

## ABSTRACT

Andrew Forrest Pierce, "The Cure of Souls: Passé or Pregnant with Potential." MTh., Church of Ireland Theological Institute, 2022.

The Cure of Souls is an archaic term. Although out of common parlance, it is still prevalent in *The Constitution of the Church of Ireland* and is foundational to the ordination rites of deacons, priests and bishops. To evaluate its relevance, however, it is necessary to understand the term in relation to both its meaning and effect throughout the history of the church.

This dissertation attempts to answer the question of whether or not the concept of the *Cure of Souls* is relevant within the modern church: specifically, has the term and practice of the *Cure of Souls*, also occasionally referred to as the care of souls, been subsumed into psycho-social counselling or is it somehow distinct from and unrelated to pastoral care as it is largely practised today.

At face value, the term *Cure of Souls* implies sickness – discontentment, disease or suffering: an ailment or condition of the mortal body or of an immaterial essence that lives within it, or both. To determine either the need for or one's ability to effect a cure this dissertation discusses the nature of the *soul* and the various potential meanings of the *cure* particularly in relation to the roles of deacon or priest as distinct from that of the secular psychiatrist or counsellor. This dissertation also explores the potential for pastoral care to drift from a primarily spiritual practice of restoring right relationship with God in Christ with the promise of eternal life, towards a practice which closely mirrors secular care-giving engaged in helping one live the present life to the greatest satisfaction. Attempting to clarify whether the term should be included in the job description for clergy, the research leads to a conclusion that it is the job description in and of itself.