



Padres of various faiths.

Is there a Role for Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Chaplains in Ethics?

by Padre Yvon Pichette and Padre Jon Derrick Marshall

Introduction

The traditional role for Canadian military chaplains has always involved two main responsibilities: the provision of support to military personnel and their families in religious, moral and spiritual matters; and the provision of advice to the Chain of Command on multiple matters in garrison or while on operations.

During the creation of the Defence Ethics Program (DEP) in 1994, for reasons that still remain unclear, it was decided that military chaplains would not take an active part in the delivery of the new program.

In this brief article, we will try to demonstrate that that decision was unfortunate and why chaplains must be involved in Canadian Armed Forces ethics training, even more now than ever before, particularly given the increasingly new and complex ethical issues that face our military. However, our role in ethics training is unique in that it involves ethics at a deeper level than is possible in the DEP alone.

To achieve our goal, we will begin with a short history of the role of Canadian military chaplains. Secondly, we will spend some time in discussion of the role chaplains play in the Canadian Armed Forces. Thirdly, we will discuss the contemporary situation regarding ethics and religion. We will then end this discussion by addressing some of the more salient questions that have been posed in the last 20 years with respect to whether CAF chaplains require their own specific ethics training, other than that offered by the DEP Program.

History¹

The name 'chaplain' or *capellanus* has its origin in the capella or cloak of St. Martin of Tours. The term 'chaplain' refers to specially trained religious leaders who are responsible for the religious and spiritual care of persons living in closed societies (i.e. hospitals, prisons, militaries, etc.) who are limited in their access to their particular faith communities and to the practice of their religious traditions. The term 'Padre' is still commonly used in the armed forces to refer to the chaplain. As far back as recorded history attests, warriors have relied upon the support of their deities when they went into battle.



Chaplain (left) of 72nd Canadian Battalion talking to a Canadian soldier 'up the line,' April, 1918.

First World War

In 1914, the Canadian Contingent was quickly assembled to go to France. Hundreds of clergy followed their soldiers to the assembly point in Valcartier, Quebec. Eventually, 33 clergymen were selected to go overseas to tend to the spiritual needs of their flocks.

Second World War ~ Padre John Foote, VC

It was not until D-Day that a steady stream of young chaplains was provided for front-line soldiers. However, Canada's most famous Padre POW of the Second World War was Major John Weir Foote, VC. Foote served with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry and was captured on the beaches of Dieppe. He repeatedly refused offers to evacuate, and he carried wounded to landing craft and also chose to remain on the beach when he was given an opportunity to escape. At war's end, on 9 August 1945, the Governor General in Council authorized the establishment of the Canadian Chaplain Services, Protestant and Roman Catholic.

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Operations under United Nations Chapters 6 and 7, and NATO Operations

As one of the architects of United Nations peacekeeping, Canada became one of the nations tasked to provide a contingent when the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was dispatched to Egypt in 1956 to be a buffer between Israeli and Egyptian forces. Canadian peacekeepers subsequently served in the Congo, Cyprus, Golan Heights, Viet Nam, Sinai, the former Yugoslavia, Haiti, Rwanda, Somalia and Afghanistan. Chaplains have been continually present with their troops in all theatres

of operations to provide pastoral care and spiritual support.

The Concept of Administrative Integration

This concept called for the integration of the administrative and command structure within the chaplaincy while maintaining the integrity of worshipping communities. In the meantime, a small committee was struck to draft a working constitution for what was, eventually, to become the Interfaith Committee on Canadian Military Chaplaincy (ICCMC). The Minister of National Defence approved this new constitution in December 1997.



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H/Captain Callum Thompson, a Canadian chaplain, conducting a funeral service in the Normandy bridgehead, France, 16 July 1944.

Canadian Forces Chaplain School and Centre

While the aforementioned process of integration was taking place, a new idea was being born in the mind of the Chaplain Branch – the establishment of our own training facility that would prepare civilian clergy and qualified laity to serve as chaplains in the Canadian Armed Forces. Since its inception in 1994, the Canadian Forces Chaplain School and Centre (CFChSC) has continued to develop courses and to provide for the professional development of Canadian chaplains and chaplains from other nations (i.e., Estonia, Korea, South Africa, the United States, and Cameroon).

Chaplains continue to be trained for service in a variety of military environments, and opportunities abound for them to grow, both personally and professionally, in their ministry. Ecumenical team ministry and inter-religious ministry are now a 'given' on most CAF bases.

In 1995, as the Chaplain School was now considered the training vessel *par excellence* for chaplains, one of its staff members was tasked with the drafting of a Postgraduate Qualification Requirement



Lieutenant H. Gordon Alkman/DND/Library and Archives Canada PA-140192

H/Major J.W. Forth, chaplain of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa, assisting the regimental aid party of the Cameron Highlanders in loading a wounded soldier onto a jeep near Caen, France, 15 July 1944.

(PGQR) in ethics.² This PGQR recognized the need to have chaplains especially trained in the area of ethics, so that they could be effective advisors, both to the chain of command and to the Office of the Chaplain General. The commitment of the Chaplain Branch to ethics training and formation was beginning to gather steam – so much so that one of the earlier graduates of the program now possesses a PhD in Ethics from a recognized Canadian university.

Not satisfied with the implementation of ethics training for chaplains both at the entry level and in the provision of a formal course at the Chaplain School, the Chaplain General inaugurated an Ethics Advisory Board, approved guidelines to be followed in the investigation of chaplains for professional misconduct, and implemented a “Code of Ethics for Canadian Forces Chaplains” approved by the *Interfaith Committee on Canadian Military Chaplaincy* at its meeting in April 1998.³ The continued involvement of the Chaplain Branch in ethics training and development shows no signs of abating – in fact it is increasing.

Legal References ~ Chaplain Mandate

The various legal references which guide the mandate given to chaplains in the CAF are discussed below.

Amendment to QR&O 33.07⁴ – Chaplains

QR&O 33.07 – CHAPLAINS

The duties and functions of a chaplain at a base, unit or other element include

- (a) *advising the commanding officer of the base unit or other element on religious, spiritual, moral and ethical matters relating to the officers and non-commissioned members under that commanding officer's command;*
- (b) *providing chaplain services to any officers, non-commissioned members and families of officers and non-commissioned members who desire those services, including to these who are sick or in service or civil custody, regardless of the religious or spiritual affiliation or beliefs of those officers, non-commissioned members and families; and*
- (c) *being prepared to give advice, assistance and instruction on religious, spiritual, moral and ethical matters.*

QR&O 33.10 TRAINING

Officers and non-commissioned members undergoing instruction, training or professional development may be required to participate in training provided by chaplains on the subjects of ethics and moral or personal well-being.

DND photo 1506-2015-0018-002 by Corporal Eric Girard



A Padre of the Royal 22^e Régiment preaches to members of the Canadian infantry in Tancos, Portugal, during NATO Exercise *Jointex 15*, 25 October 2015.



ChapSv.

Chaplains in field training.

Historically speaking, the role of religious care providers has always included religious support to any military operation, and advice to the chain of command on morale, as well as with respect to moral and ethical issues. Moreover, paragraph (c) of QR&O 33.07 further elucidates that chaplains must be prepared to give advice, assistance and instruction to military members, regardless of rank.

Whereas this legal document clearly stipulates the Chaplaincy's role and mandate in advising the Chain of Command on matters moral and spiritual, the teaching and training of chaplains in ethics and as ethical advisors is imperative.

Enclosed as Appendixes 1 and 2 are the Chaplain Based Specifications/Common Officer Based Specifications. In comparing and contrasting the Chaplain Job Based Specifications (JBS) with that of the Common Officer Job Based Specifications (JBS), it is evident that no other officer of the CAF is as responsible for providing ethical advice, or as in need of in-depth training in ethics as is the Chaplain.

Enclosed as Appendix 3 is DAOD 7023-0, Defence Ethics. The history of this DAOD is as follows:

- (a) In February 1994, as a consequence of the Somalia Inquiry, the Commission on the Somalia Inquiry found

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that there were systemic issues within the Department of National Defence and the CAF that needed to be addressed. Questions were raised as to the preparation (physical, cultural and moral) that military personnel receive prior to deployment – training that should be initiated at the beginning of Recruit School and be carried on throughout their career. DND took action in 1994.

The rationale of the Defence Ethics Program (DEP) is as follows:

- (a) The aim and primary focus of the DEP is to foster the practice of ethics in the workplace and in operations such that members of the CAF and employees of the DND will consistently perform their duties to the highest ethical standards;
- (b) The DEP is a values-based program built upon the values that are constitutive of Political Liberal Democracy (see John Rawls' Political Liberalism). These values determine what Canadian society will accept as the institutionalization of its defence. These values include the following:
 - 1) Canada's modern democratic society is characterized by a multiplicity of belief systems, some of which are philosophical, while others are religious or secular;

- 2) Such overlapping belief systems are considered to exhibit an overlapping consensus of values in a free and democratic society;
- 3) Within the kind of overlapping consensus found in a free and democratic society there exists a set of fundamental values that define what constitutes Defence. It is also reasonable to assume that within our system of democratic values, considered as an overlapping consensus of values, there exists a set of principles and values that applies specifically to the defence of the nation.

Although the CAF and the Department of National Defence are two separate legal entities, they share common ground as institutions. What is common ground can be found in the Statement of Defence Ethics. However, we can easily see the limits of this reasoning, in that they do not go far enough in addressing the complexities of contemporary ethical challenges, particularly regarding questions of spirituality, religion and the human person. Because of these limits and the fact that this program, a Public Ethics Program which is by necessity a reductionist program, it was perceived by these authors and others as inadequate (by itself) to meet the specific needs and practices of the Canadian Army.⁵ Thus, the Canadian Army designed and adapted an ethics program specific to its own sphere of practice and ethos.

The DEP as a Public Ethics program is fine as far as it goes in addressing ethical problems or dilemmas common to Canadians living and working in the public sphere, but it is inadequate by

itself to address the manifold ethical tasks and spheres of the average CAF chaplain, who is called upon to address both public and private ethical questions and concerns within the military.

What is more, from a military chaplain perspective, regarding the DEP as an ethical tool, many CAF chaplains may find that they have no interest or will to be involved in certain aspects of the public sphere ethics that one finds in the DEP (i.e., conflict of interest, donations and gifts, hospitality and benefits). CAF chaplains might well be advised of these ethical dilemmas. However, the chaplain is involved in only a limited capacity on such ethical issues by making a referral to the proper DEP ethical resource person.

Discussion

As is the case for all CAF and DND members, CAF chaplains are responsible to the values and content of the DEP. However, military chaplains are also uniquely and especially responsible for the religious and spiritual aspects of ethics and ethical training, a sphere of ethics which encompasses the content of the DEP, but which is also much deeper at the personal level.

It is the core argument of this article that CAF chaplains are the best placed (and, therefore, should also be the best trained) professionals to model, teach and implement ethical behaviour at the tactical and operational level in the CAF regarding the three universal principles: Respect the Dignity of all Persons; Serve Canada Before Self; and Obey and Support Lawful Authority, as well as its concomitant values and obligations.



Major Darren Persaud, a military chaplain with JTF North, gives communion to Canadian Rangers on Baffin Island, Nunavut, during Operation Nanook, 24 August 2014.

Chaplain Branch Manual⁶ – The Chaplain Branch Manual, as a legal document governing the work of chaplains in the CAF, is clear in stipulating that chaplains are responsible for advising, training and teaching on matters ethical and moral and in a pluralistic environment.⁷ Furthermore, the Branch Manual elucidates what is to be taught and trained to be effective as chaplains at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.⁸

Called to Serve: A Strategy for the Canadian Forces Chaplaincy – In his Message in the Chaplaincy's Strategic Plan, General (Retired) Rick Hillier made plain the role of chaplains in ethical counselling of CAF leadership, "Chaplains also provide CF leadership with perspective and guidance on religious, spiritual and ethical matters in garrison and in the field."⁹ It is also mentioned as part of Objective 3 – Advising Leadership, "The Chaplaincy needs the capability to advise and counsel senior DND/CAF leadership in areas of spiritual and religious practices and ethical decision-making in operational and non-operation environments."¹⁰

Questions and Answers

Observation 1: There are those who would argue that a Unit Ethics Coordinator (UEC), under the authority of a unit Commanding Officer, is already responsible for the ethics training of a unit on a yearly basis. The UEC and a unit chaplain may work together to provide such training. Knowing that ethics is ultimately the responsibility of a Unit Commanding Officer, he or she delegates the authority to advise, teach, and train ethics to a chaplain under his or her command. The strength of this reality is that the chaplain, because of his or her specific status, is one of the few military members whose career cannot be jeopardized when advising a unit Commanding Officer, since the chaplain's military career is chiefly driven by the Chaplain Branch. For example, if a CO behaves unethically, it would be very difficult for someone other than a chaplain to challenge the CO without fearing negative ramifications to his or her career prospects.

Observation 2: There are some critics who question the unique role the chaplain plays in advising the chain of command. They would argue that every officer is responsible for this role. The chaplain is a valuable resource in advising the chain of command, individual commanders and their subordinates in matters pertaining to the spiritual, moral, and ethical issues that affect the lives of

individuals and the unit. Only the chaplain is competent to advise on interfaith issues, holistic care, pluralistic and secular matters, and intervention for those suffering from loss, sickness, or in mourning regarding the higher existential questions of meaning due to death. Also, the chaplain is the one officer who is uniquely positioned in the Unit, Brigade or even Divisional level – including the strategic level – to inform the chain of command on important issues through ministry of presence. This happens through informal discussions, unit functions, individual counselling, chaplain sessions, managing workplace friction and misunderstandings, and working in multidisciplinary contexts. The Army has agreed that the chaplain within operations now has the added role and responsibility of Religious Area Awareness (RAA) and Religious Area Engagement (RAE),¹¹ which formalizes these capacities.

"Knowing that ethics is ultimately the responsibility of a Unit Commanding Officer, he or she delegates the authority to advise, teach, and train ethics to a chaplain under his or her command."

Observation 3: Since the chaplain is delegated the responsibility to advise, train and educate on matters of ethics, some would argue that there is a danger that ethics programs will become religious in focus. In fact, this is no longer a possibility. Chaplains are not mandated to design the DEP or the Army Ethics program. Secondly, the CAF Chaplaincy is better equipped to serve in the public sphere, since it now ministers to its own, facilitates the worship of others, and cares for all.

Observation 4: There are also those who would question the chaplain's role in matters of religious accommodation, according to the latest CANFORGEN Interim Policy – Religious Accommodation. It is true that legal officers must arbitrate on the legality of a religious accommodation request; chaplains are a fundamental resource to commanding officers and help them make informed ethical decisions, based upon the context of the



RCN Command Chaplain, Lieutenant-Colonel Michelle Staples, speaks with sailors aboard HMCS Calgary during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) off the coast of Hawaii, 13 July 2014.

DND photo IS2014-1030-03 by Sergeant Matthew McGregor

religious accommodation request especially on operations as to whether to accommodate. This has to do with matters of morale, safety, unit cohesiveness, operational effectiveness, costs, etc. Therefore, chaplains help to facilitate the CO's decision-making process by interviewing the member making the request, religious experts, and also by conducting any other task within their mandate.

Conclusion

We must recognize that the military chaplain has a crucial role to play in the development of ethical behaviour from the chain of command and from their subordinates. As previously mentioned, the special status of the military chaplain allows fullest objectivity when advising, training, and educating on matters moral and ethical in all aspects of military life. Military chaplains are professionally trained to serve in an ecumenical, inter-faith and pluralistic (including secularism) environment, ensuring that all military personnel and their families are well supported and cared for in contemporary military life. In the past several years, the Chaplaincy has developed an expertise in the operational and non-operational milieu that has enabled the Chaplain Branch to be a Centre of Excellence regarding ethics at both the tactical and operational level.

Whereas the Defence Ethics Program (DEP) deals specifically with a public (institutional) approach to ethics, the CAF Chaplain Services has a mandate to look after individual, personal ethics, and does so from a holistic approach.

For all these reasons, and assuming that the Chaplaincy Ethics courses are regularly updated and reflect state-of-the-art in matters moral and ethical, should chaplain-specific training at the highest level ever be lost, the members of the CAF and their families will lose this precious capacity, which could negatively impact operational success.

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Padre (Major) Jon Derrick Marshall, CD, PhD, *was first ordained as a Baptist Minister in 1991. He joined the Canadian Forces as a Protestant Chaplain in 1997 and has served extensively at home and abroad in a variety of operational postings. Padre Marshall currently serves in the Chaplain General's Office as a Policy, International Communications, and Media Relations Officer for the Canadian Forces Chaplain Branch.*



The Primary Chaplain Branch crest

NOTES

1. The Ecumenical Model of Ministry in the Canadian Forces Chaplain Branch, *Historic Foundations – A Précis of Canadian Military Chaplaincy*, pp. 11-17.
2. Eric Reynolds, "A Paradigmatic Approach to Values and Ethics: The Role of the Military Chaplain in Canadian Defence Ethics," pp. 13-16. The PGQR process recognizes that various Military Occupation Classifications (MOCs) require certain qualified individuals to be trained, at government expense, beyond the mere minimal standards in a specific subject area that is of concern to the military occupation. Once justified and approval by the competent military authorities, a selection process is then initiated to choose suitable candidates for further training. It should be noted that a similar PGQR was drafted and approved for graduate training in pastoral counselling at the same time.
3. This Code of Ethics can be found as Annex A to this chapter.
4. Amendments to the Queen's Regulations and Orders 33 (Chaplain Services) for the Canadian Armed Forces are presently awaiting final approval of MND.
5. At the time of production, the authors of this article could not find an ethics program specific to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF).
6. There will soon be a new version of the Chaplain Branch Manual. Both the old (2003) and the new (Vol 1) versions agree that the Chaplain's role is to advise, train and educate in the field of ethics.
7. Branch Manual (2003), 6-4, 7-4, 10-2, 10-10 and 10-11.
8. Branch Manual (2003), 5-2.
9. *Called to Serve*, p.1.
10. *Called to Serve*, 3.3, p. 9.
11. CANARMYGEN RLE Doctrine dated 21 February 2014. This should help to institutionalize the new chaplain capability in this role.

DND photo