CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE: AMERICAN MILITARY CHAPLAINS AND THE
VIETNAM WAR

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ABSTRACT

JACQUELINE E. WHITT: Conflict and Compromise: American Military Chaplains and the
Vietnam War
(Under the direction of Richard H. Kohn)

Military chaplains, serving alongside American servicemen and women, have lived and

worked at the cultural and institutional intersections of religion and war. Understanding how

chaplains experienced the Vietnam War—as military officers and as clergy—illuminates both the

sympathies and tensions between faith and war. This dissertation examines chaplains'

experiences and reflections of the Vietnam War in order to track that war's effects on chaplains

personally and on the institutional chaplaincy. Chaplains acted as "cultural mediators" or links

between religious and military cultures in situations that demanded explanation and

reconciliation. Chaplains' experiences highlighted the stress fracturing the nation as "Vietnam"

came to represent a failure of both American foreign policy and a certain vision of American

identity. This dissertation examines the impact of the Vietnam War on chaplains as individuals

and on the institutional chaplaincy.

The dissertation uses four types of primary sources: Chaplain Corps official records; first

person accounts of Vietnam-era chaplains; oral interviews with chaplains; and publications of

the mainstream media, the popular religious press, and denominational organizations. These

materials uncover not only the structural and organizational workings of the chaplaincy, but also

the cultural patterns and ideas that influenced chaplains and those around them. The dissertation

is organized into three parts. The first part examines the religious, cultural, and international

contexts of the early Cold War in order to contextualize the Vietnam War. The second part deals

with the combat period of the Vietnam War, roughly 1962-1973; its three chapters examine chaplains' official functions, chaplains' experiences, and chaplains' relationship to homefront communities. The third part of the dissertation deals with post-Vietnam responses and changes among chaplains and within the institutional chaplaincy.

Chaplains remain at the forefront of discussions about the relationship between religion and war, and the reverberations from Vietnam are intense. Several contemporary situations reveal uncertainty about the chaplain's role in the modern United States military. Many of these questions are rooted in the tensions of chaplains' experiences in the Vietnam War. Understanding the chaplaincy during this period provides important insights into the history of both religion and the military in late twentieth century America.

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INTRODUCTION

In December 1967, in Bien Hoa Province, Vietnam, Catholic chaplain Angelo J. Liteky was caught with Company A, 4th Battalion, 12th Infantry, 199th Light Infantry Brigade in an intense firefight. Over the course of the battle, Liteky, himself wounded, evacuated more than twenty wounded and dead soldiers to a landing zone and directed several medivac choppers in and out of the area. Liteky's citation for the Congressional Medal of Honor told of heroic deeds in the face of danger—in addition to evacuating many men to safety, he prayed with men who were dying and observed last rites for the dead while bullets flew fewer than fifteen feet away. On the surface, Liteky displayed precisely the courage and self-sacrificial actions that popular images of heroic chaplains might suggest. He showed concern for his men but also was intimately involved in the military's mission. In a 2000 interview, Liteky recalled "I was 100 percent behind going over there and putting those Communists in their place . . . I had no problems with that. I thought I was going there doing God's work."[1]

Yet Liteky's case was far more complicated than a simple story of unexpected battlefield heroism. He left the chaplaincy in 1971 and the priesthood in 1975, "mainly because of celibacy." In subsequent years, Liteky took up the cause of human rights abuses in Central America, vociferously protesting American foreign policy there, especially the Reagan administration's support for Nicaraguan Contra rebels. In July 1986, Liteky renounced his Medal of Honor and its attendant benefits; he placed the medal, along with a letter to Ronald Reagan, in a paper bag and left it at the Vietnam Veterans' memorial wall in Washington, D.C. Liteky

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[1] (Charles) Angelo Liteky, quoted in Michael Taylor, "A Matter of Honor: He Gave Back His Medal of Honor to Risk His Freedom in Protesting His Country's Policies," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 13 March 2000.

continued to protest U.S. operation of the School of the Americas, and said in a 2001 interview, "The reason I do what I do now is basically the same" as the reason he cited for his actions in Vietnam: "to save lives." He explained, "In the case of the School of the Americas, it's to stop training the military from the Third World, who take the training back and employ it in the oppression of their people."[2] Liteky understood his role vis-à-vis the United States military as a life-saving one, regardless of whether that positioned him to act in concert with U.S. military goals or in opposition to them. In Vietnam, Liteky said, "the situation was more immediate. People were getting blown up, shot and killed all around me. I didn't get hit, and there was nothing for me to do but help them. Some were dead. One young man died in my arms, breathing his last breath and just gasping for air. I held him for a bit, then I gave him last rites. Then I moved on because there were other people crying for help." While Liteky's protest did not emerge directly from his participation in the Vietnam War, the place he chose to return the medal demonstrated the significance of that experience—in order to honor his values and beliefs about American involvement in Central America, he returned to the site established to honor those who had died in Vietnam.

For Liteky and other chaplains who served in the Vietnam War, experiences in Vietnam and subsequent reflection about those experiences revealed both deep-seated tensions and compatibilities between the realms of faith and war. Chaplains followed a religious calling to enter into vocational ministry, and most felt a special pull to ministry with military personnel. At the same time, this calling involved them in one of the most divisive wars in American history, during which mainline and liberal religious leaders led intense protests against American actions in Vietnam and conservative ones trumpeted the cause of the Christian United States against a godless Communist enemy. Chaplains, full members of two near-total institutions, the church

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[2] Ibid.

and the military, lived and worked at the intersections of these two worlds. Vietnam and the memory of it became specific sites for working out the proper philosophical and institutional relationships of religion to the state as well as chaplains' individual religious beliefs and the role of faithful people in a time of war.

Scholarly analysis of chaplains and their role in war is limited, especially for the late twentieth century. Memoirs and polemics abound, but chaplains—individually and institutionally—have been neglected by historians of both the military and religion. Nevertheless, Doris Bergen, in the introduction to an essay collection about military chaplains, identified three major themes that appeared consistently within such scholarship: the relationship between chaplains and those they served; the relationship of chaplains to their military and religious superiors; and the moral and theological dilemmas of the chaplaincy.[3] This dissertation seeks not only to engage those questions but also to place chaplains' experiences and interpretations of war into a broader context. From accounts in Deuteronomy of Jewish priests inspiring and blessing soldiers before battle, to the more recent furor created over charges that a Muslim chaplain aided in espionage at the US military detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, chaplains have represented both sympathies and tensions between religious and military communities. Though the Latin word "*capellanus*" (from which the French "*chapelain*" and the English, "chaplain" are derived) did not appear until the ninth century, modern chaplains trace their historical antecedents back much farther: Canadian chaplains to the Assyrian army; British to the Roman army; and Americans to ancient Israel, Egypt, and Rome. In claiming such long historical roots, chaplains assert their significance to the military and religious life of their

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[3] Doris Bergen, "Introduction," in Doris Bergen, ed. *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-First Century* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 1-28.

societies.[4] Although it is unlikely that chaplains' actions directly affect the outcomes of wars,

their experiences and connections to broader military and religious institutions do reveal

important aspects of the relationship between religion and warfare in a given society.

The literature about religion's role in it the Vietnam War has centered almost entirely on

religious dissent during the war. Scholars have privileged the religious motives of the antiwar

movement without taking seriously the religious responses and motivations of either pro-war

advocates or those who were ambivalent about the war. Andrew Preston's historiographical

essay about religion and foreign relations in *Diplomatic History* argued that scholars should look

more closely at the links between the two and used the extensive scholarship on religious dissent

for the Vietnam War as evidence to the possibilities. Preston even suggested that the most

fruitful areas for research in this area lay outside of the "Truman, Eisenhower, and Vietnam War

eras," because the literature on such dissent is extensive and persuasive.[5] For many scholars, to

study religion and the Vietnam War was to study religious protest.[6] Especially evocative were

biographical profiles of nationally-prominent religious leaders or groups, such as the National

Council of Churches; Yale University Chaplain William Sloane Coffin, or Daniel and Philip

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[4] See Bergen, *Sword of the Lord,* 4; and Albert Slomovitz, *The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 1-3. See especially Deuteronomy 20:2-4. In 2003, Muslim chaplain James Yee was arrested for sedition and charged with passing classified information to detainees at the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The charges were eventually dropped, but Yee resigned his commission.

[5] Andrew Preston, "Bridging the Gap between the Sacred and the Secular in the History of American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 30 (November 2006): 783-812.

[6] Even during the Vietnam War, religious groups and presses published a significant amount of dissenting literature. See for example Michael P. Hamilton, ed. *The Vietnam War: Christian Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), which includes anti-war sermons and essays from a variety of Christian preachers and leaders. For scholarly analysis of the religious aspect to the antiwar movement see Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990); Michael Brooks Friedland, *Lift Up Your Voice Like a Trumpet: White Clergy and the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements, 1954-1973* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

Berrigan, well-known anti-war Catholic priests.[7] Taking chaplains to be fundamentally part of the story about the ways in which religion and the Vietnam War affected one another provides a broader view of the religious landscape. While chaplains' responses to the war were far from uniform, many offered the perspective of a plausible middle ground in which religious Americans were deeply conflicted over the morality and conduct of the war, but for whom all out denunciation was never a comfortable possibility. It might be easiest if these views could be written off as only quasi-religious—mere examples of the military's power to co-opt religious language and ideals—but this essentially leaves scholars in the position of judging the veracity and sincerity of other people's faith, and it plainly ignores the long history of how religion and warfare have complemented and supported each other.

Partly as a result of this historiography, most who have written about military chaplains have assumed that conceptually and practically, the American chaplaincy system was (and remains) rife with contradictions, ironies, and conflicts. The literature has assumed that the intersection of religion and the military in such a specific institution must necessarily involve some level of conflict between church and state, a Judeo-Christian tradition and war, and military and clerical professionalism. Much of the sociology scholarship has argued that chaplains experienced conflict because of their multiple roles as military officers, clergymen, and soldiers and were thus confronted by the "two masters" dilemma, or by the idea that religious

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[7] See, for example, Mitchell K. Hall, *Because of their Faith: CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Jill K. Gill, "Peace is Not the Absence of War, but the Presence of Justice': The National Council of Churches' Reaction and Response to the Vietnam War, 1965-1972," (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1996); Jill K. Gill, "The Political Price of Prophetic Leadership: The National Council of Churches and the Vietnam War," *Peace and Change* 27, no. 2 (2000): 271-300; Murray Polner and Jim O'Grady, *Disarmed and Dangerous: The Radical Lives and Times of Daniel and Philip Berrigan* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Harper Collins, 1986); Warren Goldstein, *William Sloane Coffin, Jr.: A Holy Impatience* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); and Mark Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity and Crisis Magazine 1941-1993* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999).

and military values and expectations were mutually incompatible.[8] The results of these interpretations are three popular, though inaccurate, images of chaplains: the hero, the military mouthpiece, and the incompetent. Chaplains did not emerge from Vietnam as battlefield heroes or martyrs, constantly displaying the "best qualities" of soldiers and clergy as uncritical supporters of the chaplaincy have suggested; nor did they appear to be militant legitimizers of an unjust war who carried weapons and encouraged soldiers to "kill a Commie for Christ," as those critical of the chaplaincy and of the war have implied. Neither were chaplains well-intentioned but bumbling and ineffective ministers caught between the demands of religious conviction and military necessity. Rather than cementing tensions between chaplains' multiple roles, the Vietnam experience demanded chaplains work out solutions to problems that existed in the material as well as spiritual realms.

At every turn, chaplains witnessed and participated in the intersections of religion and war. This positionality afforded chaplains the opportunity to act as "cultural mediators" for various communities by bridging the divides that separated them. They served as mediators between religious and military cultures in situations that demanded explanation and reconciliation, though their resolutions of these tensions were neither consistent nor uniformly positive or negative. Those who served in Vietnam faced fierce moral and religious dilemmas during the war, and personal faith did not always provide satisfactory answers—nor did it alleviate the stress of combat. Yet most chaplains did not buckle under the pressure of their ambiguous positions, nor did they abandon their religious values and beliefs in favor of military ones. Instead, chaplains operated, even flourished, in liminal spaces between various

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[8] The specific case for "role conflict" as the primary paradigm for understanding chaplains' experiences is discussed in Chapter Three. The "two masters" dilemma stems from the Christian scripture that warns, "No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." Luke 16:13. While the scripture refers specifically to wealth and God, theologians have interpreted it more widely and understand it to mean that humans cannot be faithful to both God and a secular entity or object.

communities: civilian and military; religious and secular; officer and enlisted; and between a host of denominational and faith groups.

Chaplains in the United States Military

In the United States, ministers serving with troops have been part of every major conflict since the Pequot War in the 1630s.[9] George Washington frequently asked the Continental Congress to make allowances for chaplains and repeatedly emphasized their importance for improving troop morale and securing God's blessing on the army before battle.[10] Chaplains continued to participate in American wars at various levels and in different ways through the Civil War and World War I.[11] World War II introduced new sets of functions and expectations for the chaplaincy, and the early Cold War ushered in new connections between religion and war.[12] Throughout these conflicts, chaplains worked under various sets of assumptions about their place in the military and religious life of the United States, and they fulfilled different roles in each war.

Men who wished to serve as military chaplains in Vietnam had to meet two types of requirements, military and ecclesial, before they could be appointed. The military required that they meet the age and physical standards for military service, though at the height of the Vietnam War the military waived some of these limits, especially for Jewish and Catholic chaplains who were in chronically short supply. Furthermore, chaplains had to have completed

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[9] Bergen, *Sword of the Lord*, 8.

[10] Slomovitz, *Fighting Rabbis*, 4.

[11] On development of US military chaplaincy see Richard Budd, *Serving Two Masters: The Development of American Military Chaplaincy, 1860-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002). See William Corby, C.S.C., *Memoirs of Chaplain Life: Three Years with the Irish Brigade in the Army of the Potomac*, ed. Lawrence Frederick Kohl (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992) for the memoirs of an Army Chaplain in the Civil War.

[12] On the relationship between evangelicals and the American military see Anne C. Loveland, *American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military, 1942-1993* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996).

three years of graduate study in theology or a related program and to have served at least two years in parish or congregational capacities. For chaplains from denominations without seminary training, equivalent education in another field sufficed. Seminarians who wished to enter the chaplaincy were generally commissioned as staff specialists as they completed their educational and pastoral requirements. Additionally, the military required endorsement by an ecclesiastical agency, which could set its own standards for appointment and endorsement. For most of the twentieth century the military chaplaincy operated on a loose quota system to ensure denominational diversity. The chaplaincy generally tried to maintain a balance of one-third Catholic; one-third Liturgical Protestant (Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, etc.); and one-third evangelical Protestant, "other" Protestant, and Jewish chaplains. The Armed Services occasionally relaxed these ratios as some denominations were unable to fill their assignments and others consistently offered more than their allotment.

Because of these strict requirements, chaplains were self-selecting. Any chaplain who wished to quit could ask his endorsing agency to lift his endorsement, thereby making him ineligible for continued service, and clergymen were exempt from the draft.[13] When from 1968 through 1970 chaplains were called up for second tours of duty in Vietnam, only a few chose this way of avoiding service; Army Chief of Chaplains Francis Sampson reported the total was fewer than twelve. Because service in the chaplain corps and in Vietnam remained essentially voluntary, chaplains who served there must have already resolved for themselves at least some of the common dilemmas about the morality of faithful people serving in war.

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[13] Joseph Dulany, *Once a Soldier, A Chaplain's Story* (np: np, 2002), 26.

Chaplains as Cultural Mediators

In the midst of heated discussion about the war in Vietnam, chaplains became "cultural

mediators" for various communities, serving as vital links between diverse communities,

sometimes working to reconcile—both personally and publicly—occasionally conflicting

worldviews. As the military found itself embroiled in conflict in Southeast Asia and as religious

communities responded to this intervention, chaplains were critical connectors in networks that

involved individuals and organizations. They mediated power relationships and communicated

cultural and social needs from one group to another. Chaplains occupied a liminal space in the

intersections between military and religious cultures and appeared to stand astride two different,

but intimately connected, worlds. They were challenged by the implications of their actions for

each group, by their resistance to or participation in warfighting, and by the necessity to maintain

their credibility among diverse groups of people.

"Liminality," a concept borrowed from anthropology and religious studies, helps to

define chaplains' position within military and religious institutions. Arnold Van Gennep

introduced the idea into the humanities from psychology in 1909, when he described "rites-of-

passage" as experiences that involved three stages: separation, transition (the liminal period), and

reassimilation/ reincorporation.[14] The idea gained traction, however, in the mid-twentieth

century with the writings of Victor Turner.[15] Though Van Gennep and Turner dealt specifically

with ritual process, it is possible to imagine certain people, in certain roles, existing in a liminal

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[14] See Victor Turner, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (1909; repr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

[15] See especially, Victor Turner "Liminality and Communitas," in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969; repr. New York: Walter de Gruyer, Inc., 1995), 94-130, and "Passages, Margins, and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas," in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 231-270. On the issue of the military as a ritual community and using Turner's ideas of liminality and communitas, see Karen J. Diefendorf, "The Military as a Ritual Society," *The Army Chaplaincy* (Summer-Fall 1997).

state for an extended period of time. Turner argued that liminal people's status is structurally and socially ambiguous. The idea that chaplains were neither "here nor there," that they could exist "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony," fairly well describes chaplains' liminal positions.[16]

In 1974, Turner updated his categories of analysis and made a clearer distinction between "liminars," who, in a transitory state, had the promise of final reincorporation into a distinct community, and "marginals," who did not have the "cultural assurance of a final stable resolution of their ambiguity."[17] Chaplains may fall into either category: career chaplains may be in a perpetually marginal state, while for short-term or reserve chaplains, the idea of liminality as a temporary and transitory state makes more sense. In either case, chaplains operated in between and on the margins of well-defined social structures.

The term "cultural mediator" can encompass a good number of people in different circumstances, including military chaplains. Cultural mediators are people who, by virtue of their cultural skills such as language, cultural knowledge, or education, are firmly entrenched in two or more worlds and can move easily between these cultures and communities.[18] While "mediation" is frequently understood in terms of direct arbitration and negotiation toward a definite goal,

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[16] Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," 95.

[17] Turner, "Passages, Margins, and Poverty," 233.

[18] The definition of "cultural mediator" used here is informed by a general reading of global history literature and American history literature—particularly in the areas of civil rights and religious movements—as well as a more specific sociological framework, rather than a linguistic framework, which proposes cultural mediation primarily as a factor of international cultural exchanges and language translation. Though they do not always use the term, some important works for my conceptualization of "cultural mediators" have been: Jill Lepore, "Dead Men Tell No Tales: John Sassamon and the Fatal Consequences of Literacy," *American Quarterly* 46 (December 1994): 479-512; Jill Lepore *The Name of War King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998); Richard White *The Middle Ground Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Aldon Morris *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984); Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Sharon Erikson Nepstad, *Convictions of the Soul: Religion, Culture, and Agency in the Central America Solidarity Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 67.

that definition is too restrictive. Instead, an older usage of "mediate" is more accurate, where "to mediate" means "to lie or occupy the space between two things, times, etc.; to be transitional between."[19]

Cultural mediators' positions are defined both structurally and culturally. Given their structural positions and cultural knowledge, cultural mediators can speak to more than one community using language, cultural signs, rituals, or symbols that each community understands. In one form or another, cultural mediators exist nearly anywhere that two or more groups of people with radically different interests or world-views interact. Sociologist Sharon Nepstad has suggested that five variables contribute to one's role as a cultural mediator: the social and cultural attributes of mediators; the structural position of the mediators in organizations and societies; the cultural knowledge of structures; the historical conditions that lead to their position; and the biographical experiences of cultural mediators.[20] These five categories, she argued, would help scholars identify cultural mediators and recognize their influence on various communities. For chaplains, the first three variables were most important in determining and cementing their roles as cultural mediators.

As a group, chaplains would be expected to have some of the social and cultural attributes of both clergy and military officers. As clergy, they were likely to hold faith and religion in high regard, to display strong interpersonal communication skills, and to exhibit moral and spiritual leadership. As military men, chaplains would be expected to achieve certain physical and mental standards, to accept and function within an intensely hierarchical system, and to value discipline and mission. By their assent to the philosophical basis of the chaplaincy—cooperation without compromise—chaplains demonstrated their willingness to go

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[19] Oxford English Dictionary, "Mediate," Online edition.

[20] Nepstad, *Convictions of the Soul*, 22.

between two cultures. These attributes would have made chaplains well-suited for an environment that required both spiritual and military bearing.

Second, chaplains possessed specialized cultural and social knowledge that allowed them to navigate military and religious worlds. Most significantly, chaplains who served in Vietnam all had graduate degrees in ministry, theology, or other fields. Their religious education provided chaplains with credibility in religious circles and within the military. For most, their graduate training included historical studies, theological studies, and ecumenical studies as well as training in counseling, religious education, and liturgical or worship leadership. These skills were useful in both military and religious contexts as chaplains ministered to and counseled a diverse population and participated in military duties. Many chaplains had also served in the military, active duty or reserve, before entering the chaplain corps, giving some a personal understanding of military culture and expectations. Military training and prior service initiated chaplains into the workings of the chain of command and basic battlefield maneuvers, while their religious training and connections allowed them to create programs and obtain supplies and services that would serve military personnel.

Structurally, chaplains occupied liminal spaces in both their religious and military communities. While chaplains serving with Reserve or National Guard units often served a parish or congregation in addition to their military constituency, those who served with regular units did so infrequently. When chaplains were activated and later deployed to Vietnam, they inevitably left their local ministries, which placed them outside the normal rhythms and expectations of organized religious bodies. In the Roman Catholic Church, for example, chaplains served under a special Archdiocese for military service—an organization fundamentally different from the episcopal and territorial organization of civilian Catholic parishes. Other churches, too, developed special organizations through which to organize and

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supervise chaplains within ecclesiastical structures.[21]

In the military, chaplains enjoyed rank without command. Though they held rank and wore rank insignia on their uniforms, chaplains were addressed as "Chaplain" rather than by their rank and wore their religious insignia above symbols of rank. Sometimes, because of this positioning, chaplains served as intermediaries between officers and enlisted personnel. Furthermore, chaplains served as advisors to commanders on moral and religious matters, and chaplains retained the clerical privilege of confidential communications with servicemen and women that other officers did not have. In 1965, the Presbyterian Church released a statement on the issue of chaplains and rank that explained why they believed chaplains retaining military rank was necessary, an argument they based on their understanding of the historical development of the United States Army Chaplaincy. The church wrote "before and during World War I there were chaplains who had no rank, and they found, as did the Red Cross men, that they were often regarded by the military as accessories with no standing and of questionable value," and they concluded that "when things needed to be done for the men, the chaplains had no power that would provide a basis for action." They upheld the idea that rank legitimized the chaplains' actions: "Rank was given to chaplains to introduce order into a confused situation and to give the chaplain a legitimate voice within the establishment."[22] Most military and some religious leaders agreed that chaplains' carrying rank was critical to their military and religious effectiveness.

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[21] For example, the Episcopal Church of the United States of America organizes its chaplains under a Suffragan Bishop for Chaplaincies; in the Presbyterian Church (including the Presbyterian Church United States of America), chaplains could retain their affiliation with their "home" presbytery or transferring to a presbytery closer to their military assignment, and in 1973, four Presbyterian bodies created the Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel, which would provide an additional level of organizational and ecclesiastical oversight for chaplains. Church bodies with purely congregational structures created loose organizations to serve the specific needs of chaplains.

[22] The United Presbyterian Church, "Ministry to Persons in the Armed Forces: A Report to the 187th General Assembly," 1975.

Ultimately, chaplains occupied space in between and on the margins of several communities: sacred and secular, civilian and military, officer and enlisted, and between denominational and faith groups. They were positioned there for structural reasons and because of their specific cultural knowledge and skills, but this liminal position allowed them to interpret their experiences from both military and religious perspectives. Having access to various religious, secular, civilian, and military communities afforded chaplains significant flexibility when they faced moral, theological, pastoral, or identity-related conflicts in the Vietnam War. Chaplains' flexible responses helped find middle ground between divergent perspectives.

Sources and Methodology

How to deal with cultural approaches to the study of war has been an ongoing question in the field of military history in recent years, as has the question of how to deal with the discourse created by, in, and about war. Though historians of the American military have come to accept, if not embrace, cultural history approaches and methodologies as important aspects of military history, they have struggled to articulate its significance to the field and to incorporate fully such approaches and methods into their work. In a 1993 article, John Shy suggested that historians were apt to use "cultural approaches" to the study of war only when historians' explanations of events could not rely on rationality, citing the brutality of the Second World War and the "surprising ferocity of the Civil War" as prime examples of when such approaches might be useful.[23] A decade later, John Lynn proposed a model by which historians could understand the relationship between the "discourse" of war and the "reality" of war, arguing that the two were closely and dialogically related to one another. Again, his work suggested that

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[23] John Shy, "The Cultural Approach to the History of War," *The Journal of Military History* 57 (October 1993): 13-26, 14.

understanding "discourse" or culture was most helpful for figuring out why and where things seemed to stray from the reality of war, neglecting to consider that the "reality of war" may itself be culturally determined.[24] These two works represented a concerted effort to retain military history's traditional focus on battle and the explanation of military outcomes while recognizing other historical perspectives and methodologies.

Frequently, the "homefront" emerged as an obvious place to understand the cultural dimension of warfare. The most robust discussions of the homefront have been in the realm of "war and society" studies, which Wayne Lee defined as "those that emphasize the connections between social organization, political institutions, and military activity."[25] Yet, as Jeremy Black noted, such studies almost always cleave "more to society than to war in both methodology and fundamental concerns."[26] Lee also suggested that historians may take into account "societal culture," which "encompasses not only the silent assumptions that common soldiers bring with them from society into the military (for example, notions about courage or masculinity) but also the public's expectations and values about war that form the environment in which decision makers operate and that they must take into account."[27] Combining these two categories of study may lead to fruitful discoveries about the relationship between homefront attitudes, cultures, and institutions and battlefield actions, attitudes, and realities.

This dissertation seeks to engage the growing base of cultural studies of the military by engaging in close analysis of the discourse and cultural expectations that surrounded chaplains and by examining a specific site in which civilian and military worlds came into sustained

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[24] John Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture, From Ancient Greece to Modern America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003).

[25] Wayne E. Lee, "Mind and Matter—Cultural Analysis in American Military History: A Look at the State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 93 (March 2007): 1116-1142.

[26] Jeremy Black, "Determinisms and Other Issues," *The Journal of Military History* 68 (October 2004), 1218.

[27] Lee, "Mind and Matter," 1118.

contact. At the same time, it is clear that such cultural analysis is less useful without a narrative context. Thus, archival records, including those from the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, provide facts and a basic chronology regarding the chaplaincy and chaplains. These sources provide a timeline for the dissertation and allow for analysis of bureaucratic and organizational issues. Additionally, cultural sources balance out the official and structural view of the archives. Cultural historians have argued that many kinds of sources can be read as texts and interpreted in multiple ways. Sources requiring a close cultural-historical reading include chaplains' memoirs, diaries, and letters as well as various national and religious media sources.

Following cues from the linguistic turn, chaplains' own descriptions of and writing about their wartime experiences form an important evidentiary base for the project. Understanding and interpreting the language, context, intention, and reception of written sources is central to the analysis of chaplains' beliefs and roles during and after the war.[28] Chaplains wrote and published reflections on the war in specific historical contexts and for specific reasons—both stated explicitly and constructed implicitly. Ultimately, memoirs, diaries, and interviews provide compelling evidence of what chaplains believed and did and how they interpreted the war and their role in it.

Such sources, however, present some challenges for the historian. Even though chaplains enjoyed significant credibility and authority, especially among religious audiences, their first-person accounts were certainly not immune to the persistent "problem of memory" so readily identified by cultural historians.[29] To be sure, memory is fallible and published accounts,

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[28] The categories for analyzing written texts come, in part, from Dominick LaCapra's work, "Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts," *History and Theory* 19 (October 1980): 245-276.

[29] See, for example, John E. Toews, "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience," *American Historical Review* 92 (October 1987): 879-907; Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (Summer 1991), 773-797; Leonard V. Smith, "Paul Fussell's The Great War and Modern Memory: Twenty-Five Years Later," *History and Theory* 40 (May 2001): 241-260; Louise White, "Telling More: Lies, Secrets, and History," *History and Theory* 39 (December 2000): 11-22; Kerwin Lee Klein,

given the interplay of memory, selectivity, authorial intent, and editorial decisions, provide a

relatively narrow view of a chaplain's experience. These types of sources, do, however, represent

a vital and vibrant discourse for understanding *how* people interpreted and made sense of their

past. They require the historian to move beyond simple narrative and factual claims and enter

into the mental world of others.[30] What chaplains wrote and how they conceived of their

experiences is critical to understanding the stories they chose to tell and why they told them in

certain ways.

Organization

   The body of the dissertation is organized into three parts. The first part examines the

broad religious, cultural, political, and international contexts of the early Cold War in order to

contextualize chaplains' experiences in the Vietnam War. Chapter One, "For God and Country:

Civic and Religious Faiths in the Early Cold War," examines larger cultural forces in the years

preceding American intervention in Vietnam. It explores the relationship between the post

World War II religious revival in the United States, public theology, and anti-communism in the

early Cold War. The tropes of religious consensus and Civil Religion provided Americans a

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"On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," *Representations* 69 (2000): 127-150; Susannah Radstone, "Working with Memory: An Introduction," in *Memory and Methodology*, ed. Radstone (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 1-22; Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, "Setting the Framework," *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Winter and Sivan (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer, *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999); Marita Struken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the Aids Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); David Paul Nord, "The Uses of Memory: An Introduction," *Journal of American History* 85 (September 1998): 409-410.

  [30] Louise White, writing about rumor, has argued that "historians could read in the inaccurate, the fantastic, and the constructed a world of . . . peoples we would not otherwise see." Memoirs allow historians to see those worlds "glimpsed through the fantastic and constructed accounts," and to come up with "a more specific version of events than we'd had before." White demanded that historians move beyond the dichotomy of true and false, in which "false" accounts are simply discounted. "Fears and fantasies are situated in distinctive terrain," she wrote "The power and importance of the made-up . . . are precisely that they are made up . . . they have to be constituted by what is credible. The imaginary and the fantastic must be constructed out of what is socially conceivable. . . . For historians, the invented account is at least as good as the accurate one." Louise White, "Telling More," 14.

common language through which to understand diverse religious and political ideas, but that these linguistic ties were insufficient to mask deep divisions that would fracture American communities during the Vietnam War.

The second part of the dissertation includes three chapters that deal with direct American engagement in Vietnam, roughly from 1962-1973, the years of heaviest American involvement in Vietnam. Each chapter focuses on a particular aspect of these years to examine the ways that chaplains acted as cultural mediators. Chapter Two, "Building a Network of Religious Support," lays out a framework for understanding chaplains' day-to-day activities and functions in the Vietnam War. It examines the organizational and bureaucratic nature of the chaplaincy in Vietnam from approximately 1962 to 1972—the decade when the most chaplains served in Vietnam—by focusing on chaplain coverage, denominational distribution, and official policies about issues like Civic Action Programs and drug use. The chapter also explores chaplains' professional relationships with their commanders and supervisors and their pastoral relationships with officers and enlisted personnel. These analyses illuminate the ambiguous structural position of chaplains within the military community.

Chapter Three, "Contested Meaning and Identities: Chaplains Respond to Conflict in Combat Zones," examines issues of morality and religious practice in wartime in order to understand the cultural and religious functions of chaplains in war. Chaplains faced intense conflict over moral and theological issues and responded creatively as they worked out practical solutions to wartime situations and created distinct and dynamic liturgies of war that involved reinterpreting traditional religious practices. In helping to create these liturgies of war, chaplains acted as inter-religious cultural mediators and mediators between martial and religious cultures.

Chapter Four, "Chaplains and Homefront Debate about Vietnam," seeks to understand how chaplains related to the homefront, particularly to the sometimes-fierce debates over the

war within religious groups. Chaplains were both participants and symbols in debates about the Vietnam War in both religious and secular communities. Chaplains' liminal positions allowed them to address a wide variety of audiences to offer experientially-grounded analysis of the Vietnam War, yet it also placed them in the middle of a long-standing philosophical debate about the proper role of chaplains in war and a policy-oriented discussion about civilianizing the military chaplaincy. While the debate over chaplains never dominated, or even became central to, mainstream debates about the Vietnam War, it was indicative of theological and doctrinal fissures within the American religious community. Examining chaplains' position within these debates illuminates a wider range of "religious" responses to the Vietnam War than is often imagined.

The third part of the dissertation deals with post-Vietnam responses and changes among chaplains and within the institutional chaplaincy. Chapter Five, "Personal Reflection, Reconciliation, and Revelation after Vietnam," deals with the ways in which chaplains worked to resolve ongoing moral, theological, and identity-related conflict after the war ended. It focuses specifically on chaplains' post-war writing by situating chaplain narratives in the traditions of combat memoirs, spiritual autobiography, and trauma writing. Chaplains' first-person accounts overwhelmingly offered a narrative of redemption as the primary marker of the Vietnam experience, counter to the more traditional Vietnam-era narrative of defeat. Chaplains' writings about the Vietnam War combined religious and martial themes, which further evidenced their roles as cultural mediators, as they wrote for both personal and public reasons. Their autobiographical writing provided a counternarrative that reflected broad trends within wider American society, and they symbolized chaplains' own reentry into the civilian religious community.

Chapter Six, "Institutional Challenges and Reorganization after Vietnam," uses three major currents in the post-Vietnam era to highlight changes within the chaplain corps: First, in the 1970s, the chaplaincy came under nearly continuous attack from liberal and mainline religious groups and from secular critics. Second, the chaplaincy undertook a major ecumenical project to produce an armed services worship book, and its inclusion of the song "It Was on a Friday Morning" created an uproar among conservative Christian groups and secular politicians who claimed it was blasphemous. This challenge exemplified the chaplaincy's attempts to retain independence and its historical commitment to ecumenism as well as the religious right's increasing political power. Finally, the chapter examines how these cultural crosscurrents—declining liberal support for the chaplaincy and rising power of conservative religious groups—affected the organizational culture of the chaplaincy. Major changes occurred between the 1970s and 2000s, and this chapter deals with the ways in which the Vietnam experience informed and influenced these discussions. Ultimately, these changes marked a conflation of military and religious values for military chaplains, which threatened the chaplain's position as a cultural mediator.

As chaplains lived and worked at the intersections of religious and military cultures during the Vietnam War, they faced intense conflicts and questions about the viability of religious faith in war. As the nation waged literal war in Vietnam, it also came apart over a war of words and actions about the war in Vietnam. The battlefield could not be isolated from developments at home, nor could the home front be divorced from the violence in Vietnam. Additionally, changes in the demography of the chaplain corps, chaplains' experiences, and their interpretations of the war reflected wider changes in the way religion and the military interacted. Because of their unique position between two near-total institutions and cultures, chaplains'

experiences, though not typical, served as bellweathers for changes in both communities.

Divisions over moral, political, and social issues affected religious communities and religious

people, and for chaplains and soldiers, experience in Vietnam often compounded or complicated

these divisions. Vietnam brought about a host of doubts and conflicts for individuals and

religious communities, but also for the nation as a whole as "Vietnam" came to represent both a

failure of American foreign policy and of a certain vision of American identity and destiny.

CHAPTER ONE

**FOR GOD AND COUNTRY: CIVIC AND RELIGIOUS FAITHS IN THE
EARLY COLD WAR**

By most measures, the decade following World War II was a period of renewed religious

commitment. According to polls, church membership and attendance rose, as did financial

support of religious institutions, and charismatic evangelical leaders began to leave their mark on

a mass audience. The religious atmosphere that emerged was simultaneously theistic and civic. It

owed much of its character to mainline Protestantism with a smattering of other beliefs mixed

in.[1] In the civic realm, it encouraged loyalty to the nation, in some cases substituting doctrines of

patriotism and nationalism for common religious doctrines. Responding to both World War II

and the Cold War, Americans redefined their religious heritage as "Judeo-Christian," recognizing

the contributions of at least one non-Christian minority to the development of the United States,

while still clearly marginalizing Islam and non-Abrahamic religious traditions.[2]

It was a time when religion entered public discourse frequently and urgently, and

theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr and religious leaders such as Billy Graham were truly

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[1] Though there is some debate, "mainline" generally refers to the Protestant Christian churches that William Hutchison identified in his work, *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). It should be taken to include Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists (United Churches of Christ), Episcopalians, and occasionally Lutherans and the Church of the Brethren, though my usage excludes the more conservative branches of these churches (i.e. the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Presbyterian Church in America, etc.). "Evangelical" will refer to churches and groups with a generally conservative outlook on theology, the Bible and social issues, and who claim evangelism as a main goal of their group. This category includes the conservative branches of mainline churches as well as denominations like the Southern Baptists, Assemblies of God, and other groups whose chaplains were endorsed by the National Association of Evangelicals or the Chaplaincy of Full Gospel Churches. Where further clarification is necessary, theological and political orientations are indicated in the text.

[2] Mark Silk, "Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America," *American Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1984): 65-85; Eric Michael Mazur, *The Americanization of Religious Minorities: Confronting the Constitutional Order* (Baltimore, MD: John's Hopkins University Press, 1999).

public men who exercised considerable influence on American politics. Politicians also entered the discourse by declaring the United States' religious foundations and consistently invoking religious imagery in political contexts. As the Cold War came to dominate thinking about America's relationship to the world, America's religious culture assumed a martial character, planting itself firmly in the way of a godless Soviet empire. Civil religion employed both clergy and politicians as priests and prophets.

At the same time, as the state mobilized to confront the Soviet Union, the military leadership worked to integrate the dominant religious and political cultures of the day into policy. These efforts were most visible in the military chaplaincy and in various "character guidance" programs implemented during the Cold War. Designed to build up the character and fighting effectiveness of American troops, chaplains and character guidance programs identified religious beliefs as essential components of American identity while at the same time connecting civil society, military service, and religious faith.

Nevertheless, many religious groups, especially liberal ones, kept a distance, retaining a critical edge in their dealings with and commentary on the government. The "religious community" did not speak with a unified voice even in the 1950s, and religious dissent against government action did not begin only in the 1960s. In addition to the religious left's participation in the Civil Rights Movement, religious responses to the use of the atomic bomb, proposals calling for Universal Military Training and peacetime conscription, and the UN action in Korea pervaded complex conversations that took place between military and religious interests during the 1950s, and were basic to the religious and military issues that emerged during the Vietnam War.

After the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, American policy-makers started the country down the long road of intense involvement with Vietnam. Having marked South and

Southeast Asia as a critical pointed in the Containment line, government officials assumed some level of involvement in Vietnam almost a matter of course in the 1950s and early 1960s. In addition to religious overtones to policy rhetoric in the United States, the presence of a small but significant minority of Catholics in Vietnam and close ties between American and Vietnamese Catholics such as John F. Kennedy and Ngo Dinh Diem served only to enhance the significance of Vietnam for American political objectives. As a result, religious groups' responses to early American forays into Vietnam were generally supportive, though not entirely uncritical, and American policy statements about Vietnam frequently had religious undertones. By the time the first chaplains arrived in Vietnam in 1962, the stage had been set for a decade-long struggle to define the proper role of religion in the American military, the religious nature of America's Cold War mission, and the character of the American military chaplaincy.

Cold War civil religion, early debates over religious programs within the U.S. military, and initial American forays into Vietnam all point to the contested atmosphere in which chaplains in Vietnam eventually operated. The early Cold War and an American religious revival injected religious and civil religious language into public discourse and public space, suggesting a distinct "public theology" during the 1950s and early 1960s. As this theological language entered the public imagination, the military responded to and used the dominant religious culture of the day to shape policies, specifically those regarding the chaplaincy and character guidance programs. Eventually, early American involvement in Vietnam and long-standing ties to the Catholic community in Vietnam prompted responses from religious communities that were wrapped in the language of civil religion.

The convergences and divergences in American military and religious cultures during the early Cold War illuminated not only trends within each realm, but also highlighted the extent to which the two existed in a dialogic relationship with one another. Religious communities and

military ones borrowed freely and frequently from the lexicons and cultures of the other,

producing in the early Cold War period a common language with which to express and

understand religiosity and patriotism. Yet theological and doctrinal differences did not disappear

with the construction of common tropes and rhetorical moves, even as the fear of confrontation

with the Soviet Union demanded that religious communities and civic communities emphasize

unity over difference for the collective good of the nation. These ideological and theological

differences, buried beneath a common language, emerged in full force in the 1960s, especially as

American involvement in Vietnam expanded; the foundations of civil religion that provided a

patina of consensus in the early Cold War crumbled, setting American religious and political

communities up for a left-right/liberal-conservative divide that would define the Vietnam and

post-Vietnam eras.[3]

An American Way of Life and Civil Religion

Since the 1967 publication of Robert Bellah's essay "Civil Religion in America," scholars,

clergy, politicians, and other commentators have debated the substance and utility of such an

idea, that suggested an intimate relationship between American religion and American civil

society.[4] The essay poses a special interpretive challenge for scholars of American religion during

the Cold War, however. Because it appeared near the height of the war in Vietnam and was

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[3] Historians of the 1950s have recently called to our attention the multiple ways in which the older story of the so-called "liberal consensus" falls apart under scrutiny. For examples, see Larry May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.) On the issue of divergent civil religions, Robert Wuthnow has argued that a distinction emerged since the 1960s between conservative and liberal Protestants; see "Divided We Fall: America's Two Civil Religions," *The Christian Century*, 20 April 1988, 395-399.

[4] Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96 (Winter 1967):1-21; Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, eds., *Civil Religion in America*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Phillip Hammond, Amanda Porterfield, James G. Moseley, and Jonathan D. Sarna, "Forum: American Civil Religion Revisited," *Religion and American Culture* 4, no. 1 (1994):1-23.

sharply critical of US involvement there, the essay itself, as well as much of the writing just before that historical moment are rightly considered primary sources for studies on the Cold War and religion; they help to establish the tenor and content of public religious and civil debates. Yet since the 1970s, "civil religion" has become a key analytical tool for understanding the nature of American religion, particularly in the public sphere. Defining civil religion as both an idea that emerged in a specific historical context and as an analytical category is necessary to understand the relationship between the military, politics, and religion during the Cold War.

In the years following World War II, civil, military, and religious themes appeared to be integrated or at least to exist alongside one another. How, for example, could one explain the poll in *Ladies Home Journal*, which suggested Americans believed they needed to follow the "law of love"—at least in theory—toward nearly everyone save the nation's enemies and those of suspect political orientation.[5] American behaviors and attitudes, in addition to presidential comments, sermons from religious leaders, and changes to the pledge of allegiance emphasized that the lines between church and state were blurry indeed.

To be sure, the lines had never been clear. Historians have been well attuned to the intricacies of the theocratic New England colonies, to the establishment of churches across the colonial and republican United States, to the relationship between ecclesiastical and political divisions in the Civil War, and to the religious bent of the southern Lost Cause.[6] As the United States entered the twentieth century, instances such as these continued to suggest an intimate

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[5] Poll cited in Jackson W. Carroll, Douglas W. Johnson, and Martin E. Marty, *Religion in America: 1950 to the Present* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

[6] See Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*, updated ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, Charles Reagan Wilson, eds., *Religion and the American Civil War*, new ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Mitchell Snay, *The Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); and Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983).

relationship between the American state, the American people, and God. But the nature of that relationship was always under discussion.[7]

Using language that could be traced to John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Bellah proposed that "civil religion" clarified the complicated relationship between religion and politics in the United States. In this essay, Bellah joined a long line of scholars interested in the "general" religion of the United States, naming more definitely what historian Sidney Mead called the "Religion of the Republic" and theologian and sociologist Will Herberg the "American Way of Life."[8] But it was Bellah's term and conception that sparked the longest-lasting interest and debate, appearing as it did in the middle of the national crisis of Vietnam. Rather than understanding this pattern as evidence that civil society had co-opted religious beliefs, Bellah believed the resulting "civil religion" to be a kind of hybrid, related to but separate from either the church or the state. "There are . . . certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share. These have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere. This public religious dimension is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that I am calling the American civil religion."[9]

Will Herberg's earlier formulation of the "American Way of Life" served as an important foundation for Bellah's concept. He argued that in the twentieth century, the United States had indeed been a "melting pot," albeit more accurately three melting pots rather than one. He

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[7] See, for example, Sydney Ahlstrom *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972) and Catherine Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1976).

[8] Sidney Mead coined the phrase "Religion of the Republic" in his book, *The Nation with the Soul of a Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 94; Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955).

[9] Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," 100.

believed that the broad categories of "Protestant," "Catholic," and "Jew" had created spaces in which ethnic and racial differences were subsumed by religious denomination—at least for white Americans.[10] The results of this combination, Herberg argued, were significant: "With the religious community as the primary context of self-identification and social location, and with Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism as three culturally diverse representations of the same 'spiritual values,' it becomes virtually mandatory for the American to place himself in one or another of these groups . . . For being a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew is understood as the specific way, and increasingly perhaps the only way, of being an American and locating oneself in American society."[11] Herberg and others have since suggested that the significance attached to being "American" may have prompted people who did not identify with one of these traditions, or who in fact did not believe in God at all, to respond otherwise in polls and in public.

Herberg asserted that the "American Way of Life" constituted the general religion of American society, particularly for white Americans. He believed it supplied "American society with an 'overarching sense of unity' amid conflict.'"[12] Herberg argued that Americans were tolerant of anything widely construed to be "American," (namely white Protestants, Catholics, and Jews) and nothing was as un-American as intolerance. For Herberg, "The American Way of Life" was, at bottom, a spiritual structure of ideas and ideals, of aspirations and values, of beliefs and standards; it synthesized all that commends itself to the American as the right, the good, and the true in actual life. It embraced such seemingly incongruous elements as sanitary plumbing and freedom of opportunity, Coca-Cola and an intense faith in education."[13] Furthermore, the

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[10] Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 35.

[11] Ibid., 39.

[12] Ibid., 75.

[13] Ibid.

American Way of Life was peculiarly democratic, individualistic, dynamic, pragmatic, humanitarian, and idealistic. This "common denominator" religion allowed Americans with diverse political and theological views to coalesce against the Communist enemy around shared language and basic ideas without having to agree on the specifics of motive and policy.[14]

Yet this blending of popular culture, religion, and national identity was not, in Herberg's mind, a positive development. He saw great danger in the perpetuation of this system, where religious terms and ideas had no religious meaning. If a watered-down version of mainline Protestantism was to stand in for what it meant to be American, then Herberg wanted no part of it. The great center of American sociability and organization was founded on shaky ground. In the end, the major social and cultural ruptures of the 1960s and 1970s should not be surprising. The unpopularity and uncertainty of the war in Vietnam proved too heavy a burden for the apparent broad religious consensus built on ideals of civility and tolerance.

Writing just over ten years after Herberg's major work, Robert Bellah modified and complicated many of Herberg's remarks. Like Herberg, Bellah sounded a warning to his audience about the potential dangers of civil religion, but Bellah was more optimistic about the positive role civil religion could and should play in American religious and civic life. He argued, "what people say on solemn occasions need not be taken at face value, but it is often indicative of deep-seated values and commitments that are not made explicit in everyday life."[15] In explicating the content of American civil religion, Bellah suggested that times of trial provided the clearest articulations of its uses and dangers, and he identified three key periods for the formation of American civil religion. Forged first in the American Revolution, civil religion appeared in opposition to the British system, and American leaders consistently claimed that

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[14] Richard Hutcheson identified this ideological makeup as "common denominator religion" in his book *Churches and the Chaplaincy* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1975), 54.

[15] Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," 99.

God was on America's side in the war and incorporated deism, if not Christianity, into nearly every aspect of the nation's founding. The Civil War provided the first great test for American civil religion because it brought the themes of "death, sacrifice, and rebirth" to civil religion, and the Gettysburg Address was added to the canon of "civil scriptures." Lincoln's call for "malice toward none, with charity for all" seemed to mandate reconciliation, if not redemption, and those words sacralized both the death of soldiers and the ground on which they fell. In the late 1960s, however, the tone of American civil religion shifted when Kennedy exhorted, "here on earth, God's work must truly be our own." The president insisted that Americans were being called by God: "the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need—not as a call to battle, though embattled we are—but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, 'rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation'—a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself."[16] God would be on America's side, because America was uniquely destined to carry out God's will on earth.

Recalling the rousing rhetoric and the heady statements of a slain president, Bellah nonetheless found himself deeply worried about the prospects for civil religion in the late 1960s. He believed it a short leap from practicing the positive, unifying brand of civil religion to using the rhetoric of civil religion to support morally reprehensible ideas and actions. Bellah warned, "It can be overtly or implicitly linked to the idea of manifest destiny which has been used to legitimate several adventures in imperialism since the early nineteenth century." And he believed the danger continued into the turbulent years of the late 1960s, when the issue was not one of imperial expansion, but instead the "tendency to assimilate all governments or parties in the world which support our immediate policies or call upon our help by invoking the notion of free institutions and democratic values. Those nations that are for the moment 'on our side; become

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[16] Ibid., 101.

'the free world," and thus could a "repressive and unstable military dictatorship in South Vietnam" become "the free people of South Vietnam and their government." Government and military leaders could use the language of civil religion to sacralize the war effort, so when soldiers died, it would allow the state "to consecrate the struggle further by invoking the great theme of sacrifice."

In 1975, Bellah expanded his thoughts on the issue of civil religion in the modern American context, specifically in light of the war in Vietnam and the apparent disillusionment of many Americans. Furthering his pleas from "Civil Religion in America," Bellah exhorted his fellow citizens: "It is our moral responsibility as Americans not to give up the struggle at the national level . . . [N]o one has changed a great nation without appealing to its soul." Bellah argued that in order to win the struggle, and in order to capitalize on it, Americans needed a new vision, for "we will not even know what we want unless we have a new vision of man, a new sense of human possibility, and a new conception of the ordering of liberty, the constitution of freedom." Finally he pleaded with his fellow Americans, in the midst of an increasingly unpopular war, that "while recognizing the reality of death, we may return finally to Winthrop's biblical injunction: Let us choose life."[17]

Ultimately, "civil religion" subsumed important differences in interpretation under a common language, so that any time someone spoke or wrote of "God" and "Country" in the same breath, they were addressing or promoting "civil religion," even when their intents were vastly different. Despite the patina of consensus on the spiritual and religious nature of the country, significant theological and philosophical differences divided Americans. In the end, however, these differences spoke to similar concerns, and civil religion provided both religious

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[17] Robert Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

liberals and conservatives as well as more universalist or nationalist thinkers a way to participate in the public culture of the Cold War. Bellah had recognized a significant pattern in American civic and religious life: one that begged for explanation, especially in the troubled times of the late 1960s in which he wrote. Politicians and citizens, clergy and laymen participated in conversations that assumed a common religious heritage, or at least a common religious language, with potentially disastrous results.

In analyzing the utility of "civil religion" to direct discussions about the place of religion and state in the American context, historian of religion Martin Marty has suggested four manifestations of civil religion in the United States. His typology included four combinations of characteristics, all of which can appropriately be identified expressions of civil religion. First, Marty identified two categories of civil religion: the "Under-God" type and the "transcendent nation" type. Within each of those categories, there existed two modes of expression—priestly and prophetic.[18] These varying ways to conceive of the concept in general as well as the different manifestations are all correctly understood as "civil religion." Marty's typology suggested one way that diverse views could be conceived of in similar language, providing scholars a way to interpret the functions and effects (rather than the content) of civil religion.

The "Under God" type assumed that the United States had a special relationship to a deity—however defined. References to "God," the "Divine," a "Higher Power," a "Creator" or the like referred to something greater than and outside of the state. The priestly function was therefore celebratory and self-assured. Marty contended that most often presidents and politicians played a priestly role in the discourse, assuring Americans of their consistent alliance

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[18] The Priest/Prophet distinction is originally Max Weber's; he uses them to distinguish between "ideal types" in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. A more extended discussion of these terms, specifically as they related to chaplains, see Chapter Four. Marty suggested this typology in his essay, "Two Kinds of Civil Religion," in Richey and Jones *Civil Religion in America*, 139-157.

with the forces of good. Particularly notable examples included Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy. The prophetic vision, however, was a dialectic one, in which the Divine and the nation were in constant conversation. The prophets warned that God did not necessarily approve of or bless American action, but that Americans, as a people set apart, should strive to do the work and the will of God. Abraham Lincoln was most often remembered for his prophetic statements in this vein. Lincoln's statement from his second inaugural address that both the Union and the Confederacy believed in the same God and read the same Bible, yet they could not both be right clearly exhibited this sentiment. He exhorted the nation to think not "God is on our side" but instead to pray that "we are on God's side." Other prophets in the civil religious tradition included Jonathan Edwards and Reinhold Niebuhr, each of whom saw great potential in the American state and people, but who tempered these visions with more somber theological reflections.

While the "Under-God" type of civil religion was particularly based on a Judeo-Christian ethos, others suggested that civil religion itself might come to replace both church and denominational religion as the religious foundation of the United States. Here, the nation itself—its people, customs, and traditions—was at the center of religious devotion. For many Christians, then, the prospect of idolatry and blasphemy made this an uncomfortable proposition, whereas secular scholars often praised civil religion's ability to supplant and replace traditional religious beliefs. This type employed a vaguely religious language—often talking about God—but their focus was on the nation and its character. For Marty, the prototypical "priests" of this type of civil religion were historian Sidney Mead and Richard Nixon. Conversely, those on the prophetic side of this civil religion, were more likely to warn against deifying the nation and to look to the structures and functions of civil religion for explanations of its place in

American society. Marty concluded that Bellah himself belonged most appropriately in this category.

These four categories of civil religion help explain how such divergent political, theological, scriptural, national, and ecclesiastical views could participate in a public culture that seemed to integrate discussions of "God" and "Country." Marty's typology challenged assumptions about a unitary American "civil religion" or a shared American "religious culture" based on ill-understood ideas of a "Judeo-Christian" tradition. People certainly used similar language to talk about different permutations of the relationship between God and Country, but their meanings and interpretations were vastly different. The religious consensus that appeared to unite the United States in the 1950s would prove, at least in part, its undoing during and after the Vietnam War.

Public Theology and the Cold War

In 1955, forty-nine percent of Americans reported to Gallup that they attended religious services at least once in the past week—the highest percentage ever recorded—and between ninety-six and ninety-eight percent of Americans consistently reported that they "believed in God."[19] In 1952, Dwight Eisenhower declared, "our government makes no sense unless it's founded on a deeply felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is."[20] Belief itself was the important thing—the content of that belief (though assumed to be vaguely Judeo-Christian) was clearly less important. Eisenhower himself offered perhaps the best example of this idea. Eisenhower's opponent in the 1952 presidential election, Adlai Stevenson, spoke regularly of specific religious values and with theological specificity during the campaign, but he was

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[19] By way of comparison, only about 20% (at the most) of Britons surveyed with a similar question said they attended church.

[20] Dwight D. Eisenhower, quoted in *New York Times*, 23 December 1952.

nonetheless stymied by his Unitarian affiliation and his status as a divorcee.[21] Most Americans

were unfamiliar with and wary of the Unitarian faith and remained skeptical of divorce within a

religious context. Eisenhower, on the other hand, often spoke of religion in vague terms and

joined the Presbyterian church (at the suggestion of Billy Graham) only after his electoral

victory. Martin Marty suggested that Americans knew nothing about Eisenhower's personal

creed beyond the first two words, "I Believe." Yet the American public seemed entirely willing

to accept Eisenhower's version of spirituality as a legitimate one.[22] Eisenhower was the

quintessential priest for America's civil religion, and he played the part for those who believed in

a transcendent nation and those who preferred to envision the United States as having a special

relationship with God. Eisenhower's language was specific enough to invoke civil religion, but

vague enough to appeal to a diverse audience.

Between 1955 and 1965, most religious denominations' membership grew significantly.

Even mainline churches experienced moderate growth, though evangelical, fundamentalist, and

Pentecostal churches grew more rapidly. During that decade only the United Church of Christ

saw its numbers decline. The United Methodist Church had the slowest rate of increase at 10.5

percent, while the Assemblies of God grew a total of 43 percent during the same time.[23] Church

attendance varied according to religious affiliation. Catholics were the most consistent attendees,

averaging around 70-75 percent weekly attendance at Mass from 1955 to 1965. Protestant

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[21] Marty, Modern American Religion, Vol. 3, *Under God, Indivisible, 1941-1960* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 806.

[22] Marty, Martin E. *Under God, Indivisible*, 302.

[23] Carroll, et. al, *Religion in America*, 15, fig. 3. Other rates were: United Presbyterian, +11%; Southern Baptist, +27.2%; Seventh-Day Adventist, +31.5%; Presbyterian US, +17.2%; Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, +34.4%; Lutheran Church in America, +22.4%; Episcopal, +20.2%, Church of the Nazarene +27.9%, and Roman Catholic, +38.5%.

attendance declined slowly during the period, but averaged around 42 percent, while Jewish attendance was significantly lower, staying between 18-27 percent, depending on the poll.[24]

But widespread belief in "God" and even increased church membership did not translate directly into heightened piety or observable religious practice. In the 1950s, when over nine million copies of the Bible were sold each year, over half of American adults could not name a single one of the first four books of the New Testament, the Gospels. Similarly, polling numbers on church attendance in any given week were likely false, the over-reporting a reflection more of what people had hoped to do or planned to do in the future than an accurate representation of their actions in the past week.[25] Overwhelmingly, Americans continued to rely on some version of the "Golden Rule" as the primary means for salvation, rather than citing specific religious doctrines of sin, repentance, or sacrifice.[26]

The ways in which religion entered public discourse and public space in the 1950s reflected both the substance and the effects of this religious renewal on the United States. This "public theology" probably differed significantly from private theologies or institutional doctrines, but it facilitated the intertwining of civic and religious language during the Cold War. Two traditions of "public theology" existed historically in the United States. The first came out of the churches: ministers and intellectuals like Jonathan Edwards, Horace Bushnell, and Walter Rauschenbush worked out religious and social meaning in the public sphere, in public space. The second was state-oriented, where political leaders such as Abraham Lincoln or John F. Kennedy, used deistic or theological language, as Martin Mary explained, "in order to make

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[24] Ibid., 19-20.

[25] C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler, "Did You Really Go to Church This Week?: Behind the Poll Data," *Christian Century*, 6 May 1998, 472-475.

[26] The most explicit statement of this foundation came from Herberg in *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*.

sense of the American Experience."[27] But men and women did not have to be theological or political giants to influence, use, and sustain this public theology; indeed it suffused the halls of Congress, court cases, schools, the military, and other public spaces.

Religious renewal offered many Americans concrete reasons for joining the anti-communist struggle. Though not all Americans were religious, the "American Way of Life" and civil religious beliefs clearly valued the First Amendment protection of free religious exercise. Communism, by denying the existence of God and suppressing religious practice, threatened not only religious Americans' worldviews but also one of the United States' founding principles. Even conservative Christians, who generally supported disengagement from the political sphere, spoke out for the moral imperative of protecting Christians' rights abroad, essentially entangling political and religious goals.[28] Additionally, religion acted as a socially conservative force, encouraging unity and the status quo. As a social institution, religion offered American communities a form of "social sacralization," by which a specific society legitimated and sacralized itself against another. In this case, the widespread perception of a common religious heritage offered a way for the United States to define itself against the Soviet Union.[29]

While religious anti-communism united many Americans in terms of language and basic principle, in practice, American religious groups exhibited a great variety in the style and expression of their anti-communist ideas.[30] Seeing both the traditional tripartite grouping of American religious adherents into "Protestant, Catholic, Jew," and more specific denominational

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[27] Martin E. Marty, "Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience," *Journal of Religion* 54 (October 1974), 333. See also Marty, "Two Kinds of Civil Religion."

[28] See, for example, David E. Settje, *Lutherans and the Longest War: Adrift on a Sea of Doubt about the Cold and Vietnam Wars, 1964-1975* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 7-9.

[29] Kenneth D. Wald, "The Religious Dimension of American Anti-Communism," *Journal of Church and State* 36, no. 3 (1994): 483-506. The idea of "social sacralization" is a specific reference to Emile Durkheim's work on the social aspects of religious organization, practice, and belief.

[30] Wald, "Religious Dimension."

groups as inadequate for understanding the basic cleavages between religious people on political issues, historian Kenneth Wald has suggested that scholars move toward analyzing religious "worldviews." He defined two dominant ones—liberal/progressive and conservative/orthodox—as better indicators of religious response to political and social issues.

In Wald's analysis, conservatives generally "supported a strongly nationalistic line which portrayed communism as a moral enemy to be resisted wherever it appeared." They "stressed active opposition, endorsed military action taken in the cause of anticommunism, and expressed skepticism about the prospects of negotiation with communist states." On the other side, progressives and liberals believed communism could best be resisted by building more just societies and relying on the framework of international law to lessen tension and prevent war." They believed that "military action, when unavoidable, should be pursued defensively and only in service of limited goals . . . To the extent Christianity had a role to play, the task of church representatives was to promote the social and economic development of poor countries and so diminish the attractiveness of radical solutions to desperate people." Wald argued these various responses were best understood as "manifestations of elective affinity," which was Max Weber's term "for a disposition to action based on the behavioral imperatives endorsed by religious values." Thus, the nature of elective affinity in American religious history meant there were any number of potential responses to a certain situation. The foreign policy positions of these worldviews were not foreordained, and one could easily imagine a world in which both groups have essentially the same goal—defeat communism—but for different reasons and by using different methods.

Both religious liberals and conservatives in the United States routinely labeled themselves anti-communist; only a small minority of religious groups, most notably Dorothy

Day and her associates at the *Catholic Worker*, openly supported communism.[31] During the early

Cold War, several theologians and ministers alike enjoyed a national public status that allowed

them to articulate their religious and political viewpoints. Though many religious viewpoints fell

under the rubric of "anti-communism," there were significant differences in the specific rhetoric

language of religious liberals and conservatives. Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr offered specific

expressions of the liberal viewpoint whereas evangelical minister Billy Graham best articulated

the conservative position. As religion and the Cold War merged in public discourse, these two

men—influential and well-respected in both political and religious circles—embodied the

essence of public theology.[32]

Reinhold Niebuhr began his intellectual life as a socialist, but although he became

disenchanted with its political program, he continued to be attracted to its fundamental criticism

of capitalism and its reliance on class as an explanatory factor in history. He was the primary

figure behind "Christian Realism," which advocated a "tough" stance on complicated issues of

the day—he derided Social Gospel-style liberalism for being "too soft," and for a faulty belief

that human action could actually change the dominant social and economic systems. Niebuhr

instead advocated a different type of human agency and a religious philosophy that would take

into account various evils in the world such as Communism.

Though quite a prolific writer in the years of the Depression and the Second World War,

it was not until the post-war period that Reinhold Niebuhr gained his widest public audience.

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[31] Dorothy Day, "Our Communist Brothers," in *The Columbia Documentary History of Religion in America since 1945*, eds. Paul Harvey and Philip Goff (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 35-40.

[32] Marty, Martin E. "Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology." Marty made the case for Niebuhr as a public theologian who embodied both the religious and political strands of public theology, as he was well-known and well-respected in religious and political communities. Eric R. Crouse argued that conservative Protestants were more forceful in promoting their anti-communist ideals than liberal Protestants and that the public rhetoric of ministers like Graham marked the popularly held "Christian" view during the early Cold War. See Crouse, "Popular Cold Warriors: Conservative Protestants, Communism, and Culture in Early Cold War America," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 2 (Fall 2002): 1-18.

Secular scholars, including Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., read his 1952 work, *The Irony of American History*, with great interest.[33] In that book, a culmination of Niebuhr's views on the Cold War and anti-Communism, Niebuhr "argued for the centrality of power in order to advocate an expanded, morally sensitive conception of power. In sum, Niebuhr militantly espoused liberal measures to counter the conservative militarists of his time and offered a realistic rationale for exercising moral restraint."[34] As a result, Niebuhr often found himself between competing camps, neither of which was wholly comfortable with his analysis. Democratic Party liberals were uncomfortable with Neibuhr's wholehearted endorsement of the Cold War, even though Neibuhr considered the decision an extraordinarily difficult one. Neibuhr's support precipitated a crisis for many liberals, and more than a few eventually chose to follow his lead, which paved the way for the mainstream American left to endorse Harry Truman's Cold War foreign policies. Neibur's influence and public position effectively meant that his defection probably prevented a political crisis within the Democratic Party.[35] Later, Niebuhr would roll back some of his early proclamations, especially with the advent of Mutual Assured Destruction and the Vietnam War, but his early support for Cold War initiatives helped to secure both political and religious liberal support for the Cold War.

On the conservative side of the religious spectrum stood Billy Graham and other like-minded voices. Whereas Niebuhr's anti-Communism had been cautious and even a last resort,

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[33] See especially Russell Yost Foster Sizemore, "Reinhold Niebuhr and the Rhetoric of Liberal Anti-Communism: Christian Realism and the Rise of the Cold War," (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1987); Martin E. Marty, "Reinhold Niebuhr and the Irony of American History: A Retrospective." *The History Teacher* 26, no. 2 (1993): 161-174; Robin W. Lovin, *Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Reinhold Niebuhr's Role in American Political Thought and Life," in *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*, eds. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (New York: MacMillan, 1956; and Richard W. Fox, "Reinhold Niebuhr and the and the Emergence of Liberal Realist Faith, 1930-1945," *The Review of Politics* 38 (April 1976): 244-265.

[34] Sizemore, "Reinhold Niebuhr," iii.

[35] Campbell Craig, "The New Meaning of Modern War in the Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53, no. 4 (1992), 687.

Graham's was vocal and often militant in tone. In one pamphlet, titled "Chistianism and Communism" Graham claimed, "Communism is far more than just an economic and philosophical interpretation of life. Communism is a fanatical religion that has declared war upon the Christian God. To a striking degree this atheistic philosophy is paralleling and counterfeiting Christianity."[36] Graham defined the world and the threats to it in ways that echoed the United States government's position. It was a fight between good and evil, and the United States needed to fortify both its faith and its military in order to overcome the Soviet menace. Using clear millennial and dispensational Christian referents, Graham wrote, "Communism *could* be only a shadow of a greater movement that is yet to come. However, it carries with it all the indications of anti-Christ."[37] Faith alone, however, would be insufficient; he called for a religious war, perhaps a crusade: "Christianity needs a show of strength and force" and must "maintain the strongest military establishment on earth."[38]

Other conservative theologians and ministers were less charitable to their coreligionists, and found liberal religion, particularly liberal Protestantism, to be insidious forces in the Cold War. Concerned that liberal Protestantism relied on principles of collective salvation, a holdover from the era of the Social Gospel, J.B. Matthews, a conservative commentator and Director of Research for House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) excoriated liberal Protestant clergy for being on the wrong side of the global struggle. In an article titled "Reds and our Churches"—inflammatory to be sure—Matthews warned, "The largest single group supporting the Communist apparatus in the United States today is composed of Protestant clergymen."[39]

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[36] Billy Graham, *Christianism Vs. Communism* (Minneapolis, MN: Billy Graham Evangelical Association, 1951), 3.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Graham, quoted in Marty, *Under God,* 330.

[39] J.B. [Joseph Brown] Matthews, "Reds and Our Churches." *American Mercury*, July 1953, 3.

Citing the People's Institute of Applied Religion, a Southern organization involved with the labor movement and with communist ties, Matthews charged that in the past seventeen years, over 3500 professors supported the Communist Party either as members, fellow travelers, spies, or dupes, and he claimed, "during the same . . . period, the Communist Party has enlisted the help of at least seven thousand Protestant clergymen in the same categories." An ultra-conservative Lutheran publication titled "How Red is the National Council of Churches" suggested that the national ecumenical group was in direct cahoots with the Soviet Union.[40] These were not accusations to be taken lightly, appearing as they did in the midst of Joseph McCarthy's senate hearings and general national anti-communist hysteria.

The public also worried about fortifying the strength of the nation and its faith, and often supported policies and measures that would ensure the two worked together for the same end. Though there were major differences between liberal and conservative worldviews, civil religion provided a way for Americans and their elected leaders to profess a public faith that relied on the language of anti-communism and civil religion. This convergence was most clearly evident in two examples: one very specific—the addition of the words "under God" to the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance—and the other more programmatic—the cooperation between Mainline and Conservative Protestant groups and believers to focus on an evangelical mission.

On Flag Day, 14 June 1954, Congressmen and Senators gathered on the steps of the Capitol building, the United States flag rose over the dome, and a military band played "Onward Christian Soldiers." The occasion was a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance—but now with a critical difference: President Dwight Eisenhower had just signed into law a bill that added the

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[40] "How Red is the National Council of Churches?" quoted in Settje, *Lutherans Longest War*, 67.

words "under God" to the pledge.[41] Here, publicly and clearly, the United States experienced the mingling of church, state, and the Cold War. From the years following World War II through the middle of the 1950s, the United States underwent a religious revival. Church attendance rose, as did financial contributions to religious organizations. The culture promoted homogeneity—at least on the surface—as Americans dug in for the long struggle against atheistic communism.

Adding the words "under God" to the pledge would, according to supporters, separate the United States from other nations and would reaffirm the United States' position in the world as a "redeemer nation." George M. Docherty, pastor of New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington D.C., supported the change to the pledge. In a Lincoln Day sermon, which Eisenhower probably attended, Docherty argued that without the words, "under God," the pledge was essentially generic, and could be used by any state, even the Soviet Union. He claimed that a (universal) belief in a Supreme Being distinguished America from the rest of the world, and therefore the pledge should say as much. In defining "American," Docherty argued, the American way of life "is more than the material total of baseball games, hot dogs, Coca-Cola, television, deep freezes, and other gadgets, it is a way of life that sees man as a sentient being created by God and seeking to know His will, whose soul is restless till he rests in God."[42] But these words from the mouth of a Mainline Protestant minister were unsurprising since he viewed the state in religious terms. The United States Congress provided a different test: similar bills had been introduced in Congress before, but they had always failed to reach the floor. With the backing of a prominent protestant minister and the attention of a national audience, the bill passed easily, supported even by those who professed no faith and adhered to no organized or

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[41] Lee Canipe, "Under God and Anti-Communist: How the Pledge of Allegiance God Religion in Cold War America," *Journal of Church and State* (2003): 305-323; see also Richard Ellis, *To the Flag: The Unlikely History of the Pledge of Allegiance* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

[42] George M. Docherty, "Under God," Sermon, 7 February 1954, http://www.nyapc.org/under%20god.htm, accessed 26 February 2006.

institutional religion. These two words represented a national faith, a basic agreement about the founding principles for the United States among people with diverse beliefs.

The post-war religious renewal also offered Protestant churches an opportunity for cooperation in the evangelical mission. Though it is common for scholars to recognize a mainline/evangelical split, both terms lack precision. Most Protestant denominations believe in the importance of "evangelism" or spreading their faith, though mainline and evangelical churches differed on the fundamental purpose of and methods for evangelism. Mainline Protestants tended to emphasize collectivity and social action whereas evangelical Protestants emphasized conversion, individualism, and verbal witness. In the 1940s and 1950s, however, both mainline and more conservative Protestants laid aside vast differences over issues like biblical criticism and debates over modernity, and at the behest of their leaders, redoubled their cooperative efforts at evangelism through transdenominational councils and ecumenical programs.[43]

Most notably, the generally moderate to liberal National Council of Churches (changed in 1948 from the Federal Council of Churches) implemented new evangelism programs intent on "winning America to Christ." The NCC sponsored preaching tours, training workshops for clergy, and advocated for a "World Day of Prayer." National directives influenced local actions, and by the 1950s, Council churches were active in evangelizing local communities and national organizations.[44] At the same time conservative Evangelical churches, particularly those instrumental in the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942, began to reexamine some of their evangelical methods and to cooperate with other Christian groups. This evangelical ecumenism was seen clearly and powerfully in Billy Graham's 1949 Los Angeles

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[43] Thomas C. Berg, " 'Proclaiming Together?' Convergence and Divergence in Mainline and Evangelical Evangelicalism, 1945-1967," *Religion and American Culture* 5, (Winter 1995), 50.

[44] Ibid., 52.

crusade and in the new publication, *Christianity Today.*[45] Though Niebuhr and others spoke

critically of the center's move toward evangelicalism, most mainline Protestants embraced it

wholeheartedly. In addition to the Cold War impetus for this convergence, the emergence of a

"Protestant" identity and the belief that Roman Catholicism threatened an essential "American"

way of life furthered the identification of a common religious identity.[46]

Military and Religious Convergences and Conversations

Though religion frequently provided a language in which Americans could discuss anti-

Communist efforts, the problem of the Soviet Union was also undoubtedly a military and

political one, and the American military prepared itself to confront the Soviet threat. Even

though religious leaders and groups spoke with an anti-Communist tenor, they were often anti-

militarist as well. Religious leaders from many denominations and groups criticized the use of

atomic weapons in World War II, and nearly all religious groups opposed efforts to mandate

universal military training (UMT) for young men. The military responded to these concerns in

part by implementing policy changes in the structure of the chaplaincy and in the nature of the

chaplains' mission to the military as well as employing a distinctly religious language to explain

the military's Cold War mission. This discourse played out during the Korean War, as military

policies and religious ideas were put into practice.

At the same time, politicians responded to the concerns and priorities of national

religious leaders. Though many believed chaplains had performed admirably during World War

II and in their ministry to Japanese and German Prisoners of War and those being held for war

crimes, some insinuated that chaplains were rarely the "top notch" ministers who might be

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[45] Ibid., 53.

[46] Ibid., 53-55.

found in civilian churches.[47] This sentiment was given voice by Major General Harry Vaughn, a military aide to President Truman, in a September 1945 address to the Women's Auxiliary of Alexandria (Virginia) Westminster Presbyterian Church, where he stated, "You have to give the Roman Church credit. When the War Department requests a bishop to supply 20 priests for chaplains, he looks over his diocese and picks out the 20 best men. Frequently a Protestant [minister] does not have a church at that moment or is willing to go on vacation for about three years."[48] Though the General Commission on Chaplains registered a complaint, Vaughn's observation was not uncommon. Because chaplains generally fell outside of traditional ecclesiastical structures and hierarchies, it was easy to view them as outcasts in the ministerial community.

In response to these criticisms, the Truman administration and many denominational organizations worked to increase the visibility and vitality of their chaplain services. The most significant change came in the area of chaplain training within the armed services. Though each service continued to operate its own chaplain school, the Army Chaplain School was as a model for understanding significant changes in chaplain training during the early years of the Cold War. At the outset of World War II, chaplain training was accomplished somewhat haphazardly at a school designed to train chaplains quickly—most went through only a one-month course before they went overseas. The school moved four times during the course of the war, which only increased a feeling of instability and impermanence. In 1946, the Chaplain School moved to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, where leaders began developing in earnest a curriculum for chaplains, and the School initiated distance-learning courses for Reserve and National Guard

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[47] On heroic chaplains' actions in World War II, see Dan Kurzman, *No Greater Glory: The Four Immortal Chaplains and the Sinking of the Dorchester in World War II* (New York: Random House, 2004). For a general history of Army chaplains in the post-World War II period, see Roger Venzke, *Confidence in Battle, Inspiration in Peace: The United States Army Chaplaincy, 1945-1975* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977).

[48] Harry T. Vaughn, quoted in Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 5-6.

chaplains. In 1947, high ranking chaplains met to coordinate between the three chaplain branches and began working on plans to offer an Advanced Course for career chaplains in all three services.[49]

When military planners chose Carlisle as the location for the Army's War College, the chaplain school moved again, but its leaders continued developing the curriculum and enacting reforms that began in the late 1940s. The Korean War also increased demand for quick and effective chaplain training. In addition to training in more conventional religious and military topics, the new curriculum also included training on Soviet religious development, philosophy, and literature.[50] In the late 1950s, the Department of the Army's Education and Training Review Board recommended that all service schools, including the Chaplain School, establish a "career course." What emerged was a nine-month course to replace the three-month Advanced Course and which would allow the Chaplain School to eliminate the Company Grade Course as well. The new course would require a permanent change of station for chaplains—and their dependants—attending the school, so the school moved again, this time to Fort Hamilton, New York. The first Career Course-trained chaplains graduated in 1963, just after the first chaplains were sent to Vietnam, and the course eventually provided substantial training for advanced chaplain-officers serving in the war.[51]

In addition to intensified and refocused training programs, the military highlighted the importance of chaplains when, in the face of post-World War II restructuring, the number of chaplains actually increased. The Officer Personnel Act of 1947 changed the ratio of chaplains

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[49] Until 1953, Air Force chaplains trained at the Army Chaplain School, at which time the Air Force created a separate training program. A formal Air Force Chaplain School was not established until 1960; the Navy established an independent chaplain school in 1951.

[50] Office of the Chief of Chaplains Report to the Secretary of the Army, 25 October 1951, NARA RG 247, file 319.1, cited in Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 117.

[51] Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 126-127.

to servicemen from 1:2500 to 1:800, significantly increasing the ideal number of chaplains in a wartime situation. In January 1947, the Navy had 486 commissioned chaplains, 192 of whom were reservists, and by 1953, they counted 892 chaplains, with 495 of those in the reserves. The 1953 count marked the first time in its recent history that the Navy had filled its authorized quota for chaplains.[52] The United States military made a conscious effort to recruit, retain, and commission chaplains during the 1950s. The fact that the chaplaincy was, for the most part, a voluntary service—and one for which there were usually more technically qualified applicants than positions—only emphasized the broad sweep of religious sentiment in the 1950s.

At the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, all Naval Reserve Chaplains were contacted and given three options: first, "To make yourself available for immediate duty, if you are within the age and grade limits;" second, "To notify us that you are available at this time, but wish to continue in the Reserve and are ready for call to duty in the case of mobilization;" and third, "To submit your resignation to the Secretary of the Navy, via the Commandant Third Naval District, if you are not available for duty at any time, due to personal obligations and commitments." The goal was to ensure chaplains served, to the greatest extent possible, on a voluntary basis.[53] By the end of 1951, 160 had volunteered for active duty and were accepted (another 140 were rejected) and 1486 chose the second option. Between July 1951 and 1952, a total of 620 chaplains resigned their commissions. By the end of the Korean War, just 119 chaplains were called to active duty involuntarily.[54] Preserving the voluntary nature of chaplain service, especially to overseas and combat posts, remained through much of the American war in Vietnam as well, highlighting the degree to which chaplains were not necessarily typical of the clergy in their

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[52] Chaplain Division, Bureau of Naval Personnel, *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy.* Volume IV (Washington D.C.: USGPO), 2-3.

[53] Ibid., 2-3.

[54] Ibid., 5.

denominations. In other words, chaplains could not be taken to be representative of all clergy; they had, by virtue of volunteering for the post, essentially made a statement on their position about the viability of faithful people serving in the military and might be expected to be more supportive of war and the military than their civilian colleagues.

In the years between World War II and Korea, Truman and other high-ranking officials such as George Marshall and John J. McCloy campaigned to push legislation that would mandate UMT for all male citizens. The military estimated that UMT would increase the number of men available for immediate military service in the event of a security crisis. In 1947, they projected that nearly one million men would come of age and that after accounting for physical and mental disability and voluntary enlistments, so UMT would compel between 750,000-900,000 men for training.[55] Truman's fervent support for UMT led him to address Congress on the subject in 1945. He made his argument primarily in terms of military security, but he assured the public that the training would go beyond that of training only for war. He recognized the importance of "moral and spiritual welfare of our young people" and stated that "facilities for worship in every faith should be available." Toward the end of the speech, Truman backed away from some of the security-driven reasons for universal training, suggesting that the objective of such a program would be to "train citizens, so that if and when Congress should declare it necessary for them to become soldiers, they could do so more quickly and efficiently. A large trained reserve of peace-loving citizens would never go to war or encourage war, if it could be avoided."[56] Regardless of this significant push from the White House, UMT legislation failed repeatedly in Congress.[57]

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[55] Department of War, *A Program for National Security* (Washington D.C.: USGPO, 1947), 52-53.

[56] Harry S. Truman, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on Universal Military Training," 23 October 1945, *Public Papers of the Presidents, Harry S. Truman (1945)* (Washington D.C.: USGPO, 1961), 404-413.

[57] For a more extended discussion of UMT proposals, see Michael Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 126-130;

Yet despite the anti-communist fervor and the near-constant rhetoric of readiness and despite President Truman's reassurances that military training would strengthen the morality and faith of the country's young men, religious groups, liberal and conservative alike, were vehemently opposed to the idea, though they relied on different theological points to make their claims. Liberal and mainline groups and leaders feared UMT would lead to militarism and the militarization of American society. In 1947, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America (FCC), later the World Council of Churches, reaffirmed its opposition to compulsory military training. Previously, the Council had supported the governmental goal "to work for a comprehensive system of disarmament" but argued that the proposed system of universal training would jeopardize this possibility. The FCC acknowledged the necessity for "adequate military defense," but held that universal training was objectionable on both religious and civic grounds, as they held it went against the antimilitarism in American history.[58] Near the same time, a petition signed by 652 clergy—Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish—urged President Truman and Congress to withdraw their proposals for universal military training: It stated, "clearly, a nation cannot prepare for war and prepare for peace, arm and disarm, at the same time" and suggested that the United States could, by committing to universal disarmament and the abolition of conscription "bring upon our country and its leaders the blessings of mankind." The FCC feared the potential ramifications of UMT and peacetime conscription not only in social terms but also international ones as they wondered what the international response would be to the apparent increase in American militarization.

On the other hand, more conservative opponents of UMT couched their arguments in moral language. They portrayed the military as a place devoid of basic morality and a place where

and Aaron Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and its Cold War Grand Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[58] "Church Unit Bars Military Training," *New York Times*, 19 November 1947, 30.

young Christian men would become corrupted. Cardinal Dennis Dougherty, the ranking prelate of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, outlined nine reasons that he was "unalterably" opposed to UMT in peacetime. One objection was that "it would throw them [young men], with all their inexperience and without adequate safeguard, into frightful temptations calculated to undermine their morality and physical health," and he continued to charge that military officers were often corrupt and set a "bad example to those under them." In addition, he claimed, that UMT would lead to a rise in venereal disease "in a frightful degree and break down the health of future fathers of families."[59] Only the American Council of Christian Churches, fundamentalist and the most conservative of the ecumenical organizations, supported it. The National Association of Evangelicals, in its magazine *United Evangelical Action* also spoke out against the potential militarization of American society, but it too focused on the morality of individual soldiers. The Editors of *United Evangelical Action* wondered "what might happen to our youth removed from home and church influences and subjected to the temptations for which military training camps are notorious."[60] Some evangelical groups were more supportive of legislation that would provide for peacetime conscription, but most liberal groups opposed this measure as well, citing their fear of militarism and militarization of the United States.[61] Although plans for universal military training had failed, the Department of Defense did run a prototype UMT training camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky in 1947. Recognizing the opposition based on the loose morality of the army, the trainees received education in spiritual and moral matters. An

[59] "Cardinal Dougherty Calls Peacetime UMT Menace to Health and Morality of Youth," *New York Times*, 19 March 1948.

[60] "What of UMT?" *United Evangelical Action*, 15 February 1952, 7.

[61] Loveland, *American Evangelicals*; Merlin Gustafson, "Church, State, and Cold War, 1945-1952" *Journal of Church and State* 8 (1966): 49-63.

army chaplain wrote the lectures for the Fort Knox group, and these lectures later became the basis for the Army's Character Guidance Program.

Responding especially to the morality-based critiques of evangelical groups, in October 1948, President Truman appointed nine (later expanded to eleven) men and women to "The President's Committee on Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces." Frank L. Weil, a Jewish New York social worker, served as the chairman. Truman appointed the committee to "encourage and promote the religious, moral and recreational welfare and character guidance of persons in the Armed Forces." The committee was part of a response to claims by religious groups that the military encouraged vice and immorality among its members and was particularly harmful to young men. For the most part, chaplains received a rousing endorsement from the Committee. The final report concluded, "The importance of the work of the chaplain is today recognized as never before in the history of the Armed Forces," and continued, "Because of the world's unprecedented awareness of the need for spiritual vitality, the importance of the work of the chaplaincy has reached an unparalleled peak." The Committee proclaimed "that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the chaplaincy" except for the acute shortage of candidates for chaplain positions. By most accounts, the chaplaincy had developed for itself a critical place within the bulwark of civic and moral education for American troops.[62] In July 1949, the Secretary of Defense created an Armed Services Chaplains Board to advise the Secretary on religious and moral matters. Though the moral development and spiritual development of servicemen was technically the domain of the commanding officer, chaplains were called into service to present and implement the new program. The chaplain's formal participation in Character Guidance suggested a transition in the chaplain's role from "morale builder" to

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[62] President's Committee on Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces, "The Military Chaplaincy: A Report to the President by the President's Committee on Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces" (Washington DC: USGPO, 1951), 19.

"moral advocate."[63] In response to religious communities' calls for a more concerted effort to promote morality in the military, chaplains became the natural conduits for this information.

The Character Guidance Program combined religious, civil, and moral themes, and as a result, the chaplain became a spokesman not only for his religious faith but also for a generic "American" morality and civic responsibility. As in the civilian world, military, religious, and moral themes were inextricably intertwined in this expression of civil religion. The basic program, presented by chaplains, was delivered to recruits in six parts—four lectures during basic training, and two more during Advanced Individual Instruction—and included the following topics: Religion, Basic Moral Principles, Marriage and Family Life, Sex Education, Citizenship, and Individual Responsibility. In addition, other personnel, excluding officers and enlisted men above the E-6 grade (Staff Sergeant), were required to attend monthly presentations by the chaplain.[64] According to the Character Guidance manuals, the program was based on "moral" and "natural" laws, which were derived from God. Belief in one Supreme Being therefore provided the basis for moral (and American) action by military personnel.

Each of the services also produced its own materials to supplement the uniform Character Guidance Program. In 1953, the Navy employed a film series titled, "For Which We Stand" as a part of its character education program. The series included seven films, released between April 1949 and December 1952. *Men of the World* instructed soldiers on the "Conduct of Liberty;" *Let's Get it Straight* on the virtues of moderation; *To Be Held in Honor* was about "Continence;" *Pulling Your Weight* instructed sailors on adjusting to Navy life; *Of Monuments and Men* addressed the issue of patriotism; *You Think It's Luck* warned them about gambling, and

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[63] Anne C. Loveland, "From Morale Builders to Moral Advocates: U.S. Army Chaplains in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century," in Bergen, *Sword of the Lord*; and Loveland "Character Education in the U.S. Army, 1947-1977," *Journal of Military History* 64 (July 2000): 795-818.

[64] Loveland, "Morale Builders," 234.

Religion in the Navy addressed the role of the chaplain and religious practice in the Navy.[65] Of these, only one was explicitly religious in character, though all of them had religious— primarily Protestant—undertones and assumed a similar theistic worldview on behalf of soldiers and officers.

The chaplains who presented these programs were of various denominations and faith groups, and their religious organizations held different views on military service, the use of force, and the role of the chaplain, yet they were held together with an underlying belief in the importance of morality and spirituality for responsible civic and military service. The program guidelines hinted at the various interpretations of Herberg's "American Way of Life" and also at the various manifestations of the transcendent nation/under-God-priest/prophet types that Martin Marty suggested. Chaplains could speak the same words with very different theological underpinnings.

By the end of the 1950s, with the Korean War behind them, the Chaplain Corps remained vigilant in promoting morality and character in the military. It was a primary concern in the fight against Communism. Baptist chaplain Frank Tobey, who was the Army Chief of Chaplains in 1959, asserted, "An essential deterrent against our enemy must remain the courageous heart, the right conscience, the clear head, the strong body fortified with the truth and obedient to the dictates of moral good."[66] Nuclear weapons and conventional forces would not be the only means of deterrence.

Using the language of civil religion became one way in which Americans could unite for a common cause. For evangelicals and conservative Christians, the military would become a primary ground for missionary efforts, and chaplains and extra-military religious groups

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[65] Chaplain Division, *History of the Chaplain Corps*, 11.

[66] Frank Tobey, "Character Guidance Program" *Army Information Digest* 14 (October 1949) quoted in Loveland, "Morale Builders," 235.

emphasized conversion, evangelical witness, and personal action within the armed services. They explicitly linked the Christian way of life to the American way of life, and they gained power and influence within the chaplain corps and within the military structure as a whole.[67] Two examples in particular illustrated the character and extent of evangelical involvement with the military. Early in the Cold War, evangelical activists found a champion in Army Lieutenant General William K. Harrison, who proclaimed himself a "Bible-believing Christian." Evangelical Christians promoted him as "something of a religious celebrity," inviting him to address youth rallies, national religious campaigns, and broadcasts.[68] The American Tract Society (ATS) helped him publish his personal testimony under the title *The General Speaks*. Over a million copies were distributed in the first year, making it the most widely circulated tract of any published by the ATS previously.[69] Harrison and other high-profile evangelical Christians within the military's upper echelon helped the evangelical movement gain credibility within wider circles and establish beachheads within the federal government and military. Second, evangelical groups encouraged evangelical Protestant chaplains to view their military posts as prime locations for evangelism. Anyone reporting to a new duty station—officer and enlisted, new recruit, draftee, or lifer—was required to visit the chaplain shortly after arrival. Evangelical Protestant chaplains looked upon this circumstance favorably. One commented, "What if every Protestant in your community were asked to report to your pastor?" Though some recognized the care necessitated

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[67] See Loveland, *American Evangelicals* for an extensive overview of the Evangelical mission to the military throughout the Cold War.

[68] D. Bruce Lockerbie, *A Man Under Orders: Lieutenant General William K. Harrison, Jr.* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 136.

[69] Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 42-43. For Harrison's full biography, see Lockerbie, *A Man Under Orders*.

by the visit's required nature and an individual's right to free exercise of religion, they still viewed the interviews as "golden opportunities for personal ministry."[70]

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, conservative Christians continued to identify both external and internal communist threats to American liberties and security. If the world were divided into "two distinct camps—the Communist dictatorships and the Christian democracies," there could be no questioning of which side someone was on. Any hint of liberalism or ecumenism was met with fierce resistance and charges of Communist infiltration.[71] When the National Council Against Conscription urged American males to refuse to register for the draft and "called upon the churches and people of the United States to observe a day of 'mourning and repentance,'" a group of evangelical ministers denounced the dissenting clergy, calling their position "unbiblical, unpatriotic, un-American, [and] contrary to the historic Christian faith."[72]

Mainline and liberal leaders, on the other hand, used the language of civil religion to emphasize more internationalist positions, and in some cases as a way to warn against the interpretation of America as God's chosen nation. They voiced concerns about the use of atomic weapons, supported Civil Rights causes, and advocated dialogue with Christians in Communist-controlled countries.[73] Yet as they staked out positions to the left of their conservative coreligionists, they retained the language of civil religion to prove their anti-

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[70] Phil Landrum, "Missionary to the Military," *United Evangelical Action*, July 1966, 8 and Orville McCormack, "Can a Man Serve God in the Military?" *Pentecostal Evangel*, 1 July 1962, 24-25 quoted in Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 72.

[71] Claude Chilton, *The Nazarene Serviceman (Kansas City, MO)* 1953, 14 quoted in Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 4.

[72] Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 4; "Drafted to What?" *United Evangelical Action*, 1 November 1950, 9 quoted in Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 4.

[73] On mainline religious responses to the use of atomic weapons see Erwin N. Hiebert, *The Impact of Atomic Energy: A History of Responses of Government, Scientific, and Religious Groups* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1961); James J. Farrell, "Thomas Merton and the Religion of the Bomb," *Religion and American Culture* 5 (Winter 1995): 77-98.

Communist outlook; though these leaders did not assess an internal or domestic Communist threat with the same urgency as the conservatives, they frequently demonized both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China as dangerous examples of Communist oppression and control. For example, when leaders from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a left-leaning organization, planned a visit to the Soviet-satellite Baltic states, Soviet officials blocked their visit to Estonia at the last minute, claiming that the Archbishop was seriously ill. This move by the Soviet Union intensified LWF commitment to battling Communism in Christian terms.[74] Unlike their more conservative counterparts, however, mainline and liberal Christians tended to value the possibility of thawed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, its satellite states, and China. Historian David Settje has argued that moderate and liberal Lutherans "believed that the potential for mission efforts outweighed the Communist capacity for evil if Lutherans relaxed their criticisms."[75]

During the early years of the Cold War, American civic, military, and religious cultures intersected at important and diverse points. Though most religious leaders and adherents labeled themselves anti-Communist, important theological and practical issues lurked beneath the surface. Liberal and mainline groups advocated a policy that encouraged containment, disarmament, and social justice while more conservative groups called for liberation of people under Communist rule and the annihilation of the Soviet Union. In the civic realm, additions of references to God in the pledge (and on the nation's currency as well) offered a way for people with diverse views to rally around a single idea. For Cold War ministers like Docherty, "under God," could refer specifically to the Christian understanding of God and be fully compatible with his understanding of the mission of the United States. At the same time, those who

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[74] Settje, *Lutherans Longest War*, 35.

[75] Ibid., 41.

professed no specific belief could similarly assent to the words "under God," as they interpreted it to have little "real" religious significance. One historian, Lee Canipe argued that for most politicians and citizens, the words "under God" were actually deprived of religious meaning, and instead served as coded language in the rhetorical conflict of the Cold War.[76] These varying viewpoints were easily obscured by a reliance on the language of civil religion.

Initial Forays into Vietnam

Yet as the Cold War intensified, and memories of Korea and Joseph McCarthy faded, imperial, security, and religious interests combined to make Vietnam a vital point on the containment line. The religious divisions present, but buried, in the 1950s would come to the foreground during the Vietnam War as the language of civil religion and religious anti-communism proved insufficient to mask the important underlying differences between religious and political communities. Conservative Christians tended to view Vietnam within the paradigm of Containment and tottering dominoes. They assessed the violence in Vietnam as an integral part of the worldwide Communist movement, and they were convinced that Americans—both out of Christian duty and developmental superiority—had a sacred duty to defend South Vietnam from the Northern aggressors. More liberal religious communities, however, contextualized Ho Chi Minh's revolution in the paradigm of national liberation and argued that it was largely separate from the worldwide Communist movement.

Since Woodrow Wilson's internationalist and idealist injunctions for self-determination in the 1910s and another move toward decolonization in the years following World War II, American policy makers had been acutely aware of the French colonies in Southeast Asia, and the rhetoric following both wars seemed to indicate that the United States favored independence

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[76] Canipe, "Under God," 305-323.

over colonialism for the Vietnamese. Yet similar rhetoric did not necessarily produce convergent expectations or actions.[77] In the second half of the 1940s, growing Cold War tensions extended the deep connections between the United States and Western Europe that had been forged in World War II. The Chinese Communist victory in 1949 and the subsequent outbreak of war in Korea marked East Asia as a potential point for Cold War conflict and led many to believe that other Asian nations formed points along the containment line in order to counteract the manpower and influence of China and to prop up former colonial powers, thereby strengthening European democracies.

After the trauma of World War II in Europe, the United States recognized a key opportunity to prop up Western Europe's floundering economies and weakened political systems.[78] Early on, American policy-makers and journalists were well aware of the communist leanings of the Viet Minh, the underground revolutionaries who resisted French rule in Southeast Asia. In January 1950, the *New York Times* reported that the "Chinese Communist regime has stepped up its propaganda support of the Viet Minh (*Viet Nam Đoc Lap Dong Minh Hoi*, which is translated "League for the Independence of Vietnam") movement in Indo-China along with recognition of the anti-French republican movement there. Whether material as well as moral propaganda support is going to Ho Chi-minh from the Chinese Communists cannot be established here, but from the publicity point of view the Chinese Communist regime has made the Viet Nam cause its own."[79] And between 1945 and 1954, French military officers referred to

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[77] Mark P. Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

[78] On the relationship between European democracies, American involvement in Indochina, and the Cold War see Mark A. Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[79] "Reds Step Up Support" *New York Times*, 24 January 1950 and "Reds in Control of Viet Minh," *New York Times*, 28 March 1950.

Vietnam as the "last rampart against Communism in Southeast Asia," and stressed the necessity of American military aid to the Vietnamese fighting against Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh.[80] If the French-supported regime fell, American officials held little hope for the South Vietnamese to defeat the communist forces of Ho Chi Minh. The Central Intelligence Agency warned that if the South Vietnamese government fell "the forces of International Communism would acquire a staging area from which military operations could be launched against other countries in Southeast Asia."[81]

The French Far East Expeditionary Corps fought against the Viet Minh between 1941 and 1954. The French went through a series of commanders, few of whom experienced success in stabilizing the regime of Bao Dai, the nominal emperor of Vietnam, or in subduing terrorist-style attacks on military and civilian installations. In 1953, French General Henri Navarre worked on a plan to create an air-supported base deep in Dien Bien province to cut off Viet Minh supply lines to Laos and to draw the Viet Minh into what he hoped would be a decisive battle that would destroy Viet Minh resistance. Navarre hoped he could recreate French successes at the Battle of Na San, in which Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap's forces had been defeated with superior French air and artillery support. The battle that eventually unfolded around Dien Bein Phu in the Spring of 1954, was far different from Navarre's expectations. Approximately 15,000 elite French troops confronted nearly 50,000 Viet Minh combat soldiers. Giap had carefully stored up artillery and weapons and established positions high on the mountaintops surrounding the French position in the valley. By the end of the battle, the Viet Minh captured between 10,000 and 11,000 French prisoners, another 2,200 were killed, and the

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[80] Tillman Durdin, "Quick U.S. Aid Held Vital to Vietnam," *New York Times*, 9 March 1950.

[81] CIA report, "Consequences to the US of Communist Domination of Mainland Southeast Asia," 13 October 1950 quoted in Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden*, 6.

wounded (including those captured) numbered over 5,000.[82] Though the United States offered

limited and covert military assistance to the French before and during the battle, both American

politicians and military leaders agreed that direct intervention was unwise—militarily, they

deemed the situation hopeless and politically, it could be considered an act of war. Eisenhower

declined to intervene, and the battle effectively ended the French war for Indochina.

But between the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and Lyndon Johnson's

commitment of American combat troops in 1965, the United States had significant questions to

answer about how Vietnam fit into the Cold War context and in American cultural contexts. The

1954 Geneva Accords recognized the territorial sovereignty and integrity of Vietnam, Laos, and

Cambodia and decreed the cessation of hostilities and foreign involvement, namely troops, in

Indochinese affairs. In Vietnam, the most hotly contested area, the Accords defined northern

and southern zones, into which opposing troops were to withdraw. The country was to be

reunified by internationally supervised free elections in July 1956. Additionally, Vietnamese

civilians were free to move from one zone to the other; hundreds of thousands moved from the

North to the South, while a much smaller number moved North, which enthusiastically anti-

communist Americans often cited as proof of the Vietnamese people's basic aversion to

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[82] See Bernard Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege at Dien Bien Phu* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1967); John R. Nordell, Jr., *The Undetected Enemy: French and American Miscalculations at Dien Bien Phu 1953* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995); and Vo Nguyen Giap, *Dien Bien Phu: Rendevous with History, a Memoir*, with Huu Mai, trans. Lady Borton (Ha Noi, Vietnam: The Gioi Publishers, 2004).

communism.[83] And though several scholars report otherwise, both the Republic of Vietnam and the United States refused to pledge to abide by the terms of the Accords.[84]

Ngo Dinh Diem's rise to power, however problematic, was reflective of the Cold War context and the American attempt to implement or stage democratic processes in the region. Though the extent to which American actions, as opposed to Diem's own agency, propelled Diem to the Presidency of South Vietnam has been hotly debated, the significance of his education, religion, and political leanings to his gaining and maintaining power seems unmistakable.[85]

Catholic religious leaders and organizations threw their support behind the Diem government, and the presence of a Christian minority in Vietnam gave incentive to Protestant groups as well. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, American religious communities, particularly as represented in national religious periodicals such as *Christian Century, Christianity Today, America, and Commonweal,* generally reflected public sentiments about the French war in Vietnam and American involvement. Their attention to foreign policy matters, however, was

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[83] For the text of the Accords, see U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 90th Congress, 1st Session, *Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam*, 3rd rev. ed. (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1967), 50-62. On the effects and terms of the Geneva Accords see "The Geneva Conference, May-July, 1954" in *The Pentagon Papers,* Gravel Edition, Volume 1(Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 108-178; Ellen J. Hammer, "Geneva, 1954: The Precarious Peace," in *Light at the End of the Tunnel: A Vietnam War Anthology*, ed. Andrew J. Rotter, rev. ed. (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1999) and Kathryn C. Statler, *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007).

[84] Edwin Moise, "Recent Accounts of the Vietnam War—A Review Article," *Journal of Asian Studies* 44 (February 1985): 344.

[85] A heated historiographical debate exists about the extent to which Diem's government was installed and propped up only with the help of American politicians and over whether or not the regime was simply a puppet for American policies. See especially Philip E. Catton, *Diem's Final Failure: Prelude to America's War in Vietnam* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden*; Jessica M. Chapman, "Staging Democracy: South Vietnam's 1955 Referendum to Depose Bao Dai." *Diplomatic History* 30 (September 2006): 671-703; Edward Miller, "Vision, power and agency: the Ascent of Ngô Đình Diêm, 1945-1954," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 35 (October 2004): 433-458; Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia, 1950-1957* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Seth Jacobs *Cold War Mandarin: Ngo Dinh Diem and the Origins of the Vietnam War, 1950- 1963* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

overshadowed by attention to the Civil Rights movement and religious participation in it. The two Catholic periodicals wrote more about Ngo Dinh Diem in the late 1950s than did the Protestant ones, and *Christianity Today* and *America* generally espoused more conservative and hard-line positions on matters like the domino theory, international communist aggression, and American responsibility in the face of it.

By 1960, however, as Vietnamese and international protest against the excesses and abuses of the Diem regime—including his brothers, Ngo Dinh Can, Ngo Dinh Thuc, and Ngo Dinh Nhu and sister-in-law, Tran Le Xuan (popularly known as Madame Nhu)—some Christian groups began to look at Vietnam more critically. While Diem gained support among wealthy Vietnamese, between 1961 and 1963, the National Liberation Front (NLF) gained ground in South Vietnam as it asserted itself as an attractive alternative—especially for peasants—to Diem's autocratic regime. Even as the military expressed doubts in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam's (ARVN) fighting abilities and as Diem's and Nhu's abuses of religious freedom became widely apparent and gained mainstream press coverage, Christian periodicals continued to lend cautious support to the American effort in Vietnam, though they urged Diem's replacement.[86] Once Diem had been assassinated, liberal and conservative periodical editors disagreed, however, about the extent to which the United States should be involved in Vietnam. More liberal editors, such as those at *Christian Century* and *Christianity and Crisis*, argued that the United States should not involve itself in any sort of campaign against North Vietnam, fearing that it might provoke a rapprochement between the Soviet Union and China.[87] More

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[86] See for example, "Vietnam Controversy," *Commonweal*, 26 July 1963, 444-445; "Vietnam Repression," Commonweal, 6 September 1963, 524-525; "Brutality in Vietnam," *Christian Century,* 31 July 1963, 950; "Diem Rebuked," *America,* 29 June 1963, 895.

[87] See for example, "More War or Less in Vietnam?" *Christian Century*, 11 March 1964, 326 and Reinhold Niebuhr, "President Johnson's Foreign Policy," *Christianity and Crisis*, 16 March 1964, 31-32.

conservative Christian groups on the other hand, urged and demanded total victory over communism in Vietnam.[88]

Though Kennedy and Johnson enjoyed the general support of religious leaders and writers for American action in Vietnam through 1965, differences in the levels and types of support differed in significant ways. The language of anti-communism dominated early discussions about Vietnam, again providing an element of civil religious expression that could accommodate diverse points of view. As American policy makers struggled over decisions about Vietnamese politics, military training, strategy, and objectives, religious leaders responded according to their particular theologies of Christian engagement in politics, international relations, and military affairs. Among religious periodicals, disagreement over American policies and strategic objectives intensified as policy makers and officers questioned Diem's effectiveness and the level of American support for regime change in Saigon.

Leading up to and directly after Diem's assassination in November 1963, however, the United States faced another critical moment at which Vietnam policy could be altered. Historian Fredrick Logevall identified the period between August 1963 and February 1965 as the most critical for understanding the United States' long involvement in Vietnam. During this period, Lyndon Johnson and his advisors worked through the decision to escalate and Americanize the war. Against conventional wisdom, which has suggested that American involvement in Vietnam represented a long, slow slide toward escalation, Logevall suggested instead that the pre-1965 period was characterized by contingency, that the outcome was "'highly dependent on individual decisions" and there was "nothing preordained or inevitable about the slide into major war in

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[88] "The Last Battle in Asia," *Christianity Today* 19 June 1964: 23. See also Mark G. Toulouse, "Vietnam: The Loss of Innocence" (unpublished ms).

Vietnam in 1965."[89] Logevall argued that the widespread assertion of a national "Cold War Consensus," which led policy-makers and public alike to support and defend the Republic of Vietnam at any cost, masks important choices that policy-makers faced and slight but important fissures in public opinion.[90] Logevall contrasted this contingent view of the American public and of Congress with the rigidity of key military and cabinet-level officials.

Though Logevall's analysis centered on the question of inevitability and policy, this more-nuanced look at the origins of the Vietnam War helps contextualize dissent. If, as Logevall suggests, there was significant debate and diversity of opinion over the course of American policy in Vietnam before 1965, the policy-oriented critiques of national religious groups in the early part of the war become more readily understood.[91] With few exceptions, Americans during the 1950s and early 1960s did coalesce around an anti-communist ideology; however, expressions of anti-communism and opinions about how it should be carried out varied widely. For some, the patriotism of civil-religious language provided a way to participate in the dominant discourse of the day while promoting alternative visions of America's involvement in the world.

As religious communities began to debate the specifics of American involvement in Vietnam, chaplains—representing a wide variety of denominations and their attendant viewpoints on the war—followed American military personnel to Vietnam: chaplains were deployed because American servicemen were stationed there. Chaplain deployment to Vietnam

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[89] Fredrick Logevall, *Choosing War*, xvi. Logevall's argument ran counter to those expressed in books such as Leslie Gelb's and Richard Betts' *The Irony of Vietnam: They System Worked* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1978); David M. Barrett, *Uncertain Warriors: Lyndon Johnson and His Vietnam Advisors* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993); Gabriel Koklo, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: Pantheon, 1985); and Noam Chomsky, *Rethinking Camelot: JFK, the Vietnam War, and U.S. Political Culture*, which generally argue that beyond 1964, US policy makers faced a limited array of choices about Vietnam policy.

[90] Logevall, *Choosing War*, xviii-xviii.

[91] On others who questioned the wisdom of escalation, including Senators Mike Mansfield and William Fullbright, as well as prominent national journalists, see Logevall, *Choosing War*, 138-140.

was slow in the early years of the 1960s, appearing on almost an ad-hoc basis, with little sustained attention to issues of organization, supply, coverage, or assignment patterns. Official histories from both the Army and Navy emphasized the minimal planning involved in chaplain deployment to Vietnam, the Army's volume suggests that chaplains "glided into the fury" of Vietnam and the Marine volume identified early chaplain missions as a "drift into turbulence."[92] The first Navy chaplain to serve with on-shore Marine units was already stationed in Japan, simply waiting for orders that would take his unit to Vietnam. The first Army chaplain, Lieutenant Colonel John Lindvall, arrived in February 1962, and within days, two others— William Staudt and Elmore Lester—joined him. They arrived with no support and no supplies; standard issue field kits, communion supplies, and hymnals had to be requisitioned on an emergency basis. By the end of March, eight chaplains, including one Air Force haplain, were stationed in Vietnam, but Lindvall lamented that coverage was scarce because the military had "people in scores of places scattered throughout the 600 mile [*sic*] length of this country."[93]

As the MACV staff chaplain, Lindvall was tasked with coordinating increasingly complicated and numerous chaplains' activities between branches, and he also established the features of a longer-standing chaplain section, especially for those stationed at and near Tan Son Nhut Air Base, such as a religious education program, regular worship services, periodic retreats, and a chaplain's fund. Chaplain presence in Vietnam grew alongside the increasing military presence; by 1963, over 11,000 American military personnel were stationed in Vietnam. The Army had deployed ten chaplains, and they, along with chaplains from the Navy and Air Force,

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[92] Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 2; Herbert Bergsma, *Chaplains with Marines in Vietnam, 1962-1971* (Washington, D.C.: United States Marine Corps, 1985), 1.

[93] John A. Lindvall to Edward M. Mize, 12 April 1962, quoted in Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 146. Mize was the Staff Chaplain at the Ryuku Islands Headquarters.

established a regular, if imperfect, principle of area coverage, in which chaplains would serve any and all military personnel in a geographic region rather than serving only their service's people.[94]

The first chaplains deployed to Vietnam reflected broad public support for democracy and deeply rooted anti-Communism, while also reflecting general ignorance of the international political situation and of the specific state of affairs in Vietnam. Joel Earl Andrews, who arrived in Saigon in 1962, recalled in a 1972 oral history interview: "I knew very little. As a matter of fact, Viet Nam was sort of a magical name to me . . . you know, the Pearl of the Orient type of thing. I thought of lush jungles and people who were very tranquil and peaceful and so forth. And I had not really been very serious in following the media as to what was going on in Viet Nam. I knew nothing of the internal political situation." Andrews reported that his gaps in knowledge tracked those of the men he served. "The men," he said, "were in the same predicament" given that "they knew very little . . . We didn't even know geographically where it was located . . . And I didn't know who the president was. We had a vacuum of knowledge concerning Viet Nam at that time.[95] He, like many others, went to Vietnam because he was ordered to do so; they were there because there was a growing American military presence in Vietnam. Chaplain buildup was gradual and primarily related to the military's personnel needs.

At the same time, chaplains' activities revealed support for anti-communist programs and goals of the United States military. Responding to a question about the chaplain's primary purpose in the military being to boost morale, Andrews replied, "all of us in the command and staff echelon were sorta' caught up with this whole ideological factor. And you know, in my character guidance . . . lectures . . . I would hit very hard on the communist angle and on the attempt of the Vietnamese to maintain their freedom—sort of a general approach to

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[94] Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 149.

[95] Joel Earl Andrews, Interview by Rodger Venzke, 1 December 1972, Tape Transcript, Senior Officer Oral History Program, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA.

international type [*sic*] of a communism conspiracy." Andrews emphasized that the entire command was caught up in these sorts of issues while many of the men serving in the field were unaware of such political consequences. He admitted, "as I look back now . . . I was a part of the propaganda effort, I think, of the command to instill some motivation in the man [*sic*] as to why they were there, their presence and so forth."[96]

Andrews' observations underscored the extent to which American military personnel and politicians at the time believed American involvement in Vietnam would be limited and short-lived. These illusions quickly gave way, though. Andrews reflected, again in the 1972 interview, that upon his return to the United States, he "was convinced it was going to be a long and drawn-out struggle."[97] The vacuum of knowledge that accompanied the first American military personnel into Vietnam would continue to affect future service members. The rapid turnovers especially meant that accumulated knowledge was hard to establish and maintain.

During the early years of the Cold War, American military and religious cultures intersected at important and diverse points. Though most religious leaders and adherents called themselves anti-Communist, important theological and practical issues lurked beneath the surface. Liberal and mainline groups advocated a policy that focused attention on conditions in the United States along with containment, while more conservative groups called for liberation of people under Communist rule and the annihilation of the Soviet Union. Yet most of these viewpoints were obscured by a reliance on the language of civil religion and the anti-communist fervor that swept the United States. As religious groups criticized military policies in the late 1940s, the administration and military officials responded with a conscious attempt to integrate

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

religious and moral concerns into the structure and character of the military. The Korean War provided a test for this relationship, and the chaplaincy emphasized a common American moral and religious heritage as a weapon for the Cold War. In the second half of the 1950s, American involvement in Vietnam increased slowly, but steadily. Imperial, security, and religious interests combined to make the Southeast Asian country a vital point on the Containment Line, even though Americans disagreed on specific policies and strategies for dealing with Vietnam. Religious divisions present in the 1950s would come to the foreground during the Vietnam War as the language of civil religion and religious anti-Communism proved insufficient to mask the important underlying differences between religious communities and as more and more religious communities found themselves unable to align patriotic and civic ideals, their religious beliefs, and American action in Vietnam. Vietnam, then, acted as a crucible in which military and religious interests mingled, interspersed, and collided. Those interactions would have a lasting effect on American religious culture, the military chaplaincy, and the place of religion in the US military.

CHAPTER TWO

BUILDING A NETWORK OF RELIGIOUS SUPPORT

As he rode with the convoy back to the base after a Civic Action trip in June 1967, chaplain Paul Mitchell—scheduled to return to the United States the following day—reflected on his time in Vietnam. He had conducted three general Protestant services that morning, and he later recalled that throughout the year he "had traveled many miles by land and air, led men in many worship services, visited, prayed, and counseled with them." Together, he helped them deal "with their fears, hurts, and sorrows, trying to help them find answers to whatever questions and problems they had." And yet these activities reflected only his official chaplain duties. "There was another side to my life in Vietnam," he reported. Civic action projects had "consumed a goodly portion of [his] time and energy." Mitchell's unit worked with local orphanages, a leprosarium, and a local normal school. They collected and distributed monetary and material donations from the unit's members and from congregations, organizations, and relatives in the United States. These activities crossed geographical, cultural, and religious differences and in large part made up the "other side" of the Vietnam War.[1] Chaplains stationed in Vietnam performed a variety of official and unofficial roles, both as military officers and clergymen.

Chaplains first arrived in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) in February 1962, coincident with the official formation of the Military Advisory Command Vietnam (MACV) that same

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[1] Paul N. Mitchell, "Army Chaplain Paul N. Mitchell Recalls His Duties During the Vietnam War," *Vietnam Magazine*, June 2005, repr. HistoryNet, http://www.historynetcom/culture/religion/3035021. html?featured=y&c=y, accessed 18 February 2008.

month.[2] By April, as the American military became increasingly embroiled in the armed conflict

in Vietnam, eight chaplains had arrived at MACV Headquarters, including seven from the Army

and one from the Air Force.[3] Additionally, one Navy chaplain was stationed in Saigon by

September 1962 as the Support Activity chaplain; he fell under administrative command of

Naval Forces Philippines and under MACV operational command.[4] Navy chaplains had begun

to serve marines and sailors on ship and shore, yet chaplains' duties and numbers remained

limited until the introduction of American ground forces to Vietnam in March 1965, and their

numbers grew until active drawdown of American forces began in 1969. Army chaplains'

numbers peaked in October 1968, when there were 1,924 chaplains on active duty, with over

600 serving in Vietnam.[5] The Navy deployed over 1100 chaplains between 1962 and 1971,

approximately 700 with Marine Corps units, and 400 with naval units in the theater.[6] In 1966, the

Navy established a new command, Naval Forces Vietnam, which operated as a major command

under MACV.[7] The last military chaplain left Vietnam on 28 March 1973. Like others who

served in the war, chaplains experienced life in combat, in surgical hospitals and aid stations, on

ships and riverine vessels, with engineer battalions, on air bases, and at various headquarters.

Even so, chaplains' daily lives featured some peculiar characteristics and general patterns based

on their function and purpose within the military, and as a group, chaplains differed

demographically from both the soldiers they served and their civilian counterparts.

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[2] Venzke, *Confidence in Battle,* 139; Harry G. Summers, Jr. *Vietnam War Almanac* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1999).

[3] Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 139.

[4] Withers M. Moore, Herbert L. Bergsma, Timothy Demy, *History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy*, Vol. IX Chaplains with *U.S. Naval Units in Vietnam, 1954-1975: Selected Experiences at Sea and Ashore* (Washington DC: USGPO, 1985), 17-28.

[5] Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 144.

[6] Bergsma, *Chaplains with Marines*, 4; and Moore, et al., *Chaplains with Naval Units.*

[7] Moore, et al., *Chaplains with Naval Units*, 29.

Even at the height of the war, chaplains served at least a year at a stateside post before deploying to Vietnam, and chaplains reported that this experience was critical to successful Vietnam service.[8] William Goldie, United States Army Vietnam (USARV) Command Chaplain in 1967, explained that this policy was designed to increase chaplains' effectiveness and safety while they were in Vietnam. He argued that chaplains who were assigned to troops in the United States would "be much more effective as counselors and as pastors to the soldiers in Vietnam" because they would be familiar with soldiers' training and circumstances. But his second concern recognized the potential liability of sending unarmed, untrained men into combat situations. He reasoned that if chaplains spent "a good amount of time in the field . . . learning how to stay alive we will have much less likelihood of running up the high score on Purple Hearts."[9]

Once in country, however, chaplains' experiences varied widely. Those who were assigned to combat units had to make important decisions about whether they would accompany troops in combat, visit troops in the field, or stay primarily in the rear and wait for the wounded to return to camp. Chaplains assigned to Combat Support or Combat Service Support units had quite different responsibilities and experiences. Navy chaplains' experiences varied widely as well. Chaplains assigned to marine units faced many of the same challenges as Army infantry chaplains, while chaplains stationed on aircraft carriers dealt alternately with intense boredom and the frequent loss of pilots' lives. Still others, serving on hospital ships, were well-acquainted with the destructive aftermath of war. A chaplain's assignment had significant implications for his safety, ministry, and schedule. Toward the end of the war, with chaplains' physical and mental safety in mind, and to match the practice of other branches, the

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[8] James Johnson, Interview by author, 17 January 2008, Fayetteville, NC, transcript in possession of author.

[9] William Goldie, interview by Henry Ackermann, in Henry F. Ackermann, *He Was Always There: The U.S. Army Chaplain Ministry in the Vietnam Conflict* (Washington DC: USGPO, 1989), 21.

offices of the Chiefs of Chaplains began rotating chaplains so they would spend no more than six months with a combat unit. But at least until 1970, many chaplains spent a full year in their original assignment, even with infantry or artillery brigades.

Their duties in Vietnam included a wide variety of pastoral and administrative tasks. In addition to conducting public worship services for troops of their faith groups, carrying out sacramental rites, counseling troops on moral and personal matters, and advising commanders on morale and morality, chaplains were also responsible for tasks apparently more suited to stateside service, for example giving character guidance lectures, and maintaining a religious education program. The importance of Sunday Schools and Character Guidance lectures lessened in importance the nearer one was to a hostile zone: for example, James Johnson, a chaplain with the 9th Infantry Division, recalled that he never gave a single Character Guidance lecture while he was in Vietnam. On aircraft carriers, however, Character Guidance and religious education programs were integral parts of a chaplain's ministry. In addition to these proscribed duties, chaplains also assisted in Civic Action Programs, worked with Vietnamese religious congregations and leaders, and coordinated delivery of holiday gifts and packages to troops and to Vietnamese civilians.

What chaplains did in Vietnam and their day-to-day experiences affected how chaplains understood both the Vietnam War and their participation in it. Unfortunately, the record for recreating chaplains' day-to-day experiences is difficult to access, so this chapter addresses representative moments and questions that the chaplain corps faced as it dealt with ministry and policy in Vietnam.[10] The composition and numerical strength of the chaplain corps in Vietnam

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[10] The evidentiary gaps are significant. The central files from the Army Chief of Chaplains' Office lack significant information about the Vietnam War and chaplains who served there, and the MACV files are incomplete. Several isolated units preserved chaplains' daily journals and general correspondence with their unit records, but these are scattered throughout the Army and are usually complete for only six months to a year. The record is better during the later years of the war, particularly from 1971-1973, but much of this chapter relies on the

revealed some of the demographic characteristics of the chaplaincy and the difficulties of ministering to troops in a spread out area of operations. In Vietnam, the chaplain corps also confronted policy-related questions about the chaplain's proper role in military policies such as drug rehabilitation and conscientious objection as well as the chaplain's formal place in the command structure. With these official roles delineated, chaplains also involved themselves with non-chapel activities such as Civic Action Programs and work with local Vietnamese religious communities and orphanages. Chaplains worked together, across denominational lines and across service lines to create a complex and intricate network of religious support for American military personnel in Vietnam, and throughout the war, chaplains' primary duties remained in the realm of pastoral care for their soldiers and officers. Chaplains' official positions thrust them into the role of cultural mediator by making them full members of military and religious institutions, by authorizing them to administer non-appropriated chaplain funds, by mandating ecumenical cooperation, and by involving them in policies that mixed military and moral considerations. Unofficially, chaplains acted as cultural mediators by serving as liaisons between officers and enlisted personnel and by participating in Civic Action Programs and engaging with local civilian populations. Though they completed administrative tasks and participated in non-religious functions, their actions centered on their mission of bringing God to men and men to God.

Providing Chaplain Coverage

As the American commitment in Vietnam expanded, so did the number of chaplains. The Army operated with a large number of Reserve and National Guard chaplains who could be

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official histories of the three services' chaplain corps as well as several interviews with and memoirs of former chaplains.

activated by necessity, or occasionally by request. Often, chaplains who wished to obtain a

Regular Army position first fulfilled chaplain duties within the Reserve or National Guard

branches. When they were called to active duty, some obtained the necessary Regular Army

commissions and made the chaplaincy a career. Anticipating the buildup in Vietnam and the

requisite increase in chaplain requirements, the Department of the Army implemented a

"Program for Appointment and Ordering to Active Duty of Chaplains of Reserve Components

of the Army" in December 1963, for implementation in fiscal year 1964.[11] Designed to meet the

Active Duty requirements of the Army, the Chief of Chaplains Office designed a procurement

program for company-grade officers, whereby "qualified individuals may apply for appointment

as Reserve commissioned officers, Chaplains Branch, with concurrent active duty, and chaplains

of Reserve components of the Army not on active duty who meet the requirements outlined

herein may volunteer for active duty."

Applicants for the program had to be younger than thirty-three and able to qualify for

retirement under Department of Defense guidelines. Alternately, they could gain waivers from

the Department of the Army and be younger than forty years old at the time of appointment.

Generally, however, age wavers would "be granted only for clergymen of those denominations

which are unable to fill authorized quotas with fully qualified individuals. Additionally, the

directive noted that "A vacancy must exist in the denominational quota for an applicant to be

ordered to active duty."[12]

Even before the commitment of ground units to Vietnam in 1965, the chaplain branch,

specifically in the Army, but in the other services as well, experienced shortages in several critical

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[11] "Program for Appointment and Ordering to Active Duty of Chaplains of Reserve Components of the Army," DA Circular 601, Department of the Army, Chief of Staff, RG 247, National Archives II, General Correspondence 1962-1963, 201-45 – 1003-01, Folder 705-03, "Military Personnel Procurement Instructions Files (63) DA Cir 601-3, PERM COFF 31 Dec 63.

[12] Ibid.

categories. In fiscal year 1964-1965, ten Protestant denominations had "failed notably" to meet

their quotas for Army chaplains, according to the Office of the Chief of Chaplains (OCCH)

Historical Review. The ten denominations in question "had quotas totaling 214, but only 42

chaplains in the active army, leaving altogether 172 vacancies." And new chaplains did not

appear to be forthcoming; seven of the ten had not provided any new chaplains to the Army

during that year, and the other three had provided only four chaplains total.[13] Additionally, the

Roman Catholic Church, with a quota for nearly one-third of all available chaplain positions,

consistently fell short of its mark. In 1965, the Roman Catholic Church had filled only 308 of a

total 450 Army chaplain positions, filling only 68.4% of its quota. The Chief of Chaplains

regularly and personally corresponded with Cardinal Francis Spellman, the bishop of the Military

Ordinate, and other Roman Catholic archbishops to encourage the appointment of more Roman

Catholic Chaplains to Regular Army, Reserve, and National Guard posts. Such shortages

compounded when troop numbers increased— demand for chaplains far outstripped supply,

and the quota system provided inadequate numbers of some chaplain denominations and an

overabundance of others.

Other denominations also experienced severe chaplain shortages, including the National

Baptist Association, which filled just twelve of ninety-six appointments, the Eastern Orthodox

Church (two of twenty-six appointments), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (four

of twenty appointments), and African Methodist Episcopal Zion (two of ten appointments). On

the other hand, several denominations contributed more than their quota of chaplains. These

churches included the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the United Church of Christ, the

Presbyterian Church in the United States, the National Association of Evangelicals, the

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[13] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review: 1 July 1964-30 June 1965*, 129.

Episcopal Church, the Disciples of Christ, the United Presbyterian Church, the American Baptist Convention, the National Lutheran Council, the Methodist Church, and the Southern Baptist Convention. In all, these denominations filled nearly 159% of their collective quotas. Within the early numbers, however, discerning a pattern between "evangelical," "conservative," "liberal," or "mainline" contributions to the chaplaincy seems difficult. Throughout the war, obtaining a chaplain's commission remained easier in the underrepresented branches, but most qualified men eventually gained appointment as chaplains, even if it took several rounds of applications.

Yet more important were the very small denominations—those with quotas of fewer than five chaplains—that consistently supplied more than their allotment. Recognizing the disparities in denominations supplying adequate numbers of chaplains, the Office of the Chief of Chaplains reported, "a considerable number of the numerically smaller denominations have shown a great willingness to make their clergymen available for the Army chaplaincy, while some of the larger denominations have not always shown themselves capable of doing so." As the chaplaincy expanded, the services relied on smaller denominations—often more conservative (theologically and politically) to fill vacant chaplain commissions. The goal for the Chief's office was to maintain the quotas of "small and miscellaneous denominations at current strength as far as this is possible without depriving another denomination that it is able to fill with suitable candidates."[14]

Throughout 1965 and 1966, the demand for extended active duty chaplains increased as the Army expanded and the number of troops in Vietnam grew. As of 30 June 1965, 1,275 chaplains were serving on active duty in the Army, and by the end of 1966, there were 1,601, most of them in the grades of Major (453 chaplains) and Captain (787 chaplains). Over 1,100 of

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[14] Ibid., 129-130.

these men were in the Army Reserves. The increased demand placed pressure on the Chief of

Chaplains' Office and on denominational indorsing agencies to identify and process potential

qualified applicants. In September 1965, the OCCH issued new denominational quotas based on

the most current *Yearbook of American Churches*, to provide for one chaplain for every 66,165

church members; the new quotas also took into account a particular denomination's history of

supplying adequate numbers of qualified chaplains. In addition to appealing to the

denominational endorsing agencies, the Chief of Chaplains also appealed directly to divinity

schools and seminaries, "soliciting their cooperation in recruiting seminarians."[15] Even with

these appeals and calling up Reserve component personnel, the Chaplain branch faced severe

shortages.

On the other end of the spectrum, the OCCH also dealt a willing, but technically

ineligible supply of chaplains who volunteered for service. During this period of rapid build up,

clergymen from around the world wrote to the OCCH to request a commission. However, many

of these volunteers had to be rejected because of "age, lack of sufficient formal education, or

past history in the military service." Another group consisted of former chaplains "who had

twice failed to be selected for promotion to the next higher commissioned grade," or who were

"nationals of foreign countries, and members of the retired reserve." When necessary, the

chaplain branch sometimes waived the age requirement: for some, this qualification could be

ignored based on previous service as a commissioned officer in the military, and others

essentially waived their right to retirement eligibility in order to gain a commission. Later in

1966, this policy was formalized to accept from certain denominations volunteer candidates

between the ages of forty and forty-five for five-year tours, "without renewals and without

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[15] Letter from Chief of Chaplains to Rabbi Henach Leibowitz and other addressees, 5 April 1966 (ff), quoted in Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, 1 July 1965-21 December 1966*, 210.

retirement benefits."[16] In isolated cases, generally for Roman Catholic chaplains, the OCCH also waived weight and disability requirements.[17] In the end, by maintaining fairly strict, if looser by peacetime standards, the Chaplain branch assured it could achieve its mission of providing professional, ecumenical, and well-qualified religious support to military personnel.

In addition to the influx of interested, but technically unqualified personnel, the OCCH also had to deal with changing expectations and procedures for chaplain assignment. In the months immediately following American troop commitment to Vietnam, "so many chaplains continued to volunteer for service in Vietnam that this Office disapproved some volunteer applications on the ground that a sufficient number of more suitable chaplains were available."[18] The OCCH also announced that chaplains serving in long-tour areas should be prepared for possible transfer to Vietnam. By August 1966, the Army had stationed 219 chaplains in Vietnam: 47 Roman Catholic, 170 Protestant, and 2 Jewish. The abundance of volunteers for Vietnam assignment suggests that early in the conflict, Vietnam was a respectable, even desirable, assignment that would appear favorably before promotion and review boards. As the war progressed, many chaplains viewed assignment to Vietnam as inevitable, so they volunteered for assignment in order to exert as much control over the situation as possible.[19]

Total branch strength by June 1967 reached 1,857 Army chaplains, and the numbers continued to rise until October 1968. At the peak of the Vietnam War, 1,924 chaplains served on active duty with the Army. After that date, however, chaplain strength began to decline, albeit slowly, as American involvement in Vietnam receded. By December 1969, 1,844 chaplains

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[16] Ibid., 212-213.

[17] Ibid., 217.

[18] Ibid., 234.

[19] James Johnson, interview by author; Jackson Day, interview by author, 19 December 2007, Columbia, MD, transcript in possession of author.

served on active duty, and by June 1970, the Army boasted just 1,760 chaplains. To complicate

the quota system, the Army's rapid growth obviated the OCCH to constantly revise its working

quotas to reflect the need for chaplains and to account for denominational history and reliability

in providing qualified chaplains. Throughout the period of escalation and rapid chaplain

procurement, old problems remained—Roman Catholic and Jewish chaplains were in critically

short supply, as were chaplains from traditionally black denominations, while (white) Baptists,

(white) Methodists, and Disciples of Christ consistently supplied more than their working quotas

required. Filling vacant chaplain positions took precedence over careful consideration of a

chaplain's denomination. As a result, great disparities existed between the chaplain population,

the authorized chaplain quotas, a denomination's membership in the United States, and a

denomination's representation in the Army.[20] By the end of the war, as mainline and liberal

religious denominations balked at sending more chaplains to a war they did not support, the

number of conservative religious adherents in the chaplain corps' ranks increased considerably, a

change that portended important post-Vietnam changes for the chaplaincy.

For most of the war, MACV and United States Army Vietnam (USARV) chaplains

operated under a system of area coverage, designed to ensure that they visited and ministered to

most, if not all, American troops in Vietnam, particularly within a brigade Area of Operations

(AO). Chaplains were assigned to units upon arrival in Vietnam, and though they were not

formally attached to units below the brigade level, they often informally claimed a smaller unit as

their own by splitting primary responsibilities for coverage among all of the brigade's chaplains.

In addition to performing chaplain functions within their unit and service, as time allowed

chaplains also ministered to service members of other units and even other branches. Especially

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[20] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, 1 January 1967-30 June 1968*, 121.

early and late in the war, when small units were scattered across the country, chaplains had to travel frequently to visit units, and when they did, most visited all the units in their area.

Earl Kettler, a field chaplain, recalled that in early 1964, when there were about ten chaplains in Vietnam, his AO covered nearly a fifth of Vietnam, from Bien Hoa to Di Linh. Kettler estimated there were just 250 Americans in his area, which was well below the troop to chaplain ratio, but visiting them in such spread out locations required most of a month.[21] When chaplains did form close relationships with men in their units, they often felt responsible for visiting and ministering to those men, regardless of a unit's location in or out of the chaplain's technical zone. Samuel Hopkins likened himself to his "circuit riding forefathers who evangelized the . . . American frontier" as he visited his unit in forty-two different locations around the corps area. He recalled that it took six weeks or more to visit them all. When he visited, he filled several roles. In the field, chaplains conducted worship services, devotions, and personal counseling. In addition to their ministerial roles, they may have brought the latest gossip and comfort items from the rear or home.[22]

The concept of area coverage was not without its problems, especially because the chaplain was not assigned at the battalion level. Chaplains who later attended the Army War College wrote that "under the old concept the chaplain did not work directly for the battalion commander, was not part of the unit, and only showed up in the unit area to conduct services, perform counseling or conduct classes. The battalion commander did not "own" the chaplain," and as a result the relationship between commander and chaplain remained undefined. They concluded that "in many cases, commanders and chaplains did not communicate as commander

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[21] Earl Kettler, *Chaplain's Letters: Ministry by "Huey" 1964-1965, The Personal Correspondence of an Army Chaplain from Vietnam* (Cincinnati: Cornelius Books, 1994), 3, 18.

[22] Samuel Hopkins, *A Chaplain Remembers Vietnam* (Kansas City, MO: Truman, 2002), 81.

to staff officer."[23] The area coverage policy effectively addressed one problem—units were spread out over large geographical distances and chaplains could not be formally attached battalion, platoon, or company sized units—but created others: chaplains below the brigade level often felt like outsiders within the staff structure and commanders were occasionally reluctant to allow their chaplains to operate outside of their brigade's Area of Operations.

Although area coverage, in theory, provided for regular, if infrequent, chaplain visits to all units in Vietnam, some units seemed chronically undercovered. In particular, commentary and analysis of the My Lai incident frequently mentioned the paucity of chaplain presence as a potential underlying cause for the American atrocity. Martin Gershen, the author of *Destroy or Die: The True Story of Mylai,* maintained that Charlie Company, the perpetrators of the massacre, had not seen a chaplain until the day before the incident.[24] Chaplain (MAJ) Harry Kissinger, who served with the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Division, 11th Brigade, of which Charlie Company (the perpetrators of My Lai) was a part, interpreted the situation differently. In an oral history interview, he recalled that Task Force Barker was stationed north of his technical zone of area coverage, so his commander discouraged him from visiting, even occasionally. He exclaimed, "I'm sure he [the author of *Destroy or Die*] doesn't understand about the area coverage concept . . . And I was following my orders from the brigade chaplain." Kissinger's actual zone of coverage was perhaps sixty miles south of Quang Ngai (the province in which Son My hamlet was located). Kissinger claimed that Task Force Barker was the only unit from the 1st of the 20th to be stationed that far north. He remembered that the day before he "went up there

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[23] Herman Keizer, Jr. (COL), Kenneth A. Seifried (COL), David L. Howard (LTC), and Joseph E. Miller (LTC), "An Overview of the Role of the Unit Ministry Team (UMT) in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm with a Critical Evaluation of Religious Support Activities and Technical Doctrine and Command Team Assessment of UMT Actions, Capabilities and Effectiveness" AWC Student Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, 1992, USMHI AWC Student Papers 1991/1992 – Jones to Roach, filed under Keizer.

[24] Martin Gershen, *Destroy or Die: The True Story of Mylai* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1971).

knowing that other chaplains were covering it, but I still wanted to have a contact with this particular company—Charlie Company."[25] Though Kissinger's statements did little to address the problem of *infrequent* chaplain coverage, they illustrated the problem of chaplains not having consistent personal relationships with the men in their units.

The scarcity of chaplains also presented problems for faith groups with small quotas and small numbers of personnel. Because of their small numbers, area coverage was particularly important for Jewish chaplains, as they coordinated and provided for all Jewish military personnel and civilians in Vietnam. Jewish service members frequently expressed displeasure, to both the Chiefs of Chaplains and their respective congressional representatives about the scarcity of Jewish chaplains in Vietnam; until late 1968, only three Jewish chaplains covered the entire country, including two from the Army and one from the Air Force.[26] Given the small numbers of Jewish chaplains and the dispersed locations of Jewish personnel, the chaplain branches worked to maximize their utility. Jewish chaplains were usually posted in central locations, such as Saigon, Tan Son Nhut, and Long Binh. They covered even larger geographical areas than their Protestant or Catholic counterparts and relied more heavily on lay leadership to provide religious support for personnel in the field.

Rather than conducting many field services, Jewish chaplains concentrated on organizing services for the High Holy Days (Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur) and other important religious observances (e.g. Passover, Sukkoth, Chanukah, Purim) in central locations and then encouraging and arranging for soldiers to attend. As troop levels declined, the Jewish chaplain's dilemma became more acute. Albert Dimont, a chaplain in 1972, recalled that his area of coverage was so large that he was able to visit each major installation only once a month, and the

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[25] Chaplain (MAJ) Harry P. Kissinger, Interview by Rodger R. Venzke, 1 November 1973, Transcribed Patricia L. O'Connell, US Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA, Chaplains-Oral History, 3-0838-044527-1, Box 1.

[26] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, 1967-1968*, 44-45.

smaller units/installations not at all.[27] In February 1970, to further assist Jewish and Christian chaplains in serving Jewish personnel and civilians, the Commission on Jewish Chaplains created a set of "procedure guides" or suggestion sheets to cover some of the activities expected of Jewish Chaplains, and to educate Christian chaplains on how they could help. Their materials included specific materials on a variety of topics of interest to both chaplains and lay leaders, including pamphlets titled "Organizing Groups to Support the Chapel Program," "Maintaining a Roster of Jewish Personnel," "Chapel Bulletins," "Kosher Food Supplies," "The Oneg Shabbat," "Passover Observances," "Counseling," "Conversions," "Torah Convocations," "Adventure with Jewish Books," "Field Visiting Programs," and "Overseas Tours of Duty."[28]

Area coverage remained chaplain doctrine throughout the Vietnam War, and by the end, again became critical in practice. By the time of major troop withdrawals, the decline in the number of chaplains decreased the level of religious support available to troops. Even though the chaplain corps remained at or above its authorized strength, the number of small detachments across the country meant that chaplain coverage was infrequent, and it was unlikely that a soldier could see or speak with a chaplain of his own denomination, except by chance. In order to cover the widest area possible, and to keep personnel safe, chaplains were heavily consolidated in the Saigon-Tan Son Nhut-Long Binh area. They could travel to detached units only as transportation and free time allowed. In response to the reduced level of religious support, the MACV staff chaplain office began sponsoring other religious support activities in order to accommodate these changes, for example "Religion in the News," daily radio devotionals, Component Meetings, training conferences, newsletters, and luncheons. These

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[27] Albert Dimont, "Jewish Report," Appended to After Action Report, USACHCS "Vietnam Files," Box 8, Jewish Report; Leonard Stegman, interview by Henry Ackermann, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA, RG: Chaplains-Oral History, 3-0838-044528-3, Box 3.

[28] "The Jewish Chaplain," Jewish Welfare Board, February 1970, USACHCS, Vietnam Files, Box 7.

activities were designed to support religious activities in ways that did not always require a chaplain to be present. At Headquarters and on other major installations, the MACV office continued to use the Human Self-Development material as the subject for monthly briefings and Continental Army Command (CONARC) training.[29]

Along with decreased coverage, United States Army Vietnam (USARV) Chaplain Leonard Stegman recalled that morale problems for chaplains increased as drawdown commenced as the chaplain branch went from 400 chaplains to 150 in a short amount of time, meaning that some chaplains had to be transferred several times because their original units would leave Vietnam for the United States. He also recalled running out of "volunteer" chaplains, and by the end of the war, many chaplains had been returned involuntarily to Active Duty and/or to Vietnam. Especially as the American public dissent grew louder and more impatient, chaplains naturally began responding to the difficult questions of faith and war. Stegman, as a supervisory chaplain recalled that he "made it very clear that whenever anybody came to Vietnam they had to close their minds to that [doubt and protest] because they were not here because of individual beliefs or convictions. They were here because of the men. If they could not serve under those conditions, I did not want them, and I made that clear in the Chief's office also."[30]

Though the Navy assigned its chaplains in a different way based on the naval mission in Vietnam, it also practiced a form of area coverage with many of its chaplains. Most naval chaplains who served on shore worked within the MACV chaplain system; this group constituted about 44% of naval billets in Vietnam. The other 56% of chaplains were ship-based,

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[29] USARV/MACV SUPCOM Staff Chaplain Briefing, Bangkok, Thailand, 13-14 January 1973 (slide presentation transcript), 7, USACHCS Vietnam Files, Box 8, "Briefing for Chief."

[30] Leonard F. Stegman, interview by Henry F. Ackerman, transcript, United States Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA, Chaplains-Oral History, Box 3 (3-0838-044528-3).

and this division reflected a reversal of the normal ratio of shore to ship chaplains. The ship-based chaplains who were assigned to the Military Sea Transport Service (MSTS) ministered to military personnel from all of the armed forces. On the long sea passage to Vietnam, these chaplains established counseling programs and formal character guidance and religious education regimes.[31] Nearly twenty percent of naval chaplains in Vietnam served on aircraft carriers. Chaplains with the fleet could be responsible for covering as many as forty or fifty ships in the battle group. They recalled that one of their primary functions, however, was conducing memorial services for pilots and servicemen killed in action.[32]

Other ship-based naval chaplains had looser assignments that covered between fifteen and twenty ships but also allowed for short-term assignments to naval groups with pressing need. One of these "circuit riders," John Senieur, recalled that he and others "were frequently called upon to do additional duty where chaplains were not available or where tragedy had left a void." Senieur then went through a laundry-list of his various Vietnam assignments: "I spent six weeks with the swiftboats and the Coast Guard cutters along the southern coast of Vietnam. I spent almost eight weeks in the USS *Repose* (AH-16) when the Catholic chaplain took ill, I was assigned to the USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34) following the tragic fires, I was in a battle with the *Carronade* and spent some time in destroyers during coastal bombardments."[33] These chaplains, dispatched in times of need, probably would not have had the time or sustained contact with specific units to form lasting personal relationships, but their ministry highlighted the importance that commanders and chaplain leaders placed on a chaplains' presence in the face of danger or tragedy.

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[31] Moore, *Chaplains with Naval Units*, 41.

[32] Ibid., 48.

[33] John Senieur quoted in Ibid., 42.

Throughout the twentieth century, because they served military personnel of many faiths (and those with no religious affiliation), chaplains placed a high value on the ecumenical nature of their work and ministry. This focus was especially strong after World War II, as Americans chose to emphasize their common religious characteristics instead of theological, doctrinal, or ritual differences. Chaplains and the broader public found a key example of this ecumenicalism in the sacrificial and heroic deaths of the "Four Chaplains" aboard the USAT (United States Army Transit Ship) *Dorchester* when it sank in the North Atlantic during the Second World War. According to eyewitness accounts, the chaplains—two Protestants, a Catholic, and a Jew— offered others their lifejackets and warm clothes and were last seen on the deck of the ship, holding hands, praying, and singing. They quickly became icons of religious cooperation and chaplain-ideals. In 1948, they were memorialized on a U.S. postage stamp and in 1960, Congress authorized a "Four Chaplains" medal, which was later awarded posthumously to the four chaplains. Private organizations remembered them as well: in 1951 the "Chapel of the Four Chaplains" was dedicated at Temple University, and in 1997, family members of two of the chaplains and survivors from the *Dorchester* founded the "Immortal Chaplains Foundation."[34] Chaplains serving in the Vietnam War operated in the shadow of these iconic figures.

As the diversity within American religious groups expanded, so too did the chaplain corps' understanding of ecumenism. From its earliest inception in the late 1700s, American chaplains had come from an increasing variety of denominational and faith backgrounds. Early legislation about chaplains mandated they be ordained Christian ministers, but Abraham Lincoln successfully lobbied for that distinction to be removed in 1862, requiring instead that they be

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[34] See, for example, Kurzman, *No Greater Glory* and www.immortalchaplains.org, the webpage of the Immortal Chaplains Foundation, accessed 17 March 2008.

ordained clergy of a "religious denomination."[35] Still, in the nineteenth century, the Army

chaplain corps was dominated by Episcopalians, who filled between forty and sixty percent of

chaplain posts, even though the "combined total of Episcopalians, Unitarians, Presbyterians, and

Congregationalists amounted to only fourteen percent of America's population."[36] During World

War II, the military recognized Roman Catholic priests, Jewish rabbis, and ministers of six major

Protestant denominational families as chaplains. By 1964, the Army recognized fifty-four

denominations and faith groups to supply chaplains, and the number of qualified denominations

and endorsing agencies grew throughout the 1960s and 1970s. By the end of the Vietnam War,

the military recognized over 100 religious denominations and faith groups, and by the early

1990s, that number had grown to over 150.[37]

In policy terms, the offices of the Chief of Chaplains and other military leaders had a

stake in promoting ecumenicalism, equality, and respect for the growing diversity of chaplains

and military personnel. Army Regulation 210-115, for example, prohibited "the engraving or

permanent installation inside or outside of chapels, or the display on chapel grounds, of religious

symbols and statues," to include crosses, crucifixes, or Stars of David. In the United States,

where chapel construction was ongoing and generally well-regulated, this posed few problems.

In Vietnam, however, military chapels had a more ad-hoc feel. Engineer companies, with the

assistance of other soldiers and officers, erected chapels quickly and with whatever materials

were available, either locally or through channels; regulations rarely seemed to come into play.

As a result, the Christian majority thought little of placing a cross on the steeple of a newly-

constructed chapel. When, in 1968, one such chapel was photographed, the Director of Field

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[35] Slomovitz, *Fighting Rabbis*, 12-18, and Richard Budd, *Serving Two Masters,* 39.

[36] Budd, *Serving Two Masters*, 17.

[37] Joseph O'Donnell, "Clergy in the Military—Vietnam and After," in Bergen, *Sword of the Lord*, 222.

Operations of the National Jewish Welfare Board (NJWB) contacted the Army Chief of Chaplains. The Staff Chaplain at USARV Headquarters investigated, and the chaplains there solved the problem with a minimum of conflict. The various interactions demonstrated the chaplains' principle of "cooperation without compromise."[38]

One way that the chaplaincy formalized ecumenicalism as policy was by mandating that chaplains were to "be addressed as 'Chaplain'" and "identify themselves by this title in all official communications pertaining to their status as military officers or relating to their performance of duty as staff officers." The title obscured differences in faith group, denomination, and rank and highlighted the chaplains' religious and staff officer responsibilities. In more informal settings (both personal and pastoral), chaplains could use ecclesiastical or academic titles as appropriate.[39] In a study of the constitutionality of the chaplain corps, as a response to a 1979 lawsuit, lawyers concluded "the term 'chaplain' is here used to describe those clergy who engage in specialized military ministries which often take them outside and beyond their own particular denominational faith groups."[40] Directives such as these served to formalize and standardize the role of chaplains in the military while recognizing various denominational and personal considerations.

Even as ecumenism remained a primary goal of the chaplain corps, some situations presented a definite organizational and personal challenge to the model. Many Protestant groups were unhappy with the fact that Mormon chaplains were assigned as general Protestant

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[38] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Historical Review, *1967-1968*, 156.

[39] J.C. Lambert, Office of the Adjutant General, Department of the Army, "Professional Guidelines for Chaplains," 13 January 1964, RG 247, National Archives II, Records of the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Records Relating to Administration and Management, General Correspondence 1954-1975, Box 4, Folder 721-01, "Religious Program Goals and Objectives (64)."

[40] Israel Drazin and Cecil B. Currey, *For God and Country: The History of a Constitutional Challenge to the Army Chaplaincy* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1995), 15

chaplains because a good number of Protestant churches did not consider the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS or Mormon) church to be Christian. Given the ecumenical tenor of religious conversation in the 1960s, however, critics usually couched their objections in terms of qualifications and education. In 1962, President Johnson ordered the Chiefs of Chaplains to accept "a limited number" of Mormon clergy as chaplains without the requisite educational requirements, in part because the LDS church did not have officially ordained clergy or require seminary education for would-be chaplains.[41] The assignment of Mormon chaplains caused significant rifts within the chaplain corps and among civilian supporters of the chaplaincy. Critics vocally accused the Department of Defense of unnecessarily watering down requirements to the detriment of the chaplaincy. The *Christian Century*, by the 1960s a leading voice for mainline Protestant progressivism, protested that "Whatever the caliber and quality of the military chaplaincy may now be, a recent presidential order threatens to lower them."[42] The unsigned editorial insinuated that Mormon chaplains, by receiving a waiver, would not be held to the same educational standards as other denominations that did not require seminary training for clergy, such as the Christian Science church. The General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel took up the issue in a January 1967 meeting. The Commission insisted that the Department of Defense had not offered a "satisfactory" solution to the Commission's complaints, and did nothing to quell rumors that it and the National Association of Evangelicals (another major endorsing body) might refuse to endorse chaplains unless they were satisfied with the solution.[43]

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[41] "President Debases Chaplaincy Standards," *Christian Century*, 30 November 1966, 1465.

[42] Ibid.,

[43] "Chaplaincy Agencies Defend High Standards," *Christian Century*, 25 January 1967, 101-102.

In the field, Mormon chaplains had to negotiate the type of ministry that was possible given strict constraints—officially on the minister and unofficially on Christians of many other denominations. Claude Newby, an LDS chaplain who served two tours in Vietnam, wrote two long and detailed memoirs of his experience as a chaplain. His memoirs illuminate some of the complexities that faced Mormon chaplains. Throughout his memoirs, Newby emphasized his efforts to provide for the religious needs of all the men in his unit, in particular, finding another chaplain to offer Communion to non-Mormon Protestants.[44] At the same time, Mormon chaplains were often expected to proved denominationally-specific services to other LDS personnel. Early in his first Vietnam tour, Newby was placed with a medical unit, but the division chaplain made it clear that another of Newby's primary missions was to provide division-wide support for LDS soldiers.[45] When, for example, the Church of Jesus Christ of Later Day Saints organized a religious retreat for all LDS personnel in Vietnam, it fell on Newby to coordinate transportation and leave for all the Mormon soldiers in the division Area of Operations.[46]

This level of negotiation and inter-denominational cooperation, especially between Mormons and other Protestants, was not without tension. When Newby was stationed at Fort Bragg between tours of duty in Vietnam, he met significant hostility from a chaplain, whom he called "Chaplain Blanke" (an alias) in his memoir. According to Newby, Blanke was skeptical of Mormon chaplains' credentials and abilities after a bad experience with Newby's LDS predecessor. Newby recalled him saying the dislike was "nothing personal" but that Blanke said

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[44] Claude Newby recalled several such instances in his memoir, *It Took Heroes*. Claude D. Newby and Lucille Johnson, *It Took Heroes: A Chaplain's Story and Tribute to Combat Veterans and Those Who Waited for Them* 2nd ed. (1998; New York: Bonneville Books, 2000). See, for example, pages 46, 180, and 396.

[45] Ibid., 22.

[46] Ibid., 43-44.

he couldn't "understand how your church has the audacity to place you men in the chaplaincy to compete with professional clergy."[47] Later, Newby accused Blanke of filing a report of grievances in order to get Newby removed from his post for cause.[48]

In Newby's second tour of duty, he faced a situation where his responsibility to minister to all troops was apparently in conflict with his duty to minister specifically to Mormon soldiers. When Newby's weekly report occasionally showed more LDS services than general Protestant ones, chaplains at the Division level worried. Newby explained that this was because "another chaplain came into my battalion and provided communion services, while I went about the division AO conducting sacrament services for as many LDS troopers as I could reach." Newby's Division Chaplain was considering moving him out of the division and into a headquarters slot, so he could minister to LDS personnel over a wider area and have more Protestant chaplains with whom to coordinate. Newby, however, protested. He explained that "LDS members were well organized and empowered to care for one another," but also that he took his orders to provide spiritual support to men of all faiths seriously, and that his church required no less of him. Eventually, the division chaplain relented, and Newby remained with his battalion.[49] Mormon chaplains especially had to walk a fine line between ecumenism and specific denominational support, and they relied on other chaplains and official channels to facilitate the balancing act.

At other times, the doctrinal differences between Mormons and other Christian chaplains provided for more productive exchanges. Again at Fort Bragg, Newby recalled that Chaplain Virgil Wood and some of the other chaplains had enrolled at a class at Duke University

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[47] Ibid., 244.

[48] Ibid., 249.

[49] Ibid., 396.

on "Offbeat Religions in America," where each chaplain was assigned to write and present a report on another religious group. Wood enlisted Newby's help, though Newby consented only if his involvement were "limited to a presentation followed by questions and answers" and would not involve "argument over points of doctrine." The chaplains cooperated and showed good-natured humor about the differences in their religious faith and practice. Chaplain Wood joked that he was jealous of Newby and other Mormons because the Baptists had chosen as their vice coffee and the Mormons plural wives.[50] Newby and Wood maintained a close relationship even after they were not stationed together. Major Wood was the one to inform Newby that he had been selected for promotion to major below the zone, a particularly happy moment for both after Chaplain Blanke's maneuvering.[51] Back in Vietnam, Newby established a particularly good working relationship with a Catholic chaplain from his brigade—Newby considered this "cross-pollinating" approach beneficial to both soldiers and chaplains.[52]

Professional Guidelines and Policy Directives

As the Chaplain Corps placed itself on a wartime footing, policy directives, both from the Chief of Chaplains offices and from their respective services, appeared and required chaplains serving overseas to negotiate perhaps onerous or seemingly irrelevant requirements. For example, in January 1964, the Secretary of the Army, via the Adjutant General's office, issued a new set of "Professional Guidelines for Chaplains," and the distribution list included not only the MACV Commander and the Commanders in Chief in Europe and the Pacific, but also the Commanding Generals of USCONARC, Air Defense Command, and the Army Civilian

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[50] Ibid., 245.

[51] Ibid., 255.

[52] Ibid., 273.

Data Center, the Surgeon General, and the Superintendent of the United States Military Academy. Yet the new directives recognized that in an Army at war "the field is the normal environment for Army worship both in training and in combat." Chaplains, regardless of their assignment, were to prepare soldiers for war. The Secretary of the Army directed all chaplains to conduct a "minimum of one Sunday/Sabbath service and one weekday service by each chaplain serving troops" and to spend at least 50% of their duty time with troops. In reality, most chaplains serving in Vietnam exceeded these mandated standards. On the other hand, the chaplain was also required to avail himself for personal or pastoral counseling in his office or "other suitable place" at least one evening a week. This directive would have been far easier in a non-combat post, where offices and "suitable places" abounded and where soldiers had easy access to such spaces. In Vietnam, however, few of these conditions would have been common—chaplains lived in similar quarters to other officers, often sharing a tent with another officer, or using his tent as an office, and soldiers in the field could not be reasonably expected to find a chaplain on a designated evening.[53]

Commanders and the Chiefs of Chaplains recognized the unique spiritual, mental, and physical pressures that the chaplaincy created, and as such authorized chaplains, both in the field and in garrison posts, to take one half-day per month for "spiritual exercises such as retreats and days of recollection" with an additional retreat period of up to ten days each year. This remained policy throughout the war, and chaplains in Vietnam often attended religious retreats for chaplains of their faith group or even their specific denomination. The vagaries of combat occasionally meant that scheduled retreats were cancelled or relocated, which complicated some

[53] J.C. Lambert, Office of the Adjutant General, Department of the Army, "Professional Guidelines for Chaplains," 13 January 1964, RG 247, NARA II, Records of the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Records Relating to Administration and Management, General Correspondence 1954-1975, Box 4, Folder 721-01, "Religious Program Goals and Objectives (64)."

chaplains' abilities to attend them.[54] Frequently chaplains assigned to combat units—ostensibly the ones who might benefit most from such leave—were unable to get away for even short periods of time.[55] In 1971, a Religious Retreat Center opened at Cam Ranh Bay, the first of its kind in a combat area; the center's opening demonstrated a significant commitment to the religious and spiritual wellbeing of men in combat, chaplains and laypersons alike. The Center housed an extensive library, over 20,000 volumes, of religious and spiritual books and print materials and provided meeting and living space for retreatants. Chaplains could also use the facility on an individual basis for personal days of recollection or longer periods of spiritual retreat, as allowed by military regulations.[56]

In addition to caring for the spiritual needs of chaplains, the Chiefs of Chaplains, through their respective departments, also issued directives intended to define the chaplains' role as a staff officer and as a clergyman in the military context. The Chiefs of Chaplains recognized that chaplains needed to maintain their religious identities, but the ecumenical and staff-officer functions of military chaplains had to be considered as well. In order to balance these two needs, chaplains were permitted to wear "appropriate vestments to conduct religious services," but were also reminded that "civilian suits, etc. are not vestments" and that all chaplains "should wear their appropriate uniform going to and from the place of religious services."[57]

The Army Chief of Chaplains also set out to establish firm rules for chaplains' behavior in combat zones, particularly as it related to carrying weapons. Although in practice chaplains had to make these sorts of decisions on personal and practical levels, the official policy of the

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[54] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, 1967-1968*, 47.

[55] James Johnson, interview by author.

[56] Theodore Huggins, interview by Henry F. Ackermann, 30 October 1985, USMHI "Chaplains - Oral History" Box 3-0838-044528-2.

[57] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, July 1965-December 1966*, 65.

chaplains branches was clear: chaplains could not carry weapons under any circumstances. After

Curt[is] Bowers appeared in a January 1966 picture carrying a weapon, The Chief of Chaplains'

office grew increasingly frustrated by inquiries from Congress and civilians who were concerned

with the actions of chaplains as portrayed in media depictions. Chief of Chaplains Jack Brown

told Theodore Koepke, the MACV Staff Chaplain, "Some of these letters, and the time-

consuming replies, could be avoided if our chaplains used a little discretion in their statements to

representatives of the various news media." Brown reiterated the Geneva Convention protocol:

"Chaplains are noncombatants . . . They will not be required to bear arms" and continued

"Weapons will not be provided for female personnel or chaplains." The Army Field Manual

stated "The chaplain is a noncombatant. He should not bear arms; he will not be required to

bear arms." At the same time, Brown wished to contextualize the significant pressures facing

chaplains serving in combat situations. "It is understandable that a chaplain in the stress of the

kind of war being waged in Viet Nam faces an individual dilemma and I hesitate to judge him

from my position of apparent security. However, I can and do pass judgment on the

unwarranted publicity that reflects immaturity and indiscretion, and necessitates explanation

after explanation to the effect that we have not given up our traditional role of noncombatants

and protected personnel."[58]

In response to these issues, the Army OCCH directed that chaplains would "under no

circumstances let themselves be led into a discussion of the pros and cons of the noncombatant

status of chaplains or permit themselves to be interviewed for a personal opinion or general

discussion of the subject." If a chaplain could not avoid such an interview, the Chief of

Chaplains expected him to "uphold the traditional position set forth in the Geneva Convention,

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[58] Brown to Koepke, letter 21 January 1966, RG 247, National Archives II, Records relating to Administration and Management, 1954-1975, Box 5, Folder 721-01 "Chaplains, Non-Combatant."

Army Regulations nos. 165-15 and 310-34, and Field Manual No. 16-5." After the uproar over the photograph, the Chief declared "under no circumstances will a chaplain admit that arms have been issued to him, or that he has arms in his possession, or be photographed carrying arms." The policy, as stated officially, went even further, addressing the common rebuttal that unarmed chaplains placed an undue burden on their enlisted assistants and military companions in combat, and stated "the chaplain will not argue that without arms he is not carrying his proper load and is a burden to others; the wielding of weapons is the responsibility of his enlisted assistant."[59] Chaplains frequently ignored these directions or altered them to fit their purposes, but the official policy set out to define a chaplain's position well within the boundaries of established international law and national policy.

One of chaplains' major duties, both in stateside and overseas posts, was to counsel men who believed they were conscientious objectors (CO) and thus might be eligible for separation from the military or reassignment to a non-combat unit. Army Regulation 635-20 directed that individuals "applying for discharge receive a counseling interview by a chaplain and that the chaplain submit a report of the interview to include the sincerity of the individual in his belief and an expression of his opinion as to whether the individual's objection to military duty is based on religious beliefs."[60] Whereas earlier CO policies required membership in a historic peace church, during the Vietnam War one could declare CO status on the basis of any "deeply held" religious belief that precluded military service. Chaplains, then, themselves members of the clergy and the military, were placed in a position to judge the sincerity of a soldier's religious belief and to make a decision about the content of that belief.

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[59] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, July 1965-December 1966*, 65.

[60] Ibid., 43; AR 635-20, 5 Jan 1966; a similar provision for Reserve components included in AR 132-25, 4 February 1966.

In 1964, the United States Supreme Court, in *United States v. Seeger* defined "religious belief" to include "a sincere and meaningful belief which occupies in the life of its possessor a place parallel to that filled by the God of those admittedly qualifying for the exemption." This expanded definition could be used to allow atheist or agnostic soldiers to claim secular philosophical beliefs as the foundation for their objection. The Chief of Chaplains Office directed that the Seegar decision and its implications for chaplains be incorporated into the curriculum at the Chaplain School.[61] Yet the Army Chief of Chaplains also insisted that "mature ordained clergymen do not need detailed instructions on how to perform their pastoral functions in every conceivable situation; that each chaplain is free to counsel each individual as he deems appropriate."[62] Chaplains in the field used the Office of the Chief of Chaplains as a source of information about new or unfamiliar denominations when a soldier claimed CO status. For example, one chaplain wrote to the Chief of Chaplains Office to inquire about the legitimacy and views of the Radio Church of God (Worldwide Church of God). "We are interested because a young 2LT MSC [Medical Service Corps], and ROTC graduate, and a member of the 70th Medical Battalion here, became involved with the church when he heard a radio broadcast in San Antonio while attending an army school. Since his arrival here, he has applied for a discharge under the provisions of AR 635-20. This was refused. Now he may apply for a discharge as a conscientious objector. He refuses to do any detail which involves carrying a weapon." Ever vigilant in the struggle against communism, the chaplain also wondered if the church might even be subversive "because of the nature of some of the teachings the Lieutenant's Commander says the young man has expressed."[63] The OCCH replied that the church was recognized and that its

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[61] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, 1966-1967*, 35.

[62] Letter from Chief of Chaplains to Robert Bird, 2 March 1967, RG 247, National Archives II, Admin/Mgt., Box 5 Folder 721-01, "Conscientious Objectors (67)."

[63] Alfred Miller to Office of Chief of Chaplains, 31 March 1967, in Ibid.

members did, in fact, "conscientiously refuse to bear arms or to come under the military authority."[64]

As dissent against the Vietnam War escalated, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)—a subsidiary organization of the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker)—issued advice for service members who wished to claim CO status and for the chaplains who interviewed them. In a pamphlet titled, "Are you a conscientious objector to war?" the AFSC defined in simple, accessible language, the Supreme Court's definition of "religious belief" and "religious training" which made it clear that attendance at or membership in a formal church or religious organization was not required by law. It also explained the "Supreme Being clause" of the stated policy, which required a belief "in a relation to a Supreme Being involving duties superior to those arising from any human relation." The AFSC pamphlet made it clear that military personnel did "not have to believe in a Supreme Being in some anthropomorphic sense of a personality having a corporeal existence, because the 1965 Seeger case allowed for a 'parallel belief' for those who hold a 'sincere and meaningful' belief that 'occupies a place in the life of its possessor parallel to that filled by the orthodox belief in God of one who clearly qualifies for the exemption." Finally, it offered practical advice for those who were considering applying for CO classification: "If you hold liberal, questioning, or more unorthodox views on religion, you should apply for a CO classification. If you cannot conscientiously answer *yes* to the Supreme Being clause, answer with an *I don't know* or *Depends on what you mean*, or leave it blank. Then follow with a clear, simple statement of what you do believe. If you answer *no* to the Supreme Being question, you will probably be denied the special appeal procedure available to CO claimants."[65]

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[64] Letter from Chief of Chaplains to Alfred A. Miller, 31 March 1967 in Ibid.

[65] American Friends Service Committee, "Are you a conscientious objector to war?" in Ibid.

As the issue of selective conscientious objection—objection to a war in particular rather than to war in general—came to the forefront of discussions for chaplains and others, the Department of Defense and Department of the Army worked to set out strict criteria for establishing "religious belief." Top military officials determined that "objection to a particular war or to a particular armed conflict is not sufficient" but that an "applicant's objection must be founded on religious training and belief." Furthermore, the policy determined that "a mere personal moral code" was an insufficient basis for objection as was objection based on "essentially political, sociological, or philosophical considerations." The applicant's belief must be "sincere" but it's "reasonableness or orthodoxy" was irrelevant.[66] Following the policy's nebulous and meandering specifications was difficult enough without the added ambiguity of a subjective judgment as to the origin, content, and sincerity of an applicant's objection. So in order to assist chaplains in interviewing soldiers, the OCCH issued a guide with "seven factors that would help them to determine the apparent sincerity of the applicant's belief" as well as a series of "questions that they might use as a guide."[67] When the application was brought before a full review panel, many of the questions again hinged on religious belief and commitment. Such questions ranged from the simple "Did the applicant attend a church school" to the esoteric "What outward actions verify the sincerity of the applicant's religious belief" including "public expression of his belief," "sacrifices [made] in pursuit of his belief" or "patterns of conduct" that would signify his belief. The chaplain's evaluation was considered in two further questions: "What was the chaplain's evaluation of applicant's sincerity?" and "Did the chaplain determine conscientious objection to be based on the applicant's religious belief?"[68] In the end, several

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[66] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, 1968-1969,* 40.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Evaluation Guide for Conscientious Objector, RG 247, National Archives II, Admin/Mgmt, Box 5 Folder 721-01, "Conscientious Objector (67)."

people had to evaluate and sign off on a CO's religious convictions in order for a service member to be released from service or reassigned.

Even though the suggested questions—for both chaplains and review boards—were long and complicated, the guidelines issued concerning the chaplain's interview of a Conscientious Objector applicant advised above all, "Keep the report simple!" Previous reports "submitted by chaplains in accordance with references 1a and 1b show a tendency to include a great deal of verbage [*sic*] in support of the final opinion of the chaplain," which led to some applicants using the chaplain's assessment as a basis for an appeal. "To this end," the guidelines proposed that the chaplain's report "should be limited to a simple statement relating to the sincerity of the applicant's belief and an opinion as to whether the objection is based on a religious and/or a philosophical belief/conviction. Reasons for the opinion of the chaplain need not be stated."[69] Chaplains were in an unenviable situation indeed—they were asked to evaluate and comment on another's sincerity of belief based on nebulous guidelines in the midst of an unpopular war in which they were voluntarily participating.

Another issue that demanded significant attention by individual chaplains and by the chaplaincy as an institution was drug use among American military personnel, especially in rear areas of Vietnam. The issue had perplexed American military leaders long before the engagement in Vietnam. Soldiers in the Philippines at the beginning of the twentieth century found abundant and cheap sources for opium, and alcohol use and abuse among service members had long concerned the top brass. Lax Vietnamese drug laws, especially related to marijuana, which was illegal in the United States but not in Vietnam, presented special challenges

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[69] "Policy Guidance Concerning the Interviewing of Conscientious Objector Applicants in the Armed Forces," RG 247, National Archives II, Admin/Mgt., Box 5 Folder 721-01 "Conscientious Objectors (67)."

to commanders.[70] Dealing with drug use among American military personnel provided a clear example of the chaplain's role in his unit's moral and military life; the situation called for staff-officer support from a moral and spiritual perspective, which was the chaplain's primary job description.

While the use of marijuana was frowned upon and discouraged, and a court-martial offense in the marines, heroin caused much greater concern. One report claimed that "In 1970 there were 1,146 arrests for hard drugs. The following year arrests in this category increased to 7,026."[71] However, heroin users in Vietnam differed from those in the United States: Users in Vietnam were likely to be from small towns (rather than urban areas), and the racial composition of heroin users was similar to the military service as a whole.[72] Most used the drug casually, but were probably addicted: the purer form of Vietnamese heroin allowed it to be ingested directly or smoked, which reduced the risk of overdosing as well as the risk of infection from injections.[73]

Recognizing that drug use was becoming an increasing concern in the military, especially in Vietnam, the Army Chaplain School began to address the issue more directly, in 1972 beginning a supplemental course about drug counseling and working with drug users for chaplains and their enlisted assistants. The introductory materials focused primarily on alcohol and marijuana as the most pressing substance-dependence problems for the military. In addition to supplying statistics about alcohol and drug use, the course emphasized the role of "youth

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[70] George S. Prugh, *Law at War: Vietnam 1964-1973* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1975), 106; see also Gary D. Solis, *Marines and Military Law in Vietnam: Trial by Fire* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1989).

[71] Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill, 1991), 113, 115, 222-223 and Prugh, 107 cited in "Higher and Higher: American Drug Use in Vietnam," *Vietnam* 15 (December 2002), 46 ff.

[72] David F. Musto, *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[73] Norman E. Zinberg, "G.I.'s and O.J.'s in Vietnam," *New York Times Magazine*, 5 December 1971.

culture," particularly for understanding marijuana use and rationalization for use among young, male soldiers. The course took care to differentiate between the legal status of alcohol and the illicit status of marijuana and other drugs, but it treated the two part of a wider problem.

The "drug scene" in Vietnam received significant attention in the new course, as did the ramifications of addicted soldiers returning home. The drug problem, the curriculum asserted, resulted from "loneliness, boredom, fear, peer group loyalty, ease of access, and the low cost of purchase." Yet soldiers often expressed a desire to get off drugs as well, if for no other reason than the cost of continuing a habit in the United States. A $3-a-day habit in Vietnam would easily translate to a $150-a-day habit "back in the world."[74] The drug problem in Vietnam was pervasive and insidious, involving not only American soldiers but also Vietnamese children who sold the narcotics everyday. Once soldiers returned, the problems continued: kicking the drug habit was difficult, especially given the emotional stress of returning home, drugs were prohibitively expensive in the United States, and doctors worried that malaria infections would rise due to needle-sharing and infested blood donations. Clearly, it was a problem that needed to be addressed from both a military and a moral standpoint, and chaplains again found themselves in the middle.

In 1970, AR 600-32 established that commanders were responsible for carrying out an aggressive preventative program, including orientations, refresher courses, and special briefings "before departure to and on return from overseas areas" and insuring that "limited rehabilitation of restorable drug abusers [was] initiated at the lowest unit level." Chaplains were further involved because the chaplain, along with a medical officer, could be reasonably expected to assist soldiers and officers in finding and participating in appropriate individual and group

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[74] "Drug Abuse: The Chaplains' Ministry to the Drug Abuser," Instructor Pamphlet, Chaplains and Chaplain Enlisted Assistants Supplemental Branch Training, 1972, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

therapy or counseling. Furthermore, the regulation stated that a "soldier seeking rehabilitation" who presented himself voluntarily to a commanding officer, chaplain, surgeon, or other designated person would "not be punished merely for admitting the use of drugs." For many commanders, however, the most immediate and expedient response often appeared to be separation from the military. Thus, chaplains (and other officers) walked a fine line between military policies, legal responsibilities, and personal counseling for drug abusers.

A limited amnesty program, instituted in 1970, aimed to curtail drug use among casual or experimental users. Frank Bartomo, Assistant General Counsel of Manpower and Reserve Affairs in the Department of Defense, spoke before a congressional subcommittee on "Marijuana and Dangerous Drugs" of the Committee on Armed Services in September of 1970. He noted that the Amnesty program, which allowed soldiers to turn in any drugs or paraphernalia without fear of recrimination and then to receive counseling, moral, and medical support, had been especially successful in Vietnam. The amnesty program used a four-step process that included peer-mentoring and evaluation in addition to professional help from chaplains and surgeons.[75]

Within the paradigm of rehabilitating soldiers and reducing drug-use and dependence, the Chaplain School course offered specific suggestions and techniques for chaplains to use in dealing with drug users. The course suggested that a chaplain's first responsibility was to understand himself and "his own ability to handle conflict and transference of the drug abuser." Second, the course advised that the chaplain could help provide an essential part of the "value system" for an addicted soldier. The chaplain could help a soldier identify and deal with his "religious strivings, a fear of death, loneliness, and a sense of meaninglessness." Alcohol (or drugs), the course suggested, "provides something to fill the value-vacuum in the abuser's inner

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[75] "Drug Abuse," 38.

world;" thus the chaplain can help re-establish quality relationships and a soldier's self-image in order to fill that void. Third, the chaplain should seek to "provide a relationship in which trust can be built, acceptance offered, and the grace of God made evident." Finally, the course emphasized that the chaplain's response to drug and alcohol abuse must be person-centered: the chaplain's focus is the "personal problem" rather than the "chemical problem," emphasizing the connection between the spiritual and the psychiatric. The course material concluded with the charge that chaplains should "provide an open, warm, responsible atmosphere in which the person in need of help can take a new look at himself and try out a new life style in the safety and encouragement of one who brings [the] spiritual dimension into focus."[76]

By the end of the war, however, the drug problem—especially heroin—was so acute that the Army decided to treat soldiers before they ever left the field. Chaplain (MAJ) Billy Lord had completed a tour with the 1st Cavalry, 1st Brigade in Vietnam in 1965. He returned to a stateside post but later returned to Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division. Soon after, however, he was assigned temporarily to the Detoxification Center at Long Binh. His assignment was unusual because he was assigned as a counselor rather than a unit chaplain, a significant departure from typical Army personnel procedures. At the Detox Center, all men had to pass a urinalysis drug test before they rotated home. Command detained those who failed for treatment. After a briefing and intake interview, the addicted (or using) soldiers were placed into a residential detoxification and treatment program. Enlisted intake technicians referred some with severe mental problems to psychiatrists for further care and others to chaplains. Doctors and nurses conducted physical exams and monitored the soldiers as they went through withdrawal. After the soldiers were sufficiently detoxed, they were medically evacuated to Japan and then to the United States for further treatment. According to some chaplains, however, centers like these

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[76] "Drug Abuse," 41-42.

had limited effectiveness. As chaplain Llewellyn Murdock commented in the official history survey, "people on drugs need[ed] much more than we could provide."[77]

A third area in which chaplains' official and non-religious duties overlapped with unofficial and religious ones was the host of Civic Action Programs (CAP) that constituted a major part of the American effort in Vietnam. In the Chaplains' Orientation guide, CAP activities were designed "to use military resources for the benefit of civilian communities, such as assisting in health, welfare, and public works project, improving living conditions, alleviating suffering, and improving the economic base of the country." These were campaigns focused on winning the "hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese people: the orientation program stated specifically that "such programs seek to gain the support, loyalty, and respect of the people for the Armed Forces and to emphasize the concept of freedom and worth of the individual."[78] Chaplains would play critical, though often unofficial, roles within Civic Action Programs carried out by their units.

U.S. divisions had three basic civic action/civil affairs requirements within their AOs, including "to establish a civic action program in the vicinity of the division base; to provide support for tactical operations; and to assist the government of Vietnam in winning the support of the Vietnamese people and in being more responsive in meeting the needs of the people."[79] In specific terms, CAP initiatives included "short-range, high impact" projects to gain rapid acceptance in an area as well as long-range projects undertaken by units permanently stationed in a particular area. Short range projects included activities such as "providing sick-call in hamlets and villages; distributing relief supplies; repairing bridges, roads, and culverts; constructing

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[77] Llewellyn Murdock, Survey Response, USACHCS.

[78] "Chaplain Orientation – RVN," U.S. Army Chaplain School, Fort Hamilton NY, December 1968, 1-5, USACHCS Vietnam Files, Box 5.

[79] Ibid.

shower facilities, latrines, wells, and bulletin boards; and distributing candy to children." On the

other hand, long-range projects included activities such as "the improvement of district

dispensaries; the construction of schools, libraries, village dispensaries, and playgrounds; the

training of midwives and medical technicians; conducting classes in hygiene, sanitation, first aid,

and the English language; and the sponsoring of orphanages, refugee camps, communities,

leprosariums, and Boy Scout troops."[80]

The most significant way in which chaplains contributed to Civic Action Programs was

through the collection and apportionment of donations—officially, non-appropriated funds—

usually collected at services and other venues.[81] Chaplains in Vietnam, the United States, and

other overseas posts made collective and concerted efforts to raise money for various causes in

Vietnam. One successful campaign, for the Go Vap Orphanage resulted in total offerings of

$32,736.48 by mid-1965.[82] On some posts, chaplains conducted informal collection drives, and

at others (mainly stateside posts), friendly competitions between Protestants and Catholics

emerged to see which group could raise the most money.

The Army Chief of Chaplains was quick to point out, however, that Civic Action

Programs were not within the realm of chaplains' duties and suggested that chaplains should not

become too entangled in them. In response to a MACV chaplain who wished to begin a

program of sponsorship of ARVN units in order to meet the "immediately urgent demands of

dependents of Vietnamese servicemen for clothing, shoes, certain kinds of food, personal

hygiene items, and so on," the Chief replied that there was considerable merit in such assistance,

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[80] Ibid.

[81] Chaplains used non-appropriated funds for non-official purposes and to purchase denominationally specific religious accessories, such as candlesticks or processional crosses. Frequently, however, chaplains misused appropriated funds for the second purpose.

[82] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, 1965-1966*.

but that the chaplain should contact the USARV Staff Chaplain and the MACV chaplain to arrange for such assistance through recognized and supported channels. The Chief was apparently wary of longstanding commitments, such as those entered into in Korea, from which chaplains found it difficult to extricate themselves and their units.[83]

Chaplains frequently reported that their interactions with local Vietnamese civilians were among the most significant of their tours. These efforts also increased goodwill in the United States among religious congregations and organizations. In 1971, for example, a United Methodist chaplain newsletter ran a picture of chaplain Ralph VanLandingham, installation chaplain at Bien Hoa Air Base, giving an offering to the sisters of Ke Sat Orphanage in Ho Nai. The picture was titled "So Children Could Have Eggs for breakfast," and the caption told readers that the $239 gift, used to purchase chickens, had been given by the Protestant congregation at Bien Hoa.[84] A Navy chaplain, Francis Burchell, reported that his unit was involved in various Civic Action projects: "Benches were built and placed in the Cat Lo town library; repair three class rooms and dig a well for a school at Vung Tau; rebuilt playground equipment and built desks and chairs for a school at Cat Lo."[85] Chaplains also accompanied doctors, nurses, and medics on Medical Civil Action Programs, where they distributed treats to children and made contacts with local leaders.[86] The reports were not, however, free of paternalist attitudes. A chaplain at the Third Surgical Hospital reported to his colleagues at home

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[83] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, 1967-1968*, 46.

[84] *United Methodist Chaplain Newsletter*, Commission on Chaplains and Related Ministries, United Methodist Church, December 1971, 1, USACHCS, Vietnam Files, Box 7.

[85] "Noteworthy News," *The American Baptist Chaplain*, Department of Chaplaincy Services, American Baptist Convention, April 1969, USACHCS, Vietnam Files, Box 7.

[86] Ibid.

that he was always "pleased to see the dedication and enterprise demonstrated by the educated and committed folk" at the "Catholic school and orphanage in Can Tho."[87]

Other congregations focused their efforts at supporting local religious communities. Donald Concklin's battalion donated their chapel to "Go Gong Village when [the] unit was relocated. The building was reassembled on its new location by personnel of the unit." The unit newspaper reported that the "donation of the chapel in tact, is believed to be the first of its kind in Vietnam."[88] Donald Rich, assigned to a MAG Team, reported that he had considerable and sustained contacts with American missionaries and Vietnamese churches. Because he was a Protestant chaplain assigned to a remote area, he often relied on Vietnamese Catholic priests, most of whom spoke English, to provide coverage for his Catholic unit members.[89] James Johnson forged a long-lasting relationship with a local Vietnamese clergyman, "Pastor Ha," while he was in Vietnam. Ha was killed in the aftermath of American withdrawal, and thirty years after the war, Johnson was able to contact and reconnect with Pastor Ha's daughter, who still lived in Vietnam.[90]

Pastoral and Military Relationships

Chaplains, as staff officers responsible to a Commanding officer, often ventured into scenes without particularly religious consequences but which dealt more generally with troop morale and effectiveness. Their status as officers gave them access to command and their status as clergy helped them remain accessible to enlisted personnel. Others believed that the chaplain's

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[87] "Mail Call," *The Disciple Chaplain*, Committee on Military and Veterans Services, Disciples of Christ July-September 1970, USACHCS, Vietnam Files, Box 7.

[88] "Noteworthy News," *The American Baptist Chaplain*, Department of Chaplaincy Services, American Baptist Convention, July 1968 Vol. XI, USACHCS, Vietnam Files, Box 7.

[89] Ibid.

[90] James Johnson, *Combat Chaplain*, v, 281 and James Johnson interview by author.

advice—especially if it came from a former "military man"—may have held special moral weight. Chaplains performed a variety of duties, including giving character guidance lectures and counseling conscientious objectors, and also performed several unofficial functions as well.

One role that many chaplains reported was that of a mediator between enlisted personnel and their commanding officers. In a speech to history students at Regents University in Denver, Colorado, James McClements gave an extended example of this role. McClements served as an infantryman before becoming a chaplain, and he understood the "chaplain's job was to be with his men in combat—the Private in the trench as well as the Commander in the lead."[91] He resolved to be a spiritual and moral advisor to both his enlisted personnel and his officers. Toward soldiers, he often cast his concern in a paternal or spiritual terms. He recalled finding one soldier who "looked awfully tired when I stood by him in the chow line. I asked him what was happening. He said he was just doing his duty. Upon my prying, he told me he was assigned to night guard duty every night for the past two weeks." McClements then switched modes and approached the private's commander, who told him that the soldier was a "goof-off" and a "cry-baby," at which point McClements returned to the soldier.

The soldier supplied additional information—namely that he had a vision problem that prevented him from seeing well in the dark, but there was nothing in his medical records. The soldier reported that he had tried to alert his commander of the issue, but encountered serious resistance. McClements kept talking and discovered that this soldier had worked as a medic on an emergency response team at home and wished to eventually become a doctor. The chaplain then went to the squadron surgeon to discuss the possibility of getting the Private transferred to the medics, who were always in high demand. When McClements returned to the commander to

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[91] James R. McClements, "The Chaplain and the Culture of Death: An Army Chaplain's Account of a Combat Ministry in the Highlands of South Vietnam," US Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA, 3-4.

offer this solution, McClements was careful to frame this advice and argument in terms of military effectiveness by suggesting that the commander would be guilty of negligence if the soldier were to fail during guard duty and it came to light that he had reported his vision problem. By that point, when McClements suggested the transfer, the commander assented quickly. Later, McClements reported, the soldier earned the Distinguished Service Cross, the Army's second highest medal for valor in combat, for pulling a soldier from a burning helicopter.[92] Here, the chaplain's military experience, his view of the soldier's and the commander's perspective, and his understanding of military channels and the chaplain's advisory function enabled him to act as an effective intermediary for an unhappy soldier and commander.

Other chaplains used their flexible schedules and ability to travel away from a command post in order to report first-hand about a unit's personnel after an engagement. James Johnson recalled that after any unit suffered casualties, he took the first available opportunity to visit evacuation and surgical hospitals to see the men. He acted as a chaplain—offering comfort and spiritual counsel to wounded soldiers whom he knew—but also as a commanders eyes and ears, gathering information about the severity of a soldier's wounds and the prospects of his return to duty. Johnson recalled that upon his return to Headquarters, he would brief the commander about the status of each soldier who had been wounded.[93] Though Johnson's official role did not require him to act as a liaison between wounded soldiers and his commander, his being chaplain gave him access to both groups that other officers or enlisted personnel might not have enjoyed.

At its best, the chaplain's relationship with a commander was one of mutual respect and support and the staff shared a common sense of mission. One chaplain, who wished to remain anonymous, wrote in his survey response regarding the influence of his first commander: "I was

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[92] James R. McClements, "The Chaplain and the Culture of Death: An Army Chaplain's Account of a Combat Ministry in the Highlands of South Vietnam," USMHI, 3-4.

[93] James Johnson, interview by author.

blessed—my commander held chaplains in high esteem—every one knew it—not because he preached by word but by action—consequently we were very much a part of the team—had all the support one could expect."[94] Generally, officers appreciated chaplains accompanying their units, as long as provisions for the chaplain's safety were in place, believing that it increased troop morale and occasionally brought luck in battle. On the other hand, commanders could frustrate a chaplain's efforts by impeding or limiting his ability to visit troops, conduct services, or perform other religious tasks.

But not all commanders appreciated chaplains. Conflicts between chaplains and their commanding officers over moral issues, performance evaluations for chaplains, the nature of religious services, or expectations about a chaplain's primary duty played out in a variety of ways. In some cases, a contentious relationship resulted in a neutral to negative Officer Efficiency Report (OER) for a chaplain. But more often, commanders simply complicated instead of facilitated the chaplains' role. In cases like these, chaplains identified themselves as right and perhaps even righteous, and thus supported by a "higher" authority. In their reflections, chaplains were nearly always successful in convincing their commanders of the positive effects of their presence. Claude Newby wrote that one of his first combat commanders, Captain Dave Root, disliked the chaplain's presence and went out of his way to hamper Newby's activities. Root used his position as a battalion staff officer to give Newby false flight schedules and otherwise make his life difficult. In a brief confrontation, Root told Newby, "I've been an atheist all my life. As far as I am concerned, you are a bad influence on the troops, and I am duty-bound to protect them from you. I'll do everything I can to make you miss flights and otherwise hamper your activities." Newby responded with a threat of his own: that if Root gave him any more "false information about flights or interfere[d] in any other way with religious support," he

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94 Anonymous survey response, USACHCS.

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and Newby would "be standing before the battalion commander."[95] According to Newby, after a communication breakdown between three platoons where Root's unit could have suffered heavy friendly-fire casualties, the captain declared his atheism shaken, and thereafter requested that chaplains accompany his men as often as possible.

Other commanders, while not openly hostile to the chaplains' activities, doubted that religious faith was an asset in battle. Curt Bowers recalled a specific unit commander who refused to attend field worship services, but who "faithfully put the word out when divine worship was conducted for his troops." Once when Bowers noticed him standing nearby and asked the officer, "'Harry, what's going on? I thought you said you didn't want to go to church because you are not in sympathy with what I am preaching—the love of Christ and love of your neighbor.'" The officer responded, "'Naw, Chaplain, I don't want my men to get too loving. They have to be fighters, and I don't want them to get too much of this Christianity stuff.'" The commander assured Bowers that he believed "a little bit won't hurt them" but he did not "want the guys to think I am getting soft."[96] Combat required men to harden their hearts and minds, and to some, religion was an unnecessary and even dangerous distraction from the business of making war.

For many chaplains, however, it seemed that their relationships with their supervisory chaplains were more problematic than with their commanders. Supervisory chaplains were to provide spiritual support and guidance for chaplains under them, but this role was largely an unspoken one, and some chaplains handled this part of their jobs better than others. Albert Hanson, a Roman Catholic chaplain, reported that his supervisory chaplain was "Useless—He was caught up in his own need to please the commander. In an 8 month period [he] never

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[95] Newby, *It Took Heroes*, 145.

[96] Curt Bowers as told to Glen Van Dyne, *Forward Edge of the Battle Area: A Chaplain's Story* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1987), 75-76.

visited my AO, nor asked how I was doing."[97] Other chaplains were more charitable in their

explanations. Douglas Edward reported that "in Combat situations, each Chaplain was busy

taking care of his own units that he didn't have much time for socializing or giving much

support to other chaplains, other than rare occasions. Most of the ones I knew were busy 'doing

their own thing,' and trying to stay alive."[98] Joseph Beasley, who was posted at USARV

headquarters and saw little if any combat action, remembered a similar feeling: the goal was to

finish the year and get out alive. Aside from this sort of focus, Beasley also emphasized that

there were rarely large concentrations of chaplains in any one area—even at Long Binh, one of

the largest military installations in South Vietnam, only three chaplains were stationed

permanently at the base.[99] Many chaplains reported receiving little spiritual or professional

support from chaplaincy channels.

Regardless of their administrative and official functions, however, chaplains, especially

those serving in combat units and in non-administrative positions, viewed their primary role as

pastoral. They were in Vietnam to "bring God to men, and men to God." Donald Shea wrote

simply that "Ministry is people where they are." Though US-based clergy and laypeople

frequently chastised chaplains for not taking a more prophetic stance on the Vietnam War,

chaplains themselves insisted this was not their primary responsibility and some argued that to

take a prophetic role would undermine their pastoral effectiveness.[100]

In addition to advising commanders on moral and spiritual matters that affected the unit,

the chaplain also offered counsel to officers on personal matters. In the official history survey,

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[97] Albert M. Hansen, Survey Response, USACHCS.

[98] Douglas Sowards, Survey Response, USACHCS.

[99] Joseph Beasley, interview by author, 13 September 2007, Chapel Hill, NC.

[100] See Anne Loveland, "Prophetic Ministry and the Military Chaplaincy during the Vietnam Era," In *Moral Problems in American Life: New Perspectives on Cultural History*, ed. Karen Halttunen and Lewis Perry (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

most chaplains recalled that officers came to them regarding a variety of issues, including both personal and family situations and about command and leadership issues. Officers' top concerns, as identified by chaplains included "home and family problems," "leadership problems; stress of command," "homesickness, separation, and loneliness," "marital/romantic problems," and "the morality and ethics of war, particularly Vietnam." For enlisted personnel, the concerns were largely the same. Chaplains identified the top concerns of enlisted men as "homesickness, separation, and loneliness," "home and family problems," "Fear (not getting home again, danger, death, etc.)," "marital/romantic problems," "personal problems (stress, anxiety, anger, depression, etc.," and "drug and alcohol problems."[101] For enlisted personnel, problems and questions about the morality of war and the reasons for American involvement in Vietnam presented themselves less frequently than for officers.

As the war went on, many chaplains became disillusioned by soldiers' apathy toward religion and with their behavior in general. Whereas earlier chaplains viewed the potential for ministry and their own effectiveness positively, chaplains during the drawdown phase were generally more despondent. One wrote in an unofficial "After Action Report," filed in 1973, "As the total number of men diminishes, the relative paucity of those attending religious services becomes even more apparent. A spirit of killing time of simply waiting out one's DEROS [Date of Earliest Return from Overseas], a sense of boredom, etc. all contribute to make men apathetic and lackadaisical." He continued that many of the men were "religiously immature and grossly uninstructed," which meant they "fail[ed] to see any relevance or applicability of religious practices." On top of spotty attendance at religious services and attention to spiritual concerns, chaplains increasingly voiced complaints about the "sinful" and hedonistic lifestyles of many

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[101] Henry F. Ackermann, *He Was Always There: The U.S. Army Chaplain Ministry in the Vietnam Conflict* (Washington DC: USGPO, 1989), 232.

soldiers and officers in Vietnam. John Kenney wrote that "the overwhelming majority of men are either actively engaged in excessive drinking habits, cohabitation, or recourse to prostitutes, drugs, etc. or, at least they are immersed in a milieu of continual and inescapable blasphemy, profanity, obscenity which pervades their consciousness and renders them feeling 'unfit' and 'unworthy' to come into contact with the sacred or whatever represents it and so they stay away in droves." [102] He estimated that "less than one per cent of enlisted men . . . participated in formal religion" and lamented the fact that a "chaplain may spend an entire day in getting to an isolated area (at considerable expense to the government and possible danger to himself), advertise time and place for services to be held, personally contact the majority of those present and then have no one show up."[103] This was a sense of defeat and frustration that simply was not consistently and visibly present early in the war. Chaplains, like others who observed US action in Vietnam, frequently came to believe the war was a colossal mistake, and a terrible waste of lives.

Kenney in particular provided a clear voice of opposition and frustration in the late stages of the war. The chaplain, in his estimation, was frustrated by the war and the behaviors it engendered, but the angst was deeper. Chaplains, of whom many had concluded that "a sincere approach to God could possibly help any man to solve his problems and live a better life," faced a feeling of uselessness and helplessness because the soldiers' and officers' "indifference prevent[ed] and preclude[d] that."[104] Kenney continued, "this experience, repeated continuously, can make him feel that he himself and what he has to offer are about as useful and appreciated as another wart on the proverbial toad, and the disappointment in proportion as he himself takes

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[102] John F. Kenny, "After Action Report: The Chaplaincy in Vietnam at the Time of Cessation of Hostilities," USARV/MACV SUPCOM, 12 February 1973, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

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the role of clergyman seriously, bears all the more heavily on his own morale," and the chaplain's morale, according to Kenney's interpretation, was critical for the chaplain personally but also for the unit—a demoralized and ineffective chaplain could only damage the military mission.[105]

Chaplains performed both official and unofficial functions when they served in Vietnam, and both types of duties contributed to chaplains' roles as cultural mediators. The complicated system of quotas, coupled with chronic shortages and overages of chaplains in some faith categories, necessitated ecumenical cooperation whereby chaplains crossed denominational and faith-group lines to minister to a diverse military audience. Chaplains combined their roles as religious and moral advocates and as military officers as they helped commanders deal with issues such as drug use and conscientious objection. They acted as liaisons between officers and enlisted personnel and between the military and Vietnamese civilians. And most chaplains seemed to welcome these opportunities to bridge cultural divides. Rather than precipitating internal conflict because their roles demanded contradictory commitments, chaplains functioned well in a system that required them to combine their religious and military identities.

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[105] Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTESTED MEANING AND IDENTITIES: CHAPLAINS RESPOND TO CONFLICT IN COMBAT ZONES

Somewhere in Vietnam, in a bomb crater filled with water, Joseph Dulany baptized soldiers, and in those moments, remnants of death and destruction became fonts for the symbolic waters of life. On another military base, James Johnson grieved as he held the lifeless body of a friend, having missed the mission in order to baptize another soldier and was left pondering the significance of trading a new birth for a death. Later, Johnson recorded in great detail the mutilation of a Viet Cong corpse by American servicemen with C-ration plastic spoons, and in his diary agonized over his inability to respond according to his moral beliefs. On a ship, Joseph O'Donnell blessed the mangled remains of eighteen marines with the Catholic Sacrament for the Sick, a blessing as much for those left alive as for the dead. Curt Bowers baptized soldiers of different races, ethnicities, and backgrounds as others armed with automatic weapons stood watch to ensure their safety. Orris Kelly offered Communion to soldiers returning home, regardless of their religious preference, as a symbol of community and reconciliation. James Hutchens participated in every aspect of his unit's initiation ritual, though he substituted lukewarm water for alcohol. Chaplain Tumkin went AWOL when conditions at camp got too rough.

In the midst of day-to-day work—holding services, filling out paperwork, traveling to units, counseling soldiers, and visiting troops—and perhaps as a result of it, chaplains confronted a variety of problems on the battlefield. As chaplains worked through complex and intense moral, theological, and pastoral dilemmas, using a variety of strategies, they fulfilled their

roles as cultural mediators within the military community as they adapted traditional religious practices and interpretations into the context of war and conversely as they reframed the experience of war within religious language and imagery. Doing so brought together two sets of cultural norms and values that frequently appeared opposed to one another. Most often, chaplains—like those to whom they ministered—made decisions based on the exigencies of particular moments. In war, chaplains not only faced broad questions of morality and identity but also struggled with apparently more mundane issues such as alcohol use and profanity. Moral, theological, and pastoral tensions tested chaplains' beliefs and world-views and demanded that chaplains work out ways to reconcile potential conflict. In response to these tensions, chaplains managed their dual identities as clergymen and officers by developing practical solutions to moral questions and crisis-based theologies that helped them identify meaning in war. This process was a fundamentally creative one, requiring chaplains to rethink their own identities and ministries in light of their wartime experiences. As they addressed theological problems and reconceived of their ministries, chaplains also responded to changed liturgical and worship settings, and again, they engaged in a creative process to participate in the creation of diverse and dynamic liturgies of war, or community acts of worship, which were particularly suited to the war zone.

This chapter relies primarily on chaplains' first-person accounts to reconstruct the experiences of some of the American military chaplains who served in Vietnam. Broadly, these accounts include published memoirs or autobiographical essays, published and unpublished letters and diaries, chaplain-authored articles and reports in various denominational and ecumenical publications, oral interviews, and Army chaplains' responses to official history surveys. At best, these sources that deal with chaplains' experiences during the Vietnam War allow us to look through a glass darkly. Even though chaplains did not usually participate in the

actual fighting, their reflections about combat are as problematic as others. As historians have undoubtedly learned from the long tradition of using personal sources like memoirs and diaries, the human memory is fallible; the pen can be used as a weapon; and time and audience are often unwanted filters that stand between historian and subject. These sources, however, are critical to understanding the human experience, and there is significant insight to be gained from them.[1] If experience and interpretation—rather than simply structures and forces—are central to telling military and religious history, then these are rich archives indeed.

Each of these types of sources brings strengths and limitations to historians. Memoirs, narratives, surveys, and interviews are all subject to the distortions of memory and time. Memoirs and narratives were written with an audience in mind and for specific purposes, which may be political, religious, therapeutic, or familial, among others. Within the area of first-person autobiographical writing, the combat memoir or narrative has held a particularly important place.[2] The combat memoir frequently employed specific tropes and images that serve to relate the experience of combat to an unfamiliar audience. And within this broader category of war memoirs, chaplains' first person writings have received scant scholarly attention—they have not usually been considered in compilations of combat memoirs, because chaplains did not participate as combatants, and in other collections, such as those that focused on gender, racial, or ethnic minorities' experiences in war, chaplains—mostly white and all male until the 1970s— voices were excluded as well. The significant exception was Bradley Carter's 2004 PhD dissertation, "'Reverence Helmeted and Armored': A Study of Twentieth-Century U.S. Military

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[1] Joan W. Scott presents an extended analysis of and challenge to historians' use of "experience" as a foundational concept in knowledge production. Scott argues that rather than asserting "experience" as the "origin of our explanation," we should instead view it as "that which we want to explain." Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Summer 1991), 797.

[2] On the sub-genre of twentieth-century (primarily) Anglo-American combat memoirs see Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Viking, Penguin Press, 1997).

Chaplain Memoirs," which examined these accounts as a distinct sub-genre of autobiographical writing in order to draw conclusions about chaplains' roles and attitudes in the twentieth-century United States.[3]

Other sources, such as diaries, letters, and period publications, which seem closer to capturing "actual" experience, also have attendant limitations and constraints. Even diarists and letter-writers produced texts for audiences—whether the audience was themselves, family members, or a broader public. In the course of writing, they chose what to record and what to leave out. After experiencing combat situations, they often choose to write nothing, insisting that words were inadequate to relate the experience or that the words would be too much for the intended audience to handle. If letters and diaries were published, the issue of editorial selectivity must be factored in, and if they remained unpublished, they were normally still subject to archivists' decisions and the permissions of the collection holders. Accounts in publications during the Vietnam War were also subject to editorial decisions about relevance, content, style, and length.[4] Furthermore, many of these documents were subject to security and classification review by government and military officials.

Nevertheless, these sources bring scholars as close as possible to the experience of chaplains in the Vietnam war zone. Wherever possible, I relied on texts produced at the time of the war, but given their relative scarcity, I also use memoirs, narratives, surveys, and interviews produced long after the fact. Often, I chose to take chaplains at their word, especially about events and practices during the war; however, their interpretations of those events and practices

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[3] Bradley L. Carter, "Reverence Helmeted and Armored": A Study of Twentieth-Century U.S. Military Chaplain Memoirs," (PhD diss. University of Kansas, 2004).

[4] For an extended discussion of the limitations of various types of first-person accounts of war, see Alex Vernon, "Introduction: No Genre's Land: The Problem of Genre in War Memoirs and Military Autobiographies," in *Arms and the Self: War, the Military, and Autobiographical Writing* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2005), 1-40.

I have read more skeptically, and the production and significance of many of those interpretations is explored in greater detail in Chapter Five.[5] Due to the specific and personal motivations of chaplains who chose to record and make public their wartime recollections, the practices and events presented in this chapter should not be interpreted as normative or even typical; they do, however, reveal a broad range of responses to theological, moral, pastoral, and identity-related conflicts. A more representative sample might reveal an even more complicated picture.

Theorizing the Chaplain's Experience: Role Conflict

Though limited, the historiography on chaplains in modern militaries has emphasized role conflict or tension as the central problem for chaplains. Based on sociological role theory, role conflict emerged when competing and incompatible expectations were placed on a single person. Consequently, scholars have argued, this conflict must be resolved—most often by compartmentalizing the roles, rationalizing away the roles' incompatibility, or abandoning one of the roles. According to many observers, the American chaplaincy system, conceptually and practically, was rife with contradictions, ironies, and conflicts. Role conflict, and the corollary conclusion that it resulted in chaplains abandoning their religious identities does not fit chaplains' experiences during the Vietnam War. Though chaplains faced intense moral and theological questions—often about their admittedly dual roles or identities—those questions did

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[5] John Towes has suggested that the work of intellectual history, and I argue, by extension, cultural history as well, has been to "reaffirm . . . that human subjects still make and remake the worlds of meaning in which they are suspended and to insist that these worlds are not creations *ex nihilo* but responses to, and shapings of changing worlds of experience ultimately irreducible to the linguistic forms in which they appear." John E. Toews, "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience," *American Historical Review* 92 (October 1987): 881. Though Scott offers a compelling critique Towes's essentializing "experience" as separate from language, his statement reminds historians that the production and texts and language surrounding experience does not originate without the sensual and visceral knowledge of events. Scott writes, on the relationship between experience and knowledge: "Writing is reproduction, transmission—the communication of knowledge gained through (visual, visceral) experience." Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," 776.

not necessarily arise from conflicting role expectations or even the various identities they were

expected to assume. Whereas the "role conflict" model asserted a fundamental incompatibility

or tension embedded within the roles and expectations themselves, in reality, chaplains actively

made choices about their identities, roles, and responses to tension, either real or perceived.

Chaplains confronted dilemmas that called into question both their functions in and

interpretations of war. They managed their identities as soldiers, clergy, and officers in a variety

of ways, few of which demanded the black-or-white decision to support or oppose the war. Like

others in the war, chaplains experienced success and failure, heroism and cowardice, certainty

and hesitation, faith and doubt as they confronted moral, spiritual, and physical uncertainties in

Vietnam.

Shortly after World War II, against the tide of Christian Realism that sanctioned military

action in the face of overwhelming evil, sociologist Waldo Burchard suggested there were five

basic tenets of Christianity that would induce role conflict for chaplains. He argued the Christian

doctrines "of love, of universal brotherhood, of peace, and of non-resistance to evil, and the

commandment, 'You shall not kill" were "manifestly incompatible with the aims of a nation at

war. Therefore it is impossible for the Christian in military service to put them into practice."[6]

He concluded, then, that chaplains compartmentalized their roles when conflict occurred and

most often subordinated their roles as ministers of religion to their roles as military officers.

Burchard's basic assertion that chaplains experienced and were unable to adequately resolve role

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[6] Christian Realism was a theological concept originated by Reinhold Niebuhr in response to World War II and the emerging Cold War. It held that humans occasionally had to forego the "Kingdom of God on Earth" because of human fallibility; instead, humans were required to confront evil wherever they found it. For Niebuhr's writing see *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (New York: Scribner, 1953); for commentary and analysis see Robin Lovin, *Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Russel F. Sizemore, "Reinhold Niebuhr and the Rhetoric of Liberal Anticommunism: Christian Realism and the Rise of the Cold War," (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1987); Gary Dorrien *Soul in Society: The Making and Renewal of Social Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995); and Ronald H. Stone, *Christian Realism and Peacemaking: Issues in US Foreign Policy* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988). It is critical to note, however, that Reinhold Niebuhr turned away sharply from supporting the Vietnam War in the 1960s. Waldo Burchard, "Role Conflicts of Military Chaplains" *American Sociological Review* 19 (October 1954): 529-530.

conflict has remained a persistent one in the literature dealing with chaplains in the late twentieth century.

More recently, historian Anne Loveland has argued that much of this line of argumentation stemmed from the rise of secular theology in the late 1960s, as ministers were expected to take on prophetic, rather than pastoral roles when dealing with moral and social issues. Many liberal theologians and ministers believed military chaplains left this role unfulfilled in their responses to and participation in the Vietnam War. Loveland further argued that while mainline churches may have emphasized the prophetic role of the minister during war, chaplains viewed their roles as primarily pastoral, requiring them to minister to troops in Vietnam regardless of their personal attitudes toward the war.[7] Toward the end of the war, Loveland claimed, chaplains and the chaplaincy moved to a third model, one of institutional ministry, which made the military itself a primary focus for chaplain activities after the Vietnam War.[8] Yet even this more sophisticated model that took into account the theological and religious ferment of the 1960s placed the primary source of conflict for chaplains in their various roles or expectations of external forces.

Conflict was often central to chaplains' experiences, but the idea of role conflict, per se, assumed a fundamental incompatibility between religion (specifically Christianity) and war (and specifically the Vietnam War.) Far earlier than widespread secular dissent, non-pacifist religious

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[7] Anne C. Loveland, "Prophetic Ministry and the Military Chaplaincy during the Vietnam Era," in *Moral Problems in American Life: New Perspectives on Cultural History*, ed. Karen Halttunen (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 245-260. For examples of role-conflict based argument see, Clarence Abercrombie, *The Military Chaplaincy* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1977); Leonard Ahrnsbrak, "Civil Religion and the Military: Are Chaplains Ministers of Two Religions?" *Christian Century*, 20 February 1974, 206-208; Waldo W. Burchard, "Role Conflicts of Military Chaplains" *American Sociological Review* 19, no. 5 (1954): 196-210; Michael T. Jones, "The Air Force Chaplain: Clergy or Officer?" (Maxwell Air Force Base, Air War College, Air University, 1996); Margaret Kibben Grun, "The Military Chaplaincy: Defining the Tension, Discovering the Opportunity" (DMin. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2002); Clarence L. Reaser, "Military Chaplain: God's Man or the Governments?" *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 62, no. 3 (1969): 70-73; Gordon H. Zahn, *The Military Chaplaincy: A Study of Role Tension in the Royal Air Force* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969).

[8] Loveland, "Prophetic Ministry."

dissent emerged when Lyndon Johnson escalated the war by inserting American combat troops into Vietnam in 1965, and it intensified until the eventual withdrawal of American troops in 1972. Historian Mark Toulouse argued convincingly that even major Evangelical and conservative Christian periodicals had turned against the war, or at least softened their support for it, by the early 1970s.[9] Given the cultural forces that aligned in opposition to the war, it was indeed difficult to imagine significant Christian responses to the Vietnam War that fell outside of this paradigm.

But the vision of Christianity and Christian mission that would make role conflict most likely or acute was generally not the vision held by chaplains. Understanding the process by which chaplains participated in the Vietnam War, and their own descriptions of their wartime experiences revealed a different picture. At the most basic level, their writings demand a reinterpretation of the meaning and sources of conflict for chaplains. If the conflict arose from contradictions and inconsistencies *within* a chaplain's religious beliefs rather than from inherent role conflict, then how the chaplain resolved that conflict in both military and religious terms becomes more readily apparent. Rather than compartmentalizing or subordinating certain identities, the process of conflict resolution became an exercise in identity management that involved both religious and military concerns.

Through combat experience and subsequent reflection, Christian chaplains worked out solutions to conflict created by theological, pastoral, moral, and identity-related dilemmas. Regarding moral questions, chaplains formulated practical solutions to conflicts as they arose, and in so doing, created a complex and sometimes ambiguous identity for themselves in the military community. When they did confront conflict or tension between their clerical and

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[9] Mark G. Toulouse, Christian Responses to Vietnam: The Organization of Dissent," Religion and Culture Web Forum, June 2007, http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/webforum/062007/vietnam.pdf, accessed 29 February 2008.

military roles, they did not often resolve them in favor of the "military" solution.[10] Rather than using "role conflict" as the sociological and theoretical basis for understanding chaplains' experiences, "cultural mediation" allows for a wider range of beliefs and responses. Chaplains worked to reconcile two worlds: sometimes those worlds converged and strengthened one another, and at other times, those worlds seemed to collide. In either case, however, chaplains worked to articulate the conflicts and to resolve them in ways that recognized the validity of both their experiences in war and their experiences of religion. Cultural knowledge and structural position afforded chaplains a range of flexible responses to these situations.

Morality and Identity

Even as chaplains carried out their official duties, which involved both secular and religious functions within the military, and wore uniforms of their respective services, complete with the unit patches for their assignments, chaplains' religious identities were never far away. They wore religious insignia—a cross or shepherd's staff—on their uniforms, conducted services in appropriate religious vestments, and were addressed as "chaplain" rather than by their ecclesial titles or military rank. They embodied the two worlds in which they operated, and by extension, they confronted questions about their proper place within the military. By involving themselves in the moral and military life of their new communities, chaplains created identities for themselves that incorporated both military and religious characteristics. Whereas role conflict or role tension has featured prominently in the literature on chaplains, closer examination of chaplains' behaviors and reflections revealed a more complex process of identity formation. This

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[10] See Clarence Abercrombie, *The Military Chaplaincy* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1997); Abercrombie's book was a sociological cohort study on chaplains, non-chaplain military officers, and non-chaplain clergy. He concluded that chaplains, in terms of their views about the military, war and peace, and theology, fell somewhere in between non-chaplain clergy and officers of similar rank, experience, or denomination, but that they were generally closer to the "clergy" mindset than the "military" mindset.

process relied on both religious and military language and ritual, and both military and religious cultures contributed to the formation of the chaplains' identity.

Chaplains considered their roles as clergy and officers as they made decisions, but their identities were ultimately neither uniform nor unambiguous. In the combat zone and on post, chaplains walked a fine line between their two worlds. If they could not be held up as moral examples, they risked losing credibility as clergy. But if they could not relate to soldiers—in mess halls, or clubs, in the field, or around base—they risked losing credibility as soldiers. In practice, chaplains had to make decisions about which issues were worth fighting over, set moral and ethical standards for themselves, and adapt to different situations.

At times, chaplains confronted moral questions common in military life, including alcohol, profanity, and sexual behaviors. Chaplains responded to these situations differently, usually based on a combination of their own religious views, their understanding of the "military" situation, and their perceived relationship to the soldiers and officers with whom they worked. For many evangelical and conservative chaplains, alcohol proved to be a serious testing ground. For some chaplains, especially for those in conservative denominations that declared drinking alcohol to be sinful, the choice seemed easy enough. In response to a query about the Southern Baptist position on chaplains imbibing alcohol, the SBC Chaplains Commission stated in a newsletter, in all capital letters: "THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION CHAPLAINS COMMISSION WILL NOT ISSUE DENOMINATIONAL ENDORSEMENT FOR A CHAPLAINCY POSITION TO A DRINKING MINISTER, OR ONE WHO IS REPORTED TO BE A DRINKER. FURTHER, THE COMMISSION WILL NOT CONTINUE DENOMINATIONAL ENDORSEMENT OF A KNOWN DRINKING SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHAPLAIN."[11] The position seemed unequivocal.

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[11] USACHCS Vietnam Files, "The Chaplaincy," TRADOC Issues, unnumbered box.

On the ground, however, chaplains made decisions about their own use of or abstention from alcohol, and most believed that successful chaplains would operate so that neither their personal beliefs nor their ministry was compromised but so they could still relate to troops. In one apparently unsuccessful case, Joseph Dulany heard that his replacement was ill-received by the troops when he allegedly refused to enter the Officer Club "because the men were drinking beer."[12] Faced with a situation in which new unit members went through an induction ritual full of alcohol, James Hutchens decided to participate in the ceremonies, but he replaced the potent drink with lukewarm water.[13] Hutchens understood the significance of initiation into the unit but chose not to abandon a central tenet of his religious belief. Curt Bowers, upon returning from an extended period in the field, reported that he found nothing but beer at the base camp when sodas had been promised as well, but concluded after some contemplation, "I knew they [the troops] were looking, and I had made my stand in terms of alcohol, so I thought to myself, You haven't drunk up to this time, so don't start it now."[14] Bowers framed his dilemma as one of setting and meeting expectations rather than as one over the morality of a chaplain drinking, believing that his actions would reflect his character and even the character of other chaplains. Although the chaplains responded differently, each of these three ultimately chose not to drink alcohol. Others most certainly made different decisions, but clearly some chaplains held their personal religious beliefs above the value of fitting in within the military. Chaplains struggled to become part of the military community and still set themselves apart as religious and moral leaders.

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[12] Dulany, *Once a Soldier*, 41.

[13] James Hutchens, *Beyond Combat* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 81.

[14] Bowers, *Forward Edge*, 60.

Profanity and prostitution also tested chaplains; soldiers and officers frequently apologized for using expletives in a chaplain's presence, and again, chaplains responded differently. Some defused the situation with humor, others confronted the issue as a problem, and still others ignored it or dismissed it as an insignificant offense given the circumstances.[15] There were similarly different, though generally negative, responses to prostitution and to officers' tacit or explicit approval of it. Some protested loudly, others accepted it as an unavoidable if regrettable fact, and still others reflected on the strength of their own relationships with their wives at home.[16] Chaplains who served in combat and close to troops wrestled with the issues in a much more delicate way than their colleagues who served in the civilian community or in rear areas of the military. Chaplains consistently recognized the moral ambiguities and stress brought about by combat. Issues that may have been black and white in "the world" became gray in Vietnam.

Chaplains dealt with moral and religious issues and their connection to war even before troops deployed. James Hutchens recalled that the sermons he gave before his unit deployed centered on the "responsibility to our government (Romans 13), the sixth commandment ('Thou shalt not kill'), and the problem of the Christian serving in the Army."[17] Hutchens crafted his sermons to reassure soldiers going into combat that what they were doing was not only right,

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[15] For responses to profanity see, Samuel Hopkins, *A Chaplain Remembers Vietnam* (Kansas City, MO: Truman, 2002), 163; and John W. Schumacher, *A Soldier of God Remembers: Memoir Highlights of a Career Army Chaplain* (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Brethren North American Missions, 2000) 57-60.

[16] For responses to prostitution and other sexual activities see, Hopkins, *Chaplain Remembers*, 165-168; J. Robert Falabella, *Vietnam Memoirs: A Passage to Sorrow* (New York: Pageant Press International, 1971), 135-136; and Hutchens, *Beyond Combat*, 55-57.

[17] Hutchens, *Beyond Combat*, 17. The first two verses of Romans 13 read, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment." Exodus 20:13 reads, "You shall not murder" (NRSV). The shorthand numbering of the commandments (the way in which individual verses are grouped together to derive a list of ten), however, is usually dependent on denomination and Biblical translation. Thus, most Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Christians label this commandment as the sixth one, while Roman Catholics and some liturgical Protestants label it the fifth commandment.

but also their duty. In the cramped quarters of troop ships, isolated at sea for three or four weeks, soldiers, sailors, and airmen had ample time to question the morality of war and to participate in worship and Bible study. Curt Bowers recalled that the most common question asked was, "Can I be a Christian and still kill?" He answered using various examples from the Old and New Testaments to reassure soldiers of their duty and morality.[18] Yet he cautioned readers of his memoir not to frame this question solely in philosophical or theological terms. In combat, soldiers did not enjoy the "luxury" or safety of classrooms; they "were wrestling to find the real flesh-and-blood answers," for their battles would soon deal in flesh and blood rather than pen and paper.[19]

As in other wars, soldiers faced acute questions about morality, killing, and faith. In combat, neither chaplains nor soldiers were given to asking moral questions, and chaplains did not expect moral ambiguities to cloud or color the judgment of soldiers in the field. "In the midst of battle, everything seems impersonal," wrote Raymond Johnson. "Survival is a man's primary concern. Therefore, it's not fair to really pose the question of whether or not you can love your enemy under such conditions. You can't really require a black and white answer in the gray of conflict."[20] But once survival was no longer in question, Johnson concluded that morality and theology must necessarily re-enter a soldier's (or chaplain's) conscience. Johnson suggested that while the New Testament commandment to "Love your enemy" could not be a fair question in the field, it became immediately relevant as soon as that enemy was captured. In such a case, a soldier was "responsible for rendering an answer to the question, 'How do I treat my enemy?' He becomes a real person. You must treat him as one who deserves to be called a

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[18] Bowers, *Forward Edge*, 34.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Raymond Johnson, *Postmark: Mekong Delta* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1968), 49.

creature of God."[21] Johnson's language implied that combat, even for chaplains, dehumanized the enemy; if the enemy was not fully human, killing was simply a means for survival.

Chaplains' status as non-combatants complicated their understanding of their identity and raised significant moral, religious, and practical questions as well. According to the Geneva Conventions, as non-combatants, chaplains were not permitted to carry weapons.[22] US military regulations stipulated that a chaplain "should not bear arms; he will not be required to bear arms." Shortly thereafter, however, the Army field manual added that, "This nation, has, nevertheless, expected that chaplains accompany their troops into combat."[23] According to the chaplains, the American experience in Korea proved to many that the enemy did not respect chaplains' non-combatant status. In Korea, no chaplain who was captured survived as a Prisoner of War; they died with soldiers in POW camps or were executed, as the closest communist equivalent to a chaplain was a party political officer.[24]

Carrying weapons raised all sorts of legal, moral, religious, and safety issues. Had all chaplains and commanders reached the same conclusion, it would have revealed a certain level of clarity (on theoretical and practical levels) about the place of the chaplain in combat. Instead, the problems and their solutions remained ambiguous. Al Arvay concluded that "even our own military people . . . didn't know exactly where we were to belong." He recalled a particular incident where his commanding officer asked him to carry a weapon. He refused, but

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Chaplains are considered protected persons under the first Geneva Convention. They may not renounce these rights (Convention I, Article 7), and these rights may not be negotiated away (Convention I, Article 6). Chaplains who are captured are not considered prisoners of war (Convention I, Article 28). The Additional Protocol I states again that chaplains are non-combatants and have no right to participate in hostilities (Article 43, Section 2). For text of Geneva Conventions see http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/lawofwar/lawwar.htm, accessed 20 February 2005.

[23] United States, Department of the Army, *Department of the Army Field Manual 16-5: The Chaplain* (Washington D.C., August 1964).

[24] Newby, *Cavalry Chaplain*,, 23-24, and Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 64-100, especially 82-83.

remembered the officer "getting very angry with me." Arvay went into his hooch and remembered, "when I was leaving there was a rifle, an M-16 that was placed there and the sergeant telling me the colonel wanted me to carry it because nobody else was going to defend me. I had to defend myself."[25] Some chaplains refused to go into hostile combat situations because they would not carry a weapon and did not feel it fair or safe to rely on others for their defense. Others tried to ensure they remained with company-sized units at all times, but they occasionally found themselves attached to platoon-sized units when a company split up for tactical reasons. Some chaplains carried weapons openly, though other chaplains generally looked down upon this practice. In one instance in 1964, a photograph of a chaplain armed with a .45 caliber pistol and a fragmentation grenade ran in US newspapers.[26] Some decided they would pick up the weapon of a wounded man if they had to. Others relied on their enlisted assistants for defense, though many questioned "school-trained" assistants' abilities to protect them or the fairness of asking for such a sacrifice. Commanders, on the other hand, seemed to worry little about potential conflicts with the Geneva Conventions. Newby concluded that "most field commanders . . . smiled on the chaplain carrying a weapon for his own protection, and some of them on occasion allowed or forbade a chaplain to go into a hot situation, depending on whether the chaplain was prepared to 'take care of himself.'"[27] A chaplain's usefulness in combat could have been immediately reversed if his presence endangered the unit.

Chaplains also had to address moral and military issues regarding war crimes and atrocities. Often chaplains acted as moral compasses for soldiers and officers. Generally having reconciled, on the most basic level, the ability of Christians or other faithful men to participate

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[25] Al Arvay, interview by Henry Ackermann, quoted in Ackermann, *Always There*, 11.

[26] Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 149.

[27] Newby, *Cavalry Chaplain*, 23-24.

in some wars, chaplains often confronted situations in which the question had to do with morality in or the conduct of war. Chaplains responses to war crimes challenged and complicated their identities in both religious and military communities. In some cases, chaplains effectively used their religious or moral force to inform commanders about possible war crimes and to effect changes in policy; at other times, chaplains' emotions took over and their responses were distressing to them. Within civilian circles, religious leaders asked what the chaplain was doing to address war crimes or atrocities. How could a chaplain allow atrocities such as the massacre at My Lai to occur, when a group of American soldiers murdered several hundred Vietnamese men, women, and children in cold blood?[28] If chaplains, as representatives of religion and morality, were unable to stop these crimes, what kind of witness did they present?[29] On the surface, it seems that a chaplain who responded ambivalently to war crimes had clearly subordinated his religious identity to his military one. Yet again, chaplains' reflections on similar issues reveal a more complex situation.

At My Lai, the concept of area coverage and a general shortage of chaplains meant that Charlie Company, 11th Brigade, Americal Division—the company responsible for the massacre—saw a chaplain only occasionally. Though no chaplains were present at the incident, division chaplains quickly became embroiled in the deeply flawed investigation and subsequent cover-up. The Peers Commission, charged with the formal investigation and reporting responsibilities, placed significant blame on division personnel for not following through with their obligations to report potential violations of military law and conduct. The division's chaplains were not spared this judgment, and the Peers Commission advised that the two

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[28] The official US estimate from the Peers Commission report is 347, while the Vietnamese memorial at My Lai lists 504 names.

[29] On the My Lai massacre and subsequent cover up, see Joseph Goldstein, Burke Marshall, and Jack Schwartz, United States Department of the Army, *The My Lai Massacre and its Cover-up: Beyond the Reach of Law? : The Peers Commission Report* (New York: Free Press, 1976).

division chaplains most directly involved, Captain Carl Creswell and Lieutenant Colonel Francis Lewis, be court-martialed.[30] In Section Six, "Suppression and Withholdings of Information," the report stated that Hugh Thompson "went to the Division Artillery Chaplain, CPT Carl Creswell, with a report of what he had seen at My Lai. Chaplain Creswell in turn, without reporting the matter to his commander, went to the Division Chaplain, LTC Francis Lewis, with the story. As previously discussed, LTC Lewis' efforts at investigation were futile and he allowed the matter to pass without substantive effort to bring it to the attention of his superiors." Though neither had witnessed the action, and Creswell did inform Lewis, his superior, the Commission concluded that both chaplains' duty went beyond their actions.

The chaplains' actions after the fact notwithstanding, My Lai and the cover-up led many to question the chaplains' effectiveness in promoting moral and ethical behavior in the military. Surely, observers assumed, troops with adequate moral and spiritual guidance and instruction would not have committed such heinous acts. In 1972, the *New York Times* used Creswell and his involvement with the My Lai massacre to open an article about the controversy surrounding chaplains serving "two masters." Creswell contended that he "should have done more," but that he had—albeit to a minimal extent—followed the Chain of Command and reported it to his supervising chaplain. The article claimed, "Such incidents, along with general frustration about the conduct of the war, have served to revive the old "two masters" problem concerning chaplains in the armed forces."[31] The edited volume, *Military Chaplains*, published by Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV) and edited by Harvard theologian and historian Harvey Cox, only served to further this sentiment. According to many of the volume's authors,

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[30] W. R. Peers, *The My Lai Inquiry* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1979), 214-215.

[31] Edward B. Fiske, "The Perils of Serving Two Masters" *New York Times*, 30 January 1972.

chaplains could not be expected to adequately fulfill their religious duties if they were saddled with military ones.

Yet other circumstances, which failed to reach the notoriety or publicity of the massacre at My Lai, still required chaplains to respond to potential war crimes or atrocities, especially those committed by Americans. For many chaplains, atrocities were simultaneously religious and military issues, and neither system benefited from their commission. A chaplain with the 1st Cavalry recalled an incident in 1967 in which chaplains observed an atrocity and took action to which commanders responded in their favor. Parker Thompson remembered that a chaplain reported to him that soldiers in the 1st Cavalry had been cutting off the ears of North Vietnam Army (NVA) soldiers for souvenirs. Thompson reported it to the Chief of Staff, who reported it to the Division Commander. The chaplain recalled that "two days later our [Division] Commander had an officers' call. It was the only one of its type I ever experienced in the 1st Cavalry. He directed that *every* officer be present, down to platoon leaders, at one of several sessions. There were *no exceptions*." At the meeting, the commander warned: "'what constitutes a crime in the United States of America, constitutes a crime in the 1st Cavalry. And I will prosecute anyone violating proper conduct to enemy personnel, living or dead. It's a short step from mutilating a corpse to mutilating a person."[32] In this instance, the chaplain did not address the issue himself, but by going through the military command structure, he ensured the problem would be addressed.

At other times, chaplains witnessed soldiers participating in ethically and militarily questionable behavior on the battlefield but chose not to respond. Afterward they questioned their reactions to war and combat. Some chaplains were surprised and disturbed by their capacity to hate the enemy, to feel little remorse for Viet Cong deaths, and to stomach the horrors of

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[32] Parker C. Thompson, survey response, quoted in Ackermann, *Always There*, 181. Emphasis in original.

combat. "I admit I'm glad to see these dead VC but as a Christian, I'm not proud of my feelings," remembered James Johnson. "These guys all have mothers and wives and girlfriends, but after what they did to the civilians I don't have positive feelings for any of them."[33] As chaplains confronted possible atrocities they also confronted internal conflicts about their response to war and their feelings toward other humans.

Sometimes battlefield actions resembled religious rituals, and in these cases, chaplains were especially conflicted. After a firefight, James Johnson recorded there were "two dead VC . . . sprawled on their backs. Each dead VC must have at least twenty holes in his face and other exposed parts of their bodies. Someone in the column takes his white plastic spoon from his C-rations and sticks the handle into a wound made by the fragments. The next soldier in line does likewise. By the time I pass the position, each dead VC has a dozen or more plastic spoons protruding from his body." Though the scene was gruesome, its quasi-religious ritual and solemnity struck Johnson. "There's no shouting or cheering as we pass the bodies. The defiant symbolism of 'sticking it to them' may be desecration of the dead, but this is a way of emotionally coping with what's happening each day of this god-awful war."[34] Johnson remained ambivalent, recognizing the action for what it was in a legal sense, but understanding and even sympathizing with the motive.

After the war, chaplains often regretted not doing more to stop morally objectionable behaviors in combat. Joseph Dulany recorded several instances where he witnessed or heard about questionable behavior but did not report them or confront the men involved. Among others, Dulany recalled seeing soldiers dragging women behind huts followed by screaming and crying; a truck driver intentionally running over someone on the side of the road; violent

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[33] Johnson, *Combat Chaplain*, 198-199.

[34] Ibid., 216.

interrogation techniques; and the construction of "sin-city," a specified location where prostitutes would be housed and checked for disease by military doctors. Dulany interpreted his inaction as a failure to fulfill his duties as a clergyman and an officer, and he confronted this fact after the war as well. "Atrocities? I'm not confident that any I witnessed or knew about achieved this level, but morally questionable? Probably." He asked himself, "What should my response have been? How could I have responded and maintained my stature and effectiveness as a unit chaplain? What can be learned from these instances that might be helpful to a chaplain in future combat settings?"[35] Ultimately Dulany had no answers for these questions, and he remained conflicted. In his memoir, Dulany doubted he had the rank, training, or authority to question effectively practices (some of which were de facto policies), and he concluded he would be most effective as a chaplain if he did not report them. In these cases, he defined his role not by moral or religious absolutes, but by his devotion to minister to the men serving in Vietnam. In Dulany's mind, the conflict arose from conflicting *religious* expectations: to set a moral standard and to be a minister to men in war, rather than conflicting expectations in his roles as a pastor and an officer.

Other chaplains recalled instances in which they witnessed possible war crimes but did not report them. Newby "saw two confirmed VC, a seventeen-year-old female and a VC Master Sergeant (or equivalent rank)" taken as POWs. He continued, "while the medics treated enemy patients, I wandered about camp. . . . I looked through a window into an almost empty room. Inside, two [ARVN] soldiers were interrogating a VC or native suspected of being VC. Wires ran from a hand-cranked generator to the suspect's bare genitals. The Vietnamese interrogators seemed unconcerned about me watching them, which led me to conclude this type of interrogation might be a common practice. One of my great regrets is that I didn't interfere with

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[35] Dulany, *Once a Soldier*, 73.

this interrogation."[36] If the perpetrators were Vietnamese, what were the chaplains' moral responsibilities? What were their military responsibilities? The various permutations of military and pastoral situations prevented chaplains from drawing simple or uniform conclusions about their identities in war. Each chaplain had to manage a series of roles and expectations. Some chaplains chose to report possible atrocities, others kept quiet; some anguished over their decision, for others the decision was simple; some relied on a religious orientation, while others relied on their understanding of military effectiveness to justify their decisions.

Learning about atrocities after the fact only exacerbated conflict for chaplains. Their responsibilities in such cases were to act as spiritual advisors to soldiers who may have been involved in the crime, to seek justice on behalf of the victim, and to uphold military and legal regulations. Newby, a trusted spiritual advisor to a man in whom another soldier had confided about witnessing a war crime, learned of an atrocity after one soldier persuaded the other to speak with the chaplain. As a result, Newby found himself in the middle of the subsequent investigation and trial.[37] In cases that might appear to an observer to be morally clear, some decisions of religious leaders and officers suggested otherwise. However, chaplains did not have the luxury to operate solely within the parameters of their own religious or personal convictions. Combat, emotion, duty, and perhaps even necessity shaped chaplains' responses just as it shaped the responses of soldiers and officers.

The tenor of the war and its reception in the United States had changed dramatically by the early 1970s due in part to increased drug use by American service members, fragging incidents, racial tensions, and protests, but also because the very nature of the war had changed.

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[36] Newby, *It Took Heroes*, 30.

[37] For a detailed account of this story, see Newby, *Cavalry Chaplain*, chapter six. This incident was reported, using aliases, by Daniel Lang, in "Casualties of War," *New Yorker*, 18 October 1969, 61. Lang later wrote a book, *Casualties of War* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969). And the incident was the basis for the feature film of the same name, *Casualties of War*, Dir. Brian DePalma (RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video, 1990).

In addition to changing chaplain doctrines and policies, individual chaplains recalled the profound effect these issues had on their ministries. To most military personnel, including chaplains, President Richard Nixon's announced policy of Vietnamization signified eventual American withdrawal and that the war could not be won. Chaplains, like other personnel, believed their goal in Vietnam was to do their job and come home alive.[38] Claude Newby, who did not want to leave his troops in 1967, experienced quite a different reaction at the end of his second tour in 1970. "In 1967 I had returned to an America where patriotism was still somewhat in vogue," wrote Newby, "now, in 1970, I returned to an America where both patriotism and America's heroic young soldiers were increasingly held in disdain." Newby also commented on changing race relations among troops: "where in 1966-67 and early 1969 infantrymen were infantrymen without regard to race or color, by 1970 even they showed evidence of succumbing to civilian and rear-area trends, of dividing into *us* and *them*."[39] Other chaplains who served toward the end of the war also recognized the changes. Thomas Confroy identified the change in the civilian attitude toward the war and soldiers as one from "respectful support" in the mid sixties to "outright hostility" in the early seventies when "drugs, antiwar sentiment, and racial conflict . . . affected the troops." Confroy determined that his "work as a chaplain was greatly affected by these changes," as it went "from positive ministry during the first tour to a sometimes defensive ministry in the second."[40] During his second tour, Confroy recalled that he had to approach his ministry as one of restricting immoral or improper acts instead of encouraging religious faith and positive action.

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[38] Joseph Beasley, interview by author.

[39] Newby, *It Took Heroes*, 521.

[40] Thomas Confroy, Survey response, quoted in Ackermann, *Always There*, 198.

Chaplains' roles were complicated in part because they were at once a part of and outside

of life within their units. And like other soldiers and officers, chaplains often bonded with their

units and formed lasting attachments to the men and their families. One group of marines

dubbed their chaplain, Vincent Capodanno, the "Grunt Padre." "Grunt" was a term generally

reserved for enlisted infantry, Marines and Army, at once a symbol of pride and recognition of

the toughest, most dangerous duties faced by enlisted men. Chaplains, as officers and volunteers

would not qualify for this label. But Capodanno's biographer explained that, "what set Father

Vincent apart was the way he lived his ministry with the Marines. He was not a religious leader

who did his job and then returned to the comfort of his own circle." Capodanno "lived as a

Grunt Marine. Wherever they went, he went. Whatever burdens they had to carry, he shared the

load. No problem was too large of small to take to Father Vincent—he was available to them

day and night. . . . The Grunt Marines recognized Father Vincent's determination to be with

them and one of them."[41] Though Capodanno was certainly not unique in these qualities, his

nickname suggested that the chaplain was simultaneously "one of the men" and a leader. Some

troops could identify closely with their chaplains, especially those who served in combat

situations alongside them, and could accord them the status of a buddy or fellow "grunt" rather

than that of an officer. But the chaplain also commanded deference and respect as evidenced in

the second part of the nickname. "Padre" represented the chaplain's position as a clergyman, but

it also reflected the chaplain's paternal role.[42] Though separated from enlisted men by rank,

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[41] Daniel Mode, *The Grunt Padre: The Service and Sacrifice of Father Vincent Capodanno, Vietnam 1966-1967* (CMJ Marian Publishers, 2000), 77.

[42] The reasons "padre" became the default name for many chaplains, regardless of their religious affiliation, are unclear. Some speculate that Catholic chaplains, due to their vows of celibacy, were more likely to take risks in combat because they did not have wives and children to return to. Catholic chaplains were also the numerically largest group of chaplains from a single denomination or faith group, so nearly every unit would have some contact with a Catholic chaplain. A final speculation is that Catholic chaplains were simply more likely to use their ecclesial title of "Father" than were other ministers, which would have made the informal "padre" a signal of both deference and respect.

status, and often age, chaplains (even those of Protestant and Jewish faiths) became "padres," and soldiers sought them out for counsel, wisdom, comfort, and reassurance.

Indeed, just as bonds formed between soldiers during combat, they also formed between soldiers and chaplains. Chaplains held and comforted friends as they died; suffered through many of the same hardships as their men, and missed their wives and families. In evaluating his Vietnam experience, Raymond Johnson identified the relationships he formed with his unit as one of the most important things he gained from the war. "I have attended to their needs both physically and spiritually when the walls were crumbling and their 'cool' was beginning to shatter under the wake [sic] of genuine fear. . . . These were some of the same men I would pray a final benediction over. I suppose I can say with all honesty that I have never felt closer to a group of men before."[43] But chaplains' military identities set them apart from their civilian counterparts because they lived and worked in a secular institution that civilian clergy rarely understood.

Within their units, chaplains found comfort, emotional release, and a renewed sense of faith. Richard Heim recalled a particularly cathartic moment after troops had "carried many wounded back to the LZ. I stayed with [one soldier], prayed the Lord's Prayer, and quoted the 23rd Psalm until the dust off chopper arrived." Afterward, he remembered, "When I got back, I remember seeing some body bags outside the aid station. . . . I went over and opened one, and there was the body of one of my trooper buddies. . . . We made many a jump together, and when I saw his body, I literally fell apart and cried."[44] In war, chaplains witnessed nearly every conceivable kind of physical and emotional trauma, and they had to find their own releases as well.

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[43] Raymond Johnson, *Postmark*, 9.

[44] Richard L. Heim, Survey response, quoted in Ackermann, *Always There*, 169.

Chaplains' effectiveness over a long period of time may have deteriorated, which was, in part, the reason for rotating chaplains to the rear. If a chaplains' presence was good for morale, what might a demoralized chaplain, the removal of a chaplain from a post, or even the death of a chaplain do to a unit? After seeing a chaplain's interaction with a wounded soldier and witnessing the chaplain's subsequent breakdown, a medic recalled, "I observed [their] . . . compassion for the sick and dying a dozen times a day. . . . I now understand how their hearts must have been broken again and again as they served God in that terrible conflict."[45] This particular soldier attributed his later turn to religion in part to this chaplain, but to others, the humanization of chaplains may have been detrimental. To recognize that chaplains experienced emotional and physical turmoil was to recognize their humanity; their divine calling and military purpose did not shield them from the full range of emotions associated with combat. Chaplains had to find a balance between knowing and socializing with their troops, maintaining themselves as spiritual and physical examples, and supporting the military institutions of which they were a part, all without sacrificing personal or religious-institutional standards.

Chaplains confronted a host of conflicts that revolved first around their place in the military community and second around moral issues. Yet their duties left many of them without a definite place either in the military hierarchy or in the civilian world. Newby wrote that he felt "alienated" from various groups by Vietnam, unable to participate fully in any one of his roles. As an officer Newby felt himself alienated because he disagreed (vocally) with army policies "like six-month commands in combat, that all too often deprived soldiers of experienced officers." Unable to protest the war outright or to see the war from the "outside," he felt separated from other clergy and civilian communities because he could not understand how they could send men "off to war with our hands tied and later welcomed home the draft dodgers before

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[45] Anonymous enlisted man (E-2), Survey response, quoted in Ackermann, *Always There*, 81-82.

expressing thanks to the faithful who served." Nor did he understand how "the American people . . . participated in or tolerated public abuse of its faithful sons and daughters." Bur Newby also could not fully consider himself a soldier. Convinced he had served both units to the best of his ability, he concluded "the soldier in me had been expressed. I realized that I was a soldier by virtue of wearing the uniform, holding rank, and experiencing hostile fire." Yet "In reality . . . I was an observer and not a true warrior. Above all, I was not a hero."[46] In this self-deprecating assessment, Newby differentiated himself from other soldiers and enlisted men. He could not comfortably fit in with any group and left the war without a firm sense of his identity.

As chaplains confronted moral and religious questions they worked to retain both religious and military authority and credibility. In the first stage of resolving conflict, chaplains used religious language and beliefs to define their entry and assimilation into a new culture. They worked out practical solutions to the problems presented to them, and were concerned primarily with the intricacies of how to carry out their dual roles as clergy and officers. Their identities and place in the military community became especially important as they accompanied troops into battle where religion and combat came face to face. Whereas proponents of role conflict or role tension have argued that chaplains' primary source of conflict was between military and religious roles, chaplains' understandings of conflict in the Vietnam War was more specific. They generally understood the conflict as a pastoral one, and occasionally a theological one. On one hand, they were to act as ministers to soldiers and in support of command—they were counselors, spiritual advisors, worship leaders, and mediators—and on the other hand, they were to remain faithful representatives of their denominational/confessional and personal beliefs. When their two missions appeared in conflict, most chaplains settled on flexibility as their

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[46] Newby, *It Took Heroes*, 523.

primary response. They would respond situationally and contextually to the problems and issues they confronted. This flexibility allowed them to remain in liminal positions within both military and religious communities and offered them a broad range of responses rather than narrowly proscribed ones.

Liturgies of War

As they confronted the moral and military dilemmas of Vietnam, chaplains, along with enlisted personnel and officers, responded to these pressures by enacting practical solutions that would help them reconcile their religious faith with their military experience. Throughout Vietnam, conducting worship services and administering sacramental rites occupied a significant portion of chaplains' attention. Beyond the organizational and structural considerations of chaplains, religious practices in the field allowed chaplains and other service members to actively recreate and redefine what it meant to be religious in the military and how wartime experiences affected one's faith and religious practices.

This section responds, in part, to the call for historians of religion to study the lived experience of religion as it was practiced outside of the confines of the institutional church. Though the focus of such studies often centers on lay practice, chaplains, as clergy, played a vital role in the way militaries experienced religion in war. Furthermore, the chaplains themselves each possessed a unique experience as they participated and served at the intersections of two cultures and institutions.[47] Bradley Carter has argued that such religious practices constituted a new form of "vernacular religion" or "popular religion," which may or may not carry with it

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[47] The attention to the lived experience of religion often falls under the rubric of "Lived Religion," an idea that first gained traction in the academy as a result of a seminar coordinated by David Hall. On theoretical and methodological perspectives as well as a sample of this type of work see, *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. David G. Hall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

traditional "official" meanings. Carter was particularly concerned with the reinvention of common materials into "holy hardware," in which objects of war became objects of religion and with the phenomena described as "foxhole faith." Chaplains, Carter argued, were surprisingly ambivalent or positive about these processes.[48]

Chaplains' lived experiences of religion in war are best understood by the creation of dynamic "liturgies of war," which were those public acts of worship and community ritual that served to assign meaning to the combat experience.[49] Chaplains, as the primary liturgists—official leaders of these public acts—played a key role in this process. Chaplains and soldiers together reinterpreted familiar traditions and created new liturgical forms in part to make religious ideas compatible with combat and with the circumstance of war, but they also provided a direct link to familiar religious traditions "back in the world." These wartime liturgical practices involved reassessing and reconfiguring the practice, and also the meaning, of sacrament, scripture, song, and space. In the end, these created and often-improvised liturgies were uniform in neither content nor meaning, but they allowed fighting men to interpret their combat experiences in religious ways in order to resolve potential conflicts between faith and war.[50]

Examining liturgies of war as both militarily and religiously significant also clarified the ways in which the two interacted. It would be easy to write off confluences as simply borrowing

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[48] Carter, "Reverence Helmeted and Armored," 170-211.

[49] Michael McCormick uses the term "liturgy of war" to describe a particular wartime-liturgy used in European armies from late antiquity until the Crusades. I adopt this term in its plural form in order to emphasize the multiple and dynamic worship practices that emerged over the course of the American war in Vietnam. See "The Liturgy of War from Antiquity to the Crusades," in Bergen, *Sword of the Lord*, 45-67.

[50] The focus in this section is necessarily on Christian liturgical traditions. In the decade of heaviest troop involvement in Vietnam only twenty Jewish chaplains served in country, and at the time there were no provisions for Muslim, Buddhist, or Orthodox chaplains. The small number of Jewish chaplains renders substantial analysis of Jewish worship practices in the context of combat difficult; usually, Christian chaplains were charged with the spiritual welfare of their Jewish men and were responsible for coordinating appropriate food, leave, or visitation to another unit for services. Additionally, to my knowledge, no field-grade Jewish chaplains have left memoirs or other records of their service in Vietnam. Only one high ranking Jewish chaplain, Saul Koss, has been interviewed under the Army's Senior Officer Oral History Program.

language and meaning from another sphere of experience—to say that the language of blood sacrifice in war had no religious significance, or to say that the song "Onward Christian Soldiers" had no military meaning. Yet taking into account both sets of cultural norms and values revealed more about each of these cultures than a single analytical perspective would. What conclusions can be drawn when "God" and "Country" appeared interchangeable in some liturgies of war, or when a Jewish soldier participated in a Christian celebration of Communion? Considering these simply as corruptions of "true" religion would disregard any sort religious meaning that may have existed by asserting that only traditional religious interpretations deserve analysis as such. On the other end of the spectrum, dismissing the potential military significance of such events would downplay the intimate connections between religious and military experiences.

Studying wartime worship or liturgical practices only from the chaplain's point of view does pose certain analytical problems. Most notably, such an approach ignores participation in and responses to these liturgies by enlisted personnel and officers. Though they participated in the creation and execution of wartime liturgical practices, chaplains' interpretations were not necessarily indicative of the meanings that non-chaplains assigned to them. Furthermore, chaplains' interpretations of the liturgies of war were not uniform. Based on their own theological ideas, education, background, and military experience, chaplains interpreted religious practices in diverse ways. Therefore, individual interpretations were not necessarily representative or typical accounts of wartime liturgy, but instead offered proof of the dynamism and diversity in interpretation and practice available to chaplains.

Liturgical practices varied widely among the religious groups represented in the military, but perhaps none more than sacramental practice and interpretation. Though only Catholics and Mainline Protestants would claim the centrality of sacraments to their worship, "sacrament" defined more broadly may mean any act of ritual or ceremony that served as an outward sign or

manifestation of inward grace. Thus, evangelical and low-church Protestants took part in sacramental practices, even if they would not label them as such. For the most part, liturgies of war did not create new sacraments—though soldiers and chaplains occasionally spoke of "baptism by fire" as the "sacrament of war"—but instead reinterpreted more traditional ones.[51]

The issue of sacramental ministry and denominational or faith-group specificity as opposed to ecumenicalism elicited strong opinions on the part of chaplains and their denominational organizations. Some denominations insisted their chaplains maintain strict standards in their sacramental ministries, practicing, as much as possible, the discretion expected of ministers in the United States. Chaplains from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) usually followed their denominational rules exactly, while other chaplains adopted more liberal policies in the war zone. Addressing some of these challenges, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod issued a statement to its chaplains regarding the practice of the Lord's Supper. It began, "in all circumstances the Lutheran chaplain shall administer Holy Communion in accordance with the scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions." Yet the chaplains' manual recognized that "exceptional cases arise in ministering to the men and women in the armed forces" and that "in such situations, a Lutheran chaplain may administer the Sacrament of Holy Communion to such personnel as have been baptized; are able to examine themselves; are conscious of the need of repentance; hold the essence of faith, including the doctrines of the Real Presence and of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace; and profess acceptance thereof." Though on first reading even this policy seems exceptionally rigid, it can be understood as a doctrinally closed denomination's attempt to balance competing interests—on one hand to uphold the sanctity of Communion by "withholding participation in the Sacrament from those

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[51] See, for example, David Knight, "Supreme Six," in *Vietnam: The Other Side of Glory*, ed. William R. Kimball (Canton, OH: Daring Books, 1987), 70.

who reject scriptural teaching regarding it" and on the other hand to welcome one who "devoutly believe[d] his Lord's Word of promise as conveyed through and in this Sacrament."[52]

Yet despite the occasional injunction against an ecumenical practice of certain sacraments, traditional religious rituals took on different meanings in combat especially because chaplain coverage was often infrequent and usually irregular. With troops spread over four major Corps areas, chaplains practiced a loose form of area coverage while still attached to specific units.[53] In practice, this meant some men only saw a chaplain once every four to six weeks and for some the wait was even longer. Most chaplains tried to establish some kind of rotation schedule to ensure equal coverage for worship services, but these plans were always flexible and altered to meet specific needs. Because the rotating schedule ensured fair but infrequent chaplain coverage, it is little surprise that men of many faiths attended field services when they were offered. James Johnson wrote that, "soldiers of all faiths attend the service, as usual, including several Catholics and one Jew. They all take communion. War and the daily threat of death is a great equalizer."[54] For the chaplain in question it appeared that confessional particularities mattered little. Ecumenicalism that would have been nearly inconceivable "back in the world" was accepted and even celebrated in battle. Though it is impossible to say how the participants might have interpreted the same event, the chaplain felt that worship and the sacrament of communion represented not a particular faith tradition, but instead a divine presence in war.

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[52] National Lutheran Council Division of Service to Military Personnel, *Newsletter for Lutheran Chaplains* 6, no. 4 (1963).

[53] Earl Kettler, *Chaplain's Letters: Ministry by "Huey" 1964-1965, The Personal Correspondence of an Army Chaplain from Vietnam* (Cincinnati: Cornelius Books, 1994), 3. All four Corps areas had chaplains assigned to them, but units were often split apart and assigned to geographically disparate areas. In theory, chaplains were therefore responsible for providing religious services for men in a particular area, regardless of which unit they were a part.

[54] Johnson, *Combat Chaplain*, 125.

Often communion served as a location for religious reinterpretation in battle. Most chaplains took Eucharistic elements (wine and communion wafers) with them in the field all the time. Many Protestant denominations, however, served communion only once a month or quarter. Their worship instead emphasized scripture and proclamation through preaching. But John Schumacher felt that in Vietnam, "I simply felt that I could not follow the tradition of a once a month communion, which is the practice of many denominations. I knew that this could possibly be the last time a soldier would take communion. Things are different in a combat zone and this was one of those differences."[55] Gary Baxter remembered celebrating Communion with soldiers at Nui Ba Den. He said, "twelve people out of that company had been killed. The battle was still raging within eyesight of where we were. It was an intense battle yet these young soldiers were able to shut out the death and dying for a few moments in the communion event as they turned from death to life in the elements of the Eucharist. They were able to grasp hope in the midst of despair, life in the midst of death, resurrection in the midst of dying."[56] Here, rather than communion simply representing a divine presence in war, the chaplain had interpreted the Eucharist in a combat-specific way, emphasizing the significance of life and resurrection—not only of Christ, but of humans—as experienced through Communion. The presence of death and destruction, instead of acting as wedges that separated soldiers from their faith, became means through which religious beliefs became more meaningful.

At other times, chaplains interpreted their sacramental ministries as possibly influencing soldiers' wellbeing and sense of safety. Chaplain Thomas Des Champs recalled one occasion when he, his driver and gunner fell under a rocket attack while waiting for their jeep to be pulled

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[55] John W. Schumacher, *Soldier of God*, 62.

[56] Gary G. Baxter, quoted in Ackermann, *Always There*, 176.

from mud. Quickly, the men were pinned down in a bunker as the enemy zeroed in their fire. In that moment, Des Champs remembered one of the soldiers calling out, "Can we have communion, Chaplain?" Des Champs had some communion wafers and a flask of wine in his pockets, so he agreed. He reminded the men that he was a Protestant chaplain, but he told them that all were welcome to Communion. He continued his story: "At that moment, another rocket exploded overhead. More dust and dirt fell. After removing the wine and wafers from my leg pockets, I stood up and blessed them. I passed the bag of wafers around to the men and then the flask of wine. Some men made the sign of the cross before taking communion, others did not. But there was not a man who did not take communion that afternoon." To this point, Des Champs's story tracked that of other chaplains who served Communion to men of different faith groups, but Des Champs took his analysis one step further. In his memoir, he asserted, "By the end of the short service, the rocket attack ended. God must have been watching over us that afternoon, because no one in the entire firebase had been hurt or killed by the attack."[57]

Yet the meaning of communion was not constant throughout the war. The chaplain's role as an interpreter of religious meaning continued as soldiers left the field and prepared to return to the United States. The military strove to ensure that soldiers had religious support from their time in basic training to their re-entry into civilian life. Orris Kelly, a chaplain with the 4th Infantry Division, reflected on his role in the soldiers' spiritual, physical, emotional journey that took them from combat in Vietnam back to civilian life in the United States, where by the late 1960s, protest against the war had strengthened in numbers, rhetoric, and action. He recalled that as soldiers left Vietnam, the base chaplains met with them. He recalled that one chaplain would tell the men, "We don't know how you feel about Vietnam or what happened to you

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[57] Thomas Des Champs as told to Phillip McGee, *Christian Soldier: The True Story of a Highly Decorated Vietnam-Era Chaplain* (Frederick, MD: Publish America, 2004), 117.

personally. We don't know what your sense of the church is, or what your sense of your relationship to God is. We don't know what you are going to face when you go home. We can't explain all those things. But one thing we came to do before you left was to offer our faith through Holy Communion and the Eucharist."[58] Most of the soldiers took the chaplains' offer. Kelly believed that at this moment, the ritual of communion was more significant than its traditional religious meaning. In such a spirit, the chaplains offered communion to the soldiers as a symbol of the Christian faith as well as a symbol of reconciliation and transition back home. The second interpretation could stand regardless of a soldier's individual religious beliefs.[59] Here, communion represented something potentially different from what it had on the battlefield. In the midst of combat Communion was a reminder of Christ's resurrection, of the victory of life over death, and of God's presence in all circumstances. In preparation for return to "the world," however, it represented reconciliation, connection with the divine and with humanity, and healing. And when chaplains were unsure of a soldier's faith, they offered their own in its place.

Combat also amplified baptismal rituals—a stark symbol of new life amidst death. Chaplain Joseph Dulany recalled baptizing men wherever possible, even in bomb craters filled with water.[60] Once signs of death and destruction, craters became founts for the waters of life represented by baptism. For Curt Bowers, the baptism of several soldiers of different ethnicities, backgrounds, and denominations represented "a time of great rejoicing and blessing as we who were brothers in warfare became brothers in Christ."[61] Christian baptismal rites represented

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[58] Orris E. Kelly, interview by Henry Ackerman, 21 October 1985, quoted in Ackermann, *Always There*, 183.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Dulany, *Once a Soldier*, 51.

[61] Bowers, *Forward Edge*, 68.

entry into a religious family akin to the family ties that war's sacrament—baptism by fire—had formed.

Occasionally baptism and death were closely linked as chaplains baptized many men just before they died. At other times the two stood in marked contrast to one another. James Johnson recalled that just after he had baptized a soldier and held services, another of his close friends had been killed on a MEDCAP (Medical Civilian Assistance Program) mission that he too would have been on if he had not been holding services. Johnson's memory of the circumstances reflected the intensity of the situation. He wrote, "I'm alone with Stiver's body. I feel a sense of rage boiling up in me. I can't take his death! He seems so alone here in the open air. His body is waiting for transportation to Saigon for graves registration and then back to his grieving family. It is all too final, too quick. He chose to live a good life. He didn't get a chance to choose how to die." Johnson, thinking about his own mortality and about Stiver's death, simply stood there. Sad, relieved, and angered that Stiver had died when he had not been there, Johnson ultimately resolved to move on: "I sat with Stiver for perhaps five minutes, mesmerized. Butch's baptism and Stiver's death are such a stark contrast. It's not fair. I hate it. But I must go on."[62]

As chaplains and soldiers faced death, they also used religious rituals and sacraments to bless the dead and to heal the living. Joseph O'Donnell, a Catholic chaplain, recorded such an incident after a helicopter returned from combat with eighteen dead marines. "About thirty marines and sailors stood around the body bags on the elevator, waiting for me. These eighteen men had been dead for two days; I knew that. The Catholic Sacrament of the Sick is for the living; I knew that too. But I knew what I had to do." As men watched and waited, O'Donnell remembered, "one by one, I unzipped each body bag, and anointed whatever I found there. It

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[62] Johnson, *Combat Chaplain*, 108.

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was not pleasant. But it was the most solemn and powerful prayer service I have ever experienced. In the midst of all the action, there was absolute silence and lots of tears."[63] Blessing the dead with a sacrament for the living provided a sense of finality to death, but also served as a healing service and a prayer for those who were still alive.

The uncertainties of combat also seemed to ratchet up the significance of the constant and quick availability of a chaplain to administer sacraments. Andrew Shimek recalled an incident where a soldier was killed within minutes of saying confession and receiving the Eucharist. The chaplains' presence also allowed for the soldier to receive the Sacrament of the Sick before he died.[64] Chaplains embodied a religious presence on the battlefield. Some troops interpreted a chaplains' accompaniment on a mission as a literal manifestation of the idea of "going with God," while others were certain that the chaplain brought heavy fire and danger— one unit apparently nicknamed their chaplain, "the right reverend magnet ass"—an obvious, if crude, expression of the intersections of the sacred and profane.

Usually field services combined sacramental, scriptural, and musical elements. Curt Bowers wrote about a typical field service: "Communion was a very worshipful, meaningful time to all of us. I remember dirty, grubby, battle-scarred hands reaching up toward heaven as I would gently place a wafer in their hand. They would take it with tears in their eyes, thanking God for keeping them safe thus far." Afterward, they often sang "Amazing Grace," a hymn originally connected to the abolition movement in England. In its new context, the second verse became particularly important. Soldiers and chaplains sang, "through many dangers, toils, and snares/I have already come/'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,/And grace will lead me

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[63] Joseph O'Donnell, "Clergy in the Military—Vietnam and After," in Bergen, *Sword of the Lord*, 220. The Sacrament of the Sick is the Catholic Sacrament which was, before the Second Vatican Council (1968), called "Last Rites" or "Final Unction." Many Catholics continued to use the terms interchangeably.

[64] Andrew Shimek, Survey Response, USACHCS Library, Vietnam Files, Box 5.

home." Curtis Bowers reflected, "some of them did go home—to their eternal home." The hymn and communion together "took on special significance for the combat soldier and for this chaplain who celebrated it with heaviness in his own heart, yet with gratitude to Jesus who drew near to us on the battlefield."[65] As chaplains led soldiers in worship on the battlefield, they interpreted their experiences in religious ways. Soldiers who died went to their "eternal home;" chaplains appropriated an abolitionist hymn ("Amazing Grace") to fit a combat circumstance; in the midst of combat, soldiers reached toward heaven to receive communion. Perhaps, though, it was just as likely that soldiers simply died, that the hymns they chose were simply familiar, or that soldiers reached up to another human to receive a ritualistic symbol of faith. But chaplains chose not to interpret these experiences in secular ways; their analysis remained religious.

Other hymns relied on more militaristic themes to provide the soundtrack for battle. For Claude Newby, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" took on different meanings depending on the situation. While filling a stateside post, his commanding officer ordered the song sung at every service prior to a live-fire infiltration course.[66] In this case, the song, which blended militaristic and Christian themes, served to instill a sense of courage and duty in often-reticent trainees. On the battlefield in Vietnam, though, Newby recalled Easter services in which he and his men changed the words of the familiar song to "as He died to make men holy, let us *live* to make men free."[67] The song, infused with new lyrics and meaning, offered hope and reassurance that their efforts were worthwhile and good. Combat soldiers used the song to reinforce their commitment to life rather than the nobility of death, though one suspects the original lyrics were never far from their minds.

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[65] Bowers, *Forward Edge*, 68.

[66] Newby, *It Took Heroes*, 253.

[67] Emphasis added. The original lyrics are, "Let us die to make men free."

As with the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," many chaplains used a civil-religious language to interpret their mission and motives for serving in Vietnam. By explicitly relating their combat experiences and religious language, chaplains connected the military mission in Vietnam with their faith. Before the war, David Knight wrote that he was "caught up with the same naive idealism" regarding combat as many others, considering himself not only an officer and minister in the United States Army, but also "an officer and minister in the Army of God, with a mandate to carry that 'terrible swift sword.'"[68] Knight had conflated God and Country, and had used a line from the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" to make the connection. The "terrible swift sword" encompassed literal and physical meanings in Vietnam.

In addition to the obvious civil-religious themes and tropes in the Battle Hymn of the Republic, other patriotic songs also worked themselves into the repertoire of chaplains conducting field services. Wendell Danielson recalled that for many of his troops "God Bless America" became the benediction for many field services where personnel of diverse faiths attended. He acknowledged that the song "for us, is difficult to sing," that he "knew the Doc wouldn't make it past the fourth line. He never finished, 'From the mountains, to the prairies,'" because "tears come to his eyes and he stops singing. Nobody, however, notices." Danielson wished for each man to express his feelings and faith, and if the song allowed him to do that, so be it. He pleaded "God help us if the words become simply words and the love is reduced to sentiment," and concluded "For my men this song becomes a prayer." At the same time he recognized the song as a different kind of prayer from a sectarian or explicitly religious one. In combat, a secular song was offered as a prayer in part because "it is difficult to find a prayer that will be accepted by everyone. One is too long, another too short. Also there are Jewish and

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[68] Knight, "Supreme Six," 70. The "terrible swift sword" refers to the lyrics of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Roman Catholic personnel present. This song bridges the gap. It says what we want to say."[69]

Thus, a hymn generally reserved for the Fourth of July celebrations in the United States took on

new meaning in Vietnam as men thought about their homes and their purpose for fighting. In

place of specific theological or doctrinal language, this hymn offered common ground on the

basis of patriotism and civic duty. In the context of a religious service, it may have exemplified

the intense connections between faith in one's god and faith in one's country, or it may have

conflated the two.

As the war in Vietnam dragged on, the aids available for conducting field services

improved, sometimes as a result of improved military supply, and other times because of the

independent efforts of chaplains or denominational groups. The Army published a new hymnal

for service members, and one was especially designed for use in the field. It included classic

hymns, such as "Amazing Grace," and short prayers for individual prayer and meditation.

Additionally, military branches published extensive materials for lay leadership of worship in the

field. Especially for remote units and small denominations, lay leaders took on significant

ministry roles. The Offices of the Chiefs of Chaplains oversaw much of this material and made

sure it aligned with the service's overall chaplain program, but these field manuals provided

invaluable religious support when chaplains were unavailable.

Civilian religious groups also published materials for use in the field. In addition to the

ubiquitous testaments and pocket Bibles that religious groups of all sorts distributed—usually

through their chaplains—some took a more creative approach. Relying on the popularity of folk

music and guitar masses, especially among young people in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One

denominational press published and distributed a "Vietnam Songbook" that took tunes from

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[69] Wendell E. Danielson, "A Chaplain in Vietnam (as inspired by the psalmist)" *The Chaplain*, July-August 1967, 4.

folk songs and rock music and revised them with Christian lyrics. Chaplains and churches alike recognized that the potential congregation in Vietnam was quite unlike that in the United States—it was overwhelmingly young and male, a near antithesis of the predominantly female and older population of churchgoers back in the world.

Supply shortages—especially of chaplain kits, field organs, and portable tape players—were fairly constant, so chaplains often resorted to creative uses of materiel or provided their own supplies for conducting worship services. One chaplain, planning ahead for a second tour in Vietnam, wrote in his denomination's chaplain newsletter that "things were a bit hectic this quarter," and that he had been preparing for a second tour since he received his orders. He wrote, "I missed organ accompaniment for worship during my last tour in Vietnam, and determined not to be without it again. I had our organist record some hymns and spliced those together to form tapes that includes [sic] a prelude, hymn, Gloria Patri, Doxology, hymn, and postlude. I then recorded those on cartridges, and brought a portable cartridge player to use in the field. I then found a company that sells pipe organ music commercially, and proceeded to put it in the same format."[70] Chaplains recognized the comfort that familiar music might bring to soldiers in the field; chaplains' services often bridged soldiers' religious experiences in Vietnam and back in the world by supplying common, yet slightly varied, forms of religious practice.

This fusion of military and religious themes arose in many situations and often involved interpreting combat experiences through scriptural references. When Knight was caught alone with a platoon, the soldiers looked to him for both military and religious support. Knight recalled that while the soldiers looked to him, "I was looking to someone else for answers. In the blackness, I silently prayed for God to guide us. Without knowing where I was I said, 'Go that

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[70] Richard N. Donovan, "Mail Call: En-route to Vietnam; On Leave at Osawatomie, Kans." *The Disciple Chaplain,* Committee on Military and Veterans Services, Disciples of Christ, Jan.-Mar. 1971.

way!' Our backs were so up against the proverbial Red Sea that I had no recourse but to simply trust that He who makes a way where there seems to be no way would lead us safely out of the snare." While Knight only implicitly compared himself to Moses, the connections were clear. After the event was over, Knight recalled another scripture and asserted, "The whole experience had been a walk through 'the valley of the shadow of death' under the guiding hand of the Great Shepherd."[71] Though it was unlikely that Knight made these connections explicit in the heat of battle, his post-war reflections revealed how chaplains interpreted combat situations. For Knight and others, biblical stories and scriptures were the most obvious way to make sense of two apparently disparate worlds.[72]

Combat situations consistently reminded chaplains of biblical references and lessons. Chaplain Stanley Beach remembered that he and Chaplain Vincent Capodanno "spent Easter Sunday morning ministering to those men. It made a deep impression on both of us and those moments of looking into the eyes of Marines who were experienced with death, gave us a greater appreciation of the hope of the Resurrection in Jesus Christ."[73] Regardless of the soldiers' experience of Easter in combat, chaplains like Capodanno and Beach articulated their belief that war amplified religious meaning.

Near death experiences and the juxtaposition of worship and battle pointed to the heart of philosophical and theological questions that involved life and death. Understanding these experiences required reexamining scripture and tradition in terms of combat. The question of why certain men died in battle while others lived haunted soldiers and chaplains alike, and they came up with varied answers. Some chaplains adopted the idea that combat was an uncontrolled

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[71] Ibid., 80-81.

[72] Joseph Dulany also interpreted some of his experiences through Psalm 23. See Dulany, *Once a Soldier*, 41.

[73] Stanley Beach, quoted in Mode, *The Grunt Padre*, 70.

experiment, where safety could not be guaranteed to the faithful and where weapons and ammunition served no other purpose than to kill any with whom they came in contact. Samuel Hopkins agreed with the old soldiers' adage that "sometimes the bullets have our name on them and sometimes they are addressed to 'to whom it may concern.'"[74]

Other chaplains, however, took exception to this theology. One response was to attribute everything in battle to God's will, and this conclusion allowed for easy, if not emotionally satisfactory, answers to the question of death. After a friendly fire incident in which an American soldier was killed, James Hutchens argued against the common conception of such accidents as tragic, and reassured himself and others that "for the Christian, these 'accidents' have a different meaning." Recalling Psalm 91:5, which states: "You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day," he determined that "a sovereign God in absolute control directs not only the enemy's 'arrows that fly by day' but also the 'arrows' of his own company." Hutchens' time in Vietnam convinced him that there was "no such thing as a bullet inscribed 'To whom it may concern.' God alone determines the length of a man's days."[75]

Still other chaplains viewed both of these interpretations as fatalistic, and preferred instead to allow for more human agency in wartime. James Johnson argued that such fatalism was "poor theology" which revealed a "kind of predestined attitude that people have begun to voice here in Vietnam." He contrasted it with his own theology in which "God helps those who help themselves," and in Vietnam, they helped themselves "by staying low and hopefully, out of harm's way." He reasoned that "if there's nothing you can do about your destiny, then one would never buckle a seat belt, have a fire alarm, or get a medical checkup." In rejecting a Calvinist theology and instead accepting the doctrine of free will, Johnson concluded, "It's not

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[74] Hopkins, *Chaplain Remembers*, 111.

[75] Hutchens, *Beyond Combat*, 38.

brave to needlessly expose oneself to the enemy . . . . It is better to err on the side of safety than to be killed because of faulty theology that gives no power to the God-given position of the right of self-determination."[76] Chaplains used scripture to explain, justify, or rationalize their experiences in war, but they also used their experiences in war as interpretive devices to read scripture in new ways.

Liturgies of war also provided opportunities to interpret scripture in ways that were relevant to soldiers in battle. Before an important battle, David Knight reread a psalm, and recorded that Psalm 91:3-8 "seemed to leap right off the page. They were speaking directly to me, saying 'You will make contact with the enemy, but I will be with you and, as you trust in Me, not a single bullet will hurt you." Knight told the unit's captain, who then told the men of Echo Company, "God had promised to shield them in the coming battle."[77] Whether by providence, fate, or luck, none were wounded in the battle, even under heavy enemy fire. Knight's faith was affirmed.[78] In this way, Knight followed a long tradition of political leaders invoking religious or spiritual protection for troops before combat. In this way, the particular circumstances were unremarkable. However, for Knight, the incident gained spiritual significance.

For evangelical chaplains, services before and during combat also provided particularly relevant situations for emphasizing the need for individual salvation through Jesus Christ. The official mission of the Chaplain Corps, however, was not to proselytize or promote religion or to ensure the good behavior of military personnel, but to provide religious support for those who

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[76] Johnson, *Combat Chaplain*, 80.

[77] Psalm 91:3-8 reads "Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings will you find refuge. His faithfulness will be your shield. . . .You will not fear . . . the arrow that flies by day . . . nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your right side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked."

[78] Knight, "Supreme Six," 81-82.

wanted it. This distinction between ministry and mission was most significant away from the battlefield, but it provided the basis for some controversy between liberal and evangelical Protestants. One draftee who had served his tour with the 9th Infantry Division wrote to the Chief of Chaplains to volunteer to return to Vietnam in order to evangelize soldiers. Noticing that the services lacked emphasis on salvation, he wrote, "none of [the chaplains] that I heard ever gave the reason why and how to be saved."[79] Most chaplains, however, used field services as opportunities to reconcile faith and combat and to provide a connection between soldiers and their religious traditions.

Conrad "Connie" Walker, nicknamed the "Leapin' Deacon" by his troops, recorded a series of combat-ready sermons based simultaneously on an evangelical view of salvation and the eight jump commands used during an airborne jump. He believed the lessons had served him well, and wanted to share them with his troops. The first, "Get Ready" was based on Luke 12:35-37; Psalm 46; Hebrews 10:19; Matthew 24:36-44, which Walker summarized as saying, "Get ready for a deeper walk with the Lord; all that we have prepared and trained for is at hand. The ultimate and urgent time is here!" The others—"Stand Up," "Hook Up," "Check Static Line," "Check Equipment," "Sound Off Equipment Check," "Stand in the Door," and "GO!"—followed in similar fashion, primarily drawing from New Testament texts and encouraging soldiers to cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.[80]

No scriptural reference, it seemed, was off limits for reinterpretation through the lens of war and Vietnam. Wendell E. Danielson, in an article for *The Chaplain* magazine, offered an extended exegesis of Psalm 46, in light of the war and the struggles that American troops faced

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[79] Harry R. Jackson to Bill Brock, quoted in Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, 1968-1969*, 45.

[80] Conrad Walker with J. Walker Winslow, *The Leapin' Deacon: The Soldier's Chaplain* (Austin, TX: Lang Marc Publishing, 2004).

in Vietnam. Danielson's hermeneutic of war allowed him to address the common doubts of soldiers and chaplains, to reinforce the confidence of the Psalmist, and to assign larger meaning to the apparent meaninglessness of Vietnam. He began with the basic conflict of men about to embark in battle:

> *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*
>   This, I thought, is what we need to hear. Tomorrow there would be trouble, perhaps more than anyone realized.
>   In several hours these men would helilifted into the jungle. For some of them this would be a new experience; most of the men had done it many times. Some troops would not return to this sand again but no one talked about this. Each man knew it would be someone else.

The next part of the psalm indicated that God remained changeless, so men should not fear the problems attendant in this world. The psalmist invoked imagery of earthquakes and violent storms, which Danielson equates to the barrage of demoralizing news from home. Letters that began "'Dear Jimmy . . . I don't want to cause you any worry but they've taken the phone away, cut our electricity off, and we're two months behind with the rent. We'll make out okay, don't worry about us.' . . . or 'Dearest . . . I've had it. When you return the children and I will be gone,'" quickly became the chaplain's domain as a primary counselor dealing with personal problems. And Danielson expressed his frustration with the homefront's apparent detachment from the war. He exclaimed,

> There is the common enemy, Charlie. But what about wives who can't wait? Or parents who won't write? Or friends who don't seem to care? How does a young man perform 24 hours a day when he has received two letters in the past seven months?
>   Charlie should be our only concern yet it doesn't work that way.

Danielson's interpretation of the first verse of the psalm revealed deep frustrations with the factors that influenced soldiers morale and an intimate understanding of the uncertainty of men facing combat.[81]

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[81] Danielson, "Chaplain in Vietnam," 4-8.

Danielson continued his exegesis, expressing a more general sense of the futility of war and the power of God. When the psalmist wrote, "He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, he burns the chariots with fire!" Danielson questioned his God's will for all of humankind. He wrote "the modern spear and bow are far more effective than the psalmist ever imagined." And he wanted God to act, to intervene: "Why doesn't God do something? Soon? Like today?" Danielson pleaded. Yet even in the face of such doubt, Danielson interpreted the psalmist's final lines, "I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge," as a statement of God's sovereignty and as a sort of mission statement for chaplains and other ministers. He concluded there was work to be done if God were to be exalted: "There is much that must be done—instruction to give, an example to set. Who will do this? For my men this is my responsibility. They must be shown faith and love and courage. If my example in living these virtues is not louder than my words I become the tinkling symbol [sic]." Danielson, in this writing, appropriated and accepted the language of 1 Corinthians 13 as central to his mission. The so-called "Love Chapter" in the Christian New Testament, exhorts followers to exhibit love in all they do and declares that actions without love are meaningless. At the same time, Danielson called on his chaplain training and his understanding of the Chaplain Corps' mission to define his role. He wrote, the chaplain's "responsibility remains the same whether in Garmisch [Germany] or Vietnam or the United States. The opportunity is always here to bring men to God and God to men. This is and always will be the high calling. To do less is to do nothing."[82] By engaging in scriptural interpretation, both in services with troops, and in a publication for chaplains, Danielson created pieces of a wartime liturgy that allowed for the reinterpretation of scripture while still acknowledging God's power and sovereignty.

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[82] Ibid.

As they engaged in sacramental and worship traditions, chaplains, along with soldiers and officers, carved out sacred space in the midst of battle, so that the two were not wholly separated, but experienced together. One chaplain recalled baptizing a soldier in the Saigon River while others from his platoon guarded the area from hostile fire. The liturgical space was defined not only by the actions of the chapel and of worshippers but also by the ostensibly inviolate perimeter formed by armed soldiers.[83]

Combat forced some chaplains and soldiers to reconsider the meaning of physical space as it related to religious experience. James Johnson described a Christmas Eve service, far different from the ones being held in the United States on the same occasion. "It's time for the service. We're muddy. No white shirts, ties, high heels or stained glass windows in church today. I hope there will be no blood stains either." But beyond noting the physical differences, Johnson experienced "a warm feeling reflecting on God's intervention in life through Jesus Christ. Sometimes, though it's hard to see or evaluate how or when his intervention comes to this god forsaken place."[84] Johnson believed the meaning of the service could be the same no matter the circumstance. But whereas the inherent goodness of Christmas and of God perhaps went unquestioned in a church, the battlefield required men to find a deeper level of trust and faith in order to arrive at the same truth.

War also altered the spaces in which worship took place. Liturgical colors and ornate vestments were replaced with jungle fatigues, makeshift altars and chapels, and portable mass and communion kits. While many chaplains and soldiers believed that God revealed himself in battle, the sacred space created by a simple alter, hymns and prayer books, sacramental elements, or a chaplain's combat vestments, was separated—at least psychologically—from the war going

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[83] Baxter, quoted in Ackermann, *Always There*, 176.

[84] Johnson, *Combat Chaplain*, 125.

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on around it. Worship services and the chaplain's presence provided a connection to "the world," the past, and offered a brief, albeit incomplete, respite from battle. And though chaplains served in the midst of war, they also set themselves apart from it. Earl Kettler wrote to his wife, "my goal each day is to live and teach the love of God, remembering that I'm not an extension of a machine gun. When a man comes to my Services I feel he has a right to have a few quiet moments to hear the love of God. There is still love."[85] In field services, chaplains created a space between war and civilization. The nearness of combat gave their words, their presence, and the acts of worship new meanings.

Occasionally combat left no time for worshipful reflection. The liturgical space was frequently invaded by artillery fire, by helicopters and airplanes, or by unexpected attacks. Newby recounted an Easter service in which a resupply chopper interrupted his sermon, which was not unusual. The situation, however, changed when the helicopter crashed nearby, at which point the "worshipers abandoned the service and dashed to the crash site, fearing troopers were being cut to pieces by the spinning main rotor. Amazingly no one was hurt. Even more amazing, about the time we made that happy discovery, a 105mm artillery round exploded in the burning vegetation about a hundred feet behind where I'd stood to conduct the service. The falling chopper had drawn Easter worshipers from the 'kill zone' just in time!" Though it is hard to imagine any minister simply continuing on with a service if a helicopter crashed nearby, the exigencies of worship in combat required an extraordinary level of flexibility and a heightened sense of situational awareness that civilian clergy could hardly imagine. One could easily imagine such a story being exaggerated, but by accounting this story, Newby stressed the potential dangers of serving in combat and his interpretation of the constant grace and mercy of God.

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[85] Kettler, *Chaplain's Letters*, 201.

In rear areas, soldiers and chaplains built makeshift and semi-permanent chapels all across Vietnam. Chaplains recalled some of these structures being raised in three or four days. Construction involved found materials, misdirected supplies, and the occasional budget allocation. Chaplain Robert Hess recalled the construction of a chapel outside of Ban Me Thuot from "'scrounged' material and a Bronze cross made from 'duster' shells, pews of ammo boxes and 'home made' chandeliers of tinted Plexiglas, and even a 'bell' in the steeple (with nobody supposed to ask where it came from)."[86] More so than in combat areas, soldiers used materials available to them to recreate recognizable worship spaces. The chapel represented a piece of the world they knew and understood.

Be it in the field or in the rear, liturgical space in combat was rarely well-defined, and many chaplains saw their ministry as one of simple presence; thus the chaplain himself represented sacred space. Joseph Dulany believed that his most important opportunities for ministry came in letting soldiers know he "struggled at times with my faith as they did." He wrote, "I invited them to join the journey as together we looked to God for faith and assurance. I shared from my heart and conviction with the men. I wept with them at memorial services. I prayed, as best I could, in the worst of situations at hospital bedsides and after enemy contacts. Sometimes, the only thing that I could do was sit with a person."[87] Dulany and other chaplains understood that the liturgies of war that were being created did not have to be formal, organized, or standard to be meaningful.

However and wherever they were carried out, liturgies of war returned power to God and agency to humans, and these liturgies allowed those who participated to experience worship, healing, and reconciliation in the midst of combat. Chaplains led the service members and

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[86] Robert Hess, Survey Response, USACHCS Library, Vietnam Files, Box 5.

[87] Dulany, *Once a Soldier*, 42.

officers who joined them in worship in the effort to reconcile their faith with their experience in war. As they confronted moral questions and the horrors of combat, soldiers and chaplains found that liturgical experiences centered on sacrament, scripture, songs, and space, which linked them with the world outside of Vietnam and at the same time created new spaces in which these elements transcended boundaries created by traditional religious interpretations and denominational or faith-group divisions.

The Morality of the Vietnam War

As chaplains dealt with internal conflict over their identities and created new liturgical interpretations to resolve theological and doctrinal questions, they also had to confront the basic morality of the Vietnam War. After the 1968 Tet Offensive, chaplains were increasingly aware of religious dissent at home, demoralized troops, and apparently waning chances for military success. Thomas Des Champs recalled thinking, "During that spring of 1970, I knew what the national news back home could not tell; we were not winning this war." He, and other chaplains, had to respond to this understanding. Des Champs chose to reassure soldiers, even though he thought the situation hopeless: "As God's emissary to the troops, I found myself telling them everything would be 'all right.' But in my heart, I knew that everything wasn't or couldn't be 'all right.' No words can describe the horrors of war or the effects that it can have upon men's souls." In deciding to reassure soldiers, some would argue that he abdicated his religious responsibilities in favor of military ones. Yet Des Champs disagreed. Rather than ignoring a religious conviction, Des Champs' religious interpretations changed to accommodate new circumstances. He wrote, "To combat the impact of the horrors of war, I adopted a philosophy

of divine confidence that even while the world appeared to be going to hell, God was still in control."[88]

Other chaplains confronted the morality of warfare and their role in it when they were called upon to minister to Vietnamese civilians, often the victims of American military action. One Christian Scientist chaplain, Richard Kemp, wrote that these instances "have been quite challenging to my metaphysical position." After holding the head of a wounded Vietnamese man, and later learning he was an NVA regular, Kemp was reminded of the scriptural injunction "Love your enemies . . . pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you," which had been highlighted in that week's lesson-sermon.[89] Ultimately, Kemp concluded "truly our enemy is that which defiles man, and not person," expressing a new theological understanding of scripture in light of war.[90] Kemp's understanding of the enemy also affected his relationship to the war. His interpretations of the morality of war and of his relationship to the Vietnamese enemy shows a case in which a chaplain might be seen as undermining a national or military goal and upholding his religious convictions. Role conflict or role tension did not cause Kemp to abandon or even question his faith or ministerial duties; rather, moral conflict and religious reflection allowed Kemp to reach a different conclusion about the nature of the war.

The war in Vietnam represented a pivotal moment for chaplains and for the chaplaincy. In previous wars, chaplains had faced only limited criticisms from a relatively small population of religious and civic activists who argued for the vigorous separation of church and state. Yet the moral ambiguities and lapses of American military action in Vietnam called the chaplains' military and religious position into question. As these moral, religious, and military questions

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[88] Des Champs, *Christian Soldier*, 121.

[89] Matthew 6:44

[90] Richard D. Kemp, "A Chaplain Writes From Vietnam" *Activities* (Christian Science Chaplain Newsletter), April 1968, USACHCS, Vietnam Files, Box 7, "Christian Science Newsletters."

converged, chaplains confronted conflict that stemmed from apparent contradictions within their own belief systems. They responded to these conflicts in practical ways and by creating new liturgical practices to make sense of the war. Chaplains found it was possible for Christians to serve in the Vietnam War, to believe fundamentally in its ostensible purpose, to find war morally abhorrent, and still to interpret it in religious ways so that their God emerged in control and their faith intact or strengthened. They reached these conclusions by sorting out questions related to their identities in and interpretations of war.

During the war, they addressed moral, military, and religious issues pragmatically. Their resolutions were dissimilar but based on personal and religious convictions. As they addressed issues such as war crimes or the chaplain's role in combat, chaplains also formed for themselves identities within the military community. These various identities contributed to the moral life and the morale of the troops they served. Conflicts over moral issues and religious interpretation often manifested themselves in apparent confusion about chaplains' roles as clergy, soldiers, and officers. In the end, chaplains had to resolve their experience in combat so that their faith and their religion did not give way to cynicism, despair, and nihilism, a process that began in Vietnam but continued as they returned home.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPLAINS AND HOMEFRONT DEBATES ABOUT VIETNAM

Chaplains, positioned as they were between the sacred and secular, the civilian and military, often served as mediators or interpreters for diverse communities in the Vietnam War, but they also played this role within American communities in the United States. Chaplains entered discussions about Vietnam, American religion, and the chaplaincy itself in specific and meaningful ways. Sometimes chaplains themselves participated in these, and at other times, chaplains emerged as subjects and symbols in these debates, rather than participants. When they participated, chaplains' words about the war in public and published discourses provided experientially grounded terms for the debate because their words and their actions represented the complex intersections of different cultures and points-of-view. They held authority and credibility in the eyes of religious and military communities by virtue of their position as both officers and clergy. Though chaplains' writings were unlikely to affect military policies or practices in Vietnam, their words reveal some of the fundamental tensions between the military and American society that developed over the course of the war. Often, chaplains became symbolic subjects in a debate where one's position on chaplain participation in war roughly coincided with one's opinion of the Vietnam War.

While their official status granted them full membership in the military community and in the religious community, their position outside of traditional parish settings and their rank-without-command status in the military, occasionally left them on the margins of both institutions. This simultaneous position as insider and outsider thrust chaplains into positions as both spokesmen and symbols, and the chaplaincy became a symbolic ground over which to hash

out ethical, theological and practical questions that related to the intersections of religion and war. In a war that challenged American religious, cultural, moral, and military ideas, the military chaplaincy occasionally emerged as a sort of safe battle ground for these quite-intense debates. Chaplains were never central to debates about American policy in Vietnam, but conversations about chaplains revealed important fissures within the homefront religious community and illuminate one way in which debate over chaplains foreshadowed larger debates over Vietnam and an American national destiny.

Discourse by and about chaplains in various communities, particularly (though not exclusively) those formed and shaped by publications, highlights the multiple ways in which chaplains related to such communities in the homefront. Communities of readers and writers formed around and were shaped by the public discourse of newspapers, weekly periodicals, newsletters, and denominational conventions. James W. Carey, a Communication Studies scholar, has proposed that "news reading, and writing, is a ritual act," in which the reader confronts not "pure information" but "a portrayal of the contending forces in the world." Newspapers, periodicals, newsletters, and even denominational resolutions did not merely present "facts" to an audience, but offered a specific way of understanding certain facts within a culturally determined context.[1] Thus, publications both shaped and reflected the values and culture of the communities around them. When chaplains, religious leaders and laypeople, and secular journalists wrote about chaplains, the chaplaincy, and Vietnam, they demonstrated the various sets of norms and values that held weight within each community. Chaplains themselves—both current and former—contributed important voices to the debate. They offered experientially grounded observations and conclusions, and they acted as cultural mediators by linking civilian and military communities. They operated comfortably within each

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[1] James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 20-21.

world, using the language and culture of each one to establish their credibility and to communicate one community's cultures and values to the other.

While limited, discussions about chaplains centered around two related themes: First, there was an abstract, philosophical discussion about the morality of war (and the Vietnam War in particular) and the chaplain's role in war. Second, there was a policy-oriented discussion about civilianizing the chaplaincy, which would remove (or at least significantly lessen) federal funding and military entanglement for chaplains. Chaplains, ex-chaplains, and civilian observers participated in both debates, though not always on the same terms or using the same assumptions. The debate's frame frequently depended on where the conversation was taking place—in other words, writers to the *Christian Century* assumed certain things about the audience of that periodical, and the *New York Times*' coverage revealed a different set of assumptions for its audience. In any case, proponents of both positions argued forcefully, and the divide over chaplains was indicative of broader cultural and political divides within the American public.

Finally, the narrative of religious dissent during the Vietnam War has been well-told by historians, but looking at discourse about chaplains illuminates a wider range of religious responses and interpretations of the Vietnam War than might be popularly imagined. In addition to widespread dissent, religious beliefs also prompted some faithful people to support the Vietnam War and induced deep ambivalence and uncertainty in others. The diversity of responses—all "religious" in nature—emphasized both the diversity of religious beliefs in the United States and underscored the extent to which American religion had been reconfigured along political rather than denominational lines.

Priest versus Prophet: Defining the Chaplain's Role in War

Though chaplains had served with American military personnel from the country's founding, the historical role of chaplains had never been constant. George Washington and other commanders apparently valued chaplains for their morale-boosting function among troops; in the Civil War, chaplains on both sides assured men of the fundamental righteousness of their cause; on the Western frontier, chaplains also doubled as library officers, post teachers, bakery and commissary managers, and even medics; and in the early Cold War, chaplains played a central role in character guidance instruction in the military.[2] As the chaplaincy increased professionalization and education-levels within its ranks, chaplains' duties became more focused on specifically religious endeavors, and because chaplains were usually drawn from a pool of civilian clergy, developments within American religious communities affected the military chaplaincy.

In the 1960s, as the wave of religious revival and adherence peaked and began to decline, politically and theologically liberal Americans began to reconsider the role of religion in public life. They took cues from World War II hero Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who advocated a sort of "religionless Christianity" in which God's people on earth undertook earthly tasks without looking to the Supernatural for guidance or support. Liberal religious adherents and secular activists took one of Bonhoeffer's most-quoted statements to heart: "God would have us know that we must live as men who manage our lives without him."[3] Harvard sociologist and theologian, Harvey Cox, published *The Secular City* in 1965. He argued passionately and forcefully

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[2] Budd, Serving Two Masters; John W. Brinsfield, *Faith in the Fight: Civil War Chaplains* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2003); William Corby and Lawrence Frederick Kohl, *Memoirs of Chaplain Life: Three Years with the Irish Brigade in the Army of the Potomac* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992).

[3] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethage, enlarged ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 360; on Christian and secular responses and the development of "secular theology" and the "Death of God" movement, see Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America since 1945: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 72-73.

that secularization and urbanization were not the enemies of Christianity, but rather its product.

Cox's book became a handbook of sorts for liberal activists and seminarians; Christians could

better the world by working in it, by engaging with American culture.[4] Thus, there were

significant calls to move away from the "institutional" church, grounded in ornate and well-

established buildings and steeped in tradition, and into communities, where liturgical innovation

and inclusion would be the norm.

At the same time, conservative and evangelical Christians involved themselves with

American culture and politics as well. Evangelical ministers were among the first to use radio to

reach mass audiences, and Billy Graham's revivals harkened to evangelical camp meetings of the

nineteenth century. By 1940, Charles Fuller's *Old-Fashioned Revival Hour* was broadcast on 450

radio stations each week, and by 1943 boasted a weekly audience of more than twenty million.[5]

Between 1952 and 1971, Southern Baptist Convention churches gained more than 6,300,000

adherents, a 78% increase; the Presbyterian Church in the United States, the conservative wing

of American Presbyterianism, experienced an 80% increase in that same time.[6] Though old

mainline denominations gained numerically more adherents and were generally larger than their

conservative counterparts, evangelical and conservative denominations clearly had greater

momentum.

In many ways, official chaplaincy channels echoed the growing cultural concern for

ecumenical cooperation and respect for religious pluralism by emphasizing its historical roots,

yet conservative groups continued to influence the military's character guidance programs and to

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[4] Robert S. Ellwood, *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening: American Religion Moving from Modern to Postmodern* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 34-35.

[5] Allitt, *Religion in America*, 13.

[6] William M. Newman and Peter L. Halvorson, *Patterns of Pluralism: A Portrait of American Religion, 1952-1971* (Washington D.C.: Glenmary Research Center, 1980), 4.

cast the Cold War in explicitly religious terms. How to provide spiritual support for American military personnel became an important issue as the Cold War solidified and as disagreements over the Cold War emerged between conservative and liberal religious groups.

An old distinction from Max Weber's sociology of religion became the frame for the debate that ensued; some writers referred to Weber's typology explicitly, but even those who did not engage Weber's theory directly described their positions in analogous ways. In *Economy and Society*, Weber identified three ideal types of religious authority: the priest, the prophet, and the magician. (In the chaplaincy debate, only the first two were ever considered with any seriousness.) Each held a particular place within a given society, and they each fulfilled a specific role and religious need. The priest was essentially a functionary of a "regularly organized and permanent enterprise concerned with influencing the gods." The priest received his authority by virtue of tradition, ritual, and law, and he was bound by the same. The priest's most important relationships on earth were social. Weber wrote that a priest was "actively associated with some type of social organization, of which they are employees or organs operating in the interests of the organization's members." Priests drew on systems of religious concepts, and they were usually learned and educated within the confines of a particular religious system.[7] Prophets, on the other hand, were process agents. They appeared when a community was threatened and revealed divine truth to men on earth and interceded on behalf of a community. Weber identified two main methods of prophetic witness, ethical and exemplary. The first was based on proclamation and the second on modeling. Whereas priests operated within formal structures and traditions, prophets usually emerged from the outside or margins of formal religious authority. Prophets were, by divine calling and personal charisma, to speak truth to power and to

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[7] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff, et al. (New York: Besminster Press, 1968), 425 ff.

attract followers.[8] Generally, those who doubted the ability of Christians to serve in war and questioned the morality of American intervention in Vietnam thought chaplains should play a prophetic role in war and that their close ties to the military compromised their ability to reveal perhaps unpopular truths to military authorities. Those who found Christian service in war acceptable and who emphasized the spiritual needs of military service members thought that chaplains' primary role should be priestly or pastoral; they were functionaries who acted in the best spiritual interest of their flock.

In 1970, near the height of American involvement in Vietnam, in response to growing concerns that a chaplain's conscience was unnecessarily and detrimentally fettered by his institutional position within the military, the General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel (GCCAFP) released a set of "Guidelines for Free and Responsible Expression of Conscience in the Military." The four guidelines were widely circulated, both in General Commission publications and within other denominational publications. The guidelines recognized the tension between a chaplain's position as clergy and his position as officer—that he held dual responsibilities to church and state, never an easy combination to reconcile. The first guideline suggested that a "chaplain's presence among his men is a constant reminder of the fact that the church is identifying with all persons in all conditions." The second stated more emphatically that "Holy Scriptures require the church to minister to men wherever they may be found." The third outlined the expectations and demands on chaplains by both the church and the state. The fourth and longest guideline set out a recommended course of action if the other three seemed in conflict. It concluded, officially, at least, contrary to the beliefs of chaplain critics that "If after exhausting all efforts the chaplain finds that reconciliation still is not

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[8] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 439 ff. See also Stephen Turner, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Weber* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Richard Swedberg, ed., *The Max Weber Dictionary: Key Words and Concepts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

possible, the dictates of his faith and denomination determine his course of action."[9] According to the GCCAFP, the chaplain's primary role was a priestly/pastoral one, but the chaplain's spiritual conscience demanded a role for the prophet as well—if faith and war conflicted irreconcilably, faith should prevail.

The debate over the chaplain's primary role, however, began years before. In November 1966, toward the beginning of a long buildup of American forces in Vietnam, the *Christian Century* published a three-part series on the military chaplaincy, and the issue of the Vietnam War echoed throughout. Framed as a dialogue about the chaplaincy, two of the three articles were clearly opposed to the military chaplaincy—either in principle or in its current form. On the other side, Navy Chaplain Albert Ledebuhr took the lead to defend the chaplaincy to a liberal and skeptical audience.

William R. Miller, a layperson in the United Church of Christ, began his article by referring to the Anabaptist chaplain in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*: "The chaplain was sincerely a very helpful person who was never able to help anyone." The critique that followed was based in this sense of irony; the fundamental problem with the chaplaincy was the "sheer incongruity of a pious imitator of Christ trying to be relevant while acting as part of a system for which the Gospels made no provision whatever." The best the chaplain could do, according to Miller, was to punch a young enlistees "T.S. Card," as the chaplain's "powers of exorcism are greatly diminished in our matter-of-fact secular age."[10] When it came to Vietnam, Miller concluded that the chaplain could not seriously preach about pacifism, but he could "ever so cautiously, *ask* whether indeed God is the co-pilot of our bomber pilots as they rain death on Hanoi and Haiphong." Miller was skeptical, though, that chaplains would even go this far, preferring

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[9] "Chaplains Guidelines for Free and Responsible Expression of Conscience in the Military," *The Chaplain*, May-June 1970, 3.

[10] Miller, "Chaplaincy v. Mission," *Christian Century*, 2 November 1966, 1336.

instead to "wrap such questions in impenetrable abstractions and couch them in a letter to the *Link* or the *Chaplain* rather than risk demoralizing our Christian fighting men."[11] Miller recognized that chaplains were constrained by the system in which they operated, and that their primary outlet for dissention or disagreement with "policy" often came only in the form of dialogue with other military chaplains.

Ultimately, Miller concluded that the military was having far too great an effect on religion, and specifically on the prophetic ministry of the church and its leaders. Miller wished to take a broad view of the chaplaincy's mission, and in some sense, disentangle the chaplains' mission from the mission of the military itself. In fact, he wrote, "quite emphatically, I do not wish to call attention to the fact that the principal function of the armed forces is to kill people," yet this critique was implicit throughout. Serving as a uniformed officer of the armed services required the chaplain to "harmonize his beliefs and what they imply with the objectives of a secular enterprise, particularly one predicated on unswerving loyalty to the state . . . an effective army cannot countenance sedition among its officers and men."[12] Conflicting allegiances most certainly made for conflicting outcomes as the chaplain balanced his military and religious duties, but the impetus for change would originate with churches more fully seeking to serve the Church in the world.

A former Navy chaplain, Norman MacFarlane, wrote the most scathingly critical article in the series, focusing on the political and military characteristics of the chaplaincy system. MacFarlane charged that chaplains who worked to uphold moral integrity within the military "have drunk the cup of hemlock," essentially sacrificing their careers for their moral bearings

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[11] Miller, "Chaplaincy v. Mission," 1336. *The Link* and *The Chaplain* were periodicals published by the General Commission on Chaplains; they contained lively and thought-provoking debate, albeit geared toward a small and specific audience. *The Chaplain* served a professional audience, while *The Link* was directed toward enlisted personnel.

[12] Miller, "Chaplaincy v. Mission," 1337

and integrity. He went so far as to charge that "no chaplain who challenged the command on a moral issue has survived the next selection board," citing that in December 1965 only 67% of chaplains who were up for promotion to lieutenant commander were selected, as opposed to 95.7% of other officers. MacFarlane's view, though a minority position for chaplains, was nevertheless evidence of the diversity of chaplain viewpoints and opinions. Chaplains, even with their common cultural and social characteristics and a shared position, could not be expected to respond unanimously to the challenges presented by war.

MacFarlane's critique extended to the fact that chaplains were often expected to take on duties that other officers would not. He reported that at sea he had become the "library officer, tours officer, movie officer, public information assistant," he became "publisher of the ship's newspaper, organizer of children's parties in foreign ports" among other duties unrelated to the chaplain's specific work. But he lamented the fact that many navy chaplains were "rotting professionally in the navy when there are 60,000 empty pulpits in America."[13] Yet MacFarlane also critiqued the Navy's tendency in his mind to write off religion, complaining that commanders prohibited or impeded active chaplain activities and undermined the religious program that chaplains offered.[14]

The *Century* also gave space to a pro-chaplaincy article. Stationed at the Armed Forces Staff College at the time of the article's publication, Ledebuhr framed his primary argument for the military chaplaincy as one of ministry to those outside of traditional parish life. Social movements of the 1960s exhorted Christian leaders to take their faith and ministry outside of church walls—to take the Church to the people, rather than forcing people into a church. Ledebuhr positioned himself and his fellow chaplains in the company of anti-poverty and Civil

[13] Norman MacFarlane, "Navy Chaplaincy: Muzzled Ministry," *Christian Century*, 2 November 1966, 1338-1339.

[14] MacFarlane, "Muzzled Ministry," 1339.

Rights activists in believing that "the ministry of the church is at its best where the clergyman, armed with the gospel, comes face-to-face with people where they work, sleep, eat and play." He believed that war was part of human nature, which led him to think that the military chaplain was needed to provide "spiritual ministry for people where thy are and as they are." Ledebuhr dismissed what he determined were major objections to the military chaplaincy and took especially careful aim at those who he terms "idealists" who argue that chaplains should not associate themselves with men or an organization that is trained to kill. Ledebuhr challenged his fellow clergymen to similarly abandon any in their congregations who served as police officers, government workers, or industrialists as they were similarly implicated in the war effort. He acknowledged the spiritual dangers of the chaplaincy—including the competition for rank and prestige and the conflation of Christianity and "Americanism"—but concluded that the potential rewards far outweighed the risks. Chaplains, Ledebuhr argued, were no different from civilian clergy; they were imperfect, but their work was critical.[15]

As Ledebuhr continued, he moved his argument closer to the conflict at hand and chaplains' participation in Vietnam. Concluding that the chaplains' presence was most effective when soldiers were at the greatest risks, he opined, "Risk is especially present these days, . . . Navy chaplains serving marines in the Pacific . . . recorded well over 9,000 counseling cases from April to June [in 1966]." Even in the early stages of US troop buildup, chaplains provided critical support for troops overseas. Ultimately, though, Ledebuhr thought the rewards were more personal than institutional or military: "Such a personal ministry of total identification is one of the real joys of the military chaplaincy." He closed by recounting some of his own experiences in Korea, and he reminded readers of current chaplain activities in Vietnam. In addition to counseling, he reported that between April and June over 500,000 men had attended worship

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[15] Albert F. Ledebuhr, "Military Chaplaincy: An Apologia," *Christian Century*, 2 November 1966, 1332.

services—proof, he said that even "'professional killers' are also moved by the gospel."[16] Ledebuhr used his personal experiences as a chaplain to establish credibility with *Century*'s readers, and his references to the social justice movements of the 1960s, ecumenicalism within the chaplain corps, and racial integration in the chaplain service established his bona fides as a progressive thinker rather than a militant participant in the war.

The series prompted several letters to the editor that expressed a variety of viewpoints on the issue. Most of the letters came from chaplains, and most of them adamantly defended their ministry in response to Miller's and MacFarlane's articles. Two chaplains wrote from Vietnam, indicating that chaplains retained some of their connections to civilian religious communities even when they were overseas. Richard McPhee, stationed in Bein Hoa, Vietnam, wrote to defend the position that simply changing chaplains' uniforms or rank structure would do little to address the underlying difficulties that Ledebuhr and MacFarlane noticed. McPhee also emphasized his personal satisfaction with his job and wrote that "better than two-thirds" of the counseling cases he saw had "legitimate problems."[17] Expressing an alternate view, J. George Hilton, assigned to the 6th Battalion, 71st Artillery, wrote that as the church re-examined its mission to the military, the chaplaincy would be fundamentally changed. He declared that it would, in fact, be possible to envision a civilian chaplain corps, and that such ministers could "just as effectively plough through the mud and march in the dust and carry on his mission as do the journalist and technical representative and Red Cross director in the thick of things in their soiled jungle combat fatigues."[18] Such responses from chaplains in the field demonstrated an understanding that issues surrounding the chaplaincy could not be separated from current US

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[16] Ledebuhr, "Apologia," 1334.

[17] Richard S. McPhee, Letter to the Editor, *Christian Century*, 30 November 1966, 1476-1477.

[18] J. George Hilton, Letter to the Editor, *Christian Century*, 22 February 1967, 242.

military actions. At the same time, their responses offered evidence that chaplains were not walking lock-step together in their views on the future of the chaplaincy. The debate, though nuanced, was dynamic.

Reserve and retired chaplains also chimed in, usually defending chaplains and the chaplaincy. Donald Shaner, former line officer in the Navy and at the time a reserve chaplain, disputed MacFarlane's point of view, but admitted that Ledebuhr "perhaps paints the picture a little too rosy." Shaner suggested taking longer view of the historical developments of the chaplaincy in the United States to emphasize the advantages of the modern chaplains' cultural skills and structural position.[19] Retired Chaplain Willaim Sodt believed the problem to be "chiefly with chaplains and supervisors in the chaplain corps who were unwilling to accept this lowly role as servants and mediators."[20] Sodt's analysis upheld the liminal structural position and flexible cultural role within the military as an admirable one, modeled on Christ and Paul, in which chaplains would become all things to all men. Another retired chaplain went so far as to accuse MacFarlane's article as a "sorry reflection on the state of the chaplaincy in the navy or an unconscious commentary on his own inadequacy as a chaplain and a clergyman." Chaplain Alfred Klausler assured "those whose sons are in the armed services, whether in Vietnam or some other theater, that by and large our chaplains are doing their tasks as servants of God." Then, addressing the theologically well-read readership of the *Century*, Klausler reminded the editors and the magazine's readership that Paul Tillich had served as a military chaplain in the First World War and that Karl Barth had served as a reserve in the Swiss Army.[21] Klausler's

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[19] Donald W. Shaner, Letter to the Editor, *Christian Century*, 30 November 1966, 1476

[20] William G. Sodt, Letter to the Editor, *Christian Century*, 30 November 1966, 1478.

[21] Alfred P. Klausler, Letter to the Editor, *Christian Century*, 30 November 1966, 1478.

references to two renowned twentieth century theologians helped to establish his credibility as a religious authority, especially with the generally liberal audience of the *Century*.

Of the letters that were more critical of the chaplaincy or supportive of Miller's and MacFarlane's observations, none that were published came from chaplains. While such letters responded to articles about the military chaplaincy, they introduced new terms to the debate. One letter addressed both the series of articles and the subsequent letters that had been published. John Sayre, who identified himself as writing from the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, argued that the primary difference between the military chaplaincy and the civilian pastorate was that the "essential business of the war machine is to kill, burn and destroy." This environment, Sayre concluded, made it impossible for military chaplains "to say a word of Christ against their army's share in the massacre of a people, or against escalation." Sayre's letter changed the terms of debate from the theoretical responsibility of the church to minister in the world to an argument about the morality of the war in Vietnam. Though subtle, the difference in emphasis was significant. In many conversations about the war and the chaplaincy, the two sides began from fundamentally different points of view as to the nature and purpose of the chaplaincy.

Even civilian pastors who were more sympathetic to the church's ministry to the armed forces questioned the chaplain's total involvement, in both life and death, with the war machine. Carl Landes, who identified himself as pastor of First United Church of Christ in Franklin, Ohio, wrote: "News accounts tell us that the first Protestant chaplain to lose his life in Vietnam was buried in Arlington cemetery 'with full military honors,' and that the chief of chaplains referred to him as one who 'always reflected confidence and ability, which seemed to radiate religious graciousness.' Isn't it a rather sad commentary on the sickness of our society, and of the church, that a representative of the Prince of Peace is buried 'with full military honors'?" His letter did not presume that chaplains had no place in the war, but he questioned that giving a

chaplain "full military honors" was appropriate. The writer relied on Jesus's teaching to love one's enemies to make his point. The letter continued: "If Jesus were speaking to his ministers today, would he not say: 'If you radiate graciousness only upon those who are your friends, what are you doing more than others? Even the communists do that.' . . . Whatever the church's responsibility to the men we conscript to kill our "enemies," isn't it time at least to separate the church of the Prince of peace from the cult of the glorification of war?" In the minds of many civilian responders to the issue at hand, there was clearly a line to be drawn between a chaplain's ministry and his involvement with the military mission and protocol.

After the first round of responses was published, however, the debate continued into early 1967. In January MacFarlane—the author of one of the original articles—wrote a letter to the *Century*, responding to the chaplains' letters. He claimed that there was a "remarkable disparity" between the letters he had received and the ones that the editors had published. He concluded, "certainly no active duty chaplain who despises the system is going to let you publish his feelings for all the world to see," essentially making his case based on the lack of self-criticism by active-duty chaplains. MacFarlane reported that he had received five letters from chaplains, only one of which contained significant disagreement with his main points. He noted instead the "many letters and phone calls from nonchaplain [*sic*] military people," that suggested he was correct on most, if not all, counts. At the end of his rebuttal, he claimed that "no one outside the chaplain community has come to the defense of the chaplains, and the chaplains have not done very well in defending themselves. If there was ever any doubt about the veracity of what I have written, I think the chaplains have pretty well dispelled it. . . ."[22]

Between 1967 and 1970, the period of the most intense fighting in Vietnam, editorial content in *Christian Century* about chaplains dwindled, even as the *Century's* opposition to the

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[22] W. Norman MacFarlane, Letter to the Editor, *Christian Century*, 4 January 1967, 18

Vietnam War—as a matter of cause and practice—increased. Then, toward the end of the war and immediately after American withdrawal from Vietnam, such debate began again. Recalling earlier critiques of the chaplaincy, Robert Kiltgaard wrote an article that placed significant blame on chaplains for the dehumanizing and militarist nature of the modern American armed forces. Beyond simply suggesting it was impossible for chaplains to play a prophetic role in the military, Kiltgaard, a former enlisted man in the Army, insisted that chaplains were actually part and parcel to the problems inherent in military service. Far from being "muzzled" by command, he claimed that chaplains' self-assumed priestly role made them "all too happy to take part" in the military mission.[23]

Kiltgaard's article had all the marks of a polemic of a disgruntled soldier. Titled "Onward Christian Soldiers: Dehumanization and the Military Chaplain," the article was deeply critical of the war in Vietnam and similarly critical of those who made such a war possible, including military chaplains. The article began by addressing a hypothetical "you"—a soldier about to enlist in the military: "One of the first officers you meet at army basic training camp is the military chaplain." Then, Kiltgaard shifted to the third person: "Basic training is a pretty harrowing experience for most people. Its goal is to turn individuals into a homogeneous, obedient, malleable group." But he quickly reverted to the first person as the soldier went through basic training: "As our cattle trucks arrive, harassment begins. We are attacked by the training cadre." The confused voice of the piece added to its sense of urgency, in no uncertain terms reminding the reader of what was at stake: "the average trainee knows that within four or five months he will be in Vietnam. [He] finds himself compelled to take the Vietnam situation

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[23] Robert E. Kiltgaard, "Onward Christian Soldiers: Dehumanization and the Military Chaplain," *Christian Century*, November 1970, 1379.

seriously." [24] It was utterly unlike the impassioned, but well-considered, and in most respects fairly balanced, trio of articles from 1966. Kiltgaard's essay reflected more clearly the editorial slant of *Christian Century* in 1970.

For American denominations, concern over the chaplain's place and role within the military took slightly different form, but it coalesced around questions of how chaplains could be effective pastoral ministers—priests—rather than how chaplains could work to change the military system or affect the trajectory of action in Vietnam—prophets. In order to explain how chaplains, generally disconnected from institutional hierarchies, conventions, and cultural contact, could operate effectively in the field, chaplains emphasized the missional nature of their work, and their writings drew parallels to civilian ministry, especially that of missionaries, who were charged with evangelizing unchurched populations. The Baptist General Conference, an organization that brought independent Baptist and evangelical churches together, featured stories by chaplains as a way to emphasize mission work being carried out around the world. Roger Bradley said he wrote to "inform our Conference family of the work of their military chaplains with a view toward arousing a sense of urgency in prayer in their behalf."[25] Bradley's bold statement of purpose indicated his position as a cultural mediator because he relied on his position as a chaplain and as a pastor to urge a specific response to new information. Bradley emphasized the missional role of chaplains as a way to create a common vocabulary for thinking about chaplains; according to the Baptist General Conference's views, they were more like missionaries than simply pastors or military officers.

At other times, especially when chaplains' audiences were other chaplains, the debate between priestly ministry and prophetic ministry appeared more complicated. Many chaplains

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Roger L. Bradley, "Our Military Chaplains: A Plea for Prayer," *The Standard (Baptist General Conference)*, 29 December 1969, 8.

believed they were called to both tasks. *The Chaplain*, published by the General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Services, frequently included first-person accounts of the chaplain's work in Vietnam as well as preaching, counseling, or teaching advice, short book reviews, and stories of general interest to military chaplains. One common feature in nearly every issue was the "Preaching Clinic," written by James Cleland, Dean of Duke Chapel at Duke University in Durham, NC. Cleland wrote on topics ranging from "The Twenty Minute Sermon," to using anecdotes effectively, to selecting scripture passages outside of the lectionary readings. These articles showcased the Protestant thrust to this publication, and emphasized chaplains' preaching and pastoral roles. Another story suggested that chaplains take up running or some other form of physical activity as a way not only to meet military requirements but also to invigorate one's body and mind.[26] *The Chaplain*, as a publication concerned itself with the minutiae of a minister's life, focused almost exclusively on his or her priestly role, as a functionary for a religious community.

In late 1970, Chaplain Wendell Wright wrote a reflective piece titled "The Problems and Challenges of a Ministry in Vietnam." While he did not claim that his experience was universal or even typical, Wright addressed his article to chaplains who had *not* served in Vietnam (and perhaps to civilian readers who took an interest in the subject.) Like chaplains who wrote in denominationally-specific contexts, Wright concluded "the problems and challenges of the ministry in Vietnam are not really so different from those experienced by a Christian minister or priest anywhere serving his people." Though he acknowledged the differences—the "situation," the "environment," and "the circumstances" in which a chaplain worked—Wright focused on the similarities. "There is much more intensity and tension because of the war, but the chaplain still brings to his people the basic message of the love of God through Jesus Christ and it is this

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[26] Hayden Gilmore, "They Shall Jog and Not Faint," *The Chaplain*, March-April 1971, 36-40.

redeeming, releasing, and freeing good news of the gospel that brings life to men in combat just as anywhere else in the world."[27] Wright's message stood squarely in the face of civilian critics who claimed that the military chaplaincy was fundamentally different from civilian ministry because of its institutional setting. He also emphasized the chaplain's pastoral role to provide for the spiritual care of a specific group of people within a specific social context.

As the American drawdown in Vietnam occurred in the early 1970s, contributors to *The Chaplain* engaged more consciously in the wider religious debates about the ethics, practicality, and ultimate future of the chaplaincy in the United States military. The editors recognized the cultural force of arguments that criticized the chaplaincy and wanted chaplains to be aware of issues facing the wider community and act accordingly. Yet the articles were not all one-sided defenses of the status quo. Jack Boozer, a professor of Religion at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, wrote there was "considerable justification" for the criticisms leveled against clergymen and chaplains, that they had been "either absent or indecisive in the high-risk struggles for human dignity and community since the early 1950s," and he exhorted chaplains to change their course.[28] A later article addressed specifically the question of the chaplain's role in prophetic ministry. While the article concluded that such attacks on the chaplaincy were generally unfounded and represented a misunderstanding of the chaplain's primary role, the essay nonetheless demonstrated that chaplains—both individually and organizationally—were aware of and concerned with broader public debates.[29]

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[27] Wendell T. Wright, "The Problems and Challenges of a Ministry in Vietnam," *The Chaplain*, September-October 1970, 44-45.

[28] Jack S. Boozer, "The Military Chaplaincy: One Calling, Two Roles," *The Chaplain*, November-December 1970, 3.

[29] Richard B. Cheatham, Jr., "The Prophetic Role of the Military Chaplain," *The Chaplain*, January-February 1971, 22-30.

Civilianizing the Chaplaincy

Implicit in debates about chaplains' roles were policy discussions about the chaplaincy itself. Not until the early twentieth century, concurrent with the wider Root Reforms within the entire Army, were chaplains fully integrated within the military's systems of uniform and rank, and these two issues—the most visible signs of a chaplain's military status—drove discussions among chaplaincy critics and supporters during the Vietnam war era. From the Revolution to after the Spanish-American War, chaplains operated only within a loose hierarchy, reporting directly to the Adjutant General rather than to a Chief of Chaplains or Chaplain General. During the Mexican-American War of 1848, the first war in which American chaplains accompanied troops outside of the United States, the Army also experimented with a civilian chaplain corps, but deemed it a logistical and tactical failure.[30] Although chaplains had served alongside American soldiers since the Revolution, there were significant variations in the historical models that could be followed.

Most notably, during the Vietnam War, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) called upon its civilian pastors to serve one-year "tours-of-duty" in Vietnam as civilian chaplains. WELS leaders believed that the theological and doctrinal integrity of their church would be compromised by asking its pastors to perform military or government functions in addition to religious ones, and they also argued that the specific spiritual needs of WELS service members would go unmet by a non-Christian, Catholic, or general Protestant chaplain.[31]

Even denominations that endorsed a significant number of chaplains worried about the chaplain's spiritual wellbeing in the midst of the military structure. Leaders of American religious

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[30] Charles W. Hedrick, "On Foreign Soil: The Tragedy of a Civilianized Chaplaincy During the Mexican-American War," *Military Chaplains' Review* (Winter 1992): 61-85; Budd, *Serving Two Masters*.

[31] Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Topical Q&As, "Other Military Chaplains," http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?1518&cuTopic_topicID=63&cuItem_itemID=9204, accessed 6 March 2008.

groups were concerned that chaplain's relative detachment from institutional structures might weaken a chaplain's theological or religious foundations. They concluded that ongoing spiritual training and support was essential to a chaplain's success. While chaplains in hierarchical or episcopal churches basically operated within certain boundaries, churches and denominations with a looser ecclesiastical structure needed to exercise some supervision or control over their chaplains. Denominations such as the American Baptist Convention worked to find a balance between freedom and control for chaplains. The Convention recognized that chaplains (and others without congregational commitments) were participating in "a new form of mission" and deemed them "pioneers in new fields of service." Yet the Convention worried that "the permissive attitude" of the denomination toward chaplains' work would be "misunderstood by some," when in reality it was "an expression of confidence and the freedom of ministry enjoyed by Baptists."

Yet this freedom did not come without cost, according to the article's author, Reverend William Flood. "We can readily see how strong the structures are in which we work" and that a "pastor is generally called to a congregation because he seems to 'fit'" or at best can meet their needs." Within the military, however, assignment was at the discretion of military officers and the "congregation" was not a denominationally specific one. Thus, chaplains were "equally influenced by the structure in which they serve[d]." He continued "the atmosphere is charged with tensions for most individuals," including chaplains and non-chaplains. The concern of civilian ministers was "reflected in the suspicion" of military chaplains and other "unstructured ministers," and in the question "when are you coming back into the ministry?" Flood determined that the real question at hand was this: "If the shaping of a pastoral identity is the concern of a local congregation, who shapes the identity of the chaplain?" Civilian ministers could not help but conclude that the chaplain was left to his own devices because his

institutional structure was military rather than religious. But Flood, himself a chaplain, asked his colleagues to reconsider. He wrote that the structure of chaplain service would "indeed shape his ministry" but could not "create his spiritual image." The challenge, then, for the chaplain was to struggle to maintain a "ministerial image and identity."[32]

The option of civilizing the chaplain corps entered public debate infrequently, but it resonated strongly as moral and religious opposition to the Vietnam War increased. As early as 1962, *Christian Century* ran an article that advocated the military chaplaincy be transferred to civilian control. In the 1960's the opening volley over the correct place for chaplains in contemporary military service, was fired by Rabbi Martin Siegel, who served as a navy chaplain for two years; he argued that with the "emergence of a permanent military establishment, the military aspects of the chaplaincy have begun to take precedence over the religious."[33] Siegel blamed a good part of this change on the fact that "in recent years a substantial number of line officers and enlisted men have left the service for a short time, taken the requisite religious training (often not too rigorous), and immediately returned to the military as chaplains." He continued that "such chaplains are essentially 'military men'" who had "thoroughly internalized the professional military pattern." Siegel also lamented the fact that chaplains often lost "contact with their own religious tradition" due to frequent reassignments and deployments. He even used the chaplains' widely-touted focus on ecumenism as a point of criticism, arguing that the widespread cooperation among chaplains of different faith groups occurred not because they "have suddenly learned to get along but because most chaplains are out of touch with their particular religious tradition."[34]

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[32] William E. Flood, "Maintaining a Pastoral Identity," *The American Baptist Chaplain*, American Baptist Convention, July 1968, USACHCS, Vietnam Files, Box 7.

[33] Martin Siegel, "Revamping the Military Chaplaincy," *Christian Century*, 8 August 1962, 959-960, 959.

[34] Ibid.

Siegel, like others before him, suggested that the chaplaincy be civilianized, essentially returning to an earlier American model when chaplains were "civilian clergymen who volunteered or were assigned to service with the military." He pointed to the success of the West German model for the chaplaincy, where chaplains were un-uniformed and served for a maximum of five years. Chaplains could then operate without fear of "military reprisals" and would be better able to counsel young men and women who were new to the military. Siegel further argued that a civilian chaplain corps would reduce the likelihood of professional concerns getting in the way of ministerial ones, so the chaplain would be "free to use the weight of his moral and religious tradition rather than his rank to get things done." Though he did not mention American involvement in Vietnam explicitly, Siegel anticipated that chaplains would soon be serving "personnel who are for the most part 'short timers' used to 'civilian' religious traditions," and that a military chaplain corps would increase the divide between professionals and draftees in the modern military.

Siegel criticized the military chaplaincy at a time when there were few chaplains deployed with military personnel—the first chaplains had arrived with MACV staff in late 1962, and chaplains did not serve in Vietnam in large numbers until 1965. He objected to the chaplaincy on a variety of grounds but fundamentally assumed there was a potential problem with military service by "a basically civilian-oriented and often pacifistically inclined body of men."[35] Articles such as Siegel's foreshadowed debates that would make similar assumptions long before the majority of Americans turned against intervention in Vietnam.

Public response to Siegel's article was significant: The *Century* chose not to publish individual letters, but rather offered a summary of the various responses in a later issue of the magazine. Titled, "Whither the Military Chaplaincy," the article revealed the editors' generally

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[35] Ibid., 959-960.

negative view of the chaplaincy in its current form, though they attempted to give an unbiased overview of the letters to the editor on the topic. The editors opened with an attempt at humor that indicated the gist of letters from chaplains: "Volleys of protest were shot in this direction by military chaplains of high rank and low from almost every branch and subdivision of the armed forces. (The marines have not yet landed, but we expect them any minute.)" This analysis, though, belied the fact that the original article had been written by a Rabbi who had himself served as a chaplain. His critics, the editors concluded, believed that Siegel had "used a blunderbuss on a delicate and complex problem and with his broadsides slew the innocent as well as the guilty."[36]

The editors proceeded to analyze the responses. In one section, the editors compiled responses to the tone and content of Siegel's argument, most of which came from chaplains themselves. First, they observed that the letters in support of the chaplaincy did not seem to fall along denominational or sectarian lines, nor did the "one-sidedness of the chaplains' rebuttals suggest that they were expressing a military or official position." Rather, the responses were more personal; they resented the implication that the military "always has an adverse effect on the clergymen who serve within it." Chaplains, too, emphasized their education and extensive training as evidence of their ability to navigate complex institutional positions. Ten chaplains stationed in Texas reminded readers that in the US Air Force chaplains could not "receive a commission without the ecclesiastical endorsement of his own church, or an agency designated to have this authority by his own church." In relation to Siegel's critique of professional ambition within the chaplaincy, the editors quoted several chaplains' responses. One chaplain wrote, "The 'professional ambitions' of career chaplains have their counterpart in the civilian ministry's competition for status. . . . One may still recall the civilian seekers of deanships,

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[36] "Whither the Military Chaplaincy," *Christian Century*, 19 September 1962, 1119-1120.

bishoprics, 'First Churches,' lucrative synagogues and denominational offices." Another responded that "the man of God in the armed forces is no more in tension with his milieu than is the man of God in suburbia or the inner city." Ultimately, the *Century* reported that though none agreed with it, only one chaplain denounced Siegel's central thesis.[37]

The second section of the editorial summary dealt with the broader issue of the Church's responsibility to men and women in the armed forces. On behalf of the magazine's readers, the editors declared that "with an unpardonable indifference the churches have let the chaplaincy develop in its own untended way, leaving a vacuum which the military has had to fill. Many conscientious chaplains are aware of and saddened by the weakness and ambiguity of the churches' relation to their ministry." They exhorted American Protestants to pay close attention to the military and their chaplains who served there. The editorial article encouraged continued discussion about the chaplaincy and the churches' relationship to the armed services. However, as the war in Vietnam dragged on, editorial content about military chaplains in *Christian Century* became increasingly critical.

In the 1966 *Century* series, discussed above, former Navy Chaplain Norman MacFarlane suggested the most radical changes to the current chaplaincy's structure. Whereas Ledebuhr and Miller recommended primarily religious-based initiatives to transform the chaplaincy, MacFarlane relied more heavily on the military. To address a problem that he determined stemmed from chaplains' structural positions as officers, MacFarlane advocated that the military abolish the system of rank and promotion for chaplains. He suggested that the number of active-duty chaplains be decreased—even as the level of American armed forces in Vietnam expanded—and that those who remained be consolidated under a single chaplains' service in order to increase efficiency and consistency across the various branches of service. While

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[37] "Whither the Military Chaplaincy," 1120.

MacFarlane recognized the impact such changes might have on the relationship between the churches and the chaplaincy, his focus remained on eliminating the tension between chaplains military and religious duties. Along with the other two articles, this series on the military chaplaincy laid out most of the critical issues involving the chaplaincy for the next decade.

As the war in Vietnam dragged on, the military chaplaincy emerged as one location to reconsider the morality of religious participation in war. Even as the war wound down and opposition to the war reached a fever pitch, liberal and mainline religious groups continued to call for the civilianization of the military chaplaincy. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) declared "The Church and its Chaplains must be keenly sensitive to the erosion, exploitation, or softening of its witness."[38] The Episcopal Church issued a more strident statement which endorsed the "necessity for a ministry to the military community," but maintained that it must be "a ministry for which both priestly and prophetic roles are stressed." The resolution conceded that the chaplain was responsible for ministry to military personnel in a variety of situations but also declared "the Chaplain is also the public voice of conscience who introduces a self-critical dimension within all institutions. His responsibility therefore is to ask the difficult moral question, whether this particular kind of participation is allowable from a Christian moral perspective. The dilemma is whether the Military Chaplaincy can ask these questions, given its dependence on the military structure."[39] In 1968, the American Jewish Congress voted unanimously to terminate its participation in the military chaplaincy system in its current form.

Reporting in the national press also reflected deep division on the issue of military chaplains' positions within the military. In one 1968 *New York Times* article that presented fairly balanced viewpoints on the chaplaincy, the headline still highlighted the reform position, which

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[38] Quoted in Brinsfield *Encouraging Faith, Supporting Soldiers: The United States Army Chaplaincy, 1975-1995* (Washington *DC: USGPO, 1997)*, 3.

[39] Episcopal Church, General Convention resolution, quoted in Ibid., 2.

urged civilizing the chaplaincy, and led with a former Jewish chaplain who agreed with this position. In many ways, this Rabbi's call reflected long standing debates about the possibility of civilizing the chaplaincy, whereby individual denominations or organizations would be responsible for the salary and material support of chaplains.[40] Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg told the *Times* reporter that he was "terribly grateful" for his time as a chaplain "because it made it easier now to be an out-and-out dove on Vietnam." Others that the author interviewed, however, disagreed. Representatives of the Presbyterian Church, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the General Commission on Chaplains remained skeptical that American denominations would have the financial resources to fund a civilianized chaplaincy, and they doubted that such a move would actually alleviate the tensions that Hertzberg and others identified.[41]

Ensuring the chaplain's effectiveness, regardless of his formal position or level of integration with institutional structures, would require close cooperation between the military and American religious organizations. Chaplains and their advocates frequently cited their liminality and structural positions as advantageous for their ministry to the military, yet this very structural position was the primary location for debate over the chaplaincy during the Vietnam war. Critics of the chaplaincy and of chaplains charged them with complicity in an immoral and unjust war, insisting that their positions as officers prevented them from performing critical or prophetic functions within the military. Supporters of the chaplaincy, on the other hand, insisted that the chaplain's structural position was the very thing that allowed him to be an effective minister within the military hierarchy.

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[40] See, for example, an earlier articles by Irving Spiegel on the debate within the Jewish community. Spiegel, "Change Proposed for U.S. Chaplains: Rabbi Wants Clerics Taken Out of Military Control," *New York Times*, 24 March 1968; Spiegel, "Jewish Congress Urges an End of Military Chaplaincy System," *New York Times*, 18 May 1968; and Spiegel, "Rabbi Supports Chaplain System: Head of Orthodox Council Disputes Jewish Congress," *New York Times*, 27 June 1968.

[41] George Dugan, "Chaplains Urged to Doff Uniforms," *New York Times*, 4 June 1970.

Using Chaplains Symbolically

Beyond considerations of a chaplain's formal role or position in the military, the national mainstream press frequently relied on chaplains as symbolic figures in the coverage of the Vietnam War. First, *Time* Magazine ran two substantial articles on chaplains in Vietnam that offered a longer-term view of the institution and its members. Published three years apart, these two articles revealed a trend that as opposition to the Vietnam War increased, so too did criticism of military chaplains. Second, in the *New York Times,* four main types of stories involving chaplains emerged. First, the *Times* sometimes ran short AP Wire or Religious News Service stories that highlighted the specific accomplishments of chaplains vis-à-vis military honors or civilian recognition from organizations such as the Military Chaplains Association.[42] Second, the *Times* reported on major speeches or talks by chaplains in the New York area or by chaplain leaders. Third, the newspaper covered chaplain activities when military chaplains died in Vietnam, especially if they died performing their religious duties. Coverage did not, for the most part, focus of chaplains' daily activities or their theological understanding of the Vietnam War. A fourth type included chaplains for the sake of juxtaposing the supposed peace of religion and the overt violence of war. The second two categories demonstrated that chaplains held significant symbolic weight in discussions about the Vietnam War, even if their day-to-day actions were largely irrelevant to the war effort.

The first feature in *Time* appeared in 1966 and focused on the increasing number of chaplains and their relationship to the men serving overseas. After reminding readers that chaplains had served with US military troops since the Revolutionary War, the unnamed authors

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[42] For examples, see "Navy Chaplain in Vietnam Honored," *New York Times*, 22 January 1966; "Jersey Chaplain Honored," *New York Times*, 19 April 1968; "Navy Chaplain is Honored for Gallantry in Vietnam," *New York Times*, 24 April 1968; Joseph B. Treaster, "Army Chaplain Decorated for Bravery in Vietnam," *New York Times*, 6 June 1968.

asserted that "Viet Nam is a new kind of war," where "chaplains have become airborne circuit riders." The decentralized fighting meant that chaplains were holding far more services than in the past. According to Army Chief of Chaplains Charles Brown, "We used to hold three or four or maybe ten services a week. Now our chaplains are saying services in the combat area to at least ten and sometimes as many as 50 separate detachments of soldiers."

But while the number of services increased, chaplains held few illusions that more men were attending their services—in fact, the chaplain corps estimated that about seventeen percent of troops attended services regularly on Sunday and about sixty percent never attended at all. Chaplain Frank Vavrin said he didn't "believe for one minute that old saw about there being no atheists in foxholes," while others attributed scarce service attendance to decreased mortality from combat wounds. Air Force chaplain Robert Cortez suggested that "the Viet Nam war is considerably less deadly than World War II," where he recalled "there was constant fear in so many cases—sitting all alone in a foxhole getting shelled, or on a rolling ship scanning the sky for kamikazes. The fear was there and it made you think of God. Here, relatively few guys are confronted with death every day."[43] The article ended with two stories of chaplains who had earned the respect and admiration of their troops. Both chaplains sustained wounds in their efforts to minister to soldiers on the front lines. One soldier even insisted "I can't talk about him . . . you just wouldn't understand. You haven't been with us." This view of combat religion avoided entirely the morality of the war at hand—it assumed that chaplains would serve with soldiers and that soldiers would come to respect their chaplains, and there was no question of whether chaplains could serve both God and men.

Three years later, a second article assumed a far more critical tone. Like other mainstream press articles, it focused on increasing religious protest and calls for the chaplaincy

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[43] "The Chopper Chaplains," *Time*, 11 February 1966.

to be civilized. The article cited the San Francisco Conference on Religion and Peace, and its co-chair, Rabbi Joseph Glaser, as primary advocates for abolishing the military chaplaincy. Glaser told *Time* that chaplains "do not have freedom of movement, and they do not even have freedom of conscience" within the military, given their official functions to support the military mission, as outline in the Army Field Manual. Along with Glaser, the article also cited Neuhaus, a long time critic of the Vietnam War, as saying that chaplains "expose[d] themselves to 'spiritual prostitution'" and concluded that Neuhaus believed there was an "unresolvable contradiction between Christianity's gospel of peace and a minister's participation in war . . . in trying to resolve the contradiction . . . many chaplains simply arrange their values along military lines, like good soldiers." Though it did not cite specific names, the article suggested that some ex-chaplains had become disenchanted by the war and military service and now worked in opposition to it.[44]

The article countered this anti-war view by asserting that "the majority of chaplains serving in Viet Nam, however, are convinced of the justice of the American cause, and a few have gone out of their way to support it in a somewhat untraditional manner." The essay related stories of chaplains who liked "to take a turn firing M-60 machine guns from Huey helicopters," and another who "wears a shoulder holster and a .45 even when in Saigon," and a third who said "'I could kill a man in a second. After you see how vicious the V.C. can be, it's hard to separate yourself from it." Rather than making all chaplains sound like gun-toting militarists, the article insisted that occasionally the "nature of the war" called on chaplains to perform otherwise forbidden acts in combat. In one instance, a chaplain with previous military experience, Jerry Autry, landed in a Viet Cong village with an inexperienced platoon "commanded by an equally green lieutenant," and "when they froze, Autry rallied them and led the charge." The author of

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[44] "Honest to God—or Faithful to the Pentagon," *Time*, 30 May 1969.

the article rationalized: "Like many chaplains who go on patrols or fly on combat sorties with airborne troops, he has discovered that his unarmed presence can make the men jittery."[45]

In between the two extremes of wholehearted endorsement and participation and dissent-driven activism, the *Time* piece recognized that military chaplains faced a difficult moral situation. The article quoted Navy chaplain John A. Rohr at length. He argued that "in a world where peace is still unattainable the fact of wars' existence 'must be borne even as we strive to abolish it.'" He said that Christianity "needs both kinds of ministers—the civilian picketing for peace and the chaplain serving 'those brave young men who bear so disproportionate a burden of the sins of the world.'" The authors also acknowledged that "most chaplains, of course, are far more appalled at the cruelties of the war than fascinated by its glory—yet few have asked for release from service." Even in the face of an unpopular, even immoral war, one chaplain, Philip Seeker chose to return to his unit "convinced" that the war "was still 'unwise'—but not evil enough to keep him away from his men." [46] Ultimately, the quite-critical article ended on an ambiguous note.

Like the changing tone of the *Time* magazine features, two *New York Times* articles in the early 1970s highlighted the extent to which the tenor of debate within the national press had changed. Whereas early in the war, chaplains' accomplishments were recorded and their contributions to military missions mentioned either symbolically or perfunctorily, by the end of the war, chaplains' very abilities to serve both God and Country were called into question by the national media. A June 1971 article reported on growing opposition with liberal and mainline churches to the chaplaincy system. The article accused chaplains, even in the face of growing opposition at home, of refusing to speak out even against morally clear issues such as killing

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

civilians. Though the article presented some viewpoints of current and former chaplains, the

quotations served to back up the basic assertion that chaplains kowtowed to military authority

and reasoning when confronted with a moral choice. One chaplain was quoted as saying, "That's

not our job" when asked if he would preach against killing civilians. Another said that his time in

Vietnam "gave me sorrow," but "most of all it gave me a tremendous hatred of Communism.

Man I hated those spasticks [*sic*]!"[47]

The second, titled "The Perils of Serving Two Masters," relied on chaplains' responses

to the My Lai massacre and the growing public outcry for radical reform to frame ongoing

arguments about the proper place of chaplains in the American military. Though the article

conceded that calls for reform had little support within the chaplaincy and even within many

denominations, the tone was clearly sympathetic to those who saw inherent problems and

conflicts between the roles of clergy and officer.[48]

Even when chaplains' roles were not in question, chaplains' themselves represented

sympathies and tensions between military and religious values. In the *New York Times*, articles

that directly concerned chaplains' activities in war generally concerned chaplains who were killed

in combat, especially if they were killed as they performed a religious function. Chaplains acted

as symbols for religious practice in war, and again, the juxtaposition of a chaplain dying as he

performed religious rites served simultaneously to highlight the senselessness of the war and the

savagery of the enemy. Articles that employed this trope usually emphasized that the chaplain

chose to go to the front, often in defiance of advice from commanders. The stories related by

these articles were often dramatic and laden with emotional references about the chaplain's

relationship to his men and the depth and sincerity of his vocational calling. The first such article

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[47] Ralph Blumenthal, "Chaplains' Role Questioned Because They Support War," *New York Times*, 22 June 1971.

[48] Fiske, "Perils of Serving."

appeared in late 1966, when Michael Quealy, a Catholic chaplain with the First Division, died in combat. The memorial article praised Quealy as a hero:

> As Father Quealy was leaning over the last of the small group of dying men and giving him last rites, a Vietcong soldier burst from the bush with a machine gun and hit the chaplain with a burst of fire in the head and stomach.
> Father Quealey lived for only moments after that. He did not know that the line had held and the Vietcong had been pushed back . . .
> A diary slipped from Father Quealy's pocket. The last entry reads: "So will my heavenly Father treat you unless each of you forgives his brother with all his heart."[49]

Other articles that dealt with chaplains' combat deaths relied on similar imagery and symbolism to convey their points.[50] Early in the war, the *Times* noted the death of Jewish chaplain, Meir Engel, who died of a heart attack, but later in the war, the *Times* did not report on the deaths of chaplains who died in accidents.[51] Chaplains' deaths warranted serious attention and praise only when they died in combat situations.

At other times, chaplains' religious services and ministrations were juxtaposed with the violence of the war. In late December 1966, the *Times* reported that midnight masses on Christmas Eve, including the traditional mass said by Cardinal Francis Spellman, had been canceled due to worries that the late-night services might give away sensitive positions and increase the chance of attack.[52] Though Christmas services would still be held, the article relied on the contrast of the supposed peace of Christmas with the overt violence of the war. In another article, ostensibly about a battle in which sixty-seven marines died, two unrelated photographs appeared at the bottom of the page. In one picture, a chaplain comforted a wounded man, and in the other, a Marine sniper took aim at an unseen target. The pictures were

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[49] "Vietcong Kill New York Priest as He Gives Last Rites to GI," *New York Times*, 11 November 1966.

[50] See, for example, Bernard Weinraub, "Chaplain from S.I. Killed Praying on Battlefield," *New York Times*, 30 December 1967, and Thomas A. Johnson, "A Chaplain Chooses to Stay at the Front and Dies," *New York Times*, 20 February 1968.

[51] "Col. Meir Engel, 50, Was Army Chaplain," *New York Times*, 17 December 1964.

[52] "Christmas Rites Curtailed by War," *New York Times*, 19 December 1966.

captioned: "Two Faces of the War in Vietnam," an analytical statement that would suppose that

chaplains and snipers operated in different circles, perhaps with two different moral codes.[53]

Implications for Wider Debates about Religious Responses to Vietnam

The American war in Vietnam also involved intense connections between the

"homefront" and the "battlefront." In addition to short tours of duty that rotated veterans back

to the United States rapidly and the intense social pressures of the late 1960s that deeply affected

the US military, the images of Vietnam were (and still are) ubiquitous and striking. The first

"televised war" brought the American public unprecedented access to some image of the

battlefront, even though much of the action occurred in dense jungle and mountainous terrain

half a world away. Extensive press coverage of the war made wartime images real and iconic:

Thich Quang Duc's self-immolation on the streets of Saigon in 1963; war-protesters placing

daisies in homecoming-soldiers' guns at a 1967 anti-war demonstration at the Pentagon; carnage

at My Lai, revealed in 1969; the publication of the Pentagon Papers in the New York Times in

1971. These words and images would become the weapons of the war at home, pitting

policymakers against students against family members against veterans.

When the mainstream national media portrayed religious people in relation to the war in

Vietnam, the images were overwhelmingly of religious protest. William Sloane Coffin, Yale's

antiwar chaplain, and other prominent religious leaders formed the group, Clergy and Laymen

Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV); the Berrigan brothers, Daniel and Phillip (both Catholic

priests), burned draft cards and aided draft resisters; and mainline religious bodies such as the

National Council of Churches released increasingly critical statements about the war in

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[53] Bernard Weinraub, "Northern Troops Kill 67 Marines in Bitter Clashes," *New York Times,* 30 December 1967.

Vietnam.[54] For perhaps the first time, an American war seemed to cause a deep and very public divide among religious communities in the United States. Though the historic peace churches had consistently offered vocal criticisms of war in general and of previous American military conflicts, "Christian Pacifism" received a sound drubbing during the Second World War as theologians such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer asserted that Christians could join in resistance against evil regimes such as the one in Nazi Germany, and others such as Reinhold Niebuhr proclaimed a message of Christian Realism, which plainly stated there were times when war was morally necessary. For the most part, American Christians and Jews supported the basic premises of the Cold War—to contain and eventually defeat atheistic Communism—but on the specific issue of Vietnam religious communities split over the execution of Cold War policies.[55] Coverage of the war in national publications such as the *New York Times* or *Time* frequently focused on growing religious opposition to the war, especially in 1968, when eminent national leaders, both religious and secular, were arrested for aiding draft resisters.

Even when the mainstream press granted space to more conservative views, they were quickly overshadowed by a liberal editorial stance. In 1966, the *New York Times*, even with a fairly liberal editorial stance, gave substantial column space to remarks by a Reform Rabbi who had

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[54] On religious protest against the Vietnam War see: Mitchell K. Hall, *Because of their Faith: CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); James Carroll, *An American Requiem: God, My Father, and the War that Came Between Us* (New York: Mariner Books, 1997); Scott Flipse, "To Save "Free Vietnam" and Lose Our Souls: The Missionary Impulse, Voluntary Agencies, and Protestant Dissent Against the War, 1965-1971," in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History,* eds. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003); Friedland, *Lift Up Your Voice*; Harold E. Quinley, "Hawks and Doves Among the Clergy: Protestant Reactions to the War in Vietnam," *Ministry Studies* 3, no. 3 (1969): 5-20; Kenneth J. Heineman, "American Schism: Catholic Activists, Intellectuals, and Students Confront the Vietnam War," in *The Vietnam War on Campus: Other Voices, More Distant Drums*, ed. Marc Jason Gilbert (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 89-118: and Donald Granberg and Keith E. Campbell, "Certain Aspects of Religiosity and Orientations toward the Vietnam War among Missouri Undergraduates," *Sociological Analysis* 34 (Spring 1973): 40-49.

[55] David E. Settje, "'Sinister' Communists and Vietnam Quarrels: The *Christian Century* and *Christianity Today* Respond to the Cold and Vietnam Wars," *Fides et Historia* 32 (Winter/Spring 2000): 81-97; Mark G. Toulouse, "Days of Protest: The *Century* and the War in Vietnam," *Christian Century*, 8 November 8, 1154-1157; and Mark G. Toulouse, Christian Responses to Vietnam: The Organization of Dissent," Religion and Culture Web Forum (June 2007), http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/webforum/062007/vietnam.pdf, accessed 7 March 2008.

recently returned from a tour in Vietnam as a chaplain. Though unnamed, the *Times* reported

that the rabbi "asserted that those seeking peace in Vietnam by attacking the Johnson

administration are helping to prolong the war." Though the chaplain acknowledged that

Vietnam War "doves"—including those in "the Congress, among the clergy, or among the

people in general—may be "well-meaning and patriotic," they are "doing what the 'hawks' in

Hanoi most desire" by portraying an image of the United States "as the aggressor and the

Vietcong and the North Vietnamese as the 'innocent victims'" of a "sinister" American plan.[56]

Reports such as this one revealed a deep divide among religious communities, yet religious

dissent and protest received far more attention from the *New York Times* and other national

publications. A 1966 article on the general religious atmosphere of the day summed up the

newspaper's editorial position well: "The compliance with Governmental policy that was widely

expected from the religiously affiliated in the 1950s has been almost reversed. Church protests

against the war in Vietnam are now massive and substantial, for example."[57] By 1968, most *Times*

coverage of religious response to the war centered on war protests and religious dissent, such as

that of Yale University chaplain William Sloane Coffin or Philip and Daniel Berrigan.[58] Such

coverage left little room for alternate viewpoints.

But even some outspoken critics of the war recognized that many religious Americans

supported the Vietnam War and the U.S. government. Richard John Neuhaus, the pastor of the

Church of St. John the Evangelist Lutheran Church in Brooklyn, New York, and Protestant co-

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[56] Irving Spiegel, "Vietnam Protests Assailed by Rabbi: Returning Chaplain Cites Effect on Hanoi's Stand," *New York Times*, 7 May 1967.

[57] John Cogley, "Changed Atmosphere, Same Attitudes," *New York Times*, 21 August 1966.

[58] See, for example, Edward B. Fiske, "Religion: the Clergy on Vietnam," *New York Times* 7 January 1968; James Reston, "The Legal and Moral Issues of the War," *New York Times,* 7 January 1968; Edward B. Fiske, "Religion: Some Clergy Say 'No' on War," *New York Times*, 11 February 1968; Edward B. Fiske, "Antiwar Movement makes Rapid Gains Among Seminarians," *New York Times*, 3 March 1968; Fred C. Shapiro, "God and That Man at Yale: Chaplain Coffin," *New York Times*, 3 March 1968; and "Church Leaders Plan Day of Prayer on Christmas Eve to Widen War Protest," *New York Times*, 29 December 1969.

founder of the group, Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam ("Clergy Concerned" or CALCAV), wrote an extended analysis of the church's role in the Vietnam War for the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, a secular, academic journal.[59] Neuhaus, by virtue of his pastorate, his scholarship, and his involvement with Clergy Concerned, emerged as an important public voice of the critical mainline stance against Vietnam.

Writing in October 1969, Neuhaus envisioned this article as a response to the broad question: What effect has Vietnam had on organized religion, and what are some of the possible implications for civil religion in America?" Neuhaus claimed that with few exceptions "no publication in the mainstream of the American religious conversation has supported the war." He continued, "The war policies of the Johnson and Nixon administrations have, on the other hand, received almost consistent support from the self-consciously conservative (fundamentalist or "evangelical") Protestant publications" including "a host of avowedly rightist publications of the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade genre."[60]

Neuhaus clearly recognized that the war prompted a variety of responses from religious people, yet the "mass media" had helped form an image of "relentless religious opposition to the war." He wrote that in the national media, "religion's attitude toward the war comes across in terms of clergy leading protest marches, granting sanctuary to draft-resisters, abetting military deserters, and burning draft cards collected in raids on Selective Service offices." He acknowledged that the Protestant base of the National Council of Churches had been "officially, if often mildly, critical of war policy at least since late 1966." On the other hand, church bodies,

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[59] Richard John Neuhaus, "The War, the Churches, and Civil Religion," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, The Sixties: Radical Change in American Religion* 387 (January 1970): 128-140. In the 1960s and early 1970s, Neuhaus was an active member of the religious left, but his political leanings shifted to the right when *Roe v. Wade* was handed down. In 1990, Neuhaus converted to Catholicism and has since become a leading conservative voice in the religious community, where he spoke and wrote broadly about conservative and ecumenical issues, particularly in his role as editor of *First Things*.

[60] Ibid., 129.

like the Southern Baptist Convention, "pursue[d] an avoidance course, assuming that unless there is an indication to the contrary, the churches will do what comes naturally, which is to profess neutrality, but, in effect, to support government policy."[61] For Neuhaus, official neutrality was just as problematic as outright support.

While Neuhaus was deeply critical of such support, his underlying assumption was nevertheless correct: many Americans continued to support the military effort in Vietnam by invoking the language of civil religion that pervaded the 1950s and by encouraging chaplains' ministries within the military. And they did so in public venues—consistently gaining political ground that liberal and mainline Christians had conceded. In 1966, Southern Baptist Convention president, William Dehoney, in a speech to the convention, proclaimed that "our nation's purpose in Vietnam is right, our motives are righteous, and our cause is just." In addition to fighting "Communist aggression," he claimed, "we are working to win a peace." But he saved his highest praise for the work of chaplains and Christian soldiers in Vietnam who contributed to the "untold story of Vietnam—what we are doing for the people." Dehoney praised them for their extensive "humanitarian activities" including "building schools and churches, and establishing village hospitals, and opening market places, and planting gardens, and financing pig projects." To end his speech, he quoted Southern Baptist chaplain Francis Garetts who said "We have such a good feeling about what we are doing for these people, like rescuing someone from a burning building."[62] For Garetts and Dehoney, the war in Vietnam was simultaneously a geopolitical, ideological battle and a salvific mission.

At other times, fundamentalist preachers cast the war in religious and anti-communist terms; Carl McIntire declared the Vietnam War a "righteous and holy cause," and Billy James

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[61] Ibid., 130.

[62] M.S. Handler, "Northeast Drive Urged on Baptists," *New York Times*, 26 May 1966.

Hargis argued that Americans were fighting "for freedom . . . security and protection of the United States" against a serious and able "aggressor."[63] Even more moderate evangelicals frequently endorsed military action and weighed in on strategic decisions. Editors at *Christianity Today*, an interdenominational evangelical weekly, advocated the continued bombing of North Vietnam in order to stop its aggression.[64]

In the face of growing arguments from liberal and mainline camps that compulsory service in Vietnam violated Christians' rights to make moral decisions against the orders of their government, the National Association of Evangelicals adopted a "Law and Order" resolution in 1966. It derided this "unamerican [*sic*] mood which has invaded our society," as "godless, revolutionary, and disloyal to government." The NAE resolution, on the basis of Romans 13, then committed evangelicals to obey scriptural injunctions "to respect the authorities over us."[65] Not until after My Lai and the Cambodian incursion did *Christianity Today* soften its editorial position. In 1971, an editorial called for "honesty in government," and in May conceded "perhaps we should never have gotten into Viet Nam in the first place."[66] Yet, many conservatives continued to call on Americans to support the government and the war through the end.

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[63] Carl McIntire quoted in Andrew Leroy Pratt, "Religious Faith and Civil Religion: Evangelical Responses to the Vietnam War, 1964-1973," (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988), 167; and Billy James Hargis, "How to Win the War," 1967, quoted in Allitt, *Religion in America*, 100.

[64] William K. Harrison, "Is the United States Right in Bombing North Vietnam?" *Christianity Today*, 7 January 1966, 25-26; "Viet Nam: Where Do We Go from Here?" *Christianity Today*, 7 January 1966, 30-31.

[65] "'National University' Proposed at NAE," *Christianity Today*, 13 May 1966, 47-48, quoted in Mark Toulouse, "Christian Responses."

[66] "Honesty in Government," *Christianity Today*, 26 March 1971, 25; "Editor's Note," *Christianity Today*, 7 May 1971, 3; "Vietnam: Continuing Impasse," *Christianity Today*, 6 August 1971, 25; "Plain Talk on Viet Nam," *Christianity Today*, 26 May 1972, 27; "The Indochina Fiasco," *Christianity Today*, 25 April 1975, 27; and Toulouse, "Christian Responses," 21.

In 1968 John O'Connor, a Navy chaplain, published *A Chaplain Looks at Vietnam*, arguing, from a Catholic, pro-war standpoint, for the inherent morality of the United States effort in Vietnam and to support the military efforts there. O'Connor consciously used his position as a chaplain who had served in Vietnam to gain credibility with an increasingly skeptical American audience. Though O'Connor later admitted that he regretted publishing the book and that it was a "mistake," at the time, O'Connor was responding to biases that he saw within the American media. He went on a lecture circuit to promote his book and to present, from his perspective, the side of the war that had gone uncovered.[67]

Regardless of official denominational statements, though, individual chaplains who served in Vietnam—even those who belonged to mainline and liberal churches defended at least some parts of the American effort in Vietnam. Overwhelmingly, chaplains who wrote for denominationally specific audiences, in newsletters or other publications, focused on organizational and pastoral issues that they faced as chaplains, rather than prophetic ones, as they explained their functions and requested support from their home congregations and religious groups. Chaplain James Thompson, nearing the end of his tour in Vietnam summed up his thoughts on his experience in a simple paragraph: "I have a great respect for the men I have served. I believe them to be the unsung heroes of this war—the advisors, who in groups of two and three live with the ARVNS and depend almost totally on them for everything. It is a frustrating job at best, and lonesome. They were always glad to see the chaplain. I am only sorry that it was so hard to get around to see them."[68] Few, if any, chaplains ever mentioned the morality of the Vietnam War as a major consideration for them in the field when they wrote in

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[67] Nat Hentoff, *John Cardinal O'Connor : At the Storm Center of a Changing American Catholic Church* (New York: Scribner, 1988).

[68] "Mail Call," *The Disciple Chaplain*, Committee on Military and Veterans Services, Disciples of Chris, July-September 1970, USACHCS, Vietnam Files, Box 7.

denominationally-specific contexts. They commented on the loneliness of deployment, or on the destructive nature of the war, but their responses were ambivalent at best.

For Neuhaus, and others, the lines seemed clear. The theological mainline and liberal churches and leaders lined up on one side, and conservative and evangelical churches and leaders on the other. Yet, adding chaplains' voices to this mix revealed a more complicated picture. Despite a growing number of conservative Christian chaplains in the military, there were, throughout the war, a significant number of chaplains from the very denominations that criticized the war so harshly. Whether they agreed politically and theologically with the American war effort in Vietnam, the fact of their continued service demands reconsidering traditional narratives of religious response to the Vietnam War. Faced with questions about the potential tensions and contradictions between faith and war, between religiosity and Communism, religious people responded in a variety of ways. Some denounced war and the United States government, and others supported the U.S. government and its efforts in Vietnam without question. Most, however, fell somewhere in between. Some tried to balance dissent against the Vietnam War with allegiance to the United States. Others questioned the strategy and tactics of Vietnam without doubting the righteousness of its fundamental aims. And chaplains fell on all points on the spectrum.

Throughout the Vietnam War, chaplains occupied specific positions as participants and symbols in debate about the war. In a war that inflamed political, religious, and ideological passions, arguing about chaplains offered a safe battleground on which to hash out opposing views about the Vietnam War itself. Chaplains' actions were unlikely to affect the outcome of the war, but they represented one logical intersection between faith and war. Mainline, liberal, and conservative religious groups alike had to work out the role their ministers would play in

ministering to the military. By the end of the war, evangelical and conservative Christians especially, had embraced the pastoral/priestly role for chaplains, and they supported chaplain ministry with significant numbers of men and unofficial support. Mainline and liberal groups, on the other hand, clung to a prophetic ideal for their chaplains. When it appeared that the Vietnam War was evidence of prophetic failure, mainline and liberal groups chose to withdraw their chaplains rather than engaging the military directly. Because military chaplains were usually sympathetic to the war—at least on the surface—mainline and liberal chaplains did not match their denominations' expectations for appropriate religious response to war.

CHAPTER FIVE

PERSONAL REFLECTION, RECONCILIATION, AND REVELATION
AFTER VIETNAM

Chaplain David Knight entered Vietnam with romantic visions of war, wishing for a

"baptism by fire;" he returned with a more sober view of it. "I saw the horror, the brutality, and

the sinfulness of a nation raped by [war]. I witnessed war as the ultimate breakdown of human

morality." Nevertheless, Knight concluded that his wartime experiences allowed him to return

"home with a greater understanding of the Lord than ever before." Knight wrote, "I discovered

that, regardless of man's sin and rebellion, we are not at the mercy of an impersonal God. We

are not subject to chance or fate. Regardless of circumstances, despite the tragedy, He is very

much in control."[1] Far from subordinating his religious identity to his military one or even

separating the two, Knight's reflection on the war fundamentally linked his religious beliefs with

his military experience. Knight's interpretation of the war embodied both his religious self and

his military self. He defined the war in hybrid terms because he worked and lived in the middle

of two cultures; his position demanded it.

Many other chaplains also chose to cast their wartime experiences in a religious frame—

in memoirs, published diaries or letters, on Internet sites, or in interviews. When chaplains set

out to reflect upon their experiences as chaplains and as servicemen in Vietnam, they did so in a

way that brought the religious and moral conflict of that war to the forefront. In Vietnam,

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[1] Knight, "Supreme Six," 88.

chaplains generally turned to pragmatic solutions to conflict and acted as cultural mediators between diverse groups. After the war, they became more reflective, and their accounts of Vietnam can be read as the public reconciliation of their roles, identities, theologies, and behaviors in Vietnam. In their first-person accounts, chaplains acted as cultural mediators in a new way: by providing, even if unconsciously, a counternarrative of redemption to the dominant narrative of defeat in Vietnam.

The theological interpretations, conflict resolution, and identity formations that began in Vietnam continued when chaplains returned home, as they began to make sense of the war and to share their experiences with others. While chaplains' responses to the war varied widely, some patterns emerged. Bradley Carter, in a study of twentieth-century chaplain memoirs, suggested that "perhaps the most significant rhetorical strategy of this subgenre is its quest to redefine combat in spiritual terms. This pervasive spiritualization does more than meet its audience's expectations of how a religious figure should write. It also offers a sweeping resolution of conflicts identified in the chaplain problematic."[2] Rather than revealing deep-seated role conflict, chaplain memoirs suggest that chaplains, at least in retrospect, privileged their religious identities over their military identities. Whereas Carter defined the central issue as the "chaplain problematic," it is more likely that these memoirs signified chaplains' continual working out of their identities as cultural mediators. As they returned home, they addressed new audiences and new questions, and writing gave them a way to reconcile conflicts that emerged from their experiences in Vietnam.

When they told their stories publicly, chaplains related their experiences and interpreted combat using religious language, images, and ideas so that their faith was affirmed and their God remained in control, even when their faith in the military, fellow chaplains, or the government

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[2] Bradley Carter, "Reverence Helmeted and Armored."

faltered. Back in the relative safety of the United States, chaplains viewed their experiences through religious filters. The conflict resolution that began on the battlefield continued in the process of healing and assigning religious meaning to the war after the fact.

Bad Chaplains and the Challenges of Genre

Chaplains' responses to the Vietnam War come through most clearly first in chaplains' first-person accounts, some of which were published almost immediately after the Vietnam War ended, and others as recently as 2006, and second, in chaplains' responses to an official survey, sponsored by the historian's office at the US Army Chaplain Center and School, which formed much of the evidentiary base for Henry Ackermann's official history of the Army chaplaincy in Vietnam, *He Was Always There*. More than 600 chaplains responded to the survey request, and the study included quantitative measures as well as open-ended questions. Taken together, these sources revealed chaplains' interpretations and reflections after the Vietnam War. They were not, however, representative of chaplains' views. Those who published book-length works (either memoirs, diaries, or letters) were generally career chaplains who tended to hail from conservative, evangelical, and/or Pentecostal denominations, and they usually had some significant experience with a combat unit in Vietnam. The survey responses represented a wider group of chaplains, though chaplains who were very disillusioned by the war and by the chaplaincy would probably not have responded to an official request. Thus, these sources limit the diversity of chaplain voices available to the public, particularly from chaplains who had negative feelings about their time in Vietnam. Nevertheless, they demonstrate a fairly broad range of responses to the war and to the military chaplaincy.

Additionally, these sources portrayed chaplains in a near-universally flattering light; chaplains writing about themselves—either for publication or in response to an official survey—

rarely shared or admitted instances where they themselves performed poorly or acted contrary to their training as clergymen and officers. Yet, surely some chaplains failed in Vietnam. Accounts about chaplains from others help to contextualize chaplains' words about the Vietnam War. While some service members held their chaplains in high regard—over eighty enlisted soldiers deployed to Vietnam later became Army chaplains, many because of the positive example they saw in their own chaplains—others presented more skeptical, even cynical portraits of chaplains. Both cynical and respectful reactions from the people chaplains emphasized the diversity of the chaplains' experience. Chaplains were neither uniformly good nor uniformly bad.

Chaplains who received the Congressional Medal of Honor have been, fairly consistently, singled out for praise among the men they served. One of them, Vincent Capodanno, a Catholic Navy chaplain who served with Marines in Vietnam, was honored on 21 May 2006 with the title, "Servant of God," a first step on the way to canonization in the Catholic Church. A reporter for the *National Catholic Register* interviewed some of the men in his unit. Ray Harton witnessed Capodanno's death in September 1967 during Operation Swift, which pitted about 300 marines against 2,000 North Vietnamese regulars. Harton was seriously wounded during the battle, and recalled that Father Capodanno found his way to Harton's side, according to Harton, comforting him by saying, "'Stay calm, Marine, someone will be here to help soon. God is with us all here today.'" Harton credited Capodanno with giving him a sense of peace like he "never witnessed before and never witnessed since" and believed Capodanno's touch "really had something to do with me still being here." Harton continued, "I do believe the second Father Capodanno leaned over and touched me, that was God touching me through him." During the battle, Capodanno was also wounded on his face and hands. As he went to

another wounded man, Harton recalled "a machine gun opened up and killed both of them."[3]

Harton's recollections about Capodanno were not unusual. Daniel Mode, a Catholic seminarian (and later a priest), wrote a biography of Vincent Capodanno, titled *The Grunt Padre*. Mode's biography relied heavily on the testimony of Capodanno's fellow service members, and presented a very positive picture of the chaplain.

Other enlisted personnel spoke highly of their chaplains as well. As part of the official history research, Henry Ackermann placed advertisements in the *American Legion Magazine* and others, requesting responses from and about chaplains who served in Vietnam. Amos Shumway, who identified himself as an "Administrative NCO," wrote Ackermann to praise one chaplain in particular. Shumway did not hold chaplains in universally high regard: he wrote, "most Chaplains with whom I came in contact were field grade, either in staff offices or at the Chaplains School. Many of them were content to play the part of a staff officer—attending social activities and functions, making TDY trips of questionable validity, and generally enjoying the benefits of their rank." Then Shumway noted an exception and praised Gene Little for his work. Shumway recounted Little's actions in Germany and elsewhere, but focused especially on Little's actions in Vietnam, writing: "Chaplain Little served in Viet Nam with distinction—going into Cambodia with his troops."[4]

While many had positive interactions with chaplains, more colorful stories of chaplains rounded out the view of chaplains as saints and battlefield heroes. Chaplains, though tasked with supporting service members of all faiths as well as atheists and agnostics, did not always provide such help. Countering the widely-held view that "there are no atheists in foxholes," Philip

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[3] Joseph Pronechen, "He Died with His Men – Sainthood Cause Begins for Vietnam Chaplain," *National Catholic Register* (Catholic Online), 26 May 2006, http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=1983, accessed 18 March 2008.

[4] Letter from Amos F. Shumway to Henry Ackermann, 1 September 1985, USACHCS Vietnam Files.

Paulson, an atheist soldier, expressed disappointment with the chaplains with whom he came into contact. He questioned, at a basic level, his ability to express his non-belief without fear of reprisal. He believed such statements might prejudice promotions and that declaring an atheist position would be "perceived as tantamount to being a communist." The unit's chaplain was a "fundamentalist Christian who saw the devil in virtually everything he didn't believe in." Paulson may have credited the chaplain with more military authority than he traditionally or officially had, but he expressed the belief that "Army chaplains wielded a lot of power; their opinions could make the difference between whether or not you got promoted. So, I was quiet about my nonbelief in God."[5] Paulson's experience with chaplains led him to question the institution and, in his interpretation, to clarify his self-identification as a "humanist" rather than an adherent to any organized religious group.

James May, in the newsletter publication of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, wrote a scathing critique of some of the chaplains he knew in Vietnam, associating them irrevocably with the militaristic, racist, and hyper-patriotic views that he also attributed to the American government and military hierarchy. May's article homed in especially on one "large, fat, loudmouthed Everything-else," who, according to May, "prated about being on a crusade against the 'Chicoms' while chomping a cigar," and "most of the troops hated him." In a "vain appeal to the troops" the chaplain's "prayer was often obscene," May wrote. One that stood out was "Please, God, let the bombs fall straight on the little yellow motherfuckers." May's overall assessment was that the chaplain "must have had a fun war, slept when he wanted, plenty of chow and no danger ever, except when four black troops beat the stuffings outta him once."[6]

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[5] Philip K. Paulson, "I was an Atheist in a Foxhole," *The Humanist*, American Humanist Association (September/October 1989) http://www.americanhumanist.org/humanism/foxhole.html, accessed 25 February 2008.

[6] James May, "Chaplains," Vietnam Veterans Against the War, *The Veteran*, Fall/Winter 2000, http://www.vvaw.org/veteran/article/?id=119, accessed 25 February 2008.

The chaplain came to represent what was wrong with the military's mission in Vietnam—the

chaplain, for May (and likely for others) could not be separated from the military.

Jerry Lembke responded to May's piece in a later issue of *The Veteran*. Lembke authored

The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam, which refuted the pervasive story of

veterans being spat on in American airports upon their return from Vietnam.[7] Lembke's well-

known critique of the Vietnam legacy adds credibility to the debate about chaplains. Lembke

began, "May's portrayal of chaplains was not too flattering, but I wouldn't quarrel with it." Then,

he went on to describe three chaplains he worked with, only one of whom retained any of

Lembke's respect. One chaplain, assigned to Headquarters of the 41st Artillery Group, was

Chaplain Elsie, a "character out of Joesph Heller's *Catch 22*." For Elsie, "ministering to troops

was only a day job for this career man," who also became the "unit's self-designated procurer."

On one occasion he "did an enlisted man a 'favor' by taking a contraband AK-47 off the

soldier's hands before he got caught with it," later explaining to Lembke that the weapon

"would become a war trophy" for another officer. Lembke reported that a second chaplain,

Tumkin (Lembke provided no first name), went AWOL when he couldn't take the conditions in

Vietnam.[8]

Lembke's interactions with a third chaplain were more positive, though not in terms of

the chaplain cultivating positive feelings about a specific religion or for the United States. This

chaplain, a Catholic and former missionary, would tour firebases around LZ Betty, near Phan

Thiet, each week. Lembke reported that during his visits, the chaplain "really deepened my own

understanding of what the war was about." The chaplain thought the "United States would not

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[7] Jerry Lembke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

[8] Jerry Lembke, "Recollections: 'Render Unto Caesar . . .,'" Vietnam Veterans Against the War, *The Veteran* 31, no. 1 (2001): 31, http://www.vvaw.org/veteran/article/?id-95.

win the war because the Vietnamese people did not want us there" and that the war could be thought of "as an act of American imperialism." In the end, Lembke wrote, the chaplain "gave me a deeper respect for the beliefs of other people and even 'relativized' for me the very notion of religion."[9]

Lembke's final analysis of the chaplaincy was grim: "I left Vietnam pretty disgusted with the chaplaincy as an institution." When he wrote the Chief of Chaplains office to report his experience with chaplains, he received a reply, which he recalled as a "classic upbraiding of dissident behavior, and a chastising of my bad attitude and lack of commitment to the mission." He was troubled by the very justifications chaplains themselves often gave for their service—Romans 13, which directed Christians to "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Chaplains frequently interpreted this to justify Christian service in war and to separate moral from military considerations. Lembke, however, was unsatisfied with this response, which he thought discounted the soldiers who were troubled by the war.[10]

To be sure, few chaplain narratives included incidents such as the ones reported above, unsurprising given the incentive toward self-preservation in published material. Chaplains, especially in the wake of the Vietnam War, had good reason to present themselves in a positive light. They needed to justify their ministry and actions in Vietnam, and they needed to successfully navigate between the worlds of Vietnam veterans and of religious communities. Additionally, chaplains' narratives were in no way free from the issues of memory and selectivity that haunt other first person narratives.

Many chaplains, however, were themselves aware of some of these issues as they wrote, addressing the issue of memory explicitly in their retellings. They did not, however, assess the

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

situation uniformly. In the official survey, Henry Ackermann, the volume's author, posed an open-ended question near the end of the survey, asking chaplains to recall "two brief narratives of what you consider the most significant events of your Vietnam ministry." The responses varied from blank pages to a few scribbled sentences to pages of dense typeset copy. Some chaplains, however, commented on the question itself: Donald Shea responded "These 'war stories' cannot help but be enhanced by age and apocryphal valor. Ten years is too long to expect credibility to last in these "story" narratives. Sorry."[11] Shea, who answered all of the other questions on the survey, assessed the purpose and accuracy of the stories he could tell and chose *not* to narrate, surely as important a choice as the one made by chaplains who published books.

On the other end of the spectrum were chaplains who attested explicitly to the accuracy of their memory, and thus of their memoirs. Claude Newby first addressed his sources for *It Took Heroes*: a personal journal, his memory, interviews, and "personal and official journals," among others. He then assessed the issue of memory and asserted "Not to brag, but my memory is verifiably exceptional, especially for directions, lay-of-the-land and chronology. This ability I've validated through research and revisits to places of long ago. Almost always, my recollections of sites and events are accurate as to geographic orientation. And usually sites and layouts are the way I remembered them—schools, houses, farms, streams, roads, and dates and sequences."[12] Newby offered this assessment as proof of his credibility as an author in imploring the reader to take his narrative to be factual and true. However, even this direct statement did not mention which events, people, or reflections he left out; though the book is long—more than 500 pages—Newby, as others, certainly made authorial choices about what to include and what to expunge, and on this issue he was less forthright.

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[11] Donald W. Shea, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[12] Newby, *It Took Heroes*, ix-x.

Most, however, fell somewhere between the two extremes. They recognized the fallibility and selectivity of memory, yet chose to record personal narratives and reflections in spite of those limitations. After several failed attempts at recording his Vietnam experience, Dulany eventually wrote his memoirs while recovering from a hip replacement. Though he "utilized records, notes, letters and journals" to "verify time-lines and experiences," Dulany admitted he was "confident that there are many errors in this document," and "apologize[d] in advance for the most obvious" errors, for which he blamed his "memory or lack thereof."[13] He continued that he was unsure that he had much to add to the vast, and ever-expanding, literature on the Vietnam War, but he claimed authority and credibility nonetheless: "I have written as I experienced it." He acknowledged that the reader would be "experiencing this glimpse of my reality through [an] admittedly marred, imperfect, scratched, and chipped lens."[14] Even with the caveats, however, Dulany essentially asserted that his memoir is "true"—that is, that it accurately reflected his experiences, observations, and reflections of his military service.

For many, the authority of personal experience was crucial to the credibility and verisimilitude of their memoirs. Few made claims to be historians or to represent a larger group with their writing, but many claimed the essential truth of their personal experience. Jerry Autry, a memoirist who has also been active on Internet sites and who has given at least one public interview, also asserted his desire to "share the truth" in his memoir. He recognized, however, the problem of identifying what is true. "Sometimes I have to ask, 'What is the truth?' My recollection and the recollection of my Vietnam buddies do not always mesh. Who is right? Or is there a right?" He concluded that more often than not "the stories and facts are the same, but details are often different." He recalled one instance where he met a veteran "who was with

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[13] Dulany, *Once a Soldier*, 4.

[14] Ibid.

another unit who said he was attached to our unit for a bit." Autry did not remember the man, but several others did, and the veteran had "constructed an entire scenario" around being attached to Autry's unit. Autry asked, "Is this untrue; true? I simply don't know and don't know whether it matters." With his concluding sentence, Autry reached the heart of these intense methodological and philosophical questions. For Autry, and most other chaplains, "Truth is not relative." He defended the basic reliability and veracity of his account, even though memory, in the words of his buddies may be "like a vinyl record that is worn and may skip a bit." Autry's experience was "Truthful," because his experiences deemed it so: "This is my story and how it was," he concluded.[15]

James Burnham also lamented that he "did not keep a daily diary during [his] year in Vietnam," because "so much has faded or been lost in the decades since—people's names forgotten, locations uncertain or confused." He contacted several of his old acquaintances, and used the weight of collective memory to reconstruct the past, but Burnham recognized that most memories are "irretrievably gone," in part because of the vagaries of memory, but also because he could not access the collective memories of his native Vietnamese acquaintances—crucial witnesses to Burnham's ministry and to the war as a whole were simply unavailable. Nevertheless, Burnham also claimed the authority of personal experience: Some of the memories may be inaccurate, but, he wrote, "they are as I remember them."[16]

Chaplains, like others, were prone to acts of heroism and cowardice and were likewise susceptible to war trauma and the romanticization of war. Both during the war and after, for many veterans, chaplain and non-chaplain alike, writing provided an avenue for communicating

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[15] Jerry Autry, *Gun-Totin' Chaplain: A True Memoir* (San Francisco: Airborne Press, 2006), xviii-xiv.

[16] James Burnham, *God's Squad: Pages from a Chaplain's Vietnam Diary, 1967-1968* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), 1.

their wartime experiences to a wider public and for personal reflection and healing—what

Samuel Hynes called the simultaneous need for first-person accounts to report and remember.[17]

As they published memoirs and diaries, and as they addressed post-war audiences,

chaplains situated themselves within three traditions of autobiographical writing: combat

memoirs, spiritual autobiography, and trauma writing. First, they wrote within the context of

combat memoirs: although chaplains were non-combatants, most who published first-hand

accounts were assigned to combat units and experienced the Vietnam War close to the fighting.[18]

Whether or not chaplains were aware of these conventions as they wrote is, to some degree,

immaterial—isolation from a literary tradition is, in fact, one marker of the combat memoir.

Samuel Hynes, author of an insightful book about Anglo-American combat memoirs from the

twentieth century, wrote that for most combat memoirs, "there is nothing to suggest that the

author is aware of any previous example: no quotations or allusions or imitations of earlier

models. . . . War writing, it seems, is a genre without a tradition to the men who write it."[19]

However, whereas traditional narratives of this sort focus almost exclusively on combat—

"drums-and-bugles" or "blood-and-guts"—chaplain narratives contained relatively little *combat*,

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[17] Hynes, *Soldiers' Tale*, 4.

[18] On military memoirs and first-person narratives, see especially Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Penguin Press, 1997). Hynes examined combat memoirs from Anglo-American military personnel from World War I, World War II, and Vietnam, with an excursive discussion of "survivor memoirs" from the Holocaust.

[19] Hynes, *Soldiers' Tale*, 4. He also concluded that this sort of isolation was reflected in the fact that war narratives have not generally conformed to "the literary fashions of their time. Tellers of Victorian wars have not been notably Victorian, narrators of modern wars have not been Modernists. Whatever their dates, they have nearly all been realists, adopting a common style that would come as close as language can to rendering the things of the material world as they are." (p. 25-26) This goes equally well to the point that combat memoirs were generally not aware of the generic conventions in which they operated—most were written without reference to other combat memoirs. One notable exception to this within the sub-genre of chaplain memoirs is Autry's *Gun-Totin' Chaplain*, which specifically mentions memoirs and books by other Vietnam chaplains. Autry wrote, "They're good. Mine may be a little more philosophical. I've tried to convey the contributions chaplains make in war and peace." (p. xi).

even for those who served with forward units.[20] With some exceptions, chaplains tended to focus on worship, sacrament, and counseling as the primary markers of their time in Vietnam.

Compared to Vietnam combat narratives, chaplain memoirs differed strikingly. The literary antecedents, merits, tropes, and recurring images and themes have been widely and vigorously discussed in scholarly literature, particularly within the fields of Comparative Literature and American Studies.[21] For the most part, however, these works, like Hynes's, focused on combat and the combat soldier as the primary narrator of Vietnam war stories. Nevertheless, the Vietnam narrative, as it has been recreated within this scholarship remained an unfinished one. The stories often devolved into chaos and provided the narrator not with a sense of closure, but rather a profound loss of innocence. These narratives were profane and often explicitly concerned with sexual metaphors of war. They were frequently dystopic and played off simultaneous and contradictory images of the soldier as victim and perpetrator. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, scholars worked to contextualize Vietnam War literature within a broader American cultural context.

Not surprisingly, chaplains (and their memoirs) have been almost entirely absent from these scholarly discussions. Chaplains did not usually participate directly in combat; they have not produced much writing about the war, nor do their publications bear the same critical weight or display the literary panache of Tim O'Brien's or Michael Herr's work.[22] Professor of English

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[20] A notable exception here is James Johnson's *Combat Chaplain.*

[21] See, for example, Don Ringnalda, *Fighting and Writing the Vietnam War* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994); Jim Neilson, *Warring Fictions: American Literary Culture and the Vietnam War Narrative* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998); Philip K. Jason, *Acts and Shadows: The Vietnam War in American Literary Culture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); Philip K. Jason, ed., *Fourteen Landing Zones: Approaches to Vietnam War Literature* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991); Tobey C. Herzog, *Vietnam War Stories: Innocence Lost* (London: Routledge, 1992); Milton J. Bates, *The Wars We Took to Vietnam: Cultural Conflict and Storytelling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[22] Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Knopf, 1977); Tim O'Brien, *If I Die in a Combat Zone: Box Me Up and Ship Me Home* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1973); Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried: A Work of Fiction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990).

and American Studies Alex Vernon argued that "personal narratives by male noncombatant military persons—white males especially—are easily the most neglected of all military life writing in Anglo American criticism, because they are ignored both by scholars who concentrate on the combat memoir and by those who focus on historically marginalized voices (women and minorities)."[23] Thus, considering chaplains narratives within a broader context of first-person Vietnam War accounts allows for chaplains' words to be considered as part of a whole literary tradition, and the differences are immediately apparent. Chaplains, even those who saw significant action when they were attached to forward operating units, did not discuss combat in great detail. Here, it would appear that traditional views of authority hold true—those who participated in combat may write about it; those who did not, may not do so. The issue is not one of proximity but involvement, and thus legitimacy and credibility.[24]

Second, chaplains wrote in the tradition of spiritual or religious autobiography, which has been a significant part of religious practice, from Augustine of Hippo to the Puritans of colonial New England and beyond. Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions* modeled confessional writing as a way to experience God's grace, and public accounts of conversion were required for membership in the Puritan church community. Puritan autobiographies therefore related to broader social, political, and cultural concerns within their communities—they signified that an individual "had come into alignment with certain linguistic, behavioral and cultural expectations."[25] Some chaplain memoirs and publicized diaries assumed the conventions of the conversion narrative or spiritual autobiography, in which an author reported not only on daily

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[23] Alex Vernon, "Introduction," *Arms and the Self: War, the Military, and Autobiographical Writing*, ed. Alex Vernon (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2005), 3.

[24] See especially, Philip K. Jason, "Vietnam War Writing and Authenticity," in *Acts and Shadows*, 41-52.

[25] Peter A. Dorsey, *Sacred Estrangement: The Rhetoric of Conversion in Modern American Autobiography* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University press, 1993), 9; see also Paul John Eakin, ed., *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

experiences but also provided theological and religious reflection on those events. Chaplains also wrote for clearly religious audiences; they frequently used religious vocabulary, images, and references, which might seem alien to a secular reader. Furthermore, their books were often published by small denominational or religious presses. These publications were part of a chaplain's reentry into the civilian religious community, ties to which their chaplain careers may have weakened, and were written to reassure readers that the authors retained, understood, and remained committed—as the Puritan authors of conversion narratives before them—to the "linguistic, behavioral and cultural expectations" of their respective religious communities.[26]

Even among the chaplain memoirs within this literary tradition, the focus varied. Thomas Des Champs, who emphasized his Vietnam service in his memoir's title—"The True Story of a Highly Decorated Vietnam-era Chaplain"—nevertheless began by writing: "I believe that where you come from and how you were raised has a great influence on whom and what you become. For this reason, I would like to tell you about my hometown, my parents, the people I knew, and the culture in which I was raised." Des Champs wrote of his family and his early religious experiences before moving on to his military experiences.[27] Jim Ammerman, on the other hand, buried his Vietnam experience deep within the middle of his book, *Supernatural Events in the Life of an Ordinary Man.* Ammerman also began with his childhood, focusing on his belief that God called him to minister to "Army officers," a pledge which Ammerman believed fulfilled when he was assigned to the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Finally, Connell J. Maguire's memoir, *Follies of a Navy Chaplain*, clearly focused on his military service, but his tour in Southeast Asia appeared as only one of many subjects. Like the

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[26] Dorsey, *Sacred Estrangement*, 9.

[27] Thomas Des Champs, *Christian Soldier: The True Story of a Highly Decorated Vietnam-Era Chaplain*, as told to Philip McGee (Baltimore, MD: PublishAmerica, 2004, 7; Jim Ammerman, *Supernatural Events in the Life of an Ordinary Man* (Enumclaw, WA: WinePress Publishing, 1996), 17, 140; Connell J. Maguire, *Follies of a Navy Chaplain* (Maywood, NJ: ChiChi Press, 2003).

others, Maguire began with his childhood and the call to become a chaplain. Each of these

authors contextualized their pastoral and military lives differently, but the spiritual-

autobiographical components of each are quite clear.

Chaplain Jack Brown viewed his personal writing (in journals) and his public writing (in

the form of his book *Another Side of Combat*) in religious terms. He began writing as a spiritual

discipline when one of his "college or seminary professors encouraged [him] to keep a daily

journal," which he began doing just before deploying to Vietnam as a chaplain with the 101st

Airborne Division.[28] Then, Brown situated his memoir as a "devotional book of memories"

where "Each devotional chapter is based on my day-to-day journal that was kept faithfully

during that memorable year. I also share my philosophy about war, the American serviceman or

woman, and the Christian faith as it relates to military service."[29] Brown hoped his spiritual

journey might be of help to others in a similar situation.

Finally, much of chaplains' writing can be understood in the context of trauma writing or

therapeutic writing, even when not begun for that explicit purpose. Writing, both fiction and

non-fiction, has been explored extensively in context to therapeutic treatment of Post Traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD).[30] James W. Pennebaker, a research psychologist, conducted

experiments in the area of post-trauma writing in order to assess the idea that if a "trauma is

cognitively prolonged and, because the person cannot talk to friends and relatives about the

distressing subject, they can become socially isolated" and that writing may provide a way to

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[28] Brown, *Another Side of Combat*, vii.

[29] Ibid., ix.

[30] See, for example, Gillie Bolton, *The Therapeutic Potential of Creative Writing: Writing Myself* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1999); Christina Baldwin, *Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest* (New York: Bantam, 1991); Gillie Bolton, "Taking the Thinking Out of It: Writing, a Therapeutic Space," *The Journal of the British Association for Counselling* (1995): 6, 215-218; Luciano L'Abate, "The Use of Writing in Psychotherapy," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* (1991): 45, 87-91.

"organize and assimilate" the traumatic memories. In his study, Pennebaker worked with students and found that those who wrote about traumatic events and the emotions and feelings associated with them sought medical attention for illness less than their control-group counterparts, which suggested improved immune function and ability to withstand infection. Most of the subjects, over 75%, described the long-term benefits of the writing in personal terms—they concluded that writing "made me think things out" or "helped me look at myself from the outside/sort out my thoughts."[31] Pennebaker concluded that "narrative expression, whether written or spoken, has a naturally organising (controlling and structuring) effect. But 'writing permits subjects to engage their traumas to a degree and at a rate at which they feel comfortable.'"[32]

Clinical understandings of PTSD, its diagnosis, and treatment also highlight the extent to which chaplains, especially those who joined combat infantry units on patrols and those who served in hospitals, could experience deep psychological trauma as the result of the war. For several years, scholars and clinicians assumed that "war trauma" was roughly equivalent to "combat trauma." More recently, however, the distinctions between "combat exposure" and exposure to or participation in "abusive violence" may affect PTSD rates and responses to treatment. The primary concern in combat is survival because the primary threat was being killed, whereas with abusive violence, which might include rape, the killing of civilians, or constant exposure to the wounded and dying, victims confronted a different problem of persistent violence against human beings, where the primary threat was to one's moral

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[31] James Pennebaker, "Overcoming Inhibition: Rethinking the Roles of personality, Cognition, and Social Behavior," in Harald C. Traue and J[ames] W. Pennebaker, eds., *Emotion, Inhibition and Health* (Seattle: Hogrefe and Huber, 1993) quoted in Gillie Bolton, *The Therapeutic Potential of Creative Writing: Writing Myself* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1999), 199.

[32] Ibid., 200.

sensibilities and psychological wellbeing.[33] In Vietnam, in large part a guerrilla war, these boundaries were occasionally murky: the threat of death was pervasive, and abusive violence was prevalent in many sectors of the war. Chaplains, regardless of their assignments, were unlikely to be immune to the abusive violence of the Vietnam War.

However, many experts agree that "normal developmental factors are also relevant: the soldier who is a few years older than the average combatant and possesses a more integrated sense of self and purpose has greater insulation against serious trauma than does a late adolescent who is still in the process of more active maturation."[34] Thus, chaplains should be expected to suffer from markedly lower rates of PTSD than enlisted personnel. Again, this is not to suggest that some chaplains, especially those who served with combat units and went into the field, did not experience extreme trauma, but rather to suggest that chaplains, in comparison to other service personnel had more intrapersonal and emotional skills with which to deal with trauma.

James Johnson began writing his memoirs as a therapeutic exercise to help him deal with PTSD and his memories from combat. "A friend who knows about some of my combat experiences suggests I write a book about them. I immediately discount his suggestion. I am not certain why, but soon, I do begin writing. I had kept very detailed diaries and journals in Vietnam and now I begin a process of what l later will refer to as a therapeutic journal. And when feelings resurface due to dreams, or in my waking moments, I record these feelings. I simply record what I'm experiencing." Johnson continued writing over the next year, and in so doing he wrote "my pen becomes my therapist." "Eventually," continued Johnson, "the

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[33] Robert S. Laufer, "War Trauma and Human Development: The Viet Nam Experience" in Stephen M. Sonnenberg, Arthur S. Blank, Jr., and John A. Talbott, eds. *The Trauma of War: Stress and Recovery in Viet Nam Veterans* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1985), 40.

[34] See Sonnenberg et al., *Trauma of War.*

vividness of my dreams begins to diminish. My feelings aren't gone, but do begin to heal. The longer I am away from Vietnam, the less preoccupied I am with the trauma that I experienced there."[35] Of the chaplain accounts that focus specifically on Vietnam, Johnson's was the most self-aware and self-reflective about his purpose in writing a memoir. Johnson was keenly aware of the therapeutic nature of autobiographical writing after trauma—the benefits for him would be both spiritual and psychological. In the introduction, Johnson acknowledged, however, that his memoir was "about more than just trauma. . . . It's also about coping, feeling, growing up, bonding, being cynical, loving, being loved, being vulnerable, placing values in perspective, and even humor."[36]

Other chaplains also wrote frankly about PTSD and trauma, and some also addressed the spiritual nature of their healing. Curt Bowers's conclusion combined the trope of spiritualized combat with healing from PTSD. After narrating his own flashback to Hill 65, where he saw his friends die and experienced combat firsthand, his final sentences addressed Vietnam Veterans explicitly: "In summary, let me say to those who read this book—to those who identify with its story—the men, the places, the emotions, and to those who have, to some degree, suffered from PTSD: There is help and there is hope." He encouraged them to seek help from the Veterans Administration hospitals, where they would find clinicians "well versed in the syndrome," but he also emphasized the spiritual dimension of healing after trauma. He wrote, "In addition, and I believe of greater importance, is the recognition that Jesus Christ our Lord is the ultimate healer and the Great Physician."[37] Bowers believed that his Christian faith, his

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[35] Johnson, *Combat Chaplain*, 248.

[36] Ibid., 3.

[37] Bowers, *Forward Edge*, 131.

understanding of PTSD, and his retelling his story all played a significant part in healing the lingering wounds of Vietnam.

Beyond distinct literary contexts, chaplains wrote within historical contexts as well. Memoirs often tell readers about the social, political, and cultural worlds of the publication date as much as they do about the past. Chaplains, like other memoirists of the Vietnam era, grappled with the broad geopolitical issues of the Cold War, the domestic politics of Vietnam, and ongoing questions of American involvement in the world. In the 1980s, then, as Americans began to recover from the immediate trauma of Vietnam, new stories gained prominence in the public mind. By the mid-1980s, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial had been designed and built, and the nation sought to exorcize the demons of Vietnam, among other ways through literature and movies. Vietnam became a symbol of the political and cultural battles of the 1960s and 1970s. The co-author of Curtis Bowers' memoir reflected that during those decades "there were many battlefronts, not all in Southeast Asia. Some were on college campuses. Others intruded on the sanctity of our homes. Sharp differences of opinion divided us. We found that a nation divided against itself could not stand against the enemy. Like it or not, those of us who lived during those years found ourselves thrust into the fray."[38] The veteran, chaplain included, was a victim of these battles, demonized by anti-war demonstrators, marginalized by the veterans of World War II, and traumatized by the experience of war.

Others, also in the 1980s, placed the trauma of Vietnam into the heightened Cold War tensions of the Reagan years. Bowers himself wrote, "It has been over twenty years since I flew out of Tan Son Nhut Airfield on my way home from Vietnam to the United States. That country has now been swallowed up by the forces we had fought against." Then he moved to wider global concerns: "There are still wars and rumors of wars in that region and all over the globe.

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[38] Glen Van Dyne, "Introduction," in Bowers, *Forward Edge*, 9-11.

Central America is a focus of our efforts against the Marxists. The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) is the hotly debated defense against the Soviet missile threat. Star Wars is a household word. The Soviets are bogged down in Afghanistan and no doubt will be for the foreseeable future. The Middle East is a tinder box waiting to be lit. Mothers everywhere still pray that *their* sons will not go to war. Things have not changed much—certainly human nature has not changed at all."[39]

After a lull in the 1990s, and since renewed military activity after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, several chaplains have published memoirs or devotional collections.[40] Indeed, chaplains have received renewed attention in that war; as in Vietnam, the chaplaincy has emerged as a site for examining the functions and compatibility of religious belief and practice during war. Vietnam-era chaplains have responded to this increased attention by speaking out about the chaplains' role in war, about the Iraq war, and about the nature of religious practice during war. Jerry Autry addressed the issue explicitly in his memoir: "Writing about Vietnam while the Iraq War is going on has been excruciating. Day by day, as I sat, watched, read—it was Vietnam revisited."[41] Autry used his experiences in Vietnam to become a "constructive critic of the war," intent on separating support for the soldiers from the political objectives of the war. He concluded "We learned our lessons, and this fact alone may be the lasting legacy of Vietnam if there is one—the soldier is just doing his job."[42] As he wrote, Autry revealed, "I decided to

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[39] Bowers, *Forward Edge*, 129.

[40] See Autry, *Gun Totin' Chaplain*; Thomas R. O'Brien, ed., *Blessings from the Battlefield* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2002). Since 2003, several other books about chaplains have also been published. See Lance Kittleson, *Meditations from Iraq: A Chaplain's Ministry in the Middle East*, 2003-2004 (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing, 2005); John Riddle, *For God and Country: Four Stories of Courageous Military Chaplains* (Barbour Publishing, 2003); Carey H. Cash, *A Table in the Presence* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 2005).

[41] Autry, *Gun-Totin' Chaplain*, xi

[42] Ibid.

intersperse my own thoughts and writings . . . about Iraq in the middle of my Vietnam story." For Autry, the two stories could not be separated.[43]

Jack Brown's book also took a long historical view of the Vietnam War; he only obliquely referred to Iraq—insisting that a nation's leaders, serving "their citizens and soldiers well" should "do their utmost to avoid war"—and instead reminded readers of the origins of the Vietnam War itself. "Now since this book is about mortality and the Vietnam conflict, a bit of history should not be forgotten. In 1945, Ho Chi Minh spoke in Hanoi to an estimated half million Vietnamese. American military personnel stood on the stage with him as he declared Vietnam's independence from French and Japanese rule. He began his speech by quoting the first few sentences of America's Declaration of Independence. He sought friendship with America." For Brown, the tragedy of Vietnam occurred between the hopeful declaration of Vietnamese independence and the 1995 opening of the American embassy in Vietnam. The lessons of Vietnam, to be debated "endlessly" by historians, must be learned in order to avoid too-costly war or peace.[44]

Chaplains Write the Vietnam War

As with other authors of first-person narratives, chaplains demonstrated a range of motivations for recording and publishing their recollections about Vietnam. James Johnson presented his experience as a series of diary entries, supplemented by memory, letters and tape recordings he sent to his wife, and his journal entries. While most of the book's action took place during Johnson's tour in Vietnam, the title revealed a wider significance for Johnson. His war did not end on the flight home—it was, for him, a "Thirty-Year Vietnam Battle," and the

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[43] Ibid., xii.

[44] Jim Marshall, "Foreword," in Brown, *Another Side of Combat*, iv-v.

story of the war was fundamentally wrapped up in the story of his life, and the lives of his friends and family. Samuel Hynes, in *The Soldiers' Tale*, contended that there are two types of "personal narratives" (his generic term for first-person accounts) about war, which "correspond to two quite different needs: the need to report and the need to remember."[45] Occasionally the two needs merged particularly when the writing was therapeutic and revelatory in nature, the two needs merged.

Other chaplains published their experiences because friends and family members suggested it.[46] In most cases, chaplains believed they had important, legitimate stories to tell. Claude Newby wrote that he began writing his Vietnam memoirs "as part of my autobiography. . . . I listed several good reasons for writing my life story. These reasons included a desire to leave a chronicle of my life that my posterity may 'know' me, gain some advantage from the lessons life taught me, and cherish their heritage." Newby was troubled, however, by the sentiment of some that the Vietnam War should not make up a significant part of the memoir, and he cited a letter from a "military man" who expressed his view that the "Vietnam War is over, and it's time to forget it. Please quit telling war stories and leave the war behind us." Newby, however, asked "*Can we forget the event and still remember those who served and sacrificed so much?*" When he wrote down his "chronicle" of his experiences in Vietnam, he wrote, "Suddenly, a great weight lifted from me—a mental, emotional, spiritual burden of near tangible proportions." Thus, "with my war memories on paper and in the computer . . . the gnawing almost ceased for the first time in more than a quarter of a century, and I felt free of a vague melancholy. . . . *I don't have to remember anymore. Now, whatever happens to me, the story is preserved, lest we forget.*"[47]

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[45] Hynes, *Soldiers' Tale*, xiv.

[46] Dulany, *Once a Soldier* and Schumacher, *Soldier of God Remembers*.

[47] Newby, *It Took Heroes*, vii-viii. Emphasis in original.

Chaplains also wrote to memorialize. Jack Brown claimed, "In a real sense, this book is also a memorial tribute to the tens of thousands of American men and women who served their country and who lost their lives in Vietnam during that unpopular war." The war memoir, published for all time, would attest to the sacrifice Brown witnessed others make—by virtue of his memories, written down, Brown would make sure that others were not forgotten. The memorial would also be for "the family members and friends of those who served there, of those who died there, of those who were wounded there, of those who were imprisoned there, and of those who are still listed as missing in action." The devotional written word would become, in the words of Jay Winter, writing about World War I, "sites of memory" and "sites of mourning."[48] Finally, Brown identified one last audience, one not directly connected to the Vietnam War or to the people who served there. Brown identified them as interested observers—those who might have specific questions about how chaplains functioned during the war, about how chaplains could serve both God and Country simultaneously.[49]

Not only did chaplains hope their stories would be significant to others who served in the war, but also to religious audiences who were unsure what to make of the war and of the chaplaincy. Often, Christian chaplains left readers with religious messages that emphasized the importance of faith in times of struggle and the significance of the Christian evangelical mission. "While it was my privilege to serve on a very real battlefield at the front, many who read this book have battlefields and front lines of a different nature," Curt Bowers wrote. "Those of us who follow Christ are all called to immerse ourselves in the battle of life. None of us are called to stand on the sideline or retreat to some quiet, secure place while life-and-death struggles are

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[48] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, new ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[49] Brown, *Another Side of Combat*, x.

taking place all around us."[50] Bowers's introduction clearly associated actual warfare with

spiritual warfare: the same skills he needed as a military chaplain, Christians would need as they

encountered resistance and conflict in their own lives.

Other chaplains used their personal stories to help other veterans deal with their

experiences in Vietnam. William Mahedy, an Episcopal chaplain in Vietnam, pioneered

counseling and therapy efforts with Veterans' centers and counseling after the Vietnam War. He

believed that Vietnam represented for many veterans a "dark night of the soul" from which

many of them had not returned.[51] Though Mahedy's work was not about his experiences as a

chaplain per se, his commitment to the spiritual lives of Vietnam veterans was significant.

Having witnessed war, he was able to relate to them, and he could appreciate more fully the

trauma brought on by combat. He understood their needs in part because he understood his

own. Mahedy believed he wrote so that others could experience the journey out of the dark

night of Vietnam.[52] At the end of his book, Mahedy printed a liturgy of reconciliation that he

compiled for a healing service that was part of a Veterans' retreat. Mahedy noticed that many

soldiers had not dealt with the grief, loss, anger, or guilt that remained from Vietnam. As a

veteran and clergyman, he was able to aid others in this process of resolution and closure.

Mahedy designed the liturgy so "the three Scripture readings used were relevant to the issues of

war and peacemaking. The prayers, including the prayer of consecration, were written around

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[50] Bowers, *Forward Edge,* 95.

[51] The "dark night of the soul" is a spiritual stage identified by St. John of the Cross, a Spanish mystic, in the late sixteenth century. He used it to refer to a spiritual stage in which a person feels the total absence of light and hope, but he believed the journey out of the dark night led one to a higher level of consciousness. Thus, the "dark night" experience was one to be treasured, though in the midst of it, one would feel utter despair. Many Christian authors have since used the term to express any period in which a person feels deep separation from God. See Saint John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. Mirabi Starr (New York: Riverhead Books, 2002), and Encyclopedia of Catholic Literature, "Dark Night of the Soul, John of the Cross," ed. Mary R. Reichardt (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004).

[52] William P. Mahedy, *Out of the Night: The Spiritual Journey of Vietnam Vets* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986).

this theme. We confessed our sins, especially those of 'violence and hatred,' receiving for these sins the forgiveness of God . . . Hymns were selected according to the theme. The unity and deep yearning for the peace of mind that only reconciliation can achieve was more evident at the service."[53] Mahedy had evaluated his Vietnam experience in religious ways and used his experience as a veteran, a counselor, and a clergyman to help others do the same.

In their narratives, chaplains saw themselves change in ways that reflected their identity and their faith. For many, their tours in Vietnam represented a time of physical, emotional, and spiritual challenge and change. "I was forty pounds lighter. My hair was sprinkled generously with gray. I had long scars to remind me always where I had been," James Hutchens reflected. But he recognized that these were merely physical changes and that the deeper changes occurred because "for nearly a year I had lived and worked beside many fine men, some magnificent men. Together we had seen good men suffer and die. Together we came out to find life very precious and more purposeful and meaningful that we had ever known before. Because of the living and dying, I would never be quite the same again."[54] But even though these were important, Hutchens believed, "above all this there was another difference. Now I *knew* by what I had witnessed that the living God still reveals Himself to men who truly seek Him. Before, I had been taught it and had read it. Now I had experienced it." He concluded that in the end, "God still makes Himself known. He still makes His presence felt just as surely as He did to Moses and Abraham, to Paul and to John. Now as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ I could stand to declare what I had seen and heard."[55] Many chaplains changed physically, and some carried battle scars and wounds. They remembered the men and officers with whom they served. They

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[53] Ibid., 187.

[54] Hutchens, *Beyond Combat*, 127-128.

[55] Ibid., 127-128.

reacted to institutional problems and situations. But through their experiences, they wrote that they continued to find strength in their religion and faith. Surely, some chaplains lost their faith or were unable to reconcile their faith and their Vietnam experience, but they have not recorded this displacement publicly. Chaplains who chose to write about Vietnam did so for personal and public reasons and were willing to expose their experiences and selves in ways that others could not or would not.

Because their reactions to and experiences of war were not uniform, in their reflections on the war itself and its purposes or meanings, chaplains disagreed. For some, battle and Vietnam renewed their sense of calling and of purpose. In the midst of carnage, they found a real place in which the things of "this world" fell away, and only God could remain. Raymond Johnson wrote, "My batteries are re-charged, 'My youth is renewed like the eagle's.'" He found his "soul is filled with a new surge of inner strength. I must return to that real arena where the living paradox of life's humor and tragedy, love and hate, is lived out before the eyes of men. This is where I belong!"[56] Johnson's revelations at the end of his tour of duty recognized paradox, not irresolvable conflict. His faith was not shaken, yet what he saw changed him. Towards the end of his tour, he was not deflated or defeated, but hopeful and even uplifted. In the midst of war, Johnson believed his God had revealed himself.

Jackson Day struggled to reconcile his Vietnam experience with a traditional theology of an all knowing, all powerful, and all loving God. His experiences taught him that in war God could not be all three. He wrote that God could encompass "any two out of the three, perhaps, but not all three, it's just too contradictory. If God was all powerful and all knowing, he couldn't be all loving or else he would do something to stop what was going on. If he were all powerful and all loving, then he couldn't know what was going on, or he would do something." To

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[56] Johnson, *Postmark*, 96.

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resolve the conflict, Day reasoned "that God was all loving and all knowing, but had given up the power, as God gave up the power on the cross. We weren't helped because God couldn't stop what was going on, but God suffered with us, and perhaps that was enough." The resolution came full circle thirty-five years later when he returned to Vietnam and concluded after "looking at the regeneration of the country of Vietnam" that "perhaps God has some power after all, and we simply had too short a horizon."[57]

Day was also challenged to rethink some of his recollections about the nature of life and death and his mission in Vietnam. He returned to Vietnam in 2004 for an educational tour. During his trip to Vietnam, Day was showing the tour guide, Dr. Ed Tick, a specialist on PTSD and Vietnam, pictures from his combat tour. Tick noticed that Day was the only living thing in one picture. Day recalled this scene and others like it, when "soldiers welcomed a break from the work of preparing a firebase. The denuded trees were part of the package—an explosive charge would be set off which would at once clear an area in the center where helicopters could land, and farther from the explosion, clear the trees of leaves, improving the line of sight." Day was reminded that for soldiers in combat "all of these things meant life, or a better chance of life, for those here." He "saw no death in the picture. Ed Tick, who wasn't there, saw no living things but the chaplain, and to view the picture fresh through his eyes was a revelation into a new truth."[58] Even in scenes full of death, Day had resolved his experience to find the redemptive quality of life.

This process, however, took years. Upon returning to the United States, Day joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War and eventually resigned his commission with the National Guard. Rather than continuing in ordained ministry, Day returned to graduate school for a

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[57] Jackson Day, "Vietnam Chaplain: Return to Vietnam," http://www.vietnamveteransministers.org/chaplain/today.htm, accessed 11 February 2005.

[58] Ibid.

degree in Public Health and worked in the private healthcare sector for several years before eventually returning to the pastorate in Maryland and becoming involved with Vietnam Veteran Ministers, a group of veterans and clergy who work together to minister to Vietnam War veterans. In retrospect, Day said it was possible to see the experience of Vietnam as a rich source for personal growth, renewed faith, and strengthened personal relationships, however, at the time, he insisted that he saw or felt few of those benefits.[59]

Others interpreted their Vietnam experiences with a different theology, in which God was neither responsible for, nor necessarily revealed in the horrors of war. Instead they found a source of hope for the future in the war. For James Hutchens, the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* served as a symbol of his beliefs. During the Civil War Julia Ward Howe wrote the hymn, which has served as a religious justification for a call to arms for American military men ever since. "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;/He is trampling out the vintage, where the grapes of wrath are stored;/He has loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;/His truth is marching on." The song called soldiers to join the Army of God as he wiped out his enemies. "What did Mrs. Howe see?" Hutchens asked. "She saw . . . what every soldier ought to see. I saw it, as did many others. . . . Coming events have a way of casting their shadows before them. The wars of the ages have all pointed to it. The insatiable cry for peace demands it: *The glory of the coming of the Lord*, the Prince of peace, who alone can establish peace." He concluded that Vietnam was a "vivid foreshadowing of the unprecedented glory and wrath of God that shall be unleashed upon a 'crooked and perverse generation' at the coming of the Lord."[60] But the hymn also demanded response: "Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him!/Be jubilant, my feet./Our God is marching on./Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!" And Hutchens replied,

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[59] Jackson Day, interview by author.

[60] Hutchens, *Beyond Combat*, 126.

"Even so, come Lord Jesus."[61] Hutchens evaluated Vietnam and his particular combat experience from a pre-millennial eschatology, wherein the horror of war was a precursor to the return of Christ on Earth, a sign of the coming triumph of the Christian God and the imposition of a millennial peace. He and others endured not because God had already been revealed, but because he would be revealed.

Yet others were more pessimistic about the war and the potential lessons that could be gained from the war. Earlier than most, chaplains seemed to criticize the war as pointless and wasteful, even if they supported its purported anti-Communist goals. As Robert Falabella left Vietnam, he was "filled with mixed emotions." He recorded that he felt "a certain joy . . . that the nightmare was over" for him. But he agonized over this emotional response: "It may have been over for me but it was not over for so many others still there. How could I be happy, when my friends were still there?" His connection to the soldiers ran deep and as he looked at his watch, he saw that it was "about two thirty in the morning, a dangerous time for those boys in the field; a lonely, fearful time for the boys on ambush; an agonizing time for those seriously wounded and in the intensive care ward at the 12th Evac Hospital, and hospitals like it all over the corps area." In a matter of hours, Falabella would be home, but in Vietnam, a few more hours would bring daylight, and "the boys, still shivering from the chilly rains will then have another day to be scorched by the sun, bitten by insects, and revolted by the leeches that will be drawing their blood when they ford the canals. They will be wondering who will get the job of point man this day, and whether there will be many booby traps in the areas they must enter." Falabella repeated his question, "How can I be happy when some of those young men who are now alive will be dead before this day is out, others perhaps without their limbs, their arms or their sight?" Like Dulany's questions about his responses to atrocity in combat, Falabella had no

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[61] Ibid., 126.

answers. He left in agony. He determined, "I had come to Vietnam in apprehension, but with hope. I find I left it in disappointment and with sorrow."[62] Falabella saw no redemption or salvation in war, but he believed he saw the essence of humanity in it. The relationships he had formed with soldiers sustained him, and prompted him to be an outspoken critic of the war and its effects. Falabella's experiences underscored the conflict between the positive and negative aspects of war, for what he believed war could accomplish—the ability to equalize men and venerate humanity in the image of God—it also threatened to take away by its equal application of death and destruction.

While many of the men who served in Vietnam may have found solace, comfort, or reassurance in their faith, chaplains were in a unique position because they were the ones who actually represented that faith physically. Chaplains were intimately connected to ministry, mission, morale, morality, and faith. Henry Ackermann, a chaplain who served in Vietnam, and an official historian for the Army Chaplain Corps, titled his book on chaplains in Vietnam, *He Was Always There*, for the phrase expressed the sentiment of many officers and soldiers and demonstrated a certain level of fulfillment of the chaplains' mission. While they recognized their ministry as important, for chaplains the phrase "He was always there" applied not to other clergy or humans, but to God. Hutchens wrote, "When I sought Him on the ship to Southeast Asia, He was there. . . . When I cried out to Him for men who were suffering pain and death, He was there. And one day when I lay on the ground with nothing to offer but blood and pain and desperate pleas, He was there. . . . He was always there."[63] However, what chaplains may have given to others by their presence and their ministry, they could not provide for themselves.

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[62] Falabella, *Vietnam Memoirs*, 154.

[63] Hutchens, *Beyond Combat*, 128.

In the end, chaplains were clearly not uniformly satisfied with their experience in Vietnam; many faced severe trauma and doubt about their faith, the chaplaincy, the United States government, and the American people. Billy Whiteside, a Methodist chaplain, recalled personal hurt and professional hindrance when the United Methodist church publicly announced its support for draft resisters going to Canada. He recalled one young soldier who told him it was "terrible when your own church turns against you," and Whiteside had little to say. When he returned from Vietnam, by his own words Whiteside was "screwed up," he told a newspaper interviewer, "I was filled with rage and doubted God's love—God's love was the last thing I felt." Whiteside said that another chaplain eventually helped him find his faith again by listening and understanding. After the war, Whiteside continued in the chaplaincy, for seven years at the disciplinary barrack at Fort Leavenworth, where he developed a holistic pastoral care program.[64] Whiteside's Vietnam experience tested his faith and his ministry, and while he eventually found his faith and ministry sustained, Vietnam was not, in and of itself, redemptive.

For some, fellow chaplains played a critical role in their post-war healing and reflection, but others left Vietnam with serious doubts about the chaplain corps and the chaplains with whom they served, particularly their supervisory chaplains. Kiyo Hokazu, a Southern Baptist chaplain, wrote in his official survey response that the Vietnam experience "made me realize the diversity of chaplains' ministry. Some really cared and ministered, some cared only for self-aggrandizement, and some seemed to enjoy the war, i.e. priest carrying a grease gun from place to place."[65] Jan Friend reported an "Alcoholic Catholic chaplain" who hindered unit coverage.[66]

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[64] Kathy L. Gilbert, "Hard Tour in Vietnam Became Chaplain's 'Greatest Ministry,'" United Methodist Church, Interview with Billy Whiteside, 27 May 2005, http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=2&mid=7985, accessed 25 February 2008.

[65] Kiyo Hokazu, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[66] Jan Friend, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

Chaplains, no more than enlisted personnel or officers, could be expected to behave in or respond to Vietnam in the same ways. David Kent concluded that by the end of his tour in Vietnam, "some of the idealism wore off. I saw chaplains as more human, fallible, and self-seeking."[67]

The "self-aggrandizing," "promotion-seeking," and "self-serving" supervisory chaplain emerged as a consistent counterpoint to the image of the combat chaplain accompanying his troops into battle. Jan Friend wrote that a major hindrance to his ministry was the "unusually self-serving supervisory chaplain who nevertheless had the [Brigade Commander] convinced he walked on water."[68] Friend continued, "Precious little was provided by senior chaplain, prior to, during, and subsequent [to] my ministry in Vietnam that aided preparation for that ministry or processing it, meaning afterwards, leaving the distinct impression that everyone was equally ignorant of what to expect, how to deal with it or debrief from the experience." Though deeply critical of his supervisory chaplain, Friend echoed Hokazu's sentiment that "some chaplain colleagues were impressive in their ministry and creativity under the circumstances while others broke under the pressure and were sent home and were clearly more interested in how the tour would serve their 'careers' than in facilitating ministry to soldiers or encouraging supervisees."[69]

Even more than lost faith in their fellow chaplain clergy, chaplains who responded to the official history surveys reported significant doubts and anger about their civilian counterparts. For some, it was a question of practice. Robert Hess wrote, "I tend to be 'angry' with the church in the civilian community for not being as ecumenical as I witnessed the church worshipping

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[67] David Kent, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files

[68] Jan Friend, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[69] Ibid.

together in the mud of an artillery hill in 3-tiered Jungle."[70] Said another, "I was hurt by the

hostility I encountered from ministers in my home presbytery . . . I felt, and I still do, that they

judged me and 98 percent of others who served without appreciating our position."[71]

Others expressed deep resentment toward the media and the public for undermining

what they saw as a justified—if operationally flawed—mission in Vietnam. "I was proud to be a

part of a totally moral and courageous effort by my country to preserve liberty for a weaker

nation. It should have been done. It should be done again if needed anywhere in the world. The

agenda of the media to demean America's involvement in VN had the reverse effect with me,"

wrote Charles LeClair.[72] One chaplain expressed concern with media distortions of actions in

Vietnam. "I became convinced . . . that the public is unthinking, uncaring, and all too easy to

fool. The news reporting what people believed was distorted beyond belief. In my hometown

newspaper, I read about several actions in which I had participated. The accounts were so

distorted that except for dates, names of people and places I would have never recognized them

as being the actions in which I was present."[73]

Still others expressed a profound crisis of faith in the United States government and the

civil religious principles that seemed to guide the country before the war. On one hand, some

chaplains blamed the government for losing the war, for not committing adequate resources to

defeating Communist forces in Southeast Asia. Marvin Trott, for example, wrote, "My faith

remained unchanged toward God. However, my faith in our government and our leaders

dramatically changed for the negative." He justified his distrust in religious terms, "I believe God

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[70] Robert Hess, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[71] Anonymous chaplain, Survey Response, quoted in Ackermann, *Always There*, 231.

[72] Charles E. LeClair, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[73] Anonymous chaplain, Survey Response, quoted in Ackermann, *Always There*, 231.

gave the US the best nation on earth to follow after righteousness and peace and we failed to use our power to annihilate Hanoi and bring it to its knees." Ultimately, Trott concluded "We had a right to be there and help the South Vietnamese to win the war against the North Vietnamese invaders."[74]

Other chaplains reported seriously diminished faith in the American government and in their own system of beliefs as a result of their experiences in Vietnam. James Juhan, a Southern Baptist minister who at the time of the survey was in the process of converting to Roman Catholicism, wrote an anguished reflection of the effects of Vietnam on his intellectual, spiritual, and ministerial life. Juhan had served two tours in Vietnam—in 1967-1968 with the Infantry and then in 1970-1971 with a Signal battalion. In Vietnam he "became very realistic." Juhan continued, "I did not think the world was full of hope any more – I became a humanist – I left my church, my belief system, and my God." He concluded that he could no longer "feel all is right with the world." Whereas Trott believed the government prevented the military from winning the war by refusing to annhilate the North Vietnamese, Juhan believed the primary mistake was "Being there" in the first place. His despair was both corporate ("We should not have been there") and individual ("I should not have been there.") In the context of the turbulent 1960s, Juhan thought his service in Vietnam put him on the wrong side, literally and figuratively: "Martin Luther King and [Robert] Kennedy were killed while I was in Vietnam, and I was on the wrong side of the ocean." Juhan's refrain, "We should not have been there," peppered his entire response. By the end, he concluded, "I died a thousand deaths for each memorial service I held."[75]

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[74] Marvin W. Trott, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[75] James L. Juhan, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

Occasionally, chaplains wrote in direct opposition to the traditional narrative of the war. In one paragraph, Samuel Hopkins remembered Vietnam as "a futile war in an exotic land" and simultaneously "the most exciting year of my life." Hopkins wrote that he often remembered these "stories and pictures in my head" with "blissful revere [*sic*]," a phrase unlikely to appear in soldiers' and officers' accounts of the same war. He concluded the introduction with a sort of historiographical plea: "May the opening and recording of these mental files broaden and balance the perspective about serving in Viet Nam."[76] Charles LeClair concluded that his service as a chaplain in Vietnam was "the most significant role of my life," which made him feel "satisfied," "adequate," and "properly utilized."[77] Lloyd Kincade concluded that his Vietnam ministry was "the greatest thing I have ever [done] or will ever do. I would do it again 100 times if necessary."[78]

Even when they were disillusioned by "Vietnam," many chaplains concluded that the experience had been a spiritual testing ground, a crisis out of which they had emerged with a stronger faith. When he was in Vietnam, Sowards felt "patriotic and willing to serve" his country, but later concluded he "had wasted two years" of his life "along with thousands of other Americans" and that "those who died did it in vain." Even in the face of this damning conclusion, however, Sowards wrote that Vietnam helped him learn "about important priorities," that "living close to death or a crippling injury" changed his life, that he "learned to share [his] faith in Christ in a better way."[79] "Vietnam" became a site in which Sowards, upon reflection, could eventually find his spiritual resolve renewed. Jack Moyar became convinced that

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[76] Hopkins, *Chaplain Remembers*, 2.

[77] Charles E. LeClair, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[78] Lloyd Kincaid, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[79] Douglas E. Sowards, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

the longer he "was in Vietnam the less [he] believed about the 'rightness' of the war," and he concluded that he was "there to be a pastor to the military." Moyar had to remove himself from any proclamation of the morality or inherent rightness of the war. And like Sowards, Moyar reflected upon the effect that proximity to death had on a chaplains' faith; War changes faith, he concluded, "had my faith not grown, it would have died."[80] Donald Shea remembered that by the end of his tour in 1972, he "felt good about the ministry but bad about the inane war."[81]

Others also recounted broken and rebuilt faith. Lloyd Kincade, a Disciples of Christ chaplain, placed three heavy "X's" by the survey option that indicated "strengthened faith" as a result of Vietnam. Yet he also observed that "the old WASP American religion was shot down. My faith had to be rebuilt to the real world we live in and not the TV world of today."[82] Larry Wedel determined that the stresses of Vietnam made his "prayer life bec[o]me more meaningful" and revealed the "reality of God's mercy, love, and presence."[83] Jack Brown wrote that Vietnam forced him "to go to the grass roots of [his] faith time and time again and concentrate on life and death issues on a one-to-one basis." Many chaplains could not accept easy answers that traditional views of faith might provide.

Still other chaplains concluded that Vietnam clarified their religious beliefs and what they considered "important." "My dependence on God as a direct source of strength was increased," wrote David Kent, whereas "'Organized' religion became less significant." The experience of Vietnam liberated his spirituality from the "traditional" type he had "learned in seminary."[84] Floyd Lacy, a National Baptist Convention chaplain who deployed from December 1968 to

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[80] Jack Moyar, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[81] Donald W. Shea, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files

[82] Lloyd Kincaid, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[83] Larry R. Wedel, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files

[84] David Kent, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

December 1969, reported that "in combat, I quickly sorted out what was real, what was important, what was vital as opposed to some of the seemingly unimportant things we argue about in our private little theological corners." Lacy wrote that he "would not trade [his experience in Vietnam] for anything," but also "would not care to repeat [it] any time soon."[85] Jack Brown, responding to the survey, wrote "I believe that my religion was stripped of the nonessentials. The love of god, the abiding presence of God, the care of God and the promise of abundant and eternal life through His Son Jesus Christ were emphasized over and over again in my own life and in my ministry to my men."[86] The ambivalence about organized, official religion and about the Vietnam War was a persistent characteristic of chaplains' reflections.

Chaplains' basic faith in God's redemptive powers extended beyond the war. Samuel Hopkins, in concluding his book, attributed the potential for lasting peace to humanity's faith in God and in the restorative power of that faith. "Vietnam has changed since we were there, and so have we. The story once lived has not ended, but continues onward. And that is how it should be. Life goes on, and we can too if we place our faith in God and promise to love each other more dearly in the days still allotted to us. Shalom."[87]

When they lost faith in their government, their church, or the American people, chaplains usually retained faith in God. Even with his grim assessment of his senior chaplain and of certain aspects of his ministry, Kiyo Hokazu, who served with an engineering battalion, reflected that "Vietnam was a critical event in my life. Crisis is a turning point. It either strengthens of weakens. For me it strengthened my faith by relying more on God and myself."[88]

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[85] Floyd Lacey, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[86] Jack Brown, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[87] Hopkins, *Chaplain Remembers*, 279.

[88] Kiyo Hokazu, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

Donald Robinson discovered "that in moments of crises, religion—theology especially, breaks down; that is, denominational differences, whether it is form of worship or what actually constitutes the sacrament, goes by the wayside. Catholic, Protestants, and others come together with one common goal, to gain strength and courage from one another and from God—no matter what their beliefs about him may be."[89] William Trotsauch echoed these reflections: "Dealing with the crisis of a hot combat situation, seeing your friends killed or maimed forced me into either abandoning faith or finding consolation in my faith. Fortunately, it was the latter."[90] Indeed, fully eighty-two percent of the chaplains who responded to Ackermann's survey reported that their faith had been strengthened by their Vietnam experiences; only two percent responded that their faith had been weakened in Vietnam.[91]

Chaplains confronted conflicts surrounding morality and war and their own place in the military community, and ultimately answered these questions in specifically religious ways. In his final analysis of war and its lessons, Samuel Hopkins emphasized that his "perspective as a faithful believer in God is that with humility and hopefulness we can endure the vagaries of warfare, without minimizing the horrific waste of lives or savage destruction of property that infernal fighting inflicts upon us. The world is full of conflict and tragedy, yet we must find a way to live confidently and joyfully amidst personal and collective suffering." In his work as a hospital chaplain, Hopkins used his experiences in Vietnam to form a connection with suffering patients. "I frequently assure the afflicted that the day of the Lord will surely come, and that justice will ultimately prevail; a certainty in the next life, if not in this world. . . . I have learned to

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[89] Donald Robinson, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[90] William P. Trotsauch, Survey Response, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

[91] Ackermann, *Always There*, 228. By way of comparison, in a survey of soldiers about the same issues, only 33% of the respondents indicated their faith had been strengthened by their experiences in Vietnam.

celebrate the positive aspects of my tour in Vietnam, while being respectful about the many sacrifices suffered there."[92]

Chaplains' post-war reflections formed the final part of a complex personal conflict resolution process that began in combat, and their own reflections signified their primary role as mediators by taking ideas, roles, and beliefs that could be in tension and reconciling them to one another. These first-person accounts played a significant role in a chaplain's reentry into a civilian religious community and modeled one method of post-war reconciliation that lay outside the traditional Vietnam narrative of defeat and despair. In this way, their memoirs can be read as mediating between popular images and perceptions of the Vietnam War and between the lived experience of it for many American servicemen and women. Eventually, many chaplains assigned religious meaning to their wartime experiences and reaffirmed their faith in God. Certainly there must have been chaplains for whom war did not affirm their faith, but generally, they have not made their accounts public. In this way, it is clear that writing about and reflecting upon the religious meanings of Vietnam was vital for many chaplains' healing process. Writing and reflection themselves became religious rituals that chaplains used to spread their beliefs and to reconcile religion and war, especially for conservative Christian chaplains. Chaplains' conflict resolution process involved personal and communal healing. By sharing their accounts with others, chaplains also provided soldiers and other religious people with alternative ways of interpreting the war.

Though faith—in God, in the United States, and in other humans—had often faltered, in many chaplains' accounts, what was perhaps most striking was the clear and pointed divergence from the traditional Vietnam-era personal narrative. The collective narrative formed

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[92] Hopkins, *Chaplain Remembers*, i.

by chaplains' first-person accounts and responses to the official history survey stood as a counternarrative to the traditional interpretation of Vietnam. Within American collective memory, "Vietnam" was the source of confusion, sorrow, failure, and disillusionment; it is code for all that went, according to the myth, horribly wrong in the 1960s and 1970s. The United States lost its way; it lost credibility on the world stage; it lost its innocence; it lost an air of invincibility. This mythic portrait of Vietnam has been perpetuated in memoirs, histories, art, cinema, and journalistic accounts.[93] Whereas soldiers' and officers' narratives tend toward the hopeless and grim, chaplains' recollections generally end with reports of spiritual renewal and restored, even strengthened, faith. Chaplains, against the traditional narrative of Vietnam, chose to interpret the Vietnam War in specifically religious ways that altered the end to the narrative. Even if the Vietnam War itself was not positive, God could redeem even the horror and trauma of war.

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[93] B[ernard] G. Burkett, *Stolen Valor: How the Vietnam Generation was Robbed of Its Heroes and Its History* (Dallas, TX: Veracity Press, 1998).

CHAPTER SIX

INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES AND REORGANIZAITON AFTER VIETNAM

Institutionally, the chaplaincy faced serious questions about its utility, organization, and mission after the Vietnam War. Liberal and mainline religious groups felt betrayed by what they viewed as chaplains' prophetic failure and openly criticized and questioned the chaplain corps' effectiveness. Some went so far as to accuse them of complicity in the tragedy of Vietnam. Conservative groups continued to promote an evangelical mission to the military. Secular observers launched a civil court case that sought to declare the military chaplaincy unconstitutional on the basis of the First Amendment. Conservative and evangelical Christians gained traction in political circles and in the military. The chaplaincy continued to face shortages of Catholic, Jewish, and liturgical Protestant chaplains, admitted women to the chaplain corps for the first time in history in the 1970s, and worked to reconfigure the way chaplains were assigned to units—all partly in response to the Vietnam experience.

The theological interpretations, conflict resolution, and identity formations that began in Vietnam continued when chaplains returned home, and the chaplain corps, deeply affected by the experience of Vietnam, similarly underwent a process of reflection and reorganization. This chapter examines three trends or episodes that illustrate the ways in which the chaplaincy responded to post-Vietnam concerns. First, in the 1970s, the military chaplaincy had to respond to continuing attacks from liberal and mainline religious groups and from secular critics about the constitutionality and moral advisability of maintaining a military chaplaincy, and the chaplain corps' response, along with the changing demographic of the chaplain corps, demonstrated the degree to which the military chaplaincy had become divorced from its mainline roots. Second,

the chaplaincy undertook a major ecumenical project to produce an armed services worship book, and its inclusion of the song "It Was on a Friday Morning"—an ironic and meditative song about Jesus Christ's crucifixion—created an uproar among conservative Christian groups and secular politicians who deemed the song blasphemous. This challenge exemplified the chaplaincy's attempts to retain independence and its historical commitment to ecumenicalism as well as the religious right's increasing political power. Finally, these cultural crosscurrents— declining liberal support for the chaplaincy and rising conservative power—affected the organizational culture of the chaplaincy, shifting it toward the political and religious right.

Major changes were afoot between the 1970s and 2000s, and this chapter deals with the ways in which the Vietnam experience informed and influenced these discussions. This process of reflection, resolution, and reorganization, both individually and institutionally, left important legacies for the expression of religious practice within the American military and for the role of chaplains. Vietnam, a war which called into question basic moral and political tenants of the American people, revealed the importance of the chaplain's liminal position vis-à-vis his role as a military officer and clergyman, but post-war changes eventually endangered that very positionality as changing demographics, doctrines, and interpretations threatened to undermine the chaplaincy's historical emphasis on ecumenism and pluralism.

Mainline and Liberal Critique

As the Vietnam War wound down and opposition to the war reached a fever pitch, liberal and mainline religious groups continued to call for the civilianization of the military chaplaincy. Furthermore, several books appeared in the late 1960s that set the tone for the debate. John O'Connor's book, *A Chaplain Looks at Vietnam* argued for the inherent morality of the United States project in Vietnam and to support the military efforts there. He used his

position as a military chaplain to establish both military and religious authority for his conclusions. Harvey Cox, on the other hand, a Harvard scholar of religion in the United States, served as the editor for a collection of essays, titled *Military Chaplains: From a Religious Military to a Military Religion*, intent on repudiating the Vietnam-era chaplaincy system. Gordon Zhan, author of a critical examination of the Royal Air Force Chaplaincy during the First World War, also contributed to Cox's collection. Zhan's essay, "Sociological Impressions of the Chaplaincy" examined the potential for role and identity conflict, particularly in combat, but did so from intellectual and philosophical grounds rather than experiential ones. A third book, published by the General Commission on Churches and the Chaplaincy, *Church, State, and Chaplaincy: Essays and Statements on the American Chaplaincy System*, presented a more balanced view of the military chaplaincy, but still raised some fundamental doubts about the chaplain's ability to act as a moral compass during war.[1]

Within the chaplaincy, this concentrated attention was not welcome. When someone recommended that the Army Chief of Chaplains buy a copy of Cox's book, the Chief replied, "Forget it! We've had experts try to sabotage us! It's an effort to salve their own conscience for their own inadequate effectiveness in their ministry and divert attention from the utter bankruptcy of their philosophy."[2] The gulf between civilian critics and chaplains seemed to grow ever wider. A 1970 Chaplain School document stated it quite plainly: "Due to the broad chasm between the chaplain and his civilian counterpart, there exist numerous misconceptions of the chaplain's mission and role. This large gap is due not only to the Vietnam War and anti-

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[1] John O'Connor, *A Chaplain Looks at Vietnam* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1968); Harvey Cox Jr., ed., *Military Chaplains: From a Religious Military to a Military Religion* (New York: American Report Press,1971); Gordon Zahn, *The Military Chaplaincy: A Study of Role Tension in the Royal Air Force*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969); A. Ray Appelquist, *Church, State, and Chaplaincy: Essays and Statements on the American Chaplaincy System* (Washington, D.C.: GCASP, 1969).

[2] Gerhard W. Hyatt to Ray Strowser, quoted in Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 26.

militarism, but also to a lack of knowledge on the part of the civilian clergy as to the true role

and mission of the military chaplain in uniform: ministering to the soldier in the environment in

which he lives."[3] Chaplains and civilian clergy were speaking different languages when it came to

the chaplain's proper role within the military establishment.

Later, two studies were published to refute Cox's collection of essays. Clarence

Abercrombie's *The Military Chaplain*, a social science study of Vietnam chaplains, focused on

identifying and quantifying the existence of role or identity conflict. Based on survey responses

from civilian clergy, chaplains, and military commanders, Abercrombie's study concluded that

the traditional version of role conflict, whereby chaplains forsook their religious identities and

roles in favor of their military ones, was not generally evident in his quantitative analysis.

Chaplains, he determined, fell squarely in the middle of civilian clergy and military commanders

on theological, moral, and pastoral issues and did not display levels of militarism suggested by

chaplain critics. His book was based on quantitative survey data, rather than a qualitative study

of chaplain behaviors and experiences.[4] A second book, Richard Hutcheson's *The Churches and the*

Chaplaincy, offered a direct critique of Cox's collection. Hutcheson had served as a chaplain and

his book unabashedly supported the military chaplaincy system in the United States.[5]

Far more than a simple historiographical blip, this quick profusion of books and studies

about military chaplains after the Vietnam War highlighted the extent to which that war had

called into question very basic assumptions about the military chaplaincy and the rightful place

of religion in relation to the military and American foreign policy. The critique hailed from

secular circles as well: In 1962 and 1973, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) challenged

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[3] "U.S. Army Chaplain School Army '75 Workshop," USACHCS, Vietnam files, 30.

[4] Abercrombie, *Military Chaplain*.

[5] Hutcheson, *Churches and Chaplaincy*.

the constitutionality of the military chaplaincy, and in 1979, two Harvard law students filed a

civil suit requesting "declaratory and injunctive relief" from their tax burden to pay for the

United States "Army's religious support program."[6] Ultimately, the First Amendment provided

fertile ground for critics. At issue was the delicate, and incredibly murky, line between the

"establishment clause" of the First Amendment, which prohibited the government from

establishing a national religion, and the "free exercise clause," which guaranteed Americans the

right to free religious practice.

The ACLU had long been critical of many of the military chaplaincy's policies and

programs. In 1962, Lawrence Speiser, director of the Washington Office, protested to Secretary

of the Army Cyrus Vance that the Character Guidance program amounted to "religious

indoctrination." Vance referred the matter to the Army Chief of Chaplains, who defended the

program's religious orientation by insisting that while it was "theistically oriented" and used

traditional American spiritual and moral principles, the program did not support any specific

religious doctrine or institution.[7] Following the incident, the Army chaplaincy revised the

curriculum even further to prevent future complaints. It prohibited chaplains from using the

Character Guidance classes "to deliver a sermon, to announce religious services, to upbraid

troops for nonparticipation in chapel programs, to show religious films, or to expound on their

own theological views."[8] Later, they removed "One Nation Under God" as a topic to be

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[6] For the ACLU Report, see Randolph N. Jonakait, "The Abuses of the Military Chaplaincy," American Civil Liberties Union Report Adopted 17 February 1973; *Katcoff v. Marsh*, 755 F.2d 223, 225—229 (CA2 1985).

[7] Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 111.

[8] Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *Historical Review, 1 July 1962-30 June 1963*, 74-75.

discussed in basic training.[9] Despite these changes, in 1968 the ACLU revived its protest of the Character Guidance program, arguing again that it violated the First Amendment.

The ACLU's 1973 complaint was broader. The board of directors declared that "abolition of the present program [the chaplaincy] is required by the principle of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment." It allowed that individual's possessed the "right to access to a minister of his denomination, and the ministry's right, derived therefrom, to be present in the military environment," and thus declared "it would continue to be incumbent on the military to provide those minimum support services necessary to insure that the right of mutual access is effectively implemented."[10] Randolph Jonakit, at the time of the report a graduate research fellow at New York University, narrowed the scope of his report to the "abuses" of the United States Army chaplaincy, which he defined as any structural or practical measures that did not further the chaplaincy's constitutionally-allowable goal of furthering religious freedom (free exercise) for members of the United States military. Jonakit concluded that abuses existed "in every major aspect of the chaplaincy's structure."[11] Jonakit's critique was wide-ranging; he reported abuses within the chaplaincy system from the selection and endorsement of chaplains, to chaplains' non-religious functions, to the chaplaincy's commitment to ecumenicalism, to the inclusion of chaplains in the military officers' personnel system of promotion and evaluation.

More worrisome to the Army chaplaincy was the 1979 lawsuit brought by Joel Katcoff and Allen Weider, two third-year Harvard Law students. Whereas the ACLU report necessitated a thorough response from the Army, the lawsuit demanded thousands of hours to fulfill

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[9] Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 112.

[10] Jonakait, "Abuses."

[11] Jonakit, "Abuses," A-B.

discovery requests and to craft solid legal arguments.[12] Whereas Jonakit's report claimed abuse of the free exercise clause, Katcoff and Weider's suit alleged that the chaplaincy violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment. The final complaint included 123 interrogatories and "requests for production of documents," and following liberal discovery procedures of federal courts, the plaintiffs requested information about the Army chaplaincy for a six year period starting in January 1974. The requests included information about the "organization, personnel, duties, policies, and funding of the Army chaplaincy and of all employees, military and civilian, who were involved in any way with its religious program" as well as information on "rank, promotions, performance evaluations, discharges, entrance educational requirements, denominational goals, chapel and other facilities, sacred items and religious literature paid for by the Army, missions, retreats and religious-emphasis weeks, religious education, the unified curriculum, devotional programs, fund-raising, religious libraries, and chaplain career-oriented professional education and training."[13] The plaintiffs claimed that in its current manifestation, the military chaplaincy (specifically in the Army) violated the "three-pronged test" set down in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971) to determine violations of the establishment clause.[14]

The Army and the chaplaincy responded by assembling a three-tiered defense team, composed of personnel from the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, the Department of Justice,

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[12] In 1979, Katcoff filed nine Freedom of Information requests with the Offices of the Chiefs of Chaplains of both the Army and Navy. The Navy requested advance payment of $192.50 for processing the request and supplying answers to the inquiries. Katcoff and Weider declined to pursue the matter further, and instead focused their efforts on the Army which complied with the FIOA requests at no charge. See Drazin and Currey, *For God and Country*, 46-47. While helpful for understanding the legal maneuvering (of both sides) involved in the case, Drazin and Currey's book often acts as an apologia for the military chaplaincy. Drazin was one of the primary chaplains involved in the legal defense of the chaplaincy, and the book lacks the critical analysis that a more detached scholar might bring to a study.

[13] Drazin and Currey, *For God and Country*, 47. Katcoff and Weider's suit was the first to actually reach the courts; five others had been dismissed or decided on their merits. Ibid. 48.

[14] The Supreme Court, between 1963 and 1971, determined that the establishment clause was violated when the government makes a law (1) whose purpose is to advance religion, or (2) whose primary effect is to advance religion, or (3) when there is excessive entanglement between government and religion. Collectively, this three-pronged test became known as the Lemon test. *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 89, 310 F.Supp. (1971).

and the Army's Judge Advocate General. The government's first official move was to reply to the complaint with three technical arguments that were "unrelated to the substance of the chaplaincy program." First, the chaplaincy's attorneys argued that the "plaintiffs lacked standing and the issues constituted political questions," second, they argued that the "complaint failed to state a claim upon which relief could be granted" and third, that "the claims were barred for want of sovereign immunity." They hoped the courts would resolve the case without having to wrangle over substantive issues regarding the structure and practice of the chaplaincy. Following the technical arguments, the government moved for a Judgment on the Pleadings or a Dismissal. The government attorneys argued that the *Lemon* test was particularly ill-suited to determine First Amendment violations in this case because military life differed fundamentally from civilian society.[15]

The battle lines seemed clear: Katcoff and Weider relied on modern tests of church-state entanglement and the clear fact that the government (and therefore taxpayers) were supporting religious programs within the military, and the chaplaincy and its lawyers defended the military chaplaincy based on historical precedent and military necessity.

Judge Jacob Mishler heard arguments in the case in March 1980, and in August denied the Army's motion for dismissal. He ruled that the plaintiffs did have standing as federal taxpayers, that the court had the authority to review the claim and that "a ruling on the constitutionality of the Army chaplaincy program could not be handed down without a full factual record describing the chaplaincy and its programs."[16] Thus, both sides were sent back to formulate substantive arguments to make their cases. Because they felt it would open all chaplaincy programs up to continuing court inspection and regulation, the Army, over the

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[15] Drazin and Currey, *God and Country*, 53-54, 56.

[16] Ibid., 65.

objection of the Department of Justice, sought to appeal Mishler's decision on the technical

merits of the case. Eventually, however, Army lawyers were dissuaded from this position and

decided not to file the appeal.[17] Mishler was also not inclined to decide the case through a

motion for summary judgment because he felt the case merited testimony on chaplains' activities

and policies.[18] Then, unexpectedly, the chief judge of the eastern district of New York removed

Mishler from the case in November 1981, replacing him with Joseph M. McLaughlin.

McLaughlin, anxious to expedite the suit, set a March 1982 date for a hearing.

During the course of discovery, chaplains and lawyers involved in the case uncovered

several instances of the misuse of appropriated (i.e. government) funds by chaplains; some had

used such money to purchase library materials and sacred items (such as candlesticks and

Bibles). Israel Drazin, a chaplain and lawyer on the case, concluded that the "misuse resulted

from lack of sensitivity to the problems, ignorance of the law, overzealousness for religion, and

the generally misguided and improvident view that whatever a chaplain considered to be good

and righteous and needed must be an acceptable item of purchase." These problems threatened

to undermine the Army's argument about the chaplaincy and bolster the plaintiff's claims of

"excessive entanglement" between the government and religion. Around the same time, *Army

Times* reported that the Air Force had issued a directive prohibiting its chaplains from

performing religious services, including baptisms and weddings, for military retirees. The story

cited constitutional concerns that prohibited "a state-sponsored religious activity." This action,

albeit by another branch of the armed services, threatened to undermine the Army's stance on

the constitutionality of the chaplaincy as they had laid out in response to Katcoff and Weider. In

reality, the *Army Times* story was misleading; the directive was a long-standing one that

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[17] Ibid., 68-73.

[18] Ibid., 126.

concerned dependents of military personnel, but the potential for damage to the *Katcoff* suit was clear.[19]

Legal wrangling, both over technical matters and substantive ones continued for nearly three years. US Attorneys working on the case preferred to argue technical matters of standing, while the chaplains wished to make substantive arguments about the unique nature of the military chaplaincy as compared both to other clergy and to other government employees. Eventually, both types of arguments were included in the government's motions.[20] McLaughlin heard oral arguments in October 1982 and rendered his decision in February 1984. The judge considered the government's standing arguments, and concluded the plaintiffs did have standing before the court.[21] He was generally not persuaded by the government's reliance on historical precedent for justifying the chaplaincy. In the end, however, McLaughlin concluded that Congress had undertaken to legislate and regulate the chaplaincy and that congressional decisions about the chaplaincy should be given great deference by the court. He wrote, "the balance struck by Congress cannot be rejected by this Court in favor of the untested possibility that a civilian chaplaincy might also meet the religious needs of the military community," and concluded that the plaintiffs' "remedy, if there be any, lies with Congress."[22]

Katcoff and Weider filed an appeal on 11 June 1984, reiterating their arguments that the Army chaplaincy violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment and claiming that McLaughlin's dismissal of the three-pronged *Lemon* test to judge the chaplaincy was incorrect.[23] After another round of written arguments, the Second Circuit Court handed down its decision

[19] Ibid., 134-135.

[20] Ibid., 146-147.

[21] Ibid., 176-177.

[22] Decision Text, *Katcoff v. Marsh,* quoted in Ibid., 180.

[23] Drazin and Currey, *For God and Country*, 184.

on 22 January 1985. The judges determined the chaplaincy was constitutional, but remanded the case to the district court in order to determine whether certain chaplaincy programs exceeded "permissible constitutional limits."[24] The government decided to seek summary judgment on the issues left undecided by the Circuit Court. Then, in 1986, Katcoff and Weider contacted the United States Attorney's office and offered to drop the case in return for not having to pay the government's expenses for the appeal.[25] The U.S. Attorneys and Army lawyers were inclined to agree to the settlement, while the chaplains were less sure; they felt that dropping the case at this stage left important questions unresolved and left them open to future litigation. Eventually, the arguments for dismissal won out; there were few benefits to be gained by further litigation, and the chaplaincy had much to lose.[26]

The Katcoff litigation prompted the chaplaincy to reconsider many of its programs, policies, and goals. Though the legal issues were only marginally settled, the chaplaincy did appear to be on firm constitutional footing. Many viewed its mission, however, as substantially limited by the court case. The chaplaincy existed, in a legal sense, only to allow military personnel their rights to the free exercise of religion. The chaplaincy was not intended to, and should not be used to, promote religion, morality, or morale.

The years following Vietnam constituted critical ones for the chaplaincy as it responded to a host of critics from mainline and liberal religious and secular groups as well as civilian litigation on the issue of constitutionality. These challenges prompted chaplains to take a defensive stand against their critics rather than encouraging open dialogue about the chaplaincy's role and challenges within the modern military.

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[24] Ibid., 197.

[25] They did, however, request that the case be "dismissed without prejudice," which would retain their right to refile the suit in the future.

[26] Drazin and Currey, *For God and Country*, 203.

Conservatives Gain Influence

The rise of the "Religious Right" in the United States has been well-documented and analyzed by scholars.[27] As the number of Conservative and evangelical Christians in the United States rose, so too did their attachment to conservative political groups in the United States. One salient feature of the movement was its insistence that liberalism within the United States threatened the Christian foundations of the United States and that Christianity, or at least their brand of it, was under attack by the prophets of religious "Pluralism" and "Tolerance."[28] Certainly the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a profusion of new religious movements, splinter groups, and non-Christian religious influences. Within the chaplaincy alone, the number of officially recognized religious endorsing agencies had grown from just ten in World War II to well over 200 by 2000.

Parachurch organizations, such as the Full Gospel Men's Business Fellowship International, Campus Crusade for Christ, the Navigators, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes, intensified their efforts to minister to military personnel. These groups, clearly evangelical in their outlook and mission, met varying levels of resistance and support from chaplains. Some "theologically liberal" chaplains felt threatened by such organizations for fear that "too much

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[27] A large literature has addressed the issue of conservative Christians' participation in politics and public issues. The best are William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996); Loveland, *American Evangelicals*; Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Martin E. Marty, ed., *Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism: Modern American Protestantism and Its World* (Munich, Germany: K.G. Saur, 1993); Richard Jensen, "The Culture Wars, 1965-1995: A Historian's Map," *Journal of Social History* 29 (1995): 17-37; Randall Collins, "Liberals and Conservatives, Religious and Political: A Conjuncture of Modern History," *Sociology of Religion* 54, no. 2 (1993): 127-146.

[28] This was not a new characteristic of late twentieth century Evangelicals. Christian Smith, argued that at least since the last third of the nineteenth century, one can "readily detect in its elite discourse a sense of crisis, conflict, or threat." Smith points to Josiah Strong's 1885 book *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Present Crisis*, Walter Clarke's *New Era* magazine article, "Christians, Save the Christian Sabbath," Harold Ockenga's 1942 address to the National Conference for United Action Among Evangelicals," and Carl Henry's 1986 book *Christian Countermoves in a Decadent Culture* as evidence of this phenomenon. Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 121-123.

evangelistic activity and involvement by outsiders may raise church-state questions."[29] At the

Marine base in Camp Pendelton, California, senior chaplains even banned such parachurch

organizations altogether.[30] But for the most part, chaplains seemed to accept these

organizations—their money, resources, and people—as mutually reinforcing aspects of ministry

to military personnel, and chaplain leadership frequently encouraged cooperation with several of

these groups.[31]

In 1974, the Army, Navy, and Air Force undertook to compile a new worship book for

use in the Armed services. The new hymnal represented years of work on behalf of the chaplain

corps from all three military services as well as the input from civilian leaders. The book

eliminated denominational and faith-group distinctions for the hymns, and included music from

a variety of religious traditions and musical styles.[32] The song "It Was on a Friday Morning," was

included as one of several folk songs in the new volume. Sydney Carter, the British composer of

songs such as "Lord of the Dance," wrote the song as an ironic meditation on the crucifixion of

Christ. The song's inclusion created a near-immediate uproar from conservative Christians and

secular politicians who relied on their support. The publication of the *Book of Worship* and the

subsequent furor over the song illuminated quite clearly two competing and very divergent

pressures on the post-Vietnam chaplaincy. On one hand, the book represented a deepening

commitment to ecumenism, pluralism, and tolerance for religious and cultural diversity. On the

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[29] Edward E. Plowman, "Bibles in the Barracks: God and the Military," *Christianity Today* (March 31, 1972), 32, quoted in Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 174.

[30] Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 174.

[31] Richard Hutcheson, *Churches and the Chaplaincy*, 94; Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 175.

[32] John E. Groh, *Air Force Chaplains, 1971-1980*, Vol. V, Air Force Chaplains, Office of the Chief of Air Force Chaplains, (Washington, D.C., 1986), 443-446; For discussion of the hymnal's development and analysis of the Protestant selections see Gary W. Carr, "The Development of the Book of Worship for United States Forces," (MDiv thesis, Duke University Divinity School, 1996).

other hand, such significant protest over the simple inclusion of a song in a hymnal highlighted the extent of conservative religious and political reach.

These competing values came to a head over the inclusion of Carter's song. Carter himself insisted the song was not a "hymn" in the traditional sense and that context mattered a great deal with such a text—it could be pious or blasphemous depending on the context of its use and the attitude of those singing it.[33] Carter's song was narrated by the thief crucified next to Jesus Christ, according to Christian scriptures. The thief narrated his experience and asks Jesus a series of questions, intent on discovering why God would allow an innocent man to die and ultimately blaming God for the sins of the world. The thief offered a litany of people and spirits one might blame for the crucifixion of the "carpenter, a-hanging on the tree" and for the depravity of humanity: Pilate, the Jews, the Devil, Adam, Eve, the crowd that freed Barabas— none of them would have existed in the absence of God's plan and creation. The thief blamed the carpenter's God "up in Heaven" who "doesn't do a thing" to stop the execution. The most damning lines appeared at the end of the song when the thief exclaims:

> To hell with Jehovah
> To the carpenter I said
> I wish that a carpenter had made the world instead
> Goodbye and good luck to you
> Our ways will soon divide
> Remember me tomorrow
> The man you hung beside
> It's God they ought to crucify instead of you and me
> I said to the carpenter, a-hanging on the tree.

Furor erupted, probably in no small part due to national elections, over the "blasphemy" of the song. Many conservative Christians expressed outrage at the song, which declared "To hell with Jehovah" and suggested that God should be crucified for the sins of the fallen world. In 1975, South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond, a retired Major General in the Army

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[33] Sydney Carter, "Context," *Modern Liturgy* 7 (March/April 1980): 8-9.

Reserves, complained to Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger. In 1976, nearly fifty Members of Congress corresponded with the Department of Defense and/or one of the chaplain services on the issue. Almost universally, they called for the song to be removed from the hymnal, by razor blade if necessary.[34]

In the face of the controversy, chaplains insisted that any order for removal or replacement come from the "theological" or "church" side of the chaplaincy, rather than from the "military" or "governmental" side. For most of them, at issue was a fundamentally theological question, which made it an inappropriate decision for the Department of Defense or other official branch of the United States military to make. According to the chaplain services, critics could cite not a single instance of a church organization requesting or demanding the song's removal. Furthermore, they argued, removing "hymns from the manuscript because they are objectionable to one or another of the involved religious denominations" would leave the military with a "thin hymnal indeed!"[35] One chaplain made the argument even more explicit: "If we started objecting to a hymn because we don't like the theological content, then some of the more conservative Protestants could go after the ones about the "bleeding heart" and "the Mother of God," and the Jews can certainly take off on the Trinitarian ones, and then many can take off on the Mormon hymns and the Christian Science hymns and where do you stop?"[36] Chaplains tended to approach the inclusion of the song pragmatically and based on the chaplaincy's long-standing commitment to ecumenical cooperation.

Chaplains did not shy away from the controversy. When the hymnal was released, the Air Force Chaplain Board issued an introductory pamphlet, *Hello, Hymnal*, with commentary by

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[34] Groh, *Air Force Chaplains*, 448.

[35] Hymnal Task Force, quoted in Ibid., 447.

[36] Groome quoted in Ibid., 450.

Chaplain James Chapman about the inclusion of Carter's song. He wrote, "Some have said that it is not even a hymn. Other critics have denounced it as blasphemous." Then Chapman offered three justifications for the song's inclusion. First, he appealed to the chaplain's duty to minister to all people and claimed that "the questions asked by the thief are the ones many of our people still ask when confronted with the Crucifixion," and argued that the song gave chaplains "a vehicle to deal with these mysteries." A second justification offered a theological interpretation of the song in which "the thief . . . provides the answer, inadvertently," when he states "'It's God they ought to crucify instead of you and me,' and he stumbles on to the glorious solution. God is being crucified instead of you and me! That is the Gospel!" Finally, Chapman argued from a devotional basis, "This hymn *can not* be simply sung and dropped," he wrote, "you've got to deal with it. We recommend you use it as a basis for a Good Friday meditation. You'll be forever grateful to Sydney Carter."[37]

Even when chaplains admitted they should have foreseen the consequences of the song's inclusion, they defended the integrity of the process and of the final product. Air Force Chief of Chaplains Henry J. Meade said, "It was probably poor judgment that inserted that hymn, but it would be bad judgment to excise it."[38] Eventually, with prompting from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the eventual concurrence of the Chiefs of Chaplains, it was decided to eliminate the song from future printings of the *Book of Worship*.[39] Conservative Christians, calling upon what historian Anne Loveland termed the "Sectarian Ideal," gathered political and public support to demand changing an official, but internal, publication of the United States military. Conservative influence in the military continued to grow throughout the 1970s and 1980s and

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[37] James W. Chapman, *Hello, Hymnal*, USAF Chaplain Board, quoted in Ibid., 451.

[38] Meade quoted in Ibid., 451.

[39] Groh, *Air Force Chaplains,* 449-450.

well into the 2000s, even as the institutional chaplaincy continued to insist on ecumenical cooperation and expanding pluralism in the same period.

Organizational Restructuring and Changing the Chaplaincy's Mission

Even before the war in Vietnam ended, the U.S. Army Chaplain School held a workshop in anticipation of its eventual end, focusing on re-visioning what the Army chaplaincy might face in 1975 and after. The workshop, titled "Army '75: The Chaplain and the Soldier in the Army of 1975," was to "establish conclusions and guidelines for the chaplain in planning and executing a local post religious program for 1975 period and beyond." The concerns and conclusions in the workshop materials demonstrated the mindset of the chaplain corps in the waning years of the Vietnam War: Their discussions assumed a garrison model, rather than a combat model, focused as much on ministry to military families as anything else. Chaplains also recognized that their authority as religious leaders might decline as fewer Americans turned to organized religious practice to fulfill spiritual needs and provide moral guidance. The program handouts asserted that "through 1975 we will see a continuing loss of moral authority by the churches as institutions because of the lack of credibility and apparent hypocrisy."[40] Thus, Chaplain School instructors suggested that chaplains "of the future will be more active in the community life of the military post. He will be less of a religious expert and more the participator in aspects of community life which offer meaning and service. His authority will depend on his own demonstrated value in the interpretive role, not on his ordained authority."[41]

However, many of the changes that would confront the US military and the chaplaincy after Vietnam were unexpected, and sometimes even contrary to the conclusions set forth by the

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[40] Army '75 Workshop, 34.

[41] Appendix D, "Conclusions: The Chaplain, The Career Soldier, and His Family," in Army '75 Workshop, 9.

chaplains. Among other things, the workshop materials assumed that "the Army of 1975 will not be an all-volunteer army but will be organized and structured very much as it is today," and concluded that "No drastic changes will take place in the organization and structure of the US Army." Furthermore, "there is no foreseen change in the mission of the chaplain. But changes will occur in the perspectives and ways and means to make the ministry more relevant." Another section concluded: "The US Army will continue at a level of between 850,000-1,000,000 men in the 70's. To maintain this force level a mixed volunteer/draft system will continue to function."[42]

Even though the demographic assumptions proved untenable, the chaplain participants recognized changed imperatives for spiritual guidance and worship styles. Thus, it established some guidelines for ministry, including the "Need for new forms of worship: Modern language liturgies, simpler liturgical forms, folk and modern music, etc." These sentiments echoed the process of liturgical creativity that chaplains and military personnel engaged in during the Vietnam war. They also recognized the need for more "dialogue in spiritual matters between the chaplain and the people he serves," and increased skills for chaplains in the area of pastoral counseling, especially in the wake of the ongoing trauma of the Vietnam War. They predicted that the legacy of Vietnam would mean that "concepts surrounding drugs and sex will be matters of commonplace concern," which reflected a societal tendency to take a "free and frank attitude" towards them, prompting "old taboos" to be "shunted aside in an attempt to 'tell it like it is.'"[43]

Perhaps most importantly, the conference participants—career Army chaplains who would continue to shape post-Vietnam chaplain ministry—concluded that "the chaplain will

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[42] Army '75 Workshop, 11.

[43] Army '75 Workshop, 1-3.

often have to serve as mediator between the military establishment and the young soldier. The chaplain will have to become more alert to the sociological and political trends of the times." Chaplains would be challenged to assert their significance due to "smaller military budgets" and ever more "severe questioning by the young soldier of the role of religion, clergy (chaplain) and church (chapel) in society." The chaplain would be increasingly involved in "domestic Peace Corps type projects" and "play an increasingly important role in community relations and liaison."[44] And while some of the chaplains' conclusions and predictions clearly did not come to pass, many chaplains demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the chaplaincy's changing role within the US military, the changing religious atmosphere within the United States, and the legacy of the Vietnam War.

One chaplain attending the advanced course at the Air Force Chaplain School in 1976 wrote that the "single most important development in the Air Force chaplaincy from 1970-1975" was the "withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Vietnam and the fall of South Vietnam." He reasoned that "foreign policy from 1965-1975 was strong on survival of democracy in South Vietnam," but "great amounts of U.S. resources (men, money and materiel) were expended in South Vietnam and brought back a 'zero' return." He continued by arguing that "national involvement in South Vietnam divided our country (war protest, Kent State, refusal to pay taxes) and the problem of amnesty still faces us and divides us," which made the nation "doubt and question our institutions (governmental and military) and leadership." In his estimation, all of these factors led the United States "to a limited position of 'isolation' in foreign policy."[45] All in all, chaplains recognized what they believed to be a damaged and weakened civic faith, which

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[44] Army '75 Workshop, 13.

[45] Anonymous Air Force Chaplain, quoted in Groh, *Air Force Chaplains*, 25.

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had been exacerbated by the declining membership within American mainline and liberal faith communities.

As chaplains returned to the United States, the legacies of Vietnam for stateside ministry were apparent. Air Force chaplain historian John Groh wrote that American involvement in Southeast Asia deeply affected American military chapel installations due to continued involvement with "Prisoner of War (POW) and personnel Missing in Action (MIA); Operation Homecoming and the 'other' homecoming; operations Babylift and Newlife; [and] . . . the resettlement of Indochinese refugees."[46] In addition to direct legacies of Vietnam, the military chaplaincy also dealt with the move to an all-volunteer force, in contrast to earlier Army plans for a continued draft, which meant an older soldiery with more dependents. This demographic change moved the chaplaincy to emphasize "family life" at the same time that they dealt with ongoing problems of alcohol and drug use and contentious race relations. In response to high PTSD rates and injury, more chaplains completed Clinical Pastoral Education training, which prepared them to work in hospital settings with trauma victims and their families. Additionally, chaplains continued to play an important, though changing role in Character Guidance training, which underwent a substantive revision and was renamed Human Self Development.[47]

In the immediate post-Vietnam years, these sorts of changes, based primarily in pastoral care, counseling, and ministry areas, dominated chaplains' thinking. Army Director of Combat Developments Gordon Schweitzer reiterated the extent to which chaplains reconceptualized their role after Vietnam, most strikingly by moving away from the focus on combat and front-line chaplaincy that dominated the war years. "Chaplains were pastors, counselors, and preachers. Clinical pastoral education and the emphasis on parish development contributed to

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[46] Groh, *Air Force Chaplains*, 25.

[47] Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 159.

the organization and delivery of religious support for the soldier and family members on installations." Chaplain Activity Specialists (Chaplain Assistants before 1977), were trained primarily in building maintenance and office administration, and by 1983, fewer than 50% of Active Duty chaplains had combat experience.[48]

As the chaplaincy redefined its role, it also underwent organizational and doctrinal changes that affected how it carried out its mission.[49] The post-Vietnam drop in manpower resulted in a significantly older chaplain corps than had served in Vietnam. In the Air Force, nearly 50% of all chaplains were over forty-six years old, compared to just over 34% in 1971. Across the board, the numbers of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish chaplains decreased, and only the number of Eastern Orthodox chaplains rose.[50] At the same time, the chaplain corps dropped its system of denomination-based quotas for filling chaplain slots. The reasons for this change were numerous: the number of waivers and exception allowed during the Vietnam War had already weakened the quota system; some denominations were consistently providing more qualified chaplains while others rarely met their goal; and the number of denominations contributing to the chaplaincy proliferated at a rapid rate.

In responding to this shortage, to changes in force structure, and to developments within American religious communities, the Armed Services also explored commissioning women as chaplains within the integrated All Volunteer Force (AVF) structure. Several national denominational churches had ordained women into full-time ministry and wished to endorse them as chaplains, and the military restructured itself to integrate WAC, WAF, and WAVE units into previously all-male units. Shortages within the chaplain corps led to aggressive recruiting

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[48] Gordon Schweitzer, quoted in Ibid*.,* 159.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Groh, *Air Force Chaplains*, 290.

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drives in seminaries, and some of these advertisements—like others of the early AVF era—appealed to women. Bonnie Koppell, a Jewish Army chaplain, saw such a poster in 1976, when she was a student at Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. When the Orthodox contingent of the Jewish Welfare Board did not veto her application, Koppell received endorsement in 1977. She attended Chaplain School at Fort Hamilton in 1979, where she was one of three women in a class of 108; Koppell was the first Jewish woman to attend the Army Chaplain School.[51]

The issue of accepting women as chaplains was not new, however. During the Civil War, Ella Gibson Hobart was elected chaplain by the First Wisconsin Regiment of Heavy Artillery, but her official appointment was denied by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.[52] Then, with the creation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (later, Women's Army Corps) in 1942, some female ministers challenged the all-male limits on chaplains. However, few women service members objected to male chaplains—nationally, clergy were almost all men—so the request was dropped. Women continued to serve alongside chaplains as Directors of Religious Education, a post which was accessible to female civilian leaders.[53]

In the late 1960s and 1970s, women had gained prominence as ordained ministers in several national denominations. Women gained access to ordination in 1956 in the Methodist Church of America and in the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA). By the 1970s, women in the Episcopal Church, the Lutheran Church of America, Reform Jewish congregations, and a number of other smaller denominations were being ordained. According to the 1970 census,

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[51] Bonnie Koppell, "Female Rabbis in the Military: A View from the Trenches," *Army Chaplaincy* (Winter-Spring 2000), http://www.usachcs.army.mil/TACarchive/ACwinspr00/koppell.htm, accessed 5 March 2008.

[52] Brinsfield, *Faith in the Fight,* 36-40.

[53] "World War II and Its Aftermath," in "A Brief History of the United States Army Chaplain Corps," http://www.usachcs.army.mil/history/brief/chapter_6.htm, accessed 3 March 2008.

three percent of all American clergy were women.[54] As might be expected, women faced challenges in this new environment. Carolyn Wiggins, a Navy Chaplain, wrote in the Navy Chaplains' professional journal in 1987—fully thirteen years after the first women were commissioned chaplains—"We [female chaplains] leave an accepting seminary to enter a hostile chaplaincy working with male chaplains who have often never worked with clergywomen and have difficulty accepting us as professional colleagues. They often show disdain for our presence in the Navy Chaplain Corps."[55] Female navy chaplains identified significant cultural barriers that challenged their work, including reticence of commanders accepting female chaplains; difficulty socializing in a male-dominated chaplain system; difficulty in obtaining desirable assignments, such as aboard s aircraft carriers, which would facilitate promotion and professional advancement; and trouble finding role models and mentors among women who had deployed with the Navy.

Chaplain leaders also examined their organizational structure for clues as to the causes of problems in Vietnam. The concept of area coverage meant that brigades were the lowest level of assignments for chaplains—a brigade chaplain and three or four assistants had full responsibility to provide religious support for all units assigned and attached in addition to any other units that might be in the brigade's Area of Operations. In theory, this provided for coverage at the battalion and company level, but in practice, it meant that chaplains could rarely form close connections with the units they served. It also strained the chaplain's relationship to commanders. Area coverage later came under serious scrutiny by chaplains at the Army War College who wrote that "this doctrinal and manning concept presented difficulties for

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[54] Mark Chaves, "The Symbolic Significance of Women's Ordination," *The Journal of Religion* 77 (January 1997): 87. See also Mark Chaves, "Ordaining Women: The Diffusion of an Organizational Innovation," *The American Journal of Sociology* 101 (January 1996): 840-873.

[55] Carolyn C. Wiggins, "Personal Reflections on Women in Naval Chaplaincy," *The Navy Chaplain* 1 (Winter 1987), 4.

commanders and chaplains" because "the chaplain did not work directly for the battalion commander, was not part of the unit, and only showed up in the unit area to conduct services, perform counseling or conduct classes."[56] On duty rosters, only the brigade chaplain was listed as "staff chaplain," so few chaplains had direct access to commanders within the parameters of the chain of command and the guidelines set out in the chaplain's field manual about the chaplain's staff responsibilities.[57]

In 1978, in order to clarify command-chaplain relationships and to insert chaplains more directly into the life and workings of battalion-sized units, the Army Chaplain Corps instituted the "Forward Thrust" doctrine, based on the new Army operations manual FM 100-5 and the emerging AirLand Battle Doctrine. Army Chief of Chaplains Orris Kelly, who had served in Vietnam, and Donn Starry, the Commander of Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), responsible for recruiting, training, and educating the Army's soldiers, worked to assign chaplains as far forward as possible in order to provide coverage to company-sized units.[58] In 1984, the Army took the concept even further by instituting Unit Ministry Teams (UMT) as the primary source of religious support for Army units. The UMT consisted of a single chaplain and a chaplain assistant, who would be assigned to a single battalion or similarly-sized outfit. They would provide "direct religious support" to their units of assignment and "general religious support" to attached units during peacetime, field training, and in wartime operations. Rather

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[56] Herman Keizer, Jr. (COL), Kenneth A. Seifried (COL), David L. Howard (LTC), and Joseph E. Miller (LTC), "An Overview of the Role of the Unit Ministry Team (UMT) in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm with a Critical Evaluation of Religious Support Activities and Technical Doctrine and Command Team Assessment of UMT Actions, Capabilities and Effectiveness" AWC Student Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, 1992, USMHI AWC Student Papers 1991/1992 – Jones to Roach, filed under Keizer, p. 14.

[57] USARV Chaplain Duty Rosters, USACHCS, CD-ROM

[58] Keizer, "Overview UMT," 15.

than chaplains being assigned to deployed units as the need arose, chaplains would remain with specific units in both stateside and overseas posts whenever possible.[59]

The Navy also restructured its chaplain corps in the 1970s in response to post-Vietnam staffing and organizational concerns. Reflecting on the period, one Navy chaplain wrote in 2005 that immediately after Vietnam "force shaping, or downsizing became a reality of life for all branches of the service. Throughout the 70s the naval services cut back on billets and ships, and the Chaplain Corps . . . explored new ministry delivery models."[60] The Chief of Naval Operations authorized the establishment of "Fleet Religious Support Activities" (FRSA), which "was created to meet the emergent needs" of the Navy. For the first time, modern chaplains would be "assigned to an administrative command position" and "ordered into an FRSA UIC and were concurrently assigned to operational platforms when ordered to do so by their FRSA chaplain-commander."[61] The FRSA emphasized a team approach to ministry, the flexible assignment of chaplains, coordination between ship-based and shore-based ministries, and the development of a new lay-leader program. The FRSA program was discontinued in the late 1970s and replaced with a new "alternative ministry delivery platform," the Dependents Assistance Board (DAB). The DAB focused on providing a central location for chaplain support of deployed commanders and their families.[62]

These structural changes reflected the chaplaincy's concern with ministry to military families and to adjusting to new strategic and tactical military paradigms. Additionally, the

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[59] Keizer, "Overview UMT," 15

[60] "White Letter #7, Sea Warrior Ministry Council: Operational Ministry Center/Regional Ministry Center," U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps, 1, www.chaplain.navy.mil, accessed 22 October 2006.

[61] Stephen O. Wallace, "The Fleet Religious Support Activity," U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps (Washington DC: n.p., 1985); "White Letter #7.

[62] Ibid.

chaplaincy became more dedicated to "institutional ministry" in the years following Vietnam.[63]

Chaplains were involved in redesigning character education programs and in increasing commanders' and chaplains' knowledge about minority religious groups. In the 1980s, Chaplain Matthew Zimmerman was tasked to create "a handbook for commanders on less familiar religions, FM-16-1," which he deemed a "very interesting project." He recalled that "back in those days we had a lot of new sects, cults, etcetera that were coming into existence every day and they were making themselves felt on installations. Commanders didn't know what to do. Somebody would show up and ask for permission to wear a simulation of a sword, and the commander wouldn't know if it was a legitimate request or a con job. It just went on and on." In response, the chaplain corps set out to address the issue by attempting to authenticate such requests with the headquarters or leaders of such denominations. Then, the chaplain and commander could know what the "parameters were for any particular sect, cult, or any denomination that came up."[64] The creation of the new handbook exemplified chaplains' institutional responsibilities and justified, at least in part, the military's insistence that chaplains have broad religious and theological training in order to provide support to personnel of any faith.

The chaplaincy's focus on institutional ministry and response to increasing calls for pluralism and secularism were also evident in the evolution of the Navy Chaplain Corps official seal between 1962 and 2001. In 1962, the Naval Chaplain Corps seal included the words "Chaplain Corps" (at the top) and "U.S. Navy" at the bottom. The emblem itself was a compass rose with an anchor in the middle, with a cross on the viewer's left and the Tablets of Moses, surmounted by the Star of David, on the right. The seal thus reflected the martial and religious

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[63] Loveland, "Prophetic Ministry."

[64] Matthew Zimmerman, Oral History, 55-56, USACHCS, Vietnam Files.

traditions of naval chaplain service. In 1981, Hebrew numerals replaced Roman numerals on the tablets—a sign of increasing cultural sensitivity to minority religious groups. And in 1996, the seal gained a Muslim Crescent, for the first time expanding religious imagery to include a non Judeo-Christian faith group. By 2001, however, all religious imagery had been removed from the chaplain corps' seal: Instead "*Vocati ad Servitium*" (Called to Serve) appeared on a scroll. An eagle, holding an anchor and the compass, was "stationed as sentinel to guard the free exercise of religion for Sea Services personnel. The open book . . . suggests the doctrines, scriptures and guiding principles of religious tradition and wisdom."[65] The evolution of the Navy Chaplain Corps seal suggested an institutional move toward pluralism and ecumenicalism.

The official move toward more pluralistic guidelines and official positions was prompted, at least in part, by the growing diversity of military personnel. Yet the chaplain corps grew ever more theologically and politically conservative in the post-Vietnam years. A segment on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, aired on 27 July 2005, examined growing tensions within the military chaplain corps. Correspondent Jeff Brady reported that nearly 60% of the military's chaplains were "evangelical" (though he did not attempt to define the term more precisely), even though only 40% of military personnel identified as "evangelical."[66] Other sources also cited the twin trends of growing religious diversity among military personnel and ever-more-evangelical chaplain corps. A *New York Times* story cited Air Force statistics that showed there were about "3,500 [enlisted personnel] who say they are either Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, pagans, druids or shamans. There are 1,600 who say they are atheists and about 50,000

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[65] "Evolution of the Navy Chaplain Corps Seal," http://www.chaplain.navy.mil, accessed 24 October 2006.

[66] In reality, chaplains of many faith groups are "overrepresented" according to percentage because of the number of non-chaplain personnel who claim "no preference" as their religious affiliation.

who say they have no religious preference, out of a total of 280,000."[67] The number of evangelical chaplains in the military and their positions therein did not always conform the image of the military discriminating against evangelical chaplains. Brady surmised that in the current religious climate, Catholic, Presbyterian, or other chaplains were simply "hard to find," and Air Force Chief of Chaplains, Charles Baldwin—himself a Baptist—concurred. He said, "In the Air Force, we're not saying let's go hire evangelicals today. We're looking at those who have presented their credentials and who want to serve the men and women in the Air Force." Those in Brady's report concluded that many of these difficulties in recruitment and retention stemmed from mainline and liberal opposition to the Vietnam War, which had long-lingering effects on those denominations' willingness to send new chaplains to the military.[68] Futhermore, clergy who were sympathetic to mainline and liberal religious groups' anti-war tendencies were unlikely to volunteer for chaplain service.

As the chaplain services made more and more concerted efforts to ensure pluralism and ecumenical cooperation, chaplains, especially conservative Christian ones, pushed back, bringing several lawsuits against the military services and the Department of Defense and by gaining support from prominent conservative Christian groups. Though the controversies emerged over a variety of issues, they all reflected the growing vocal conservatism of many chaplains within the military and highlighted the extent to which chaplains came into conflict with long-standing historical traditions of ecumenicalism and cooperation that had marked the American chaplaincy since its inception. Chaplains became champions for sectarian and denominational causes and

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[67] Laurie Goodstein, "Evangelicals Are A Growing Force In The Military Chaplain Corps," *New York Times*, 12 July 2005; also see Alan Cooperman, "Military Wrestles With Disharmony Among Chaplains," *Washington Post*, 30 August 2005; *Christian Science Monitor*, "By the Numbers: The US Military Chaplaincy," http://www. csmonitor.com/specials/chaplains, accessed 2 March 2008.

[68] Jeff Brady, "Evangelical Chaplains Test Bounds of Faith in Military," National Public Radio, All Things Considered, 27 July 2005.

individual free exercise rights as opposed to furthering their roles as cultural mediators between

diverse groups of people. At the same time, Congress emphasized the free-exercise rights of

non-Christian military personnel with a 1987 amendment to the military's uniform regulations,

indicating a broader cultural shift.[69] To be sure, not all of the lawsuits and controversies

stemmed, even indirectly, from chaplains' experiences in Vietnam, but the changed demography

of the chaplain corps, coupled with a changing American religious landscape, thrust the debates

into the public eye.

In 1996, the Department of Defense faced a lawsuit in response to Air Force, Army, and

Navy directives that barred chaplains from participating in the Catholic Church's "Project Life

Postcard Campaign," which asked religious adherents to send postcards to members of

Congress encouraging them to override President William Clinton's veto of a partial-birth

abortion ban.[70] The lawsuit alleged that the directive unfairly infringed on chaplains' right to the

free exercise of religion and the right to political participation. The military chaplaincies sought

to reinforce the wall of separation between church and state by ensuring its chaplains could not

be construed as speaking on behalf of the military, which would violate anti-lobbying laws that

prohibited active-duty personnel from attempting to influence political policies or elections. The

military branches reasoned that chaplains could contact members of Congress but could not

participate in an organized campaign. Chaplain Vincent Rigdon, who was named in the suit,

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[69] See, for example, the 1987 "Religious Apparel Amendment," (10 U.S.C. §774), which allowed for military personnel to wear visible religious apparel provided it did not interfere with one's military duties or the operation of military equipment. The law effectively circumvented the 5-4 Supreme Court decision in *Goldman v. Weinberger*, 475 U.S. 503 (1986), which declared that the military had the right to prohibit deviations from the prescribed uniform, even if such deviations were religious in nature. Chaplain Arnold E. Resnicoff, a line officer in Vietnam and later a combat chaplain, lobbied for this amendment.

[70] *Rigdon v. Perry*, 962, F. Supp. (D.D.C. 1997).

however, said the directive created a "conflict between two chains of command I am under . . . There is the military structure and then there's my calling in the church and what that requires."[71]

The Washington D.C. Circuit Court ruled that the directive violated the chaplains' rights to free exercise of religion. Judge Stanley Sporkin opined that "What we have here is the government's attempt to override the Constitution and the laws of the land by a directive that clearly interferes with military chaplains' free exercise and free speech rights, as well as those of their congregants. On its face, this is a drastic act and can be sanctioned only by compelling circumstances . . . The 'speech' that the plaintiffs intend to employ to inform their congregants of their religious obligations has nothing to do with their role in the military." He concluded that "the chaplains in this case seek to preach only what they would tell their non-military congregants. There is no need for heavy-handed censorship, and any attempt to impinge on the plaintiffs' constitutional and legal rights is not acceptable."[72] The *Rigdon* decision, which the government declined to appeal, set a clear precedent for the retention of free exercise rights of military chaplains.

In 2000, another suit, this time against the Navy, addressed the issue of denominational preferences and discrimination when considering chaplains for appointment, assignment, retention, and promotion.[73] Even though denominational quotas had been abandoned for over twenty years, the plaintiff alleged that the Navy favored Roman Catholics and liturgical Protestants (to include Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Presbyterians) at the expense

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[71] Larry Witham, "Military Chaplains' Role Disputed," *Washington Times*, 23 Sept. 1996, USMHI, Chaplains, Bibliography File.

[72] Stanley Sporkin, Memorandum Opinion, *Rigdon v. Perry*, 962, F. Supp. (D.D.C. 1997).

[73] *Adair v. England*, 183 F. Supp. 2d 31, 34 n.1 (D.D.C. 2002) and *Chaplaincy of Full Gospel Churches v. England*, 276 F. Supp. 2d 79 (D.D.C. 2003); these two cases were consolidated by the United States District Court for the District of Columbia; In 2006, the case was remanded to District Court, the Appellate Court having ruled that the plaintiffs had demonstrated the possibility of irreparable harm if the allegations of Establishment were true.

of non-liturgical Protestants (to include Baptists, Charismatics, and Pentecostals among others). They argued that this constituted the Establishment of religion, in violation of the First Amendment. As of early 2008, the case had not been decided.

Also in the early 2000s, the Air Force Academy came under fire from religious and secular critics who complained that cadets were being vigorously and unconstitutionally proselytized by Air Force Academy faculty (including chaplains) and other cadets. An investigation concluded: "Senior faculty and staff members, in efforts that may have been well intentioned, have made public expressions of faith that some faculty, staff and cadets believed to be inappropriately influential or coercive. As a result of this, some military and civilian faculty expressed concern about the impact of religious affiliation on their personal career advancement."[74] Lutheran chaplain Melinda Morton had been instrumental in bringing these accusations to light, an action that provoked conservative Christian outrage directed both at Morton and the U.S. Air Force chaplain corps.[75] Morton was removed from her post as Executive Officer of the chaplains' squadron, though the Air Force claimed it was for reasons of continuity rather than as reprisal for her outspokenness.[76] Morton eventually resigned her commission.[77] Morton's name and accusations appeared on several conservative news websites and blogs, which reported that Morton, a "chaplain,"—the quotation marks were used

[74] See Headquarters, U.S. Air Force, Report of the Headquarters Review Group Concerning Religious Climate at the U.S. Air Force Academy (June 22, 2005), available at http://www.af.mil/pdf/HQ_Review_Group_ Report.pdf#search=%22Headquarters%20Review%20Group%20Concerning%20Religious%20Climate%20at%20t he%20U.S.%20 Air%20Force%20Academy%22, accessed 2 March 2008.

[75] Memorandum, Melinda Morton to Michael Whittington, 30 July 2004, www.yale.edu/divinity/notes/ 050516/AFA_Report.7.04.pdf. See also Gustav Spohn, "Professor Kristen Leslie Testifies At Congressional Hearing On Air Force Academy ; Air Force Issues Guidelines Against Promoting Any Particular Faith," Yale Divinity School, "Notes From the Quad," http://www.yale.edu/divinity/notes/050831/ notes_050831_afa.shtml, accessed 2 March 2008. The full Yale Practicum Team report is also available there.

[76] T.R. Reid, "Air Force Removes Chaplain From Post: Officer Decried Evangelicals' Influence," *Washington Post*, 13 May 2005.

[77] John J. Lumpkin, "Intolerance Cited at Air Academy: Pentagon Probe Finds No Overt Religious Bias," *Associated Press*, 23 June 2005.

mockingly in the comment—wanted "Christ out of the Air Force Academy." One blog post, at

FreeRepublic.com, prompted nearly 400 comments, mostly derisive of Morton's position. Many

questioned women's fitness and ability as ministers; others suggested potential assignments for

Morton—Greenland and Antarctica being popular destinations—and still others derided the

Academy for cowing to liberal demands and training cadets on religious sensitivity.[78]

Partially in response to these claims and the investigative report, the Air Force issued a

new directive to its chaplains, clarifying its position on proselyzation and public sectarian prayer.

The interim guidelines, published in 2005, set out eight guiding principles for balancing concerns

over establishment and free exercise throughout the Air Force. The first recalled that all

members of the Air Force were sworn to uphold and protect the Constitution of the United

States. The second stated that the Air Force would accommodate the free exercise of religion

except as "limited by military necessity," but that it would not endorse programs or actions that

privileged one religion over another or the idea of religion over irreligion. The third principle

affirmed that "service before self demands respect for the Constitution, our Air Force and each

other, and an understanding that in the military our service begins with a commitment to our

responsibilities, not only our rights." The fourth reiterated that chaplain programs, in service of

religious support for military personnel, fell under the purview and responsibility of

commanders. The fifth reminded commanders, supervisors, and superiors that their position

required special attention and care when dealing with religious issues because of the potential for

confusion regarding an official endorsement of religious belief. A sixth principle declared

discrimination or mistreatment of fellow Air Force personnel to be unacceptable. The seventh

concluded that the Air Force would build a successful team "by stressing our common Air Force

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[78] Carl Limbacher, "Chaplain Wants Christ Out of Air Force Academy," Newsmax.com, 12 May 2005, posted to FreeRepublic.com, 12 May 2005, http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1401963/posts, accessed 18 March 2008.

Heritage" and by recognizing and valuing "the many heritages, cultures, and beliefs represented among us." The final principle entreated Air Force chaplains to remember that in a "time when many nations are torn apart by religious strife . . . our ability to stand together as Americans and as airmen" representing many religions and no religions standing "shoulder-to-shoulder" constituted "part of our heritage and our strength."[79]

The actual guidelines included policies regarding "Religious Accommodation; Public Prayer Outside of Voluntary Worship Settings; Individual Sharing of Religious Faith in the Military Context; The Chaplain Service; Email and Other Communications; and, Good Order and Discipline." The directive stated that "public prayer" was generally inappropriate in official settings such as "staff meetings, office meetings, classes, or officially sanctioned activities such as sports events or practice sessions," though it did allow for brief, *non-sectarian* public prayer in "non-routine military ceremonies or events of special importance, such as a change-of-command, promotion ceremonies or significant celebrations" provided that the "purpose of the prayer is to add a heightened sense of seriousness or solemnity, not to advance specific religious beliefs."[80] These guidelines did not apply to chaplains' general or denominational worship services. The Navy also issued strict guidelines that would regulate public prayer in official settings.

Responding to significant pressure from conservative religious groups and members of Congress, the Air Force issued revised guidelines in 2006. Most significantly, it added a provision that stated, that the Air Force "will respect the rights of chaplains to adhere to the tenets of their religious faiths and they will not be required to participate in religious activities, including public

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[79] Department of the Air Force, "Interim Guidelines Concerning Free Exercise of Religion in the Air Force," http://www.af.mil/library/guidelines2005.pdf, accessed 2 March 2008.

[80] Department of the Air Force, "Interim Guidelines Concerning Free Exercise of Religion in the Air Force," http://www.af.mil/library/guidelines2005.pdf, accessed 2 March 2008, emphasis added.

prayer, inconsistent with their faith." Additionally, it softened the language on prayer in public or official settings. The revised guidelines read, "Public prayer should not imply government endorsement of religion and should not usually be a part of routine official business . . . Futher, non-denominational, inclusive prayer or a moment of silence may be appropriate for military ceremonies or events of special importance when its primary purpose is not the advancement of religious beliefs."[81]

The revised guidelines sparked immediate discussion from supporters and critics. The *Associated Press* issued a release which summarized the changes: "The Air Force released new guidelines for religious expression, dropping a requirement for chaplains to respect others' rights to their own beliefs and no longer cautioning top officers about promoting their personal religious views." The release continued to report on reactions to the guidelines. The *AP* reported that "the revisions were welcomed by conservative Christians. But critics called the revisions a step backward and said they did nothing to protect the rights of most airmen."[82] A *Stars and Stripes* article reported that Representative Walter Jones (R-NC) and Billy Baugham, executive director of the International Conference of Evangelical Chaplain Endorsers, stated that the revised guidelines did not "go far enough" in protecting chaplains' rights to "pray in Jesus' name." Baugham was quoted as saying that "The Air Force has a mind-set that because my chaplains pray in the name of Christ that it constitutes recruiting. But that's nonsense. That is how we believe we must pray."[83]

Congress soon involved itself in the controversy. A provision in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2007 would have legislated chaplains' rights to pray sectarian prayers in

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[81] United States Air Force, Revised guidelines, http://www.af.mil/library/guidelines.pdf, accessed 2 March 2008.

[82] *Associated Press,* 10 February 2006.

[83] Leo Shane III, "Air Force Softens Rules on Religious Expression," *Stars and Stripes*, 10 February 2006.

public (official) settings.[84] Three conservative Republican Representatives, Randy Forbes (R-VA), Todd Aiken (R-MO), and Walter Jones (R-NC), threatened to block passage of the entire bill unless the provision was included. The provision would "add language to each of the service sections (including the Academies) stating that chaplains 'shall have the prerogative to pray according to the dictates of the Chaplain's conscience, except as must be limited by military necessity, with any such limitation being imposed in the least restrictive manner feasible."[85] The Senate did not include a similar provision. The Conference Report, however, directed the Secretaries of the Air Force and Navy to rescind their most recent policies and guidelines on religious exercise within the services and to reinstate earlier policies (from 1999 and 2000), which did not include strict guidelines about sectarian prayer in official settings.[86] The Congressional order marked a major victory for evangelical military chaplains, who held that their First Amendment right to free exercise guaranteed them the right to pray "in Jesus' Name" at any and all military functions or worship services.

The post-Vietnam chaplain corps emerged as another battleground in the "culture wars." Eric Mazur, writing about competing visions of "pluralism" and "Protestantism" as the dominant religious ideology in the United States, attributed much of the controversy to conservative Christians feeling "increasingly alienated" and "seemingly nostalgic for what it now considers its lost control over the culture." They began to combat "what they believe[d] to be the increasingly immoral nature of contemporary American society because of secularization and an abandonment of Christian morality" and "worked to reclaim the American constitutional

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[84] H.R. 5122, Sec. 590.

[85] Congressional Research Service, "The FY2007 National Defense Authorization Act: Selected Military Personnel Policy Issues," 21 July 2006, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33571.pdf, accessed 2 March 2008.

[86] Conference Report, H.R. Rep. No. 109-702, at 739, 30 September 2006.

order and 'restore' the proper role of religion—predominantly Christianity—in American society."[87]

The war in Vietnam precipitated a significant number of organizational and cultural changes within the military chaplaincy. The immediate post-Vietnam years marked critical ones for the chaplaincy as it faced intense scrutiny and critique from mainline and liberal sources and confronted growing conservative Christian power within military and political circles. The combination led the chaplaincy to defend its mission and ministry in terms of protecting the religious free exercise rights of military personnel, even as it moved culturally to the right. At the same time, official chaplain channels faced a changing military organization and mission and responded to increasing religious diversity within the military by reemphasizing the chaplaincy's historically ecumenical character and its commitment to military families. The values of conservative Christianity and religious pluralism collided in the 1990s and 2000s with a series of court cases and Congressional actions that privileged chaplains' individual free-exercise rights over chaplains' roles as cultural mediators and providers of broad-based religious support.

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[87] Mazur, *Americanization Religious Minorities*.

CONCLUSION

In 2003, former chaplain and Vietnam War Medal of Honor recipient Charles Liteky, formerly known as Angelo, again found himself opposed to an American war. He addressed an open letter to American soldiers in Iraq on May 7 of that year. His letter proclaimed that he had renounced his Medal of Honor because "what the U.S. was supporting in El Salvador and Nicaragua, namely the savagery and domination of the poor, reminded me of what I was a part of in Vietnam 15 years earlier." He declared the war against Iraq unjust and unlawful, yet he conceded "I'm sure you believe that what you are a part of is right and just. I once believed the same of my participation in the Vietnam War."[1] Liteky's post-Vietnam statements revealed deep regret over his own complicity in the Vietnam War, anger and disgust for American foreign policies in the Vietnam and post-Vietnam eras, and a yet-unfinished process of reconciliation and recovery from the war. Following one protest at the School of the Americas, Major General John LeMoyne, the post commander at Fort Benning, called Liteky and invited him to participate in a symposium on human rights. When asked if he thought the Medal of Honor had anything to do with the call, Liteky responded "yes, I guess I did use the medal consciously. I didn't for a long time, but I see now that it provides me with a certain respectability even though I've renounced it."[2] The significance of Liteky's public activism and actions, such as renouncing the Medal of Honor, relied heavily on his status as a Vietnam Veteran, chaplain, and Medal of Honor recipient.

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[1] Charles (Angelo) Liteky, "Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient Addresses U.S. Forces in Iraq," Military Families Speak Out, http://mfso.org/article.php?id=85, accessed 3 March 2008.

[2] Charles (Angelo) Liteky, quoted in Taylor, "Matter of Honor."

James Johnson, on the other hand, experienced a more typical post-Vietnam journey. After his service in Vietnam, Johnson stayed in the Army as a chaplain, then after retiring from the Army and earning a doctoral degree in counseling, returned to civilian pastoral counseling. He thinks his experiences in Vietnam helped him in counseling others who experienced severe trauma, including psychological, physical, and sexual abuse and estranged familial relationships. Johnson's book, *Combat Chaplain: A Thirty Year Vietnam Battle*, helped him to come to terms with some of his Vietnam experiences, and it provided him opportunities to speak with current military chaplains who are or have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. He retired in 2005 after being declared permanently disabled from the effects of PTSD and renal cancer, which he suspects was caused by Agent Orange. In 2008, forty years after his tour of duty in Vietnam, Johnson maintained close contact with several Vietnam veterans through online e-mail lists and Internet sites.[3] For Johnson, "Vietnam" echoed constantly through his daily routines and activities; he could not leave it behind, and it would not leave him.

Jackson Day entered the military chaplaincy because he believed it was the only logical solution to his vocational calling to ministry and his renunciation of conscientious objection as a personal philosophy. "I never made a decision to be a chaplain," said Day. "I made a decision to . . . serve in the Army, and I made a decision to be a minister. Put those things together, and I'm a chaplain." The Vietnam War, however, brought about other personal and political crises for Day, as he experienced firsthand the death and destruction wrought by war and the breakup of his first marriage. When he returned from Vietnam, he became active with Vietnam Veterans Against the War and resigned his military commission. For several decades, Day left the ministry altogether, earning a Masters in Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and working in the public health sector. Slowly, Day became reacquainted with his own

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[3] James Johnson, interview by author.

Vietnam story and began building a website to document it. The website put Day in contact with others who served in Vietnam and their family members. He became involved with the group "Vietnam Veteran Ministers," and eventually decided to reestablish himself as a congregational pastor in Maryland.[4]

For Liteky, Johnson, and Day—and nearly 3,000 other chaplains—Vietnam carried an individual burden of experience and memory. Their official positions, unofficial duties, and personal conflict-solving mechanisms placed them firmly in the middle of converging and colliding worlds. They lived and worked at the intersection between religion and war, between church and state, between denominational and faith group communities, between Americans and Vietnamese, and between civilian and secular worlds. Chaplains relied on their theological and military training as well as personal moral codes and understanding of their roles to carry out their work in Vietnam.

Their liminal positions compelled many chaplains to act as cultural mediators between groups with diverse interests and values, but their individual experiences and post-war paths were not uniform. Some chaplains acted heroically and others cowardly; some supported the war, and others protested it; most remained in ministry, but others left it altogether. The variety of wartime and post-war experiences reveals diversity within the chaplain corps. Chaplains, no more than other groups of veterans, did not experience, understand, or remember Vietnam monolithically. The popular stereotypes of chaplains—the battlefield hero, the militant legitimizer of war, and the bumbling incompetent—simply do not stand up under scrutiny.

Certain patterns, however, do emerge. First, on the whole, chaplains were unlikely to forsake their religious beliefs in favor of military values. Rather, they worked out ways to bring the two cultures together. Sometimes, elements of both worlds appeared to take on the language

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[4] Jackson Day, interview by author.

of civil religion, which intertwined religious and martial themes. At other times, chaplains interpreted wartime experiences through a religious lens, by, for example, concluding that God's power was still evident in the destruction of war. Yet in other places, chaplains took civilian religious practices and reconstituted them to suit a wartime atmosphere, for instance by altering lyrics to hymns or offering communion to soldiers of all faiths. Second, chaplains broadly understood their primary role in Vietnam to be pastoral rather than prophetic. Most believed that their personal convictions about the morality of war in general or the Vietnam War in particular were irrelevant to their ability to minister to military personnel serving there. For the most part, they did not find inherent contradictions between being faithful and serving in the military. Third, many chaplains, like other Vietnam veterans, experienced a sense of alienation from civilian communities—both religious and secular—as a result of their service in Vietnam. Many were angered by media portrayals of Vietnam soldiers and veterans, while others were dismayed by what they viewed as a shortage of institutional denominational support.

Chaplains' individual experiences and reflections about the Vietnam War are also significant because they speak to broader unresolved debates within Vietnam War scholarship. First, chaplain accounts provide a more complex picture of religious responses to the Vietnam War, countering a dominant narrative of religious dissent and protest about the war. Chaplains' responses ranged widely, and discounting their religious language about the war as the product of co-option by the military is misleading. Second, chaplains' post-war reflections, namely memoirs and other first-person accounts, offer insights into non-combatant, non-minority men's experiences of war. In Vietnam in particular, where so few personnel were involved in direct combat, uncovering non-combatant voices helps to produce a fuller understanding of the war effort and its long-lasting psychological and cultural effects. Chaplains' recollections may also be useful for considering other dual-profession military officers such as doctors and lawyers. People

in these professions who serve in the military have to deal with two sets of professional norms and values, which may not always be compatible.

Yet, it is important to remember that individual chaplains' stories are also part of larger institutional and cultural experiences. The military chaplaincy—as an institution, as a bureaucracy, and as a group of people—also underwent significant changes in the wake of Vietnam. Demographically, the chaplaincy became more conservative and more evangelical after the Vietnam War. As more conservative Christians entered the chaplaincy, judicial challenges and the cultural prominence of conservative religious and political beliefs increased the sectarian nature of the chaplaincy. Some chaplains asserted their free-exercise rights to the detriment of the chaplaincy's historically ecumenical focus. At the same time, the military's religious diversity increased, as did the number of religious groups that supplied military chaplains. In the early 1970s, the chaplain corps commissioned female chaplains for the first time, indicating a more progressive stance on the issue of ordaining women than many of the chaplaincy's conservative supporters would like. The chaplain corps received strident criticism for its ineffectiveness in reporting and preventing war crimes and atrocities in Vietnam. Partly in response to that issue, the chaplaincy reorganized itself to be more responsive to small forward operating units. Chaplains who attended the Army War College determined that "Vietnam" represented a wide-scale failure for the chaplaincy, even if individual chaplains did succeed in ministry. As for individual chaplains, the specter of Vietnam haunted the military chaplaincy for the next several decades, especially as the United States found itself in another unpopular war against insurgent forces in Iraq.

Chaplains' experiences and public debate about chaplains' proper role within the military also revealed broader cultural uncertainty about America's religious and civic faiths and foreign policy. At the beginning of the Cold War, many Americans coalesced around the language of

civil religion and anticommunism. Civil religious language relied on shared cultural assumptions about the Judeo-Christian foundations of the United States, the value of free exercise of religion (within certain culturally-defined boundaries), and the belief that the United States occupied a particular place in God's plan. Faced with an imposing Soviet threat and the specter of Communist revolutions worldwide, Americans—even many without a personal religious system—used the language of civil religion to define the foundations of the anticommunist struggle. While there were significant variations in the ways religious groups thought the United States should confront a communist enemy, the language of civil religion provided common tropes and images that papered over some of these differences.

Then, as American involvement in Vietnam expanded and as protest at home escalated, civil religious language was insufficient to unite Americans around a common cause, and deep disagreements about faith and war came to the forefront. Chaplains, especially those from mainline and liberal denominations, experienced significant alienation from their denominational communities, which claimed that chaplains should act as prophetic voices within (and against) the military. Chaplains, former chaplains, and civilians engaged in debates about civilianizing the chaplaincy or at least drastically reducing the chaplain's military trappings of rank and uniform. Those who were opposed to the Vietnam War generally advocated a revamped and civilianized chaplaincy system, while those who supported its cause thought the established system produced the most beneficial outcomes. The debate over the Vietnam War and over the chaplaincy marked a significant point in the growing divide between liberals and conservatives in the United States. Liberal disillusionment with chaplains, coupled with the military's new personnel policies, resulted in a sharp increase in the number of conservative and evangelical chaplains. Litigation that challenged the chaplaincy left it with a more limited mandate—to secure the right to free exercise of religion for all military personnel. And chaplains sought, and in many cases, won,

such free-exercise rights for themselves as well. This move toward conservatism and individualism in many cases collapsed or damaged the chaplain's position as a cultural mediator.

After Vietnam, the institutional chaplaincy set out to correct its mistakes and to accommodate a diversifying military and a homogenizing chaplain corps. Due to a constant shortage of Catholic, Jewish, and liturgical Protestant chaplains, the chaplain corps abandoned the quota system that had been the basis of chaplain appointments for decades, opting instead to accept the best-qualified chaplains for available slots. They also altered the way chaplains were assigned to units, emphasizing long-term connections with smaller units rather than assigning chaplains for deployment overseas more randomly. The chaplaincy revamped its involvement with military Character Education programs, reducing the curriculum's religious content and undertones. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the chaplaincy shifted emphasis away from combat operations and toward garrison ministry, especially to military families. By the 1990s, the chaplain corps placed a new emphasis on chaplains' roles in peacekeeping and nation-building operations. Chaplains' education, inter-cultural training, and clerical authority could be an asset to the military in hostile areas.

Considered broadly, the chaplaincy offers a site for scholars to study civil-military relations and the church-state relationship in the United States. First, Vietnam-era trends in American religion, specifically in American Christianity, namely the move away from denominational alignment and toward alignment along political lines, deeply affected the chaplain corps' mission and individual chaplains' experiences.[5] The military relied on (and continues to rely on) civilian religious institutions to supply chaplain ministers to the military, and this relationship deserves more consideration. Understanding chaplains' experiences also

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[5] Robert Wuthnow identified this realignment as the defining feature of American Christianity in the second half of the twentieth century. See Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since WWII* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

indicates some ways in which civilian religious culture and military culture enter into dialogue with one another—each provided language and images useful to the other. Second, the chaplaincy's shifting organizational culture and mission may be indicative of changes within the church-state relationship, in which religion and politics are inexorably intertwined with one another. By regulating the chaplaincy, the military—and therefore the federal government—is frequently in the position of commenting on or even regulating religious practice for its members. The military provides an especially good site for testing the limits of the free exercise of religion.

Following the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001, and the subsequent military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the relationship between religion and warfare has again come to the forefront of public discussion. Americans learned about *jihad*—at least superficially—and many painted the fight against terrorism in apocalyptic and cosmic terms.[6] As in Vietnam, chaplains became embroiled in these questions as they ministered to military personnel in the field and became symbols for religious faith and practice in a time of war. In February 2003, the United States Army charged Muslim chaplain James Yee, a West Point graduate, with sedition, aiding the enemy, spying, espionage, and failure to obey a general order, after he was suspected of leaking classified information to the enemy, having been tasked with providing spiritual care for detainees at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. As a chaplain, Yee had almost constant, private access to detainees and was protected by pastoral

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[6] See David Domke, *God Willing: Political Fundamentalism in the White House, the 'War on Terror,' and the Echoing Press* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Jasmin Zine, "Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: Muslim Women and Feminist Engagement," in *(En)Gendering the War on Terror: War Stories and Camouflaged Politics*, eds. Krista Hunt and Kim Rygiel (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 29; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Anonymous (Michael Scheur), *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror* (n.p.: Brassey's, 2004); Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).

privilege. The charges against Yee were dropped in 2004; Chaplain Yee resigned and was granted

an Honorable Discharge later that year.[7]

As the American war in Iraq entered its sixth year, religion retained an important place in

public debate. Several chaplains who have served in Iraq have published memoirs or collections

of spiritual meditations.[8] Numerous other chaplains have been interviewed by the mainstream

media, and the religious press.[9] The digital age and easy publishing access via the Internet only

served to increase the amount of information available about the military chaplaincy and the Iraq

war. In 2008, a simple search for "Iraq" and "chaplain" on Google, a popular search engine,

yielded over 1,300,000 results. The rapidity and democracy with which information and opinion

can be produced, disseminated, and evaluated marked a significant change between the Vietnam

War and the Iraq War, but the sides of the debate were largely the same, with one important

exception. Liberal and mainline churches critical of the war were largely silent on the issue of

chaplains being complicit in the immorality of war, reflecting the broad trend toward expressing

"support" for American troops even if one criticized the war. One of the only major criticisms

of chaplains came from the organization Americans United for Separation of Church and State,

which claimed that a Southern Baptist chaplain in Iraq was proselytizing and overstepping

boundaries by offering soldiers food and fresh water in return for listening to a sermon and

being baptized. Yet the AUSCS stopped well short of suggesting that federally-funded chaplains

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[7] See James Yee with Aimee Molloy, *For God and Country: Faith and Patriotism Under Fire* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005); James Yee's official website, http://www.justiceforyee.com, accessed 3 March 2008; Tim Golden, "Loyalties and Suspicions: The Muslim Servicemen; How Dubious Evidence Spurred Relentless Guantanamo Spy Hunt," *New York Times*, 19 December 2004; Eric Lichtblau, "Army Cleric Who Worked with Detainees Is Arrested," *New York Times,* 21 September 2003.

[8] See, for example, Kittleson, *Meditations from Iraq;* William McCoy, *Under Orders: A Spiritual Handbook for Military Personnel* (Ozark, AL: ACW Press, 2005); and Cash, *A Table in the Presence.*

[9] See, for example, "God & War: How Chaplains and Soldiers Keep the Faith Under Fire," *Newsweek*, 7 May 2007; Andrea Stone, "Military Copes with Shortage of Chaplains," *USA Today*, 5 February 2008; Deann Alford, "Faith, Fear, War, Peace: Snapshots of the Grim and 'Happy' Ministry of Today's Military Chaplains," *Christianity Today*, 1 December 2004,; Kristin Henderson, "In the Hands of God," *Washington Post Magazine,* 30 April 2006.

had no place at all in war, instead emphasizing the chaplains' historical ecumenical responsibilities.[10] Even the *Christian Century*, which opposed the invasion of Iraq from the beginning and had a long anti-war tradition, carried advertisements for military chaplain volunteers.[11] The chaplains' assertion of their pastoral role within the military had taken hold, even among vocal opponents of the war. The debate over chaplains in the Iraq War would be over chaplains' methods and limits rather than over their fundamental purpose.

In Vietnam, concern over the chaplaincy and chaplains' experiences reflected and even foreshadowed the national crisis over the Vietnam War and its memory. Religious Americans struggled over the proper role for military chaplains, and chaplains, both during and after the war, wrestled with their involvement in Vietnam. As chaplains reconciled their participation in war with their faith, the American public has done the same. Chaplains, especially in their first-person accounts, demonstrated various ways to reconcile faith and war by challenging the notion that the two were somehow mutually exclusive. Their actions in and responses to war highlight the diversity of religious responses to war, and American chaplains—both now and in the future—would do well to follow their examples of cultural mediation, ecumenical cooperation, and personal struggle to reconcile the horror of war with the assurance of faith.

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[10] Americans United for Separation of Church and State, "Military Should Rein In Baptizing Chaplain In Iraq, Americans United Urges," Americans United Press Release, May 2003, http://www.au.org/site/News2?abbr= cs_&page=NewsArticle&id=5371&security=1001&news_iv_ctrl=1086#2, accessed 3 March 2008.

[11] "Saluting Chaplains, Reader Letters" *Christian Century,* 26 July 2003, 43-33; Glenn Palmer, letter to the editor, *Christian Century,* 14 November 2006, 53.

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