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# Prison chaplaincy, church and the powers that be

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the organisational culture and context in which prison chaplains, as representatives of the Christian Church, work within the Scottish Prison Service. It draws on the ideas of the American theologian Walter Wink (1935–2012), on his concept of powers and the assertion that all organisations and institutions have their own spirituality and associated impact. To explore what shapes this spirituality, I consider various elements which create a cultural web, such as symbols, space, security, seeing, stories, routines and rituals. The complicity and challenge of any chaplain embedded in an organisation with a different spirituality and worldview to that of the host is discussed. The power of life-giving liturgy in the everyday is offered as a counter-cultural stance to the powers that be in any organisation.

## KEYWORDS

Prison chaplaincy; church; liturgy; organisational spirituality; cultural web; powers that be; Walter Wink; Scottish Prison Service (SPS)

## Introduction

Chaplaincy is a part of the church which actively seeks to engage with non-church institutions, offering to be a guest rather than host, offering to engage with organisations which have different visions and values. This is challenging work, for organisations have a spirituality of their own which questions and stretches the incomer. This spirituality can, at times, be dynamic and graceful and transforming, and at other times toxic and disgraceful and mortifying. Out of this organisational spirituality, with its deep values and vision, come the stories and jokes and public persona, revealed and reflected in the organisation's everyday rituals and liturgies.

This article explores the spiritual dimensions of being a chaplain within the Scottish Prison Service. It is based on my own experience as a white, Scottish, female, Church of Scotland minister. I start by providing some wider context to prison chaplaincy and its relationship to church and state. The focus of the article is, however, the exploration of the competing and coalescing spiritualities of church and criminal justice system, of chaplain and prison. This is underpinned by the idea that organisations have a spirituality. Some might even say a soul. Wink's concept of 'powers' and the inherent 'complex web that we can neither ignore or escape', are used to think about the invisible forces which shape both

SPS and church as organisations.<sup>1</sup> A similar concept, that of the cultural web, found in the theory of organisational development and corporate strategy, provides a way to look at an organisation's spirituality through the lens of social sciences.<sup>2</sup> The result is a deepening understanding of the context in which prison chaplains minister and the significance of their role to individual and organisational transformation.

### **Methodology**

I approach the above by drawing on autoethnographic reflections based on journaling undertaken primarily, though not exclusively, during the Church Year of 2017–18. This was done while working as a prison chaplain in HMP Edinburgh and HMP & YOI Cornton Vale.<sup>3</sup> The autoethnographic approach allows me to reflect more deeply on what is happening around me regarding 'a particular issue or concern that has wider cultural or religious significance.'<sup>4</sup> It allows a way of integrating 'the autobiographical and the ethnographic, the personal and the cultural, the research and the imagination'.<sup>5</sup> This is not without purpose. Observing organisations in this way is a form of witness to everyday life in prison, in chaplaincy, in church and in personal encounters with others. Behar understands the importance of witness and recognises 'the role of witnessing in our time as a key form of approaching and transforming reality'.<sup>6</sup> This is particularly important when the reality with which we are faced is not life-affirming. For the chaplain, it often challenges their role in what they are witnessing.

### **Prison chaplaincy in context**

Prison chaplains have traditionally been sent by the church to minister in prisons. The Prison (Scotland) Act, dating back to 1877, still provides for at least one Church of Scotland (CoS) minister in every prison in Scotland.<sup>7</sup> More recently, in 1989, this was broadened to include chaplains of other denominations, namely Roman Catholic (RC). The relationship between SPS, the Church of Scotland and the RC Bishops Conference of Scotland changed in 2004 with the signing of the tripartite Chaplaincy Agreement. The most significant implication being that chaplains, in addition to their religious status, became servants of the state, civil servants, paid for by the state rather than by the sending church. From the early 2000s, chaplains of the Islamic tradition were engaged under a separate arrangement with some of the hours linked to the UK wide PREVENT programme.

Currently, there are 59 chaplains employed by the SPS of which 29 belong to the Reformed tradition, 23 Roman Catholic and 7 Islamic. Around one-third of chaplains are full-time (mainly Reformed tradition) and one-third work 8 hours or less. The remainder

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<sup>1</sup>Wink, *Powers That Be*, 2.

<sup>2</sup>Johnson et al., *Corporate Strategy*, 201.

<sup>3</sup>See Orr, 'Transforming Liturgies', Chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup>Walton, *Writing Methods*, xxx.

<sup>5</sup>Orr, 'Transforming Liturgies', 40.

<sup>6</sup>Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer*, 27.

<sup>7</sup>The Scottish Prison Service (SPS), an executive agency of the Scottish Government, is responsible for 14 prisons and 2 female Community Custody Units (CCUs). In addition, there is one private prison under contract to SPS.

work anything between 8 and 25 hours each week. Most chaplains are male with women accounting for 12 (20%) out of the total. Nine of these are from the Reformed tradition and 3 are RC. All the Islamic chaplains are male. Within the Reformed Tradition itself, women account for over 30% number wise and over 40% when the number of hours worked is considered. In contrast, 13% of RC chaplains are women.

Each prison has a chaplaincy team made up of at least one chaplain from each of the three main traditions with an increasing number of chaplains from denominations other than the CoS within the Reformed Tradition.<sup>8</sup> But meeting the religious needs of prisoners is only one part of the chaplain's role. By far the main part is the pastoral and spiritual care of all prisoners (and to a lesser extent staff) irrespective of faith, belief or lack of it. 'Generic' and 'holistic' are words that have been used to describe this broadening of chaplaincy from the earlier focus on religious care for one's own flock. The SPS Chaplaincy Framework provides insight into the current role of the chaplain by defining pastoral, spiritual and religious care and what this looks like in practice.

## The powers that be

Every organisation has a culture, which emerges from its values, beliefs, behaviours and taken for granted assumptions.<sup>9</sup> Values and beliefs are often stated up front and published in some sort of mission and vision statement. Behaviours are also observable and can be seen in the everyday actions, attitudes and decision of the staff and members of an organisation be it a business, a school, a church, a hospital or a prison. Behind all of these, however, is the underlying paradigm, which form a cultural web made up of different elements: stories, symbols, power, organisational structures, controls, routines and rituals. Wink argues that it is these invisible elements which form the inner spirit of the organisation, the spirituality of the organisation.<sup>10</sup> He draws attention to the difference between systems which are based on domination and those based on partnership. In the former, power is used to control, dehumanise, rule and punish. Relationships are based on hierarchy, a them and us. The future is about keeping hold of the status quo of holding and keeping power. In a domination free/partnership society, power is used to give, support and nurture life, it is enabling, and relationships are based on an equality of opportunity and a linking together as we/we. Cultural transformation is envisioned.<sup>11</sup> What happens when two overtly different powers are operating in the same space?

The following sections look at key aspects of the SPS cultural web to understand more about its spirituality. In doing this, it is recognised that there will inevitably be some generalisations. Although informed by the overall SPS spirituality individual prisons can vary greatly in culture just as individual chaplains come from different denominations with their own spiritual influences. In addition, Wink stresses that the powers are not uniformly evil. There is also good in them, often at the same time as evil.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Within the last two decades chaplains have been recruited from denominations such as Assemblies of God, Baptist, Elim Pentecostal, Free Church of Scotland, Episcopal and Methodist. Nine of the 29 Reformed Chaplains are from non-CoS denominations.

<sup>9</sup>Johnson, *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, 200.

<sup>10</sup>Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 5.

<sup>11</sup>Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 46–47.

<sup>12</sup>Wink, *Powers That Be*, 2.

### ***The spirituality of symbol***<sup>13</sup>

On Wednesday 19 October 2011, at a service in St Andrew's Parish Church, Bo'ness, I was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. By word and hymn, vows and creed, prayer and commissioning, I promised to serve God. And in making my vows, to play my part in advancing the Kingdom of God. Almost three years later, on the 8 September 2014, I signed another document agreeing to become a servant of a different kind – a civil servant, an employee of the Crown. My signature on this document affirmed, that as a chaplain in the Scottish Prison Service, I would be subject to the Civil Service Code of Conduct and to Prison Rules. The contract of employment also included the following:

Employment as a chaplain requires you to be in good standing with your Church and/or faith group and appropriate faith community. If you fall out of good standing and/or if you are responsible for any act/omission which causes your Church and/or faith group to lose trust and confidence in you, this will render your employment terminable by SPS without notice or pay in lieu of notice.

I am a servant of two sovereigns. A citizen of two kingdoms. A signatory to two agreements. And I cannot be one without the other. I cannot be a chaplain without remaining in good standing with the Church and all that implies. And I cannot remain true to my vocation if I do not follow the call to prison chaplaincy and thus the rules that go with the role.

The Service of Ordination for Word and Sacrament leaves it in no doubt as to whom I am pledging allegiance or the extent of the remit. In the Preamble, the Moderator states the Presbytery<sup>14</sup> is met 'in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church' and that the calling is 'to labour in the fellowship of faith for the advancement of the kingdom of God throughout the world'.<sup>15</sup> This is echoed in the vow I made, 'seeking in all things the advancement of the kingdom of God'. And in praying of the Lord's Prayer: your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

And what of the nature of this Kingdom that I am to advance? One of the passages read at my Ordination service was Psalm 23. Here, the Lord, the King, is portrayed as a loving, compassionate shepherd who looks after his 'flock', and pastors his 'sheep'. He feeds them and leads them, restores and heals them, he stays with them through dark nights and danger, he defends them. There is a sense of wellbeing, of blessing, of difficulties being overcome, of goodness and loving kindness. From this, we see the model of pastoral care that underpins the work done by parish ministers and chaplains. But the Kingdom is not just about individual pastoral relationships. It is also about the relationships between citizens, about fairness and justice, about taking care of those in our community who are on the margins. The ultimate things concerning this King are whether we care for people when they are most in need: the hungry, thirsty, sick, lonely, and those in prison (Matthew 25:31–46).

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<sup>13</sup>This section is a slightly edited version of section 5.1.1 of Orr, 'Transforming Liturgies'.

<sup>14</sup>A Presbytery is a court of the Church of Scotland composed of all the Ministers of Word and Sacrament and an equal number of elders in a geographical area.

<sup>15</sup>This and the following quote are from the booklet of Services of Ordination and Induction to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament 'Services of Ordination and Induction to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament', 2013, accessed April 30, 2020, [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/18575/ordination\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/18575/ordination_booklet.pdf).

Another indication of the nature of the Kingdom is found on the front of the Service of Ordination booklet. The Church of Scotland emblem, first used in 1691, depicts the burning bush from Exodus 3, pictured against a background of the St Andrew's cross, bringing together ideas of sacrifice through the cross, with holiness and servant leadership as Moses stood, barefoot, in the presence of God.<sup>16</sup> The ideal citizen in this Kingdom of God is one who reflects the qualities of the Godhead as one who brings life, bears another's pain, and is a channel of God's love. As a minister and a chaplain I am called to be such a citizen.

As I turn to look at the Prison Rules to which I signed up, I notice a very different emblem on the front cover: the mighty male lion, sword in one hand and mace in the other, seated upright on a crown while also wearing a crown on it's head. The image exudes power and authority. Its intimidating demeanour is not accidental. Below are written the words 'IN DEFENS'. Dating back to the Stewart dynasty the emblem took its words from the opening line of an old Scot's prayer 'In my defens God me defend'. But this emblem has been plucked from the larger Royal Coat of Arms with the added heraldry and the latin words 'NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSIT'. Used on coins since at least the reign of James VI, this motto has been roughly translated in Scots as *Wha daur meddle wi' me?* In English, as *No one can harm me unpunished*. In this emblem, the symbols of the cross are subverted. The St Andrew's cross along with the mythical unicorn becomes the symbol for Scotland, the St George's cross and the lion for England. Defence of the realm and obedience to its laws are paramount, the implication of the motto being that swift revenge and punishment will follow any who are disobedient. Over the centuries, the arbitrariness of such revenge has been reduced and the duty of care to citizens extended. The Scottish Government's current vision for a 'just, safe and resilient Scotland'<sup>17</sup> could be a paraphrase of an Old Testament prophecy: 'My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest' (Isaiah 32:18). 'Peaceful' in the biblical sense, however, has the richer meaning of a holistic peace that can only come when there is justice in all senses of the word: economically, socially, legally. Still, as SPS employee and as chaplain, there is some coalescing of a vision for society and the desire for an environment where people can thrive, where disadvantage is tackled, where people feel safe. What is missing is the *language* of love, peace and wholeness. So although aspirations and vision may not seem too dissimilar on one level, a closer look at the nature and use of space, the rules and regulations that dominate every aspect of prison life, and the organisational culture evidenced in attitudes and behaviours, all indicate two vastly different Kingdoms at play in the life and work of the prison chaplain.

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<sup>16</sup>In a series of lectures Foucault discusses the origins of the pastoral model and how it has informed ideas of governance in the West: 'the form of power so typical of the West ... was born ... or at least took its model from, the sheep-fold' (*Security, Territory, Population*, 130). However, he notes three differences between the shepherd (pastor) and a sovereign. The shepherd watches the flock, a sovereign oversees a territory. The shepherd is beneficent, exercising a power of care versus the sovereign who exercises strength and superiority backed by law. Shepherds care equally for the individual as well as the whole (going in search of a single sheep) while the sovereign is concerned primarily for the entity.

<sup>17</sup>Scottish Government, *Vision for Justice*, 2022.

## ***The spirituality of space***<sup>18</sup>

If there is a gasp of awe when one walks into a beautiful church with its high vaulted roof, iridescent stained-glass windows, beautifully crafted furniture and symbols of cross, and altar and baptismal font, the same cannot be said of walking into a prison. The same principles are certainly used in some of the newer builds when considering staff and visitor entrances: imposing architecture, banks of glass and high ceilings and oversized doorways, conveying, as in the church experience, a sense of transcendence and unseen power. ‘HMP’, His Majesty’s Prison, preceding each prison name, locates the source of power and authority. Indeed, this regal link was reflected in the style of the earliest prisons which ‘imitated defensive architecture with exaggerated castellated elements’.<sup>19</sup> Most prisons looked like castles and could easily be mistaken for such. While some of the more modern exteriors may have changed, the sense is of entering a defended, secure, regulated space. This is reinforced by the various barriers to access – the approach to the heavy metal door, the buzzer that has to be pressed to gain access, the list of prohibited things and a disembodied voice asking for ID.

On entering a church, everyone goes in through the same door. Not so with the prison. A separate entrance is used, with many more layers of security and dehumanising rituals. Contrast the large, transparent, relatively open entrance for visitors and staff to the large solid grey gates through which prisoners pass, handcuffed inside a van. Whether a person is convicted or still to be tried, the treatment is the same. And although there are different entrances, I along with other staff must also go through a process of security – walking through a scanner and putting my jacket and bag, shoes and keys, in a tray to be checked. Staff and prisoner alike are treated with suspicion – a first glimpse of one of the many aspects of Goffman’s ‘Total Institution’ – that of mortification.<sup>20</sup> There is a hierarchy of mortification. As a non-uniformed, professional member I could argue that I am required to give up least of myself, in one sense. Apart from mobile phones, that minute by minute link to our social world which everyone must surrender, I can wear my clothes of my choice and as a chaplain I have considerable agency over what I do. For uniformed staff their clothing, timing and activities are tightly controlled during the period they are in the building. Subject to most mortification is the prisoner. This starts with the process of admission in the reception area, which includes a series of losses: of civil and financial rights,<sup>21</sup> of personal property, of dignity through the humiliating stripping of clothes and checking for contraband.

Once inside the prison, each successive space can only be accessed with keys taken from a secure key room. Thick metal doors form regular barriers. Space is broken down into tightly defined areas usually with long, enclosed linking corridors.<sup>22</sup> Access to space

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<sup>18</sup>Orr, ‘Transforming Liturgies’, Section 5.1.2.1.

<sup>19</sup>Historic Environment Scotland, *Scotland’s Prisons*, 10.

<sup>20</sup>Goffman, *Asylums*, 25.

<sup>21</sup>Accessing one’s own bank account becomes impossible in prison and where people do have money they become reliant on a relative or friend to put it on their PPC which until recently could only be done by sending it in by post (with frequent complaints that it never arrived) or taking it personally to the prison. Some without friends or relatives have no way of accessing their own money with which to buy essential toiletries and canteen items which help make prison life slightly more tolerable.

<sup>22</sup>This principle of separation means that corridors can be extremely long. It is reckoned that in Edinburgh prison the distance from the front door to furthest hall is over a ½ mile long (but not being allowed to wear a Fitbit one will never know!). Getting to the chapel involved opening and closing 13 separate doors and a good proportion of the main corridor.



is regulated by time and purpose and for prisoners by their category. However, unlike the operators of the CCTV who can see everywhere in the prison, individuals can spend years in the same building but never meet or even see another person living only 100 or 200 metres from them. Most spaces in prison are austere with the monotony of sterile walls. Some corridors may be painted in bright colours, and people have scope to personalise their cell to an extent, but overall, it feels a hostile place.

### ***The spirituality of security***<sup>23</sup>

The design and use of space in a prison is focused on security, on reducing and controlling risk. Risk is something into which the prison chaplain is socialised along with other staff.<sup>24</sup> From the initial training in prisoner behaviour and personal protection, the chaplain is made aware of the risks associated with working in a prison and the primacy of security. While the work of the chaplain may be different in focus from uniformed staff, they go through the same rituals of getting keys from the key vend, carrying a radio as a precaution, and wearing the same colour and design of badge that all staff wear. In a study of prison chaplains in the USA, Hicks noted that ‘by symbolically tying chaplains to other staff, such props were perceived as contributing to the management of risk’.<sup>25</sup> Sometimes this is overt as Chaplains are often involved in doing security checks for those attending their groups, checking to see if there are any ‘enemies’ or ‘must be separate,’ and ‘if their name isn’t on the list, they can’t come’ (Pentecost).<sup>26</sup> Once in the room, the chaplain positions themselves, as any member of staff does, closest to the door. Or in the chapel, the chaplain must acquiesce in the ‘military precision’ with which ‘prisoners are directed and seated’ with uniformed staff sitting strategically between them (Easter). An essential part of the life-giving liturgy of communion is pushed aside by the rule-based liturgy of security. Not infrequently, during a service ‘the sense of peace is broken . . . by an order from one of the officers who berate’s the congregation if they show the slightest sign of disrespect . . . order must be kept . . . authority respected’ (Easter). Even in the place of worship there is a battle of values as the officers let their presence be known in the presence of the ‘softies and civvies’ (as chaplains and other non-uniformed staff are known). Hicks suggests that the result of this socialisation ‘creates juxtaposition between rehabilitation, custody, and punishment, and implies that religious workers are socialised in ways that may potentially suppress their rehabilitative or redemptive concerns’.<sup>27</sup>

The role strain that Hicks speaks of, stemming from ‘contradictory or incompatible expectations,’ has been further exacerbated by the growing demand for prison chaplains to professionalise, which is a way of externally defining, and thus controlling, the chaplains’ job. This has been influenced by the development of managerialism within the SPS combined with the wider debate in society about what constitutes ‘good religion’, and the role of religion within public institutions.<sup>28</sup> The result, according to Pattison is

<sup>23</sup>Orr, ‘Transforming Liturgies’, Section 5.1.2.2.

<sup>24</sup>Hicks, ‘Learning to watch out’, 636.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 647.

<sup>26</sup>(Pentecost) – this and future references to the Church Year in brackets i.e. (Advent), (Easter), reference quotes from the autoethnographic pieces of Chapter 4, Orr, ‘Transforming Liturgies’.

<sup>27</sup>Hicks, ‘Learning to Watch Out’, 661.

<sup>28</sup>See Cadge et al., ‘Religion in Public Institutions’; Fitzgerald, *Critical Religion*; and Todd, ‘United Kingdom: Public Reconstruction’.



a ‘dumbing down of the Spirit’ by universalising, commodifying and individualising spirituality.<sup>29</sup> An example of this is the issue of Kosher meals. Prisoners can declare themselves Jewish one day and Muslim the next, driven by the motivation to access the associated food diets. Despite the disquiet of religious leaders, chaplains and staff, ‘possessive individualism’, which focuses on rights without responsibilities, is perpetuated by the prison rules over a more communitarian understanding.<sup>30</sup>

### ***The spirituality of seeing***<sup>31</sup>

Another aspect of prison culture is the pervasive surveillance. The over (*sur*) seeing (*veiller* – to watch), an ‘hierarchical observation’, where observation becomes the coercive means by which discipline is exercised.<sup>32</sup> This is achieved not only by the design and layout of buildings, as in Foucault’s discussion of the panopticon but by the presence of cameras in almost every crevice of the incarcerated space. Surrounding areas, car parks and approaches are also watched. Staff are surveyed as they walk around the prison, along the corridors and in the halls. Cameras at the side of doors allow entry and exit from one area to the next to be closely monitored. Signs remind everyone that there are CCTV cameras. All phone calls made by prisoners are also monitored, letters are opened and checked for illicit content such as a SIM card or drugs.

Surveillance, and particularly video surveillance, implies the loss of eye-to-eye contact. It is asymmetrical and this lack of reciprocity leads to a debasing of the interaction: ‘Inherent in the one-way gaze is a kind of dehumanization of the observed – and possibly, although indirectly, of the beholder, too’.<sup>33</sup> There is ‘no longer recognition, but subjugation, imposition of conducts, means of control’ and, as noted above, there is the risk of becoming dehumanised in the process.<sup>34</sup> However, there are exceptions. According to Prison Rule 44(4) the chaplain has a right to see a prisoner without surveillance:

Any visit to a prisoner by a member of the chaplaincy team must be held outwith the sight and hearing of an officer except where (a) the member or prisoner concerned requests otherwise; or (b) the Governor considers it would be prejudicial to the interests of security or safety for an officer not to be present.

There is something about the role of surveillance that is recognised as detrimental to the pastoral relationship between chaplain and prisoner and highlights that there are different ways of ‘seeing’ the prisoner. ‘Seeing people’ through the eyes of love is a good description of the chaplains’ role. The day is structured around ‘seeing’ people who have requested a visit or who are identified as vulnerable – those in prison for the first time, the suicidal or self-harming, the bereaved or distressed, or those wishing support and guidance from a religious perspective. By engaging in ‘visits’ (from the French *visage*, meaning face) I am seeing people as well as making them visible. In relation to this, Brighenti makes the point that ‘visibility is closely related to recognition ... a basic category of human identity, whose origin can be traced back to the Judeo-Christian and

<sup>29</sup>Pattison, *Challenge of Practical Theology*, 136.

<sup>30</sup>Milbank, ‘Against Human Rights’, 203.

<sup>31</sup>Based on Section 5.3.2 of Orr, ‘Transforming Liturgies’.

<sup>32</sup>Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 170.

<sup>33</sup>Brighenti, ‘Visibility’, 337.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 336.

the secular Enlightenment projects of “life in common” . . . a form of social visibility’.<sup>35</sup> Recognition, as practiced by a chaplain, also includes a spiritual visibility, as the inner world of a person, their thoughts and emotions, disappointments and hopes, are appreciated and given space.

### ***The spirituality of stories***<sup>36</sup>

There is an underlying story in the SPS surrounding CO-CO!, The SPS Organisational Review of 2013 set out to transform the way it worked by focusing on rehabilitation and reintegration. The vision was refreshed but when it came to the Mission Statement there was a reluctance to let go of the almost quarter century old Custody Order – Care Opportunity (CO-CO) mantra. Although a new Mission Statement was developed – Providing services that help to transform the lives of people in our care so they can fulfil their potential and become responsible citizens – CO-CO was retained as the Review Team believed it was so well embedded in the organisation that it would be counter-productive to seek to remove it’.<sup>37</sup> This, despite the reservation that ‘a continual focus on the perceived “hierarchy” of the mission would perpetuate cultural values that emphasised the restrictive elements of imprisonment rather than promoting the rehabilitative ones’.<sup>38</sup> With such a powerful acronym as COCO remaining at the heart of the SPS Mission is not surprising that ‘custody and order’ are still deeply embedded within the prison system, which practices are shaped and dominated by rules, that some of the officers’ actions can be humiliating rather than helpful.

Liebling has shown that ‘interpersonal relationships and treatment, and the use of authority . . . lead to stark difference in perceived fairness and safety and different outcomes for prisoners, including rates of suicide’.<sup>39</sup> It seems there are always one or two officers who persist in bawling surnames down the landing (Advent). For the prisoner, this has the double ignominy of being shouted at while also letting everyone else know some of their business. The more considerate officers will walk to the cell door, address the person by their first name while politely informing them that the chaplain is here to see them. This attitude also spills over into their interactions with chaplains. Staff sometimes ‘forget’ to open a cell door when someone has signed up to come to a group. Or, during the group, or one-to-one, the door will suddenly burst open with no warning and brusque ‘time up’ delivered. This robs participants of a sense of closure or preparation for re-entry into the prison world and can be particularly upsetting if it occurs during a sensitive prayer or quiet time of sharing (Pentecost). Less obvious but equally challenging are staff attitudes to escorting people to the chapel or being present during a group. Having taken away the privilege of being able to escort a prisoner to the chapel, the chaplain is reliant on uniformed staff. Those who are sympathetic to chaplaincy can and do make it happens. But there are those who see it as extra work and so in many prisons the Chapel lies empty and unused for most of the week despite it being a highly valued space.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 329.

<sup>36</sup>See Orr, ‘Transforming Liturgies’, 117 (COCO) and 112 (Liebling).

<sup>37</sup>SPS, ‘Unlocking Potential’, 47.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>39</sup>Liebling and Arnold, ‘Moral Performance’, 530.

## ***The spirituality of routines and rituals***<sup>40</sup>

When thinking about the everyday routines and rituals of prison life, it's useful to draw on the work of James KA Smith and his *Cultural Liturgies* project. Smith takes the Biblical concept of liturgy, from the Greek word *leitourgia* meaning 'work of the people', and thinks about what it looks like beyond the domain of the church.<sup>41</sup> He argues that there are secular liturgies 'that shape our imagination and how we orient ourselves to the world'.<sup>42</sup> His overarching point is 'that liturgies – whether "sacred" or "secular" – shape and constitute our identities by forming our most fundamental desires and our most basic attunement to the world. In short, liturgies make us certain kinds of people, and what defines us is what we *love*'.<sup>43</sup> It is the communitarian nature of liturgies that makes them so powerful. Seeing ritual and routines as a kind of secular liturgy within the prison context gives them the power about which Wink writes.

In the second volume of his *Cultural Liturgies* Smith takes up Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* to make the point that it 'is always sort of bigger than me – it is a communal, collective disposition that gets inscribed in me'. This inscription can be graceful or disgraceful. At the extreme, it can inscribe life or death, it can inscribe healing or pain, it can inscribe love or hate. It is possible to identify 'liturgies of grace' and 'liturgies of disgrace' in the way people are treated on admission to prison, the way people are spoken to or treated on a daily basis, the way people are looked out or ignored, the stories that are told about what makes a good prison officer. From her research, Liebling is clear about the impact of these contrasting liturgies:

Some relevant aspects of the prison experience, including indifference, humiliation, deliberate taunting, inactivity, unfairness and unpredictability can precipitate feelings of hopelessness, powerlessness and despair, particularly among the vulnerable. Their opposites: dignity, recognition, respect, humanity and kindness, can protect individuals from such feelings.<sup>44</sup>

The power in liturgy is in the way it forms and shapes and creates a certain kind of people through repetition. Every liturgy is a pedagogy that teaches us, in all sorts of precognitive ways.<sup>45</sup> And embedded in every liturgy is an implicit worldview or 'understanding' of the world. There is power in liturgy.<sup>46</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This article has sought to explore the cultural web of the SPS, a government agency which hosts chaplains as religious representatives of the church, and to compare it with the underlying culture and spirituality of Christian chaplaincy. It has explored the reality of the organisational culture and context in which Christian chaplains work. By considering

<sup>40</sup>Orr, 'Transforming Liturgies', 101–2.

<sup>41</sup>Liturgy is derived from the Greek word *leitourgia* (Λειτουργία) which is mentioned six times in the New Testament. Its common usage was a service undertaken e.g. as in military service. In the New Testament it refers to the Priestly service in three instances (Luke 1:23; Hebrews 8:6 and 9:21) and in the remaining verses (2 Cor 9:12; Phil 2:17 and 2:30) to the ministry and gifts of believers.

<sup>42</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Liebling, 'Can Human Beings Flourish?'

<sup>45</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 26.

<sup>46</sup>See Orr, 'Transforming Liturgies', Section 5.3.3.

various aspects of the SPS paradigm – symbols, space, security, seeing, stories, routines and rituals – I have shown where there are similarities and where there are differences in the underlying spirituality, and thus power, between church (and chaplains as designated representatives) and SPS. This highlights the complicity and challenge of any chaplain who is embedded in an organisation with a different spirituality and worldview to that of the host organisation. For the church not to take up this challenge, however, could be seen as a neglect of duty, a refusal to take responsibility, an abandonment of any opportunity to show love and a lack of belief in a God who can bring good out of evil.<sup>47</sup>

Within SPS, there is general agreement that there is something distinct about the chaplain, that they hold more trust in the prison than other members of staff, that their pastoral presence is valued and to this extent they can be seen as counter-cultural.<sup>48,49</sup> But it is more than being a ‘truthteller’,<sup>50</sup> or responding to ‘individuality over against the institution’s thrust to conformity’.<sup>51</sup> The presence of a chaplain is symbolic not just of a different culture, but of a wholly different system, a different way of relating to others, a different way of using power, a different Spirit. Also, although I as a chaplain may try to practise life-giving liturgies through my routines and rituals, it is an invitation to everyone to be involved in a more caring way of relating to fellow human-beings. It is much bigger than chaplaincy. It is about Kingdom values permeating society.

So, prison chaplaincy, like other forms of chaplaincy, provides an opportunity to offer liturgies of grace which value relationship over rules, humility rather than humiliation and freedom over imprisonment of the soul, liturgies that are life-giving rather than mortifying. Every life-giving liturgy that I, or for that matter any other member of staff, perform (the handshake, the respect given, the belief in an individual, a random act of kindness) weakens the dominant culture and ‘strengthens the new order of God’.<sup>52</sup> I cannot absent myself from an institution just because I do not agree with all that goes on there. There is work to be done. As Wink reminds us: ‘The gospel message is not an ideal beyond realisation. It is rather a continual lure towards the fullest conceivable life for all’.<sup>53</sup>

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Notes on contributor

*Sheena Orr* is the Church of Scotland Chaplaincy Advisor to the Scottish Prison Service. After 25 years working in organisational development and research abroad in developing countries, and latterly at home, she was ordained as a Church of Scotland minister. Her calling to chaplaincy

<sup>47</sup>Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, 6–11.

<sup>48</sup>This is a common theme in the literature about chaplaincy e.g. Caperton et al., *A Christian Theology of Chaplaincy*; Cobb et al., *Introduction to Chaplaincy*; Dearnley, *Prison Chaplaincy*; Sundt and Cullen, *Role of Chaplain*; Threfall-Holmes and Newitt, *Being a Chaplain*; Todd, ‘Religion, Security, Rights’; and Todd and Tipton, *The Role and Contribution*.

<sup>49</sup>This is not to claim that chaplains are morally superior. There have been times when a chaplain failed to meet expected standards and has been disciplined or dismissed.

<sup>50</sup>Williams, *Ministry in Prison*, 7.

<sup>51</sup>Phillips, ‘Roles and Identities’, 135.

<sup>52</sup>Wink, *Engaging The Powers*, 48.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

combines her commitment to working with people on the edge with her faith in the transforming grace of God for all. She explored her interest in the way chaplains challenge the organisational culture through everyday liturgies of word and action in her thesis *Transforming Liturgies: The Autoethnography of a Prison Chaplain*.

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