Chapter 5

Believers in foxholes.

5.1 Introduction

One of the reasons I opted for the 7-Movements approach was the fact that particular attention was given to a reflection on religious and spiritual aspects, and especially God's presence in our understanding of reality. When research is done in the field of Practical Theology, it is absolutely essential that special attention is given to spiritual and religious matters as studied in theology. The research develops within 7 Movements, which reflects the assumptions and foundation of post-foundationalism in Practical Theology. Chapter Five corresponds in broad terms with the fifth movement in the research.

In this chapter, we will reflect on the role of religion, and the role that our own spiritual world plays, not only on an abstract theoretical level, but also in a practical sense of looking at the role that religion and our spiritual concepts and beliefs play in helping us to cope or not. The role that our Co-researchers' spiritual and religious experiences played prior, during and after deployment will be listened to - and what role, if any, it played in their and our ability to cope with life will be reflected upon.

This chapter will further focus on the role that religious and spiritual understanding, and personal experiences of God's presence played in the Co-researchers' lives. In order to be able to understand where we are today within the field of Practical Theology, it is necessary to briefly venture back into the history and development of Practical Theology as an academic subject. Understanding the journey of how Practical Theology developed may assist one in understanding what questions and issues may be on the table today, that were just as relevant to Theologians in the past, thus sharing in their knowledge and insight.

5.2 Atheists in Foxholes

The old saying that there are no atheists in foxholes is simply not true. The precise origin of the phrase, coined some time during the Second World War, is uncertain. The statement "there are no atheists in foxholes" is used to imply that the moment people experience extreme stress, fear or hardship especially during combat, it is a natural human phenomenon to reach out and cling to any straw that in their desperation may bring any hope. This can happen notwithstanding their atheist claims or how absurd their actions and beliefs may seem to onlookers.

Somehow, the stalk of straw brings some form of hope and peace to people. Because they normally refuse to admit that they really do believe in God, deep down, in extreme situations they will reach out and grasp that "straw' in a desperate attempt to save themselves.

Contradictory to the saying "there are no atheists in foxholes" is the distinct possibility that, when a soldier exits a foxhole after surviving a terrible war, he or she may well become an atheist! Therefore, it is vital to look at the impact and the result of ongoing war and hardship on Christians as well, and not blindly accept the claim that the stress and strains of extreme hardship will necessarily bring people closer to God. In fact, one of the theories for the decline of Christianity in Europe is the large number of people who experienced terrible suffering during the two World Wars. Their experience was that God is either absent or totally uncaring and definitely not with them in their foxholes.

Paul Watkins (Elie, 1995:40-41) wrote the following testimony:

> "My great-grandfather returned from the Somme in the winter of 1916. He was an officer in a Welsh Guards regiment. He had been gassed and shot and had seen his platoon numerically wiped out and replaced more than three times since he first took command of it. He had used his side arm, a Webley revolver, so much that its barrel was pitted into uselessness. I heard a story about one of his advances across no-man's-land in which he set out with a full company and by the time he arrived at the German wire, he was one of only two men left alive. Until that time, this branch of my family had been Calvinistic Methodists. But when he returned from the war, my great-grandfather had seen enough to change his mind. He gathered the family together and banned religion in his house. 'Either god is a bastard,' he said, 'or god isn't there at all."

This and many similar experiences after two devastating wars led to a whole generation of children being brought up in European countries without the social constructionist impact of parents teaching and guiding them to believe in Christ or at least to accept God's existence as a reality in their lives. In fact, it is as if God was banished from numerous people's lives.

Referring back to the saying that "there are no atheists in foxholes", it is necessary to state that there are indeed people who are non-believers. There are also soldiers who did not believe before, during and after they had experienced major traumas in their lives. There is even an organisation, the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers (MAAF, 10/05/2008) that exists to challenge the idea that all soldiers are believers and to support atheists in foxholes. They believe that, after a soldier has been in a foxhole, he will probably be an atheist. They were unable to find any information that could convince them that God is present in our daily lives or even exist at all. Notwithstanding these arguments presented by those in disagreement with the original statement there, interestingly enough, still remains some truth to this old saying.

Schuster (2001:1507-1512) found that 90% of a random example of Americans reportedly coped with the stress and trauma of the terrorist attacks by turning to religion. These researchers have found a definite link between spirituality and moments of great stress. This tendency was especially noticeable after the 9/11 attacks in The United States of America. This implies that at least a sizeable portion of the population will turn towards "God" or some form of religion during periods of extreme trauma and stress.

It must be noted that there is a distinct difference between Europe and the United States regarding their respective acceptance of religious beliefs. My personal opinion is that Africa's, and specifically South Africa's population are

more religious than Europe's population, and that the research done in the USA, as the Americans are also more religiously inclined, might well be applicable to South Africans.

Similarly, Bulman (1977:351-363) found in a study that in order to cope with the experience, people who had been paralysed as the result of an accident, most often offered the explanation for the accidents as: "God had a reason". Despite this and other evidence of it's worth and significance to people trying to cope with life traumas, Shaw (2005:1-12) mentioned that with few exceptions, psychologists have oversimplified or even overlooked the roles of religion and spirituality in a stressful time.

Spirituality can potentially be very helpful or, unfortunately, even harmful to people. Since religious practices may run the risk of being accused of influencing people's lives in an unacceptable manner, it may be worthwhile to look briefly at the phenomenon. Due to the misuse of people's beliefs by individuals for their own personal gain or even political motives, a number of cynics are very sceptical about religion.

Christianity is not excluded from this scepticism. This is partially due to all kinds of strange beliefs that people clung to in the past and proclaimed as the "truth". On the extreme edge, destructive cults, such as David Koresh's Branch Davidians, Shoko Asahara's Aum Shinrikyo, or Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church (or the Moonies as its followers are commonly referred to), can completely control people's lives and inspire them to the extent to "voluntarily" physically harm themselves or other people. Alan Gomes (1995:7) described a Christian cult as a group of people, while claiming to be Christian, who embraces a particular doctrinal system taught by an organization, an individual leader, or a group of leaders that denies either explicitly or implicitly, one or more of the central doctrines of the Christian faith.

Looking into different sociological definitions of the term "cult", Ronald Enroth (1983:14) highlighted that special consideration of such factors as authoritarian leadership patterns, commitment mechanisms, lifestyle characteristics, conformity patterns and loyalty must be given towards the phenomena in order to understand the impact of religious manipulations on people.

These include the use of various sanctions in connection with those members who deviate from the prescribed norms in order to keep them in line. The following paragraphs are included to remind us of the overwhelming impact that the "misuse" of religion can have on society as well as the potential harm that can be done towards individuals and society as a whole.

The website (Apologetics, 31/05/2008) recalls the tragic story of how Koresh and 76 followers, including 17 children, died after a standoff with the FBI and a devastating fire. David Koresh, the leader of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, thought he was an angel and an agent of God. The government thought he was a gun-hoarding criminal who physically and sexually abused the several children he fathered with his followers. Koresh taught his followers that he was an incarnation of God and trained them for an armed apocalyptic conflict.

David Thibodeau (1999:1) was a survivor from David Koresh's cult. His mother made the following comment to a journalist: "I can't imagine the Davey

I know and love, finding the answers to his questions in quotes from the Bible". David Thibodeau described the journey from his life in Maine towards his life at planet Koresh as part of the cult, as similar to travelling from a galaxy far away towards a different planet. Koresh misused the bible to gain and maintain his hold on the members who followed his teachings.

Aum Shinrikyo, (Apologetics, 31/05/2008) a fanatical Japanese religious movement, or cult, is best known for its 20 March 1995 terrorist attack on the Tokyo subway system. Sarin, a deadly nerve gas, was released on five subway trains during Tokyo's early-morning rush hour. Eleven people were killed in the attacks and almost five thousand commuters injured. Aum and its leader, Shoko Asahara, were possessed by visions of the end of the world. Asahara's beliefs were similar to some present-day Christian prophets' beliefs of biblical world-ending events. They believe that Armageddon would be directly connected to current "end-time" agents, such as nuclear warheads or chemical weapons of mass destruction.Notwithstanding such horror stories of how religion and the bible can be misused, thankfully not only negative behaviour and impacts are attributed to Christian religion and spirituality. According to Pargament (1995:13-32), religion and spirituality have been described as a defence against pain, stress and anxiety. Religion and spirituality can provide a passive or active form of coping, but religion and spirituality may even be the source of denial of reality.

5.3 Spiritual Dimension of Traumatic Experience

While the social, psychological and physical dimensions of traumatic experiences are well recognised, the spiritual dimension is often overlooked. Yet the spiritual dimension plays a critical role in the way not only in how traumas are understood and managed, but even more important, how these traumatic experiences are ultimately resolved.

Religion and spirituality are equally important in coping with normal day-to-day experiences and not exclusively for trauma, although people have a higher tendency to call on their spiritual beliefs in time of need.

5.4 Practical Theology and an Inter-disciplinary Approach

Richard Osmer (Shults, 2007:328) wrote during his contribution in honour of J. Wentzel van Huyssteen's work on the new approach to inter-disciplinary work, that the paradigm of theology has been called into question on many fronts in our post-modern intellectual context. Osmer pointed out (Shults, 2007:328) how van Huyssteen challenged the way theology was divided into a relatively autonomous, specialized disciplines that function in relative isolation from other fields.

This isolation is contributing towards the risk of theology becoming more and more irrelevant in the secularised world, leading towards a direct loss of

influence. This motivated van Huyssteen to focus on the inter-disciplinary approach.

An inter-disciplinary approach engages the human sciences and can also include anthropology, psychology, sociology and philosophy. According to Osmer (Shults, 2007:331) Paul Tillich, David Tracy and Don Browning influenced this inter-disciplinary approach. This new approach emerged in the 1960s. While characterized by a high degree of pluralism, the subject matter and tasks can be summarised as follows: "Practical Theology constructs action-guiding theories of Christian praxis, in particular, social contexts based on four inter-related forms of research and scholarship – descriptive – empirical, the interpretive, the normative, and the pragmatic".

Osmer summarised van Huyssteen (Shults, 2007:328) according to this definition of Practical Theology, namely that the primary subject matter of Practical Theology is some version of active Christian praxis in the present-day world. For example, if biblical studies begin with the original biblical texts, and church history studies begin with old documents and artefacts of the past, Practical Theology begins with Christian praxis in the present.

Practical Theology studies this praxis empirically, clarifies it in order for people to better understand it, and build a theological casing to gauge it critically. It is vital that people can still understand it, and while maintaining academic quality, still be relevant in practice. Then practical models must be provided with guidelines for future behaviour and improvement.

Osmer summarised (Shults, 2007:329) by saying that the primary subject matter of Practical Theology is some form of contemporary Christian praxis. Other specialties carried out in the same fields thus have common characteristics and cover the same ground as Practical Theology. It is the way these tasks enlighten one another, which is characteristic to Practical Theology.

5.5 Post-modern Theology

In post-modern theology, there is no such thing as universal dogmas or even truths. Pieterse (Pieterse, 1996:63) stated that a post-modern sensibility has a clear aim of disrupting dominant identities, which charade as "normality." We need to remember that "normality" is often socially constructed. That was why many black people accepted their situation in the old South Africa, apparently without question, because it was also "normal" for them. The discourses were seldom, if ever, questioned by the majority. The South African history and our church history reflect the dominant position of white males' "true knowledge". Pieterse and Ackermann (1996:50-64: Ackermann 1996:32-49) referred to the fact that absolute knowledge has a way of marginalizing many people.

5.6 Practical Theology Tasks Within a Narrative Approach

Osmer (Shults, 2007:328) briefly mentioned the following tasks of Practical Theology: *Descriptive-empirical* research focuses on what is happening in a particular field of social praxis, utilising human sciences research tools.

Some social scientists tend to be very reductionistic in their approach to religion, causing a failure to look deeper into concerns of great importance to a specific religious community. Therefore, empirical research has become part of Practical Theologians' research work. How would it be possible to answer the question of how caregivers cope with deployment if the researcher never bothered to ask their opinion on coping with deployment?

Shults (2007:328) referred to a second form of reflection and research in Practical Theology, namely *interpretation of a specific field of action*. Most of the time, reflection follows empirical or clinical research. After observing what is happening in a particular context, the aim is now to interpret what has been uncovered. What is the meaning of these events? How do these relate to the past and the future? Questions regarding the influence of culture and social structures on these events must be asked. The same argument applies here: How can the researcher "interpret" the experiences of the Co-researchers without consulting their opinion, and the meaning they attach to events when interpreting experiences in their own lives?

The third task Osmer (Shults, 2007:329) mentioned in Practical Theology is the *normative task.* This separates it from the human sciences as is frequently practiced. Proposals are given in terms of what ought to be done in a given field of social action. This sort of normative guidance is not commonly given by social scientists. Practical Theologians, in order to develop an action-guided theory of Christian praxis, often offer normative guidance to the Christian community. Such direction is openly theological and extracts from the source of Christian reality: scripture, tradition and reason.

Within the Practical-Theology field, a different approach is followed when doing research regarding the normative task. Research and therapy differ.

In a therapeutic set-up, some pastors have a tendency to be very normative, to the point of dictating and directing peoples' actions and behaviour. They will tell people what they must do in their lives. This follows from a long tradition amongst theologians to preach and direct peoples' lives. They operate from a premise that they have the knowledge and understanding that others lack and that it is. Therefore, their duty to inform the unenlightened what and how they must react.

The researcher's premise is, firstly, one of learning, and not one of telling others what to do. Secondly, working from a not-knowing paradigm within the narrative perspective, the researcher is not the one with all the knowledge. The researcher does not look down and judge from his/her own point of view as the only correct and only point of value. He/she tries to allow room for people to discover their own "truths" and "knowledge", their own norms and

then guide them to accept their own findings, even if those findings may differ from his/her own norms and beliefs.Not knowing does not imply that the researchers have no knowledge or beliefs of their own, but only that this "knowledge" is not forced on others.

The fourth task Osmer (Shults, 2007:329) mentioned is the *pragmatic dimension,* focusing on building models of Christian praxis and rules. In the pragmatic dimension, theologians seek to offer guidance to individuals and groups on how certain activities and practices could be carried out in practice. These issues are context-specific, and, accordingly, Practical Theologians develop models of practice and answers that are contextual.

Examples of the pragmatic dimension may be how premarital counselling is structured to cater for divorced persons, ranging from Catholic, traditional African to Protestant. How does one, spiritually, cater for a vast number of people from very different denominations suddenly deployed thousands of kilometres from their own congregations? This practical challenge is a definite reality that both chaplains and deployed members need to cope with. Some respond to the challenge by attending inter-denominational services (Co-researcher B), others by trying to attend their own local denomination (Co-researcher C) and some by withdrawing from attending at all (Co-researcher D).

Co researcher A felt uncomfortable with the style of the inter-denominational service. She had no local church similar to her denomination and, therefore, focused on her own private spiritual maintenance. This research does not propose answers or models on how the pragmatic dimension of coping with deployment should be addressed in future, but rather tries to provide some insights in how the Co-researchers, who's stories are shared in this research, have managed to cope with their experiences.

Van der Lans (Hermans et al, 2002:27) pointed out that an individual's religious beliefs are studied as narratives. These are stories of our experiences and our personal meaning attached to those events, as determined by social interactions in one's biography, especially during early childhood. Van der Lans (Hermans et al, 2002:27) continued that the religious reality, in which an individual believes, is studied as "a world created by discourse." Van der Lans (Hermans et al, 2002:31) stated that from a constructionist viewpoint, religious faith is primarily social, and not psychological.

Gerkin (1986:54) stated: "Narrative Practical Theology is, therefore, an ongoing hermeneutical process within the immediate storied context of ministry. The intention of that process is the transformation of the human story, both individual and corporate, in ways that open the future of that story to creative possibilities."

This is in line with the important contribution that religious agencies attributed to tradition. Van der Lans (Hermans et al, 2002:30-32) pointed out that "tradition is always a central concern of a community of faith since it contains its roots as well as the conditions for its existence." The word "tradition" refers to a process as well as a product. The product is often emphasised when the church argues that the heritage should be preserved unaltered.

The over-emphasis on the product side of tradition may lead to the "fossilization" of that religious tradition. In living religions, tradition is a

continuous process of acts of communication, and not a static system of immutable ideas and conventions.

From a social constructionism perspective, to understand an individual's religion is to investigate the discursive transactions and negotiations of religious meaning in the social networks in which the individual operates. It would be a mistake to focus only on manifest transactions within a physical social network. It should also cover the internal dialogue between the self and another who is virtually present in memory or imagination. Van der Lans (Hermans et al, 2002:32) stated that it is important that religion must always be studied as a dialogical activity in which meaning is always negotiated.

Müller (1996:2) felt that Post-foundationalist Practical Theology should be seen as a way of understanding within the paradigm of the hermeneutical approach. Although it moves beyond hermeneutics as a metaphor for Practical Theology, it moves even further and debates for a specific view of understanding which not only contains the local context as one of the hermeneutical circles (Bons Storm, 1989:63), but includes perspective that can only develop from within a specific local context.

5.7 Practice, Praxis and Hermeneutics

Ballard and Pritchard (1996:1) wrote that, in particular, Practical Theology not only considers Christian life and practice within the Church, but also considers Christian life in relation to society. Heyns and Pieterse (1990:6) added that with the emphasis on the word "practice", Practical Theology focuses on the religious activities of humanity, concerning praxis. Heyns and Pieterse (1990:6) continued to describe Practical Theology "as concerned with actions that propagate the gospel and promote God's coming to this world". God's encounter with humans always takes place in this world.

Similarly, our interactions and sharing of the good news of salvation is definitely part of our current world. The way we respect those who do not believe and even "how" we treat them if their belief systems were very different and contradictory to our own, that respect and behaviour remains vital in the praxis of Practical Theology.

During deployment people are in a different environment, their own religious beliefs should play a role in determining their actions and behaviour. It is not always easy to stick to one's beliefs and principles. Practical Theology also strives to construct and enhance our theological understanding of the role our religious beliefs play in our daily lives. Through its processes, Practical Theology also brings about the hermeneutical interrelation between church and society.

Marshall (Lundin, 1997:49) wrote that many problems between churches (and Christians) have more to do with hermeneutics of scripture than with the authority and inspiration of scripture. Similarly, many of the problems experienced by soldiers during deployment have more to do with how the individual person experienced that specific situation and how they interpreted it than with the situation itself. How we interpret things that happened to us, may be more important than the actual happening! Our perceptions play a dominant role in how we interpret life.

According to Nicholas Wolterstorff (Lundin, 1997:25) hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation. The problem still remains of how this theory of interpretation can be defined in an easy, generally accepted way, and how it should be understood. This exact difficulty led Nobel-prize winning physicist Steven Weinberg (1996:11) to make the statement that upon facing death, he drew consolation from the fact that he would never again have to look up the meaning of the word "hermeneutics" in a dictionary.

This story is used to convey the levels of frustration he experienced with the question of what exactly the meaning of the term hermeneutics is and how it is understood in practice, as well as the numerous different interpretation possibilities. Until this very moment, it remains an easier-said-than-done issue.

Lundin (1997:2) acknowledged that, on the one hand, authorities urge us to ponder the complexities of the hermeneutical task, while others consider interpretation as an act which is as natural to human life as the act of breathing. This group debating the "normal" act, argued that all humans are at all times interpreters, from interpreting every small daily occurrence to reading and interpreting a specific verse in scripture. We are constantly engaged in a hermeneutical process without effort and without reflection.

Although they are right concerning specific aspects of daily interpretation by people of our reality, the problem occurs the moment we try to interpret the words and actions of others, either directly received or received as a secondary message. This interpretation can include old documents and texts where biblical hermeneutics played a prominent role. It may include art that can differ from paintings to poems, from movies to live theatre, to music. How do humans interpret its meaning? It can also include the interpretation of conversations, comments of the spoken word, and this is, therefore, applicable to all counselling and to this narrative research as well. The specific point of departure is very important. For instance, if one is busy interpreting the bible, the person whose point of departure is in the practice of faith, accepting the signals of God's wondrous deeds of salvation, will certainly come towards a different interpretation than a person reading the bible but with a point of departure to deliberately find inconsistencies in order to draw our attention to them.

Severino Croatto (1987:1) wrote that hermeneutics – which literally means "interpretation" originates from the Greek word *hermeneuein* - to interpret. Both words convey the same meaning. One comes from Latin and the other from the Greek.   Interpretation has entered common use and therefore hermeneutics is utilised when three specific aspects of interpretation must be spelled out: Firstly the interpretation of texts; secondly the acceptance of the pre-knowledge or pre-understanding all interpreters have of a text based upon their own life context; and thirdly the way the interpreter expands the meaning of the text being interpreted.

Intervention and the mere act of listening to the different stories of the Co-researchers, imply the use of hermeneutics. By enlisting the help of the Co-researchers in re-listening to their own stories, one prevents the urge to jump towards one's own conclusions.   Their own interpretations must then be utilised to co-interpret meaning. Thus, the hermeneutical process is sounder than if an individual on his/her own interpreted everything without the initial story-tellers' inputs in the outcome of the hermeneutical process.   During

deployment, one will find a unique slice of the general society, where specific people are enlisted to contribute towards the research process.

By listening to these specific stories in the contexts of deployment, we will be able to listen to the role God played for those specific individuals, and how He assisted them in their daily lives and helped them to cope with deployment. If God played a role in their stories, it is already theology in practice!

Gadamer (1975:263) stated that hermeneutics is not simply a method for understanding, but an attempt "to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place". According to Gadamer, (1975:274) hermeneutics maintains that all understanding involves not only interpretation, but also application. It is easy to refer to the process of how the researcher and his co-researchers interpret the stories of coping.

Similarly, we can refer to the process of how a scientist interprets the results of an experiment, or how a physician interprets a patient's symptoms in order to make a diagnosis, or how parents interpret a small child's behaviour to know without doubt that their child is tired or hungry.

Wolterstorff (Lundin, 1997:25-26) mentioned that what each person "is to make" of a certain phenomenon, these activities of "what we make of it", assist us in arriving at a certain sort of knowledge about it. The occurrence or phenomenon does not automatically produce knowledge of that sort. In order to arrive at a point that makes sense for the person trying to understand the phenomenon, he or she has to interpret it!

Therefore, when I refer to in-context stories, it means that all understanding of these stories should be listened to within the specific conditions in which the stories developed and grew. The context constitutes a central part of the hermeneutical act in understanding and interpreting of the stories. Therefore, it is a wonderful opportunity to be able to re-listen with the original storytellers in the research (Co-researchers) to their own stories and to re-interpret their stories to enhance understanding on an individual as well as on a broader level.

Tracy (1983:76) defined Practical Theology as "the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian fact and the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation." This model, resembling a hermeneutical approach, observes the fusion of the horizon between the visions implicit in contemporary practice and the practices of the normative texts of faith.

5.8 Language

For van Huyssteen (1989:128-168) the relation between language and experience could be considered as an "interplay". Van Huyssteen stated that no religious experience is pre-linguistic, or pre-theoretical. He continued that language not only reflects reality, it represents reality, and in fact it constitutes reality. Religious experiences, indeed all-intellectual activities including theology, are socio-cultural forms and thus governed by the language and traditions of specific groups. One cannot express any religious experiences, concepts or beliefs without the use of language, how primitive the language may be.

Stone (1993:448) felt that the metaphoric language of religious experiences should be altered into theological concepts in order to attain conceptual clarity; in this, theology parallels science. Following Mc Fague (1982:23), a model is "a dominant metaphor, a metaphor with staying power," an extended and systematized metaphor. Stone argued (1993:448) that the metaphors of God as Father or the Metaphors of Jesus as Savoir became models for Christian believers. Models do not only provide a way of speaking of the unknown in terms of the known, but also strike a balance between simplicity and detail as comprehensive interpretive networks; models open up new dimensions of understanding. Referring to van Huyssteen's argument, Stone (1993:448) stressed that the referential character of metaphors is not only decorative or expressive in function, but opens new insights into our world. Therefore, theoretical language needs to remain in touch with its metaphoric roots in order to preserve the metaphoric tension inherent in all language, a tension that can easily stagnate if not utilized.

Theoretic language also needs to remain in touch with reality and must not become so abstract and irrelevant that it is only of use to a few academics. Van Huyssteen (1989:141) pointed out that the importance of models is creating a space for the metaphors to nourish theory and for theory to lend perspective to metaphors.

5.9 Listening With the Ears Of God

If we want to listen to the stories and experiences of people and respond "correctly" to them, the quality of listening needs to be crucial. The art of listening is not only a human courtesy, but remains a very important part in creating theological integrity.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1972:76) said the following about listening: "The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to his Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is listening to them". Bonhoeffer's comment links closely with the Narrative viewpoint which claims that it is essential to listen closely to peoples' stories and to hear what they say, thus emphasising the art of listening.

In His love for us, God not only gives us His Word, but also lends us His ear. Thus, it is His work that we do for our brothers and sisters when we learn to really listen to others. People sometimes forget that listening can often be a greater service than speaking. Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. Sadly, they will not always find a listening ear amongst Christians, because some Christians are talking when they should be "listening". These words were penned down by Bonhoeffer in 1939 before the outbreak of the Second World War, and would easily be at home in any present pastoral counselling book.

If we are not able to listen to one another, we will also struggle to listen to God. Bonhoeffer (1972:75) continued by explaining that if we are unable to listen long and patiently, we will soon be talking. Besides the point of talking too quickly, Bonhoeffer also made the point that such a person will never be able to really speak to others, because while listening with half an ear, that person already knows (assumes) what the other person is going to say and,

therefore, starts to prepare his/her own response on that 'knowledge' and not on what the person is really saying! Bonhoeffer (1972:75) stated the following truth: "Anyone who thinks that his time is too valuable to be spent keeping quiet will eventually have no time for God and his brother, but only for himself and his own follies".

Heskins (2006:26) correctly stated: "The presumption to know what the other is going to say before they have finished speaking is indeed the overture to spiritual chatter, clerical condescension and the death knell for any kind of spiritual life and true communion with each other. When theologian and pastoral reflection and debate are experienced under the threat of declarations that we will be cut out of communion with each other, we need to ponder what kind of communion we have."

This touches on the basic principle of Christian love. Unfortunately, this "golden rule" is not always so easily noticeable amongst clergy and other professional caregivers. Although all pastoral theologians "know" the theory of listening and the narrative perspective of trying to be true towards the "not knowing position", it is not always that easy in practice to really listen to other people. Therefore, the emphasis within the narrative approach utilised in the academic world encourages narrative research to allow the voices of Co-researchers to guide the researcher and to play a vital part in the process of understanding.

If a researcher is not prepared to do that, he or she must not try to adapt to the narrative approach but rather be honest and simply admit that the results and opinions are his or her own according to the findings and conclusions they have made during their research process. Similarly, one must accept that,within the narrative approach, the results may differ from those that the researchers may have anticipated at the outset of his or her studies.

5.10 The Spiritual Dimension of Pastoral Care

According to Midali, (2000:35) a pastor's responsibility is defined in terms of "care of souls" (Sielsorge), where "soul" indicates the spiritual dimension of the human being in need of salvation, and pastoral care is described in the context of the tension between sin and soul! Midali stated (2000:35): "Care is defined in function of the "good of souls, this is understood in a dualistic vision of nature and "supernature" guided by a spiritualist anthropology of the supernatural." Pastoral care is directed at the individual through different people within the Christian community. Midali (2000:35) continued by explaining that, for "spiritual solicitude used toward an individual, multiplies itself within the community".

The growing need for effective pastoral care is linked to human beings' demand for external assistance, enabling them to cope with their problems and life in general, and growing spiritually and emotionally to become more and more what Christ expects of us. But it is not only Christians who experience problems coping with life; non-believers also experience problems in coping with their personal lives. It is, therefore, not surprising that a large part of the professional caregiver's profession does not necessarily utilise Christian beliefs or principles as their professional foundation or as a starting

point when working with clients or patients. Some humans are more aware of and open to their spiritual needs than others.

This led towards Midali (2000:35) drawing a parallel between education, which aims at the spiritual dimension that is natural to the human person, and the caring of souls, which addresses their supernatural life. In keeping with his argument, Midali continued: "...the care of souls comes to be defined as the totality of those ecclesiastical ministries through which supernatural energy is planted within souls, death and sin are vanquished, and intimate fellowship is established between souls and God."

According to Midali (2000:36), this approach demands that pastors have a spiritual disposition known as a "zeal for souls" and, in relation to the people themselves, that pastoral care be attentive to the moral and religious values in human beings' lives and that it extends to all the needs and frailties of society. In the past, this approach has led to ministers becoming so focused on saving souls that,, in the process, they often neglected to think of the impact their ministry was having on the peoples' lives holistically.

To encourage people to break with tradition and culture without considering the holistic impact of such actions, may prove to be an unloving act rather than an act of kindness and love. Unfortunately, the concept of loving thy neighbour like thyself often implied the following - first change my neighbour to be like me - then my neighbour must act and respond in a manner that I can approve of. If the neighbour does not comply with my wishes, then I retain the right to withdraw my unselfish act of kindness. Although this may sound a bit harsh and even cynical, many a true word has been spoken in jest. Therefore, it is essential that pastoral and spiritual care must remain focused to achieve a relationship between the individual and God as well as between the individual and its fellowman within the person's emotional, intellectual, spiritual and cultural reality.

In other words, the pastoral care and intervention must be relevant and applicable to the specific individual within his or her own situation, making God's love a reality in their own lives. Whenever a particular thought pattern is forced upon somebody, the whole question of how God's love changed the world, is on the table, plus the age-old questions regarding what is Greek/Roman culture and what is church tradition and what is really God's will.

The spiritual dimension of pastoral care is something that almost everybody will acknowledge, even if spiritual refers only to that part of the caring relationship that lies beyond rational explanation and scientific method. David Willows (2000:11) said that in all caring encounters, there is a transcendent dynamic, which encompasses and includes us, yet, lifts us beyond our professional skills and competencies into the realms of mystery.

Even the sceptics have to admit that there are many things on a spiritual level, and especially about God's presence, that are not always that easy to understand. The impact of spirituality on mankind is above question and cannot be disputed. But, to prove or disprove scientifically how faith functions in practice in people's daily lives, is not that easy. It is similarly not that easy to explain faith or even prove that God exists in a purely scientific manner.

As theologians, we have to realise and admit that we cannot obtain a definite and exact knowledge of biblical reality. Many facts are known and can be accepted in terms of how certain biblical practices were conducted at that particular time. However, a fundamentalist approach stating that we "know" is simply not possible while regaining some scientific and religious credibility in the process.

According to Midali (2000:44-45) kerugmatik theology was born due to pastoral concerns, namely a growing recognition that a gulf existed between the scientific-scholastic ordering of theology and the day-to-day demands to preach and communicate the faith in a way that was more attentive to the message of the Bible and tradition.

After the Second World War, there was a renewed effort to clarify the scientific, theological and practical presumptions of pastoral theology. Today, it is still not clear whether the efforts to clarify Practical Theology's presumptions were effective. Post-modernism is also not that inclined to accept something as the "truth" just because someone else is willing to accept that particular belief as truthfuland to enforce that specific idea on the rest of the community.

In the modernist theology as practiced in South Africa in the past, many white South African male theologians claimed to have all the "true" knowledge and understanding. Everything was biblically explained or proven, and questions arguing with the accepted discourses were not well received. These ideas were so effectively conveyed to the white population that most people accepted those beliefs as the truth. Even a large portion of the black community also accepted the status quo without challenging it.

Every generation runs the risk of becoming blind towards its own folly, simply because, for them it is so obviously the truth that nothing else is even considered. According to Gerkin (1991:77) the post-modern theology uses the stories of the Old Testament prophets', who, as ordinary people, began to see the commonly accepted practices of their people through the lenses of an alternative consciousness. The church of today has a similar task of finding an alternative consciousness. This alternative consciousness of the church today implies that we have to look at the current reality around us through the lenses of our spiritual understanding of God's presence in this world. Heroldt (1998:221) rightly stated that a theological perspective, which tends to be an unchanging and closed system of theological knowledge untouched by cultural shifts and movements, runs the risk of becoming obsolete.

Personally, I agree with this statement: if theologians are not prepared and able, to honestly address peoples' questions regarding authenticity and to adapt to new challenges, while remaining true to the age-old core of religious beliefs, Christian religion as we know it, will become obsolete. Then it may be practiced by a gradually declining group of people who will struggle to maintain their position, and in clinging to an unchanging and closed system of theological knowledge, will be unable to continue the great commission as instructed by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV 1999):

> *Then Jesus come to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

The difficult question that was debated throughout the ages, and will continue to be debated by theologians and other dedicated Christians, is to determine what exact teachings were referred to and must be conveyed to all nations.

The second just as difficult question, is to determine how these commandments (doctrine) must be incorporated and obeyed practically within peoples' lives, lives that may culturally be very different from the world that was acceptable and known during the Roman/Greek time in which Jesus uttered these words. On the other hand, one must also be aware of the risk of becoming so focused on the issues of the day that ancient Christian principles are no longer valued. For example, we may become so focused on the suffering and misery caused by HIV/Aids, that the sexual promiscuity often present in the spreading of the virus is overlooked in the process.

This implies that we are so accommodating and full of God's love and forgiveness that we tend to forget God's wrath. It is important to maintain the balance between honestly seeking God's will for guidelines in scripture, and implementing them without enforcing rules and guidelines that were initially focused on a totally different world.

This struggle to find God's word and will, and to incorporate it in a way which is relevant to the individual's world today, and still maintain the essence of what was originally intended with the scripture, remain one of the biggest challenges of interpreters of the bible. This hermeneutical interpretation process was critical in the past and will continue to be important in future.

5.11 Intervention

Underlying this whole debate, is the question of the role of Christian doctrine. On what level should one intervene? This question is applicable to the individual as well as to the countries involved. If we look at Peace-keeping missions, we have to ask specific questions:

1. Do we have the right to be in a foreign country in the first place?

2. At what point do foreign countries decide to intervene in an independent country's internal affairs?

3. Which ethical and moral issues must be determined?

4. Which political and strategic concerns must be kept in mind?

5. Which financial motives must all be determined, and who will pay for the expenses?

6. Where is the mandate to deploy?

7. Is the mandate external or internal? Is a mandate decided by the United Nations, African Union, or even the South African government (as was the case in Lesotho), or internally mandated by the country itself?

8. Where is the power to make those decisions vested?

9. If a specific minority or a particular group of that country's population is not in favour of your presence, how does it affect the peace-keeping mission?

10. Is deploying in another country the right thing to do?

11. Is the exit strategy in place? (It is often more difficult to get out of a country than it was to get in.)

12. On a spiritual level, it is also important to ask the question: Am I "called" to be there in a spiritual sense? Am I deployed according to God's will or am I just ordered to be there due to a logistical need for a particular service that must be rendered? Or both? If one accepts that it is part of God's will to be deployed on a peace-keeping mission, what does that imply in practice?

These questions are closely linked to questions of ethics, values and religion. Müller and Schoeman (2004:3) stated that research is a form of intervention, a given fact. Therefore, intervention is not only applicable to the research intervention, but also to countries and communities that have changed after the peacekeepers' withdrawal.

One of the biggest problems is the monetary dependence that the local population develops during the deployment. Often, after withdrawal of the peace-keeping soldiers, the local economy is severely affected. Another problem is the deterioration of the gained political solutions and even regression towards anarchy.

Especially, if the deployment was very difficult, and if loss of lives occurred during the peace-keeping mission, the worth of the whole peace-keeping mission may be challenged. If all the sacrifices seemed to be a wasted effort afterwards, it may even affect a member's sense of his or her own personal worth. Currently, the debate in both the USA and UK in terms of the cost in human lives to "stabilise" Afghanistan and Iraq, is almost on the same level.

5.12 Social Constructionism and Practical Theology

According to Hermans (2002:vii), Practical Theology commences its theological reflection from practices. It aims to empirically analyse practices, and as a result should be focussed on the transformation of these practices. Heitink (1993:18) agreed that Practical Theology is aimed at developing a hermeneutical action theory. This practical orientation led to a natural connection between social sciences and Practical Theology.

As logical as it may seem that social sciences and Practical Theology interact, the development was not always smooth. Schweitzer (1999:310) used Germany as an example where the relationship between Practical Theology and social sciences was very close during the beginning of the 20th century. Due to the influence of dialectical theology and of Neo-Lutheranism, the period between the 1920s and the 1960s was characterized by non-co-operation. Hermans (2002:x) mentioned that new co-operation relationships

developed; this is also the case in most countries globally. According to Browning (1999:6), the application model with its two elements of theory-practice, is replaced in Practical Theology by a practice-theory-practice model.

Practical issues must be part of it from the beginning, moving from the practice to the theory and back to the practice again! If people within a community experience problems in their lives, they begin to ask questions regarding meaningful or theory-laden practices. After they have gained new insights into the problem that motivated the process, their behaviour, responses or practices can be transformed into new practice. This is an ongoing process, where Practical Theology really becomes practical. Browning spoke about "strategic Practical Theology". Practice always returns after the theoretical reflection.

There is a fast-growing number of publications with the term "social construction" included in their titles. Therefore, it is important for Practical Theology to reflect on the social constructionism concept within the social sciences.

According to Hermans (2002:xi-xii) three types of relationships can be identified between social constructionism and Practical Theology: the Ancilla model, the Cooperation model and the Inter-disciplinary model.

Hermans believed that the main difference between scholars is whether one should decide on an inter-disciplinary approach or on an intra-disciplinary approach:

1. In the first model, Practical Theology draws its insights from the social sciences but, defines the meaning of these insights. The social sciences are subordinated to Practical Theology; therefore, an asymmetry exists between the two.

2. The second model of co-operation between Practical Theology and the social sciences is on an equal footing from a theoretical point of view(the sentence is not understood). Both share the same research perspective. Although the disciplinary framework differs, they share the same research aim and similar research question in order to be able to talk about co-operation between the two.

3. The third type "subsumes" Practical Theology under the social sciences. The research question and aim are formulated from a social-scientific perspective.

Practical Theology is not different from psychology or sociology of religion. Consequently, Practical, theological concepts are considered to be under social-scientific concepts.

In Jan Van der Lans' research (2002:27), he started out with the idea that a cognitive skill, like a metaphor, would provide him with a key to understanding why people choose either a liberal or a metaphorical interpretation of a religious utterance. After looking at the research data, it was discovered that social interaction accounted for the variance and not for cognitive skills. This implies that we would believe something because it was socially acceptable and people may be brought up with certain ideas and never question it at all.

These people may be highly educated and with highly developed cognitive skills, but will most probably not question their own beliefs or belief systems.

I referred previously to the difficulty that numerous white South Africans experienced before they were able to question the "Apartheid" policies as these were applied. Van der Lans' research (2002:27) also stated that people, who were active members of a religious community, preferred a literal interpretation and those who preffered to practiced their religion privately without being part of a religious community, preferred metaphorical meaning of interpretation.

5.13 Social Construction and Religion

Hermans (2002:vii) stated that one of the main aspects where some social constructionists definitely differ from Practical Theology is the question of whether there exists a reality which is independent of our discourse on reality. The question addresses the theological premise that God exists independently of our thoughts, opinion or understanding of how such existence is constructed. If our understanding of God's existence was developed over time by using social constructionism, it touches at the heart of what we believe in terms of God's existence.

Was this information and knowledge revealed to prophets and ordinary human beings through divine intervention and the direct input of the Holy Spirit? Or did humans develop understanding of God through social constructionism? Or is it a combination of the two? How do we explain the development of different understandings of God's existence amongst different denominations and Christian traditions? This brings forward the difficult scientific proven topic of belief and faith.

Even some religious practices were socially constructed by societies over time. Looking at the differences in style, behaviour and even religious standpoints, the Roman Catholic Church, notwithstanding its centralised control, has developed differently in Europe than in Central Africa. One of the only logical answers explaining the wide variety of different denominations, where all are claiming to find their "truth" in scripture, is the fact that their realities were socially contracted and institutionalised over time.

Therefore, it is so easy to "know" that your church's doctrine and opinion is correct and that those of "others" are wrong. The extreme fundamentalism sometimes found amongst believers from different faith groupings is closely linked with this phenomenon.

It must be noted that this phenomenon is not only found amongst Christians, but is also prevalent amongst other religions, especially the Islam faith's struggle with fundamentalism.

They not only accept their own beliefs as absolutely unquestionably correct, but without a moment of consideration will "know" that all else are a hundred percent wrong and "evil". This unquestioned knowledge is often part of our religious discourses, the water in which we are swimming, without even knowing that we are fish! How can we question our environment if we are not

even aware of its existence? How can we question our belief systems and discourses if we are not even aware of their existence?

What is Practical Theology's relationship to the social sciences? Practical theologians are obligated to offer a theological account of the relationship between the methods of theology on the one hand and social science on the other hand. Osmer (Shults, 2007:339) stated that this is the task of articulating an explicit inter-disciplinary method, which regulates the relationship between theology and culture, in which philosophy and social science are viewed as part of the intellectual resources of contemporary culture.

Van Huyssteen (1997:191) felt that it is clear that the only way that we can manage to say anything about God at all is through our concepts, through metaphors and analogies. Van Huyssteen (1997:191) suggested that the following could add towards a critical theory of metaphorical reference in Christian theology:

"The fact that the Bible, as the classic text of the Christian faith, has survived as a religious text and as a book of faith in a long and remarkable interpretative traditions of a still ongoing faith-context; The reality of ongoing faith experiences that this text has evoked through centuries of belief in God;

The metaphorical nature of biblical language and the continuity of reference this has creatively given to religious and theological language through the ages. This presupposes a continuous language-using community going back to the 'initiating events', then these metaphorical terms were first introduced and their references fixed."

The huge impact of narratives on Christianity could not be denied. Van Huyssteen (1997:191) felt that this is due to the religion's concern to show that God acts in the human world and its history. Narratives became important for Christians and how they read and understand scripture. Jesus' life and the stories He told influenced the way the Old Testament is being interpreted today. Van Huyssteen (1997:191) claimed that epistemologically, the realist choice and the determining of metaphorical reference are justified by revealing the basis of Christian narrative in history.

Van Huyssteen wrote (1997:192) the following about the events in the life and death of Jesus:

"…one can only generalise from parable to myth and from myth to fiction if it can be shown that historical questions are irrelevant to a full and proper religious understanding of the gospel narratives. The aim remains to understand God's message in our world, whether it was originally written in narratives, historical data, prophecies, poems or as metaphors."

This reference from van Huyssteen sums it up very well: "The aim remains to understand God's message in our world" and it will remain our aim not only to understand the message, but also to convey the message in an understandable, consumable and a digestible manner.

Kincheloe and Mc Laren (1994:144) stated correctly that Practical Theology's empirical approach can not and should not substitute theoretical scrutiny as well as critical reflection. According to Pieterse and Dreyer (1993:36), when

Practical Theology with empirical observation adapts a hermeneutical construction, research could contribute to reconstruct a theology.

5.14 Practical Theology in the Context of Deployment

When dealing with investments and financial markets, we sometimes need to adopt a philosophical approach and accept that although we cannot direct the wind, we can adjust our sails. Similarly, when a soldier is deployed in an operational theatre, even a "peace-keeping" one, there are certainly a number of factors that simply remain beyond the control of the deployed person's ability to change. It is impossible for deployed soldiers to see their loved ones on a daily, weekly, or even monthly basis.

It is equally impossible for an individual soldier to single-handedly change the entire political, social or economic situation of the country he or she is deployed in. However, it is possible to adjust his/her own "sails", to adjust to the specific situation in that deployment area, in such a way that he/she not only survives the experience, but is actually able to increase his/her quality of life in the process. This incredible ability of humans to adapt to the circumstances notwithstanding whether it is their personal choice or not to be there in the first place, has assisted mankind in the past and will assist them in future, not only to survive and cope in difficult circumstances, but to thrive and flourish in difficult circumstances.

A theologian (Kalomiros, 1982:18) once wrote: "God is Truth and Light. God's judgment is nothing other than us coming into contact with truth and light. In the day of the Great judgment all men will appear naked before the penetrating light of truth. The 'books' will be opened. What are these 'books', they are our hearts. If in those hearts there is love for God, those hearts will rejoice seeing God's light." Our motives will also play a role in how our behaviour will be judged. Therefore, one must stop and ask the question "what is in our hearts?" Even if it may not be the "truth" according to others' opinion, for that particular person it will most definitely be "true".

5.15 How the Co-researchers Referred to God

Some of these comments may overlap with Chapter Three, but it is also very relevant in Chapter Five, focusing on their personal relationship with God and what role it played or did not play in helping them cope with deployment. Therefore, those remarks must again be incorporated here, even at the risk of repeating some information.

5.15.1   Co-Researcher A: Faith Dimension

After asking Co-Researcher A (D21/A1) how she was able to cope with the stress and trauma of the departure, her response and eventual answer held some clues regarding her personal spiritual experiences.   She initially

experienced difficulty in answering the question. After giving it some thought, she referred to her relationship with God as her main source of power. She also directly attributed her overall success in coping with deployment to her relationship with God. She was adamant in her opinion that the mere thought of God's presence with her and her life partner during her absence was enough to be a strong source of strength and support throughout the entire peace-keeping mission.

It was equally noticeable that after asking an open-ended question, where her response could have gone in any direction, she decided to first address aspects relating to her relationship with God. Co-Researcher A was very open and forthcoming about her relationship with God and not at all ashamed or uncomfortable in referring to matters spiritual. She was able to talk freely and easily about spiritual issues affecting her coping skills, before, during and after her deployment phase.

She additionally emphasised the fact that according to her, a relationship with God is an integral and, therefore, essential part of one's ability to cope. Not only does it provide the ability to cope with the deployment scenario, but it also provides the tools to cope with life in general. An interesting comment in her statement was that there is a difference in claiming to be a Christian and being one. She also felt that any person claiming to have a relationship with God would have such a relationship severely tested in practice during deployment.

Co-Researcher A stressed that being part of a congregation and a cell group is far removed from her experience during deployment. To feel spiritually safe and comfortable in a strong permanent relationship in South Africa, is vastly different from feeling alone and vulnerable during deployment. In her "permanent" normal daily world in South Africa, God and the Bible play a major role in her life, as well as in most of the people she interacts with socially. Compared to her spiritual situation during deployment, she was suddenly worlds apart from her former support structures.

During a long deployment a believer's relationship with God is severely tested due to the normal support structures that are not present in the "abnormal" deployment area. Therefore, the individual must make certain decisions regarding his or her own religious viewpoints and then stick to them.

If not, they must admit that these ideas were not really a personal belief system but rather a cultural habit, which could temporally be put aside during the deployment phase as the person may or may not see fit.

She explained that according to her, a true relationship with Jesus Christ is deeply embedded and not superficial. Such a relationship with God is long-term and is not built overnight. Co-Researcher A explained it as a triangle with God at the top end and the partners at the bottom, thus it forms a unit of strength, with a baseline running through it (D28/A1). With her partner not physically present during the deployment period, it forced her to reconsider her own beliefs and to recommit herself to them. She was adamant that a real relationship with Jesus Christ should not be something that could easily be put aside or simply be reactivated depending on the situation. One should stick to one's principles and beliefs and values.

During Co-Researcher A's deployment, a separation developed between her inner relationship with God and her external practical unwillingness to

voluntarily attend any church services conducted by the chaplains. This pained her because she normally held chaplains in high esteem and was looking forward during her pre-expectations of deployment to the spiritual care and guidance she expected from the chaplain's service as she was accustomed to.

This definite separation between her personal relationship with God and her deliberate distancing from the chaplain's service during her deployment phase is a sharp contradiction. This implies that on a personal level Co-Researcher A experienced God on her own through prayer and reading her Bible, but not as part of an organised religious structure by the chaplaincy.

She referred to the power of a quick prayer, but even more to the absolute certainty gained by the knowledge that God is in control - not only in control of her life, but in control of the universe in general. Therefore, making the decision to deliberately give things into God's hands since one is not able to cope with it anyway, was relatively easy for her. That certainty of God's presence had a huge calming influence on her.

She referred to advice given to her: "Don't try to run your household from the mission area." This proved to be very good sensible advice for her and assisted her in the process of coping. Currently, she also advises people to let their households/home matters in capable hands in South Africa and not to be concerned with things that they cannot control anyway.

In D31and D32/A1 she categorically stated that the mere fact that a soldier has a relationship with God immediately enables such a soldier to be in a better position to cope with deployment, than somebody who does not believe! She explained the process of making a deliberate choice to allow God to be in charge of the things that one simply has no control over.

That reality of the distance that separated her from her loved ones was almost overwhelming until she was able to make that decision stating "I am not able to do anything at home, therefore let it be, and trust your support at home to cope on their side." The certainty of God being in control enabled her to calm down and cope with the new environment. This strong conviction is somehow contradictory to her own comment on how difficult it is to remain faithful towards one's belief systems. She is under no illusions about the temptations waiting during deployment, alcohol and prostitution on the obvious side but also things like improper friendships and bad human relations.

Co-researcher A's perception of the chaplain's sermons and their contents was negative. She felt that the chaplain's sermons contained a strong underlying political motive (D34/A14), possibly his own personal opinion. She attended a church service, after a personal invitation from the chaplain, but still felt so uncomfortable during the sermon that she refused to attend any further church services during her deployment. She experienced the sermon as an attack on the pre-94 political system. She complained that the chaplain misused his position as chaplain to state how badly black people had been treated in South Africa as well as in the rest of Africa, and how it should be rectified.

Although she understood his reaction and even his thought patterns, she was still convinced that his behaviour did not fit into her expectations of what chaplains should do (D36/A1). They should, as all soldiers, be a-political and be aware of how their comments could add towards either a peaceful relaxed

deployment or one full of tension. The chaplain's behaviour was definitely racially motivated as far as she was concerned.

Unfortunately, the racial discourse underlying South African's thought patterns does not contribute to a healthy environment for deployment. This underlying racial tension was one of her "sad" memories when recalling her deployment. Sadly, only black members attended the sermons during her deployment term; the white soldiers who attended the chaplain's sermons have done so only once.

The chaplain's apparent preferences for a particular point of view only emphasised the racial divide amongst the deployed soldiers. He did not try to heal the wounds, but his contribution even aggravated the situation in a certain sense. She felt that in a new political dispensation and in a new National Defence Force, it was unnecessary and uncalled for to deliberately provoke racial tension. He was intentionally stirring up racial tension, where he as chaplain was supposed to manage and promote peaceful co-existence between the different ethnic and racial groups, and not purposely intensify the existing racial tension.

Consequently, Co-researcher A withdrew from attending any further chaplain's periods or church services. According to her, chaplains are supposed to be prophetic voices, addressing wrongs, preaching a message of forgiveness, love and reconciliation.

These are all aspects that need to be part of a chaplain's "mondering" (make-up). She even wondered whether the chaplain was not still struggling with some unresolved issues of his own, related to our racial heritage, and battling with his own internal pain. She was adamant that the chaplain's conduct was neither one of a "peacemaker" nor of a "peacekeeper".

In D36/A1, serious allegations against the chaplain regarding an extramarital affair were made. After making these allegations Co-Researcher A reiterated in O44/A1 the importance of faith in her ability to cope with deployment. In D43/A1 she clearly stated, "If God is not in charge of your life you will be in trouble!" This emphasised the role her personal relationship with God played in her ability to cope with deployment. There is absolutely no question regarding Co-researcher A's conviction of the role that faith and God played in her life in assisting her to cope.

5.15.2   Researcher B: Faith Dimension

In the first interview with Co-researcher B, her personal faith was never directly discussed or referred to. Her dreams of making Africa a better place, as well as her dream to make an impact on children's lives were mentioned during the interview.

Faith as a coping mechanism was not discussed at all. I refrained from introducing the topic in order to allow the Co-researcher her own responses. If a question was asked "Did God assist you during your deployment to help you cope?" the answer would most probably have been affirmative but not necessary a personal motivator.

I know that her calling was very important to her, and that was how she experienced her deployment, as a calling. Part of her frustration during deployment was directly linked to her frustration of being "prevented" indirectly from fulfilling that calling. I think that it is quite possible that she focused so completely on how to provide spiritual guidance to the contingent deployed in Burundi, that she may have neglected her own spiritual welfare. Her own spiritual defences against the stresses and strains of deployed life were definitely not very effective. The whole question of "caring for the carer" is on the table, and who is in fact doing that in practice. The need for such a "caretaker" is clear.

Co-researcher B had a very good relationship with local pastors and she used to attend their church meetings. The external projects that she was involved with included her going out to the local orphanages as well as to the local churches. Co-researcher B felt that the joy of helping others managed indirectly to support her during deployment!

On the one hand, it was simply the obviously huge difference between them. She used to say to herself: "You know, I think I am suffering but look at these poor people. I am suffering administratively but they are suffering in all spheres of life". On the other hand, it was the pleasure she received from contributing and making a real difference in people's lives.

To be true towards her own inner calling, this calling motivated her to remain true towards her core business notwithstanding the hardships she experienced. Co-researcher B received excellent support from family, friends and Air Force colleagues, but no support from the service, the division that was supposed to support her. Here she referred to the chaplain's office at CJOPS and the Chaplain General's office.

The lack of support from the chaplains directly responsible for the deployed chaplains under the command of the Joint Operations remained her main grievance. The total disregard for reports, telephonic requests and the lack of respect in the way people were generally treated offended and troubled her tremendously.

The lack of any support, either emotional, practical or logistical, from operational command and control, remained her greatest problem. She felt totally alone and isolated without any support! Co-researcher B repeatedly asked the following question: "If you are not able to look after yourself, how will you be able to take care of anybody else?" She stated that that is the bullet that is killing caregivers, " because you are supporting the members but no one supports you," (RB/1-27).

I am convinced that it was her calling as well as her personal relationship with God that enabled her to continue with her work and to keep on providing chaplain's services, notwithstanding her own personal crises. I asked her once more whether she was willing to comment on this summary, and although she declined the offer, she commented that without the strength of the Holy Spirit life would have been too tough.

My conclusion is that although she was traumatised and had a negative experience during deployment, she remained true towards her calling and it motivated her to keep on going. The fact that she withdrew from the feedback loop is sad because according to my experiences with the other Co-

researchers, it might have helped her to finally be at peace with the whole experience.

5.15.3   Co-Researcher C: Faith Dimension

Co-researcher C's principles are based on her religion and religious beliefs. She became quite close to God during her time in Burundi. She was used to going to church every week in South Africa and was very committed to her faith. There is a Catholic church in Burundi, but one cannot go to church alone, especially not as a white female and being a deployed soldier in a foreign country added to that. Although her colleague and friend did go with her a couple of times, she realised that since he came from an Afrikaans traditional church (Hervormde Kerk/Dutch Reformed Church) it would simply not be fair to expect him to accompany her often. She missed that denominational presence in her life and experienced it as a big drain on her ability to cope.

Co-researcher C got the impression that the chaplain was there for the media coverage, because wherever he went, he wanted a photographer to go with him! She didn't hear him speak once on religion or on any issues directly linked to the gospel! She heard him speak much of HIV, the plight of the women in Burundi, but not of God at all. They did have chaplain's periods on Sunday for an hour; but, she did not feel the need to go. Co-researcher C attended the chaplain's Sunday sermon once, and although it was sort of a church service, it was not for her (RC/1-53).

The cultural difference in the denominational approach followed by the chaplain during his sermon was foreign and, therefore, uncomfortable for her. She was not racially motivated at all because she attended the local Roman Catholic Church without any problem. She was painfully aware that the colour of her skin made her attendance of the local church not without its own challenges. This was especially true in the light of the South African contingent's unpopularity in the eyes of the local population during that stage of the operation. Her motivation was denominationally determined and the fact that she was not spiritually fed or inspired by the chaplain's sermon and approach, did not inspire her to worship with the rest of the soldiers.

Apparently Co-researcher C's experience of the chaplain was that he was more of a "political commissar" than a chaplain, with a lack of emphasis on religious issues. Her religious practice was a very personal experience for her and remained very important throughout her deployment time.

After a direct question of where the Co-researcher got the strength from to cope with the unstable situation internally as well as externally, her answer was simple "I became quite close to God in that time" (CR/1-33). This was a very clear statement of the role that her relationship with God played in her ability to cope. She left with a strong relationship with God and it became even stronger during her deployment. Faith was by far the strongest anchor in her amour providing her with the ability to cope.

Her following statement is a good summary of her approach and opinion regarding the role of faith during deployment: "You have to make the best of a bad situation and you have to consciously make a decision between right and

wrong! Because it is so easy to slip into the norm, nobody would have thought anything different from you; in fact they probably would have accepted you better in the whole situation."

This indicated the extent of how strong the group pressure upon deployed members can be. If the biggest part of the contingent behaved in a certain manner, let's say drinking excessively, if that group also included senior personnel, it became very difficult to stand up for oneself and declare: "I am not partaking in this behaviour due to my own personal values and beliefs". Those who stood up could either be ridiculed and lightly teased or even ostracised and badly treated, depending on the group and the standpoint taken.

This severe group pressure may explain why there were continuous rumours of chaplains who have joined the ranks of those who tend to overdo it from time to time. It is clear that, at the end of the day, every individual must make his or her own decisions and accept the consequences thereof. This is easier said than done!

5.15.3.1 Re-interpreting a Body of Death

Looking back at her own hallucination Co-researcher C commented that the battle between what is real and what is not, was in her mind. She found this mental struggle similar to the battle in our minds, in terms of what is real (truth) and what is unreal (false), what is good and what is bad! In retrospect, she explained and re-interpreted the corpse following her as our previous weak 'body of flesh' who keeps on following us, trying to seduce God's children back into death (sin).

Although she realised that it was not a true vision but a hallucination induced by medicine, she still used the narrative metaphor to see a deeper meaning in the unpleasant incident. She emphasised the fact that everybody is followed from time to time by their "old" lives, and that we are seldom privileged enough or in a position to "see" it clearly. *Your mind must be able to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong.*

5.15.4   Co-Researcher D: Faith Dimension

Co-Researcher D viewed herself as a Christian but not one that goes overboard and quotes scripture during all appropriate and inappropriate times. She did not give much thought to her relationship with God prior to her deployment because it was something that was always there. Her relationship with God deteriorated during her deployment in Burundi; in fact she experienced a vast distance between them that gradually worsened. She was very honest about her own role in her relationship with God and openly admitted that she was primarily responsible for the gradual breakdown in the relationship between them. The distance was caused by her behaviour and actions (A70/D1).

Although she suffered terribly during, and even after, her deployment, anger and resentment against God never entered the equation. Although she

realised her need to have a relationship with God and even tried in her own way to rebuild their relationship, it slipped further and further away from her (A77/D1). She felt as if she was incapable of preventing the gradual deterioration in their relationship.

She openly declared that she needed God and her faith to sustain her coping skills, but that it was not constantly part of her thought patterns. It was not an easy natural way of life, but a seeking need which was not answered. She admitted God's existence, accepting that Jesus Christ died on the cross for us to be saved and that we are His children (A79/D1). Nevertheless, she experienced God as remote with an ever-growing distance between them. She is still struggling to retain her original relationship with God, and admitted that it is increasingly bothering her.

Initially, she didn't even want to contemplate the possibility that she might be angry wih God, although in retrospect, she acknowledged the possibility that she felt led down and as if God did not protect her. She is still working on her relationship with God, trying to restore it although with limited success. She still struggles to communicate with God and experiences difficulty in hearing His voice clearly. She is currently considering the possibility that part of her inner struggle to make peace with what happened with her and those around her, may be due to the lack of peace between herself and God.

5.16 Atheists and Christians in Foxholes

Going back to the initial remarks regarding "atheists in foxholes" at the beginning of Chapter Five one needs to answer the question: "What role did the co-researchers' religious beliefs play in their efforts to cope with deployment?" After listening to the various stories, it is obvious that all the Co-researchers experienced different levels of stress, different problems and different levels of anxiety. It was also noticeable that according to their own styles and personalities, they all managed to cope with deployment.

They managed to cope with their different situations with different levels of success. The following should be taken into account:

1. One Co-researcher is still actively receiving counselling in order to recover from her ordeals.

2. The second Co-researcher withdrew from the research process due to her personal pain after recalling what happened to her during her deployment as she was too traumatised to continue the process.

3. The third Co-researcher is still unhappy that no after-care support was provided, notwithstanding her requests. Therefore, she decided to utilise the research process to work through her own unresolved emotional injuries that she received during her deployment in order to heal her wounds.

4. The last Co-researcher also quite extensively referred to her own struggle to cope with deployment and the almost total lack of support provided by the organisation.

None of the Co-researchers were, during the time of the interviews, even considering the possibility of re-deployment. I was recently informed that the Co-researcher who withdrew from the research is apparently considering going back as part of a peace-keeping deployment for another six months. I assume that one of her motives might be her wish to overcome her own bad experiences and self-doubt from the previous experience with a "better deployment" to prove to herself that she can do it. Due to the huge expectations from within herself, as well as from the organisation, the fact that she struggled was a terrible blow for her personally.

Maybe the decision to be re-deployed is similar to a person who was hurt in a vehicle accident. In order to conquer his/her own fear of the road and driving, a decision can be taken to challenge it head on in order to overcome her/his fears. I am not convinced that it is a sound decision, because to deploy somebody struggling with severe emotional stress to go and spiritually and emotionally takecare of others, is debatable.

The Co-researchers' ability to cope were influenced by their personalities, expectations, support structures - including family and friends, as well as military support structures. That the different levels of support or lack thereof, which they received, played a significant role in their ability to cope, was very evident. Different people experience God and His presence in our lives differently. For some it is an active, constant presence that influences all their actions and behaviour, including coping with deployment. For others, God is a distant presence to call upon in dire need, not to be bothered with small issues. For still others,His very existence is debatable and they are not even really convinced that, if God exists at all, He is in fact playing any direct role in their lives.

My personal conclusion, after listening and re-listening to all four Co-researchers' stories, is that God definitely played a prominent role in their lives and that the closer they were to Him, the more positive impact it had on their ability to cope. There is no indication whatsoever that Christians experience less problems or can cope with more ease than non-Christians. It cannot be questioned, however, that they cope in a different way and use their spiritual and religious beliefs to support them. All four Co-researchers agreed that without faith and a relationship with God, coping would have been even more difficult for them.

It could not be concluded with any certainty that the difficulties they experienced "forced" them closer to God as assumed in the introduction by the phrase "atheists in foxholes". In fact, one Co-researcher mentioned that it created distance between them and that her relationship with Jesus Christ deteriorated during her deployment. Thus, situations of stress and difficulty are not necessarily conducive to spiritual growth, although in situations of stress, spirituality and God's presence assisted believers in coping.

Whereas interdisciplinary meaning was discussed in this chapter in terms of religion and the Practical Theology, the next chapter will look closer at the insight that may be gained from other disciplines on the subject of how to cope with deployment.