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2017 sees the 100th anniversary of the World War 1 Charge at Beersheba. There are many volumes that could be written on this single and very significant event in Australian Military History. One theme which resonates through the Charge at Beersheba is that the character central in that battle is the Australian Digger, the ordinary bloke who volunteered not just himself, but also his horse and responded to the ever changing circumstances which he faced.

Men like Methodist minister the Reverend William James Dunbar, from Orange, NSW. Dunbar enlisted initially as a trooper in 1916 and was sent to the Middle East. Then in May 1917, was appointed Chaplain 4th Class (CAPT) being assigned to the 11th Light Horse with whom he took part in the charge at Beersheba. CHAP Dunbar was tragically killed in action on the 7 November 1917 at Tel-el-Sheria, Palestine, whilst attempting to drag a wounded digger out of the line of fire. Dunbar was aged 37 when he died.

100 years on Army chaplains are still serving, with our forebears like CHAP Dunbar reminding us that service above self is what the vocation to be a chaplain truly is. Whilst many things have changed in the Australian Army and indeed society, the hallmarks of chaplaincy, the religious, spiritual, and pastoral service have remained the same. It could be firmly postulated that these hallmarks of chaplaincy are timeless and essential, shaping the ministry of Army Chaplaincy.

In this year’s edition there is a varied collection of writings, with the majority of contributions from our own Chaplain cohort. The variety of subjects covered demonstrate wide field of interest that members of the RAAChD are reading, researching and studying. We welcome an article for the eminent Rabbi Raymond Apple, a former member of the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services (RACS) now residing in Israel. Rabbi examines from a Jewish perspective women serving in the armed forces. Rabbi Apple’s article will no doubt generate much discussion. One would hope that such discussions may lead to better an understanding of the diversity of views, cultures and faiths in which Chaplains regardless of faith or tradition, deal in service today.

The Editorial Committee

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Jews in the military, both male and female, seem to feel more Jewish afterwards, not less.

In 1991, Australia’s capital city, Canberra, hosted the international conference of the World Council of Churches. I was present as an observer representing the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. Though refused permission to address a plenary session, I was able to engage in networking behind the scenes.

One lunchtime I was in the cafeteria when an Australian conference delegate asked, “May I share your table?” I said yes and, glancing at her name tag, said, “I think you owe me one. It’s thanks to me that you are an air force chaplain!” Her appointment had been under consideration by the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services, of which I was the Jewish member. The five Christians on the committee were at odds about the proposal, not that they had anything against her personally, but some had a rooted objection to women clergy. It was I who broke the deadlock by proposing that any denomination be entitled to nominate for a chaplaincy appointment any minister in good standing in that faith group. Thus the Royal Australian Air Force got its first woman chaplain.

Though we had no Jewish woman chaplains, we did, from at least the 1940s, have Jewish women serving in the Australian Defence Force. I don’t think any woman had consulted a rabbi before enlisting. I doubt that any enlisted merely out of feminism. They simply wished to serve their country.

Nonetheless there is a Jewish point of view about women in the military. The Torah (Deuteronomy 20) considers the question of whether a newly married man with a wife at home can be conscripted for military service. Women were not thought of as soldiers. The Talmud says bluntly, “It is the way of a man to make war, not the way of a woman” (Kiddushin 2b). The men went to war; the women stayed home, often becoming young widows.

But this is not the whole story. Deborah (Judges 4) helped to destroy the enemy, like Yael (Judges 4-5) and Judith (in the Apocrypha). These women operated with wit, wile and tenacity. The Mishnah says that in an obligatory war (e.g. to defend the Land of Israel) everyone must fight, even a bride from her huppa, or marriage canopy (Sotah 8:7), though Judaism prefers women to have a more private role, saying, “The whole glory of the princess is inward” (Psalm 45:14). Nonetheless women did go into battle. An archaeologist relative has shown me that a significant minority of Bar Kokhba’s troops were female. We have the names of those who held leadership rank in the struggle against Rome.

The Sefer HaHinnukh says that the command to eradicate Amalek “applies to males but not to females” (Mitzva 603). The Avnei Nezer (Orah Hayyim 509) distinguishes between a battle, in which only males take part, and attacking an individual Amalekite, which a woman can do. Sefer HaHinnukh itself (Mitzva 245) allows women to help eradicate the seven Canaanite nations as part of the mitzva of settling the land. Because of the prohibition of cross-dressing (Deut. 22:5), Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya’akov says that a woman should not wear military uniform or carry weapons of war (Nazir 59a; Sifra to Deut. 22:6; Targum Onkelos to Deut. 22:5). Women were deemed too weak to carry arms, and it was feared that their modesty and dignity would be compromised in the uniformed military.

In the Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society, No. 16 (1988), Rabbi Alfred S. Cohen writes about drafting women soldiers. He finds across-the-board rabbinic objections to compelling women to serve in the Israeli military, quoting the Hazon Ish (Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz), who told David Ben-Gurion that Judaism would be morally endangered if there were women soldiers.
On Deut. 23:1, Nahmanides warns that army life is unpleasant: Soldiers, he says, rob, destroy, eat forbidden foods, commit adultery, and indulge in “every disgusting thing.” Women would face the same risk, and might even invite or be subject to licentious behavior. Rabbinic authorities prefer women to stay behind the scenes and handle food supplies. Rav Soloveitchik says that in a war against the surrounding nations, women can be used to sabotage enemy installations. Rabbis Moshe Feinstein and Ovadia Yosef allow women to bear arms on guard duty to save life (pikuach nefesh).

Israel has compulsory military service for girls as well as boys, except for girls precluded by religious conscience. The Defence Service Law discriminates between men and women in regard to length of service, reserve obligations and circumstances of release, and allows women to volunteer for fighting units. In some views, women volunteers should not carry or use weapons.

In 1995, the Israeli Supreme Court heard the case of Alice Miller v. Minister of Defense, Chief of Staff and Others. A woman who sought to be an air force pilot claimed that excluding her from the training course was sexual discrimination. The IDF argued that because women serve less time in the military and can become pregnant, neither they nor the nation would derive the full benefit from the expense of training a woman pilot.

The court upheld the woman’s petition. Justice Dalia Dorner quoted Tennyson, “Man for the field and woman for the hearth; man for the sword and for the needle she” (“The Princess,” 2nd Song). The judge agreed however that women “should not be prevented from achieving their potential and aspirations simply because of their normal functions.”

What about women chaplains, realizing that chaplaincy does not necessarily entail bearing arms or being a combatant? Rabbinic authorities would almost certainly object for moral reasons, and also in the light of halachic considerations which we will address in due course. Maybe women chaplains could be appointed to serve female soldiers, who, I presume, would welcome this.

In the Diaspora there are few Jews in the military. I am not aware of demands from any Jewish community for women chaplains, even in non-Orthodox groups which routinely ordain women. What would be the rabbinic response to a request for a woman chaplain? I am not sure what I might have done if the problem arose while I was senior rabbi to the Australian Defence Force. I would have sought halachic guidance and would have spoken to Christian women chaplains to ascertain what they do and how their sex impinges upon their work.

From the halachic point of view there are two issues: the chaplain as pastor, and the chaplain as agent of religious tradition. Pastoral work requires personal skills that some women have and some men lack. This does not in itself preclude women chaplains. Counselors, mentors and moral guides are vital in a context that demands morale and stability. Women can clearly fulfill this role.

The chaplain as agent of the religious tradition is more difficult. A woman scholar or teacher is no major problem. Some Orthodox groups permit female halachic decisors. What about women officiants? Speaking at weddings and funerals is not the major issue. I know of an Australian case of a brit mila at a military base, when the ADF brought from Sydney to Darwin a (male) mohel whom I nominated. The ADF was always helpful in meeting Jewish needs.

The major question is about women as cantorial officiants (not just reading psalms or delivering homilies, but chanting worship services). In Jewish law the agent must have the same level of obligation as the principal. In this respect a woman is precluded by Halacha from being a shaliach tzibur, “the agent of the congregation.” There is also a ban on a woman’s singing voice during prayer, kol b’ishah ervah. We would be on shaky halachic ground if a woman chaplain’s duties included cantorial services.
On the general question of whether – as a rosh yeshivah recently claimed – army service leads to a woman becoming less Jewish, my experience, admittedly limited to the Diaspora, argues the opposite. Jews in the military, both male and female, seem to feel more Jewish afterwards, not less. Facing foxhole crises often makes you more of a believer.

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Introduction

The prevailing wisdom of our society is that as individuals we are to grow increasingly less dependent on others as we age. Theories such as Erikson’s ‘eight stages of psychosocial development’ seek to depict a continuum that begins with dependency in infancy and progresses to independency in late adulthood (Figure 1). Indeed, independence appears to be a desire embedded deep within us. Teenagers are renowned for their impatience desire that would see their independence achieved at eighteen rather than eighty. The parents of young children are reminded of the desire every time their three year old asserts “I do it myself!” As a society we eagerly encourage such desires and rarely stop to challenge if this goal of complete independence is realistic.

This essay will grapple with what is possibly the most fundamental, yet frequently overlooked, psychological dilemma: “are we complete as individuals, or are we dependent on others?” In doing so we will discover that the best psychological models expect that interdependence, rather than independence, should be the goal of human existence. We will acknowledge that this is not the expectation in western societies where individuality is valued as the dominant source of identity. It will then be shown that this inevitably creates problems in the Army as the inherent requirements of military service are built on teamwork. As a way forward, Army Chaplains are encouraged that the social resources of Christianity present a unified solution to our interdependent needs.

A Psychological Model

Developmental psychology is the study of how human beings change over the course of their lifetime in the areas of physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development. Among other things it proposes models that explain the development of concepts such as ‘self’ and the formation of ‘identity’. Erik Erikson’s hugely influential work on the ‘eight stages of psychosocial development’ forms the foundation of a model of interdependence and describes the process an individual passes through from infancy to late adulthood. The culmination of this development is “for a person to become an independent self with meaningful relationships.” The interplay between independence and relationships is evident at every stage of Erikson’s model. It is ultimately realised in the end-state goal of late adulthood (stage 8, ages 60 to death) where the aim for elders is to have enough ‘integrity’ not to fear death even whilst death is claiming their most meaningful relationships. In this stage independence is anticipated to be achieved, sadly, through loss; both retirement and the death of a spouse or close friends. In earlier stages the interplay exists in the self-protective isolation of early adulthood (stage 6, ages 20 to 39) where the fear of rejection can inhibit the development of an intimate relationship. Again it is evident in the need for parental security before a child (stage 2, ages 2 to 4) can explore their new-found autonomy. Thus we see relationships and independence intertwined throughout Erikson’s model.
The first such challenge is described in greater detail by John Bowlby as the ‘attachment theory’. Bowlby’s theory considers whether a child will develop a basic sense of trust or mistrust. Successful attachment determines our ability to establish ‘belonging and intimacy’ throughout life. If Erikson’s stages describe the normal development from the dependency of the infant to the independency of the adult (Figure 1), then Bowlby’s theory exposes what can go wrong when children do not learn healthy basic trust (‘secure attachment’); the resulting mistrustful adult will either plunge into co-dependency (‘anxious attachment’) or abscond into counter-dependency (‘avoidant attachment’) to satisfy their unmet needs (Figure 2).

It is from this expanded model of developmental psychology that we can suggest that the aim of human life is not a movement from being exclusively in one category to the other (dependent to independent) but to find a satisfactory balance of the two. Co-dependency and counter-dependency are the cautionary signs that both dependency and independency respectively can be taken to the extreme. For a person to reach the goal of becoming “an independent self with meaningful relationships” they need a balanced interdependency (Figure 3). Given our society’s tendency toward independence the risk is that we will overbalance in this direction. If this assessment of western society is correct then a renewed vision of life is achieved when we “can surrender [our] counter-dependent independence for freely chosen interdependence.”
Identity and Independence

The dominant ideology of western civilisation “assumes the self is an independent entity, responsible for its own chances in life and the final arbiter of authority and judgement.” Modern psychology is similarly trapped by a focus on the individual and not the person; as Moes & Tellinghuisen expose, psychology has “[misunderstood] the way in which our central characteristics are very much the product of reciprocal relationships.” We are unequivocally relational beings, yet the dilemma for psychology is that its methods and practices have an emphasis that “centres primarily on the individual, devoid of substantial consideration of the socially embedded nature of those individuals.” As psychologists increasingly discover evidence about the ways in which we are ‘programmed for relationships’ they also run into the reality we all know, that is that while we find relationships deeply fulfilling, “when we think about broken friendships, family fights, or social rejection, we are reminded of how painful relationships can be.” This pain is the subjective explanation for our tendency toward independences.

Against this background of relational pain, society provides independence as the expectation for those who are going through the decisive stages of developing their personal identity. Enlistment in the ADF is a turning point – a significant Erikson ‘life experience’. What resources are available to those who are enlisting as they seek to define their identity? If they are not going to define it in terms of people they belong to (‘relationally’) then they must frame it in terms of things that they do (‘functionally’). Counter-dependency has been powerfully described as an ‘addiction to activity’! Indeed, identity is so frequently described functionally within our society that we are lost whenever someone is forced to describe it relationally. Generally, functional definitions of identity are workable in day-to-day living but where they become impractical is when a crisis emerges.

In a military context those taking a functional approach will frame their identity around the possession of certain ‘soldierly qualities’; they think of themselves in terms of their ability to ‘get the job done’. The crisis is presented when – usually as the result of some physical or mental injury – they are prevented from doing their job. The latest analysis of ex-service suicide found that those at highest risk categories were “those with a short length of service (less than 1 year); or those discharged for involuntary reasons, particularly medical discharge.” The report theorises that the increased suicide risk is due to “difficulties in redefining a sense of identity and in accepting the circumstances of discharge”. In essence these soldiers are experiencing an ‘identity crisis’. A close reading of military doctrine would suggest that a soldier’s character is more important than their ability to get the job done. Character is defined as “those inner qualities of a person that are evident in behaviour that is positive and constructive in the development of self, relationships and community.” It is right to want an identity, even in the military. However it is misguided to think an identity can be developed in isolation from others.
Interdependence and The Military Team

It is easy to see from the outside why the military presents an enticing opportunity for those with independent tendencies: it offers excusable isolationism through frequent interstate moves; it allows those emotionally unavailable to hide behind the veil of virtuous stoicism; it retains a permissive sexual ethic that fosters a narcissistic masculinity; it perpetuates the myth of the counter-dependent hero of the likes of James Bond or Jason Borne. In short joining the military allows those who have struggled to make meaningful relationships in adolescence to define an identity that is counter-relational. The military gives an identity-seeker a whole smorgasbord of opportunities to define themselves functionally: services (Army, Navy, Air Force), corps/musters/categories, uniforms, rank, medals, badges and trade qualifications. But enlisting with the aim of independence would be misreading the realities of military service. For, above all other considerations, the military organisation prizes teamwork.

The military concept of teamwork is defined as an “environment of trust, support, interdependence and group effort that each leader must create and sustain.” As such teamwork is framed as a leadership responsibility in which the fundamental task of leaders is to “focus on the interdependent aspect of the group to ensure its effectiveness.” This interdependence is fostered through the leaders’ awareness of the stages a team will go through as well as establishing ‘norms and standards’. Many military leaders are good at setting expectations that the team members will be loyal to the team but they fail to ‘focus on the interdependent aspect of the group’ if they don’t likewise set the expectation that the team will be loyal to the members. Given the levels of commitment required from the members to the team it is only fair that the members have expectations of commitment from leaders (including impartiality, openness, and a willingness to confront and resolve issues) and other team members (competence, collaboration, trust, support, sharing of information, and constructive response to feedback). This is known as ‘unified commitment’, which is marked by a strong sense of team spirit and the blurring of boundaries between self and others. Teamwork is about achieving collective strength despite individual weaknesses. This is not to deny that there may be a requirement for leaders “to deal effectively with non-contributing team members” or the occasional need for ‘pre-selection’ based on “the personal characteristics of individuals to the objectives of the team”, but in general a group may only truly be considered a team when a leader has integrated all the individuals at their disposal. In summary teamwork is the activity of a leader harnessing social power.

The military team is the appropriate setting in which “support to individual members” should first be sought; “with proper leadership, a personnel problem can be owned inside the culture not outside of it and soldiers may assist other soldiers to overcome what may be temporary personal difficulties.” This is not just out of a sense of duty of care for the soldier. Rather, the nature of military work demands teamwork for success due to harsh environments, severe stress and the high cost of failure. Indeed Erikson draws upon the military for an example of “extreme interdependence” when he discusses the nearly symbiotic relationship of a submarine crew; he acknowledges that psychology rarely has a “satisfactory dynamic answer” for why these men seem to “function in good health and high spirits”. Thus “the ADF’s hierarchy must clearly differentiate between the imperatives of an effective military culture focused on the use of collective force and those of the mental health professions focused on the primacy of individual welfare because they are not, and can never be, one and the same.” Chaplains should resist any effort to be consolidated with other professionals whose primary focus is on the individual not the group. Perhaps the most compelling explanation for why the proliferation of psychological ‘supports’ offered to soldiers is seemingly having no observable impact is that it is trying to address their independence-related problems with individual-focused tools. This is where the military can reasonably expect Chaplains to make a different contribution; if one of responsibilities of Command is to “build a communal architecture that not only encompasses barracks life but which stretches beyond the front gates into families and the surrounding civilian community” then there is no greater resource at a CO’s disposal than their Chaplain.
Interdependency and Christianity

As Chaplains we should have a primary focus on collective welfare - team cohesion and holistic care of the people within their communities (paying particular care that we are attending to their social needs - i.e. sensitive to their relationships with family, friends and workmates). Thus “it is not enough to rail against the individualism within wider society and to treat the negative effects, including excessive independence, and solipsistic attention. We must also examine the ways in which individuals has become institutionalized in the very practice and organization of pastoral care itself.”38 Thus Chaplains must have confidence that where the Scriptures say we cannot be understood apart from our relationships they are to be trusted. Only then can they draw deeply on these theological wells; God’s interdependent existence within the Trinity, God’s deliberate choice to interdepend with humanity in the incarnation, the scandalous truth that a holy God identifies with us in our sinful fallen condition, and the great hope on offer that God heals and glorifies us by lift up our humanity in the resurrection.39 As Wayne Grudem reflects, God’s desire is for us to “demonstrate love for others, wisdom in understanding their needs, and interdependence and personal cooperation (which are reflections of God’s Trinitarian existence)”.40 As Chaplains we have two responsibilities to our people:

First, to those in command, we can remind them of the value of teamwork and the principle of interdependence that underpins it. In this regard Christianity provides considerable resources that speak to how such interdependence is achieved. God’s dealings with humanity show His concern is more for the community – expressed in the family, tribe, nation – than for the individual.41 His plans for history involve bringing about blessing through families, praising His name among tribes and overcoming the dividing wall of hostility among the nations. God made humans to be interdependent with one another – to seek in others ‘suitable helpers’ (Genesis 2:18) and ‘friends closer than brothers’ (Proverbs 18:24). The church is envisioned as a body of interdependent parts (1 Corinthians 12:12) which cannot function together unless each is doing the work it was designed for. The church, with this counter-cultural focus on communal welfare, is of course where Chaplains learn their unique toolkit of interpersonal skills that makes them such a valuable resource in Defence. Chaplains can encourage commanders to dedicate time at the beginning of each year to team formation (Tuckerman’s ‘forming, storming, norming and performing’).42 Preparing for tensions that will appear in the team is an important aspect of the leader establishing trust. It is during the ‘storming’ phase that the Chaplain can assist them in “resolving team maintenance problems.”44

While a Chaplains’ focus with commanders will be on the community, it is also true that God knows each individual and cares for them. So a Chaplains’ second responsibility is to that individual. Most pastoral interactions are an opportunity to gently call them to reconsider their identity in terms that are relational. God offers all people the opportunity to take up their identity in Christ (John 1:12; Romans 8:29; Galatians 3:27-28; Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 3:1-3; 1 John 3:1-3). It is entirely possible that what our people desperately desire – a sense of identity and belonging – is something they simply don’t know how to ask for. As Rhett Smith divulges, it can feel like there are ‘warring factions’ within us:

One of the factions has a great yearning to escape and be alone and to see if it can survive on its own. We want to be independent and feel a sense of accomplishment in knowing that we navigated various life transitions without anyone’s help. Yet, there is another faction that desires to be with others and that craves the sense of belonging that comes with being in relational community with other people. We want to be able to depend on others and we hope that others can also depend on us.45

As Chaplains we can identify the struggles soldiers are having with their identity – loss of functional identity through injury or discharge, ‘split’ identity from poor life balance, counter-dependency from failed attachment. Chaplains can encourage them that “it’s a freeing experience to let go of the anxiety of trying to be someone else” and finally come to grips with who they are. If we can take the initiative of addressing this need to belong we may just find they are overwhelmingly grateful for the assistance.

Conclusion

The goal of human existence should not be viewed as a journey to independence. In the wise words of Henry van Dyke “in the progress of personality, first comes a declaration of independence, then a recognition of interdependence.” For Erikson, who devoted his life to the study of how independence is developed, that same recognition came toward the end. Collaborating extensively with his wife Joan in their 80s they reflected that “life doesn’t make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for us all.” As Chaplains we can help others to recognise that when “we surrender to God and others, we truly becomes a flourishing person and have true freedom.”

God places us on this earth in order to learn to interdependence and work is one of our opportunities to hone interdependent relationships. In this respect we would be hard pressed to find an environment that demands greater cooperation than the military team.

References

1 Jürgen Moltmann, ‘Christianity and the Values of Modernity and the Western World’, Fuller Theological Seminary, April 1996.


3 There is a significant inconsistency of a society that expects the military to function on teamwork but that doesn’t likewise expect mutual cooperation in all other pursuits. As Hackett reflects, “What a society gets in its armed services is exactly what it asks for, no more and no less. What it asks for tends to be a reflection of what it is. When a country looks at its fighting forces it is looking in a mirror; the mirror is a true one, and the face that it sees will be its own.” John Hacket, ‘The Profession of Arms’ Lees Knowles Lecture, Cambridge, 1962.


5 Moes and Tellinghuisen, Exploring psychology and Christian faith, p. 152.

6 Erikson, Childhood and society, p. 269.


9 Moes and Tellinghuisen, Exploring psychology and Christian faith, p. 143.

10 There is a lot of explanatory power in this tendency for western society to overbalance into independence. Erikson’s model expects the goal of life to be independence because that is the default position of his own society. This would explain why his model does not interpret as well in socio-cultural contexts such as Japan or India. See Barbara J. McClure, Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Reflections on theory, theology, and practice. The Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, 2015, pp.140-141.

Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counselling, p. 3.

13 A person is a relational term whereas an individual is not. Modern psychology is caught between two ‘camps’ of thinking (conflict models and fulfilment models), both of which are inherently individualistic. In the conflict model people are viewed as “inherently selfish and working consistently toward a selfish satisfaction of their own needs and wants” and yet for the best function of society we need people to display altruism (see ‘The Prisoner’s Dilemma’); selfishness and altruism are in conflict and the “goal of therapy is to aid in negotiating the ongoing and necessary compromises between the two.” In the fulfilment model the external conflict is not acknowledged as people are viewed as simply needing encouragement to reach their full potential; the goal of therapy is reconfigure society’s expectations so that they do not impede the individual’s natural development. Erikson’s developmental theory “mixes both conflict and fulfilment models” and yet this means it still, by default, assumes an individual’s autonomy. All quotes are from McClure, Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counselling, pp. 133-139.

14 Moes and Tellinghuisen, Exploring psychology and Christian faith, p. 209.


16 Ibid., p. 177.

17 The average age at enlistment in the ADF is 22 for general ranks and 20 for officer appointees, see Joint Health Command, The Longitudinal ADF Study Evaluating Resilience: Pre-Enlistment Report, Canberra, 2012, p. 39. This places recruits in the life-stage were “people actively explore identity.” Moes and Tellinghuisen, Exploring psychology and Christian faith, p. 153.


19 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Incidence of suicide among serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force personnel 2001-2015: In brief summary report, Canberra, 2017, p. 32. Accordingly there was no significant contribution to suicide risk for those who had operational service in the ADF.

20 Ibid., p. 30. This conforms to studies by two researchers (Durkheim & Joiner) in which suicide arises “from a moral crisis caused by insufficient community which causes lack of social connection and individual disorientation” (Durkheim) and that there are “three factors that contribute to individual suicide ideation; a sense of failed belongingness; perceived burdensomeness from personal existence; and a habituation to self-injury” (Joiner). For a detailed discussion see Michael Evans, Understanding Suicide: A primer for Australia Defence Force commanders, Australia Defence College, Canberra, 2017, pp. 8-9.


22 LWD 0-2-2 Character, section 1-3, paragraph 9.

23 This author is aware of Craig Bickell’s response to Michael Evans. I agree with Bickell’s conclusions that stoic philosophy – defined by Evans as mastery of “all conflicting emotions in favour of the power of reason” – is of limited utility within the military “because of its inherent self-focus”, Craig Bickell, Christianity and the Profession of Arms, Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal, Winter, July 2014, pp. 6-20. Indeed, as Moes & Tellinghuisen rightly observe emotions have many functions but “perhaps their most important element is to create and maintain relationships.” Moes and Tellinghuisen, Exploring psychology and Christian faith, p. 164.

24 Both men and women are capable of taking on this ‘manly’ persona which has no needs for affection, support or warmth. Their counter-dependence will usually be identified during a crisis since they will resist treatment, avoid referring to feelings and attempt to control the discussion to preserve a sense of
independence.

25 LWD 0-2 Leadership, chapter 15, section 15-3, paragraph 15.18, emphasis mine.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., paragraph 15.29a-b.
28 Ibid., paragraph 15.27.
29 Ibid., paragraph 15.21.
30 Ibid., chapter 15, section 15-2, paragraph 15.9f.
31 Evans, Understanding Suicide, p. 19.
33 Ibid., p. 25.
34 Evans, Understanding Suicide, p. 18.
35 Chaplains need to be aware of Hoglin’s proposal for the ‘consolidation of counselling services’ within the military that would place them under the coordination of a ‘secular’ team, see Phillip Hoglin, ‘Religious Diversity and Secularism in the ADF’, Australian Defence Force Journal, no. 199, 2016, pp. 20–28.
36 Some of these agencies exist to provide multiple entry points for soldiers and appropriate treatment depending upon the severity of their symptoms. However, it should not be overlooked that when we duplicate basic services by providing both on-base and off-base counselling we are merely fuelling the soldiers desires for independence.
37 Evans, Understanding Suicide, p. 19.
38 McClure, Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counselling, p. 5.
39 Genesis describes the way God made us in his ‘image’ (Genesis 1:26) and when He found that it was ‘not good for a man to be alone’ He made ‘a helper suitable for him’ (Genesis 2:18). Being made in the image of God is often described (among other aspects) as being imprinted with God’s relational quality. While this is a fair assessment of the consequence of being in his likeness, even more fundamentally the ‘image of God’ seeks to define our dependence upon God. We are made in His image; without Him we are not (John 1:3). Likewise, in the creation of the first humans God made interdependency the full expression of His image; when He says that man needs a ‘helper suitable for him’, gender was not a necessary requirement in this verdict as the helper seeks to address the man’s need for companionship not his need to procreate. Of course it is not at all controversial to say that we humans are dependent upon God; what is controversial is to say we are interdependent with God for this suggests that God is interdependent with us. This is not that same as saying God ‘needs’ us. Nor is it to say that we are equal with God. Rather, God makes a deliberate choice to depend on us – He moves to close the gap and be known by us. At its core the incarnation is the act of God interdepending with humanity. This is likened to the same tension created between God’s classical descriptions of immanent vs. transcendent. Such a tension is not defined by logic, and indeed the tension does not even exist without the incarnation of God. Likewise humanity’s interdependence with God would not exist without the incarnation as God would remain unable to ‘sympathize with our weaknesses’ (Hebrews 4:15).
41 English is a particularly poor language at conveying this emphasis; there is no distinction between the 2nd person singular (‘you’) and plural (‘you’) in English and yet the majority of the occurrences of ‘you’ in the Bible
are plural.

42 This is not to say that the church is the perfect community. Churches fail at community building because it is easier to ‘attend church’ than it is to ‘be church’. People in the church may cause us frustrations but ultimately we cannot say to them ‘I don’t need you’ (1 Corinthians 12:21). God intended the church to be a work-in-progress.


44 LWD 0-2 Leadership, chapter 15, section 15-4, paragraph 15.40.


46 Ibid., p. 151.

47 We should be mindful that the assumptions people make “about identity and safety are treated as the truth for that individual. Unless this truth about identity or safety is challenged effectively, the individual often remains trapped in the primary feelings associated with lack of love and trustworthiness”, see Terry D. Hargrave and Franz Pfitzer, Restoration therapy: understanding and guiding healing in marriage and family therapy, Routledge, London, 2011, p. 123.


49 This quote is variously attributed to either Erik or Joan Erikson; an appropriate recognition that wisdom, much like identity, is achieved communally.

50 Moes and Tellinghuisen, Exploring psychology and Christian faith, p. 209.
Chaplaincy on Deployment

Chaplain Stephen Brooks

‘Seeking better to do together what we can, and do separately what we must.’

Introduction

I like many in the Australian Defence Force have been given the honour and opportunity to deploy on Operations. In my role as a Chaplain I have attempted to articulate what is at the core of our ministry. What is it that provides us with opportunities to engage and connect with those we serve? Usurpingly it is authenticity, being true to our calling and true to self. Yet when on deployment and due to circumstance we are often called to walk that thin line, between adherence to defined corporate directives and the spiritual needs of our soldiers.

The question that we must ask ourselves is this: Are we companions on the journey, engaging in ecumenism and multi-faith dialogue or simply guardians of our own tradition? I feel that it is my role to provide palatable insight, to fuel dialogue and address denominational issues which in the past may have taken destructive forms. Ultimately I believe that it is a matter of integrity that we address these questions, seeking better to do together what we can, and do separately what we must.

Connection with soldiers we serve

I have over recent years been developing a theology of relationship, that in making connections one can better understand who we are, in relation to God and our fellow human beings. No more poignantly was this revealed to me than in my first days in the MEAO as Chaplain to RTF3.

On the 7th of October I was located at a staging Base; Fort Buering in Kuwait, walking through what was called IED Alley (a training aid to assist soldiers in identifying possible IED placements). Half way through the training a vehicle pulled up and the occupants asked me to get in. Thinking that I was needed for a welfare issue I gave it no thought until the driver grimly announced, “Padre we are sorry to tell you that a member of RTF3 has been killed and the CO has requested that you move forward to Tarin Kowt immediately. He has made it very clear to us that he wants the RTF3 Chaplain to provide support to his soldiers.”

Upon arriving in TK I was greeted with disbelief and shock, not wanting to ride rough shod on the out going Chaplain, I elected to stand back and allow him to conduct the memorial service, preferring to provide pastoral support to the grieved. On speaking to the RTF3 soldiers, they made it very clear to me that they wanted me to take a leading role in the religious ceremonies, to ensure that the sacrifice of their mate was
respected. “You’re our Padre; Poppy knew you and he would want you to send him off.” After consulting with the RTF2 Chaplain, it was agreed that I would assist him at the Memorial service and officiate at the Ramp Ceremony the following day.

In a profound way I had connected with the soldier’s deep psyche through the blood of one of their own. Through this tragedy I had been entrusted with a most sacred role; to honour the sacrifice of their friend. This did not equate to large numbers of soldiers suddenly wanting to be converted or rediscover lost childhood beliefs, it did however provide the means to build trust, to make connections and open the door to relationship. It is this very foundation that through making connections, I was able to better minister to members of RTF3.

Being amongst them, sharing their fears, joys and hopes I witnessed an awakening of their mortality and a yearning for something deeper and more complete. In conversation, many of the soldiers indicated to me that though they had never been great practising Christians other than compulsory attendance whilst at school, they did believe in the notion that there is a compassionate and forgiving God who looks over them. Denominational concerns were never an issue, not once did any soldier approach me and ask for denominational specific care, despite it being offered on numerous occasions.

I am not implying that the soldiers simply dumped their denominational affiliation and came together in a non sectarian spirit of Christian fellowship, simply because for many their affiliation was in name only. Nor am I suggesting that denominational specific needs were overlooked. Like the ADF promotion of ‘I’m an Australian Soldier’, which promotes the idea that members of the Australian Army are soldiers first, the Australian soldiers in TK expressed their identity first as members of RTF3. This was well illustrated when representatives of RACS came to visit the soldiers in TK to provide spiritual care and support; attendance at their services was underwhelming to say the least.

There may have been many valid reasons why attendance was so poor, yet in all honesty I don’t think that the soldiers viewed these visits as anything more than VIPs coming to see how it is in TK. Though appreciating the kind gesture to visit the troops they were nonetheless viewed as outsiders – people they had no immediate connection with. This raises a very important question one worthy of further discussion: What is it that sustains the Australian soldier on deployment, their families, mates, or connection to someone or something? No doubt many soldiers upon RTA continued their normal form of practice, but their experience in the FOB revealed how their support was aligned to those who had shared in their trials.
Companions on the Journey – Ecumenism

What I learnt from sharing in the lives of the soldiers was that as their Padre “I couldn’t be everything to everyone”. I was very conscious of my strengths and limitations of ministering in a pluralistic setting, in which few publically acknowledged denomination and faith group affiliations, whilst most remained silent and distant from all things religious. It would have been presumptuous of me to think that one size fits all. Opportunity and place limited the multiplicity of denominational choice, otherwise available for soldiers on larger coalition bases. As previously stated the soldiers appeared to accept the situation without question, never seeking nor requesting other than what was available. Each in their own way drew strength from a common desire to offer support to each other as best they could; individuals thrown together by circumstance.

As the largest coalition component embedded in the FOB, the Dutch Army boasted a Pastoral Team which consisted of a Catholic Lay Pastoral Worker Chaplain, her Lutheran replacement, a Psychologist, a Social Worker and a Humanist Chaplain. Conscious of the sacramental needs of particular soldiers, I encouraged them to seek out the Dutch Chaplains to access denominational specific care; no one took up the offer. No doubt cultural differences and the fact that the LPW was limited in her ability to confer the sacraments may have deterred some. Despite many attempts to include the Dutch Pastoral Team in different events such as the opening of Poppy’s (soldier’s Rec Hut), Christmas Eve, Holy week celebrations and the blessing of the new Ghan Chapel, only the LPW took up the invitation. As a consequence there were limited opportunities for the Australian soldiers to make connections with members of the Team. Matters weren’t helped when the LPW’s replacement made it clear that his priorities did not include participating in ecumenical and cross cultural events.

Notwithstanding the need to remain loyal to denominational affiliations, should we be critical of those Chaplains who decide to act outside their tradition in an effort to serve the needs of their soldiers due to location and opportunity? Is it fair to attack a Protestant Chaplain for sprinkling holy water on an aircraft since no other Chaplain was available or a Chaplain who employs an open table policy in his//her attempt to provide spiritual nourishment to all in their care?

In both cases one could argue that the Chaplains were providing a form of first aid, they were not attempting to pilfer from another denomination or deceive; they were simply acting in good faith, doing what they could due to limited resources. In truth some may view their actions as deceptive in crossing the line, which in turn can create denominational scandal; in that a soldier has been theologically deceived by the Chaplain’s actions. However, instead of mauling the Chaplain which serves only to drive the wedge of disunity more
deeply between denominations, we as a Department need to be clearer in how we might better manage these ecumenical issues. It is all well and good to state that we function in a pluralistic environment, we work collegially, we seek to serve all, we facilitate the diverse needs and we uphold our own traditions and religious practices, but in the heat of the battle are they always attainable and realistic?

I too was faced with a number of denominational and multi-faith issues both working with the Australian soldiers and the American Special Forces embedded in the FOB. On one occasion a soldier approached me from another denomination and asked that I hear his confession, prior to him leaving for a dangerous insertion mission. In his eyes I was it. Following a lengthy discussion he said in no uncertain terms, “Chaplain I have to be honest with you I don’t give a — about which Church I might be from, all I know is that I want to be at peace with God and myself before I leave, because I might not be coming back”. Another who hadn’t been baptised approached me before the celebration of the Eucharist he too was about to leave the wire. “Padre I’m not Christian but can I come up to get the bread, I need all the help I can get!” I am not going to elaborate what my actions were, only to say that I didn’t always act in the first instance, nor in retrospect do I think I acted imprudently. What I believe is essential for the integrity of all Chaplains, is ensure that our pastoral decisions are never motivated by popularity or personality driven. To do otherwise can in fact undermine ecumenism and lead to Chaplain’s becoming ‘good blokes’, at the cost of being good ministers. Faced with difficult pastoral situations we as a Department need to better understand what we can and should do together and what it is that we must do separately.

This brings me to another important reflection about ecumenism and working with coalition forces; it needs to be a two way relationship. In the FOB RTF3 built The Ghan Chapel as a sacred space for people to come, reflect, pray and worship. As a sign of ecumenism and our partnership with coalition forces, the Chapel was open to all. Tensions arose when the Humanist Chaplain wanted to have his meetings in the Chapel. He felt that humanists were being denied access to meet and freely express their philosophy on life. I met with the Dutch Pastoral Team and advised them that this was not the case at all. Using the analogy of a sporting field, I asked the logic of a basketball team bypassing a basketball court to play on a soccer field? Surely the humanists would be more comfortable using a secular building devoid of religious symbolism to express their philosophy on life. In response the Humanist Chaplain asked why a “purpose built” room had not been constructed for them. It then occurred to me that it was not about access to ‘a chapel’ that upset him, but moreover acceptance; being welcomed despite theological or philosophical differences.

Up until this point I had not even considered the practical needs of other faiths and secular groups. Which raises the question; in a FOB with limited resources, who should be allowed to access a Christian Chapel? Should access be limited to Christian celebration or should the door be opened to other religions or secular groups?
Dialogue with Multi-faith Groups: “No peace among nations without peace among religions. And no peace among religions without a greater dialogue among them” (Hans Kung)

As Chaplains we are sometimes guilty of using Mother-hood statements to reassure ourselves that we are on the right thing. So too can Command be guilty of pigeon holing the role of the Chaplains; as those who provide religious support for troops and ethical advise to command. A role as yet to be fully explored in the ADF is that of the Chaplain as Religious Liaisons. The primary focus of the Chaplain would be as one who builds diplomatic bridges with religious leaders, wins the trust of the local community and helps to dispel religious misunderstanding.

The more you look at the role of religion in human life and particularly within the Islamic culture, the more one understands how deeply rooted it is. In making this connection one is better equipped to explain why it is that people react as they do in particular situations. According to philosopher Roger Trigg, Emeritus Professor at Oxford, “Western diplomacy has failed to take account of just how important religion can be for some people.” In his view people have tried to play down the importance of religion in Western society in recent years. So much so, that foreign policy has looked at what’s happened without actually stopping to think, why is this happening from a religious point of view? What are the religious motives behind this? Instead the view of many is that religion and culture are different from politics.

Despite RTF3 having an active engagement component it fell into the trap of secular humanism by not utilising the Chaplain as an important source or tool for engagement. Too often Chaplaincy is placed within the religion box, only to be opened for people’s private use. Moderate Muslims on the other hand have a great respect for people who worship the one God. To exclude the role of the Padre may in fact be reducing the ADF’s capacity to engage from a mutual starting point, which acknowledges the importance of religion both within the public and private sphere.

It is naïve to employ western secular thought that religion and politics should not mix, in so doing we have unwittingly succumbed to missionary arrogance. As so clearly defined by the CO’s (RTF3) intent …ours is not to impose a belief or a way of life but rather to support the Afghanistan people in rediscovering what is already present in their culture. Therefore, the challenge for me was to find a meeting point where politics and religion can work together to have a positive impact on this region.
The meeting point I was to discover came about through my interaction with the ANA Bde Mullah located in the FOB. Wanting to better understand his role within the Afghan Army, I invited him to participate in a number of religious ceremonies. These events created opportunities for us to dialogue, to build trust and develop a relationship of mutual respect. The turning point for this relationship came when the Mullah attended the Good Friday service. Prior to the commencement of the liturgy I explained the significance of the day and what we were about to re-enact. He became deeply moved by our devotion and expressed his desire to participate. What followed were invitations to significant Muslim feasts, weekly meetings with coalition Chaplains and the Mullah participating in the opening of The Ghan Chapel. This lead to the Mullah announcing that he and his representatives (ANA religious officers) if asked would accompany the PRT and RTF on visits to the local people, to spread a message of goodwill about the work being carried out by Australian and coalition troops.

There may be some Chaplains who feel that this is not our core business, to my mind we are called to be peacemakers. This role would in no way detract from the work of the Chaplain, but only help to reinforce the importance of having a strong religious presence, which in turn presents a more favourable image to the moderate Islamic people in this region. The question that needs to be asked is should we expand our ministry whilst on deployment to encompass the role of Religious Liaisons in non Christian countries?

Reclaiming the Padre’s role

One of the most refreshing aspects of Chaplaincy in TK was that fact that soldier welfare issues had to be dealt with at the local level. Due to the limited medical and psychological support, soldiers and their problems couldn’t be bundled up and sent off for treatment unless severe. Normal life events; relationship upheavals, bereavement or welfare issues were ministered in amongst members with the support of Chaplain and medical staff. Unlike the corporate model which can create a void of disengagement, the temptation to keep people and their problems within the confines of prescribed directives; such a model does not work within an FOB, nor should it be the model for life in the Barracks. The role of the Padre is paramount in setting the tone for well considered pastoral care. Naturally if circumstances demand then priority should be given to providing appropriate psychological care, but it is the overall care and role that the Chaplain provides which ultimately can make the difference.

The Chaplain is best placed to deal with normal life events that impinge on a soldier’s well-being and capacity to perform in a deployment environment. The Padre is the one with whom the soldier has a connection with as a companion on the journey. Too often in the past I have been unable to access psyc support on weekends, yet whilst embedded in a FOB a mental health professional can appear within 24 hours. I am not questioning the important role that mental health professionals play in supporting soldiers after a Critical Incident, but are we in danger of over reacting and escalating the situation by employing them in non critical events?

Closing Reflection

Chaplaincy on deployment it is not simply a matter of letting ‘the other’ be ‘other’, no the challenge for us is to embrace ‘the other’ in mutual recognition as companions on the journey sharing in our unique call to minister together and serve all.
For some time, even before I entered military chaplaincy I had a fascination with the Australian Army Chaplains of WW1. This was encouraged when I completed my Chaplain Basic Course (a long time ago) and had to prepare a presentation as part of the pre-course preparation on an Army Chaplain who had inspired me. This gave me the motivation to do some research in the Defence Library and as a result I have been encouraged in my fascination and admiration of these men; those on whose shoulders we stand. I would like to share some of this fascination with you.

In 1913 representatives of the Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and Methodist denominations met with the Australian Army’s Adjutant General, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Chauvel, to establish the structure of the Australian Army Chaplains Department. It was agreed that each denomination would appoint one chaplain general, and one senior chaplain per state to administer that denomination’s chaplains. One chaplain from each of the four denominations would also be attached to each infantry and light horse brigade. In total, the proposed establishment would comprise 116 chaplains. The Australian Army Chaplains Department was promulgated in the Commonwealth Gazette on 20 December 1913.

During the course of the war 414 clergymen served in the Australian Imperial Force. Their denominations were:

- Anglican 175
- Roman Catholic 86
- Presbyterian 70
- Methodist 54
- OPD 27
- Other 2

Some of the most well-known chaplains include:

- John Fahey was a Catholic padre from Perth. Fahey was assigned to the 11th battalion and was the first chaplain ashore on Gallipoli, disregarding the order to stay on the ship. He was evacuated due to illness in November 1915 but re-joined the battalion in Egypt before being transferred to France in 1916. Fahey was the longest-serving front-line chaplain.
- Presbyterian Chaplain Andrew Gillison went ashore at Gallipoli on 26th April, the day after the original landing. He was killed a few months later on 22nd August 1915.
- Anglican chaplain Walter Ernest Dexter was one of the longest-serving padres, enlisting in the AIF in September 1914. Walter was one of the most highly decorated chaplains of the First World War.

Walter Ernest Dexter (1873-1950), was born on 31 August 1873 at Birkenhead, Cheshire, England, the youngest son of Thomas Dexter, shipwright. At the age of 14 he was indentured for five years on the barque Buckingham. At the end of his first voyage he ran away in Calcutta, stowed away to New York where he worked in a biscuit factory and as a lift attendant, and returned to the sea in 1890 aboard the Pythomene of which his eldest brother was master. From 1888 to 1900 he sail the world progressing to the level of first mate. In March 1899 he passed the examination for his master’s certificate. By February 1900 he was first mate of the Akbar based at Mauritius.
Dexter’s next adventure was to enlist in a mounted infantry unit during the Boer War. The Viceroy of India was not amenable to Indian units being deployed to South Africa; however he did permit the formation of a European volunteer mounted infantry unit, Lumsden’s Horse, named after its Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel DM Lumsden. This unit was sometimes referred to as the Indian Mounted Regiment, of which Dexter was a Trooper in 4 section of B Company. To illustrate Dexter’s bravery in the face of the enemy I cite the follow incident.

Lumsden’s Horse was in the vanguard of the advance on Elandsfontein, a Boer railway centre. Lumsden as the advance guard commander had only five companies at his disposal. The Boers were using Telegraph wires to report British actions and perhaps direct artillery fire. Private Dexter rode forward under heavy fire, climbed a telegraph pole and cut the communication wires.1

At the end of his tour of duty Private Dexter was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). He was also awarded the Queen’s South Africa Medal with three clasps.

After discharge from his Boer War service he returned to the sea and was given an award from the Royal Humane Society for gallantry at the wreck of the Taher off Mauritius in March 1901. He became master of the Afghan carrying Moslem pilgrims to Mecca, and then traded in the off-season. On 16 September 1902 in Mauritius he married Frances Louisa Carroll, née Rohan, who died one year later. Somewhere in that period he experienced a call to the ministry. After studying at sea (Latin, Greek, Hebrew), he entered Durham University in 1906 with the intention of joining the Anglican ministry.

Graduating M.A. and L.Th. in 1908, he was ordained and appointed curate at Walbone, Newcastle upon Tyne, until 1910 when he was sent to the new coal-mining town of Wonthaggi in Victoria. For two years his tent was his vicarage before he was transferred to South Melbourne. On 8 April 1913 he married Dora Stirling Roadknight at Christ Church, Ormond.

Enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force on the outbreak of World War I, Dexter was one of twelve chaplains whose appointments dated from 8 September 1914. His parishioners of St Barnabas South Melbourne presented him with a travelling communion kit. He sailed with the first convoy and served in Egypt and on the Suez Canal; he then tended the Anzac wounded on a hospital ship and joined the troops on Gallipoli (17 May). First with the 5th Battalion, then the 2nd Brigade, and finally as an acting senior chaplain, he shared the lives and dangers of the men, helping them practically and spiritually, and using effectively his long experience of acquiring things. He recorded his feelings about the burials he had to conduct in his diary dated 10 August 1915:

In the Lone Pine the moving of the dead goes steadily on. All hope of getting them out for burial is given up and they are being dragged into saps and recesses, which will be filled up. The bottom of the trench is fairly clear, you have not to stand on any as you walk along and the bottom of the trench is not springy, nor do gurgling sounds come from under your feet as you walk on something soft. The men are feeling worn out but are sticking it like Britons. The stench you get used to after a bit unless a body is moved. In all this the men eat, drink and try to sleep. Smoking is their salvation and a drop of rum works wonders ... Had a funeral at 6 p.m. One is obsessed with dead men and burials and I am beginning to dream of them. I suppose it is because I am so tired. 2

Dexter was also very much involved with identifying and mapping the location of graves of Australian Soldiers at Gallipoli in places such as Shrapnel Gully so that the grave could be protected from flooding because of the rather haphazard method of burial.
After a brief stay in Egypt and Sinai, he went to France in April 1916. He served from Pozières in July to the A.I.F.’s battles in August 1918, with a short period at A.I.F. Headquarters in London before returning to France. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) 14 January 1914 and was also mentioned in despatches (MID) in early 1916 and in October 1918 he was awarded the Military Cross, becoming the most decorated chaplain in the A.I.F.

At the end of the war he returned to Melbourne in 1920 after having worked in London with the demobilisation of troops. He had doubts about returning to parish work so he ventured with a soldier-settlement block at Kilsyth for a while, but when this failed he decided to return to the Church; first at Romsey parish in 1924-27, Lara in 1927-40, and West Footscray in 1940-47. Pastoral work, writing, teaching and family filled up his time as well as involvement with war commemoration services. He wrote a number of books about his exploits at sea as well as a collection of poems entitled, “For the dead at Gallipoli.” Walter died on August 31, 1950.

Let us never take for granted the efforts, pain and sacrifice of those who went before us. We will never really understand what these men endured in the horrors of trench warfare and the need to be comforting an endless stream of wounded and shattered soldiers. The torture of daily burials and the emotionally painful letters written to the families of deceased soldiers consumed much of Walters time with the troops. We must remember that we stand in a long line of brave and faithful men who served as chaplains in the Australian Army, men like Walter Dexter.

Walter Ernest Dexter, sailor, master mariner, trooper, Chaplain (LTCOL): DSO, MC, DCM, MID.

Lest we forget!

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Introduction

As participants in Australian culture, soldiers are constantly saturated with the pervasive sexual imagery the marketing and entertainment industries pour forth through every available medium. The subtle and overt message is that in our “sex-crazed” culture, “anything goes” as long as somebody doesn’t get hurt (Hollinger 2009, pp 11-12). Soldiers are active participants in this popular expression of sexuality in the social sphere. However, soldiers simultaneously inhabit the professional space in which an increasingly stringent standard of sexual awareness and behaviour is being demanded. These demands are at odds with the norms of Australian social behaviour and therefore it is no wonder a complicated ambivalence exists amongst soldiers in regards to social sexual ethics, resulting in a range of negative consequences for the Australian Army.

Whilst Cook and Syse (2010, p 121) argue, ‘confessionally specific beliefs cannot serve as the basis of a general professional ethic in a pluralistic society’, they are correct to acknowledge the importance faith-based ethics do contribute to the professional sphere. This essay will discuss Army sexual ethics and explore the contribution Christian ethics could have in shaping a more authentic sexual ethic amongst soldiers. There is richness and depth to the Christian understanding of sexuality as seen through the paradigm of the Christian worldview. This worldview is grounded in the metanarrative of biblical revelation, inclusive of the narratives of creation, fall, redemption and consummation (Hollinger 2009, pp 69-70). The first three of these narratives will provide the structure for the essay.

Creation

The creation narrative of Scripture provides foundational meaning to sexuality (Hollinger 2009, p 70). As a starting point, the theologically rich creation narrative of Genesis 1-2 affirms the extraordinary value of people; all persons having been created in the image of God. Humans are created as holistic beings—neither entirely body nor entirely soul (Hollinger 2009, p 75)—and are created as sexual beings (Gen 1:27; 2:24). This sexuality is intended for and pronounced by the Creator as ‘good’ (Gen 1:28, 31). To ensure the goodness of human sexuality is experienced as Divine-intended blessing, God provides the perfect context for sex: the covenantal relationship of marriage, wherein man and woman become ‘one flesh’ (Gen 2:24).2 Sex as intended by God, is ‘a privileged form of self-giving between spouses that both expresses and fosters their communion of love’ (Simon 2012, p 31). Good, pleasurable, committed and loving sex that God is pleased to give is summarised by Heimbach (2004, p 156) as: relational, exclusive, intimate (profound), fruitful, selfless, complex (multidimensional) and complimentary. Even if the divine creator of sex is not acknowledged, Christian sex remains great sex; especially when compared with the emptiness of the pop-culture driven version being generated by an increasing sexual nihilism (Hollinger 2009, p 13).

The creation narratives are a useful reminder that all humans are of essential value and not to be used for selfish gain. Additionally, sexuality is an integral part of being human and to be celebrated. Although, quite counter-culturally, sex in any form outside of its intended blessing is bereft of the fullness it could have and often quite harmful.
The Fall

The biblical narrative of ‘the Fall’ (Gen 3) and the many frank biblical accounts of self-seeking sex informs the reality that what God intends for good is all too often reduced, distorted, misused, abused and used for evil purposes when sex is removed from God’s ordained purposes. We see the worst of this in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) when scandals involving sexual violence and harassment perpetrate great harm and are rightly denounced in the media. ADF and Army leadership have responded to this with various statements, policies and reports in an attempt to drive cultural change.

The impacts of this level of sexual misconduct are captured by the Australian Human Rights Commission (2012, p 36) in one such report, with Principle 5 succinctly reading, ‘Gender based harassment and violence ruins lives, divides teams and damages operational effectiveness’. The establishment of the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO) has occurred as a result of endorsing ‘Recommendation 18’ of the review, and has complied with the direction to provide education packages on ‘respectful and healthy relationships, and sexual ethics’ (AHRC 2012 p36).

Whilst rightly targeting the more serious types of sexual misconduct and helpful in many regards, SeMPRO’s initial package designed for training institutions has missed the opportunity to provide sexual ethics training of any real rigour with the ability to generate cultural change. SeMPRO’s Healthy Relationship and Sexual Ethics Foundation Program describes relationships as ‘any kind of ongoing sexual involvement: boyfriend and girlfriend, a long-term relationship…and includes short-term sexual involvements – to one-night stands and casual sex’ (Flood 2014, p 67). These relationships are described as healthy if they contain just the four qualities of consent, safety, pleasure and respect (Flood 2014, p 70).

This is certainly an advance on common cultural practice and the example set by the entertainment industry, but the claim that non-committal one-night stands and casual sex ‘divorced of love’ (Simon 2012, p 35) can be respectful, safe and healthy requires scrutiny and redressing. Casual sex by its nature is sought after for a range of self-centred motivations. These include self-seeking pleasure, the banal satisfaction of appetite, the challenge of ‘scoring’, and the seeking to fill emotional holes (Simon 2012, p 122). Potential partners are viewed not as whole people to be respected, but reduced to sexualised opportunities, or filling of void or fulfilment of fantasy.

This type of reduced sexual encounters without intimacy comes with potential high cost. The obvious high costs include the physical risks of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy (Hollinger 2009, p 126). The harm of the later should not be underestimated when we consider the depth of negative impact of abortions or children born into broken relationships. Yet beyond these obvious risks, there is further emotional, psychological and spiritual harm. For understandable reason, casual sex is often followed closely by regret and as Kristjansson rightly points out, humans are creatures of habit and habituated sex without intimacy erodes long-term potential for sex to become all it was designed for and inhibits the ability to form ‘deep relationship with a single other’ (cited in Simon 2012, p 136). A person cannot help but bring their sexual past into future relationships.

Relationships initiated with casual sex that progress are also more likely to turn into casual relationships without commitment. ADF policies actively encourage the dramatic ‘rise of premarital cohabitation—couples not married to each other but living together as sexual partners who share a household’ (Balswick & Balswick 2008, p 163). Balswick & Balswick (2008, p 165) are absolutely correct when they state, ‘By its very nature, a cohabitating relationship is one in which commitment is ambiguous.’ They provide an impressive list of research which shows the detriment to this non-commitment wherein couples who either cohabitate prior to marriage or remain unmarried have much higher instability, infidelity and breakup rates, and much lower satisfaction rates in a range of relationship criteria. (Balswick & Balswick 2008, p 169-175).
The on-going harm caused by relationship breakups is hard to quantify but excessive. It includes economic loss, family breakdown, children raised in brokenness, loss of productivity, low morale and increased mental health issues. Albeit sometimes overstated, it is no wonder Heimbach (2004, p 38-39) can demonstrate how sexual immorality acts as a pivot point for a wide-ranging societal moral crisis and supports the Christian view of sexuality being much more than a private and personal morality. Sexual ethics is certainly a societal issue (Balswick & Balswick 2008, p 15).

Redemption
The Christian worldview sees God responding to the reality of distorted relationships and the hurt, wrongs and suffering sexual immorality renders with justice, forgiveness, reconciliation and grace (Hollinger 2009). Whilst redemption in the ultimate sense involves salvific grace for Christians, God provides resources for all people to move towards more fulfilling relationships and provides response to sexual brokenness. This is known as common grace (Hollinger 2009, pp 88-89) and is where Christian ethics can shape a more authentic sexual social ethic amongst soldiers, despite the Christian stance on sexuality being a minority one (Balswick & Balswick 2008, p 324).

Whilst SeMPRO’s sexual education package has some merit, it is clearly focussed on prevention of serious sexual misconduct. A much broader and deeper acknowledgment of the problem of inauthentic sexuality, beyond the negatives of sexual misconduct, is required. An appropriately shared Christian ethic, combined with social science research, would contribute in challenging common practice by bringing critical thought to social sexual ethics.

Chaplains are well placed to help soldiers respond to the trauma of inauthentic sexual relationships and encourage soldiers into more authentic relationships. They regularly do this through pastoral and relationship counselling with individuals and couples, and can testify to the good rendered when soldiers embrace sexual authenticity. Yet, greater potential for positive change exists should the opportunity be given for chaplains to address social sexual ethics amongst soldiers, from a Christian ethics perspective. Christian sexual ethics brings real and deep meaning to sexuality and when this meaning is combined with the attributes of love-motivated commitment, soldiers are given the opportunity to redefine their current and future relationships with real personal and communal redeeming benefits.

Conclusion
The Army, at the individual, family and organisational levels, are suffering significant negative effects as a result of the widely practiced and culturally endorsed inauthentic expressions of sexuality. Christian sexual ethics, grounded and informed by the biblical narratives of creation, fall and redemption, have much to contribute—beyond current Defence lacklustre initiatives like SeMPRO—in shaping a greater authentic sexual ethic amongst soldiers. It does this by firstly acknowledging the extraordinary value of each person, providing an enriched depth of meaning to sex, and describing the best love motivated and commitment centred context for this enriched and fulfilled expression of sexuality. The Christian worldview brings attention to the dangers of inauthentic sexuality but provides real solutions to the problems and harm caused by sexual immorality. The Australian Army would benefit from an enriched understanding of the Christian meaning of sex.
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1 Proverbs 5: 15, 18-19.

2 This is later affirmed by Jesus, ‘…and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one.’ (Matt 19:5-6).

3 Indeed, whenever people of any age engage in sexual activity, they rarely think about ethical theories to guide them. Most act in accordance with cultural mores… For those who do take stock of what they ought to do…they are frequently guided by moral regulations that are merely accepted as true and right. They ask few questions as to why they are right or good’ (Hollinger 2009, p 23).
This paper was written in response to the perceived reaction of members following the mandatory viewing of Hitting Home. It was published in WONCO-A Defence Papers 2016 as the required professional development task.

In December 2015 the Chief of Army announced that all Army members were expected to view the “Hitting Home” documentary on Domestic and Family Violence (DV) as part of Army’s Cultural Reform initiatives to: (i) Support White Ribbon; and (ii) Reinforce our core values. “Hitting Home” was intended as a starting point to establish awareness, ongoing discussion and “work towards changing the attitudes and behaviours that allow violence against women to occur both within the workplace and the wider community.”

It seems the viewing failed to reach the intended goal. Some members were offended by the perceived ‘male-bashing/anti-male’ aspect of the mandatory viewing. The primary focus of “Hitting Home” was male physical violence towards women and indicated that victims are female while perpetrators are male. There was little acknowledgement of non-physical violence, and no direct acknowledgment that most males are not perpetrators. As Army members considered themselves not directly involved in DV, and male members considered themselves unfairly placed in the category of “perpetrator”, they denied the social problem of domestic violence and opted out of discussion.

Appropriate DV education is not ‘anti-male’, it is anti-violence. Though most DV is perpetrated by men, most men do not perpetrate DV. To increase Army members’ engagement with DV education, we require a different approach. Following serious officer misconduct of the so-called “Jedi Council” which brought the Army into disrepute, the Army introduced a number of initiatives that remain available.

The purpose of this paper is to widen the perceived parameters for DV beyond ‘gender’ to empower the silent majority of respectful non-violent men and women to: (i) Recognise victims and perpetrators and (ii) Safely speak out against attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate societal violence. Such empowerment may be achieved through existing training initiatives including the Mentors in Violence Prevention Program (MVP) and the White Ribbon Campaign, both of which now have an Australian Army focus.

Scope. This paper addresses what is meant by the terms DV, victim, perpetrator and bystander. Consideration is given to ways of raising awareness and initiating cultural change. The aim of this paper is to educate soldiers and officers about DV and steps required to reduce DV, thereby making them agents of cultural change in the Australian community.

The Reality of Domestic Violence

Domestic and Family Violence (DV) in Australia has become a media focal point especially since family violence campaigner Rosie Batty was named 2015 Australian of the Year. In 2009, Federal, State and Local Governments began a national campaign to raise social awareness, change societal attitudes and so end violence against women. DV is not restricted to particular areas or groups. It occurs across all socio-economic and geographic strata, regardless of religious beliefs, level of education, sexual orientation, occupation, community position, or cultural/ethnic background.

DV is at epidemic proportions. Police in Australia attend a DV incident every two minutes. Each week in Australia one woman dies at the hands of a violent partner, 56 women are hospitalised, and hundreds are
treated in emergency rooms. The One in Three advocacy group says that one in three victims are male. Whilst men and children are indeed victims of DV, and women are indeed perpetrators, statistics show that victims are mainly female, and perpetrators mostly male. To deny involvement and seemingly overlook the scandal of widespread societal violence is to take a passive bystander approach. This not in keeping with Army core values.

Many incidents of DV go unreported. DV is a silent, behind-closed-doors wide-spread societal disease. It exists wherever there is any denial of equal rights. It is any behaviour used to control, dominate or coerce, and puts family safety at risk.

A major problem in Australia is defining DV. In some areas DV is limited to physical assault between intimate partners. However, the wider view encompasses any acts that institute an imbalance of power, including physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, psychological, financial, spiritual or social abuse and isolation by any person against another. DV involves bullying and controlling through fear. The legislation in NSW, VIC, QLD, WA, ACT, NT and SA now includes intimate partners, relatives, family members, carers and children.

A broad definition of DV resonates very well with Army core values and should encourage Army members to “come on board” as the non-perpetrating majority who refuse to be passive bystanders. Army members should ask the question: “If I’m not the victim and not the perpetrator, what is my role?” This proposed shift in perspective may address the problem of Army members disregarding domestic violence education as “male bashing” or “anti-male”.

Reconceptualising Army members as the non-violent majority who have a valuable role in preventing and intervening in domestic violence by the problematic minority will honour the Army contract with Australia.

**Making a Difference**

In the past, DV was considered a private matter between husband and wife. The term “rule of thumb” dates back to 17th century England where a man could beat his wife as long as the stick was no thicker than his thumb. Even police officers hesitated to interfere in ‘family matters’ and any perceived blame, shame or humiliation belonged to the wife. Communities were comprised of silent, passive bystanders. During the 1970s, women’s groups protested the behaviour, introduced the concept of perpetrators and victims of violence and created shelters for battered women and their children. The focus was on male perpetrators and their female victims.

For decades, various organisations have tried to provide protection to victims. Most organisations focus on ending men’s violence against women as statistics indicate that 85% of victims are women. Strategies include the provision of emergency accommodation, care and counselling for the victims as well as anger management courses and counselling for the perpetrators. This was the starting point - Society is becoming more aware that the problem needs to be addressed at all levels. Some organisations offer training to members to this end. For example Gold Coast University Hospital conducts training for midwives to recognise and respond to victims, as research indicates 30% of women experiencing abuse for the first time are pregnant. Organisations such as Better Men Australia provide parenting programs for fathers. The One in Three Advocacy Group raises awareness of male victims of violence, and homophobic violence against the Gay community.

The National Campaign is focussing on awareness of the issue, and changing attitudes and behaviours. The vision is to educate from cradle to grave in order to end violence. Police are trained to support and advise victims as well as submit protection orders. Attitudes have changed to the point of insisting that DV is a criminal offence, that perpetrators accept responsibility for their criminal behaviour, serve their sentence and undergo mandatory counselling to change said behaviour of bullying and controlling by fear.
The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research has produced fact sheets to explain abusive behaviour in its many guises including carer violence against the elderly, and adolescent violence against parents and siblings. They acknowledge DV as any imbalance of power, including physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, psychological, financial, spiritual or social abuse and isolation by any person against another. The three categories of abuse are clearly defined: Verbal abuse includes yelling, screaming, swearing in an abusive manner and making intimidating comments; Emotional/psychological abuse includes playing mind games like threatening to leave, hurting themselves or telling lies to control parents or the household; Physical abuse includes pushing, hitting, kicking, throwing objects around the house, breaking family property and hurting family pets.

More recently, consideration has been given to the wider ramifications of DV, including homelessness, financial costs, and physical, emotional and mental health of victims. Children who witness or experience DV are more likely to experience anxiety and depression, suffer learning difficulties and be socially insecure. Such children are now recognised as victims of child maltreatment.

Education is seen to be a key factor in cultural reform. Programmes such as Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Keep Your Mates Safe (KYMS) and the Mental Health First Aid course (MHFA) were designed to raise awareness of the taboo subjects of suicide and mental illness, to educate participants to recognise, intervene and support at-risk members. Similar programmes are being applied to the problem of DV. The Army is currently utilising two programmes, the White Ribbon Campaign and MVP.

The White Ribbon organisation originated in Toronto Canada in 1991 and was introduced to Australia in 2003. White Ribbon Australia is a non-profit organisation that seeks to end men’s violence against women. It is primarily a male-led campaign that aims to educate boys and men to change attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate disrespect, inequality and bullying. It encourages them to take the oath: I will stand up, speak out and act to prevent men’s violence against women. The White Ribbon Campaign focuses on the positive role that men play in preventing violence against women. By living the oath, they are no longer silent, passive bystanders but rather vocal, active bystanders forcing positive cultural reform. Because most men are not violent their efforts to prevent violence against women will change society for the better.

White Ribbon Australia provides many resources and education programs for cultural reform. Multiple fact sheets provide data to dispel current misinformation. As the Australian army is now an accredited White Ribbon workplace, it would seem we have a great opportunity to encourage members to embrace the White Ribbon Three-Step Plan to end violence: (i) Live the White Ribbon Oath (Stand up, speak out, act); (ii) Break the silence about violence; and (iii) Grow the campaign.

The Mentor in Violence Prevention Program (MVP) has had international uptake, and was introduced into the Australian Army in 2013. MVP is a leadership program designed to prevent all forms of violence in society. MVP utilises a proactive bystander approach to prevention. The program does not view participants as either perpetrators or victims of violence. It views all participants as empowered bystanders who can confront, interrupt or prevent violence. MVP seeks to enlist all people in the fight against violence by equipping them with the skills to be effective bystanders.

MVP is comprised of interactive discussion sessions aimed to provide participants with practical and effective skills to employ in social situations of violence. The training sessions also open dialogue regarding participant leadership around issues such as battering, sexual assault, fighting, and bullying. Participants are encouraged to consider the underlying issues and dynamics of social violence in order to become effective leaders with concrete options for intervention in potentially dangerous social situations.

The Army MVP train-the-trainer courses provide the skills, knowledge and attitudes required by soldiers to
become proactive bystanders and agents for cultural change. Soldiers who complete the MVP training may come to be recognised as the Army’s most valued players (MVP) in the area of cultural reform.

**Conclusion**

Domestic and Family Violence is a real issue in Australian Society. It is not simply male violence against female partners. It affects all Australians. The National Campaign to end DV is not ‘male-bashing’. It is not anti-male. It is anti-violence. Whilst there are indeed men, boys and girls who are victims of DV, the vast majority of victims are women who have been violated by their intimate partners. While there are indeed women perpetrators and male intimate partner victims, the vast majority of perpetrators are men. Therefore the logical starting point for reform was the area of male dominance of women.

Since the 1970s there have been major changes in provision of care for female victims. In the past decade, there have been changes to legislation to make it easier for victims to receive care and perpetrators to receive corrective training. Various organisations are providing their members with education and training in the recognition of potential victims and perpetrators. Children who have witnessed DV are recognised as victims of child maltreatment.

While the focus still remains on male perpetuated violence against females, efforts have been made to widen the parameters of DV to include any form of abuse by any person against another, regardless of gender. Recognised actions that come under the DV umbrella include carer abuse to the elderly and children, homophobic bullying and adolescent abuse of parents and siblings.

To reiterate, recognition of the gendered patterns of DV, and subsequent response following the feminist movement in the 70s, provided both the starting point and framework for continued responses to DV. However, the vital and primary point for recognition in today’s education and response to DV is a conceptual shift from anti-male to anti-violence.

The Australian Army already has avenues in place for addressing the issue of domestic violence in society. Both the White Ribbon Australia campaign and the MVP program offer effective strategies for raising awareness, changing attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate domestic violence. Both promote the development of effective proactive bystanders willing to make a difference in keeping with Army Core values and our Contract with the Australian people.

In order to create change, Army members must experience two perceptual shifts (i) DV education and intervention is not anti-male; it is anti-violence, and (ii) Bystanders must be active, not passive.

To encourage these perceptual shifts in Army members, there must be clear acknowledgement that: (i) While most perpetrators are men, most men are not perpetrators, and; (ii) Army members who are not directly involved in a situation as either victim or perpetrator can make a difference as active bystanders.

The question for Army members must remain: If I am not a victim and I am not a perpetrator, what is my role?

**Bibliography**


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Further Reading:

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BOOK REVIEW

Chaplain Matthew Stuart

**Bible through the Lens of Trauma**

*Elizabeth Boase and Christopher G. Frechette*

“Bible through the Lens of Trauma” is a collection of essays, from biblical scholars as well as systematic and pastoral theologians. The essays explore “how trauma can be defined and applied in biblical studies and explores the usefulness of trauma theory as a lens through which to read the biblical texts.” Elizabeth Boase (Senior Lecturer in Hebrew/Old Testament and Head of the Department of Theology at Flinders University and Adelaide College of Divinity) along with Christopher G. Frechette (Visiting Assistant Professor of Theology at St. Mary’s University Texas) is the editors that draw together these thirteen scholarly essays in three sections.

The three sections include: “Individual and collective dimensions of trauma”, “New insights into Old Questions” and, “Survival, Recovery and Resilience in and through the text”. Whilst I was not disappointed with the first two, the third has become a valuable resource to my ministry in Army Chaplaincy.

The essays are definitely at an academic level, and I wouldn’t suggest this book to people who are after a quick easy read. Most of the essays draw on Old Testament stories and I greatly valued the deep level of scholarly research that drew out for me how to respond to victims of trauma and personal reflection on what I bring to Scripture.

A particularly thought provoking essay, for myself, was Robert Schreiter’s “Reading Biblical Texts through the Lens of Resilience”. Schreiter draws out the importance of language in the healing of trauma; “Language has to be recovered as a vehicle for processing experience, the tyranny of past events that freezes us in an unending past and that blocks out the present and the future must be overcome, and a sense of meaning and a framework for right behaviour must be restored.” (196)

Schreiter talks about the importance of identity and ritual in the process of resilience, which “include[s] an affirmation of meaning, a sense of being in control, and a strong sense of the direction in which one is moving.” (196) The basis for this identity he argues is memory.

Ritual is important in affirming identity; Schreiter argues that it is central to resilience and therefore the healing process. He suggests that there are two notable ways that ritual assists in dealing with trauma; ritual allows people to move through time in a different way and it expresses to people “that what is being dealt with cannot be treated effectively with normal, mundane activity.” (202)

I have found this important in my own ministry through the invitation of people to find their stories connected to Scripture; subsequently they draw upon a larger memory in the process of affirming their own identity. Finally this is reinforced in the liturgies/rituals of the Christian tradition.

This book has helped guide much reflection on my ministry, particularly in regards to the language I use in responding to people’s stories of trauma. This book has also developed my appreciation for the God I serve and the stories that have been handed down to me in the Scriptures. It has encouraged me in dealing with some of my own trauma as well as responding to other people’s; to find refuge in the stories of the Bible and to draw upon the rich liturgical/ritual traditions of the Christian faith in the healing process.
I initially heard of Andy Cullen a couple of years ago and was delighted to hear that after many speaking engagements, he had chosen to publish his story. I attended the book launch earlier this year on the Gold Coast, along with around four hundred other people. Andy and Zoe shared warmly of their story in an endearing way that reflected its depth, compelling people to want to know more. Andy comes across as a stoic and determined soldier who would not have been very open about his feelings and struggles, nor would he have been closely in touch with the sentiments of those around him. His heartfelt reflections are a new chapter for him as a person and they bring hope for all those who have suppressed their pain throughout military training and operations.

The foreword is written by Major General (Ret’d) John Cantwell, AO DSC, who of course wrote the widely acclaimed Exit Wounds. The style and candid nature of his recollection is reminiscent of Exit Wounds, which is refreshing for the reader. In the foreword Cantwell pays tribute to a man of courage, as displayed in his work of bomb disposal, his willingness to share the story of his personal story and also of his courage to seek professional psychiatric care. His insights are spot on and succinctly articulated.

It is a story that is told not from the glorious mountain tops, but from the dark valleys of despair. Andy reflects on his writing in the following way:

“These pages provide an insight into my personality, values and philosophy. They take a look, unashamedly, at mental illness and bear witness to the problems faced by many returning veterans in the hope of shining some light and understanding on an illness that is plaguing our society.

As anyone that has been deployed in any combat zone will tell you, ‘it’s not all beer and skittles.’ This book takes a look at the good, the bad and the ugly of deploying to war on the modern battlefield of Afghanistan, through the eyes of an Australian soldier, and the mental scars that are carried long after returning home, (p. 3).”

Cullen portrays himself vividly as being the stereotypical soldier, with all those character traits and values that any Chaplain will quickly recognise. He went hard, lived life on the edge and threw himself into everything that he did. These natural attributes enabled him to excel in his military life, firstly as an infantry soldier, then an officer cadet, then a Royal Australian Engineer officer. However it was these same attributes which nearly cost him his marriage, his family and his life. The book is greatly enriched by the sections that are written by Zoe, displaying her perspective on events and situations – not surprisingly, quite divergent from that of her husband. Chapter six, entitled ‘Aftermath of war’ is penned solely by Zoe and is especially revealing. Chaplains who have supported family members through the rigours of military service and deployment will be familiar with this dynamic and will be intrigued to follow the story.

Andy writes extensively of his military service in a way that will captivate anyone who enjoys a good war story. The fact that it is Australian is a real bonus! His second deployment to Afghanistan was from May 2011 – January 2012 and his ‘Diary from the Frontline’ in chapter 9 is a highpoint. The challenges and battles of life on deployment are described, not least of which being some of the personal dynamics around him and people or policies from above standing in the way of the job being done.

As Chaplains we need to be able to understand the inner lives of our soldiers. Rather than merely seeing the surface, a prerequisite of effective ministry is to be able to see, understand and sympathise with what is going on in the hearts and minds of our people. This autobiography does a fantastic job of illuminating and exploring the internal processing of the highs and lows of military life. Therefore it is essential reading for members of the RAACChD.
Like any quality book, it leaves the reader pondering and reflecting, attempting to make sense of things. For me, there are questions that linger. Firstly, that of the root cause of his complex mental health situation. Was it PTSD? Was it a struggle to adjust and readjust to the differing environments of Army life in Australia, Army life on deployment and the challenge of being a husband and father? Was there some underlying psychological vulnerabilities that were exposed in the heat of battle and change? Was it moral injury? Was it all of the above? If he had been a more well-adjusted, emotionally intelligent person prior to the crisis, might he have escaped unscathed? If he had of known Jesus through his military service, how different would the story have been?

I had been anxiously anticipating the mention of a military Chaplain or a fellow soldier who was a follower of Jesus that would have a key role in helping him to discover Jesus. It did not eventuate. His wife seemed to have a quiet and consistent faith throughout their journey and he sought help from a Christian Psychologist who was instrumental in promoting healing, especially in the years subsequent to Andy leaving the military. I wonder if he had been open to a Chaplain in his crisis, or was there not one there at the time?

This is a story that plumbs the depths of human experience, as Andy finds himself repeatedly admitted to the Currumbin Clinic, with his life in danger. But it is also immensely positive as it portrays the joy of finding the Lord. We are reminded that it is God who binds up the broken hearted, proclaims freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners. He brings comfort for those who mourn and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair, (Isaiah 61). This is a quality story, well written and it will leave the reader enlightened and inspired. If I had stars to give I would give it 4.5 stars out of 5.