuming they have a sound academic and practical formation, how should chaplains do theology in multi-faith contexts? Obviously one should try to keep an intelligent interest in the field, be as literate as possible in relevant areas and go on reading and doing in-service training. But I also want to re-emphasise one of the main points I made earlier about the opportunity for collegiality in the multi-faith chaplaincy team. The main source for your inter-faith theology should be each other, together with whoever you draw into your team’s conversation – whether in person or through their writings. Intensive conversation is the best way to seek a theological wisdom that does justice both to your own faith and to the contributions of others. The stronger the relationships in the team the more you should be able to differ from each other and open up the most sensitive issues. The danger is that teams avoid questions closely related to faith and its outworking in life. It is ironic that people often turn to books to learn about other faiths and not to the members of those faiths whom they know.

¹⁷ At a time when the Research Excellence Framework is assigning 20% to the category of ‘impact’ in research it is especially odd that a university with a world-leading chaplaincy research centre does not appear to have grasped its potential in this regard.

There are many ways in which wisdom-seeking inter-faith conversation can be carried on, and I am sure a survey of you in this room would come up with at least a dozen. But let me tell of one recent experience of my own, followed by a brief account of the inter-faith practice in which the experience was rooted.

The experience took place in Abu Dhabi two years ago. I had signed a contract with Wiley-Blackwell for a book in their Manifesto series, called *The Future of Christian Theology*,¹⁸ and knew well the authors of the companion volumes in the series, Steven Kepnes on *The Future of Jewish Theology* and Aref Ali Nayed on *The Future of Islamic Theology*. I was ahead of the others in my writing and they offered to meet to respond to what I had written and was planning. So Steve flew in from Jerusalem where he was on sabbatical, Aref drove in from Dubai (where, by the way, he is at present the Libyan ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, having played a leading role in the Libyan revolution) and we met in my hotel room for many hours. This was inter-faith conversation at its most intense. Each had read my work closely and came up with one question or comment after another. We ranged far and wide, but also laboured on the structure and some of the details. I emerged with a sheaf of notes that led to a book with a different structure and many new angles and insights. But I doubt whether anyone reading the book could tell just what the Jewish and Muslim contributions have been, except in the chapter dealing explicitly with inter-faith theology (which, interestingly, was not one that we spent a great deal of time on). This for me was an example of going deeper into my own tradition through engaging with people of other traditions, and it carried with it a deeper appreciation of Judaism and Islam as Steve and Aref spoke out of their own faith and understanding.

But how did the three of us get to know and trust each other as friends in the first place? That was through Scriptural Reasoning, the practice of Jews, Christians and Muslims studying and discussing the Tanakh, Bible and Qur'an together. This has in my experience been the form of inter-faith engagement that has best brought Jews, Christians and Muslims together in such a way as to have long term, faith-involving conversation. I have been taking part since the beginning fifteen years ago, and it has become more and more fruitful and generative, not just in academic settings, but also in schools, civic settings, local inter-faith gatherings, international conferences, among prison chaplains,¹⁹ and so on. It is built on mutual hospitality around our classic scriptural texts, with each as host and guest. At heart it is very simple: Jews, Christians and Muslims read our scriptures separately; so why not occasionally read them together too? Because these scriptures are so rich with meaning, we can return to them again and again and never exhaust them, and this lets them be an ideal focus for sustained collegiality. Because there are endless disputes about their meaning, it is a good way to improve the quality of disagreements within as well as between traditions. We do it fundamentally because we each believe it pleases God for our

¹⁸ See note 2 above.

¹⁹ As the result of an initiative by Ven. William Noblett, Chaplain-General to Prisons, the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme has led some Scriptural Reasoning among prison chaplains of different faiths.

scriptures to be studied. But in addition there are all sorts of practical blessings that have flowed, not least the experience of mutual hospitality turning into friendship, as with Steve and Aref.²⁰

So my suggestion is that chaplaincy teams might like to try Scriptural Reasoning as one element in their group life together, improvising on it as might be appropriate to the particular traditions represented.

A Manifesto for Chaplaincy in Multi-faith Contexts

Ever since Wiley-Blackwell asked me to write that book I have been rather taken by the idea of a manifesto, and have produced two others.²¹ I now offer you a third, this one for chaplaincy in multi-faith contexts.

²⁰For further information about Scriptural Reasoning, see the website of the Society for Scriptural Reasoning, <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/jsrforum/>, the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme website <http://www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk/en/academic-work/activities/scriptural-reasoning> and my lecture at the Angelicum University in Rome, 'Jews, Christians and Muslims Meet around their Scriptures: An Inter-faith Practice for the 21st Century' <http://www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk/en/resources/papers/jpii-lecture>. For print resources on Scriptural Reasoning, see Chapter 8 in David F. Ford, *Christian Wisdom* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007), pp. 273-303; David F. Ford and C.C. Pecknold, *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning* (Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2006); Peter Ochs, 'Reading Scripture Together in Sight of Our Open Doors' in *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 26, no. 1, new series (2005), pp. 36-47; and Steven Kepnes and Basit Bilal Koshul (eds.), *Studying the 'Other', Understanding the 'Self': Scripture, Reason and the Contemporary Islam-West Encounter* (Fordham University Press, New York 2007). Many of the chapters in Peter Ochs and William Stacey Johnson (eds.), *Crisis, Call, and Leadership in the Abrahamic Traditions* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2009) are also relevant. Scriptural Reasoning can be practiced bilaterally too. One example of this is some meetings of the on-going Christian-Muslim 'Building Bridges Seminar', hosted annually by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Some of the proceedings from the second meeting of the seminar, in Doha in 2003, can be found in Michael Ipgrave (ed.), *Scriptures in Dialogue: Christians and Muslims Studying the Bible and the Qur'an Together* (Church House Publishing, London 2004).

²¹ 'A Muscat Manifesto' – see <http://www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk/en/resources/papers/muscat-manifesto>; and 'Christianity and Universities Today: A Double Manifesto' - <http://cathedralsgroup.org.uk/Dearing.aspx>.

1. Theology matters

Chaplaincy in multi-faith contexts needs theology rooted in wisdom-seeking, academically-mediated faith.

2. Theology and Religious Studies matter

Chaplains are best educated in settings where universities with theology and religious studies collaborate with faith-specific institutions.

3. Chaplaincy is Threefold

Chaplaincy is mainly concerned with worship (and other faith-specific practices), pastoral care, and raising questions of meaning, value and purpose within institutions.

4. Teams are Strengthened by Fourfold Deepening

Theology for chaplaincy teams in multi-faith contexts needs to go deeper into one's own tradition, deeper into those of others, deeper into engagement with the institution and deeper into mutual understanding among the team.

5. Disagreement and Depth can go Together

Finding theological consensus is good; but on many issues it is more appropriate to improve the quality of disagreement.

6. Religious Communities are Important in the Public Sphere

Chaplaincy makes good sense partly because religious communities are important intermediate institutions interacting with others in our civil society, and so should not be seen as only 'spiritual' or private.

7. Depth and Breadth can go Together

Faith-specific depth and generic breadth need to be held together in teams committed both to fourfold deepening and to engaging with the whole range of institutional issues and people, both religiously affiliated and not.

8. Spread Religious Literacy

Religious literacy is a priority for a pluralist society and its institutions, and nurturing it should be seen as part of chaplaincy's commitment to breadth.

9. Try Scriptural Reasoning

Wisdom-seeking inter-faith conversation around each other's scriptures and classic texts is a constructive activity for a multi-faith chaplaincy team.