

"The Christian combatant, like those of any other faith and none, is required to conform to the various written and unwritten codes that shape the common life, purpose and actions of the armed forces in which they serve. However, the Christian is called to more than obedience to rules, laws and injunctions: he or she is called to a life in the Spirit wherever they find themselves, whether in peacetime or wartime." — an excerpt from this paper

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This article will explore the question: What are the means by which the ethical Christian military professional is formed?¹ The parameters of this exploration will be set out in the first section, using a conception of ethical subjectivity as being simultaneously constituted through conformity to codes as well as through creative ethical self-formation that goes beyond the limits of those codes.

² This study assumes a minimum 'thin' conception of identity whereby the self-reflective individual is capable of constituting herself or himself in relation to both social situations and religious and ethical discourses as a work of self upon self.

The first section of the paper will highlight how the development and enforcement of a professional military ethic prioritises codes, both written and unwritten, through conformity to military law, law of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, Just War, honor codes, regimental traditions, and so on. These codes, both written and unwritten, are enforced by proscriptions, interdictions and punishments, and examples will be used to demonstrate that the mere existence of such codes is insufficient to ensure conformity to them. Consequently, the focus of the second section will shift to what will be called creative, ethical self-formation: an ever-present yet frequently overlooked dimension of the military professional. Aspects of ethical self-formation will be explored in response to the following questions:³ 1) What is the ethical substance of the military professional? That is, the essence upon which beliefs, qualities and characteristics of ethical behaviour is constructed. 2) How are individuals incited or encouraged to recognise their moral obligations? 3) What are the ways in which individuals change themselves in order to become ethical military professionals? 4) What is the type of being or existence to which an individual aspires when behaving in a moral way?

The final section of the paper will frame a specifically Christian military ethic in response to the four aspects of ethical self formation set out above. Given the importance of his place in the pantheon of Christian just war proponents, as well as his wrestling with issues of faith and morality in the domains of war and power politics, this paper will draw upon the writings of

Augustine in addressing some of the challenges facing the Christian military professional in forming himself, or herself, as ethical today. The paper will conclude that as well as conforming to ever more detailed military codes of behaviour, for the Christian military professional creative ethical self-formation should not only be acknowledged but encouraged and nurtured.

The military professional and moral codes

In a study of the formation of the subject in the classical Greek and early Christian periods, Michel Foucault identified systems of morality based on rules and prohibitions, which he named the 'moral code'.⁴ This moral code comprised laws and customary practices: both written and unwritten. These were, in turn, juxtaposed with 'ethical problematizations based on practices of the self'⁵: different aspects of creative self-forming that operated, at least to some extent, independently of the wider moral codes. This section will consider the place of moral codes in shaping the ethical military professional, focusing

...on the instances of authority that enforce the code, that require it to be learned and observed, that penalise infractions ... where the ethical subject refers his conduct to a law, or set of laws to which he must submit at the risk of committing offences that may make him liable to punishment.⁶

The codes to which the modern military professional must conform are many and varied. For example, some of the codes that guide the lives and conduct of Royal Air Force (RAF)⁷ personnel are the set out in Queen's Regulations for the RAF, which state:

Every officer is to make himself acquainted with, obey, and, so far as he is able, enforce, the Air Force Act, the Queen's Regulations for the RAF, and all other regulations, instructions and orders that may from time to time be issued. He is also to conform to the established customs and practices of the Service.⁸

This list of codes to which military personnel are expected to conform is extensive and contains

both written and unwritten elements. In both peace and war the written elements, such as Military Law, are enforced by judicial process either at Orderly Room hearings or full Courts Martial, with punishments for infractions ranging from administrative action to detention in a military prison. Transgression of unwritten customs and practices can be punished by administrative action or the reproach of both peers and superior ranks. In addition, all personnel deployed to operational theatres are subject to the Law of Armed Conflict and related rules of engagement: 'All personnel must be aware of the basic rules of the law of armed conflict, including the practical application of the principles of military necessity, proportionality, distinction and humanity'.⁹ Furthermore, as well as obligations under domestic civil and military law, every combatant of a signatory state is obliged to conform to the constraints set out in the Geneva Conventions. According to the Geneva Conventions, all combatants should be made aware of their responsibilities under international law, with compliance achieved through regular instruction. Instructional methods are even suggested: 'lectures, films, slides, audio-visual methods, war games including questions and answers etc'.¹⁰ The British armed forces – like American and many other armed forces around the world – use such techniques to ensure that their combatants are familiar with the law and know how to act in conformity to it. The combatant consequently forms himself, or herself, as ethical by conforming to the multiple and various aspects of codified morality set out above: with conformity enforced through the threat and exercise of sanction and punishment.

In recent years ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have provided numerous examples of valor and selfless commitment above and beyond the call of duty, but they have also provided instances of dereliction of duty where the codes that govern military conduct have been transgressed. Amongst the most notorious, and politically damaging, of those failures to conform to military codes was the abuse of prisoners by both US and UK military personnel in Iraq. In those instances, and others, the military judicial systems of both allies provided appropriate investigations, trials and, in turn, punishments for the perpetrators. As a result, Standard Operating Procedures were reviewed and applied with greater diligence, with changes made where necessary in order to prevent any subsequent reoccurrence. To be clear, however, these incidents did not occur because of a lack of codes that proscribed such abuses; these incidents occurred despite the presence of the codes: the codes were simply ignored.

At a less dramatic level, the events described below as Incident 1 took place during the opening phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom and capture a different, though still negative, attitude to military codes:

Incident 1

The author – white, British and at that time a Royal Air Force chaplain – was lifting weights in the gym with two US Air Force NCOs: both African-American Firefighters. British Forces' radio was playing quietly in the background and a relaxed training atmosphere pervaded the gym. A new group arrived and one of their number – early 20s, white, American, tattooed and wearing a Confederate bandana on his shaven head – replaced the radio music, without consulting anyone, with a Death Metal CD and cranked up the volume to maximum. The atmosphere changed instantly when the 'music' mentioned killing Jews, n****rs and wh***s. The author immediately switched off the music and a tense stand-off ensued. Following the customary exchange of pleasantries ("Who the **** switched off my music!!" "Me – the chaplain! Who's asking?") the first line of defence adopted by the protagonist concerned was, "I don't see any sign that says I can't [play this music]!"

This single individual, with the encouragement and tacit support of three colleagues, set out to make – at the very least – some kind of warped personal statement; probably intended to cause offence; and possibly sought to provoke some kind of reaction from the other gym users: specifically, the African-American personnel. When challenged about the offensive and inappropriate nature of the music that had been played at maximum volume the individual concerned avoided the language of right and wrong and sought to justify his actions on the basis that there was no specific, publicised prohibition written on the wall of the gym. In other words, if it was not specifically banned by a publicised rule then it must be allowed. The lack of a specific prohibition was taken as a licence to denigrate and disrespect fellow Americans and allied partners in a time of war, as well as contravening equal opportunities legislation. (Note: following the initial confrontation the ranking non-commissioned officer present intervened to pursue follow-up disciplinary action.) Emboldened by a combination of anger that my training partners would rather accept the offence and ignore the hate lyrics than challenge the perpetrator -- and a quick mental calculation that if events spiralled towards violence there would be enough numbers supporting me to ensure I did not take too much of a beating, --I produced the best challenge I could think of in the circumstances: "Does your mother know what kind of music you listen to?" His response took me by surprise: "Yeah, she bought it for me."

Taking the two previously mentioned examples together – the prisoner abuse and the racial incitement – it can be seen that the presence of military codes, written and unwritten, does not in itself ensure that conformity will follow. Not even the risk of judicial intervention or administrative punishment managed to deter inappropriate or illegal conduct in these situations. The establishing of codes to which individuals are expected to conform is only one aspect of the formation of the ethical military professional. Furthermore, regardless of the care with which codes are defined, enacted and enforced, they are limited in their efficacy because they remain externalised, limited in the extent to which they explore the internalised, creative, self-forming aspects of military conduct. These include the ethical substance which enables an individual to make ethical choices; the means by which the individual is made to recognise his, or her, moral responsibilities; the changes in behaviour that are required in order for the individual to form himself, or herself, as ethical; or the goal to which the ethical military professional aspires.

Looking again at the gym confrontation, there was no opportunity to explore in depth with the offending individual the reasons why he acted in a manner that would cause offence to most people, in a military environment where discipline is strict and equalities laws enforced. It would appear from our brief conversation that his racial attitudes were brought to the armed forces rather than learned in the armed forces. More importantly, deeply entrenched racial views had clearly survived throughout the military training process and his introduction to all the laws, rules and other written and unwritten codes that regulate behaviour in the armed forces.

In contrast, consider the events that took place only a few days later, described here as Incident 2:

Incident 2

A US Air Force chaplain colleague suggested that we use the Chaplaincy Centre facilities (a former Mess Hall with kitchen and large dining area) to lay on pancake breakfasts over two consecutive days. Breakfast was timed to catch the shift changeover so that personnel could eat either before or after their 12-hour shift. When the breakfasts were first advertised, several days in advance, volunteers of different ranks came forward and offered to flip pancakes, serve coffee, wash dishes and clean up afterwards. For some, this entailed an 0400 start and two hours less sleep before going to work; for others it meant two further hours of work following a 12-hour night shift. After the success of the first breakfast even more volunteers came forward to help the following day. More than 1000 pancake breakfasts were served over the two days.

Over the course of the two days I was interested to find out what motivated tired, hard-working and homesick individuals to give up their time (and especially their sleep time) to do something altruistic for their colleagues, most of whom would be unknown to them. Responses to my enquiries included: a religiously inspired desire to do something for others; "I miss making pancakes for my kids"; "to remind me of home"; "because I'm bored"; "to remind me how much I hated my first job flipping pancakes"; and, "to do something I choose to do". Everyone involved gave up their time to help out, but the reasons for doing so were many and varied. For some it was about being a particular kind of person – neighbourly, religious, caring or dutiful – while for others it was an external expression of values and attitudes: in all cases there was a sense of contributing to the common good. However, no orders were given or inducements made to motivate the volunteers to make and serve pancakes. Furthermore, while written and unwritten codes may encourage individuals to place a concern for others above a concern for self, this particular action was not enforced in any way. The decision to give up time and make a positive contribution to community life during deployed operations illustrates a positive, creative, aspect of what it is to be an ethical military professional.

The notion of ethical self-creativity will be examined further in the next section by exploring both the strengths and limitations of the use of codes, drawing upon the author's experience of teaching moral education within the RAF.

Self-formation and the ethical military professional

The process of ethical formation begins as soon as new recruits commence military training, through instruction in, and personal exploration of, core values: which in the Royal Air Force is referred to as The Beliefs and Values Programme. Every member of the RAF, officer and enlisted, receives a copy of *The Ethos, Core Values and Standards of the Royal Air Force*, which states:

Core values are those values by which we lead our lives and which we aspire to develop in others. The Royal Air Force core values are: Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence, nurtured by effective and consistent leadership ... Every member of the Royal Air Force has the duty and ability to lead and the moral responsibility to live by our core values.¹¹

Military instructors issue this text to new members of the RAF and order that it should be read and the core values adhered to. However, it falls to the chaplains¹² – over four sessions spaced throughout initial training – to enhance the adoption of these core values by exploring their significance with classes of recruits or officer cadets: encouraging the process that is referred to in this article as creative self-formation. Each core value is approached thematically (Respect, for example) in a separate session. Hypothetical incidents are outlined and the recruits invited to imagine themselves located in the scenario as, say, the perpetrator or the victim of bullying, or as an armed combatant in time of war. Self-reflection is then encouraged, using questions such as: How do you think you would feel [in such a situation]? What do you think of your colleague's response? How does such a reaction reflect the core value of, for example, respect or integrity? Such sessions progress in what might be termed a 'confessional' dynamic: individuals (including myself as chaplain at that time) publicly describing how a particular action could result in either a positive or a negative outcome, as well as making known the feelings that such hypothetical actions engender.

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Individual views or descriptions, would, in turn, be discussed by the group. Following these elements of self-reflection and discussion the final part of a session would then encourage or incite further self-forming in relation to the RAF core (and other) values. Each session would conclude with the recruits being encouraged to continue to apply the core values to their current and future actions. Overall, the process might be more accurately described as encouraging, or inciting, critical self-reflection, self-policing of attitudes and actions, adherence to codes and creative ethical self-forming.

There are a number of strengths and weaknesses to be found in this approach. On the positive side, in addition to the order by military instructors to observe the core values and put them into practice, time is spent with recruits and officer cadets exploring possible responses using hypothetical examples drawn from military life. Not only were responses discussed and collectively analysed, the consequences of particular responses were assessed. For example, one recruit voiced his opinion that shoplifting was a socially acceptable hobby in the deprived area he came from, while 'grassing¹⁴ on your colleagues – no matter how severe or criminal their actions – should be punished by violent retribution. Over the course of four sessions the implications of these activities were explored with his class of fellow recruits, considering how theft can lead to the breakdown of individual trust, unit cohesion and morale, and ultimately impact upon fighting effectiveness. The consequences of a 'no grassing' approach were also considered: bullying and other anti-social or criminal activities could escalate, leading to a breakdown of unit cohesion and military discipline. While the peer influence of the group hopefully persuaded the former gang member to refrain from stealing and to report activities such as bullying, there is no evidence to show that such an outcome was definitely achieved. Further, there was insufficient time available to explore the much deeper social and psychological origins of his views. However, having even limited space in the training programme to explore such issues and their potential consequences is more likely to lead to a positive outcome than simply setting out rules and punishments. If someone has spent a lifetime ignoring rules and caring less about punishment, there is little likelihood that the donning of a

military uniform will have some magical ethical effect.

Moving beyond the limits of codified morality

This paper suggests that a professional military ethic can be enhanced by going beyond the limitations of codified morality and exploring in greater depth the creative, self-formative aspects of ethical subjectivity introduced above. An information paper on the West Point website echoes the observations made above and states that the classes in the Honor Education Program 'are not designed to provide "right answers;" they are designed to challenge the cadets to examine their own value systems and to promote internalization of the West Point value system'.¹⁵ There is already a creative, self-reflective dimension to this programme where cadets are encouraged to relate their own value systems to the West Point value system. Questions set out previously break down this self-reflective and self-formative approach further:

What is the ethical substance of the military professional? That is, the beliefs, qualities and characteristics upon which ethical behaviour is constructed (religious faith, social conscience, patriotism etc.). How are individuals incited or encouraged to recognise their moral obligations? What are the ways in which individuals change themselves in order to become ethical military professionals? And, what is the type of being to which an individual aspires when behaving in a moral way?

These questions throw up some difficulties as well as provide assistance in the process of ethical self-formation. For many people the ethical substance upon which their character and conduct are based is deeply held religious faith: being a good Christian or Muslim or Jew and so on. However, to publicly acknowledge this, and especially to include this aspect of ethical self-formation in any formulation of military policy will be problematic in any polity that is built on the separation of state and religion. For the non-religious person this may seem like a trivial or even irrelevant point, but to the person of faith it runs to the core of their being and any denial or marginalisation of their belief system can be unsettling or destabilising. Contrarily, some of the current fiercest enemies of the US, UK and their other NATO allies use religious faith, as many have over the centuries, to fuel political motivations and justify means and ends. To be clear, this is not to justify or promote any form of religious war, merely to point out that the religious faith of an American or British soldier – if they have one – is of no less significance in his or her ethical formation than the faith of the Muslim who fights for the Taliban or Al-Qaeda. The most obvious difference is the more prominent role played by religion in the motivation of the latter fighters. Jean Bethke Elshtain sums up the dilemma in writing about the training of American

soldiers to avoid both intentional and unintentional killing of the innocent: 'No one is encouraged, or even allowed, to call the killing of civilians "God's will" or, even worse, an act carried out in God's name'.¹⁶ She contrasts this approach with appeals to Divine authority in the training materials of Islamist radicals, quoting: 'You have to kill in the name of Allah until you are killed ... Our enemies are fighting in the name of Satan. You are fighting in the name of God.'

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Understandable political sensitivities may encourage military and political leaders to avoid addressing the role of religion in the process of ethical self-forming in a military environment. State constitutions, written or unwritten, may forbid the exploration of what are often seen as private religious matters in a public domain. A Christian soldier who takes seriously the biblical injunction, 'Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends'¹⁸, is allowed to make this kind of self-sacrifice in the line of duty. However, political or military spokespersons are highly unlikely to point to religious motivations within the combatant's ethical approach when discussing his or her death. Despite the limitations imposed on public declarations or practices of faith in the context of military service, for the individuals involved it can be of paramount importance in the way they conduct themselves both on and off the battlefield. Consequently, the remainder of this article will explore a specifically Christian military ethic and what it might mean for the man or woman of faith today.

The soul as ethical substance

No Christian military ethic – or any other kind of ethic – can stand on its own, independent of the historical discourses that make up the tradition or traditions on which it draws. In this study of the limitations of codified morality in shaping the ethical military professional that means not merely importing Augustinian just war concepts into the present but acknowledging the biblical and other discourses that he draws upon. Augustine is nowhere solely concerned with ethical military conduct: his primary concern is with the formation of good Christians, who will share eternity with God in the Heavenly City.

The very existence of Christianity points to the limits of codified morality for the transforming of human behaviour. The Old Testament contains myriad 'Thou shalt not's'; from God's giving of the Ten Commandments in the book of Exodus to the rules, laws and injunctions of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. If the existence of religious rules was enough in itself to ensure individuals' compliance with them, the repeated failure of the Israelites to maintain their covenant with God would not have resulted in the need for repeated renewal of that covenant. Ultimately, there

would have been no need for the new covenant in Jesus Christ.¹⁹ The covenant between God and humankind moved from being rule-centric to Christ-centric, with Christians urged to live 'holy and godly lives'.²⁰

Augustine's *Confessions*, written in AD 397, captures his own wrestling with his inner self or, as he puts it, inner selves, in trying to live a holy and Godly life. He refers to the self that desires to obey God and the self that acts against that purity he claims to desire. For Augustine, every individual has, if not complete freedom of thought and action, sufficient freedom and autonomy to work on herself, or himself, with the intention of imitating the behaviour of the Christ: God in human form. Augustine's ideal subjectivity is a unified whole that reflects the perfection of Christ but, in his *Confessions*, he acknowledges that 'it was I, and it was my impiety that had divided me against myself'.²¹

In order to overcome this divided self – part good, part evil – evil actions had to be confessed (to God), 'that thou mightest heal my soul'.²²

The soul, divinely created and imperishable, is the substance upon which any Christian ethic is based. In Psalm 23 King David acknowledged that God 'restores my soul'²³; later as he reflected upon human failings – his own and those of others – he captured his inner desire for communion with God with the words: 'Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being praise his holy name'.²⁴ Jesus

would warn his disciples: 'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell'.²⁵

It is the divinely created soul, which is imbued with a Christ-like capacity for goodness, upon which humans can construct their ethical conduct:

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."²⁶

For Augustine, the soul's desire for God led to a desire for ethical conduct, while the fallen nature of humankind brought about separation from God: 'For since the soul was created immortal and cannot by its nature be without life of some kind, its utmost death is alienation from the life of God in an eternity of punishment'.²⁷ In addition, the act of confession became part of a process of self-policing and self-forming that would ultimately – in conjunction with

Divine intervention – re-create the subject in the likeness of Christ. Thomas Lynch sums up the relationship between self-knowing and transformation, Christ and confession, as follows: ‘For Augustine, the self is incomprehensible apart from a Christology affirming the role of Christ as exemplum and sacramentum. In short, Christ is both the end and the means’.

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This reliance on Christ, enacted in self-policing through the act of confession, would continue, according to Augustine, when ‘thou set a watch upon my mouth and a door around my lips that my heart might not incline to evil speech, to make excuse for sin with men that work iniquity’

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A Christian military ethic

Augustine corresponded on a number of occasions with Boniface, a Roman military commander in North Africa who rebelled against the authorities, to whom Augustine offered advice and pastoral council. He wrote: ‘I am filled with praise, congratulations and admiration, my dearest son Boniface, that in the middle of the cares of warfare and weaponry, your desire to know the things of God is so powerful.’ For Augustine the waging of war – in pursuit of peace – did not excuse the soldier from the task of seeking after the things of God. The pursuit of the spiritual in the midst of the carnage of war was seen not only as desirable but essential. Instructions regarding good military conduct were of secondary importance to the more general requirement to live a good life in the sight of God:

...if you find in either this letter or in sacred scripture anything you still lack for a life of goodness, then make urgent efforts in prayer and in action to acquire it. Give thanks also for what you do possess to God, as the source of the goodness you have, and in every good deed that you do, give him the glory and yourself the humility. As it is written: ‘every excellent gift and every perfect present comes down from above from the Father of lights [James 1:17]’.³⁰

The source of the Christian’s earthly capacity for ethical conduct, in war as elsewhere, is God himself. For the Christian this will probably seem like an obvious thing to say. In contrast, a humanist view might suggest that humans have evolved to a state where ethical conduct has emerged as part of an essential characteristic of communal behaviour that has stopped individuals from killing one another off over millennia. The key difference between these two positions – both of which would see ethical conduct as good and desirable in a functioning society – is that the telos, or ultimate destination, of the Christian is heavenly and eternal, while for the humanist it is earthbound and restricted to the here and now.

Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God'.³¹ Augustine took that injunction and applied it to the domain of war: 'Be a peacemaker, therefore, even in war, so that by conquering them you bring the benefit of peace even to those you defeat'.³² Such a view of war and peace cannot be limited to Christians; people of many faiths and none would be happy to promote the pursuit of peace in times of war. Christians, however, are encouraged to set their sights on eternal rather than temporal ends: 'If, indeed, human peace is so delightful because of the temporary security that belongs to mortals, how much more delightful is divine peace'

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– a divine peace that is accessed through faith on the part of the Christian.

The Christian is encouraged to acknowledge God, even in war, and, consequently, in their conduct to keep faith with both friends and enemies alike:

'When you are arming yourself for battle, then, consider this first of all, that your courage, even your physical courage, is a gift from God. Then you won't think of using a gift from God to act against God. When one makes a promise, one must keep faith, even with an enemy against whom one is waging a war. How much more so with a friend for whose sake one is fighting.'³⁴

To examine the significance of keeping faith with both friends and enemies let us take the example of Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales and the (at this time alleged) killings in the Panjwai district of Afghanistan's Kandahar province on March 11, 2012. A previously decorated, brave soldier used what was once a gift and a blessing – his courage and dedication – and turned it into what Augustine would call a sin and a curse, killing sixteen innocent people in the process. Amongst the many violations of trust that occurred that night was a breaking of the Oath of Enlistment he made when he joined the US Army, which says:

'I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.'³⁵

Bales stands accused of violating not only the lives and community of people for whom the US

Army was attempting to bring about peace and social and political reconstruction, but the very standards of freedom, respect for life, the pursuit of justice encapsulated in the Constitution that he swore to defend. He also violated various rules of engagement, regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. That such an atrocity could happen when such stringent, codified rules and moral frameworks were in place highlights, again, the limits of codified morality in the shaping of human conduct.

Augustine demanded that faith even be kept against enemies. Notably, however, he advocated that even greater faith must be kept with the friend for whose sake the soldier is fighting. In Afghanistan, that 'friend' takes three forms: first, for the US soldier, are the people of the United States who look to their armed forces to protect them from attack; second, are the Afghans who no more want a life lived under Taliban domination than would most Americans, Britons or other Westerners; third, soldiers fight for their colleagues in the company in which they serve. So what are the consequences of Bales's actions for these 'friends'?

As a result of the killing of 16 Afghans the lives of Americans in their homeland, as well as those in the homelands of and their NATO and ISAF allies, are put under greater threat because of the promise of reprisals from Taliban, Al Qaeda and other Islamist extremist sympathisers. In addition, the so-called 'hearts-and-minds' aspect of the campaign is severely damaged as the trust of ordinary Afghans in US and ISAF forces is eroded: a problem exacerbated by President Karzai's questioning of whether the killings were the work of one individual.³⁶ The Taliban promised revenge attacks against what they called 'sick-minded American savages' for the 'blood-soaked and inhumane crime'.

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Thus the lives of Robert Bales's military colleagues have been put a greater risk: patrols will be deadlier; rocket, grenade, roadside bomb and other attacks have been promised. All because one individual failed to keep faith with both his enemy and the friends for whom he fought.

The earthly and eternal consequences of such actions have been spelt out clearly, reflecting not only individual responsibilities within a military hierarchy but, in turn, responses to the command of God:

...when the soldier, obedient to the power under which he has been lawfully placed, slays a man, he is not guilty of murder according to the laws of his city. On the contrary, if he does not do so, he is guilty of desertion and contempt of authority. If he had done this of his own will and authority, however, he would have fallen into the crime of shedding human blood. Thus, the deed which is punished if he does it when not commanded is the same as that for which he will be punished if he does not do it when commanded. And if this is true when the command is

given by a general, how much more true is it when the command is given by the Creator.³⁸

The hierarchy of authority set out by Augustine with regard to war takes the following form: soldier, general, legitimate [political] authority, the Creator. Nobody in a military/political hierarchy is exempt from the basic Christian responsibility of seeking after God and obeying God's commands, an active seeking through contemplation, self-awareness and a desire for things eternal: 'Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.'³⁹

Augustine left open the possibility that the soldier could still emerge as ethical in pursuing honor on the battlefield, even while obeying a sacrilegious ruler in executing an unjust war:

Therefore, a just man, if he should happen to serve as a soldier under a human king who is sacrilegious, could rightly wage war at the king's command, maintaining the order of civic peace, for what he is commanded to do is not contrary to the sure precepts of God ... perhaps the iniquity of giving the orders will make the king guilty while the rank of servant in the civil order will show the soldier to be innocent.⁴⁰

The king is described as guilty, not necessarily a result of his actions in relation to war but because he is sacrilegious and contravenes God's guidance. The soldier who waged the king's unjust war, on the other hand, could still be seen as ethical despite involvement in actions that opposed God's command. This is because the soldier, through his obedience, is helping to maintain civic peace, which is part of God's intended order for people to live by. The separation of the moral responsibilities of the king and the soldier reflects Augustine's Christian views about salvation as individualised rather than a shared communal responsibility. One person's actions could not get another person into heaven, just as one individual's behaviour could not stop someone else from gaining divine approval. So the one who ordered war and the one who executed war could only be held accountable for actions in their own sphere of influence.⁴¹

The cost of serving

For societies, especially liberal democratic societies, to be able to function effectively and, importantly, defend their freedoms, they need to have effective armed forces. For the US, UK and many others this means, unless extraordinary circumstances arise, relying upon volunteer forces for the protection of the state and its interests. Individuals who choose to serve in the military do so for a complex array of motivations: the need for paid employment; to defend the state and its interests; in pursuit of some kind of higher purpose; to maintain a family tradition; to test oneself; and so on. In so doing the individuals who don a uniform and take up arms are granted special legal dispensation to take other human lives under particular circumstances. The corollary of that dispensation is that they make themselves legitimate targets for aggressors and must therefore be prepared to make great personal sacrifice: separation from loved ones, wounding, maiming, death.

Those who endure hardship, fight well and live to tell the tale have their actions recognised by the state: Medals are awarded and words like courageous, brave, honorable and self-sacrificial abound. However, there is a negative aspect of this valorising of the 'brave soldier' in that those self-same individuals can frequently be discouraged from voicing their doubts, fears, anxieties, grief, anger and so on: the unspoken 'dark side' of war. Prime time news bulletins that broadcast medal ceremonies tend not to dwell on the combatants' deepest fears and regrets. It is, to use a loaded, gendered term, unmanly. On the one hand the prevailing approach in the various armed forces I have encountered can be summed up in some well-worn phrases: 'Suck it up ... soldier on ... man up (whether the soldier is male or female)' etc. Yet we deny the legacy of these emotions and the events on which they are based at society's peril. A Christian military ethic needs to acknowledge the damage done to those who fight in our name and support those whose lives will never be the same after an encounter with death.

Augustine in his *Confessions* describes his devastation at the death of a friend, devastation expressed in terms of the pain the loss inflicted upon his soul:

So I boiled with anger, sighed, wept, and was at my wits' end. I found no calmness, no capacity for deliberation. I carried my lacerated and bloody soul when it was unwilling to be carried by me. I found no place where I could put it down ... But when my weeping stopped my soul felt burdened by a vast load of misery.⁴²

Augustine was obviously a man of a vastly different era to our own, yet his faith-based wrestling with issues of life and death, sin, grief, loss and despair helped to shape the vocabulary that Christians of all traditions still call upon today. His reference to his 'lacerated and bloody soul' provides the most profound description I have yet come across of the mental and spiritual consequences of traumatic loss, which I extend here specifically to the domain of war. In a

previous professional capacity I have dealt with veterans of the 1982 Falklands War, the Balkans conflicts of the 1990s, and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars of the past decade, most of whom suffered some degree of mental trauma. My grandfather – a devout Christian – could not bring himself to talk of his experiences in the Royal Artillery in World War II, and scorned those who did.

Every individual reacts differently to the trials of war and life and death, and the same individual can react very differently on subsequent tours of duty. Augustine speaks to the modern Christian combatant because he lived, worshipped, ministered and wrote at a time of political and religious ambiguity against the backdrop of military violence. He knew that good people could do bad things, especially in war. He consoled himself with scripture, especially the Psalms: 'Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me'.⁴³

The Christian military professional today looks to the scriptures, still, in his or her struggles with the weight of their actions or inaction, or in thanks for a mission successfully concluded. For many the issues are fear or guilt; no matter how just the cause or how legitimate the action taken, the taking of life – and the way of self-sacrifice – weighs heavily. There is no magic cure. In the Old Testament King David struggled repeatedly with guilt, perhaps rightly so: 'Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions ... Save me from bloodguilt, O God ... The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.'⁴⁴

4

At Gethsemane Jesus himself reached breaking point as he faced death: 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death ... Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me'.

45

Fear led Peter to deny his relationship with Jesus, while Augustine would later admit, 'But when my weeping stopped my soul felt burdened by a vast load of misery. I should have lifted myself to you, Lord, to find a cure'.

46

It is in a similar spirit that the Christian combatant turns to God as the source of faith and hope. Experience tells us that, as Jesus experienced in Gethsemane, the cup of pain is rarely lifted in response to a cry of anguish, no matter how deeply and painfully felt. However, the witness of men and women of faith through the ages, in times of war and peace, tells us that somehow they are able to endure. And perhaps that is enough, for now.

Conclusion: Honoring God by Living Up to His Standards of Conduct in War

The Christian combatant, like those of any other faith and none, is required to conform to the various written and unwritten codes that shape the common life, purpose and actions of the armed forces in which they serve. However, the Christian is called to more than obedience to rules, laws and injunctions: he or she is called to a life in the Spirit wherever they find themselves, whether in peacetime or wartime. The tactical and strategic consequences of soldiers violating not only military codes but the moral underpinnings of those codes can be severe. From the rice fields of My Lai to the prison cells of Abu Ghraib the actions of the unethical military professional have undermined the morale of uniformed colleagues, placed them at risk of reprisal attacks, diminished public support for the armed forces and lowered the reputations of entire nations in the eyes of the world. Consequently, it is important to conform to the legal and moral codes set out for military personnel.

The Christian whose business it is to protect others by military force will continually be confronted by ambiguities, contradictions and confusion. The very idea of going to war in pursuit of peace highlights the paradox that everyone who takes up arms must wrestle with. I have therefore called upon Augustine's experiences and writings to highlight some of the challenges and possibilities that we face in the twenty-first century. The fifth-century Christian, monk and bishop knew what it was to struggle with faith and belief in a world where politics was regularly corrupt and absolute power was wielded harshly. Though the means of war, the weaponry available and the political framework in which we live today is radically different to that faced by Augustine, the spiritual ambiguities faced by the Christian military professional have changed little. The need to honor God in keeping faith with both friends and enemies remains, as does the physical, mental and spiritual damage that can be wreaked on those who risk life and take life on behalf of the state. We know from the history of war and the traumas that are inflicted and endured that there is not always a cure for the troubled mind and scarred soul. Like Humpty Dumpty after his fall, people cannot be put back together again.⁴⁷

Any Christian ethic of war must be willing to deal not only with conduct in war but also with the long term consequences of military violence: both of the victim and the perpetrator. Augustine's words to a military man in AD 428 remain valid for today's Christian combatant who seeks to reconcile the demands of the military profession with the calling of God: 'the security of the soul, together with the immortality of the body, the strength of justice, victory over the hostile passions, glory, honour and peace for eternity, these are given only to the good. It is these then that you must love, these you must desire, these you must seek by any means you can.'⁴⁸ For some who have been damaged by war, this aspiration may seem beyond their reach. So I conclude here with the words of St Paul – a man who both inflicted and endured pain and desperation – as the start-point for the despairing: 'but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint because us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us'.

Dr Peter Lee served from 2001 to 2008 as a chaplain in the Royal Air Force. He spent the first five months of Operation Iraqi Freedom at a military hospital in Cyprus providing pastoral and welfare support to wounded, maimed and injured soldiers who had been airlifted from the battlefield. Between 2005 and 2008 Dr Lee taught personal ethics, in the form of the Beliefs and Values Programme, to RAF enlisted recruits and officer cadets. Since 2008 Dr Lee has been employed by King's College, University of London as a Lecturer in Air Power Studies based at Royal Air Force College Cranwell, specialising in the ethics of war. He lectures to officer cadets on the Initial Officer Training Course and to senior officers undertaking the Higher Air Warfare Course. He has a particular interest in the ethics of interventionist wars and in November 2011 published his first book entitled *Blair's Just War: Iraq and the Illusion of Morality*. In addition, he is regularly invited to lecture on this subject to military, academic, church and wider audiences.

Endnotes

1. This article was developed from a paper prepared for the 'Exploring the Professional Military Ethic' Conference, 15-18 November 2010, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The expression 'military professional' is taken here to include soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen and their respective commissioned and non-commissioned officers.

2. The conception of ethical subjectivity adopted in this paper can be found in the later works of Michel Foucault and in William E. Connolly, *The Augustinian Imperative* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002, 2nd Edition).

3. These four aspects are adapted from Foucault's exploration of the ethical subject in Foucault, M., 'On the Genealogy of Ethics', in Foucault, M. and Rabinow, P. (Ed.) *The essential works of Michel Foucault 1954 - 1984 Volume 1: Ethics – Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: The New Press, 1997) p. 263-5.

4. Foucault, M., *The History of Sexuality Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*, Trans. R. Hurley, (London: Penguin Books, 1984) p. 25.

5. *Ibid*, p. 5.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 25ff.

7. Members of the Army, Navy and Marines are also subject to the same laws, with subtle variations according to the branch of the Services. Other armed forces have similar military codes that govern behaviour in both peace and war.

8. *The Queen's Regulations for the Royal Air Force*, Para. 989, Parts 1 and 4, p. 15-1.

9. *Aide Memoire on the Law of Armed Conflict*, JSP 381, Revised February 2005, Ministry of

Defence, located at <http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonl/yses/749088E6-E50A-470E-938D-459A74481E88/0/jsp381.pdf>, Para. 4, accessed 10 January 2009.

10. Programmes of military instruction, Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977. Part 5, Section 1, Article 83, Para. 3376, located at <http://cicr.org/ihl.nsf/COM/470-750108?OpenDocument>, accessed 15 January 2010.

11. *The Ethos, Core Values and Standards of the Royal Air Force*, p. 7.

12. At the time when the author taught the Beliefs and Values Programme all uniformed RAF chaplains belonged to Christian denominations. Ministry of Defence-appointed civilian chaplains from other faiths – Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist – were also available to provide specific religious guidance when needed.

13. What I refer to here as a 'confessional dynamic' can be seen throughout history from the works of Augustine to the 12-step programme of Alcoholics Anonymous and countless self-help books. It is not to be confused here with any form of religious instruction.

14. Reporting an individual or an event to any form of authority figure.

15. The Cadet Honor Code, <http://www.usma.edu/committees/honor/info/main.htm>, accessed 1 September 2010.

16. Elshaint, J.B., *Just War Against Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 2004) p. 21.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 21/2.

18. John 15:13, *New International Version*. All subsequent bible quotations taken from the *New International Version* unless otherwise stated.

19. Luke 22:20.

20. 2 Peter 3:11.

21. Augustine, *Confessions and Enchiridion*, (397) Trans. Outler, A.C. (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), p. 70.

22. *Id.* There is not the space here to extend the analysis of Augustine's conception of the soul. However, it should be acknowledged that his was a complex formulation that wove together a biblical understanding of the soul with philosophical influences from Socrates and Plato. See Augustine, *City of God*, Bk VIII, Ch. 3ff.

23. Psalm 23:3.

24. Psalm 103: 1.

25. Luke 10:28.

26. Matthew 22:36-40.

27. Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, Ed. and Trans. by R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Bk VI, Ch. 12, p. 265-6.

28. Lynch, T., 'Confessions of the Self: Foucault and Augustine', *Telos*, Vol. 146 (Spring 2009) p. 134.
29. *Id.*
30. Augustine, 'Letter 189: Augustine to Boniface (417)', in Atkins, E.M. and Dodaro, R.J. (Eds.) *Augustine: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) p. 217-8.
31. Matthew 5:9.
32. Augustine, 'Letter 189', p. 217.
33. *Id.*
34. *Id.*
35. Title 10, US Code; Act of 5 May 1960 replacing the wording first adopted in 1789, with amendment effective 5 October 1962, <http://www.army.mil/values/oath.html> , accessed 12 December 2011.
36. Reuters, 16 March 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/16/us-afghanistan-idUSBRE82F0PV20120316> , accessed 17 March 2012.
37. CBS News, 12 March 2012, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505263_162-57395223/taliban-vows-revenge-for-afghan-shootings/ , accessed 14 March

2012; Al-Jazeera, 12 March 2012,

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/03/201231242342723175.html>

, accessed 14 March 2012.

38. Augustine, *City of God*, Bk I, Ch. 26, p. 39.

39. 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18.

40. Augustine, *Against Faustus the Manichean*, XXII, Ch.74 in Reichberg, G.M., Syse, H. and Begby, E. (Eds) *The Ethics of War* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 82.

41. This view is strongly challenged by Professor Jeff McMahan and others who argue for a rights-based ethic of war that grants greater autonomy of action to combatants to refuse to soldier in circumstances where they are not morally convinced of the cause they are meant to be fighting for. The scope of this article does not permit further exploration but McMahan's views can be found at McMahan, J., 'Liability and Collective Identity: A Response to Walzer', *Philosophia*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2006) pp. 13-17; McMahan, J., 'Collectivist Defenses of the Moral Equality of Combatants', *Journal of Military Ethics*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2007) pp. 50-59; McMahan, J., *Killing in War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

42. Augustine, *Confessions*, Trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) Bk IV, Para. vii (12) p. 59-60.

43. Psalm 138: 7, cited in Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 61.

44. Psalm 51:1, 14, 17.

45. Mark 14: 34, 36.

46. Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk IV, Para. vii (12) p. 60.

47. I am aware that this is a generalization. Nobody has a higher regard than I for the work of psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, counsellors and others who work to alleviate the ravages of combat stress. However, I have yet to meet one who says that she or he can return an individual to their pre-traumatized physical or mental state. I remain open to correction of course.

48. Augustine, 'Letter 220: Augustine to Boniface (428)', in Atkins, E.M. and Dodaro, R.J. (Eds.) *Augustine: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) p. 224.

49. Romans 5:4, 5.