



## **Royal Australian Army Chaplains Department**

*In this Sign Conquer*

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# **Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal**

Journal of the Royal Australian Army Chaplains Department  
Winter edition, July 2014

- Christianity and the Profession of Arms
- Serving Faithfully
- Deployed Chaplains as Force Multipliers Through Religious Engagement
- God and the Cost of Freedom
- Rabbi Gittelson's Iwo Jima Sermon
- The Cloister and the Barracks: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Formation of Christian Community
- Living in the Shadow: A Theological Discussion on the Place, Purpose, and Meaning of Australian Defence Force Chaplaincy

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## Editorial

Chaplain David Grulke  
Interim editor

This is my first and last editorial for the Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal (AACJ). It has been a long journey to this point, as the past is reshaped from the days of *Intercom* into a new, more professionally oriented journal that sits within the suite of recognised Military academic journals. As with all journals, however, they only form a life of their own when they provoke, engage and disseminate the intellectual constructs being formulated within their specific field of interest. Consequently, the AACJ will only take a life of its own once Chaplains and other interested parties embrace the theological discourse required to sustain chaplaincy as a unique and meaningful element within a Military context. In this edition, some of that has begun. With the introduction of the Hulme-Moir lectures, a lecture given to Duntroon's graduating class on character, faith and leadership, the conversation extends itself beyond the clerical voice. Craig Bickell's article is a wonderful personal exploration of the way faith shapes leadership, and Tim Fischer's reflections on Chaplain Frank Roland, interesting in itself as one Catholic reflects on the ministry of a Protestant, demonstrates the diversity with the theological conversation beyond the cloisters of the clerical elite. Even so, there remains an earthy struggle in John Saunder's exploration as to what chaplaincy may look like in an operational context, with a strong focus on reconciliation and peace making being central tasks of chaplaincy. This struggle is also reflected as Stephen Brook's reflects on evil and the various attempts at reconciling this in the contest of a loving God. There is a correlation between the Saunders & Brooks articles,

offered by a Jewish Army Rabbi, which earths the entire discussions in the wake of Young's reflections of Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn after the battle of Iwo Jima. In the midst of evil, suffering, and the inhumanity of war, Chaplaincy functions to reconcile and create peace not just in the lives of those it touches, but beyond with greater capacity into a larger operational setting. Finally, Ben Myer's reflection on Bonhoeffer and community centres the conversation back into the context in which theology become a lived praxis. Chaplaincy exists within a community, not simply a community within the Army, but as part of a larger faith community from which to draw its strength for the task it cases. The articles in this edition provide a breadth in which the theological conversation concerning chaplaincy, faith, leadership and ministry takes place. I pray that you are blessed and engaged by the discussion these writers invite you to join. ■

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With the task of preparing the winter Journal almost completed by Chaplain David Grulke it has fallen to me to see it through to completion. It seems appropriate to include an article by David himself as a way of marking his significant contribution to the establishment of the Australian Army Chaplains Department. It is hoped that this article will also serve as a stimulus to theological debate and discussion that will overflow into the 2014 Summer Journal.

Chaplain Don Parker

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In the Summer 2013 Edition of the Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal the article *The Past, Present and Future – Conversations on the tensions, Theology and Professionalism of Chaplaincy* was wrongly attributed to Revend Darren Jaensch. The article was authored by Revend Dr David Grulke in consultation with Revend Darren Jaensch.

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# Christianity and the Profession of Arms

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## **ABSTRACT**

Professor Michael Evans has warned that the profession of arms is being challenged by the rise of a selfish society with a deep adherence to moral relativism. Evans' solution — stoic philosophy — is, however, limited in its utility. This article will argue that the Christian faith has enduring value for the profession of arms, and indeed that the Christian faith of some of its members can contribute to the combat capability of the Army.

*The Christian religion is above all others a source of that enduring courage which is the most valuable of all the components of morale.*<sup>1</sup>

*Field Marshal Sir William Slim*

## Introduction

In 2002, as a young captain, I had the opportunity to visit the Army Recruit Training Centre in Kapooka for the first time. At the time I was escorting the Minister for Defence, and part of the itinerary included a visit to the chapel, which had been constructed by Army sappers in 1993. While I was not a Christian at that time (although I had been regularly attending church for a decade), what caught my interest was the image on the stained glass window illustrated in Figure 1. The image depicts a soldier in a scene that would resonate with many Australians who have served in the Army. The soldier has clearly travelled a great distance, perhaps patrolling, and possibly under some threat from an unseen foe. During his patrol he has been burdened by a heavy pack which he can no longer carry. The pack is symbolic of the weight, not only of the duties and responsibilities he bears, but also of the guilt he feels — guilt for the acts and omissions arising from the sinfulness and rejection of God that the Bible and human history and experience tell us is common to all mankind. That weight is now too great for him to carry. He can go no further. He has placed his pack on the ground and kneels, clearly exhausted. The pack appears not to have been simply discarded, but placed carefully, deliberately on a hill. Perhaps he saw the hill from a long way off and made his way towards it. Perhaps he stumbled across it as he stared, fixated on the ground in front of him in his weariness, shuffling forward, one foot in front of the other. More importantly, he has placed his pack at the foot of a cross on which a man — Jesus Christ — has been hung, crucified, in an extreme, violent act of punishment. The soldier is looking up, expectantly, his expression conveying a question. He appears to be asking the silent figure: ‘Can you take up my burden for me?’ The image gnawed at my conscience. I could relate to the soldier depicted in the image. But I had never really asked Christ the same question. Could I? Some months later I would.



*Figure 1. A stained glass window in the Soldiers' Chapel at Kapooka depicting the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the surrender of a soldier to Him.*

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the enduring value of the Christian faith to the profession of arms. The article will outline the challenge to the profession of arms identified in a recent *Quadrant* article by Professor Michael Evans and briefly address the limitations of his proposed solution — the embracement of stoicism by its members. The article will then argue the case for the enduring value of the Christian faith to the profession of arms.



## The Problem for the Profession of Arms and the Limitations of Stoicism

Professor Michael Evans claims that the greatest challenge to the Western profession of arms emanates from the rise of a selfish society with a deep adherence to moral relativism. He describes a culture in which a 'tsunami of secularism and moral decline ... has left us with a public culture dominated by effete celebrities and corporate billionaires united by their lack of civic virtue' and in which shame has been abolished. Evans implies — correctly in my view — that this leaves those in the profession of arms with little armour to protect their inner selves.<sup>2</sup>

The solution, according to Evans, is to embrace the moral philosophy of the ancient Greek and Roman Stoics. I agree with Evans' diagnosis of the problem and its consequences for the profession of arms, but disagree with his proposed solution — the embrace of stoicism by the military professional. The aim of this essay is not to critique stoicism or compare its value with that of the Christian faith. However, my understanding of stoicism is that it is inherently focussed on the self and sets a standard of behaviour that is compromised by the human condition. It also fails to deal with the two questions in every soldier's mind posed by the reality of the battlefield: what happens when I am killed, and what happens to the person whose life I take in carrying out my orders? In addition to answering those soldiers' questions, I believe that the Christian faith, based on the Bible, provides sound instruction in the eight moral lessons that Evans attributes to stoicism. I also believe that the Bible is equally effective in posing to the military professional the seven choices Evans describes as stoic. It is also interesting and illustrative of the enduring value of the Christian faith that many of the examples Evans uses as evidence to support or illustrate his argument in favour of stoicism are derived from individuals who, as indicated in the words attributed to them, either are Christian or at least acknowledge God. These include the author of the American Civil War Soldier's Prayer and Brigadier General Henning von Tresckow of the German resistance to Hitler.

## The Christian Faith

As a Christian — or a believer in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour — I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the saviour prophesied in the Old Testament. I believe that He was crucified on a cross as a sacrificial act of atonement to take the punishment for mine and all humanity's rejection of God and all its consequences. I believe that, in dying on the cross, and through my asking God for forgiveness for my sins through this sacrificial death, Jesus Christ saved me from the punishment that will be meted out on the Day of Judgement referred to in the Bible. I believe that, on the third day after his death, he was resurrected, thus demonstrating his victory over sin and death, and is now seated at the right hand of God and will come again to judge the living and the dead. That judgement day will be completely just and worse and more effective than any interrogation human beings are capable of, in that all resistance will be ineffective and all our secrets will be revealed. I believe that Christ's kingdom — defined as a kingdom of believers and not geopolitical boundaries — is being spread throughout the world through a process of people hearing God's word and responding in repentance and faith. As a Christian I have many responsibilities, but primarily they are to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul strength and mind, and to love my neighbour as myself,<sup>3</sup> and in accordance with the 'Great Commission', to spread the good news about Jesus Christ throughout all nations.<sup>4</sup>

## The Enduring Value of the Christian Faith to the Profession of Arms

Despite a rising secularism and increasing anti-Christian agenda evident in public discourse, I believe that the Christian faith has enduring value for the profession of arms. I do not believe that a Christian faith and service in the armed forces are incompatible and there is a significant body of literature that presents this argument clearly and in a more fulsome manner than is possible here.<sup>5</sup> The Confederate General Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson and a recent UK Chief of the General Staff, Sir Richard Dannett, are notable examples of military men who followed the Christian faith.<sup>6</sup> The Christian faith has enduring value to the profession of arms because it remains a source of morale for individual soldiers, provides a positive example of leadership and sacrifice, is a source of resilience and heals mental wounds and moral injury. Christian faith informs character, provides a pathway to individual and thus cultural change, informs assessments of what constitutes

a 'just war' and ultimately provides a means of overcoming the fear and reality of death that permeates the environment in which the profession of arms operates — the battlefield.

Jesus Christ provides a model of sacrifice to emulate. Faith in Christ commands the believer to emulate Christ in his or her words and actions. Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross on the orders of the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. The Bible teaches that the purpose of Christ's death on the cross was to atone for, or pay the penalty for, human sinfulness or rejection of God. So Jesus laid down his life for others and personally demonstrated what he taught his disciples — 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.'<sup>7</sup> Members of the profession of arms are asked and required to be prepared to give their lives in the service of their nation. While a just cause is an important factor in maintaining a soldier's will to fight, many soldiers derive greater motivation from the knowledge that they are fighting with and for their mates. This may be particularly so when the justness of their cause is in question or open to debate. In this way, for Christians serving in the military, Christ laying down his life in an act of service to others — even his enemies — is an example to emulate as they struggle to overcome the natural human desire for survival and fear of death on the battlefield.

Jesus Christ provides a model of leadership to follow in two important aspects. First, Jesus was obedient to His Father, God, the ultimate authority, to the point of death. He trusted in God's plan for Him. In time of war, soldiers will be asked to trust and obey their commanders to the point of death. Jesus is and can be a model of obedience from which to draw inspiration and will. The motto of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst is 'Serve to Lead' and Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of the servant leader. Jesus' sole mission and purpose was to serve humanity by becoming an atoning sacrifice for humanity's rejection of God so that people could know God and return to a restored relationship with Him while avoiding eternal punishment. He served and sacrificed Himself for those who did not want His service or sacrifice, and who were — who are — in effect, His enemies. Jesus demonstrated the servant nature of His leadership by the act of washing the feet of His disciples as recorded in the Gospel of John<sup>8</sup> and through the act of willingly going to His death on the Cross.<sup>9</sup> While I have seen successful leaders sacrifice for and serve their subordinates without holding a Christian faith, it is my view that these leaders have been taught or have seen and adopted the benefits of such a servant leadership model, perhaps without its attribution to the example of Christ.

Faith in Christ is a source of resilience. Resilience is both an individual's ability to cope with stress and adversity and a measure of the capacity to endure beyond all reasonable limits. This coping may result in the individual's being restored to a previous state of normal functioning, simply not displaying negative effects, or even growing from the experience. Contemporary specialists such as Glenn Schiraldi recognise the value of religion to resilience.<sup>10</sup> The Christian faith holds that 'in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose'<sup>11</sup> and that 'neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'<sup>12</sup> A Christian who believes in these words of Paul, that in everything that occurs in one's life God is working to bring about some good purpose and that nothing — even death — will separate him/her from God's love, draws on an enormous resource derived from scripture which provides the means to cope with the stress and adversity that life and, more acutely, military operations present. Even a cursory reading of the Psalms will demonstrate that such resilience is born of a faith that does not deny adversity or fear or claim to control fate.<sup>13</sup> The perspective of the Psalmist stands in contrast with the selfdeceptive 'siren song' of the poem *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley and admired by Michael Evans as the 'most eloquent tribute to the noble essence of the Stoic spirit'. In his poem, Henley proudly claims that, exposed to great adversity and stress (experienced during a lifetime of debilitating illness and infirmity), he has not winced or cried aloud, that he is unafraid and, most famously, that he 'is the master of his fate, the captain of my soul'. But Henley's very experience of life demonstrates that he was not master of his fate and the Bible teaches us that his soul's fate will be determined by God rather than Henley himself. If Henley is the 'Captain of his soul' then God is both its field marshal and Defence Force Magistrate. Most soldiers would probably relate to the frightened and flawed character who is the principal protagonist in Stephen Crane's American Civil War classic *The Red Badge of Courage*, rather than the apparently unafraid Henley. A wiser soldier would do better to heed Jesus' words:

*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.<sup>14</sup>*

Linked to resilience is an individual warrior's ability to resist interrogation, and at least one postKorean War study has identified the value of religious faith and national idealism in resisting indoctrination and interrogation. The *United Kingdom Advisory Panel Report on the Korean War*, in its chapter entitled 'Factors Affecting Individual Resistance in Battle or after Capture', made just such an observation and recommended that those who had this kind of faith and idealism should be encouraged and assisted to strengthen it. This recommendation was influential in postKorean War Australia and taken seriously by the Army's Directorate of Military Training. It laid the foundations for the emergence of the Character Guidance Course in the Australian Army in 1959, which sought to develop character through a promotion of the religious and moral tenets of the Christian faith.<sup>15</sup> Not only does faith in Christ assist in developing resilience, but there is evidence that it assists individuals to resist and survive interrogation and capture.

Faith in Christ is a valuable component of fighting power. The Australian Army's Land Warfare Doctrine 00-2 – *Character* recognises that the root of character is a coherent belief and value system. The most influential belief and value system in post-colonial Australian history is the Christian faith, a coherent — albeit now not widely held — belief system. Doctrine therefore recognises Christianity's value as a foundational element of the moral component of fighting power that provides the will to fight. This doctrine makes the profound claim that the combat capability of an Army relies as much on the spiritual and moral qualities that are at the heart of a person's character as it does on physical fitness and skills — perhaps more so when soldiers are under stress.<sup>16</sup> According to Army's doctrine, belief in Christ within its members provides a foundation for the Australian Army's combat capability.

The military has long recognised the importance of character to soldiering. Lord Moran, the medical officer of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers from 1914–1917 and later Churchill's doctor during the Second World War, concluded that:

*... fortitude in war has its roots in morality; that selection [recruitment] is a search for character, and that war itself is but one more test – the supreme and final test if you will – of character ... a man of character in peace becomes a man of courage in war. He cannot be selfish in peace yet be unselfish in war. Character as Aristotle taught is a habit, the daily choice of right instead of wrong; it is a moral quality which grows to maturity in peace and is not suddenly developed on the outbreak of war. For war, in spite of much that we have heard to the contrary, has no power to transform, it merely exaggerates the good and evil that is in us, till it is plain for all to read; it cannot change, it exposes.*

*Man's fate in battle is worked out before war begins. For his acts in war are dictated not by courage, nor by fear, but by conscience, of which war is the final test. The man whose quick conscience is the secret of his success in battle has the same clear cut feelings about right and wrong before war makes them obvious to all. If you know a man in peace, you know him in war.*<sup>17</sup>

Based on his military experience, particularly commanding the Fourteenth Army in Burma during the Second World War, Field Marshal Sir William Slim observed that 'religion has always been and still is one of the greatest foundations of morale, especially of military morale. Saints and soldiers have much in common ... The Christian religion is above all others a source of that enduring courage which is the most valuable of all the components of morale.'<sup>18</sup>

Faith in Christ also heals mental and spiritual wounds. There is increasing awareness of mental health issues such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in veterans of operational service. This phenomenon is not new, but recent conflicts and media attention have once again brought what is now commonly referred to as PTSD to the fore. Steven Pressfield, author of *Gates of Fire*, a fictional account of the epic Battle of Thermopylae when 300 Spartans courageously faced an overwhelming Persian army, spoke of 'the guilt of the warrior'. To paraphrase the narrator in that account:

*There is a secret all warriors share, so private that none dare give it voice, save only to those mates drawn dearer than brothers by the shared ordeal of arms. This is the knowledge of the hundred acts or omissions where he or she has fallen short. The little things that no one sees. The comrade who fell and cried for aid. Did I pass him by? Choose my skin over his? That was my crime, of which I accuse myself in the tribunal of my heart and there condemn myself as guilty.*<sup>19</sup>

To use a contemporary example of a soldier burdened by the 'guilt of the warrior', former Major General John Cantwell, in his recent book *Exit Wounds*, describes in vivid detail the burdens and guilt arising from his operational service and its consequences on his mental health and relationships.<sup>20</sup> Jesus Christ offers a solution to the guilt of Major General Cantwell, the guilt of this author and the guilt and anguish of all Australian servicemen and women who are bearing a burden caused by the physical, mental and spiritual<sup>21</sup> injuries sustained in their service, when He says:

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and my yoke is easy and my burden is light, and you will find rest for your soul.*<sup>22</sup>

It is a gift and offered freely. I would encourage those suffering such wounds, in addition to seeking help from professional mental health services, to also seriously investigate the Christian faith.<sup>23</sup>

Faith in Christ also helps understand the world in which military operations are conducted. ADF operations take place in environments of natural disaster, human misery and suffering, war and injustice. These events and exposure to them often constitute the traumatic experience that lead to PTSD among members of the profession of arms. Christ teaches that these events, however traumatic, are inevitable and are signs of His return:

*You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.*<sup>24</sup>

The Christian faith helps to explain the context in which military operations take place and provides an explanation of how the suffering and injustice witnessed during these operations by members of the profession of arms will ultimately be resolved. This knowledge contributes significantly to reducing the stress caused by exposure to such events.<sup>25</sup>

Faith in Christ commands behaviours valued by the profession of arms such as obedience to authority, respect and accountability. Christians are commanded to obey authority. Jesus Christ modelled obedience to authority in obeying His Father to the point of death on a cross. Paul writes to Roman Christians, 'let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.'<sup>26</sup> He continues this theme when writing to Peter: 'Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority ...'<sup>27</sup> Paul commands Christians to 'show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor.'<sup>28</sup> Finally, Paul teaches Christians accountability to God through the authorities established by Him:

*Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.<sup>29</sup>*

Faith in Christ informs a pathway to change. Jesus and the first Christians called people to repent. Repentance is not just feeling sorrow or remorse, but a turning around, a complete alteration of the basic motivation and direction of one's life. Repentance will often lead to an attempt to right a wrong or to seek forgiveness or restore a broken relationship. In 2012, in response to revelations of unacceptable behaviour and abuse within Defence going back many years, Defence's senior leadership published *Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture*. This document is a statement of Defence's cultural intent and the organisation's strategy for realising that intent. It holds that Defence's work in implementing this strategy begins with accepting individual responsibility for one's own behaviour, assisting others to live the culture, and placing the onus on leaders to be exemplars of positive and visible change at all times. It also involves amending policies and processes that do not align with our cultural intent.<sup>30</sup> While not explicitly stated, the strategy aims to respond to and prevent the occurrence of the types of abuse and incidents of unacceptable behaviour that led to the requirement for such a strategy to be developed. The Christian faith offers a tried and true pathway to change: repentance and placing one's trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. This faith has changed the lives of its adherents and the organisations with which they were affiliated since Jesus first called people to faith in Him. From Saul, the repentant chief persecutor of Christians who became Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles; to John Newton, the repentant slave trader and author of *Amazing Grace*; to Charles Colson, the repentant Chief of Staff to Richard Nixon during Watergate and author of *Born Again*, individuals have been called to faith, responded in repentance, righted wrongs and restored broken relationships and, in so doing, changed their lives and often the course of history. Defence's strategy to evolve its culture could benefit from acts of repentance and the associated concept of forgiveness derived from the Christian faith. This will be difficult as Jesus Christ both warns and calls people when speaking of the pathway to Heaven:



*Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the path that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the path that leads to life, and only a few find it.*<sup>31</sup>

Christianity also informs the standards of the profession of arms in terms of what comprises a 'just war'. The Christian faith and consequent ideas of two leading theologians, Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, have informed the philosophy that underpins the Australian Army's approach to rationalising the use of force, the so-called 'just war' principles.<sup>32</sup>

The first and foremost criterion for a 'just war' is that it is only the state that can legitimately wage war. This criterion is derived from Christian theologians such as Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, and is associated with Romans 13 in which the authorities 'have been instituted by God. [They are] the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.'

Second, for a war to be 'just', force must be used only in a just cause. A just cause is one in which, drawing on the notion of justice in the Christian tradition, is concerned with justice for all rather than limited to the more common cause of self-defence. In this it is more concerned with the 'defence of others, especially innocent third parties in the face of unjust aggression', than with self-defence.<sup>33</sup> A just cause could be associated with repelling an unjust attack, recovering that which has been unjustly seized, or restoring the moral order. A just cause provides legitimacy for pre-emptive strikes that respond to a threat that is both imminent and grave, but prohibits preventative attacks.

The third criterion is that there must be a 'just' intent in using force. Force should only be used to seek a just peace, informed by a love of one's enemy rather than hatred or revenge, and a desire to see justice for all, not solely oneself.<sup>34</sup> War must be a last resort in that diplomacy must, in good faith, be given time to succeed and alternatives to war must be investigated. These concepts are rooted in the Christian concept of divine hope — a proven hope that God is able to soften hard hearts. Finally, there must be a reasonable prospect of success. It should be conducted for attainable, limited ends and the costs and benefits must be proportionate. The criteria informed by a Christian faith would both prohibit demands for unconditional surrender from a state and require that the state entertain the option of negotiating a halt or surrendering if the other criteria of just war become unattainable. These concepts reflect the Christian belief that 'it is not the force of a nation's arms that guarantees that justice will prevail, but the Lord, who is able to defeat even death'. A Christian knows that 'nation states and

armies are not the final line of defence against injustice'. Christians can 'surrender, because they know that surrender and defeat does not and cannot mean the end for either Christians or their neighbours'.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, the Christian faith is a source of courage that provides a means of overcoming the fear and reality of death that permeates the battlefields in which members of the profession of arms operate, risking their lives. Christians believe that, whether they live or die, they belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>36</sup> Christians strive to follow Paul, who claimed that for him, 'to live is Christ, and to die is to gain'.<sup>37</sup> Christians believe that death is not the end, but that, through their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, they will be raised from death and live in eternity in the new heaven and new earth promised in the Book of Revelation. Michael Evans cites the former United States Navy SEAL commando, Richard Marcinko:

*It is my unshakeable belief that when ... two intrinsic values — the total acceptance of death as a natural condition of life, and total acceptance of an absolute moral code — are combined, the Warrior becomes invincible.*<sup>38</sup>

Christians accept death as a natural condition of life and view it as simply a temporary journey on their way to their ultimate destination — eternal life with Christ. In my view it is this belief that led Field Marshal Slim to conclude that 'the Christian religion is above all others a source of that enduring courage which is the most valuable of all the components of morale.'<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

The 'inner armour' of members of the profession of arms in Western militaries is being challenged by an increasingly secularised culture. Stoicism is a limited and incomplete solution because of its inherent self-focus and failure to deal with every soldier's question, 'what happens when I am killed in battle?' The aim of this article has been to demonstrate the enduring value of the Christian faith to the profession of arms. The Christian faith endures as a source of courage and morale, an integral component of fighting power and thus combat capability, a model of leadership to follow. It teaches values and behaviours idealised by the profession of arms, offers a tried and tested pathway to change, and informs Army's concept of what constitutes a 'just war'. Members of the profession of arms would benefit from an investigation and serious consideration of the Christian faith. The Army would be well served by encouraging its members who follow the Christian faith to meet, pray, learn from the Bible and encourage one another. The Army should

also continue to allow its members to freely hear about, discuss and investigate the Gospel, the basis of the Christian faith. Spiritual resilience programs should be informed (but not exclusively) by the Christian faith. Finally, character training programs should be encouraged and continue to embrace the Christian faith as a belief system central to the development of character. As this article has argued, far from being detrimental, doing so will positively contribute to the Army's fighting power and combat capability. ■

## The Author

Colonel Craig Bickell, CSM, is currently Plans Officer (G5) at Headquarters Forces Command. He has served in East Timor, Kuwait and Afghanistan and commanded the 1st Intelligence Battalion during 2010–2011. He holds the degrees of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) and Master of Defence Studies, both from University of New South Wales. In his spare time, he volunteers as Vice President of the Governing Board of FOCUS Military Ministry, a network of Christians in the Australian Defence Force and Department of Defence. He and his family attend an Anglican Church in Sydney.

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## Serving Faithfully

Second Lieutenant Tim Fischer, AC (RL)  
Former Australian Ambassador to the Holy See<sup>1</sup>

Diggers serving in the front line today will be interested to know that there was once a Presbyterian padre who crawled forward through the wire and across the start line, minutes **before** 3.10 am when the Battle of Hamel commenced on 4 July 1918.

As I describe some aspects of my work as Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, including public diplomacy across the board and boosting Australia's profile, I begin with an extract from some of my previous writings relating to Anzac Day.

Padre Frank Rolland served in the Australian Imperial Force in World War I, most notably in the 14th Battalion, and performed with extreme and characteristically understated bravery. His initial foray was in and around Cairo, Egypt, in 1915 as a chaplain captain, one of two Presbyterian chaplains in the locality.

Rolland had enlisted after hearing news of the appalling casualties incurred at the landings at Gallipoli, resigning from his parish at Noorat in Victoria. Prior to this he had served in Beltana in South Australia, having been appointed by John Flynn ('Flynn of the Inland'), and had travelled as far afield as Broome and Thursday Island with his work.

Every bit of his undoubted bush skills came to the fore when he joined the 14th Battalion on the Western Front, particularly in the Battle of the Somme, through to Hamel and beyond. John Monash, of Jerilderie and Melbourne, knew Frank Rolland and later awarded him the Military Cross in the field, a rarity in any war at

any time for a non-combatant. His epic notes from the Battle of Hamel point to his courage, practical determination and absolute dedication to the diggers. General John Monash had fixed 3.10 am as zero hour for the Battle of Hamel, the planning allowing 90 minutes to capture the village and surrounding terrain. History records that it took 93 minutes and casualties were very light.

Padre Frank Rolland, with the doctor and his team of medics, pushed forward to reach the nominated place for the RAP (Regimental Aid Post) minutes before 3.10 am; as usual he was unarmed but carried stretchers, supplies and equipment to brew hot cocoa for the men. Halfway to the RAP post, the huge barrage planned by Monash commenced, with many retaliatory shells from the Germans falling nearby. Calmly and coolly, the medics, the doctor and the padre made their way to the RAP, reaching it by 3.18 am. Already the wounded had started coming in and the work commenced. Here is an extract from his written notes:

*It was still almost dark but I noticed a few German shells dropping behind us and towards us, so I crept over to the doctor and advised him to push on further at once. He agreed and as we stood up and moved again, the scene was indescribably apocalyptic. The eye, and not the ear, was receptive, though I remember the machine gun crackle shrilling through the heavy roar. Every kind of gun was at work. It was cloud and fire, lead falling in colossal showers, the hill hidden with smoke, the smoke flashed with flame; all the force of the elements seemed concentrated and hurled.*

Rolland was, of course, describing the holistic approach meticulously planned by John Monash, which became the template that turned the Western Front and showed one or two British generals how to do so. Rolland went on to become the Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church and, for 25 years, Head of Geelong College. His official MC citation reads: 'For conspicuous bravery and extremely good work'.

Clearly, he is an outstanding example, not only of a military padre on the battle front, but a leader in education and in the Presbyterian Church in Australia. Here in Rome, it happens that some of my work relates to the Anglican Centre and various Protestant faiths. More broadly, one key priority is interfaith dialogue and building links between Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and all branches of the Islamic faith.

It is a great privilege to have been appointed by the Australian government as first Rome-resident Ambassador to the Holy See, and the timing has worked out well. Australia's first Catholic saint, Mary MacKillop, will be canonised in Rome on Sunday 17 October. Please visit the Sisters of St Joseph website for more information.

Interestingly enough, around 1900, Mary MacKillop, then in her fifties, John Monash, then in his thirties, and Frank Rolland, then in his twenties, spent considerable time in Melbourne, Australia's first national capital. Who knows if they met in Collins Street, Melbourne, or Albert Street, East Melbourne, but all made enormous contributions to the fabric of Australia. Ironically, all made particularly vital contributions in relation to education.

As I continue my work here in Rome, I am conscious of the fact that these three Australians all worked in Europe, making huge efforts against incredible odds for the good of Australia. It puts the various irritants of Rome traffic jams, triple parking, weather extremes and moving to a second floor apartment into perspective.

It will amuse some to know that Padre Captain Frank Rolland, MC, who became the Very Reverend Major Sir Francis Rolland, CMG, OBE, MC, MA, was once described as 'the nearest that Protestants ever came to producing a Jesuit'. In completing this writing, I acknowledge material obtained from the biography written by B.R. Keith entitled 'The Lives of Frank Rolland' and I salute this giant of an Australian padre. ■

## Endnotes

- 1 Extract from a lecture delivered by Tim Fischer on 1 March 2013 on the life of Padre Frank Rolland, MC.

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# Deployed Chaplains as Force Multipliers Through Religious Engagement

Chaplain John Saunders  
Chaplain, 7th Combat Signal Regiment

## **Abstract**

Military chaplaincy is by its nature a challenging and demanding vocation, but one which presents opportunities that our roles as clergy in civilian life could never engender. Engagement with indigenous religious groups while deployed on operations is one such opportunity — fraught with difficulties and potential dangers, but rich in the rewards it brings. This paper will argue the case for the emerging specialist role for chaplains as a tool for commanders in force multiplication through engagement with indigenous religious leaders and groups by building bridges of understanding which can only be established at a religious level.



It is no secret that chaplains provide a valuable resource to commanders at all levels, with the majority of our work concerned with caring for the well-being of our soldiers and their families. Naturally this role is of great importance when on deployment, and indeed this was my experience when deployed to Operation SLIPPER with 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (2 RAR) Mentoring Task Force 3 (MTF-3) in 2011–2012. Having said this, the chaplain's specialist religious knowledge and position provide a largely untapped commander's resource on deployment — religious engagement with indigenous religious groups in the relevant area of operations.

This article will argue the case for an expanded role for military chaplains in terms of religious engagement and will do so through a brief discussion of historical examples of chaplains' involvement in religious engagement and an examination of the current literature on this important topic. Primarily, however, the article is a description of my role in Uruzgan with MTF-3 and the way that I became involved in religious engagement with the local Afghan National Army (ANA) Mullahs and the enormous benefits — both personal and for the task force and ANA brigade — that resulted from this engagement.

I have a vivid recollection of what I believe was a divine calling to religious engagement when I was at Al Minhad Air Base in the United Arab Emirates preparing to enter Afghanistan for the first time. It was early morning — just before sunrise, in fact — and I was out running in an effort to keep fit and also avoid the stifling June heat. I jogged past the base mosque just as the Imam was giving the morning call to prayer. I like to engage in prayer and reflection as I run and this time a notion hit me from out of the blue and a plan for engaging with Muslim leaders in Uruzgan Province coalesced in my mind. I found myself compelled to mount a totally foreign endeavour in a foreign land — but more about my approach later.

At its most basic level, religious engagement can be defined as:

*Any command-directed contact or interaction where the chaplain, as the command's religious representative, meets with a leader on matters of religion to ameliorate suffering and to promote peace and the benevolent expression of religion.<sup>1</sup>*

Thus, religious engagement involves the chaplain meeting and entering into a dialogue with religious representatives on a religious level to promote peace and harmony through understanding in the area of operations. For religious engagement to be authentic and effective it must not have as its objective the achievement of specific military goals or intelligence-gathering, otherwise it risks

becoming a tainted and fraudulent façade for the application of force, not a power for peace, reconciliation and the cessation of conflict. Since religious engagement involves religious dialogue, building mutual understanding and respect with the end result the amelioration of suffering and promotion of peace, it is a task for which we as chaplains are well educated and prepared; indeed for such a task, there are no better agents than the padre.

Religious engagement in its broadest sense is not necessarily new for chaplaincy in the Australian Army, nor for our coalition partners. There has been a healthy degree of religious engagement in previous wars along with some more recent reflection and experience both in Australia and overseas. Catholic historian Tom Johnstone comments that padres seem to have always been interested in working with local communities in addition to their task force responsibilities.<sup>2</sup> In Vietnam, Australian chaplains such as Father Gerry Cudmore conducted Mass for Vietnamese villagers in the Iron Triangle in 1965, and in 1966 Father John Williams integrated with a local Catholic community in Binh Ba as part of a civic affairs program. He celebrated Mass with the local congregation and Australian soldiers also attended; this built trust and friendship between the Vietnamese community and the Task Force.<sup>3</sup>

Johnstone discusses the involvement of chaplains with local communities in more recent deployments following the Vietnam War, particularly in United Nations peacekeeping operations such as East Timor. In East Timor, for instance, 2 RAR Chaplain Farther Glynn Murphy was involved with the local Timorese Catholic community.<sup>4</sup> Moving forward to the Iraq conflict, Chaplain Bob Bishop was clearly focused on deliberate dialogue and engagement when he spoke of 'building bridges of common mutual understanding' with the Muslim community. However he expressed regret that he was limited in this endeavour because command viewed him as a 'high value political target'.<sup>5</sup>

Over the last decade a number of authors have written specifically on the topic of religious engagement by chaplains. As far back as 2004, Lee, Burke and Crayne discussed the concept of military chaplains as peace-builders through religious engagement. They argued that,

*The doctrinal role of United States military chaplains must be expanded to allow for formal inclusion of indigenous religious groups and religious leaders into stability operations ... described as the role of religious liaison.*<sup>6</sup>

The authors assert that this additional role of religious liaison could be viewed as an expansion of the traditional chaplain's role of adviser to the commander. As I mentioned earlier, the chaplain is eminently suited to this role.<sup>7</sup>

As recently as 2013, Canadian academic and former military chaplain Steven K. Moore published a seminal work on religious engagement, *Military Chaplains as Agents of Peace: Religious Leader Engagement in Conflict and Post-Conflict Environments*.<sup>8</sup> Based on his 2008 doctoral thesis, Moore's thorough and insightful research explores the emerging role of operational chaplains from a theoretical basis, then anecdotally, by examining case studies of Canadian, French, United States, New Zealand and Norwegian endeavours in conflicts from Kosovo to Afghanistan. Moore views religious (leader) engagement 'as an evolving domain of ministry among operational chaplains'.<sup>9</sup> He explains that it is in operational settings 'that an irenic impulse among military chaplains is leading to a peace-building role among religious leaders and their respective communities within indigenous populations' while at the same time in no way undermining their sacramental and pastoral responsibilities to their troops.<sup>10</sup> The success of the chaplain lies in his or her role as a 'tolerant voice' and the subsequent sharing which this tolerant voice precipitates.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff also produced a publication in 2013 — *Religious Affairs in Joint Operations* — in which they assert that, in many cases, clergy-to-clergy communication is preferred by indigenous religious leaders and that chaplains have the requisite knowledge, experience and training to ensure their religious legitimacy which may directly contribute to the success of the mission.<sup>12</sup> They envisage this sort of engagement as designed to 'build trust and confidence, share information, coordinate mutual activities and maintain influence' and to 'ameliorate suffering ... promote peace and the benevolent expression of religion.'<sup>13</sup>

Given my own experience, I can identify with Chaplain Bob Bishop's Iraq recollection since the response he received was similar to the reaction I encountered when I proposed my involvement with religious engagement to my commanders. Fortunately for me, the security situation in Uruzgan was better, the United States military was already involved in religious engagement and MTF-3 had the brigade-level Operational Mentor Liaison Team (OMLT) in operation, so there was some scope for my proposal. MTF-3 commander, Lieutenant Colonel Chris Smith, and his counterpart at Combined Team Uruzgan, Deputy Commander Colonel David Smith, both gave their cautious assent, although I still suspect there was some reluctance based on concerns for the safety of the padre in this 'risky venture'!

My plan was two-fold. First, I proposed to build understanding with both the ANA and with local mosque communities by becoming the conduit for gifts of the Qur'an from the Australian Muslim community to Afghan Muslims. I arranged with an Imam in Queensland who had just become the chair of the Queensland Council of Imams to send me copies of the Qur'an, suitably wrapped, sealed, and clearly marked as gifts from Australian Muslims to Afghan mosque communities. He was more than happy to reach out this way and the boxes were soon in the mail and on their way. My intent was to counter the misinformation spread by the Taliban that International Security Assistance Force soldiers were in Afghanistan as crusaders bent on the overthrow of Islam, when in fact we were there to help them secure their country and to support them in reconstruction. In this vein, I believed it would be beneficial for Afghans to realise that there were Muslims in Australia who lived in harmony with the non-Muslim population, and to back this up by gifts of the greatest magnitude to a Muslim — the Holy Qur'an. I have to stress that the gifts of the Qur'an were **not from me**; although, yes, I had arranged them. But I was simply the conduit for the Australian Muslim community to support Afghan Muslims. I have vivid recollection of the overwhelming reception from Mullahs in both the ANA throughout Uruzgan and civilians in Tarin Kot. One older man was overcome with emotion and held the Qur'an to his forehead in devotion; another said to me that this was the greatest gift they could receive and could not stop thanking me. Suffice to say, the gifted Qur'ans opened doors for dialogue and understanding in ways I could not have anticipated. I am indebted to the Queensland Muslim community for their willingness to support this venture.

The second aspect of my religious engagement was to act as a mentor to the religious officers in the ANA. This was a project in which it appears the Dutch had been engaged at some point and which United States forces were again beginning to involve themselves at a Regional Command – South level. My predecessor, Chaplain Renton McRae, had attended a conference in Kandahar on religious engagement, but unfortunately his deployment had come to an end just as this endeavour was ramping up. The ball was passed to me, and indeed the soil of my heart had been ploughed over and I was ready to run with the idea.

I was attached to the Brigade OMLT under Major Andrew Baker and began meeting with the 4th ANA Brigade Religious Officer and the brigade Mullahs at the ANA base adjacent to Multinational Base Tarin Kot. This role was expanded when I visited MTF-3 soldiers in their various forward operating bases and I was invited to spend time with many of the *kandak* (roughly equivalent to a battalion) religious officers throughout Uruzgan. The role of religious officer is not specifically a religious position, and is not set aside for ANA personnel with specific training.

It is probably more akin to a welfare officer role. My role as a 'mentor' had nothing to do with specific religious material, instead it became an advisory role when problems in the brigade or *kandak* emerged and the religious officer wanted to discuss ideas and possible approaches. I was also a conduit for the endless requests for material support, although these were not always as successful as the ANA officers would have liked! More often than not, when I went to visit the religious officers, the *kandak* Mullah was present as well and so we would engage in inter-religious dialogue in addition to my 'mentoring' of the religious officer.

While I cannot quantify the effect of my involvement in religious engagement, I can relate some anecdotes which illustrate the enormous potential of religious engagement. After hosting one discussion at my office (with coffee and Tim Tams!) with the brigade religious officer, the brigade Mullah (a Sunni) and a Mullah from Tarin Kot (a Hazara Shia), the three Afghans requested a visit to our Ghan chapel and an explanation of the Christian faith and practice. I was taken aback, but it was then my great joy to walk them through the Ghan chapel, explain the practices of our faith and the connection between Australia and Afghanistan as exemplified by the naming of the chapel. They left with a much-improved understanding of the Christian faith and practice and the historical relationship between our two nations.

On another occasion I flew into Patrol Base Wali to spend a few days with the combat team there. I stowed my pack and webbing in the usual spot and went off to Headquarters to say 'G'day' to the Officer Commanding (OC) and operations staff. As I approached the hesco hut, the OC came out and said, 'Padre, so you are here. The ANA are looking for you.' It appears the ANA commander, religious officer and Mullah had become aware of my arrival and had immediately sent a message to the OC — 'We hear your Mullah has arrived and we want to see him!' Hence, I became known as 'the [Australian] Mullah'. The 4th ANA Brigade Mullah (Mullah Nassim) went further and announced to me one day that they had decided to give me an Arabic name — Hamza, meaning 'brave and strong' — because of the effort I had devoted to understanding their faith and assisting them. My relationship with Mullah Nassim and the 4th Brigade religious officer was helped considerably when, in the midst of some difficulties the officer was having with his commander, I suggested that the Mullah pray and we ask the Almighty for help. We bowed our heads and he recited Qur'an verses and prayed. He later told me that this was a pivotal time for him in his relationship with Christians and with me because I had demonstrated respect for him and his Islamic belief.

I have vivid memories of sitting on the floor over many cups of chai (tea) discussing faith, practice, belief and the *Ingil* (Gospel) with Mullahs firing as many challenging questions at me as they could. One of my treasured memories is being in a room with some five Mullahs and, after a long talk, one of them commenting, 'Yes ... interesting ... this too is in the Holy Qur'an ...' and the others nodding. Of course, the dialogue could only go so far; once it turned to the divinity of Christ and the nature of Godhead, we had to agree to disagree; but, most importantly, they listened. I have to admit that the learning was not all one way; I learned a great deal about the Muslim faith and was personally challenged by their faithfulness and devotion to prayer. Indeed, I formed some close bonds with my Afghan counterparts and it was with some very mixed feelings that I left the country when our deployment came to an end.

There are many, many stories I could relate, but for me the success of the relationships I had built was demonstrated when I handed over to Mentoring Task Force – 4 Chaplain Martin Johnson and he discovered that the Mullahs and religious officers were keen to continue the dialogue and mentoring. Before I left the country a request arrived from one of the patrol bases from an ANA religious officer who was asking why the new Australian Mullah had not yet come to visit. Martin continued to pass on the remaining copies of the Qur'an as opportunities presented themselves and so the work of relationship-building continued. I had one final privilege before returning to Australia, and that was to respond to a request from the United States chaplains at Kandahar to come and speak to them about my involvement with religious engagement in a seminar which I entitled 'Religious Engagement – Building Bridges of Understanding'. I received a very warm and enthusiastic response from the assembled brethren who were keen to explore their own opportunities for religious engagement.

To understand the possible effect of religious engagement and the subsequent relationship with the Mullahs, this relationship must be viewed in context of the place of the local Mullah in Afghan Islamic practice. The Mullah may be a semi-literate village-appointed Mullah, or he may be a well-educated Islamic cleric skilled in the Qur'an and in Islamic jurisprudence. But, in all cases, Mullahs are respected and listened to intently by their communities. Lee, Burke, and Crayne point out that in Western countries there is a separation of church and state, but this is not so in Muslim countries where religious leaders are as powerful, if not more powerful, than the political leaders.<sup>14</sup> So, the investment of time in dispelling falsehood and misinformation and in building understanding and mutual respect will impact on the religious leaders and thus the religious community — and by that I mean the whole community. What the Mullah

shares at Friday prayers can inflame hatred, mistrust and violence against foreign troops or it can encourage cooperation based on an accurate understanding of the mission and attitudes of those troops and their commanders. Engagement with that Mullah is therefore vital, and in this objective, the chaplain can perform a unique role.

This concept of engagement is not restricted to areas of the world where the Islamic faith predominates. Moore adds that, in any region of the world where religious observance is revered and permeates all levels of society and government, religious leaders are held in high esteem, often occupying positions of political power. He poses a question: what contribution can religious leader engagement make in these areas?<sup>15</sup> Obviously, military chaplains can engage in ways that others cannot since the very fact of their religious affiliation and leadership is generally respected and doors are opened by this respect. Consider, for instance, the religious statistical profile of our own backyard. The nations of the Pacific are predominately actively Christian in belief and thus religious engagement in the Pacific is likely to be extremely effective.<sup>16</sup> Add to this the burgeoning Islamic influence in Asia, where the lessons to which I have alluded can be applied, and again there is significant scope for successful religious engagement.

As we move beyond the conflict in Afghanistan and our posture as an army moves from OPGEN (operational generation) to FORCEGEN (force generation), the opportunity for chaplains to engage in religious dialogue within whatever communities we as an Army find ourselves remains. This niche capability will be a task force necessity irrespective of the type of operations in which we find ourselves engaged in the future, be that warfighting or disaster response. In this respect then, the necessity to train chaplains for religious engagement remains a significant priority for Army and a significant opportunity for the Chaplains Department. From my perspective, religious engagement has been not only a personally rewarding endeavour, but one which I believe built understanding and mutual trust with key Uruzgan-based Afghan religious leaders in both the civilian and military spheres. My hope is that this endeavour ultimately saved lives on both sides of the conflict. ■

## The Author

Chaplain John Saunders serves as Padre to the 7th Combat Signals Regiment and the 136th Signals Squadron, both based at Enoggera, having formerly been chaplain to 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR), JLU-NQ, B Squadron 3rd/4th Cavalry Regiment, and the 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment. He deployed on Operation SLIPPER with 2 RAR Mentoring Task Force-3. Chaplain Saunders is an ordained minister of the Uniting Church in Australia. He is married to Jan and they have two adult children, Michael and Jessica.

## Endnotes

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## God and the Cost of Freedom

Chaplain Stephen Brooks

'Let us quietly and deliberately admit that no man has yet explained the reality of evil in a world created and sustained by an all-powerful, all wise, all-good Spirit, by God'<sup>1</sup> So why try to understand a reality which, though empirically accessible, is at the same time an impregnable mystery, a mystery which brings humanity to the point of self contradiction: 'For ... evil is absolute meaningless and perversion'<sup>2</sup>

When applied to the claim that *it is impossible for God to give certain benefits without the existence of evil being inevitable*, the mystery begins to unravel. This claim goes right to the heart of finite humanity's search for self-realisation, the search to *become*, to transcend limitations, to be a *question* which ultimately seeks fulfillment in the Absolute *other*. This *other* is God, the source of human existence, the One in whom every mystery is known but not yet fully realised.

The journey of self-realisation is fraught with the struggle against evil, the undeniable contradiction of the suffering of the innocent; for the hand that feeds, is also the accused hand that poisons. One must question the authenticity of God as either a fraud whose existence is doubtful, or a God of vulnerable love who has created humanity with incarnate freedom to act, to deny, to choose, and to find the limitless One within the limited self — the *I in us*.

For human activity to go beyond mere survival and propagation there must be an ability to transcend the immediate, to remain free from the strictures of a corporal reality of life that ultimately brings obliteration and nothingness. From time immemorial and in all cultures people have sought an answer to escape this nothingness, to seek the meaning of human existence, by asking *Who am I?* Essentially, the answers to this question have found expression in the form of metaphysical and religious conviction. Though varied and not limited to one pattern of thought, this question of ultimate meaning raises the question of God, the absolute ground of being. As the claim suggests, God is the source of all being, the creator who gives meaning to existence. Therefore the *word* God in this context is not a mere void, nor an identity with the subject and the world (pantheism), but an experience which is an encounter with mystery. Driven by this search for meaning and value, humanity stands before this *word* as a *question* about God.<sup>3</sup> As a *question*, humanity seeks to transcend its reality as a finite, corporal and incomplete self. The *question* is drawn to its source of being, to the God who cannot be fathomed, who is beyond understanding and knowledge. How then can the human consciousness begin to perceive that who is unperceivable? The answer is found within incarnate freedom, as *self* searches for meaning beyond the boundary of human existence to a horizon of infinity. This search to have meaning must find fulfillment in relationship with the *other*. Yet God as *other* does not impose will over human freedom as would a master puppeteer on his objects.

This freedom, as Lobo suggests, is not an instrument for meeting specific needs, but rather the choice to *become who we truly are in relationship with God*.<sup>4</sup> It is from God that humanity draws the *benefit* of freedom — a freedom to act or not to act. In every choice of action there is an opposite course, even when great difficulty or rejection of self remains a possibility. This incarnate freedom is not absolute, but limited by various natural and physical events: by culture, prejudices and self-understanding. It is a freedom which invites the conscious self to grow in understanding of what can be neither comprehended nor possessed, to help dispel the darkness of the horizon of human history which has no meaning. For this freedom to be real, God does not make the universe and person within it act, rather God makes the acting universe and person be.<sup>5</sup>

As humanity is *free* (albeit limited), how can knowledge of *other* be possible since God is beyond humanity's horizon of *being*? Aquinas clearly understood the difficulty of searching for meaning and the inadequacy of language when speaking of God. To overcome this impasse he applied the *Analogy of Attribution*.

Aquinas readily acknowledged that he would never be able to understand the good in God, but could grasp the good in God's creation and, though not absolute, this revealed something of that unfathomed good which is God.<sup>6</sup> So it is with the totality of human experience — language, community, art, worship, science, technology, politics and nature all create the means by which humanity can discover the foretaste of what is eternal, for '... God is the cause of being of everything.'<sup>7</sup>

From this understanding one can draw the conclusion that God is benevolent, transcendent and imminent as creator. God is not simply *initial cause* devoid of relationship, but open to *finite becoming*, addressing the whole person as an historical and communal being in all the dimensions of imagination, affectivity and sensitivity. This does not contradict God's omnipotence as unlimited; rather it acknowledges that God can do everything that is logically possible for God to do. Equally, God as all-knowing, *omni-present* in all things, past, present and future, does not threaten the integrity of incarnate freedom. Peter Vardy clearly articulates this view in his work *The Puzzle of God* by concluding that '...God cannot predict with absolute certainty our every future action. However, He can predict that His eventual purpose will triumph.'<sup>8</sup> That is to say, humanity is free not in spite of God, but rather because of God.

Having established the transcendental benefits that God has bestowed on humanity as a means to self-realisation, God can nonetheless become unhinged, because evil has not been excluded from the equation of life. As the claim states: *It is impossible for God to give certain benefits without the existence of evil being inevitable*. This claim immediately comes under attack from its opening premise, that something is *impossible for God*. God is all-powerful, the creator of the universe; surely if God willed it, then nothing is impossible. David Hume goes further by suggesting that if God cannot prevent evil then God is impotent; if, on the other hand, God can prevent evil and will not, then God is malevolent.<sup>9</sup> One can only conclude from Hume's interpretation that God's omnipotence is limited, if not in wisdom, then in power.

God's very existence is brought into question because the single most persuasive argument against the existence of God is the existence of evil. This is well illustrated in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, when Ivan rebels against God in protest at all the evil suffering inflicted on the innocent. He cannot justify such suffering even if it brings about a higher good. His response to this perceived contradiction is not to deny that God exists, rather he simply does not want 'to play the game' any longer: 'It is not God that I do not accept ... I merely most

respectfully return him my ticket.’<sup>10</sup> Ivan is not rebelling against the notion that God wills evil absolutely, but that God *permits* it for a higher good. This is not a solution to the *claim*, but more an evasion since, by permitting it, God wills it, and God’s will is absolute.

Taken from the Manichaeian tradition, the dualist theory offers a possible defence in that there are two equal forces at work in the universe — one good and one evil. This supports the *claim* that neither can be present without the other. The weakness of this theory is in the application; the world becomes a battlefield on which one or the other will win. Therefore *the good* cannot be assured of victory and, as God is often understood as *the good*, God becomes relative and subject to the struggle.

Attempts to explain the existence of evil from a theological perspective or theodicy, in most cases, further weaken the *claim*. Many fall under the mantle of *Free Will Defence* which maintains that God allows evil so that humanity is truly free to enter into relationship with *other*. It also exonerates God from blame for evil by placing it squarely at the feet of ‘... dependent beings who have willfully misused God’s gift of freedom.’<sup>11</sup>

Turning to *The Book of Genesis* (Gen 3:1-24) as a starting point, evil entered the world through the sin of one man, Adam. At first glance this supports the notion that evil is an inevitable reality of God’s positive action in the world. God had offered to both Adam and Eve the *benefit* of incarnate freedom to have dominion over all the earth; they chose self and alienation (Gen 1:26-3:24). This explanation, in fact, does little to support the *claim*. Had the story of creation marked the first steps of humanity’s journey in *becoming*, then the tale would be more plausible. Instead one is saddled with the notion that Adam and Eve, prior to *the fall* (Gen 3:13-24), had assumed *being* and were in a full relationship with God, although there is no mention of this being freely realised. Instead of humanity being in a state of *becoming*, it had been there, done that, and was now in a state of *regression*. As an aside, it is also difficult to reconcile the timeline of humanity’s effect on nature, since nature, according to the creation story (Gen: 1:1-2:7), preceded Adam and Eve. Does this imply that nature had reached perfection before humanity? And if so, then surely nature should hold a higher and more privileged place within the universe than the human race.

Defending the morality of God, prospective theodicies seek to explain the reason for evil in the world by showing that it has a purpose. The individual eschatological theodicy inspired by Irenaeus of Lyon and championed by contemporary

theologians Hick and Swinburne suggests that the presence of evil and sin challenges humanity to grow through adversity to discover self in relationship with God which finds fulfillment in immortality (Jn 6:51). The suffering of this world can be tolerated for the eternal joy which will be experienced in heaven with God. It is within this struggle that humanity overcomes that epistemic distance or hidden knowledge of the Absolute and, in turn, comes to know God through the free interpretive response of faith.<sup>12</sup>

The problem with this approach is that God is perceived as a hard taskmaster. The old analogue — *you have to be cruel to be kind* — is somewhat apt in this context. As a consequence it blindly overlooks the fact that suffering does not necessarily make one a better person; for some it is too heavy a burden to shoulder. It is difficult to accept that the suffering of the innocent is just an unfortunate part of life and, quite plainly, one must ask: is freedom worth the price? Not escaping these criticisms, Hick does give strength to the plausibility of the *claim* by raising a vital point: if humanity is denied the opportunity to engage in the objective world (as a free moral agent) with all its diversity, evil and suffering included, then how can individuals find meaning, subjectivity and a genuine relationship with *other*? This would be a world devoid of the need for virtues or self-sacrifice, and the capacity to love unconditionally could never be fully tested.<sup>13</sup> In other words, humanity needs to win its stripes, not fall into a dependency model which deprives it of authenticity and leaves it in a state of blind adherence. This is not liberation from, but rather bondage to a *poverty of spirit*.

Accepting that God will only do what God can do, the *claim* does have merit. It stands to reason that God is a God of relationship open to our limitations. For if humans were simply pre-programmed robots or, as J.L. MacKie would suggest, created to always do what is right, what would be the point of a relationship with God?<sup>14</sup> It would more be akin to an arranged marriage. The outward action of God in creating the universe demonstrates that, as an absolute being, God is not self-absorbed; God is a God of outpouring. To suggest otherwise would be absurd, for to create something is to impart self into the object — not that the object becomes the maker, but rather *I made this; therefore this is part of me*. Creating implies that there is a relationship between the maker and the made; one could argue that the maker could ignore or discard the creation. While this is true, God has given humanity the *benefit* of freedom to search for the meaning of *I* which finds fulfillment in the *we*, the *I in us*.

Is this reasoning simply collapsing into William Paley's *Design Argument*?<sup>15</sup> Perhaps it is; but more to the point, one is free to debate, to search or to ignore relationship with the *other*, not as some mental gymnastics but out of a desire to find meaning.

The action of God within creation is not limited, since creation is in a state of *absolute* becoming. God is not diminished by God's work in progress, for it is a revealing foretaste of what it will become — God is both the beginning and end of all created being. This invites the conclusion that God as *selfless absolute being* is open to relationship. True relationship is built on selfless love which is *vulnerable* in that it does not seek to control, it longs for the other; it is silent because it gives no reason for itself; *in communion* by uniting two without the loss of individual identity; *present* in accepting the I in other; *self giving* so that the other can reach fulfillment in self; and *reciprocal* in that the meeting of the I and the *Thou* results in a *We*.<sup>16</sup> For this vulnerable love to be realised, humanity must be given freedom, the freedom to choose and accept responsibility as a communal being despite, as the *claim* suggests, evil being inevitable.

As much as the *claim* helps to explain why freedom to *become* cannot be devoid of the inevitable existence of evil, it struggles to justify the negative effect of evil — suffering. Humanity must face it on two fronts: *natural evil*, a destructive power produced by nature in flux — wind, fire, movement and rain destroy property and life. *Evil done or sin* — the absence of *other* in a person's life, born of self-centeredness, which not only destroys property and life, but *self in relationship with other*. Suffering is a paradox of mystery; without it there is no freedom to choose, but suffering itself can enslave and destroy. Evil, the source of suffering, was understood by Aquinas as the *deprivation* of the good in a person or thing, that which prevents realisation.<sup>17</sup> Efforts to justify unmerited suffering as a means of *purification* or an opportunity to *grow in faith* collapse under the weight of innocent suffering. How can the torture of an innocent baby be purification or a means of growth? God, by giving humanity the benefits of freedom, has also saddled it with the negative effects of evil. This is somewhat akin to Einstein's discovery that  $E=MC^2$ , used wisely, has the potential to uncover the secrets of creation (*The Big Bang Theory*). But, as a means to destroy, it may equip humanity with the means to finally bring about its own annihilation.

This brings one to the inescapable truth — that all theodices and arguments to justify the creative action of God and the presence of evil cannot be reconciled against the suffering of the innocent. Where to from here? While religion does not provide a clear, reasoned answer to what is a mystery, Christianity nonetheless

does offer a cure.<sup>18</sup> For the Christian, evil is a double paradox. On the one hand its presence in the world created by God cannot be understood. On the other hand, God has broken into human history and, through the redeeming action of the Cross, sin and death have been conquered (Lk. 24:45-47, 1Cor.15:3-5). Humanity in all its frailty is, in turn, promised a share in the glory of eternal life. Blind faith perhaps, but the alternatives seem far less inspiring. One can rebel and revolt against God as did Ivan Karamazov; escape from it to the Buddhist's passionless *Nirvana*; preach a stoic indifference; or fight against it with all one's strength in the knowledge of faith, that fulfillment will be found in God's salvific plan for humanity, the *I in us*. ■

## Endnotes

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- 2 W. Kasper, Jesus the Christ, Burns & Oates, London, 1985, p. 55.
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## Rabbi Gittelsohn's Iwo Jima Sermon

Sheldon M Young

The fight for Iwo Jima in 1945 was one of the bloodiest of World War II. A tiny island in the Pacific dominated by a volcanic mountain and pockmarked with caves, Iwo Jima was the setting for a five-week, non-stop battle between 70,000 American Marines and an unknown number of deeply entrenched Japanese defenders. The courage and gallantry of the American forces, climaxed in the dramatic raising of the American flag over Mt Suribachi, is memorialised in the Marine Corps monument in Washington DC. Less well-remembered, however, is that the battle occasioned an eloquent eulogy by a Marine Corps rabbi that has become an American classic.

Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn (1910–95), assigned to the Fifth Marine Division, was the first Jewish chaplain the Marine Corps ever appointed. The American invading force at Iwo Jima included approximately 1500 Jewish Marines, and Rabbi Gittelsohn was in the thick of the fray, ministering to Marines of all faiths in the combat zone. He shared the fear, horror and despair of the fighting men, each of whom knew that this day might be his last. Roland Gittelsohn's tireless efforts to comfort the wounded and encourage the fearful won him three service ribbons.

When the fighting was over, Division Chaplain Warren Cuthriell, a Protestant minister, asked Rabbi Gittelsohn to deliver the memorial sermon at a combined religious service dedicating the Marine Cemetery. Cuthriell wanted all the fallen Marines (black and white, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish) honoured in a single,



non-denominational ceremony. Unfortunately, racial and religious prejudice was strong in the Marine Corps, as it was then throughout America. According to Rabbi Gittelsohn's autobiography, the majority of Christian chaplains objected to having a rabbi preach over predominantly Christian graves. The Catholic chaplains, in keeping with church doctrine, opposed any form of joint religious service.

To his credit, Cuthriell refused to alter his plans. Gittelsohn, on the other hand, wanted to save his friend further embarrassment and so decided it was best not to deliver his sermon. Instead, three separate religious services were held. At the Jewish service, attended by a congregation of 70 or so, Rabbi Gittelsohn delivered the powerful eulogy he originally wrote for the combined service:

*Here lie men who loved America because their ancestors generations ago helped in her founding. And other men who loved her with equal passion because they themselves or their own fathers escaped from oppression to her blessed shores. Here lie officers and men, Negroes and whites, rich men and poor, together. Here are Protestants, Catholics, and Jews together. Here no man prefers another because of his faith or despises him because of his color. Here there are no quotas of how many from each group are admitted or allowed. Among these men there is no discrimination. No prejudices. No hatred. There is the highest and purest democracy ...*

*Whosoever of us lifts his hand in hate against a brother, or who thinks himself superior to those who happen to be in the minority, makes of this ceremony and the bloody sacrifice it commemorates, an empty, hollow mockery. To this then, as our solemn sacred duty, do we the living now dedicate ourselves: To the right of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, of white men and Negroes alike, to enjoy the democracy for which all of them have here paid the price ...*

*We here solemnly swear this shall not be in vain. Out of this and from the suffering and sorrow of those who mourn this, will come, we promise, the birth of a new freedom for the sons of men everywhere.<sup>1</sup>*

Among Gittelsohn's listeners were three Protestant chaplains so incensed by the prejudiced behaviour of their colleagues that they boycotted their own service to attend Gittelsohn's. One of them borrowed the manuscript and, unknown to Gittelsohn, circulated several thousand copies to his regiment. Some Marines enclosed the copies in letters to their families. An avalanche of coverage resulted. *Time* magazine published excerpts, which wire services spread even further.

The entire sermon was inserted into the Congressional Record, the Army released the eulogy for short-wave broadcast to American troops throughout the world and radio commentator Robert St John read it on his program and on many succeeding Memorial Days.

In 1995, in his last major public appearance before his death, Gittelsohn reread a portion of the eulogy at the 50th commemoration ceremony at the Iwo Jima statue in Washington DC. In his autobiography, Gittelsohn reflected, 'I have often wondered whether anyone would ever have heard of my Iwo Jima sermon had it not been for the bigoted attempt to ban it.' ■

## Endnotes

- 1 With grateful thanks to the American Jewish Historical Society for this excerpt.

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# The Cloister and the Barracks: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Formation of Christian Community

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## **Cloister and Barracks: Bonhoeffer's Protestant Monasticism**

Amid the rising tide of National Socialism in 1930s Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer began to study monastic communities and other forms of disciplined communal life. He believed the immense power of the Nazi regime could be resisted only through the cultivation of small, faithful, highly disciplined Christian communities.

While other Christian leaders in Germany were embroiled in church politics and in complex negotiations concerning the place of church institutions in the new German Reich, Bonhoeffer was planning a trip to India to become a member of Gandhi's ashram. He was convinced that the church in Germany had forfeited its spiritual integrity and moral authority. The German church had not followed the way of Christ. Instead of being a believers' community, it had become a counterfeit community whose ultimate loyalty lay not with Christ but with the German Führer. By contrast, Gandhi had taken seriously the teaching of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, and had cultivated a form of community that looked more authentically

'Christian' — more Christlike — than anything in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Though Gandhi was a Hindu and not a Christian, Bonhoeffer planned to spend six months as his disciple, learning from him about communal discipline, the practice of non-violent resistance, and the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount.

But shortly before leaving for India, Bonhoeffer was called on by the Confessing Church to become director of one of its five illegal seminaries. These seminaries would train a new generation of resisting pastors — pastors who would receive no salaries, no state support, and no official recognition from the state church, but who would be committed to preserving a faithful Christian witness at any cost. Bonhoeffer accepted the call and began to make preparations for establishing a new seminary community. The most important part of his preparation was a tour of monastic communities in England as a way of observing communal discipline, even though he would no longer have the opportunity to experience such communal practices for himself in Gandhi's ashram.

After visiting a number of English monasteries he returned to Germany and became director of the illegal seminary in the small town of Finkenwalde. The seminary comprised a community of young men living together in an old, run-down manor house. Initially the students addressed Bonhoeffer as 'Herr Director' but, after the first few days, he told them to call him 'Brother Dietrich' — a mark of the kind of fraternal community that he wanted to cultivate. Under Bonhoeffer's leadership, the community adopted a rigorous regime of discipline, including daily psalm singing and Bible reading, periods of work and study, regular rhythms of prayer, meditation, fasting, solitude and mutual confession of sins. And Bonhoeffer's teaching — again in imitation of Gandhi — was devoted primarily to the Sermon on the Mount. Students were encouraged to regulate the whole of their lives according to Christ's teaching. As Bonhoeffer saw it, Christ's commandments are not merely (as the Lutheran tradition had argued) lofty moral ideals that are impossible to put into practice. They are teachings that are meant to be obeyed:

*From the human point of view there are countless possibilities of understanding and interpreting the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus knows only one possibility: simply go and obey. Do not interpret or apply, but do it and obey. That is the only way Jesus' word is really heard.<sup>2</sup>*

Thus ascetic teaching and ascetic practices pervaded every aspect of the community's life in Finkenwalde. Adopting Gandhi's emphasis on fasting, for instance, Bonhoeffer told his students: 'Jesus takes it for granted that disciples will keep the pious practice or exercise of fasting. The life of a disciple requires

the strict practice of austerity.’<sup>3</sup> Yet there was, by all accounts, plenty of leisure at Finkenwalde too, particularly in the form of music. Bonhoeffer was fond of playing his African American Spiritual records which he had brought back from New York. But even such recreational time was carefully scheduled and adapted to the spiritual rationale of the community. Nothing was haphazard or frivolous; everything was accommodated to the wider spiritual architecture of monastic discipline. Indeed Bonhoeffer argued that asceticism is important precisely because it makes believers ‘more joyous’ in their daily lives.<sup>4</sup>

It is striking to reflect that such communal discipline was Bonhoeffer’s considered response to the vast and powerful machinery of the Nazi Reich. In the context of an increasingly militarised society, Bonhoeffer deployed a familiar vocabulary of discipline, obedience and loyalty — but while such terms were used in Germany with reference to the Führer, Bonhoeffer used this language to describe the community’s relationship with Jesus Christ. The Finkenwalde seminary was a form of alternative barracks, a training ground for addressing society with an alternative message of grace and salvation.

## **Alien Righteousness: the Nature of Christian Community**

But what, in practical terms, was Bonhoeffer hoping to achieve with these measures? The short answer is: not much. Again and again, Bonhoeffer’s writings and letters caution against false ideals of success: ‘The form of the crucified disarms all thinking aimed at success ... Only in the cross of Christ ... does humanity take on its true form.’<sup>5</sup> The Christian community’s aim was not to fight against worldly power on its own terms. Its aim was not to exert influence in any ordinary way. Nor was its aim to achieve numerical success — as if the problems in Germany could be solved simply by recruiting more people to the Christian cause. As Bonhoeffer saw it, the church’s problem in Germany was that it was too big. Virtually all German citizens had been baptised as infants and automatically considered themselves Christian. The Christian institution had become all but indistinguishable from German cultural ideology. The great need, Bonhoeffer believed, was for a *smaller* church — a small community of faithful, disciplined believers who could recover an authentic witness to the person of Jesus Christ. Ultimately what mattered was this witness itself, not the size of the witnessing community. As Bonhoeffer would later write in his drafted work, *Ethics*:

*The church of Jesus Christ is the place ... in the world where the reign of Jesus Christ over the whole world is to be demonstrated and proclaimed. This space of the church does not, therefore, exist just for itself, but its existence is already always something that reaches far beyond it. This is because it is not the space of a cult that would have to fight for its own existence in the world. Rather, the space of the church is the place where witness is given to the foundation of all reality in Jesus Christ. The church is the place where it is proclaimed and taken seriously that God has reconciled the world to himself in Christ, that God so loved the world that God gave his Son for it. The space of the church is not there in order to fight with the world for a piece of its territory, but precisely to testify to the world that it is still the world, namely, the world that is loved and reconciled by God. It is not true that the church intends to or must spread its space out over the space of the world. It desires no more space than it needs to serve the world with its witness to Jesus Christ ... Otherwise the church becomes a 'religious society' that fights in its own interest and thus has ceased to be the church of God in the world.<sup>6</sup>*

Bonhoeffer understands 'the world' not as a single entity but as a complex system of overlapping communities including marriage, family, work and government.<sup>7</sup> The Christian community is not absolutely distinct from these other communities. It intersects with them. It partially overlaps with all the other communal structures that make up 'the world'. The Christian community is not one additional form of social belonging alongside all the others. It is not primarily an institution with its own separate role and position in society. Rather the Christian community is a microcosm of the whole world. God's grace towards every kind of human community becomes visible in the communal life of the church. When a Christian community lives by grace alone, the true foundations of all human community are laid bare. In this way the Christian community does not seek anything for itself, but exists solely to serve the world by showing the world that it is loved by God and reconciled to God in Christ.

Grace, therefore, is the whole *raison d'être* of Christian community. Here, in a striking piece of theological improvisation, Bonhoeffer translates the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith into a doctrine of community:

*Christians no longer live by their own resources, by accusing themselves and justifying themselves, but by God's accusation and God's justification. They live entirely by God's Word pronounced on them ... The Reformers expressed this by calling our righteousness an 'alien righteousness', a righteousness that comes from outside of us (extra nos).<sup>8</sup>*

Each member of the community lives by the same grace. Moreover, all members are signs of grace to one another: 'Christ made the other Christian to be grace for us.'<sup>9</sup> By trusting one another with our frailties and vulnerabilities, we learn how to live in trust with God. By confessing our faults to one another and depending on one another for forgiveness, we learn how to live in openness to God's gift of forgiveness. In this way each member of the community receives Christ from all the others. The whole community learns how to live not by its own internal resources, but by the 'alien righteousness' of Jesus Christ. 'The Christ in [our] own hearts is weaker than the Christ in the word of other Christians.'<sup>10</sup>

For the same reason, Bonhoeffer places special emphasis on the role of weak and vulnerable members within the community. At a time when the whole of German society was swept up in the adulation of health, strength and physical perfection — leading, for instance, to policies concerning the sterilisation of the disabled — Bonhoeffer insists that the weakest members of the community are potentially the most significant since it is in relation to them that the community's real source of life becomes most apparent. 'The exclusion of the weak and insignificant, the seemingly useless people, from everyday Christian life in community may actually mean the exclusion of Christ; for in the poor sister or brother, Christ is knocking at the door.'<sup>11</sup> Again, it is clear that Bonhoeffer's interest is not in strong or successful communities, but simply faithful communities in which human beings learn how to live together through a grace that each freely receives yet none possesses. Only in this way does the world have the opportunity to see what it really means to be the world — a world loved by God and sustained by God's own inexhaustible resources.

## Surprising the World: Community and Christian Ministry

In such communities, Bonhoeffer believes, the role of the pastor or leader will not be to cultivate an idealised ‘vision’,<sup>12</sup> nor to manage or influence the community through ‘psychological techniques and methods’.<sup>13</sup> The Christian leader is not permitted to relate to other human beings on the basis of what they *might* be, but only on the basis of what they *actually are*. ‘Those who love their dream of a Christian community more than the Christian community itself become destroyers of that Christian community even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest, and sacrificial. God hates this wishful dreaming.’<sup>14</sup> God brings us into community not so that we can achieve some higher purpose — as if human beings were a means to a higher end — but so that we can learn how to participate together in an environment of grace and joy. ‘Christian community is not an ideal we have to realise, but rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.’<sup>15</sup> Christians are to enter into life together ‘not as those who make demands, but as those who thankfully receive.’<sup>16</sup> This prohibition against ‘making demands’ applies above all to the minister, or to any person who exercises leadership within the community.

While the leader with ‘vision’ wants the community to attain some higher standard or to succeed in fulfilling some higher aspiration, Bonhoeffer remained calmly uninterested in the usual markers of influence or success. The Christian community, he believed, exists solely in order to become a living testimony to the reality of grace in the world. Within such a community, the leader will be a servant of grace — not a triumphant figure, but a person who resembles Henri Nouwen’s model of a ‘wounded healer’.<sup>17</sup>

In sum, it is not the job of the Christian community to win. What Bonhoeffer called ‘the godlessness of the world’ is not a problem that the Christian community needs to overcome. ‘Godlessness’ is the place where God’s light shines whenever Christians show, by their lives together, that human community is really founded on Christ. As Bonhoeffer would later explain in one of his prison letters:

*Being a Christian does not mean being religious in a certain way, making oneself into something or other (a sinner, a penitent, or a saint) according to some method or other. Instead it means being human, not a certain type of human being, but the human being Christ creates in us ... Jesus calls not to a new religion but to life ... One must speak in such a way that the godlessness of the world is not covered up in any way, but rather precisely to uncover it and surprise the world by letting light shine on it.*<sup>18</sup>



Here then is the rationale of Christian community: to ‘surprise the world’ with signs of genuine humanity; to present the world with the strange spectacle of fully human lives — lives that are individually frail and broken, yet collectively healed and forgiven within the setting of a community of grace.

And because Christ’s followers live by grace, their life together will be marked by a peculiar joy and freedom. Their vocation is to show the world what humanity really looks like. This occurs whenever Christians live together in unity, peace, penitence, encouragement and forgiveness. Compared to this, other ideal forms of humanity which a society might emulate — the hero, the warrior, the person of exceptional power or beauty — seem pale imitations, mere parodies of humanity.

Bonhoeffer’s lasting insight is that it is not our own individual resources that make us fully human. We become truly human, truly alive, only when we learn how to give and to receive in a community of vulnerability, generosity, trust and joy. ■

## Endnotes

- 1 See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letter to Julie Bonhoeffer, in London, 1933–1935, Hans Goedeking, Martin Heimbucher and Hans-Walter Schleicher (eds.), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* 13, Fortress, Minneapolis, 2007, p. 152.
- 2 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Discipleship, Martin Kuske and Ilse Tödt (eds), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* 4, Fortress, Minneapolis, 2001, p. 181. This book is based on Bonhoeffer’s lectures to the students at Finkenwalde.
- 3 Ibid., p. 158.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics, Ilse Tödt, Heinz E. Tödt, Ernst Feil and Clifford Green (eds), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* 6, Fortress, Minneapolis, 2005, pp. 90–91.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 63–64.
- 7 Bonhoeffer rejected the traditional Lutheran doctrine of autonomous ‘orders of creation’ and redefined these orders as ‘orders of preservation’ which serve the gospel of Jesus Christ. His attempt to respond to this Lutheran doctrine, and thus to provide a rival theological definition of ‘the world’ forms a major part of his Ethics and of his *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, John W. de Gruchy (ed), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* 3, Fortress, Minneapolis, 1997.
- 8 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, G. L. Müller and Albrecht Schönherr (eds), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* 5, Fortress, Minneapolis, 1996, p. 31.
- 9 Ibid., p. 109.
- 10 Ibid., p. 32.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 45–46.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 35–38.

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- 13 Ibid., p. 40.
- 14 Ibid., p. 36.
- 15 Ibid., p. 38.
- 16 Ibid., p. 37
- 17 Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, Image Books, New York, 1979.
- 18 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letter to Eberhard Bethge, in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, John W. de Gruchy (ed), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 8*, Fortress, Minneapolis, 2009, pp. 480–82.

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# Living in the Shadow: A Theological Discussion on the Place, Purpose, and Meaning of Australian Defence Force Chaplaincy

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## **Abstract**

Defence Chaplaincy is a unique aspect of the church's mission engagement with the secular world. However, little work has been undertaken by the church to frame it theologically and ensure it is set well within the organisational context in which it exists. This paper is an attempt to open the theological dialogue on Defence chaplaincy and to offer some ways in which the church can begin to think theologically about this unique ecumenical engagement. It is not an attempt to provide answers, but a challenge to the church to collectively engage in a theological discourse that will empower its presence in an alien world.

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In 2013 the Royal Australian Army Chaplains Department celebrates 100 years since formation. In this time Chaplains, from all three services, have served in every military, peace and humanitarian operation Australia has undertaken. Strangely, however, little has been written or researched regarding the theological frameworks in which this ministry operates. There is a significant amount of historical material, some verging on the purely mythical with religious fabrications akin to delusional apocalyptic religious propaganda through to more earthy accounts articulating the chaplain's personal struggle with the inhumanity of war. While this material may be interesting, it fails to peel away the pragmatism of pastoral practice to reveal the theological meta-narratives that determine why and how chaplains function in a secular organization. This is not something unique to Defence chaplaincy, for all forms of chaplaincy appear to suffer from the same lack of theological deliberation.

It appears strange that in an age when secular organisations are utilising such valuable and scant religious resources little is being done to explore the theological implications and ramifications of this inter-relational merger between secular and religious worlds. In the rare case where such discussions have taken place they have floundered by a lack of interest from the organisation, or a lack of robust theological engagement from the religious bodies. Modern organisations are dominated by hangovers from the industrialised paradigms of the twentieth century. This pragmatism focuses the organisation on productivity and output as measures of success. The rationalised consummation of productivity and the need to pursue profitable success offers little scope for the more deliberate process of critical reflection that an appropriate theological engagement demands. The religious world has not been immune to this industrialisation of its world-views. In a world where the social influence of structured faith systems has waned and collective religious conviction has been gradually superseded by the pursuit of individualised spirituality, religious bodies have retreated into their fortresses of faith and adopted an apologetics that is far more defensive and self-justifying than it has historically been. Chaplaincy, with its tenuous links to the religious body and consumed by the pragmatic pressures of the organisation, resides in the shadows of both. Too often it is overlooked or disregarded, not taken serious as an aspect of the religious body's social engagement with the world, and allowed to drift under its own efforts to sustain a justification for its presence in both worlds. Understandably, therefore, to open a discourse on the theological parameters of chaplaincy is not an easy task, and this paper can never hope to provide definitive outcomes in this regard. Nevertheless, the conversation needs to begin if chaplaincy is to remain a unique entity that can contribute effectively to both the secular and religious worlds. This discussion is an attempt to open the door to begin facilitating this possibility.

The very point of interaction between secular and religious, or church and state, pose significant theological questions for both sides of the divide. The debate in Australia is not complicated by constitutional dilemmas such as exist within the United States of America.<sup>1</sup> In this setting the constitutionally enshrined freedom of religion, the role of the state, the separation of powers, the individualisation of the spiritual, and the historical baggage of a nation that has emerged with a unique and strong religious under current all complicate the very essence of the dialogue regarding the place, purpose and function of chaplaincy within the United States military. The United States debate is coloured by the legitimacy of a perceived religious imposition upon what has become a fundamentally modern view of individual religiosity that has permeated Western society over the past several decades. While elements of this debate are present in the Australian social psyche, they lack the passion and fervour of the United States experience. Far more relevant is the emergence of a social religiosity defined by the secularised organisation to serve its vision, mission, and structural intent. It is not as concerned with the faith systems from which chaplains are drawn. Instead it prefers to value the presence of 'religious professionals' enshrined in an overall understanding of holistic well being on both the collective and individual levels with the end state of enhanced productivity. This essentially industrialised world view articulates the religious professional as an agent of capability and productivity whose presence facilitates success. It is for this fundamental reason that many organisations have adopted the presence of a 'chaplain', with government policy actually facilitating the employment of religious individuals within the secularised system. In this environment, chaplaincy is sustained in direct correlation to the way it contributes to the successful achievement of the organisation's outcomes. It is understandable that in this pragmatic climate, where productivity is pursued with religious zeal, that little desire resides within the organisation to dig deeper into the theological discourse that validates the existence of the chaplain within the non-religious world. As long as chaplaincy functionally adds to the organisation's productivity, there is no need to ask the deeper questions. Chaplains, and their ecclesiastical masters, are delusional if they think the secular organisation utilises their services for any other means apart from that which the organisation deems as value adding to their productivity or operational outcomes.

For many, this rationalisation of the religious within the context of the secular appears vague or even theologically repulsive. For the theologian, residing within the citadel of the academy and alienated from the fracas of common existence, such pragmatic rationalisations based on productivity or outcomes remain difficult to justifiably sustain. It is far easier to obscure chaplaincy behind

the meeting of specific religious needs within the organisation, presupposing that such needs must be internally met because they cannot be adequately met external to the organisation. Such justifications appear precarious considering that not all organisations, including similarly focussed organisations, employ chaplains or actively seek religious input within their organisational fabric. Given the contemporary individualisation of religiosity, and the misalignment of such within a compartmentalisation of the individual that segregates work, home, faith and relaxation, it appears strange that organisations would actively seek to meet these needs within the timeframes of active employment. However, despite the vagaries of displaced religious manifestations there appears an emerging recognition within the organisation that such segregation of the individual is unsustainable. It is more probable that this recognition emerges as the primary justification for the presence of chaplains within the secular realm. A more holistic, functional individual is more productive and better able to support the organisation in its drive for successful outcomes than fragmented individuals torn between personal loyalties that constitute their world.

Some evidence is emerging that supports this perspective, and places it in a more creative light than the negative drive for pragmatic outcomes. This holistic approach to the individual and the subsequent meeting of religious needs appears to establish a positive affirmation in terms of the organisations purpose. This has mainly been drawn out of research from within the Scottish hospital system where the evidence suggests that religious input aids the healing process of the patient.<sup>2</sup> The pragmatism of this evidence does not adequately answer the deeper questions that the presence of a chaplain imposes within any non-religious organisation. It does, however, raise the question whether the organisation is capable of actually articulating this, or whether such is the task of the Chaplains and their associated ecclesiastical bodies. Similar research from Scotland suggests this to be the case:

*The question raised by this report is not whether or not there is a role for chaplains. There clearly is a role and we can show what this role is. Rather the question is, can chaplains effectively conceptualise and articulate their role in language and within structures that make sense to other healthcare providers?*<sup>3</sup>

This is the most pressing concern for Defence Chaplaincy. In what ways can it adequately articulate its role so that both the theological tradition is sustained while simultaneously translating that tradition into a language the Defence organisation can comprehend?

One way in which this has been done is through the language of 'presence'. What this presence is, and why it is important to the secular organisation needs better clarification. Why it can only be provided by a religious presence also remains open for discussion. These questions challenge chaplaincy to articulate this 'presence' in ways that reflect the theological frameworks from which it arises and effectively engages the secular paradigms in which it manifests.

In Defence this question of 'presence' is often articulated in poorly constructed and vague terminology. Chaplains often cite their ministry, in nonchalant ways, as a 'ministry of presence', with little regard to whether it is a valid theological expression of the clerical office, or if it is terminology that adequately translates the theological tradition into a secular context. In addressing these concerns, there is a need to understand the nature of the ecclesiastical office, the Chaplain, and the theological tradition as it exists within the framework of a theological continuum. At one end, found with the more sacramental traditions, is an ontological understanding of the clerical office. At the other end is a functionalism that struggles to deconstruct the clerical office from such ontological concepts and attempts interpretative reductionism into the realm of organisational leadership.

Ontologically, the clerical office is often seen incarnationally, as the means by which the church is manifest, or the presence of Christ is expressed. Importantly, an ontological perspective links the clerical office directly to the 'means of grace', often expressed through the church's sacramental activity. It is this sacramental expression of the Word which facilitates the presence of Christ in the world. While various nuances exist, and unique expressions are seen across the sacramental traditions, they essentially embrace an ontology, or coming into being, in which Christ is made present, or incarnated, into the World. The preaching office is incorporated into this tradition as the means by which God speaks through the sacred text to His people. These concepts have far deeper understandings than what can be articulated here. There is, however, a sense of the mystery of God which is grasped by God's gracious gift of faith. The individual is not the means by which Christ is incarnated and made present. This incarnational work of the Spirit is inextricably linked to the clerical office alone, which functions only in relation to the means of grace Christ has given to the church. The chaplain belongs to an ecclesiastical office intimately interwoven within a deep theological appreciation of the church's ecclesiology. Ontologically, a ministry of presence only occurs in the context of the means through which God has given to the church to facilitate this possibility. For Chaplains in this tradition, it is the office enacting the means of grace, not the individual, which brings God's presence into the organisation.

At the other end of the theological spectrum, such ontological notions are rejected. The individual is capable of finding and experiencing the presence of God independent of such theological impediments. The sacramentality of the church becomes nothing more than a memory of a past event or a means by which individual's can affirm their personal faith. The presence of God is found in the individual encounter, especially as it manifests in an appreciation of God through self examination of the sacred texts. Even the preaching office is not a manifestation of the voice of God, but a call to examine the Word and come to a point of faith affirmation based on a reasonable and often logical appreciation of the facts presented. The church's ecclesiology, or self understanding, is separate from the clerical office. The church is constituted by individuals gathered as like-minded believers in Christ. From within this mix emerge individuals whom the collective body set aside to provide a safe-guard for those theological insights integral to the collective's identity. A 'ministry of presence' is hard to define in this context. The church as a collective body is integral to an understanding of Christ's presence. Essentially, in contrast to the ontological perspective, the incarnational aspects of theology are not well defined by the functionalist position, and so it becomes difficult to adequately articulate a 'presence ministry'.

In the light of this, and given the diversity of the church's tradition represented within Defence, how is a 'ministry of presence' to be understood? From a sacramental perspective, the administration of the means of grace and the speaking God's Word into a situation, clearly expresses an incarnational understanding of chaplaincy. The mere personal presence of a chaplain, however, is insufficient to adequately express this ontological appreciation. Allowing Christ to become real requires the active engagement of the core elements which bring the church into being. Without these sacramental elements within the overall ministry of the chaplain, the chaplain reverts to the same status as any other individual functioning independently of the ecclesiastical office. It is this reality of an ontological theology that makes the notion of a 'ministry of presence' non-sensical when articulated by clergy who do not align themselves within the sacramental understandings of the ecclesiastical office. In this sense, those who claim a 'ministry of presence' that incarnates the presence of Christ, assuming that is the presence being referred to when such a term as 'ministry of presence' is used, outside the elements essential to an ontological theology becomes nothing less than ego driven self inflated idolatry. In this bizarre reversal, the accusation of ecclesiastical idolatry aired against the priestly office by a theological naivety confronts any clergy who articulates their chaplaincy as a 'ministry of presence' devoid of the elements essential for the full expression of such an incarnational



theology. This divine incarnation is not an individual endeavour but a task entrusted to the church and made real through the clerical office as it acts in, with, and through the church regardless of the environment in which this ministry takes place.

Even in the functional understandings of ministry, church is never seen as an individual manifestation, but one that always occurs in the context of community. Functionalists are quick to divorce themselves from such individualism, and although they will not utilise the sacramental concepts of the ontological perspectives to define church, the collective sense of faith and community still remain integral to any understanding of how Christ is made present in the world. For the functionalist Christ is seen in community, which makes the notion of individual chaplaincy conducting a 'ministry of presence' outside the ecclesiastical community incomprehensible.

Chaplains, clearly, bring about an engagement with the presence of God only when they act within the defined parameters of their theological frameworks. Chaplaincy confidentiality is an example of how this transpires. Within the Christian tradition only the confessional requires strict confidentiality. The confessional, when understood sacramentally, is the means of grace in which the forgiveness of God is pronounced. On hearing the individual confession the cleric announces reconciliation with God through Christ to the repentant individual. This act, which is ultimately between the person and God, is facilitated as the Words of God's grace are announced in the totality of Christ's forgiveness. This is what remains confidential, for the position of trust filled by the cleric is one that ensures the confidence of God's mercy upon the penitent. This may be extended into other forums of pastoral care, but such forums are lesser manifestations of the sacramental functionality of the confessional. One needs to acknowledge a separation of function in this regard. The simple chat, the use of counselling models, the generic clerical interaction, while all relying on trust as a confidence builder, are not subject to the same rules of confidentiality that applies to the confessional. One has to be cautious not to confuse the confessional with other forms of pastoral interaction. The presence of Christ is found in the confessional because it administers the means of grace through the process of divine reconciliation. The same presence is not as obvious in the generic pastoral interaction of clergy that transpires outside the sacramental engagement, or operates devoid of the Word of God, that could have just as easily been facilitated by any non-religious person. This concept of the confessional reaffirms the reliance of chaplaincy, not on the individual, but on the means of grace that creates and sustains the church and, through the church, incarnates Christ's presence in the world.

Religious clerics, regardless of their faith tradition, exist to further the core elements of that faith. In many ways they fail to conform to the notion of expert, so prominent in the Modern and Industrialised paradigms, and fit far more easily into the notion of a guardian of the tradition. Giddens' exposition of the specialist, expert or modern professional is a summary of Modernity.<sup>4</sup> Acquiring the correct amount of knowledge, conforming to the appropriate professional standards, and sustaining one's status amongst their professional peers is sufficient for any individual with the money, time and commitment to become a professional practitioner in their preferred field.<sup>5</sup> Modern medicine, psychology, social work, finance, business, management, industry, trades, academia, to name a short list, all conform to Giddens' appreciation of how the Modern world functions. The religious world resides in transition, with pressure to conform to the Modernist paradigms but still entrenched clearly in the traditions out of which they have emerged. The clerical office is entrenched within the traditions that shape and determine their religious paradigms. When they move out of the immediacy of this paradigm, and venture into the secular world they do not cease being intimately shaped by that paradigm. The essence of their office remains intact, and they facilitate the dimensions of their faith tradition into this secularised environment. This clash of the faith tradition with the secularised world requires reconciliation. The faith tradition is an embedding paradigm, indicating an inherent integrity to the totality of the norm, whereas Modernity and the secularised world it has created is disembedding, creating elements that exist alienated to the integral structures that sustain the norm. The contrast of these fundamentally opposite paradigms is of a greater challenge to the ecclesiological frameworks of chaplaincy than it is to the secular organisation dominated by such disembedding mechanisms. One has to question how well the poorly articulated and often flawed notion of a 'ministry of presence' aids this reconciliation. The demand for such an ecclesiological presence does suggest that there is something within the religious paradigm that the secular organisation cannot provide through its own disembedding mechanisms. The challenge of adequately answering this is one of the looming challenges facing both paradigms. Reconciling two alien world-views and structures of power needs to be grappled with if both the secular and religious are to benefit from the presence of the cleric in the organisational environment.

Chaplains do not represent themselves. They operate within the paradigms of their faith tradition, and embody a formulaic truth system articulated within their theological and denominational traditions. This reality of the ecclesiastical life, that chaplains represent something beyond their own being, places expectations upon them that supersede those of the general public. This important point appears

to be disappearing from the concepts articulated by individual clergy, especially those engaged in secularised institutional ministries. The idea that chaplains exist in isolation from their denomination, that they can function without regard for their theological tradition, or to assert that they wish to have no current or future engagement with their faith tradition are seriously worrying concerns. The clerical office belongs to the church. It is an ecclesiological office of the faith tradition, to which it is solely accountable and subservient. To intentionally isolate oneself from this tradition self imposes disendorsement from the denomination or faith group, and automatically negates continued functionality as a chaplain. This religious isolationism is a crass misrepresentation and amounts to nothing less than religious fraud. It indicates a lack of personal and faith integrity, and demonstrates deep personal dishonesty. The church and the secular organisation, if both seek to sustain the integrity of using such ecclesiastical representation within the organisational structure, should seriously challenge the ongoing continuation of such individuals. If the organisation is seeking from the faith tradition something which the organisation is unable to provide, if there is to be a process of reconciling the disembedding system of Modernity with the formulaic truth systems of the tradition, then integrity to such traditions remain paramount. It is the systemic collectivisation of opposite mechanisms that surpasses modern individuality, and demands integrity within the antithetical systems of the church and the secular organisation if adequate articulation and empowerment of each is to occur. While theological variations may exist within the various traditions represented in Defence, and within these traditions mechanisms of control vary in intensity, the reality remains that chaplains remain linked inextricably to their faith tradition.

This is highlighted through the dimension of authority and legitimacy. Technically, Chaplains do not exist within the formal structures of control within Defence. Although there is a degree of subservience to these structures, the loyalty demanded on Defence members, does not apply in the same way to Chaplains. Loyalty to the organisation always remains subservient to the loyalty of Chaplains to their faith and its traditions. Such a position doesn't undermine the role of the Chaplain. Instead, it provides an external perspective, coloured by an alternative paradigm, and spoken with the authority of the ecclesiastical office. The reality that Chaplains have rank but do not exert authority through that rank, indicates that such an advisory role becomes only as important as that which the organisation grants to it. It is for this reason that issues of integrity, honesty and faithfulness to their calling as religious leaders emanating out of a direct and sustained relationship with their faith tradition remains fundamentally important for the sustainment of a chaplaincy presence within Defence. The fact that chaplains speak on behalf of the

tradition from which they have come, means they speak in, with and through the church, and allow the dialogue of reconciliation to take place in which the opposing paradigms can find transformative resonance for current and future functionality.

The way clergy act within the organisation, also draws out this convergence of alternating world-views. There are no differentiations in expectations for cleric behaviour based on the environment in which they exist. These expectations are not professional standards, as found within expert systems; rather they are intricately linked to the tradition and the need to uphold the integrity of that tradition in which they are entrusted guardians. Primarily, they exist to uphold the nature of God, the way in which God is understood and incarnated, the way in which the church or denomination is defined, and the integrity of the tradition reflected through the clerical office. This is embedded and defined within the sacred texts of the faith tradition. In the Christian paradigm the qualities and behaviour required are articulated throughout the Bible. Paul informs Timothy<sup>6</sup> that Christian clergy should be above reproach, sober minded, respected, disciplined, hospitable, well thought of outside the faith community, self-controlled, gentle, upright, and love what is good and right. Paul talks about faithfulness in marriage and an ability to manage one's own house and family well, giving a clear appreciation that a stable and well managed family life is integral to the capacity of the clerical leader. The ability to teach, to demonstrate a holy life, and faithful adherence to the Word of God, including both instruction and correction, are also listed as important aspects for any holder of the clerical office. Clergy should not get drunk or use alcohol inappropriately, be violent, seek out quarrels or arguments, be arrogant, be ill or quick tempered, love money or seek material gain, pursue personal power or self-exaltation, be gossips or slanderers, and be a recent convert to the faith or faith tradition. All these qualities are listed, not because they fill some legal requirement, but because the ecclesiastical office reflects the nature of Christ and are representations of the faith community. Consequently, chaplains can never be 'one of the boys' for the nature of their office automatically negates this possibility. As bearers of the ecclesiastical office, set aside by the church, they exist as aliens and sojourners journeying through a strange land to be a light within the dark shadows of the world<sup>7</sup>.

While the church has a responsibility to ensure their clergy comply with these standards, any organisation that embeds the clerical office into its structure assumes a shared responsibility with the ecclesiastical body in ensuring that these standards are maintained. Advancement, leadership, seniority, appointment to

supervision or oversight, should not be set on the standards of the organisation, but on the standards outlined within the faith traditions from which the clergy are appointed. Clearly this is a challenge for any organisation to adopt a set of values that may run contrary or antithetical to that which is important to that organisation. The presence of an alternative paradigm already indicates that the organisation is working with conflicting mechanisms. The onus here, however, is not for the faith tradition to align its expectations of its clergy to organisational standards, but for the organisation to modify its processes if an adequate reconciliation of such perspectives is to be empowering and transformative. For the organisation to apply these ecclesiastical standards ensures that the core values desired by the organisation and found in the clerical office are sustained and not usurped by a secular paradigm that is foreign to these integral values.

This question of authority and legitimacy is an important engagement for the organisation and the church. The fundamental question always reverts to where the chaplain's authority resides. Christianity, Islam and Judaism all have, at the core of their faith system, a sacred text and all claims to legitimacy and authority exist in direct relationship to the way these texts are engaged within the various religious systems. While each have different hermeneutics governing the interpretation of these texts, and even within the sub-groups embedded within the larger religious frameworks these hermeneutics can dramatically change, there remains an intrinsic link between the legitimacy and authority of the clerical office and the sacred texts unique to each faith. This total reliance upon the sacred text to legitimate the clerical office exists in isolation to other norms, and embeds the ecclesiastical office within the faith tradition, reasserting the early conversation about guardians and experts, and eviscerating any individual usurpation of authority outside the faith tradition. Any secular demands arising from an engagement of the clerical office with the secular organisation is superseded by the various hermeneutical understandings shaping the clerical office within the faith system. To assert other norms as relevant or important dismantles the frameworks of legitimacy and undermines the core reliance of the office on the sacred text. In essence, to subordinate the sacred text removes the authority of the clerical office and makes it redundant.

This becomes an issue in how the Chaplain functions within an organisation such as Defence. While Chaplains agree to the same conditions of service as any other individual, this agreement always exists in direct relationship to the clerical office they hold. Neither Defence nor the individual can declare ownership to it. The authority for such an office always derives directly from the ecclesiastical

or religious body out of which the chaplain has been released. Even the term 'released' is relative, for the authority to remain clergy is not an individual authority but one which is held in sacred trust by the denominational body. While this varies in degree of control, and different hermeneutics portray variations in the overall narrative, the one thing that remains true is that no individual has the authority within their own right to claim the clerical office, and no organisation outside the religious group has the authority to create its ecclesiastical manifestation. Why any secular organisation, devoid of religious norms, would wish to create their own clerical office is an interesting question, and while the establishment of 'secular clergy' is another topic, such issues bring into question the legitimacy of a non-religious body to create a position within that body that affirms, by their very presence, some form of social religiosity vacuous of any reference to a faith structure or paradigm. This also challenges trends within chaplaincy to create a 'neutral' or 'non-spiritual' form of religion that removes any reference to God. Such moves are clearly incomprehensible given the frames of reference governing the release of clergy by their religious group into Defence. The naïve and ignorant claims of avoiding being the cause of offence, and the deliberate shift away from the necessary apologetics of the faith system in order to facilitate this, means that the Chaplain must inevitably act in violation to the core faith elements established within their religious office. If this is an attempt to create a non-religious form of chaplaincy to sustain a valid place within the organisation, then why would the organisation seek religious or denominationally based clergy? The actual seeking of chaplains presupposes that the organisation willingly accepts specific religious overtones within the organisation. While intentionally not creating offence may be desired, a degree of angst always exists when world-views, especially diametrically opposed views, coexist. Organisationally, however, the benefit to the whole outweighs the perspectives of the few, and in highly structured organisations like Defence, greater paradigms are present that drive organisational purpose and output. It is this desire for productivity that seeks the use of chaplaincy within the organisation, and assumes that everything encompassed by the clerical office is valid and deemed essential within the organisation's overall functionality.

Assuming the above conclusions are valid, the question of purpose for the clerical role within the organisation remains unsettled. This is a difficult question to answer, as demonstrated by the Scottish hospital experience, and relies inevitably on the chaplain being able to adequately articulate their purpose in terms understood by the organisation. One way this is currently happening is by employing the

mantra of 'pastoral care'. This anomalous and loosely used term is heavily laden with presuppositions and pre-understandings. Pastoral care is not a term unique to the clerical office, but is widely used within education, health care, welfare, industry and other agencies to mean a raft of things not directly related to its religious origins. Interwoven in this confusion is the anti-intellectualism prevalent within chaplaincy, and the naïve and crass pragmatism used to justify continued existence. Theologically speaking, all pastoral care is heavily laden with theological understandings. No chaplain can engage in such pastoral practice without engaging their theological frameworks. Whether this happens subconsciously or in a deliberative process of critical reflection, is irrelevant. The simple practice of pastoral care is an exercise in the praxis of theology; it is both theory driven and practice applied. To claim that chaplaincy is not to be academic, intellectual, or theologically attuned, but that the only requirement is to deliver 'pastoral care' is a sad aberration of a poorly perceived theology devoid of relevance or meaning, and ultimately redundant to the unique dimension of pastoral practice chaplains provide within an organisation.

Theologically, pastoral care is governed by an interaction with the divine, and primarily incorporates the applied use of the Word and the sacraments. In contrast, the modern secular aberrations of pastoral care are stripped of their faith roots, and are defined as anything from psychotherapy, professional counselling, social welfare, relationship maintenance, acts of charity, or community service. While in Christian pastoral care these things remain evident, they do so in a theological sense only in so far as they facilitate an interaction with the divine. It is this other-worldly, beyond the human condition, divine encounter through which hope, help, health and fullness is facilitated. Without this engagement beyond the self, pastoral care denigrates into the disembodied disciplines of specialised expertise already discussed. Because of the intimate link with the sacred, the reliance upon the sacred text, and the intent of facilitating this engagement into the human dimension, pastoral care is not simply a form of religious social work or spiritual psychology. Its perspective is external to the human condition, understanding it in terms of the divine, and existing to create hope that draws the individual beyond this fundamentally flawed existence. Christian pastoral care embraces a theological perspective in which all relationships are seen in terms of their status with the divine, and all problems are considered through a perspective of alienation from this external reality. Such a theological perspective denies the power of the self to heal and restore hope from a world which is consumed by its self established egocentric introspection. This cyclic self destructive human reality lies at the heart of a religious framework that offers

a world view where transformation toward a higher or ultimate reality is possible. Christian pastoral care is intimately linked to this theological understanding thereby separating it from all human or secular models. Chaplains cannot act without these frameworks impacting on their application of pastoral care. To do so moves them outside their theological frameworks and once more makes them an illegitimate manifestation of the ecclesiastical office.

The other inseparable dimension to pastoral care is education. Scripture always articulates pastoral care in direct correlation with the responsibility of teaching as Paul's reference to the shepherd-teacher in his letter to Ephesus demonstrates.<sup>8</sup> However, this teaching is very specific, and concerns itself with empowering individuals to comprehend how the divine functions in regard to the human condition, always emphasising God's intentional focus on restoring humanity. This restorative work transpires through the nature and work of Christ, which is freely and unconditionally offered to all who seek it. The ongoing living out of this restored relationship with the divine also exists as a critical dimension to pastoral care. It is this input from the divine and the ongoing encounter with the divine that finds a fuller expression through the teaching dimension of the pastoral care function. Chaplaincy does not exist to deliver pastoral care in the narrow secularised pragmatic sense articulated by the naive mantras aired currently within Defence, but always embraces the responsibility of teaching what the pastoral encounter means in the life of the individual and the community. To deny pastoral care this opportunity is to disempower it and ultimately prevents it from offering the fullest benefit it can to the organisation. The anti-intellectualism that opposes this difficult task, that rejects any form of critical theological engagement, creates a delusion form of ministry through imposing a crass pragmatism devoid of theological praxis. Ultimately such anti-intellectualism dismantles chaplaincy as a valid and empowering presence within the organisation.

There are a lot of concepts and theological reflections that have been articulated throughout this discussion. Almost certainly, some of the points and perspectives will cause discomfort and raise further questions. It is the courage to pursue this discomfort and ask why it arises that is the challenge of both the religious institution and Defence organisation. The challenges that arise from this dialogue are what will further the discourse that is required if chaplaincy is to find a place that it can theologically articulate within the secular context. Several themes remain consistent, regardless of the future direction of any theological discourse. Chaplaincy is unique and belongs first and foremost to the religious system from which it has been drawn. The organisation utilises chaplains because it has



a need which it believes only chaplaincy can fulfil. These two points separate chaplaincy from any other functionally similar group. Chaplaincy is the link for both the individual and the organisation to some higher reality, which it can or cannot adequately articulate, but which it acknowledges, by the very presence of chaplaincy, that such links have a degree of importance within the organisation's paradigms. Chaplains are obligated to standards that exist outside the immediate paradigms of the organisation, and which may run contrary to the organisation, but for which the organisation adopts a degree of responsibility to expect by accepting clergy within their structure. And finally, the presence of chaplains hold a purpose which requires clearer theological articulation if the chaplain is to be empowered to provide a full and whole effectiveness within the organisation. These things sum up much of what has been discussed, and provide a possible framework for any future theological conversation that needs to take place. These concepts are not definitive, but provide a start point for the church, the secular organisation, and the chaplain. Hopefully all will continue the conversation and thereby begin to theologically shape chaplaincy as a constructive and meaningful presence within the shadow of the organisation and the church. ■

## Endnotes

- 1 Cf. R. Chuck Mason & Cynthia Brougher, "Military Personnel and Freedom of Religious Expression: Selected Legal Issues", Congressional Research Service, April 8, 2010 <<http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA521221>> accessed 24 August 2010. "This report provides an overview of the requirements of the First Amendment related to military personnel's religious exercise. It analyzes current constitutional and statutory requirements regarding religious exercise, and provides a framework for how Congress and the courts might consider future issues that arise related to service members' religious exercise. Specifically, the report examines the limitations placed on service members in uniform in the exercise of their religious beliefs. It also examines the role of military chaplains and the legal challenges associated with publicly funding religious personnel. The report analyzes efforts by Congress and the Department of Defense to address the constitutional concerns that are raised by these issues." This is an illustration of the current contentious issue of US Military Chaplaincy the US Constitution. The creation of this report for the US Congress highlights the frequency and dominance of the contentiousness surrounding the US Constitution and religious freedom as it relates to the existence of Chaplains in the US Military. This is supported by the numerous articles, both contemporary and historical, that support this unique US position on Chaplaincy.
- 2 "Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy in NHS Scotland 2008 - Revised Guidance, Report and Recommendations: Revision and Update of HDL (2002) 76 "Spiritual Care in NHS Scotland" - Dealing with progress and change since 2002 and making recommendations for the Future." <[http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/3796/211108spiritual\\_care\\_revised\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/3796/211108spiritual_care_revised_guidelines.pdf)>, accessed 24 August 2010.
- 3 Harriet Mowat, John Swinton, Clare Guest, & Liz Grant, "What do Chaplains do? The role of the Chaplain in meeting the spiritual needs of patients" University of Aberdeen Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability & Mowat research, Report No. CSHD/MR001 Edition 2, February 2007 <[http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cshad/documents/Chaplains\\_Report.pdf](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cshad/documents/Chaplains_Report.pdf)>, accessed 24 August 2010.

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- 4 Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 27ff.
- 5 Anthony Giddens, "Living in a post-traditional society", in Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens & Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1994), 84-85.
- 6 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 2 Timothy 2:14-26, Titus 1:5-9.
- 7 1 Peter 2:11-12.
- 8 Ephesians 4:11.



