BUDDHIST CHAPLAINCY IN THE UNITED STATES: THEORY-PRAXIS RELATIONSHIP IN FORMATION AND PROFESSION

Ven. Guan Zhen, M.Div, MSW[a*]

[a] PhD Candidate at School of Philosophy, Renmin University of China, Beijing.
Secretary, International Center of Chinese Buddhist Culture and Education, USA.

[*] Author for correspondence email; zhenguanxu@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

This article gives an overview of the emergence of Buddhist Chaplaincy in the US. It analyzes the concept, profession and formation of this chaplaincy using the theory-praxis model. Current available academic research literature related to this chaplaincy is also summarized and analyzed. This article puts forward potential challenges that Buddhist chaplaincy faces today in the US. It seeks possible practical and functional approaches for present and future development of Buddhist chaplaincy. Differences between practical theology and Buddhology based on the concepts of "shepherding" and "ox herding" are compared and explored. Insights on the theory-praxis model of Buddhist chaplaincy today in the US are depicted in a practical formula.

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Introduction

The discipline of "Buddhist Chaplaincy" in the US emerged in 1980s. In the beginning, Buddhists engaged in chaplaincy work on a volunteer basis. This form of chaplaincy did not receive recognition as a profession until the beginning of the 21st century. It was an emerging field about two decades ago, and is still a new "phenomenon" to many in the country. The new phenomenon, however, is grounded in its practice and theory on Christian theological models.

Today, Buddhist chaplaincy in the US provides services to organizations ranging from federal government agencies (such as the US Army, Navy, Air Force and federal prison) to state agencies (such as the National Guard, hospitals, police departments, fire departments), as well as non-profit organizations (such as universities and homeless shelters). The basis for the acceptance of Buddhist chaplaincy in US society includes: (1) support for the "Free Exercise Clause" in the First Amendment for all citizens; (2) enrichment of individual morality and spirituality in society; and (3) finding paths to alleviate human suffering such as mental health issues or existential questions related to religious or moral crises in life. [1]

This paper evaluates the definition and development of Buddhist chaplaincy in the US. It provides perspectives on the theory-praxis model of Buddhist chaplaincy through the lens of history. It investigates Buddhist chaplaincy as a sub-specialty under the western Christian context of practical theology. This paper advocates for the establishment of an educational and practical system of Buddhist chaplaincy based on Buddhology, specifically the teaching and concept of "ox herding" from Buddhist texts. Further, insights on Buddhist chaplaincy in the US, its formation and professional practice, are depicted in a formulaic structure for purpose of summarization and analysis.

Definition of Buddhist Chaplaincy in the US

Buddhist chaplaincy in the US bears strong influence from Christian practical theology, specifically theology of relational care. Historically, the term "chaplain" refers to an ordained priest or pastor appointed by a church to serve at a chapel often owned by a noble family. [2] In Christian tradition, contemporary chaplains provide pastoral counseling and spiritual care in secular settings such as in the armed forces and healthcare system. This has its roots in the Christian ministerial tradition serving those who could not officially attend church services. For example,

[1] Guan Zhen, "Practice Norms of Buddhist Chaplains in the United States: Code of Ethics, Legal Obligations, Competences and Boundaries," **Journal of Buddhist Studies**, 2020, *2 (1)*, 316-327, the Research Institute of Buddhist Culture of China.

[2] Monica Stanford, **Kalyanamitra: A Model for Buddhist Spiritual Care** (ON: Sumeru Press, 2021), 16.

there ordained ministers accompanied the famous British navigator Sir Francis Drake (1540-1596) in the 16th century to minister to sailors; during the American War of Independence, there were ordained ministers sent by local churches to serve continental soldiers on battlefields at General George Washington's request.[3]

During 1970s and 1980s, with the rise of practical theology in the US, the definition of chaplain changed accordingly. Under the principle of offering practical and functional approaches to save people and the world within a Christian framework, ministry was no longer limited to priests or pastors appointed by the church but extended to general church members who felt called to serve in secular settings. Practical theology offers a pragmatic, broader, pluralistic and constructive embodiment church and ministry which also points to the improvement and expansion of church itself to include greater secular elements.[4] To some degree, the rise and practice of practical theology in the US has redefined "calling" or "vocation" from traditional theological contexts in which an ordained minister is not only called to serve God and the church but also to minister to humanity in particular, specialized and diverse ways.

That is, practical theology offers tools for expanding ministry beyond church walls. It has not merely confined itself to reflect on the religious sentiment of honoring God and the church but also towards a practical and accessible definition of ministering to individuals in the multiple religious, social and cultural environments. Christian chaplains, as practitioners of practical theology, do not necessarily affiliate with any particular church, other than for the purposes of receiving ordination at the outset of their career. Some effectively become individual, unaffiliated practitioners. In other words, practical theology has employed available, necessary means to minister appropriately and effectively in God's world today, but some limitations exist. As a practical and functional form of theology, it listens to different voices and systematically absorbs knowledge of social sciences such as psychology to provide effective guidance for the church's praxes and ministry to humanity and diversity, outside of the church.[5] Here, diversity and humanity refer to religious, cultural, national / ethnic, LGBTQIA+, intersectionality, etc.

In Christian chaplaincy today, practical theology continues to enrich a minister's spiritual caregiving role in secular settings using the following approaches: (1) reflective practice which

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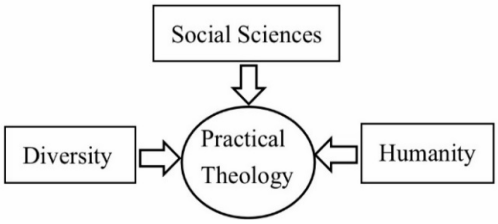
[3] Naomi K. Paget & Janet R. McCormack, **The work of the chaplain** (PA: Judson Press, 2006), 1.

[4] Don S. Browning, "Introduction," Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and World, ed. Don S. Browning (New York: Harper & Row, Publ. 1983), 1-6; Alastair V. Campbell, "Is practical theology possible?" **Scottish Journal of Theology**, 1972, 25*(2),* 217-227.

[5] Robin Gill, "The future of practical theology," **Theological Investigations**, 1977, 56*(1)*, 17-22; Ian D. Bunting, "Practical theology and pastoral training," **Evangelical Review of Theology**, 1980, 4 *(2)*, 116-122; Andrew Todd, "Responding to diversity: Chaplaincy in a multi-faith context," in M. Threlfall-Holmes & M. Newitt (Eds.), **Being a chaplain** (London: SPCK, 2011), 89–102.

develops "descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative and pragmatic tasks of practical theological reflection on particular contexts"; (2) metatheoretical paradigms that empower ministers / chaplains to "make decisions about how they view the theory-praxis relationship, interdisciplinary work, the relative weight of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience and the theological rationale that justifies their approach."[6] Practical theology develops a minister's / chaplain's capacity in understanding, accessing and responding to particular issues with using the tools of the social sciences. As Figure 1 demonstrates:

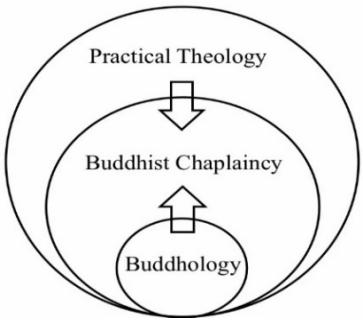
Figure 1 Practical Theology



In Figure 1, Practical theology incorporates the social sciences and specific focus on diversity and humanity in its theory-praxis in order to respond to the problems of the time.[7]

It is arguable that the emergence of Buddhist chaplaincy in the 21st century resulted from adapting the liberal concepts of practical theology and the tools of social science to better serve diversity and humanity. It is also arguable that, from the beginning, Buddhist chaplaincy was and is still defined as a "practical theology" and, to a degree, considered a different form of "Christian chaplaincy" in the US. As Figure 2 illustrates:

Figure 2 Buddhist Chaplaincy



[6] R.R. Osmer, "Practical theology: A current international perspective," **HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies**, 2011, 67(2), 1. available at http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v67i2.1058

[7] H. M. Kuitert, **Everything is Politics but Politics is Not Everything**, trans. John Bowden (Grand Rapdis: Eerdmans Publ., 1986), 19; James W. Fowler, *Faith development and pastoral care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 9-20; Howard John Clinebell, **Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth** (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 22-30.

In Figure 2, Buddhology ideally functions as a core foundation for Buddhist chaplaincy to develop accordingly. Nevertheless, it also shows that Buddhist chaplaincy and Buddhology together are under the influence of practical theology as a whole. Arguably, the practice of Buddhist chaplaincy in the US today is more of a combination of Eastern Buddhist philosophy, Western practical theology, and elements of the social sciences serving as a model for providing spiritual care and emotional support to those in need. The theory-praxis relationship of Buddhist chaplaincy in the US is not limited to serving Buddhists but also non-Buddhists and individuals with no religious preference. A "Buddhist chaplain" working in the field today is often found called upon to engage in prayer, Bible reading, or performing blessings for non-Buddhists.

It is worth noting that Buddhist careseekers in the US compose a small population in chaplaincy. Buddhist chaplaincy in Asian countries such as Thailand or Korea requires training in a Buddhist university and at least five years of experience as an ordained monastic living in a Sangha in order to qualify for becoming a professional Buddhist chaplain. Added to the educational requirements completed before or after living in a sangha, the entire process can take upwards of ten years. [8] In contrast, the role of a Buddhist chaplain in the US is not limited to former or current ordained Buddhist monastics, but laity who receive training in Buddhist chaplaincy and complete required lay Buddhist minister ordination, and endorsement by a recognized Buddhist sangha community. Some Buddhist chaplains complete the training process independent of any and all proper Buddhist training centers or communities. Aside from three years of divinity school and four units (one year) of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), the length of the process is highly unregulated. The standard of what is considered a Buddhist chaplain is therefore, unclear and undefined. In both theory and practice, Buddhist chaplaincy is independent from any sangha community in the US. It is a new form of "Buddhism" which emphasizes secularism.

Buddhist Chaplaincy as a Profession in the US

An individual in the US who seeks to become a professional Buddhist chaplain must complete the following: (1) 72-unit credits or more of a master's degree in Buddhist Chaplaincy from an accredited academic institution recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation; (2) at least two years of Buddhist training from a local sangha community (especially for someone who seeks to become a military chaplain); (3) field education (such as becoming a clinical

[8] Michael Jerryson, "Pluralistic Permutations: The Thai Buddhist Military Chaplaincy," in Torkel Brekke and Vladimir Tokhonov ed., **Military Chaplaincy in an Era of Religious Pluralism: Military-Religious Nexus in Asia, Europe, and USA** (New Delhi: Oxford, 2017), 153-7; Vladimir Tikhonov, "South Korean Military Chaplaincy in the 1950–70s: Religion as Ideology," in Torkel Brekke and Vladimir Tokhonov eds., **Military Chaplaincy in an Era of Religious Pluralism: Military-Religious Nexus in Asia, Europe, and USA** (New Delhi: Oxford, 2017), 248.

Buddhist chaplain which requires four units of CPE at a hospital or medical center) ; and (4) lay Buddhist minister ordination and endorsement from a recognized Buddhist tradition.[9] Once all requirements are met, one is qualified to work as a professional Buddhist chaplain in secular settings, providing spiritual care and emotional support to those in need. However, this author has observed that the second requirement is often overlooked or left unexamined. The requirement is often considered "fulfilled" on the basis of a simple recommendation or endorsement letter.

Currently, there are two different systems of education for Buddhist chaplaincy in the US. The first type is of the academic variety which can be obtained from one of the following institutions: (1) Harvard Divinity School in Boston; (2) Union Theological Seminary in New York City; (2) Naropa University in Boulder; (3) Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley; (4) University of the West in Los Angeles; and (5) Maitripa College in Portland, Oregon. These five academic institutions provide students with a 72-unit accredited theological master's degree of divinity in Buddhist chaplaincy recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. In these academic institutions, students receive training in Buddhist chaplaincy theory and comparative religion; Buddhist scripture and ritual; Buddhist spiritual care and counseling; interreligious engagement and social justice, etc. Although the training courses and theoretical model of Buddhist chaplaincy provided by these academic institutions may seem to follow a similar pattern across institutions, they in fact have obvious differences in emphasis.

For example, Buddhist Ministry Initiative at Harvard Divinity School, Thích Nhất Hạnh Program for Engaged Buddhism at Union Theological Seminary, and the Masters of Divinity at Naropa University focus on the cultivation and development of inter-/multi-faith and socially-engaged aspects of Buddhist chaplaincy. They advocate for anti-racism and social justice, and aim at training "future Buddhist religious professionals in terms appropriate to modern, global conditions"; studying "Buddhism within the Interreligious Engagement"; and focusing on "community and an interreligious approach rooted in Buddhist philosophy and meditation". [10] In contrast, Buddhist Chaplaincy at University of the West, Institute of Buddhist Studies and Maitripa College focus on the extension of traditional Buddhist teachings and practices from the lineages

[9] Danny Fisher, **Benefit beings!: The Buddhist guide to professional chaplaincy** (America: Off the Cushion Books, 2013); Monica Sanford and Nathan Jishin Michon, "Buddhist Chaplaincy," **Oxford Research Encyclopedia**, 25 February 2019, available at https://oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-641

[10] Harvard Divinity School, "Buddhist Ministry Initiative," available at https://hds.harvard.edu/academics/buddhist-ministry-initiative; Union, "The Thích Nhất Hạnh Program for Engaged Buddhism," available at https://utsnyc.edu/life/institutes/buddhism-program/; Naropa University, "Master of Divinity," available at https://www.naropa.edu/academics/masters/divinity/index.php

of Chinese Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism, emphasizing social service "with Buddhist approaches for positive changes in the world".[11]

The second type of education relates to training programs established by local Buddhist organizations. Currently, there are two well-known and emerging organizations in the field. They are: (1) New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care in New York City; and (2) Upaya Zen Center in New Mexico. These two centers are both established by local non-ethnic, non-immigrant Buddhist communities and have their foundations in the Japanese Soto Zen tradition. Nevertheless, a Buddhist theoretical framework for CPE laid out by these two centers include teachings from Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions. They also adapt the tools of contemporary social sciences such as aspects of psychology. For example, a ten-month program of CPE provided by New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care has its focus on facing the challenges of countertransference between a chaplain and a patient in medical situations such as long-term illness, facing major surgery, or in the process of dying. The method that this program uses to resolve this type of challenge is Buddhist practice with emphasis on Buddhist spiritual and moral development.[12] Unlike New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care, the one-year-long program of CPE laid out by Upaya Zen Center focuses on the Buddhist teachings of compassion and wisdom in tending to patients' emotional and mental well-being. Palliative care, environmental protection and prevention of social violence are also the focuses of the center's Buddhist chaplaincy training.[13]

Accordingly, any candidate who completes the educational requirements of the first system of training would also need to establish Buddhist practical and theoretical foundations of morality and spirituality through a recognized sangha community. Those utilizing the second system would have already established such a foundation. After that, a candidate may prepare to receive ordination as a lay Buddhist minister and endorsement for becoming a professional Buddhist chaplain.[14] For a candidate who seeks to become a military Buddhist chaplain, Buddhist Churches of American in San Francisco is the only Buddhist organization recognized by the US Department of Defense for endorsement. For a candidate who seeks to become a board-certified clinical

[11] University of the West, "Department of Buddhist Chaplaincy," available at https://www.uwest.edu/academics/graduate-programs/buddhist-chaplaincy/; Institute of Buddhist Studies, "Buddhist Chaplaincy," available at https://www.shin-ibs.edu/academics/areas-of-specialization/buddhist-chaplaincy/; Maitripa College, "Degree Program: the Master of Divinity Degree (MDiv)," available at https://maitripa.org/master-divinity-mdiv/

[12] New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care, "Professional Chaplaincy Training (CPE)," https://zencare.org/contemplative-care-training-program/professional-cpe-buddhist-chaplaincy-training

[13] Upaya Institute and Zen Center, "Prison Outreach Program," available at https://www.upaya.org/social-action/prison-outreach/

[14] Board of Chaplaincy Certification Inc., "BCCI Certification Graduate Education Equivalency Worksheet," available at http://bcci.professionalchaplains.org/content.asp?pl=19&contentid=19

Buddhist chaplain by the Association of Professional Chaplains, the nation's biggest organization promoting interfaith chaplaincy, there are fifty-five Buddhist organizations in the US recognized by the association as community faith groups for endorsement.[15]

Research Literature on Buddhist Chaplaincy in the US

Currently, academic research on Buddhist chaplaincy in the US is limited. There are mainly four books published with scholarship intended specifically for professional Buddhist chaplains. They are:

1. *The Art of Contemplative Care: Pioneering Voices in Buddhist Chaplaincy and Pastoral Work* by Chery L Giles and Willa Miller (Wisdom Publications, 2012);
2. *Benefit Beings! The Buddhist Guide to Professional Chaplaincy* by Danny Fisher (Off the Cushion Books, 2013);
3. *A Thousand Hands: A Guidebook to Caring for Your Buddhist Community* by Nathan Jishin Michon and Daniel Clarkson Fisher (Sumeru Press, 2016); and
4. *Kalyanamitra: A Model for Buddhist Spiritual Care* by Rev. Dr. Monica Sanford (Sumeru Press, 2021).

These four books are pioneering in the field of Buddhist chaplaincy, outlining models for chaplaincy based on the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path; the teachings of non-self, compassion, wisdom, and bodhisattva-hood; and the teachings of interconnection (i.e., between a careseeker and spiritual caregiver) from Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana perspectives. These publications are significant in the filed because they provide direction on how a Buddhist chaplain in the US today may conduct themselves according to Buddhist teachings even while functioning in a Christian or secular culture.

The frameworks of Buddhist chaplaincy described in these books reflect the theory-praxis relationship which is under the considerable influence of Christian chaplaincy. Most of them focus on contemporary challenges associated with social justice issues. For example, individual articles collected in *The Art of Contemplative Care* and *A Thousand Hands* cover a wide range of practical models and theories of Buddhist chaplaincy to address anti-racism by employing Buddhist spiritual care as a means for seeking social justice in community. Based on practical theology, they develop in-depth and insightful analyses of professional models of Buddhist chaplaincy that advocate for the rights of LGBTQIA+ communities. Also, in his *Benefit Beings!* Rev. Dr. Fisher provides an

[15] Chaplaincy Innovation Lab, "Buddhist Chaplaincy," available at https://chaplaincyinnovation.org/resources/faith-tradition/buddhist-chaplaincy

introduction to the practice of Buddhist chaplaincy in the fields of healthcare, military, law enforcement, and higher education with significant influence from Christian theology.

Rev. Dr. Sanford's work, *Kalyanamitra*, develops a practical concept of "spiritual friendship" that outlines a "map" for Buddhist chaplains in the US to work in secular settings derived from the teachings of the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana traditions. For individuals who seek to work as professional Buddhist chaplains, *Kalyanamitra* is a valuable resource. In her work, Rev. Dr. Sanford promotes the practice of interfaith chaplaincy which is in accordance with the current social and cultural climate. The Buddhology that Rev. Dr. Sanford presents and suggests for the current and future development of Buddhist chaplaincy shows considerable influence from the theory-praxis model of practical theology.

According to available literature, it is notable that current thinking on Buddhist chaplaincy is significantly influenced by practical theology as illustrated in **Figure 2**. With regard to US religious, social, and cultural contexts, this has been meaningful and beneficial for advancing the field of Buddhist chaplaincy both in theory and practice. Nevertheless, it is also important for us to examine the differences between theology and Buddhology. This author will attempt to do so through the concepts of "Shepherding" and "Ox Herding" in both religious traditions. The purpose of this project is to provide a foundation for potentially establishing Buddhist chaplaincy based on Buddhology.

Concepts of Shepherding and Ox Herding from Theology and Buddhology

The contemporary formation of pastoral / spiritual care provided by Christian chaplains in the US can be traced to Jesus as described in *The New Testament*. In John10:11, Jesus identifies himself as the "Good Shepherd" and the "gatekeeper", led by the Holy Spirit, sacrificing himself for the purpose of guiding lost sheep back to the flock.[16] This type of theology continues to define the foundation of pastoral / spiritual care of Christian chaplaincy today. It points to the role of a shepherd as an intermediary between careseekers and the Holy Spirit for healing, spiritual growth and redemption. [17]

In both practice and theory, Christian chaplains today continue Jesus's role as shepherds who minister in secular settings. With the ministry of presence, Christian chaplains perform sacrament, pray to God, listen to confession, comfort the wounded, heal the sick, and present the path of

[16] The Holy Bible, "The Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ, According to St. John," p.1390. available at http://triggs.djvu.org/djvu-editions.com/BIBLES/DRV/Download.pdf

[17] Howard Clinebell and Bridget Clare McKeever, 3rd ed., *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, TN: Abingdon, 2011, pp.4-5.

spiritual growth and redemption to those in need through the power of the Holy Spirit. [18] In other words, in Christianity, healing and salvation is seen as a gift of divine grace; and a shepherd answers the call from the Holy Spirit to shepherd His creation (i.e., humanity) with self-sacrifice as described in Apostles 20:28. [19]

In contrast to the Christian theology of "shepherding", there is the Buddhology of "ox herding" which may serve a foundational role in the formation of a new model of Buddhist chaplaincy. In *Ekottara Āgama Sutra: The Chapter of Ox Herding 增一阿含经•放牛品*, and the *Buddha's Teaching on Ox Herding 佛说放牛经*, there are discourses describing how a cowherd / caregiver may skillfully herd cows using eleven tasks: (1) diagnosing the health conditions [of the cows] through their appearances; (2) becoming skillful in distinguishing the characteristics of good oxen]; (3) picking out flies' eggs [from the animals' bodies]; (4) dressing wounds; (5) smoking out the sheds; (6) knowing fords; (7) drinking water; (8) recognizing the road; (9) being strategic in pasturing; (10) preventing over-milking; (11) showing respect for elder ox-herders. [20]

These eleven tasks are based on the threefold training (triśikṣā) — virtue, concentrated meditation and wisdom — for developing the body and mind on the path of liberation from suffering. This was further elaborated into ten stages in a Chinese Chan Buddhist text known as *Ox Herding in Ten Illustrations 牧牛图颂* composed during the Song dynasty (960-1279) by Venerable Master Puning 普明禅师 (lived during the 12th century). The ten stages are: (1) seeking the ox; (2) finding the tracks; (3) seeing the ox; (4) catching the ox; (5) pasturing the ox; (6) riding the ox home; (7) letting go of the ox and keeping the presence of self; (8) letting go the ox and the self; (9) realizing the true nature of the mind; (10) returning to the world with compassion.[21] These ten stages describe how to adjust an untrained mind — like a wild bull — with using certain strategies. Through these stages, the mind can be gradually trained and eventually reach its destination of realization of Enlightenment.

In addition, the *The Chapter of Ox Herding*, *Buddha's Teaching on Ox Herding* and *Ox Herding in Ten Illustrations* together describe a cowherder herding an ox (i.e., the body and mind) with the following five Buddhological formations: (1) with deep understanding of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; (2) seeking to develop morality and skillful action using body, mind and

[18] James Woodward, Stephen Pattison, and John Patton, **The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology**, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, p. 23.

[19] The Holy Bible, "The Acts of the Apostles," p.1438, available at http://triggs.djvu.org/djvu-editions.com/BIBLES/DRV/Download.pdf

[20] T.2 125. 46. 794a07-795a16; T. 2. 123. 1. 546a16-547b04; Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans., **Maha-gopalaka Sutta: The Greater Cowherd Discourse (MN 33), Access to Insight (BCBS Edition)**, available at http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.033.than.html

[21] J. 23. B129. 1. 358b02-362b26.

speech; (3) observing the five aggregates with the insights of non-self, impermanence and emptiness; (4) understanding that the liberation of the body and mind is guided by right understanding and practice of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path; (5) diligently participating in practice of the threefold training as to develop the quality of morality, concentrated meditation and perfect wisdom that eliminate unskillful emotional and mental states of greed, hatred and ignorance. [22]

Within a Buddhological, instead of a practical theological framework, using the ministry of presence, a cowherder (a Buddhist chaplain) herds a cow (a careseeker) to establish foundations for the liberation of the body and mind in accordance with Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Concentration, Right Intention, etc. The propose for developing such foundations in Buddhist chaplaincy is to engage in empowering both a careseeker and caregiver to develop moral and spiritual capacities to uproot the causes of suffering, i.e., emotional and mental fetters, obtain peace and confidence in life, and finally liberation from the suffering of the six realms of existence (i.e., the realms of gods, demi-gods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts and hell denizens).

Notably, the Buddhology that underlies this analogy of a cowherd (a Buddhist chaplain) distinguishes itself from that of a shepherd (a Christian chaplain) in various ways. The Christian chaplain shepherds His sheep with "theology-in-action" and "an ultimate vision of redemption" as described by Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward in *Theological Reflection: Methods*. [23] In effect, the Christian chaplain serves as a "gatekeeper" for shepherding sheep. A careseeker, symbolized by a sheep, heals from suffering and sustains the path of spiritual growth and redemption through His power of grace. As Figure 3 demonstrates:

Figure 3 Shepherding

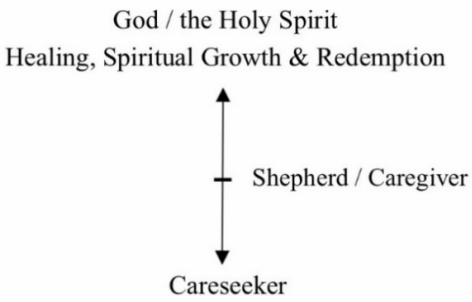


Figure 3 depicts God / the Holy Spirit as the ultimate pastoral authority in Christian chaplaincy for healing, spiritual growth and redemption. The relationship between a careseeker, caregiver and

[22] T. 2. 123. 1. 546a16-c07; J. 23. B129. 1. 362a12-13.
[23] Elaine L. Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward, **Theological Reflection: Methods**, London: SCM Press, 2005, p. 14 & pp. 188-9.

God is in a vertical format, from top to bottom, with the shepherd / caregiver in an intermediate role as gatekeeper. This theological model of chaplaincy is based on a hierarchical relationship between God, chaplain and careseeker. In juxtaposition to the Christian chaplain's role as a "shepherd", a Buddhist chaplain's role as a "cowherd" is equal to a careseeker within the care relationship. In Buddhology, the function of a Buddhist chaplain in providing spiritual care is dissimilar from the "gatekeeper" described by St. John in the *New Testament*. Instead, the Buddhist chaplain serves as a "spiritual friend 善友" or a "virtuous teacher 善知识" who, with the blessing of the Triple Gem, offers careseekers companionship and guidance on the spiritual path of healing and transition. As Figure 4 illustrates:

Figure 4 Ox Herding

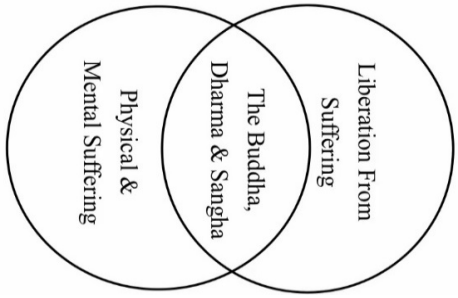


Figure 4 depicts a Buddhological framework for the practice of Buddhist chaplaincy in accordance with the concept of Ox Herding from the *The Chapter of Ox Herding*, *Buddha's Teaching on Ox Herding* and *Ox Herding in Ten Illustrations*. Accordingly, a Buddhist chaplain as a cowherd assists careseekers in healing and finding liberation from physical, emotional and mental suffering with the blessing of the Triple Gem. Therefore, careseekers and caregivers both benefit from taking refuge in the Triple Gem. In this formation, Buddhist chaplains represent the theory-praxis relationship of the Buddhist tradition and the presence of the Triple Gem in the service they provide.

As a profession, Buddhist chaplaincy should build its foundation and provide service to careseekers based on the presence of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the traditional sources of refuge for Buddhist practitioners.[24] Proper faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and gradual development of virtue, concentrated meditation and insight from the various Buddhist traditions, should serve as the Buddhist chaplain's wellspring of inner strength of morality and spirituality. Based on this development, the professional capacity to effectively and appropriately care for

[24] Daijaku Judith Kinst, "Cultivating an Appropriate Response: Educational Foundations for Buddhist Chaplains and Pastoral Care Providers," in **The Arts of Contemplative Care: Pioneering Voices in Buddhist Chaplaincy and Pastoral Wor***k*, ed. Cheryl A. Giles and Willa B. Miller (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 14-16.

suffering individuals and to engage in appropriate spiritual self-care even in crisis situations, such as after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, grows.[25]

Conclusion

Buddhist chaplaincy as an emerging field in the US has benefited in the past couple decades from the contributions of practitioners in the field and educators in academia. Since the beginning of the 21st century, practical theology has provided Buddhist chaplaincy a framework to use as it develops in the US. Figure 5 illustrates the formation of Buddhist chaplaincy as influenced by the pragmatism of practical theology:

Figure 5 Formation of Buddhist Chaplaincy

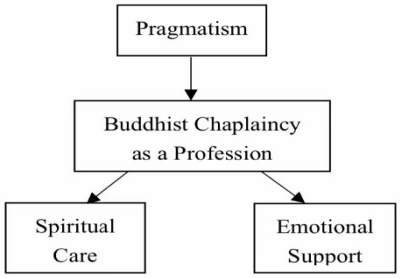


Figure 5 depicts the profession of Buddhist chaplaincy as grounded in the pragmatism of practical theology. It is also notable that the field has been deeply influenced by two mainstream American secular values, i.e., rationalism and individualism. While these influences have allowed for the growth of Buddhist chaplaincy, they have also contributed to potential problems in the field including unevenness in training, spiritual / moral injury for practitioners and confusion as to the uniqueness of a Buddhist form of chaplaincy. To further understand the current situation of Buddhist chaplaincy in the US as a profession, a practical formula might be meaningful and helpful. It should be noted that the formula presented below is only to be used as a description of the existing theory-praxis structure of Buddhist chaplaincy and its relationship to practical theology, rationalism and individualism in the US today:

$$\text{Buddhist Chaplaincy} = \text{Practical theology}^{\text{Buddhist philosophies}}_{\text{+Sacred/profane}} + \frac{Profession}{Social\ Sciences}\ (\text{Rationalism} + \text{Individualism})$$

[25] Guoying Stacy Zhang, "Serving Humanity in Transition: Chinese Buddhism and Spiritual Care in the United States," **Global Buddhistdoor**, September 8, 2021, available at https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/serving-humanity-in-transition-chinese-buddhism-and-spiritual-care-in-the-united-states/

Accordingly, the formation and theory-praxis relationship of Buddhist chaplaincy as a profession in the US today mainly derives from the addition of Buddhist philosophies to practical theology. This Buddhist philosophy, specifically the concepts of compassion and non-attachment, is often interpreted through a Christian lens however, resulting in the blurring of sacred and profane (e.g., Buddhist chaplains are often called upon to perform Christian prayers or Bible readings for careseekers regardless of their own religious identification. This results in the awkwardness of transforming sacred Christian prayers into profane acts performed without any faith in the object of the prayer).

Added to this, institutional demands regarding professionalism result in the focus of Buddhist chaplaincy shifting away from spiritual care toward more secular emotional and mental support. While emotional and mental support are worthy services, they are perhaps better addressed by professionals in the social sciences, such as social workers or psychiatrists. Lastly, the multiplying effect of rationalism and individualism has pushed Buddhist chaplaincy further into secularism. A particular manifestation of this in the US is the phenomenon of some Buddhist chaplains disconnecting themselves from their Buddhist sangha communities after ordination. This particular manifestation of the theory-praxis relationship of Buddhist chaplaincy in the US, while understandable given the religious, social and cultural context of US society, deserves some reexamination.

As such, this author proposes that Buddhist chaplaincy needs firmer grounding in a Buddhological model to increase fidelity to the Buddhist tradition. This paper proposes that the model of Ox Herding, an analogy derived from Buddhist scriptures, is a worthy place to begin conceptualizing the relationship between Buddhist theory, practice, chaplain and careseeker. This is in contrast to the shepherding model of Christian chaplaincy which has so far been incorporated into Buddhist chaplaincy.

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