The U.S. Army

CHAPLAIN CORPS
JOURNAL

**AI-generated cover:
see page 5 for details**

U.S. ARMY

PRO DEO ET PATRIA

Chief of Chaplains
Director, U.S. Army Institute for Religious Leadership

Chaplain (Major General) William (Bill) Green, Jr.

General Randy George, the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), has called us to a renewed focus on strengthening the Army profession. The recently launched Harding Project is a grassroots effort to support that focus area by renewing and strengthening the military writing in our Army professional publications (see https://mwi.westpoint.edu/introducing-the-harding-project-renewing-professional-military-writing/). Our *U.S. Army Chaplain Corps Journal* is rising to the Harding Project's challenge.

Technologically, the goal for Army branch journals is to deliver content via twenty-first century platforms that are web-first, mobile friendly, and supported by social media. But the challenge isn't technological alone. A robust profession supports an ongoing developmental conversation through time that benefits from multiple voices expressing a wide spectrum of carefully crafted perspectives and opinions. The *Journal* is one very important forum for that conversation in our branch, and the *Journal's* strength comes from those of you who intentionally engage with it.

As we answer the CSA's call to strengthen our profession, consider that the Harding Project

was launched after General George read a major's article in *Military Review*. Think about that: a major's writing influenced the CSA to support an initiative to renew and strengthen military writing. What about you? What do you think we need to do differently or better in the Army Chaplain Corps and in the military chaplaincies more broadly? What's your big idea and how will you share it with others? And how will you help hone the big ideas of others? As you answer those questions, I ask you to engage with the *Journal* by reading and reflecting on its content, by assessing together and debating what it means for you and your colleagues and for those in our care, and, yes, by writing and submitting articles! Extend the conversation into your brigades, divisions, and corps, and find ways to bring *Journal* content into your recurring training and your daily practice.

As I close, I want to extend my gratitude to this issue's contributors. You are helping carry our branch's developmental conversation forward, and without you there is no *Journal*. Thank you.

For God and Country - Live the Call!

Regimental Sergeant Major

Sergeant Major Meaghan B. Simmons
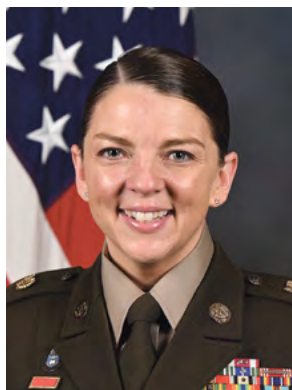
As this May 2024 issue of the *U.S. Army Chaplain Corps Journal* hits the streets, it is my pleasure to highlight the excellent work of Master Sergeant Eric Tysinger, who contributed a research article, and Sergeant Major Daniel Roberts, who participated in the Forum. The experience and wisdom noncommissioned officers (NCOs) have accumulated make them the backbone of our Army and our Corps; and Master Sergeant Tysinger and Sergeant Major Roberts are helping lead the way as NCOs, by representing our religious affairs specialists in the pages of the *Journal*.

Our religious affairs specialists provide an essential enlisted perspective to all Army religious support operations and they are often the most trusted enlisted Soldiers in any formation. This makes their perspectives extremely noteworthy and important, because they can provide distinctive insight into the lives, morale, and overall readiness of Soldiers and families across our Army. That insight is critical as our Chaplain Corps works to enhance the ways we care for everyone in the Army family and build Army spiritual readiness.

I echo the words of Chaplain (Major General) Green in challenging each of my fellow religious affairs specialists and everyone in our Corps to consider how you can contribute to our Corps' ongoing developmental conversation, in the *Journal* and otherwise. We need to benefit from the rich diversity of voices across our Corps, especially as we answer General George's calls to strengthen our profession and to pursue continuous transformation.

Thank you all for being a part of the conversation and for making a difference every day in the lives of those in your care.

Pro Deo et Patria!

Through the AI Looking Glass

By Adam Tietje

A few things are amiss with the cover. The priest in the foreground wears a collar in uniform as well as an over-the-top amount of beads. The patches are unrecognizable. The cover image was generated using OpenAI's artificial intelligence image generator, DALL·E. My prompt: "Give me an image of a military chaplain providing pastoral care to soldiers." Look at the image again. What do you see now? I see a white, Christian man ministering to other white men, as nearly as I can tell. As a white, Christian man myself this did not initially stand out to me. Only after viewing dozens of DALL·E -generated images of military chaplains did I begin to see the pattern. They were all white, Christian men. I had to expand my prompts to DALL·E from "military chaplain" to "Black woman military chaplain" or "Muslim military chaplain" to generate images of women chaplains or chaplains of other religious traditions or both. For DALL·E, at least for now, an image of a military chaplain is an image of white, Christian man.

I raise this issue not as a criticism of DALL·E per se. DALL·E was trained on publicly available images from the internet. What I take away from the exercise is that looking at images from DALL·E can be like looking at a mirror in harsh light. We may not like what we see, but there is no denying what we see. Our cover, then, serves as a discomforting image for us in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps. It is not how we might choose to see ourselves, but it is how we are seen, even as we continue to recruit and retain incredible chaplains who represent the rich diversity of the United States.

In our last issue, our Forum examined the nascent challenges of artificial intelligence (AI) for the Chaplain Corps. In this issue, our Forum examines important questions around soldiering and gender. Our cover, then, serves as a link between these two important conversations. Although in different ways, the wider cultural conversations around AI and gender have been fast paced and have upended long held assumptions about what could or should be possible. Both conversations have broad implications for the future of warfighting and religious support and demand our attention. Chaplain (Major) Mel O'Malley, Sergeant Major Daniel Roberts, and theologian Gene Rogers each bring a wealth of wisdom and experience to the discussion.

Future issues will develop a more sustained focus around a theme while still holding space for discussion outside of that theme. The November 2024 issue will focus on "Military Chaplains and the Civil-Military Divide," for example. For May, we have a set of articles that speaks to the breadth of the issues facing the Chaplain Corps. Theological ethicist Daniel Bell offers a virtue ethics approach to situating chaplains within the just war tradition that he first presented at our "Care of Souls and the Ethics of War" conference at Duke University in November 2023. Chaplain (Major) Patrick Stefan argues that we need a legal definition of religion. Master Sergeant Eric Tysinger argues for a need to re-align Army garrison religious support on joint bases under the Army senior commander. In our new Best Practices section, Chaplain (Major) Luke Heibel analyzes a chaplain-led program for its possibilities for ministry to Charles Taylor's "buffered selves," while Chaplain (Major) Brandon Denning and Chaplain (Major) Daniel Werho ask us to consider how Multi-Domain Operations may require new approaches to preaching. Chaplain (Major) Pete Robinson and Chaplain (Captain) Marcus Marroquin outline an intentional approach for the first ninety days of ministry at a new unit.

The *Journal*, like the Chaplain Corps and the Army, is in the midst of transformation. The Harding Project has provided new energy to ongoing priorities around shifting our publication from a print journal that gets posted online to an online journal that is integrated within civilian academic databases and conforms to the highest standards of civilian academic publishing. I cannot get there on my own and so I want to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of the USA-IRL staff, especially Mitch Ashmore, the Knowledge Management Officer, Gino Carr, the S6, Chuck Heard, the Deputy Director of Training for the Religious Leadership Academy, and Mike Craddock, Religious Support Simulations Center Chief.

Representing the Moral Warrior:
The Just War Tradition, Military Chaplains, and Moral Leadership[1]

By Daniel M. Bell Jr.

"What the bad man cannot be is a good sailor, or soldier, or airman."[2]

– General Sir John Winthrop Hackett

The just war tradition is a rich resource in the Christian tradition and beyond, from which military chaplains can draw while living out their callings to care for the souls of those in their charge. In contrast with something approximating a fixed doctrine, however, the just war tradition admits of significant variation both historically and practically. In what follows I introduce the practice of just war as an instantiation of a virtue or character ethic and then discuss the implications of this way of conceiving just war for the moral leadership of military chaplains.

While space constraints preclude a robust defense of this way of laying out my argument, briefly stated, my rationale is that a virtue or character ethic best correlates with both Christian living, my own tradition, and the profession of arms. Regarding the latter, Karl Marlantes writes:

> The warrior operates in extreme zones. The more removed a situation like combat gets from everyday life, the less applicable the guidelines get. This is why we must rely so much on character rather than rules when discussing and experiencing extreme situations like war . . . When we meet the next test, we can meet it only with the character we have at the time.[3]

Indeed, although it is not widely recognized within the U.S. military, that institution carries within itself the nascent practice of and potential for a robust virtue ethic. Accordingly, a just war ethic understood in terms of virtue and character is fitting.

I discuss the implications of a virtue-based just war ethic for the exercise of moral leadership for military chaplains. In doing so, I draw upon not only scholarly research but also experience working with the military and with chaplains on just war and ethics – through the military's advanced civilian education program, the Command and General Staff College (where I worked with both Soldiers and instructors on these matters), several denominations judicatories overseeing chaplains, and as a seminary professor for almost twenty years.

Two Visions of Just War

I briefly contrast a virtue or character ethic understanding of just war with a conventional understanding, which I call a "check list" approach.

The conventional understanding of just war is as a kind of public policy check list. It is very much in line with a dominant approach to morality, which is rule centered. Ethics is about knowing the rules and then summoning the will power to obey them. Just war becomes a check list of rules that anyone can use on the eve of war. Character does not matter in this approach. You can be a scoundrel, one with little interest in justice and who has never cared about your neighbor, and yet if you can check off the criteria, you can claim the mantle of a just warrior. Laying this claim requires no training, no formation. What it requires is simply compliance – only memorization and the willpower to obey.

The alternative vision that I want to highlight is just war as an instantiation of character, as an expression of the character of a people. Specifically, it is the extension of the character / virtues that mark the everyday life of a people before, during, and after war. Unjust persons cannot wage just wars. Not because they cannot memorize a check list but because they lack the well-formed judgment and the character to embody and sustain the virtues that the criteria presuppose and point toward. The alternative vision I endorse of just war is one that recognizes how a person is not likely to sustain justice, prudence, honor, courage (physical and moral) in the moral pressure cooker that is war if one has not learned to embody such virtues in one's daily life prior to entering the field of battle.

Leading Moral Warriors

These two visions correspond to two very different ways of conceiving and enacting moral leadership. In what follows, I consider the implications of a virtue-based just war ethic in terms of three challenges / opportunities military chaplains face in exercising moral leadership.

TEACH JUST WAR

For just war to serve as a resource, it needs to be known. Just war needs to be taught systematically and consistently to both Soldiers and chaplains.[4]

When just war is taught, it is frequently resisted and rejected. The value or importance of the tradition is not appreciated. For chaplains to exercise moral leadership they need to not only teach just war but help Soldier's find its value, help Soldiers embrace their identity as moral warriors.

While working with instructors charged with teaching ethics to officers, I was regularly told that just war was irrelevant and that it was ignored in their lessons. The reasoning behind this judgment came through in the comments officers and instructors made regarding just war. For example, one instructor became very agitated when he discerned that if evaluated by the just war tradition, the Indian Wars, Sherman's total war tactics, and World War II were not just. After reaching this conclusion, he dismissed the just war tradition, proclaiming that it was absurd that those wars might not be regarded as moral and just. Another insisted that the Army's doctrinally-stated mission, "Win the nation's wars," did not include any moral caveats. Instructors and chaplains have told me that just war

was irrelevant and so unnecessary because Soldiers were either resigned to being murderers or are okay with killing. Another theme concerned the force protection imperative. Soldiers insisted that pragmatic concerns for Soldier safety trumped ethics. My final example is related to what Robert Jay Lifton calls "doubling," and others have called "fragmentation."[5] That is, how some Soldiers divide their moral selves into distinct personae operating in different realms with disparate moral codes, e.g., being in uniform or out of uniform, in garrison or down range, or the disavowal of moral agency expressed in the sentiment "I was just following orders."[6]

Addressing this resistance and rejection is where the difference made by conceiving of just war as an expression of character instead of as a check list emerges most clearly. The deontological, check list approach largely conceives leadership in terms of reiterating the rules, summoning the willpower for compliance, and perhaps incentivizing such compliance through sanctions. It gives little thought to and certainly does not expect Soldiers to ask why they should comply. Here are the rules: obey. To which Soldiers should respond, "Ours is not to reason why."

In contrast, just war conceived as an expression of character recognizes that obedience and will power are not sufficient. What is desired is not mere compliance but commitment to and the internalization of the values / virtues the tradition embodies and expresses. Waging war in accord with moral parameters is not just something one is ordered to do; it is an expression of who one is, of who one aspires to be as a U.S. Soldier and citizen.

Much more ought to be said about those virtues and their formation, more than the allotted space permits.[7] Let it suffice for the moment to say a word about moving from compliance to commitment – a key shift in moving from a deontological to a character ethic.

Commitment is nurtured in many ways, starting with teaching not only "what" but "why." Understanding why something is done the way it is done – why it is valued – is a crucial component in nurturing the internalization of a moral vision.

The litany of objections to just war (and ethics) identified previously make it clear that many Soldiers (including chaplains) do not appreciate the "why," the value of just war commitments, of which there are many, from the pragmatic to matters of character and identity. For example, many fail to recognize the strategic value of just war / ethics in winning hearts and minds – whether that is a matter of

maintaining domestic support or reducing grievances that feed insurgency. Many do not recognize the importance of just war / ethics in preserving hearts and minds, that is, in potentially avoiding moral injury. Moral Soldiers, just warriors, need not see themselves as murders.

Likewise, many Soldiers have a superficial understanding of their mission (one with no moral caveats) and do not see that their calling as professionals (as opposed to mere experts or even public mercenaries) is to the ethical application of force. U.S. Soldiers are called to be moral warriors. Just war and ethics more generally are an instantiation of our identity.

The "why" that is military and national character sheds light on the importance of countering the aforementioned doubling of the self, captured so well in the canard that good garrison Soldiers do not make good combat Soldiers and

vice versa. At the heart of character is the Army value of integrity. Integrity is about embodying one's moral commitments consistently within and across the various and diverse roles one inhabits in life. As Alasdair MacIntyre describes it, "To have integrity is to refuse to be . . . one kind of person in one social context, while quite another in other contexts. It is to have set inflexible limits to one's adaptability to the roles that one may be called upon to play."[8] Integrity means maintaining one's moral commitments with the passing of time, in the face of changing situations and circumstances. Integrity – staying true to who they are – is why moral warriors fight the way they do.

OWN MORAL LEADERSHIP

The second challenge concerns chaplains' identity, specifically, owning and asserting chaplains' proper identity as moral leaders.

The challenge here is what I will call, as a catch-all, "ineffective chaplains."[9] It encompasses many things that can be summed up in what William Mahedy calls "chaplain bullshit."[10] It involves chaplains who are more focused on fighting the culture wars than exercising a moral leadership role. Chaplain BS involves chaplains whose first devotion is to their careers and advancement and/or to the role of cheerleader / morale booster / force multiplier. It involves chaplains who lack moral courage – such as the chaplain serving at a military academy who told me he would never pray for enemies in the chapel for fear of backlash. It involves chaplains who so want to "fit in" that they unwittingly compromise their role as chaplain – be it by taking up arms or proffering alcohol and dirty jokes, etc.[11]

Chaplain BS is an indication of a host of issues around chaplain identity. I wish to focus on chaplains owning and asserting their proper identity as moral leaders. Neither chaplains as caretakers of souls (only) nor chaplains as morale boosters / force multipliers is an adequate vision of the calling of chaplaincy, at least from my perspective as a Christian.

Chaplains as moral leaders should tend to souls, and they should encourage persons to persevere in the good. Indeed, good moral leadership requires both soul-care and morale-care. The problem is when these two important tasks are divorced from moral leadership /guidance and so become morally indifferent (souls only) or morally corrupt (hitched to morally unexamined or questionable ends).

Now, obviously, in the face of the aforementioned obstacles reminding Soldiers of the moral foundations of military service and advocating on behalf of moral warriors will require moral courage. Indeed, it may require

significant sacrifice and cost. Ultimately, full moral leadership might require revisiting how chaplains are embedded in the military. It might require an independent chaplaincy, which would ask chaplains to sacrifice the cultural capital that accrues military rank and service.

REPRESENT THE MORAL WARRIOR

The third opportunity in many ways brings the aforementioned challenges / opportunities together insofar as it concerns embracing a different moral vision and practice of moral leadership. Chaplains should represent the moral warrior.

This involves leaving behind a flawed moral vision and concomitant practice of moral leadership. There are three facets to this: a general moral culture, an ethical decision-making model, and a lived focus. Regarding the general moral culture, the military shares a moral ethos with wider modern Western culture, namely, a broadly deontological ethos where ethics are conceived in terms of obligations in the form of rules and principles. Ethics is a matter of information / rules / principles and compliance through willpower. Accordingly, moral leadership becomes largely a matter of promulgating the rules and encouraging / enforcing compliance.

The second facet is that of the dominant ethical decision-making model, and it is fascinating in part for how it undercuts the deontological character of the general ethos. This is the ethical triangle whereby Soldiers are encouraged to run moral decisions through a simplistic three-fold calculus of virtue, rules, and outcomes.[12] While this EDMM is reductionistic to the point of being a caricature, having seen it being

taught and "applied," it is difficult not to conclude that the point of this model is to develop feasible justifications for circumventing moral strictures.

The second facet leads nicely to the third, which is the "on the ground" lived ethic. The mission focus, along with the force protection imperative as a kind of moral sidecar, renders the functioning military ethic basically consequentialist. As Timothy Challans puts it, the warrior ethos is really about a special kind of work ethic, one that centers on mission accomplishment . . . not on moral restraints and law-abidingness."[13] It is a work ethic that can be summed up as "maximize military proficiency."[14]

Chaplains embracing and leading in the formation of just warriors, of warriors who own their moral commitments as an expression of the character of the military and the nation, means leading beyond fostering mere compliance with rules, beyond the sloganeering that drives a work ethic in service to consequentialism. Chaplains can lead by representing the moral warrior.

What I mean can be clarified by way of contrast. Modern deontological and consequentialist visions amount to ethics without representation, that is, they focus on the memorization of and willed compliance with rules or formulas (be it the greatest good for the greatest number or an ethical triangle). Beyond information and will-power, they require little. No wonder ethics training is conceived primarily in terms of PowerPoints and classes.

In contrast, a virtue or character ethic is primarily about representation. It is about modeling, exemplifying, displaying 24/7 the character that Soldiers as moral warriors should inhabit as Soldiers

and citizens. This is to say, moral leadership is first and foremost about living out the virtues.

In this regard, consider how the military uses stories and traditions to nurture the warrior ethos. The military excels at passing on traditions and stories of physical courage. From the visual imagery to the songs and cadences to the stories interspersed in training exercises, Soldiers are immersed in a world filled with models and reminders of forward-leaning, hard-charging physical courage. Chaplains could lead in representing that same physical courage rightly ordered by moral courage.[15] Chaplains could lead in seeing to it that stories, examples, models of moral warriors are interspersed and integrated into training the same way as the stories of physical valor.

And I do mean lead, not just advocate.[16] Chaplains' proximity / access to Soldiers becomes an opening for developing and displaying the commitment (relationships of care), the character and the competence that elicit the trust that enables the strongest leadership. Put a little differently, chaplains may lack command authority, but they may inspire. Especially today, with a postmodern generation that has a diminished respect for positional authority, inspiration is more powerful than positional authority for nurturing commitment and ownership of a moral vision.

Chaplains may not (always) have a voice, they may not (always) have a say in decisions, but they can always represent. Clergy often speak of exercising a ministry of "presence" in situations where words may not avail. Military chaplains may exercise a kind of moral leadership by presence, if their presence – their character – represents the moral traditions that sustain moral warriors.

Put in terms of conventional leadership theory and practice, chaplains are particularly well-situated to exercise leadership "from the middle." Indeed, they are prime candidates to exercise morally courageous followership.[17] This is the case not only because of their unique position in relation to Soldiers and Commanders but also because leadership from the middle / courageous followership is fundamentally about character, about embodying virtues, about representation.

By way of example, allow me to recall Martin of Tours, a figure who looms large in the history of military chaplaincy. When called out on account of his faith, Martin of Tours demanded that he be placed at the front lines of battle, unarmed. As such, he is a paragon of physical and moral courage. Chaplains, unarmed in the midst of battle, represent that same virtue – physical and moral courage – which every Soldier who aspires to be moral warrior would do well to emulate.

Conclusion

This essay began with an epigram about bad men not being good Soldiers. Unfortunately, it is not true. At least, it is not an apodictic truth. Whether it is true or not depends on the moral vision, or lack thereof, that animates a people and its military. By doctrine, by the best that we as Americans say about ourselves, by the best to which we aspire and achieve, US Soldiers are not mere experts. They are not public mercenaries. They are professionals bound by a moral vision; they are moral warriors.

Chaplains can steward this moral foundation and lead in moral formation – inspiring commitment, ownership, embodiment of the virtues that constitute the character of a moral warrior. And they can do this by drawing on the wisdom of religious traditions, especially where that wisdom intersects with the moral foundations of the military, as it does in the case of the just war tradition.

Admittedly, this stewardship and this leadership are not easy because they are not unconstrained. Leadership from the middle is never easy. To exercise these opportunities – to represent virtue in garrison and down range – requires physical and moral courage. It requires selfless service and sacrifice. Yet chaplains should not be alone in shouldering these challenges and reaching for these opportunities. Chaplains and civilians both have roles to play. Indeed, chaplains need their religious communities for the formation and support to carry out their calling, their mission, and religious communities need chaplains for the same reasons. Only working together, in a shared mission, can we make Hackett's claim a reality.[18]

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NOTES

1 An expanded version of this paper was first presented in a scholarly working group as part of the The Care of Souls, The Ethics of War, and the Wisdom of Sacred Communities Conference, Duke University, Durham, NC, November 2022.

2 John Winthrop Hackett, "The Military in the Service of the State," USAF Harmon Memorial Lecture #13 (1970), https://www.usafa.edu/app/uploads/Harmon13.pdf.

3 Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go To War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly, 2011), 60, 107. See also Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).

4 This teaching must be pervasive, iterative, developmental, at echelon, for both enlisted and officer. Teach it at enlisted basic training (there is a chaplain at every basic training battalion) and teach it at all levels of enlisted Professional Military Education and Sergeants Major Academy. Chaplains should teach it at all Basic Officer Leadership Courses and all branches' Captain's Career Courses. But it must be required at Intermediate Level Education, the Army War College, and especially at Capstone for General Officers – in short, across all Professional Military Education.

5 See Robert J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (NY: Basic, 1986), 418ff. Paul Berghaus and Nathan Cartagena use the language of fragmentation in their "Developing Good Soldiers: The Problem with Fragmentation within the Army," *Journal of Military Ethics* 12.4 (2013): 287-303.

6 An insightful treatment on the issue of obeying orders from a virtue/character perspective is offered by Mark Osiel, *Obeying Orders: Atrocity, Military Discipline and the Law of War* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2002).

7 My book, *Just War as Christian Discipleship: Recentering the Tradition in the Church rather than the State* (Brazos, 2009) treats just war from a virtue / character ethic perspective. See also my Ekklesia Project pamphlet "Just War as Christian Discipleship," https://www.ekklesiaproject.org/pamphlets/just-war-as-christian-discipleship.

8 Alasdair MacIntyre, "Social Structures and their Threats to Moral Agency," *Philosophy* 74.289 (1999): 317.

9 This is not necessarily or primarily an indictment of individual chaplains. It has much to do with the failures of churches and perhaps with the way military chaplaincy itself is structured.

10 William Mahedy, *Out of the Night, the Spiritual Journey of Vietnam Vets* (Knoxville, TN: Greyhound, 2005 [1986]), 145ff. Mahedy focuses on chaplains who refused to see and speak the truth, who were blind to the sin involved in war, who were wrapped up in civil religion.

11 I am not suggesting that chaplains cannot and should not fit in. The question is *how* to do that in manner that maintains one's integrity as a chaplain.

12 See Department of the Army, *Army Leadership and the Profession (ADP 6-22)* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2019), 3-38, 4-41.

13 Timothy Challans, *Awakening Warrior: Revolution in the Ethics of Warfare* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 11. Roger Wertheimer summarizes this work ethic in terms of "maximizing military proficiency" in "The Morality of Military Education" in *Empowering our Military Conscience: Transforming Just War Theory and Military Moral Education*, ed. Roger Werthheimer (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 159ff.

14 Wertheimer, "Military Education," 167ff.

15 Physical courage not ordered by moral courage is not a virtue but a vice, a *simulacra* perhaps better called rashness or viciousness. More charitably, one might recognize it as a kind of defective courage.

16 By advocacy, I mean talking about and exhorting others to act morally. By leadership, I mean inspiring people to commit to something and act accordingly.

17 See, for example, Ira Chaleff, *The Courageous Follower: Standing Up to and for Our Leaders* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2009).

18 Thanks to Larry Dabeck for (years of) insight and advice on these matters as well as John Jensen for comments on a draft of this essay. I am grateful, as well, for Adam Tietje's insightful assistance in revising this essay for publication.

Legal Religion: Judicial Discourse and the Historical Underpinnings of the First Amendment

By Chaplain (Major) Patrick G. Stefan

The First Amendment of the American Constitution protects only those practices that are religious in nature; however, it nowhere defines what makes a practice religious. That question is left up to the courts. And because the United States was founded on the inalienable right of religious practice, the definition of religion is an academic exercise with significant impact on lived reality. The definition of religion determines how people within the American political sphere can or cannot act when their religious practice bumps up against laws of general applicability. American religious practice is intimately connected with religion in definition. In this article, I contend that how legal agencies define religion largely determines how individuals governed by those agencies practice religion.

The lack of a Constitutional definition of religion creates a seemingly never-ending dilemma for legal agencies: a practice must be religious to be Constitutionally protected, yet by defining what makes a practice religious the government steps into what scholars call the establishment trap because the demarcation of boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable religion is an exercise in the establishment of orthodoxy.[1] That is, once legally acceptable religion is defined, unacceptable religion is also defined. This dilemma is referred to in the study of religion as the impossibility of religious freedom: religion must be defined to be protected, but in defining religion it is also established. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Supreme Court dabbled in attempts to define without establishing, only to give up in 1973, leaving the remaining rulings in place.[2]

The assumption model is generally sufficient for everyday life – we know religion when we see it. Cases that challenge the assumption model often arise in the Army through the religious accommodation process. Commanders and lawyers must determine whether a practice is religious to warrant the approval of accommodation. I argue that a belief in a transcendent reality should be a requirement for a belief or practice to be considered religious.[3] I propose two different lenses for defining religion in the American context: a legal perspective of religion and a theoretical perspective of religion. These lenses are distinct but may overlap. Legal religion is protectable based on the precedent of case-law interpretations of the First Amendment of the Constitution. Theoretical religion is studied in the academy, especially in religion, anthropology, and sociology departments. All legal religion can also be observed through the theoretical lens, but not all theoretical religion qualifies as legal.[4]

The purpose of drawing this distinction between theoretical study and legal clarity is to understand what the First Amendment protects. To that end, a basic historical understanding of theoretical religion is important. The academic study of religion is a product of the Protestant Reformation, which in turn shaped the emergence of the categories of world religions in the context of the early twentieth century German Protestant universities.[5] This history provides the backdrop for the purpose and meaning of the First Amendment.

My distinction between theoretical religion and legal religion emerges from the lines drawn in the majority opinion *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, 2022.[6] In Justice Neil Gorsuch's majority opinion, the Court's reliance on *Lemon v. Kurtzman* 403 U.S. 602 (1971) was based on an "ahistorical [and] atextual" approach to discerning Establishment Clause violations. Instead, in the words of *Kennedy v. Bremerton*, the "Court has instructed that the Establishment Clause must be interpreted by 'reference to historical practices and understandings.'"[7] The legal precedent set by the most recent Supreme Court reading of the First Amendment requires attention be given to the historical question of what the Framers were seeking to protect. Given the reality that the Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause exist in the same amendment, it stands to reason that just as the former requires a reference to

historical understandings, so too does the latter. To de-historicize the Free Exercise Clause in adjudicating matters of religious freedom is to act contrary to the current Supreme Court's logic.[8]

I suggest that a robust understanding of legal religion allows agencies broadly, and the Army specifically, to adjudicate on the protection of religious freedom in keeping with the most recent Supreme Court ruling in *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*. I draw on the critique of religion's genealogy to show that the First Amendment's "historical practices and understandings" necessarily contain two elements for legal religion: belief and transcendence. I argue that like the Establishment Clause, what is legally protectable as a religious practice (contra a mere philosophical idea) under the Free Exercise Clause can also be "interpreted by 'reference to historical practices and understandings.'"[9]

What is Religion?

Religion has certain characteristics that distinguish it from philosophy, for example, ritual, architecture, or music. But must a religion have all these characteristics to be called religion or just some of them? And if it needs only some: which ones are vital, and which are expendable? These types of questions permeate the study and classification of religion in an endless stream of monographs, articles, and books.[10] Scholars identify a given phenomenon in the world and decide whether it is religious, often going down rabbit-trails of post-transcendent religion, civil religion, and many others. Some even discard the word religion altogether.[11] Meanwhile, as scholars contest the viability of religion as a category worth keeping, the average churchgoer, lawyer, or politician joins along with Justice Potter Stewart's statement about pornography: I know it

when I see it. There is a significant gap in legal definitions of religion. The First Amendment, as it concerns religious protection, protects only religious beliefs and practices; however, it nowhere defines what makes something religious, it merely assumes it. My aim is to attempt to fill that gap by drawing on the insight of the majority opinion of *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District* (2022).

Benson Saler's work on classifying religion is helpful for understanding how "historical practices and understandings" might be understood and interpreted today. Saler sharpens Ludwig Wittgenstein's account of family resemblances with prototype theory. Wittgenstein suggests that certain social phenomena can be compared based on family resemblances, i.e., one or more feature in common. From this, we can begin to construct the family of religion. The family of religion would quickly become too broad to be useful. Saler builds on this to suggest that there are better and worse exemplars of the family. For example, in studying the family of fruit one might say that apples or oranges are better examples than corn kernels, and thus deem them prototypes. Saler contends that religion should be conceptualized in graded form "on the model of 'tall person' or 'rich person.'"[12] Building on Saler, I suggest that the definition of legal religion must consider the Western construction of the category of religion as a prototype because of the legal precedent set by *Kennedy v. Bremerton* and its continued relevance considering the makeup of the Court. I am not proposing that religion entails transcendence or belief in the context of religious theory and study. Instead, I suggest that this prototype both informed the work of the Framers and might also guide government agencies as they craft policy.[13]

For a matter to be protected under the Free Exercise Clause, an individual must demonstrate that their religious practice is (1) sincere, (2) being burdened, and (3) religious in nature.[14] My focus is on the last requirement: a matter only warrants protection under the Free Exercise Clause—and by extension, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)—if that matter is religious. The Framers considered a clause protecting matters of conscience (as distinct from religion) but ultimately decided against it. For the Framers, practices stemming from religious expression are protected in a way that those stemming from conscience are not.[15] The deliberate decision to not protect matters of conscience informs my historical inquiry to identify the characteristics of the Framers' prototype of religion and why it deserved protection in the first place.

Where did Religion Come From?

The concept of religion that was operative in the drafting of the First Amendment was one that was informed by the Protestant Reformation. What the Framers sought to protect was something that generally looked like Protestantism. But why did the Framers choose to protect religion at all? And why did they choose to protect religion, but not other matters of conscience? The history of the development of religion as a category in connection with the rise of the modern nation-state suggests that the protection of religion was intertwined with a political purpose.[16] The modern Western category of religion grew up in a dichotomized house of two kingdoms: church and state, or the religious and the secular.[17] The former is run by God and the latter is run by the government (made up of the people).

The religious wars of post-Reformation Europe demonstrated to the Framers the dangers to a society when religion and state authority come into conflict. For this reason, the Constitution prohibits either establishing a religion (for that is only the business of God who is outside the state) or limiting the free exercise of religion (for those beliefs and laws come from God, not people). Indeed, the very existence of the problem of free exercise assumes a contestation of authority: the state directs one thing, and God (or a power parallel to that filled by the traditional God) directs a contrasting thing. When two laws bump up against each other, the Framers made clear that the laws that transcend the state will win because they exist from an entity outside of and beyond the state's control.[18] Eduardo Penalver suggests that "the Framers probably never considered the issue of defining religion for the First Amendment at all, because they thought the everyday meaning of the term was clear . . . [theism and religion] were, for the Framers, one and the same thing."[19]

Given the expansion of the idea of religion since the drafting of the Constitution, the courts have helpfully clarified that a particular theistic belief is not necessary for something to be classified as religion for the purpose of First Amendment protections.[20] However, they have also noted that for something to be a sincere religious belief, it must occupy a space in the person's life "parallel to that filled by the God of those admittedly qualifying for the exemption."[21] In fact, this statement by the Supreme Court is the last time the Court sought to define what makes a belief religious, and therefore protected under the First Amendment. For reasons unknown (one can speculate that it is due to the

very challenges already experienced in defining religion), from 1973 until the present the Supreme Court has assumed a matter of religion is religious in its First Amendment cases.

Importantly, the RFRA does not seek to define religion either, it also assumes it. In *Employment Division v. Smith*, Justice Antonin Scalia declared that in those instances when the dictates of one's religion (outside of the state) conflict with the laws of general applicability for the state, the dictates of one's religion does not transcend the state's power.[22] In a remarkably bipartisan demonstration of disapproval with the passage of the RFRA, lawmakers made clear that the only time religious dictates do not transcend the state's power are when there is a clear and compelling interest for the government, and even then, it must limit the religious dictate in the least restrictive means to further that compelling government interest. For a matter to fall under the RFRA's scope and definition it must first pass the test of being qualified for First Amendment protections as a religious matter. Once it passes that test, it can fall under the scope of the RFRA and all that needs to be decided by adjudicating authorities is whether there is a burden and if so, is there a compelling government interest, and if so, is the least restrictive means necessary being applied.

I am not arguing that the historical understanding of religion for the Framers in drafting the First Amendment was Protestant-centric (though it was)

therefore only those religions that look in essence like Protestantism warrant protection. Instead, I am saying that based on the Protestant-centric backdrop of the First Amendment, the Framers intended to protect those practices, beliefs, and dictates that stem from a system that transcends, or stands outside of the state. Understanding this historical background should help identify the elements of the prototype of religion to limit what constitutes legal religion. An individual or group cannot simply attach the label religion onto a belief or practice. Instead, for a practice to be religious an individual needs to demonstrate that it stems from a system of belief that finds its source in something that transcends the state. Allowing beliefs and practices that do not transcend the state into the world of religious liberty risks undermining the basic social compact that is required for an organized group of people to function properly.

For the Framers, religious liberty relieves pressure when the dictates of one's religious conviction conflict with the state. The Framers created a path out of conflict. This is just as true in the Army. A Soldier's religious practice is accommodated when they believe that their religious dictates conflict with Army policy. For Soldiers stuck in a moral dilemma between religious requirements and Army authority and policy, commanders can provide a way out of this dilemma through religious accommodation. But when the dictates of one's mere conscience conflict with

the state, the allowance of divergence undermines the harmony necessary for society to function because it makes the individual more authoritative than the state.

Conclusion

From a theory of religion perspective, questions of whether non-transcendent systems and groups qualify as a religion or not, and what their system does to shape cultural understandings of religion can be endlessly examined. However, I argue that the legal definition of religion should be grounded in a family resemblance analysis by introducing a prototype. That prototype should be the one used to frame the First Amendment. It is a well-recognized point in scholarship that the prototype of religion for the Framers was a general idea of Protestant Christianity. The Framers rightly emphasized the importance of protecting the free exercise of religion. In those instances when the dictates of God conflict with those of the state, the state allows the individual to defer to God. A philosophical idea or practice, if not sourced from an entity that transcends the state does not qualify for the same protection. Philosophical ideas and matters of conscience arising from a group or individual member of the state must by necessity defer to the state. But when those dictates or practices come from a source that transcends the state's authority the Framers built in a safety valve to prevent a replication of the religious wars in Europe.

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NOTES

1 See Winnifred Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

2 See esp. Torcaso v. Watkins (1960); U.S. v. Seeger (1965); and Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972).

3 This point is made clear in U.S. v. Seeger (1965) where the Court is wrestling with the validity of a conscientious objector's request that does not include belief in the traditional type of God. The Court, in deciding that a belief that comes from a source outside the person that is sincere and "fills the same place as a belief in God in the life of an orthodox religionist, is entitled to exemption," also assumes a relationship between "an avowedly irreligious person or as an atheist."

4 As a disclaimer, I am not speaking from an authoritative legal position. Instead, this article follows the direction of theoretical academic discourse.

5 I acknowledge that the use of the general term "Protestant" flattens a very diverse and complex period of history and that not all Protestant movements thought similarly. However, the general observations of Protestantism that I rely on throughout this article are those that became dominant throughout Europe and the creation of the modern nation-state. My understanding of the relationship between Protestantism and American understanding of religion is heavily dependent on the work of Tamoko Masuzawa in *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

6 Kennedy v. Bremerton School District is an Establishment Clause case that considers a school employee's public prayers after a sporting event. The school district understood the employee's actions as a violation of the Establishment Clause. The Supreme Court disagreed. In the majority opinion, the Court rejects the use of the "Lemon Test" which was commonly employed to determine Establishment Clause violations. The Lemon Test was a three-part test developed in 1971 following *Lemon v. Kurtzman*. For a law to comply with the Establishment Clause it must have (1) a secular purpose; (2) a predominantly secular effect; and (3) not foster excessive entanglement with the government and religion.

7 In this case, the Court returns to a historical reading of religion in adjudicating Establishment Clause issues, provides "objectivity and predictability to [religious] analysis," and effectively kills the Lemon test. See Daniel L. Chen, "*Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*:

The Final Demise of *Lemon* and the Future of the Establishment Clause," *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 21 (2022).

8 It should be noted that there is much controversy surrounding whether the intent of the Framers is the most relevant factor in determining the meaning of the Religion clauses, see Christopher L. Eisgruber and Lawrence G. Sager, "The Vulnerability of Conscience: The Constitutional Basis for Protecting Religious Conduct" 61 *University of Chicago Law Review* 61 (1994): 1245, 1270. It should also be noted that the current makeup of the Supreme Court holds to the Constitutional theory of originalism. This article is not arguing for or against originalism as an interpretive concept, rather it is arguing that the current makeup of the Court (and that of the foreseeable future) requires the use of originalism in determining how one reads the First Amendment.

9 Kennedy v. Bremerton School District (2022).

10 See esp., Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003); Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Tamoko Masuzawa, *The invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

11 Benson Saler, *Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories* (New York: Berghahn, 2000), ix.

12 Saler, *Conceptualizing Religion*, xiii.

13 My use of Saler's conceptual model builds on Jonathan Z. Smith's observation that the Supreme Court, in the absence of any formal definition of religion, operates on an underlying prototype of what religion is and that prototype is Protestant Christianity. See, Jonathan Z. Smith, "God Save this Honorable Court," in *Writing Religion* (University of Alabama Press, 2015).

14 42 USC ch 21b. Religious Freedom Restoration Act, Section 2000bb.

15 See Michael W. McConnell, *The Origins and Historical

Understanding of Free Exercise of Religion*, 103 Harv. L. Rev. 1410, 1481 (1990); for the historical record see 1 Annals of Cong. 757-59, 796 (Joseph Gales ed. 1789). See also Stanley Ingber, "Religion or Ideology: A Needed Clarification of the Religion Clauses" 41 *Stanford Law Review* 41 (1989): 252.

16 See Brent Nongbri, Before Religion: *A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013) for a masterful analysis of how this concept of religion came to mean what it presently does. See also Masuzawa, *World Religions*; Markus Dressler and Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, eds, *Secularism and Religion-Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) as representative of the scholarship that has elucidated the rise of the modern notion of religion. See also William T. Cavanaugh, "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House: The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State" in *Modern Theology* 11 (1995): 402-403 for the relationship between the religious wars post-Reformation and the creation of religion in relation to the modern nation-state.

17 This is a brief overview of a very complex history. For a broader account see Malcolm D. Evans, *Religious Liberty and International Law in Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and John D. van der Vyver and John Witte Jr., eds, *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1996).

18 This general dichotomy of authorities, between religious and secular, is seen clearly in 4 Jonathan Eliot *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution* in which a delegate debates the importance of the lack of religious test for office in Article VI as leaving "religion on the solid foundation of its own inherent validity, without any connection with temporal authority [so that] no kind of oppression can take place" As quoted in Torcaso v. Watkins, 367 U.S. 488 (1961).

19 Eduardo Penalver, "The Concept of Religion," *The Yale Law Journal* 107 (1997-1998): 791-822.

20 Torcaso v. Watkins, 367 U.S. 488 (1961).

21 Wisconsin v. Yoder, 406 U.S. 205 (1972).

22 Employment Division v. Smith, 494 U.S. 872 (1990).

Force Management and Organizational Capability in Joint Base Religious Support

By Master Sergeant Eric Tysinger

"Humans are more important than hardware."

– SOF Truth #1

When the 11th Airborne Division re-activated on June 6, 2022, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), it became the Army's only division headquarters without an Army-led garrison for support. Having experienced ten Soldier suicides on JBER alone between 2020-2021 and wrestled for twenty-five years with organizational identity and mission, the decision to resurrect the 11th Airborne Division was a strategy to inject unit cohesion and purpose into the U.S. Army in Alaska.[1] Tragically, members of the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps assigned to the garrison on JBER responsible for addressing identity and purpose through spiritual readiness remain isolated from their fellow Soldiers due to joint base command relationships (COMREL). These Army Chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists bear an Air Force identity and mission, constraining them from providing religious support and spiritual readiness aligned with the Army Senior Command. The COMREL dichotomy between the operating and generating force on joint bases creates misalignment with the Senior Commander's intent and impairs spiritual readiness task and purpose. The Army Chaplain Corps must align its garrison assets under the Army Senior Commander on joint bases to achieve religious support unity of effort and strengthen spiritual readiness.

Background

Unlike Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs), the creation of joint bases has a fiscal, rather than operational, purpose.[2] Neither joint base doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, or policy (DOTMLPF-P) originate or integrate with the Department of Defense's (DOD's) Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS) construct.[3] Aimed primarily at reducing cost and eliminating redundancy, Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) affected not only real property and funding but also personnel and mission. With the transfer of installation support functions (ISF) on joint bases to the lead service, the Army religious support ISF aligned its priorities and procedures with Air Force operating instructions (OIs) rather than Army regulations (ARs) wherever it was the supported component. Although Joint Publication 3-83, *Religious Affairs in Joint Operations*, describes interoperability authorities and procedures, it does not address joint bases which operate according to Department of Defense Operating Instruction Support Agreements, local Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) and lead-service doctrine.[4] Additionally, joint basing categorizes Installation

Management Command (IMCOM) Soldiers as Joint Base Integrated (JBI) or Joint Base Supported Component Force Structure (JBSCF) personnel. Local MOAs capture these changes and are co-signed by the Vice Chiefs of Staff of each service component.[5]

In its strategic overview, the BRAC report admits, "No institution will remain successful without adapting to its constantly changing environment. Our armed forces must adapt to changing threats, evolving technology, reconfigured organizational structures, and new strategies."[6] Since the implementation of joint basing in 2009, the U.S. Army in Alaska has undergone significant organizational change in response to an extremely dynamic and challenging operational environment.[7] This level of transformation requires a correlating sustainment response from its power projection platform.

According to the 2022 Joint Base Operating Guidance, a 2012 policy memorandum requiring the Joint Base Partnership Council to review each MOA every three years remains in effect.[8] This process, known as the Joint Management Oversight Structure (JMOS), is a four-tiered accountability architecture to ensure fairness between the services, provide compliance oversight, dispute resolution, and MOA change approval.[9] In the fourteen years since the implementation of joint basing, each of the three Air Force-led joint bases conducted this review only once: Joint Base Langley-Eustis (JBLE)[10] and Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) between 2011-2012[11] and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) between 2022-2023.[12] While joint base procedures such as periodic MOA revision can serve as useful tools in resolving force management and organizational

capability issues, they can only do so if executed on prescribed timelines and elevated to the appropriate JMOS tier.

Problem

In an information paper from 2020, U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK) made the following observations:

> Joint bases are not truly Joint bases; rather, they are installations where one service is the supporting command (lead) and other organizations are supported commands. JBER administratively functions under Air Force regulations that are not aligned with Army requirements, timelines, [and] priorities…These differences result in gaps and seams that impede Army unit readiness.[13]

The DOTmLPF-P domains described in Army Regulation 71-9, *Warfighting Capabilities Determination*,[14] Army Regulation 71-32, *Force Development and Documentation Consolidated Policies*,[15] and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3150.25H, *Joint Lessons Learned Program*, provide the best framework for understanding and addressing these "gaps and seams."[16]

DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATION

Although JBER recently conducted a comprehensive MOA revision in response to these concerns, it failed to address the affiliation and task organization of JBI Chaplain Corps personnel. Chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists comprise roughly half of Soldiers assigned to a garrison headquarters.[17] AR 165-1, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities*, defines the roles and responsibilities of Religious Support Offices (RSOs) and their

relationship to the Senior Command Chaplain on the installation.[18] This position, created in April 2020, is now codified in the new AR 165-1 and, as of July 2022, includes the 11th Airborne Division on JBER (although the O6 chaplain in Alaska will now be an IMCOM billet).[19]

In addition to meeting regulatory requirements, the formalized relationship between the RSO and Army Senior Command achieves greater unity of effort, improved leader development, and ensures senior rater equity between the operating and generating force.[20] Without shared identity and organizational alignment however, generating force assets are unable to represent the Army Senior Command, advocate for religious support equities, or provide dedicated spiritual readiness to their fellow Soldiers and Families. Can the Senior Command Chaplain carry this burden alone? If the value of organizational alignment, service culture, and identity for Soldiers were irrelevant, the 11th Airborne Division would not be re-activated today. The point of friction with joint basing in this area is its COMREL.

POLICY

Joint base dysfunction exists outside of Alaska. In its 2021 audit of joint bases across DOD, the Office of the Inspector General confirmed the following:

> Lead Components at JB Lewis-McChord, JB Anacostia-Bolling, and JB Elmendorf-Richardson did not always meet minimum performance standards or other terms specified in the MOA…Joint base personnel often identified Service-based decisions, operational differences, and a DOD-wide lack of joint base knowledge and operational guidance

as reasons why MOA terms were not met…These factors can also hamper relations on the installation and potentially marginalize the input, needs, and mission of the supported Components.[21]

Despite not operating jointly, the supporting (lead) component still operationally controls (OPCON) JBI or JBSCF personnel from their sister service. Joint bases have no joint manning document, retain the culture of the supporting component, and typically prioritize the mission of the lead service unless the stakeholders use the JMOS process effectively to enforce accountability measures. With only one MOA revision per joint base in fourteen years, little has been done to address this. The relationship between operational units and installation religious support works most effectively when aligned within a service-specific organization and culture. It is only when both services maintain their distinctive identities that equity exists and joint operations can occur.

PERSONNEL

For the past four years, the Army's number one priority was "People First."[22] The focus on warfighting and readiness today still relies on strengthening the Army profession and building cohesive teams.[23] The 11th Airborne Division operationalizes this:

> Arctic capability and mission readiness ultimately depend on our greatest resource, our Soldiers. People have been and remain our top priority, with a focus on taking care of Soldiers, Families, and our Army community through leadership and connections. On 6 June 2022, the 11th Airborne Division activation

properly aligned *identity, purpose, and mission* for our soldiers, and the chief of staff of the Army charged us with reestablishing the proud reputation of this storied division. This was a huge missing piece of the puzzle. We improved soldiers' and family members' quality of life by clearing away the previous *"Frankenstein-like" creation that was cobbled together with various patches and units*. The best quality of life program in the Army remains tough, challenging, training as *part of a cohesive unit*—and that must remain foundational [emphasis mine].[24]

Likewise, Army Field Manual 7-22, *Army Holistic Health and Fitness*, describes spiritual readiness in terms of purpose, meaning, and identity.[25] Soldier readiness is directly proportional to the level of connection within a community that shares a common purpose and identity. In the Army, these values are both organizational and spiritual. The Army Chaplain Corps lives at the intersection of both.

While tangible assets such as materiel and facility transfer usually receive the most attention, the center of gravity in joint base religious support is not chapels or funding but identity and mission. Although local MOAs tacitly acknowledge the Army identity of JBI and JBSCF Soldiers as the supported component, Army Chaplain Corps personnel OPCON to a sister service negates this description. Additionally, and in contrast to JBSCF Airmen on Army-led Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) who retain their organic unit patch, JBI and JBSCF Soldiers on JBLE, JBSA, and JBER wear an Air Force shoulder sleeve insignia. In the case of the Army Support Element on JBER, this happened just prior to the

MOA revision of 2022. My personal communication with JBSCF Religious Affairs Airmen at JBLM on this topic indicate they do not want to operate under the same conditions as the ASE Soldiers on JBER.[26]

JBI and JBSCF Soldiers do not appear on an Air Force manning document and do not count against their numbers but exist on an Army Table of Distribution and Allowances (TDA) with an Army Unit Identification Code (UIC).[27] Neither local MOA nor joint doctrine requires this cross-service identification. For Army Chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists on Air Force-led joint bases, however, the status quo is assimilation and prioritization rather than partnership and equality.[28]

LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING

Impediments to joint operations also exist outside of local MOAs and OIs. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld described the BRAC process as an opportunity to promote jointness in 2005 but the official report from the BRAC commission found the opposite to be true stating, "very few of the hundreds of proposals increased jointness, and some actually decreased or removed joint and cross-service connections…collocation is not synonymous with integration, and transformation is not synonymous with jointness."[29] This is ironic considering BRAC initially prioritized "current and future mission capabilities and the impact on operational readiness of the total force of the Department of Defense, including the impact on joint warfighting, training, and readiness" as the first of eight statutory selection criteria.[30]

According to Major General Brian Eifler, Commanding General of the 11th

Airborne Division, interoperability with joint partners is essential to building capability in the unforgiving environment of the Arctic.[31] Army Senior Commanders have a responsibility to drive the strategic vision for everything from Soldier readiness to power projection.[32] Army Command Policy defines the roles of senior commanders as caring for Soldiers, Families, and Army Career Professionals to enable readiness across the force.[33] Unfortunately, the COMREL between Army Senior Commanders and Army Chaplain Corps personnel in JBI or JBSCF positions on joint bases constrains this.

Solution

In his thesis at the United States Army War College examining the efficacy of garrison religious support in joint operations, Chaplain (Colonel) Michael Brainerd recommends the RSO be task organized under the Army Senior Commander and supervised directly by the Army Senior Chaplain at that location.[34] Such a realignment, Brainerd argues, has the potential to increase chapel funding, solidify organizational identity, create shared purpose, promote common culture, and increase unity of effort. This course of action mirrors the motive and approach of the Army in the re-activation of the 11th Airborne Division.

Brainerd goes on to propose a joint application of this, offering examples of BRAC products such as joint basing and the (at that time) co-located Army, Air Force, and Navy chaplain schools at Fort Jackson, SC. However, in 2014 joint basing was only five years old and already experiencing fractures.[35] The Air Force and Navy chaplain schools then moved back to their original locations in 2017 after it became evident that the training, doctrine, and culture of religious support between the services were not compatible even in a training environment.[36]

Unlike joint basing, the Army Chaplain Corps does participate in the JSPS and recently conducted a proponent-wide Capabilities Based Assessment (CBA) in 2022 as part of the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS).[37] Although only a small part of the overall force development process, CBAs exist to identify capability gaps and then provide DOTMLPF-P recommendations to address them.[38] The CBA is phase one of a five phase force development process that potentially ends with changes to manning documents and task organization.[39] In preparation to

support MDO in the Army of 2030 and beyond, the Army Chaplain Corps' CBA examined religious support and spiritual readiness within each DOTMLPF-P domain at echelon across active duty and reserve components.[40] In its July 2023 report to Army Futures Command, the Chaplain Corps identified eight capability gaps with proposed solutions, including the Army Senior Chaplain's responsibilities to oversee garrison RSOs and force design updates (FDUs) to the Division Chaplain section.[41] These gaps and proposed solutions tie to an MDO statement which tasks the Army Senior Commander's chaplain with spiritual readiness responsibility during the competition phase on both Army garrisons and joint bases.[42] Although this same report recommends leveraging coordinating instructions as the means to accomplish this for units not organic to the command, a COMREL solution akin to Brainerd's 2014 proposal is more sustainable and enduring. The Chaplain Corps could accomplish this without any changes to MTOE or TDA manning documents by following a precedent already established by the Judge Advocate General (JAG).

The Army JAG Corps has aligned its generating force assets under the Army Senior Commander, even on joint bases, in its consolidated legal office using a doctrinal solution.[43] The Army Chaplain Corps should follow suit and adopt this model. This force management strategy increases the organizational capability of both the Army Senior Command and the garrison RSO, aligns their identity and mission, and uses a systems approach to increase unity of effort. The alignment combines MTOE and TDA assets under the Army Senior Commander by changing task organization and not force structure, all without compromising the garrison or operational mission, but improving the effectiveness of both.[44] This course of action would not affect brigade or battalion UMTs and it empowers Army Chaplain Corps IMCOM personnel to represent Army requirements to the Joint Base Commander and serve on equal footing with their sister service counterparts. The Army Chaplain Corps should integrate operational and generating force COMREL alignment, modeled after the JAG Corps' consolidated legal office, into its DOTMLPF-P solutions as its CBA moves through the force development process. Although Functional Solution Analysis has already occurred, the Army Senior Leader Reference Handbook, *How the Army Runs*, states, "Every process may not always be required before organizational changes are made . . . and the process steps may occur out of sequence."[45] If the Chaplain Corp's CBA is the vehicle to achieve this, doctrine is the driver. This action, supported by strategic endorsement from the Armed Forces Chaplain Board, will provide the joint staffing required for such a transformation and is no cost to the U.S. Army or the U.S. Air Force.[46]

Conclusion

Organizational capability issues require force management solutions. Joint basing is unable to provide senior commanders the dedicated and aligned religious support required to maintain spiritual readiness because it exists independently of the Joint Strategic Planning System. As a result of COMREL dichotomy, Army generating force assets assume a sister service identity in locations where they are the supported component which isolates them from the Army Senior Command, the Army Senior Chaplain, and their fellow Soldiers. This separation constrains the Army Senior Commander's ability to fulfill doctrinal requirements and disables Army garrison Chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists from effectively representing, engaging, or advocating on the Army's behalf. In response, the Army Chaplain Corps must align its garrison assets under the Army Senior Commander on joint bases to achieve religious support unity of effort and strengthen spiritual readiness.

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NOTES

1 11th Airborne Division, "Army Suicide Prevention Program Suicide Roster," redacted version, August 8, 2023, Unpublished raw data on suicides in Alaska, Retrieved August 8, 2023. See also Davis Winkie, "How — and why — the 11th Airborne Division is being resurrected in Alaska." *Army Times*, May 25, 2022, https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2022/05/25/how-and-why-the-11th-airborne-division-is-being-resurrected-in-alaska/.

2 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, *Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission Report*, 2005, iii.

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Chaplain Pursuit of "Buffered Selves":
Shepherding the Tough in Spirit

By Chaplain (Major) Luke Heibel

An infantry brigade commander reflected on the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.[1] He confessed to his staff that he struggled with the sobering costs of giving so much for so long with such dubious results. The experience led to public and private soul-searching. This struggle was compounded with daily challenges in the human domain. Problems grew across the formation despite many resources and competent leaders. He observed to his staff, "We used to just go out with the chaplain, get outside and do hard things together. This solved a lot of our problems. Can't we just do that again?"

This Commander's conviction that Soldiers just need to get outside and go do hard things with their chaplain was a catalyst for a brigade Unit Ministry Team (UMT) program called "Tough in Spirit" (TIS). It was implemented in each battalion across the 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne). The structure and duration of events varied.[2] But the simple formula "go outside and do hard things with your chaplain" was implemented across the brigade. What follows is one battalion chaplain's reflection on pastoral dynamics operative in TIS events and how those dynamics aim to facilitate spiritual readiness (SR) in a time when many people no longer conceptualize a need for God.

In this paper, I offer three elements of the TIS formula: struggle, content, and process. I frame these elements as an active form of "ministry of presence" (MP). I argue that MP is a form of active pursuit essential to building Soldier SR. Finally, I examine TIS participants through the lens of what philosopher Charles Taylor calls the "buffered self" of our secular age. I draw on Taylor to conceptualize the challenges of ministering to "buffered selves" and to highlight the importance of events like TIS for creating unique opportunities to both challenge and equip Soldiers.

"Tough in Spirit"

The 173rd Airborne Brigade TIS initiative was a command-directed and unit-supported event. Command support was the most important aspect of this program's success. Endless requirements compete for a unit's limited training time. There is rarely protected time for religious support initiatives. Chaplains learn to nest initiatives into existing training or offer events during evenings or on weekends.

The average TIS cohort was comprised of ten to thirty Soldiers who have different backgrounds, religions, aptitudes, fitness levels, and interest in participating in the program. The twelve-hour TIS program, in my unit, used this structure: 0600 start time followed by ninety minutes of classroom instruction at an off-post location. The classroom training focused on the importance of the spiritual domain for every Soldier. It featured short videos designed to facilitate discussion about Soldiers' worldviews that nested within the Army's definition of SR.[3] Subsequent discussions were designed for sharing personal opinions and spiritual beliefs. The chaplain, as facilitator, worked to persuade TIS participants that the spiritual domain is relevant to everyone, not just the formally religious.[4]

The next phase required an hour-long bus ride to the training location. Upon arrival, Soldiers were provided a big breakfast.

The mealtime included intentional conversation shaped by discussion cards and followed by large group processing. After breakfast, the group transitioned to a long-range movement over rough terrain. The group engaged with one another around participant-driven content at planned intervals along the route. The event concluded with another big meal and more intentional conversation. Lastly, we conducted an after-action review before the bus ride back to base.

The TIS model is deceptively simple: get people together, do hard things outdoors, provide some training, eat good food, and talk in an intentional way. How do these simple ingredients foster SR? Soldiers already do some version of these activities every day. Many participate in these common activities and never develop a relationship with God, become resilient, find meaning or purpose, or experience belonging. Inertia, task saturation, exhaustion, apathy, and general entropy see to that. Several key ingredients are required to facilitate fostering Soldier SR: a common struggle, quality content, and a humanizing process. Is the chaplain essential? Yes. TIS is a potentially formative experience. But transformation requires a chaplain who can shape each part and translate MP opportunities into SR gains.

STRUGGLE

Through a common struggle, chaplains work to focus attention, build teams, and strengthen relationships. Our TIS events used a long walk in often frigid temperatures over rough terrain to these ends. War journalist Sebastian Junger observes that forging a "community of sufferers" and a "brotherhood of pain" ironically has positive impacts on mental health.[5] During TIS the struggle provided the occasion for deeper engagement

with others. Junger writes that "adversity often leads people to depend more on one another, and that closeness can produce a kind of nostalgia. . . . What people miss presumably isn't danger or loss but the unity that these things often engender."[6] Positive memories of shared hardship builds teams. I hoped that, at a minimum, my Soldiers would come away from TIS as a stronger team.

In addition to the physical struggle, Soldiers experienced an interpersonal struggle to be vulnerable and the intellectual challenges to think about difficult subjects. Before the long-range movement Soldiers were given a card with a trust-building behavior on it. Along the way each were provided a chance to illustrate the behavior with a personal story. Many Soldiers used this simple practice to share a story that reframed their platoons' understanding of who they are. Many shared personal issues or life stories in a vulnerable, humanizing way. One Soldier said he learned more about his platoon in one day – during TIS – than in the past year.

QUALITY CONTENT

Soldiers assumed TIS would be more indoctrination than education. Discussions of spirituality and religion are frequently divisive. Moreover, many Soldiers lack the vocabulary to have robust spiritual conversations. Soldiers need SR terms and concepts "issued," like mission essential equipment, to assist meaningful dialog. Military hierarchy is also a barrier to conversation. Soldiers need formal permission and encouragement to speak freely.

The TIS training goal was to address spiritual readiness, personal identity, belonging, and moral courage.[7] I provided spiritual terms and concepts during the classroom phase and the long hike

outdoors. Small group discussion, videos, and anecdotal illustrations were used to stimulate thought and empower conversation. Along the way, we considered the difference between spirituality and religion, the nature of suffering, the protective factors of spirituality, and the Army's concern for the spiritual domain. We reflected on why spirituality matters. Additionally, each platoon's leadership was given an opportunity to shape training content to ensure their TIS event addressed known needs.

HUMANIZING PROCESS

The process of Soldiers reflecting in these ways during TIS was aided by natural beauty. Our long-range movements were conducted in rugged but mostly beautiful places. The Army's physical environments are utilitarian. They are designed to be useful, not beautiful. But aesthetics matter. "The medium is the message."[8] Soldiers have brains and souls – but these are routinely subordinated to the physical. Reducing life to the utilitarian and purely physical is inherently dehumanizing. I believe that we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and thus have a longing for experiences that address us as embodied souls. We long for transcendence.[9]

We hosted meals in a Bavarian "Gasthaus" featuring traditional German fare (schnitzel, knöedel, grillhaxe, etc.). By paying wise attention to content, environment, and process the chaplain can be combine these elements with quality food to facilitate an experience of the sublime for Soldiers. Military dining, like military architectural design, underwhelms. Simple meals prepared with care set the stage for rich communion. Theologian Norman Wirzba highlights the significance of food for connecting us to God:

Eaters can consume a wide variety of foods and not really savor any of it as God's love made nurture for us. To eat with theological appreciation presupposes reverence for creation as the work of God's hands. It entails spiritual formation in which we allow God the Gardener (Genesis 2:8) to conform us to his image as the one who looks after and provides for creatures. . . .Without this ongoing catechesis we run the risk of reducing the gift of food and the grace of eating to a desecration.[10]

This combination of a humanizing process and pleasing aesthetics is disarming. It can stir a person's soul in ways mere words cannot. The pairing can even lead the jaded participant to be less defensive and more fully present with his peers.[11]

Ministry of Presence

One practice chaplains use during TIS events is the ambiguous sounding "ministry of presence" (MP). MP means being physically present and rooted with Soldiers in places others cannot go. MP can have both active and passive shepherding aspects. MP in a passive sense is participation in the mundane realities of Soldiers' lives: formations, physical training, motor-pool, meetings, exercises, mobilizations, etc. Passive MP is shepherding conducted in the daily grind of a willing, observing presence.[12] It is a form of pursuit rooted in being consistently present and available. A passive MP leads to credibility through effort over time, sharing the unit's story.

An active MP is a form of shepherding patterned on the "shepherd God of Israel" that seeks to know and positively shape other Soldiers.[13] An active MP

gives direction and challenges others. It develops personal knowledge and grows relationships. Chaplains are often an abstraction to their Soldiers. If a chaplain is too passive, he will never become trusted and sought out by his Soldiers. A chaplain must employ an active MP to move from being seen as an abstraction to being seen as a person with trusted and indispensable qualities.

Practicing both active and passive MP are essential pastoral tasks for Chaplains. Nesting effectively into a unit's battle-rhythm, staff functions, and footprint is skilled labor. Information traffic rarely flows in the chaplain's direction without sustained effort and healthy relationships. Passive chaplains are easily marginalized. The presence of adverse organizational and relational dynamics can neutralize a chaplain's effort to integrate. Commanders and their staff ensure information flows consistently through the chain of command as subordinates report up. Chaplains on the other hand – who are expected to know people and unit dynamics – must "work to work."[14] They must actively pursue others. Chaplains must work to know people, work to integrate, and work to learn unit dynamics through proactive engagement. They must earn the privilege to do the spiritual "soul work" that transforms individuals and unit culture. A chaplain's MP is a skillfully curated effort that enables both advisement capabilities and spiritual care.

An Obstacle to Ministry: "Buffered Selves"

Practicing a robust MP allows the chaplain to know Soldiers and fulfill the religious support mission. Yet many Soldiers today don't want or think

they need a chaplain. The demand for spiritual care is muted in our secular age.[15] While many people are open to spirituality – it is nevertheless seen as optional, a mere life-style accessory.[16]

Twenty-first century selves are shaped by a vastly different spiritual landscape than previous generations.[17] Philosopher Charles Taylor accounts for these radical cultural shifts.[18] He notes the human self is no longer conceived of as "porous" or vulnerable to external spiritual authority.[19] In previous eras, the self was commonly understood as vulnerable to spiritual forces and dynamics outside of one's control. Yet, for Taylor, the modern self is insulated from external spiritual realities by a "buffer" that neutralizes the dire need for spiritual connection to God and for God's protection.[20] This accounts for, in Taylor's words, "a very different existential condition."[21] He notes: "As a bounded self I can see the boundary as a buffer, such that the things beyond don't need to 'get to me'… That's the sense to my use of the term 'buffered' here. This self can see itself as invulnerable, as master of the meanings of things for it."[22] Theologian Andrew Root, one of Taylor's key interpreters, outlines several pastoral implications implied by this understanding of the self as buffered: a changed view of personal freedom and the perception of the self as invulnerable.[23] Again, Taylor writes: "The buffered self is essentially the self which is aware of the possibility of disengagement. And disengagement is frequently carried out in relation to one's whole surroundings, natural and social."[24] This phenomenon explains why spirituality often just seems irrelevant to people today.[25] It explains why people think they don't need God.

TIS events engaged Soldiers in conversations that brought identity,

meaning, and purpose to the surface. Many Soldiers responded with atheistic convictions. Others openly scoffed at notions of meaning beyond what is self-created (which is textbook "buffered self" behavior).[26] This is predictable. In our secular context, few ask for guidance that connects identity, purpose, and meaning with God. Thus, Taylor's conception of the buffered self is useful for explaining why many metaphysical answers to Soldiers' questions don't get traction today.

Root observes that the shaping and directing of peoples' inner lives has been the preserve of pastors for centuries. He writes:

> Since [the time of] Augustine [in the fourth century AD] the pastor's job has been to impact, direct, and lead people's inner lives…The pastor is to get deeper than behavior, treading inside the inner world of people's intentions…For the next fifteen hundred years, pastors sketched out for people the need to surrender this inner reality to God.[27]

People's needs seem different today. Root suggests that some "might need a therapist, or financial advisor, or social worker, but not a pastor."[28] Pursuing others is a crucial skill for chaplains to learn. Yet this pastoral skill is challenging work and often ambiguous. Reduced calls for pastoral care don't obviate the chaplain's duty to pursue Soldiers. It does change pastoral dynamics and passive chaplains who expect Soldiers to come to them will be frustrated and largely avoided.

Root observes that one consequence for the buffered self is that "personal encounter with Divine Action has been

locked out of the compound of the self."[29] This makes sense of the reduced demand from Soldiers for guidance on their spiritual lives; they don't experience it as an existential priority. Soldiers today are insulated from spiritual promptings. This insularity is reinforced by powerful technologies.[30] We today are bombarded with information and formed within an "epistemological habitat" that is filled with the noise of endless distractions.[31] These conditions pose a challenge to chaplains whose goal is to connect "God to Soldiers and Soldiers to God."[32] Regardless, chaplains have been adapting to dynamic and formidable ministry conditions since its inception.[33]

Ministry to "Buffered Selves"

Many Soldiers keep their chaplain at a distance. Thus, the best moments of ministry often lie on the far side of a chaplain's pursuit. Like a sniper waiting a long time for a clear shot, chaplains must "go out" (patient MP) before a Soldier "comes in." TIS events facilitated the "proximity principle."[34] They allowed for closer proximity and a robust passive and active MP. TIS events ensured multiple points of meaningful intersection with Soldiers. Yet proximity alone offers no guarantee of ministry success or that Soldiers will accept the chaplain. Nor does it facilitate true spiritual formation.

Proximity itself doesn't prove chaplains are serving as God's ambassador to Soldiers. Once chaplains draw near to Soldiers, however, they have opportunity to minister to the soul. The chaplain's other work only begins after the work it takes to get close. This other work is to generate interest in and facilitate true spiritual formation. The goal is to be God's ambassador to Soldiers.

It involves a willingness to bridge the distances that isolate Soldiers from others, creation, and God.

TIS was not a religious event offering traditional means of grace. However, our TIS events were filled with moments to consider the sacred within the ordinary – in shared struggle, in challenging content, and in a humanizing process. Healthy spiritual formation inevitably involves a "re-sacralizing" process.[35] Re-sacralizing doesn't happen by "re-enchantment" or mere declaration,[36] much less from a long, difficult hike. However, TIS sets conditions for the ordinary to gain more attention and point beyond itself. It is here that Soldiers—those who are "tough in spirit"—need an intentional shepherding presence to direct this enterprise, seeking opportunities to point out Divine action.[37] When these TIS elements align and are well received, the experience facilitates SR.

The TIS initiative was conducted with a Solider population that was spiritually diverse and often conspicuously irreligious. Through TIS, many Soldiers experienced a shift in their existential horizon. They expressed this through a new (or renewed) interest in their spiritual lives. Some even turned to God. Though a minority remained isolated and unimpressed, all were provided a chaplain's active MP. Most Soldiers were very open to participating in a common struggle, engaging meaningful content, and embracing a humanizing process that deepened engagement with their platoon. The process invited buffered selves into dynamic conversations that facilitated reflection on their own SR. And this is why the commander's exhortation to "get outside and go do hard things with the chaplain" remains timely guidance.

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Sacred Speech in Future Armed Conflict

By Chaplain (Major) Brandon Denning and Chaplain (Major) Daniel Werho

The battlefield of the future will be complex. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza already demonstrate the incredible complexity of war as reflected in the new multidomain operating concept.[1] Chaplains have always provided ministry amidst the trauma, anxiety, uncertainty, and despair of war. The development and deployment of new technologies are adding to the complexity. Multidomain operations introduces further complexity with combined arms employment of space and cyberspace capabilities. Does this mean that the mode of sermon delivery will change? Possibly. However, we contend that chaplains cannot rely on leveraging these emerging technologies to deliver religious support. Instead, we focus on what we know will be constant: the human dimension.[2] We argue that, in future operations, chaplains need to be prepared to use sacred speech that is simple and adaptable for tactical purposes, while still addressing the complexities of the human dimension of war. In this paper, we explore the complexities of the future battlefield and offer a model that navigates these complexities.

The Future Battlefield

Space and cyberspace domains will change the way sacred speech is delivered on the battlefield. Given technological advances and recent experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, one potential solution for chaplains seeking to reach their Soldiers dispersed across a future battlefield might be virtual sermons and worship services. However, FM 3-0 states that "peer threats employ networks of sensors and long-range massed fires that exploit electromagnetic signatures and other detection methods to create high risk for ground forces,

particularly while they are static."[3] For example, a Ukrainian battalion was destroyed by long-range precision rockets shortly after a drone was spotted observing their location.[4] Soldiers will not be able to amass in large groups for any period of time without becoming a target. Instead, Soldiers will be dispersed to prevent detection through hostile air and space assets. At the same time technology will be limited, exploited, and leveraged by both the U.S. and the enemy. Internet connectivity will likely have a limited bandwidth dedicated strictly for current operations. Cell phones will be unusable and if they are used, the results could be deadly.[5] Chaplains cannot expect to rely on technology to deliver sacred speech.

Chaplains need to formulate sacred speech in a condensed and adaptable form. The Army calls this technique the "BLUF" (bottom-line-up-front).The technique is designed to communicate concepts briefly and clearly. In homiletics, this technique is the called "The Big Idea."[6] Using the BLUF or Big Idea technique allows for a variety of sermon structures and provides one central meaning to the sermon. In a large-scale combat operations (LSCO) context, this technique immediately informs the Soldier of the sacred text and main idea. The chaplain must adapt by delivering the conclusion at the beginning of the sacred speech. This is important in the case of an interruption. Then, the Soldier can later reference the sacred text and associate a meaning to it. In other words, the chaplain must structure the sacred speech in a way that it can be presented in full length or abbreviated, if required, without losing meaning. The message can be delivered in-person, or the message might be passed along through formations; possibly delivered by first-line leaders or even designated

Soldiers. On the future battlefield, chaplains will need to be creative in developing means of delivering sacred speech in a way that is tactically sound to avoid putting Soldiers at risk.

There is a complex human element to every decision that must be made in war. War is not just about hardware.[7] Humans have a will to hope, a will to fight, and a will to overcome overwhelming odds. Despite tactical constraints, chaplains still need to address the complex realities of the human dimension of war. This feels like an impossible task in light of the nature of today's realities. Soldiers' lives can change in an instant based on media, social media, politics, propaganda, family realities, and a myriad of other factors. How can chaplains deliver real, relevant, and brief sacred communications to the people in their care who are scattered across the front lines?

Amid chaos and when all the formalities are stripped away, the enduring elements of sacred speech remain. There will be people who want to worship God. There will be a sacred text. And there will be an existential need. If the chaplain is not there to bring these elements together, the Soldiers surely will, even if it is in small group gatherings. The point here is that the existential questions emerge through the experience of war. These questions will ultimately drive Soldiers of faith to a sacred text one way or the other. This means that chaplains must have a solid theology of suffering that speaks with relevance to the existential questions of war.[8] This is the challenge the Corps faces.

In our experience of supervising chaplains, one of the mistakes we witness is the inability to transition to the existential needs of the Army during a

combat scenario. Often the sacred text does not relate to the battlefield context, military language and illustrations are overdone, and the sacred speech is too long. There are some unchanging constants that should be predictable on the battlefield and in the lives of Soldiers. Chaplains should prepare messages that address these constants, such as issues related to stress, grief, trauma, fear, and suffering. Chaplains should also consider Soldiers' physical circumstances such as exhaustion, hunger, and distractions. Yet, on the future battlefield, chaplains may be unable to be present on a regular basis with all their Soldiers.

With that in view, messages should be repeatable to small groups of Soldiers multiple times a week or even within a day. We suggest chaplains consider partnering with Soldiers on the front lines to empower them as lay leaders. Chaplains should consider training and equipping their lay leaders. This

approach may be uncomfortable for some chaplains. However, as a Corps and as individual chaplains we must adjust to the future battlefield where chaplains will be scarce, and survivability will be an operational premium for the command. Like most challenges, this train-the-trainer (T4T) model also presents opportunities. Chaplains can gain relational capital through the training process. Another benefit of this approach is that the chaplain's message will be mediated through the lay leader's experiences on the front lines. After all, the lay leaders will be living side-by-side with their peers on the battlefield.

Regarding content, chaplains serving on the battlefield of the future need an approach to sacred communication that gets straight to the existential questions and draws on sacred texts that answer those questions. Regarding form, chaplains serving on the battlefield of the future need an approach to sacred communication that is teachable and

accessible to everyone. It must be portable and flexible enough to integrate with daily study and be deliverable in various small group settings.

The Conversational Model

To meet the challenges of this battlefield context, we propose The Conversational Model. This model was created and validated by Chaplain Denning in 2010 during Operation Hero Recovery, Afghanistan. Although it has not been tested in LSCO, Operation Hero Recovery was a 72-hour operation that included a mass casualty event. It is a real-world battlefield-tested approach to sacred communication.[9] The Conversational Model is unique in the way it incorporates a hybrid delivery of monologue (explaining the text) combined with a facilitated dialogue all focused on the existential question addressed by the sacred text. Not to be confused with other dialogical approaches,[10] it is not a solely facilitated model where interpretation is the task of the audience. Conversational homiletics is not new in and of itself but the focus, structure, and the elements of delivery for this model are unique. It is important to note that the chaplain does the exegetical work beforehand and can package it to equip front-line leaders when battlefield circulation is limited. What makes this model useful is that it is informal, provides flexibility regarding length, assesses Soldiers' spiritual maturity through discussion, and is repeatable with little effort. For the Soldier, a conversational approach gains and maintains attention, feels collaborative through active participation, and provides practical application. The structure of the Conversational Model provides a logical and linear path. Below is a depiction of this path.

1. Existential Question (Monologue)

↓

2. Audience Answers (Dialogue)

↓

3. Consider the Sacred Text (Monologue)

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4. Explain the Sacred Text and Answer the Existential Question (Monologue)

↓

5. Application (Dialogue)

↓

6. Challenging Insight with Action (Monologue)
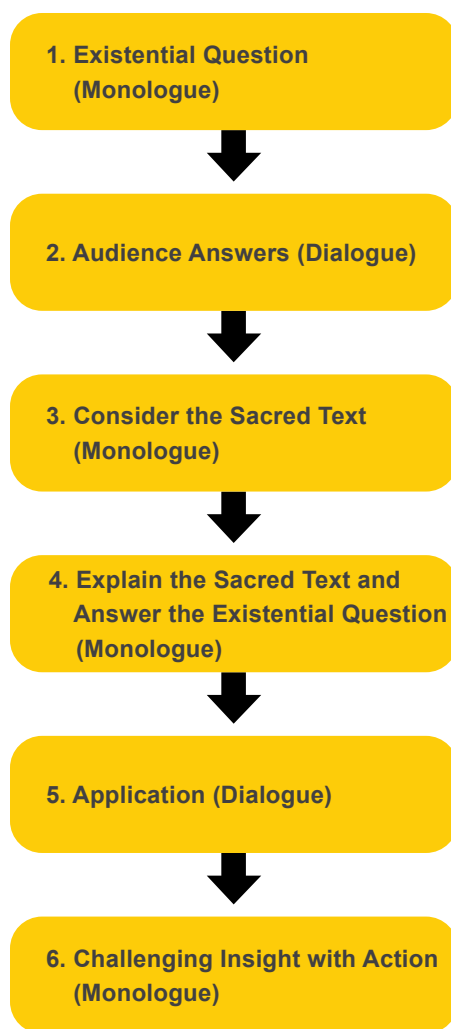
1. **Existential Question (Monologue)**: The chaplain or facilitator[11] begins by presenting the main idea of the message as an open-ended existential question. The question brings unity to the entire model and is derived by isolating the subject while determining the theme of the sacred text. The existential question is the BLUF in the form of a question that the sacred text will answer. Thus, even if the message is interrupted, the chaplain can still provide the reference to the sacred text for further study. It is important for the chaplain to study and prepare (exegetical work) because questions might be asked for further clarity. The chaplain is just presenting the

question while setting the conditions for it to be answered honestly and openly by the audience. It is not rhetorical in nature and should not be presented as such.

2. **Audience Answers (Dialogue)**: At this point, the chaplain facilitates a discussion around the existential question. The responses that emerge may be unpredictable, so it is important to keep answers focused on the question. During this stage of the model the chaplain listens to the Soldiers' answers and rarely comments. This approach gives the chaplain the opportunity to learn how the existential topic impacts everyone, assisting the chaplain in assessing spiritual needs. Soldiers should be allowed to process and explore their ideas and concepts related to the existential question. The first time the model is used, a chaplain should expect it be uncomfortable, ask follow-up questions to bring clarity to the subject, and help Soldiers to see that this is not just a lecture. Working in this way allows chaplains to show Soldiers that their thoughts are important in understanding how the sacred text addresses real life situations. If Soldiers get off subject, the chaplain kindly asks them to stay on subject and consider revisiting those discussions later. Whatever direction the conversation goes, the chaplain needs to be cautious not to dismiss any answers.

3. **Consider the Sacred Text (Monologue):** Once the chaplain determines it is time, this section serves as a transition to explaining the text in relation to the question. The chaplain explains to the Soldiers why he or she thinks the question is important and related to the scriptural

worldview. The chaplain could speak to his or her own experience or reference a current situation. The key factor in this section is for the chaplain to make a clear transition to considering how the sacred text addresses the existential question. Soldiers should realize that this is the time to listen to the chaplain. Once this is done, the chaplain reads the section of sacred text to setup the next section.

4. **Explain the Scared Text and Answer the Existential Question (Monologue)**: The chaplain explains the sacred text and its historical, cultural, and literary context. This

should be brief and based on the chaplain's exegetical work. With the text and its context in view, the chaplain explains how the sacred text directly answers the question.

5. **Application (Dialogue)**: In this section, the chaplain addresses the application question of "what does this look like today?" The chaplain invites the Soldiers to either participate in an exercise to reinforce the sacred text's answer or to share personal illustrations of how it effects their lives.

6. **Challenging Insight with Action (Monologue)**: This is the conclusion of the sacred speech. It is designed

to transition from insight to action, which could be a variety of next steps. The chaplain provides his or her own action to how the sacred text relates to the existential question.[12] If the message is distributed, this is where lay leaders receive experiential training. Finally, the facilitator provides an action that everyone could take based on the how the sacred text answered the existential question.

A CONVERSATIONAL MODEL EXAMPLE FROM A CHRISTIAN APPROACH

1. **Existential Question (Monologue)**: "What does God expect of us?"

2. **Audience Answers (Dialogue)**: *Facilitation of the answers.*

3. **Consider the Sacred Text (Monologue)**: "We live in a world of expectations. We have expectations from our leaders, spouses, children, maybe our parents. Expectations impact our beliefs, our actions, and how we live our lives. It impacts the way we respond to war and suffering. It seems important to know what God expects of us. I think we can answer this question by looking at Matthew 22:36-39 (NIV)." *Read Text* "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

4. **Explain Sacred Text and Answer the Existential Question (Monologue)**: The chaplain continues the monologue by explaining the context and

providing exposition to answer the existential question. The exegetical work is prepared before the message.

5. **Application (Dialogue)**: "Let's put this concept to a test." After stating this, the chaplain asks for volunteers to give one of the 10 Commandments. As the Soldier gives a commandment, the chaplain asks the others in the group how that commandment fulfills what Jesus said in Matthew 22:36-39. The chaplain may need to help provide a commandment(s) if needed. An example of this is "thou shall not covet" fulfills loving your neighbor as yourself.

6. **Challenging Insight with Action (Monologue)**: "We all need to be careful about loving things more than God. I had a CSM say to his NCOs, 'Love people and use things, don't love things and use people.' God's expectation is for all of us to love Him and love each other.

This model will not work in all contexts, but it may be especially suited for the battlefield of the future.[13] There are several weaknesses that need to be considered. First, the chaplain must manage time during facilitation. Consider setting clear expectations around time to help Soldiers stay focused. Tell Soldiers there can only be a certain number of comments due to time constraints. Also, consider asking the existential question then reference the text in case of interruption or if you know time is limited. Another weakness is that this model does not work well in large groups of Soldiers or with Soldiers who do not know one another. It is also important that the chaplain has an established relationship with the Soldiers.

Keep in mind that as a combat approach, this model is flexible. If time is restricted, all portions of facilitation (parts 2 and 5) can be removed, and the sermon remains monological. If the chaplain has a network of trained front-line leaders who understand this model, the chaplain can simply push out the exegetical work in a packageable format that the front-line leaders can adapt to their Soldiers' context. Imagine a prompt sheet with the existential question and instructions on guiding the conversation with the sacred text and prompts for the monologues. This would look like the example provided above. This makes the model portable, teachable, adaptable, and focused on the BLUF.

Conclusion

The battlefield of the future will be constrained by technology and time. Traditional preaching models may be difficult to deliver or ineffective. The Conversational Model works within the constraints to address the existential questions that emerge in the context of war and suffering.[14] Our approach is simple and adaptable and addresses the complexities of war. The Conversational Model fosters sacred speech that is real, relevant, and brief, regardless of who is delivering it. As the Army continues to train for future operational environments, religious support activities will be increasingly challenging, and their delivery may change. Our hope is that this article serves as a first step in a wider conversation around sacred communication in future armed conflict.

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Chaplain (Major) Daniel Werho entered active duty as a chaplain in 2012. He holds a Master of Divinity from Denver Seminary in Pastoral Counseling and a Master of Theology from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Preaching. He served in aviation, signal, and psychological operations units with a combat deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He currently serves as the Homiletics Instructor at the United States Army Institute of Religious Leadership in Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

NOTES

1 Multidomain operations refers to "the combined arms employment of joint and Army capabilities to create and exploit relative advantages that achieve objectives, defeat enemy forces, and consolidate gains on behalf of joint force commanders." Department of the Army, *Operations* (3-0) (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2022), 1-9.

2 Department of the Army, *Holistic Health and Fitness* (FM 7-22) (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2020).

3 Department of the Army, *Operations*, 1-10.

4 See the case study in *Operations*, 2-9.

5 Rhoda Kwon, "Russia blames its soldiers' cellphone use for missile strike that killed dozens," *NBC News*, last modified January 4, 2023, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/russia-blames-soldiers-phone-use-ukraine-missile-strike-rcna64187.

6 Homiletics is the art and science of communicating any sacred speech that provides essential elements of religion that can include worship, observances, or religious education. It is deploying practical theology in a way that makes it useful and applicable.

7 Department of the Army, *Operations*.

8 We recommend all chaplains develop a formal theology of suffering through a group process prior to going to war. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is one option to work through a theology of suffering, but technical supervisors can also walk a cohort through a process as a part of training for war.

9 After use in combat, Chaplain Denning later noticed that the sacred speech lost authority and significance when defined by Soldier's opinions of the meaning of the text. Most Soldiers were not familiar with inductive study approaches. During his time as the Homiletics instructor at USA-IRL, he worked to refine a useable model for use by any chaplain. Later, Chaplain Werho's combat experience helped emphasize the importance of the existential question in the model.

10 This is not "Dialogue Preaching" as defined by Lucy Atkinson Rose nor is it Doug Pagitt's "Progressive Dialogue." See Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville, KY, Westminster John Knox, 1997) and Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).The sermon does not belong to the audience per se. It is driven by the text and the chaplain's previous exegetical work. The audience participates providing insight and practical illustrations, but the goal is conveying the meaning of the text and preserving the authority of the Scripture.

11 For the sake of simplicity, both the chaplain or the facilitator are referred to as the chaplain for the rest of this explanation.

12 If this message is facilitated by a lay leader, it is important to have the facilitator do some personal reflection on the exegetical work provided by the chaplain.

13 This model is not recommended in a formal congregational setting such as chapel.

14 Examples of existential questions include: What is the meaning of life? What is my purpose? Why am I doing this? Will I be punished for sin? Is there life after death? Why do we suffer? Can people change? Can people really be good? What is wisdom? How do I measure success? Can war be morally justified? What is the difference between killing and murder?

Leading in Gaps:
Intentional Leadership During Times of Military Assignment Transitions

By Chaplain (Major) Peter Robinson and Chaplain (Captain) Marcus A. Marroquin

It was a Friday when I[1] arrived at my very first battalion as a chaplain. After ten years of education, ecclesiastical training, and completing the Chaplain Officer Basic Course, I was ecstatic to begin ministering to Soldiers. I met the executive officer, briefly met the battalion commander, and then settled into my office. On Monday at physical training (PT), I met a concerned company commander who had desperately been trying to get a hold of me. Despite all my excitement and ambition to do a good job, I had not started properly. I failed to communicate with key leaders immediately upon my arrival and did not provide basic contact information to leaders within my unit. To make matters worse, the battalion Commander came up to me after the first formation and asked, "Why weren't they able to get a hold of you?" I made the crucial mistake of assuming I could just settle into my role. It was a relational obstacle I had to face right off the bat. That very morning, I placed a photo of myself and my contact information all around the battalion. I had decided that for my next assignment, I would actively explore ways to better assimilate into a new unit. Transition plans help leaders begin on the right path and open up ministry opportunities.

Chaplain transitions can lead to gaps in pastoral care. Within the Chaplain Corps, opportunities to conduct "left seat—right seat rides" with the outgoing chaplain are scarce. Chaplains may become absorbed in the fast-paced operational environment and form subjective views about their unit's culture, leadership, and command climate. By adopting a phased approach and intentionally planning transitions for assignments, chaplains can enhance their effectiveness and gain a more accurate understanding of the overall context.

In this article on best practices for integrating into a new unit, we present a phased approach to starting a new assignment. Originally designed for command teams and drawing on our experience, we have adapted this approach for use by Unit Ministry Teams (UMTs).

Phase 1: Preparation

Chaplains must be intentional when it comes to their transition into a new assignment, a reality that requires preparation. The preparation phase is key for cultivating situational awareness and integrating with the unit to establish trust. And this all starts before the chaplain arrives.

Many Army leaders assigned to key developmental positions conduct a significant planning phase prior to coming to an organization. Commanders are selected as early as two years prior to taking command. On top of that, they attend pre-command courses at echelon to prepare them. Chaplains do not have that same level of notification nor access to a course intended to help them envision ministry in a new context.

First, to prepare for arrival, it is important to develop situational awareness of the organization. Background information such as task organizational charts, briefings, mission statements, and unit histories all provide valuable insights into the formal aspects of the organization. We recommend inbound chaplains reach out to the current supervisory UMT to gather information about the unit and their mission. We also suggest networking with colleagues and acquaintances to gather their knowledge

about the organization. The goal during this phase is to find valid and relevant information that helps develop a picture of the organization's cultural environment, leadership, command climate, and identifies potential areas where a new chaplain might make a meaningful impact.

Second, soft introductions are an incredible tool to communicate professionalism and open lines of communication. After my first assignment, my brigade chaplain and I talked about how an initial introduction to my next battalion could facilitate a transition. He helped me construct a professional email containing an attached biography and formal letter of introduction. This approach helped me establish good dialogue for a seamless transition. These emails may also include a request to talk on the phone, especially with the current executive officer and supervisory chaplain. This goes a long way to prepare the incoming chaplain for the new assignment. It also empowers the incoming chaplain to enter Phase 2: The First Day.

Phase 2: First Day

The first day marks a chaplain's entrance into their organization, which comes with plenty of threats and opportunities. What the chaplain does—and who they spend time with—on the first day will signal to their people what and who are important to the chaplain. For these reasons, the first day should primarily focus on initiating and gaining trust.

Arriving at a new unit requires intentional preparation. Michael Watkins, founder of Genesis Advisers and a corporate consultant, suggests that joining a new organization is akin to an organ transplant, and the new employee is the new organ. If chaplains fail to thoughtfully adapt to the new situation, the organizational immune system may attack and reject them.[2] As welcome as most chaplains are at any unit, they still face challenges in transition. Without proper awareness of the situation, a chaplain's good intentions could be attacked by the unit's immune system. For example, attacks could come through marginalization. This is evident when an individual is not recognized within the unit, is not sought out as the primary resource for addressing Soldier concerns, is excluded from leadership consultations, and is ultimately not trusted.

A key task for any new chaplain is building and maintaining trust. As General Stanley McChrystal quotes: "Great teams consist of individuals who have learned to trust each other. Over time, they have discovered each other's strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to play as a coordinated whole."[3] New chaplains should hit the ground running by building trust. Chaplains establish trust by purposefully spending time with their people, engaging with the organization's leaders, and reflecting on their interactions. A purposeful approach and reflection establish trust.

Impressions and assessments begin immediately, for both a new chaplain and for those they are meeting. We recommend a new chaplain prioritizes meeting with the Religious Affairs Specialist. This shows respect, a team approach, and enables the chaplain to begin to lay out and get feedback on the initial integration plan. How a chaplain honors that relationship signals to the Religious Affairs Specialist and the rest of the organization the value the chaplain places on enlisted leadership. A chaplain's ability to prioritize and empower their Religious Affairs Specialist reflects how they value and integrate NCO leadership across the whole unit. When the Unit Ministry Team functions as a team, ministry multiplies. If a new chaplain is assigned to an installation where they in-process the installation prior to coming to their assigned unit, meeting with the Religious Affairs Specialist before the first day in the office can provide time for meetings to be set up for the first day ahead of time.

Other people new chaplains choose to meet on the first day should be focused on building key partnerships in the new unit. A good rule of thumb is that the people who know Soldiers best are the senior NCOs. For instance, at a TRADOC assignment, that may mean the Senior Drill Sergeants. For most other assignments, this means the first sergeants. Having a one-on-one with each first sergeant on the first day communicates that you prioritize soldier care and will be engaged with the Soldiers. An intentional plan from day one will set the chaplain up to enter the next phase: the Initial Assessment.

Phase 3: Initial Assessment

In *The First 90 Days*, Watkins suggests assessing and leading an organization is like preparing for a long sailing trip:

> First, you need to be clear on whether your destination (the mission and goals) and your route (the strategy) are the right ones. Then you can figure out which boat you need (the structure), how to outfit it (the processes), and which mix of crew members is best (the skill bases). Throughout the journey, you keep an eye out for reefs that are not on the charts.[4]

This phase encompasses the first 30 days and prioritizes reflection and assessment. As tempting as it may be to speed up this phase, it takes time just like preparing for a long sailing trip. The more experience a chaplain has, the more tempting it is to quickly make changes based on past failures and successes. However, without fully understanding the operational environment and the personalities involved, we can find ourselves committing malpractice and losing credibility with our "educated" assumptions. By speeding through transition, chaplains may not see the reefs that can cause them to crash and sink. For instance, this might involve assuming that a Chaplain Moral Leadership Training that was effective in a previous unit will automatically work well in the new unit. However, it is essential to engage with the Religious Affairs Specialist and unit leadership to determine the most suitable processes for the new context.

The bulk of the work here involves face-to-face meetings with stakeholders. Stakeholders are the interconnected offices and people that make up the larger picture of how the organization functions. It is about understanding what values and priorities make up the whole organization. Meeting with and assessing each section and command's leadership will help the chaplain have a better understanding of the whole organizational picture. Stakeholders can be both external and internal. Examples of internal stakeholders are the senior NCO population, the chaplain's command team and leaders at one level down, as well as staff sections, special staff, Soldier and Family Readiness Groups, and Civilian staff. External stakeholders are UMT peers across the installation, contracted ministry coordinators, behavioral health,

military family life counselors, financial counselors, societies, and regimental associations, and even food banks. For instance, as a chaplain in the First Infantry Division, being a member of the Society of the First Infantry Division and taking the time to talk with their president has opened an increased understanding of the history and lineage of the First Infantry Division and has even helped to explain why the First Infantry Division has such a strong tie with its local community.

During the initial meetings with these stakeholders, a new chaplain needs to determine their priorities and how often they need to touch base with the stakeholders. Chaplains need to make sure they have a purpose in their meetings and start to understand the stakeholders' impact on the Soldiers in the unit. For instance, my second assignment was an AIT battalion in a joint base environment with an Air Force Wing command. We were a tenant unit and the only Army battalion for one hundred and fifty-eight miles. Our stakeholders were distinct from our brigade, which was seven hundred miles away. I decided to break up the stakeholders by weeks. I dedicated the first week to the drill sergeant populations, senior chaplains on base, and my technical chain. In the second week, I met with the instructors and cadre. I dedicated the third week to the Air Force resources and offices. In the fourth week, I met with the community partners. Throughout the first month, I met continually with the battalion staff and battalion leadership.

The initial assessment is an incredible time for introductions and relationship building. New chaplains can build their unit's credibility with every handshake and partnership they build. Many stakeholders may have wanted to come

by or be a part of the effort but have not gotten around to it. When this is done intentionally, chaplains can multiply their efforts in caring for people and advising their commander. With a solid knowledge base of the organization and the key stakeholders, the next phase of Organizational Alignment and Team Building will yield better results.

Phase 4: Organizational Alignment and Team Building

This phase is focused on alignment, team building, and nesting the UMT's efforts with the unit and the commander's intent. This phase will take around 30 days, concluding around the 60-day mark. This phase requires constant effort and reflection because the alignment and team-building phase of the transition model necessitates re-establishing our core competencies in the context of our units and clearly communicating our purpose to the team. This step is crucial to operationalizing religious support in any environment. By fostering alignment and team building, a chaplain establishes their leadership of both the UMT and their role as the commander's advisor. This phase can be accomplished in six steps.

Step 1: Review and develop organizational alignment. How a chaplain assesses whether the UMT is organizationally aligned impacts what they can do for their people. The commander's goals and instructions, along with the unit's METL and its known or expected missions and objectives can help shape a chaplain's vision. Examine how effectively the unit shares the overall vision from the top down. The degree of alignment required may vary based on the distance from the desired state. Chaplains can make needed

changes more easily if they are patient and flexible and can set the tone with their UMT. We recommend choosing a creative venue to take the team to talk about vision, mission, goals, and objectives. Chaplains need to talk to their people, learn the history of the team, programs, and missions, and dream about what they can do together.

Step 2: Establishing Key Milestones. Chaplains should be clear with their team and leadership about what they are learning and establish clear milestones. They should determine the resource requirements for goals and how feasible it would be to accomplish them as a team.

Step 3: Secure quick wins and short-term victories. Chaplains shouldn't underestimate the value of showing up on time and being prepared. Chaplains can secure quick wins, ranging from having computer access to acquiring resources that seemed inaccessible for the previous team.

Step 4: Consider discontinuing established rhythms. This phase does not include making changes to the battle rhythms or programs. Rather, it requires the UMT to lay the groundwork for why some things may need to change. Some established programs can assist the UMT in maintaining its presence and provide a framework to achieve rapid wins by upgrading existing processes. Chaplains may abandon programs that have lost their effectiveness. At the same time chaplains should be slow to eliminate programs and rhythms too early and jeopardize needed continuity.

Step 5: Build the team. We recommend chaplains spend time understanding their part in developing their subordinates and their personal and career goals.

This may be a time where chaplains evaluate if team members are in the right position or if there is bandwidth to make personnel changes.

Step 6: Create a sense of urgency. The UMT provides a unique and specific resource in any operational environment. Urgency reminds the team of that role. Chaplains can create urgency in three ways: by ensuring the UMT sticks to the essentials, i.e., providing religious support and advising the commander, by advocating for the needs of the unit and their families, and by staying true to their calling. As chaplains have these discussions, their vision for ministry in their new context will start to unfold into specific and measurable objectives.

A Reflection on Phases 1–4

After phase four, we recommend chaplains conclude their assessment and start actioning their vision for the rest of the time they serve in that unit. In addition to intentionally transitioning through each phase we suggest, a new chaplain will benefit from using Army systems and planning as well. For instance, spending time utilizing the Army Design Methodology during each phase could help to address and identify some new areas of priority and provide opportunities for creative strategy and processes. Prior to proceeding to Phase Five, new chaplains can help ensure the unit is aware of the unique contributions of the UMT.

Here is a crucial but overlooked point: chaplains need to go back to the basics, assess the condition of their main product, and make it excellent. If the main thing is not excellent, then no other factor will compensate for its ineffectiveness.

For the Army, the main thing is the ability to fight and win our nation's wars. For the UMT, it is our core competencies: "nurture the living, care for the wounded, and honor the fallen."[5] We suggest chaplains maintain focus on their vision for the main thing, ministering to Soldiers in the darkest of hours. That leads us into Phase 5: Establish Culture and Ministry Rhythms.

Phase 5: Establish Culture and Ministry Rhythms

Culture and rhythms help guide the team, improve the health of the organization, and balance all the responsibilities of the team. As chaplains delve into the history and mission of the unit, it may seem that the organization has forgotten or lost its vision for the good work they have done and the opportunity to contribute to our nation's defense. New chaplains have an opportunity to reinvigorate the wider unit culture by utilizing existing slogans, key historical moments, or unique experiences in the unit (airborne operations, air assault operations, riding in tanks, etc.). We recommend incorporating these into the chaplain's vision for ministry. In this phase, new chaplains can also establish ministry rhythms. This might mean maintaining, adding, or removing existing meetings, programs, or daily practices. Chaplains may benefit from explicitly integrating the vision and mission into the reasons these rhythms are changing or staying the same. Culture and rhythms need to be regularly assessed, which leads to Phase 6: Sustaining.

Phase 6: Sustaining

Chaplains can reap the benefits of an intentional transition process in

phase six. This phase consists of two congruent efforts. The first is cultivating the systems and relationships created that help the UMT function effectively in the unit. The second is looking ahead to facilitate the next transition. Feedback is key for ongoing assessment. We suggest chaplains seek out feedback from their Religious Affairs Specialist, their leadership, other key figures in their organization, and their supervisory chaplain. Chaplains need not fear making changes as they go because an idea failed, or they didn't anticipate something in their initial assessment. Chaplains can align the change with the vision and mission and try again. Finally, it is never too early to start preparing the organization for the next leader. If chaplains keep this in mind, it gives them a big-picture perspective that pays dividends to the UMTs, unit leadership, and Soldiers that follow in their footsteps.

Conclusion

In the Army, transitions occur constantly. Transition periods present risks but also offer valuable opportunities. When the UMT approaches transitions with intentionality, both the chaplain and the gaining unit stand to gain. Too often, chaplains approach transitions with haste and surprise, as if they had no idea they were leaving or heading to a new assignment. While updated and thoughtful continuity books can be very helpful, they are not the only tool available for assignment transition. Above, we explored several ways to promote healthy transition and integration with a new unit. Approaching the transition with intentionality opens opportunities for ministry and care.

As an accompaniment to this article, Chaplain Marroquin developed a Chaplain Transition Handbook. It can be found using the following QR code.

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NOTES

1 Chaplain Marroquin.

2 Michael Watkins, *The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter* (Boston: Harvard Business Review, 2023).

3 Amy C. Edmondson, *Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, and Compete in the Knowledge Economy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 11 as quoted in Stanley McChrystal, Tantum Collins, David Silverman, and Chris Fussell, *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World* (London: Portfolio Penguin, 2015), 98.

4 Watkins, *First 90 Days*, 145.

5 Department of the Army, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities (AR 165-1)* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2024), 2-4.

The Forum is a space for conversations on important topics that are relevant to military chaplaincy. In this issue the Forum homes in on soldiering and gender by focusing on Caitlin Flanagan's "In Praise of Heroic Masculinity."

REFLECTION ON

"In Praise of Heroic Masculinity"

By Sergeant Major Daniel L. Roberts

In Caitlin Flanagan's thought-provoking piece, she provides a stirring counterpoint to some progressive ideas about masculinity. Within liberal circles, the phrase and concept toxic masculinity has been popularized to refer to harmful traits attributed solely to men. Quoting from Shepherd Bliss, Flanagan defines the term as "'behavior that diminishes women, children, other men . . . a way to describe that part of the male psyche that is abusive.'" Such groups have portrayed men as the cause of much evil in the world, including wars, rape, political power struggles, and domestic violence. Flanagan offers another view of masculinity that is worth honoring and has been the source of much goodness in the world: heroic acts of bravery, the protection of the innocent, and service to others.

It is worth noting that masculinity and femininity are both socially constructed terms and have meaning only within the circles in which these terms are agreed upon. For instance, in some progressive groups, the word masculinity is at best met with suspicion and resistance, and at worst, is subject to derision and attack. Flanagan herself notes, "I've talked about this topic [heroic masculinity] before, and almost instantly someone interrupts to report in outraged tones the monstrous action of some man who has been in the news. 'Is he heroic?' they will ask." She continues, "In progressive areas, there is a kind of suspicion about boys, a sense that if things aren't handled very carefully, they could go wrong and the boy might never express his feelings." In other words, within the culture she refers to there is

a worry that boys need to be taught to be sensitive rather than brutish, and if left to their own devices will likely harm others.

Flanagan counters assumptions about men and boys by using an example from a New York Times article. In it, the op-ed the author explains how she tried to raise her sons in a "gender-neutral way." Even though she taught them the importance of the inner and emotional lives of people, her sons, aged between three and seven, are only interested in shows and video games that involve combat between two dominant male figures. "Despite her best efforts, she has managed to produce boys who care deeply about being heroic and saving good people from villains," Flanagan reports. She continues, "Let them be who they are, including those boys—among them many artists and poets—who are very interested in what it means to be heroic, in the sense of defending and protecting the weak."

Flanagan also makes an important point that some ignore. Generally, men "are larger, faster, and stronger than women. This cannot be disputed, and it cannot be understood as some irrelevancy, because it comes with an obvious moral question that each man must answer for himself: Will he use his strength to dominate the weak or protect them?" This is truly the crux of the matter. As Flanagan points out, both men and women are capable of great strength and extraordinary deeds, but what they use their power for is the determinant of whether they are toxic or heroic.

Where the term toxic masculinity fails is that it is essentialism of the worst order. It paints men with broad brushes and attributes brutish, harmful, and violent traits to one gender rather than recognize that anyone, regardless of gender can perform both good and evil deeds. As Flanagan states, there are good cops and bad cops. Good police officers might be men or women and are willing to place their own bodies in harm's way. Such honorable servants are also ethical and lawful in their use of both legal and deadly force in defense of the innocent. On the other hand, bad cops are those who abuse their power to serve only themselves. Both men and women are capable of toxicity.

Flanagan shows that masculinity can also be linked to heroism. Borrowing from the common mindset that masculinity is normally attributed to men, Flanagan dispels the notion that traditional views of manhood are dangerous and need to change. Rather, the author points out that the same attributes of strength, power, bravery, and control can be directed against foes that seek to do harm. This is heroic and praiseworthy.

Phrases like toxic masculinity only serve to create division among people by painting classes of humans with broad strokes. Taken as a whole, no one individual matches such descriptions completely. We all are capable of both evil and good actions. Rather than create broad phrases, it is better to examine specific behavior. A person who is physically strong, wields great power, and directs that power against the vulnerable is engaging in toxic behavior. If those abilities are used to protect or help the innocent, then the person is acting in an honorable way. These statements are true whether the person in question is a man or a woman.

In my own research with servicewomen who have been morally injured, I interviewed fifty women veterans. They had been harmed in many ways and over 50% of them had been sexually assaulted, some by multiple people. Nearly all participants traced their wounds to a man who had harmed them. Those men represented an exceedingly gross misuse of power and strength. After hearing a few of those stories, it could be easy to accept toxic masculinity as an appropriate term. Participants also told stories of women who greatly harmed them. Would that be referred to as toxic femininity? Neither masculinity nor femininity is the problem, toxicity is.

To an earlier point, masculinity, like femininity, is a socially constructed term. Given society's current emphasis on gender fluidity and self-identification, words like masculine and feminine become even more difficult to define in ways that are generally accepted. Adding an adjective like toxic skews the debate even further. If one only looks at the adjectives themselves, clarity is immediately available. The issue is not toxic versus heroic masculinity. The question is, did the person, regardless of gender, behave in a toxic (harmful) or heroic (live-saving) way?

In the Army, it is acceptable to refer to both men and women as Soldiers. This is helpful because it orients them to a common group, a group that has a united purpose. Terms like toxic masculinity and even heroic masculinity are potentially divisive because in most people's minds, they assign behavior to one gender over another. On the other hand, toxic and heroic are terms that can be used with emotional clarity and refer much more specifically to a type of behavior rather than gender.

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Sergeant Major Daniel Roberts's Reflection

By Chaplain (Major) Mel Baars O'Malley

Sergeant Major Daniel Roberts begins his piece by critiquing what he calls a progressive and liberal tendency to demonize men and not celebrate the kind of masculinity that is worth honoring. At first, he seems to take a position similar to Caitlin Flanagan's. Eventually, though, he names the problem as painting one gender with an attribute like toxicity without acknowledging that this trait and many others, both positive and negative, can be embodied by any person regardless of gender. I agree with this wider view of human capacity that traverses the entire spectrum of gender. Corrupt cops are not only men, but they can also be women who have lost their way. Women also run into burning buildings at their peril to help another. Men are not the only ones called either in their work or personal life to face physical danger. All people are capable of good and evil and assigning characteristics, even positive ones like heroism, to one gender alone divides people further.

In his work and research in the Army, Daniels has personally interviewed women who have been harmed by men who have abused their power and strength. He says it would be easy to characterize these men as toxic. Their behavior is abhorrent and cannot be tolerated in the Army or elsewhere. However, he is also clear that there are other stories, though fewer, in which women are the abuser. It is not masculinity that drives these crimes but toxicity. Every person, he argues, has the choice to be harmful or lifesaving. While this is true, it still seems important to address the particularities of this problem. For instance, while there are both male and female perpetrators of sexual trauma, most often, they are men. These perpetrators do not represent every man, nor does calling them toxic help change the trend. However, there is something within this problem which is connected to certain expressions of manhood. Is there an approach to cultivating healthy masculinity that might help address the root of this problem?

Perhaps we begin by teaching men not only to value their physical strength and size but also, to cultivate other aspects of being manly, even something as radical as vulnerability. Flanagan gives the example of the Nashville Chief of Police John Drake as an example of heroic masculinity.

What Drake did when he addressed his fellow officers who were hurting in the aftermath of a terrible school shooting is open the door of vulnerability. In this moment, he embodied something greater in his masculinity than being merely, "larger, faster, and stronger." Drake demonstrates the essence of what Paul teaches about divine paradox for all people regardless of their gender, "For when I am weak, I am strong (2 Cor 12:10)." It matters that Drake's police officers were present to witness his courage. His example might be enough to open a similar door in their lives and begin cultivating a wider approach to a masculinity that has room for far more than strength and power.

Sergeant Major Daniel Roberts's Reflection

By Dr. Eugene F. Rogers, Jr.

Sergeant Major Roberts's essay is useful for two reasons, and both in a voice of military authority. First, it conveniently reprises a lot of what Flanagan says. Second, it accepts that gender is socially constructed. Two other things are worth noting about the social construction of gender, so that we don't misunderstand it. One, "social construction" doesn't mean that something isn't real. Lots of things are both more clearly socially constructed than gender, and also more obviously real. Paper or digital money is clearly socially constructed—and a matter of life and death. Two, the idea of social construction is not new. It is present, for example, in the High Middle Ages, when Thomas Aquinas (not known as a flaming liberal) writes in his *De Veritate* that things in general (including hard, physical things to stub your toe against) are nevertheless "constituted between two intellects" (that is, socially), where one is the mind of the human being and the other (in a theological twist) is the mind of God. Thus a clearly related idea—things are constructed between minds—is at home in a realist thinker of a period long before the present.

"In Praise of Heroic Masculinity"

By Chaplain (Major) Mel Baars O'Malley

Caitlin Flanagan argues that it is imperative to support and even celebrate the inherent strengths of men, that, by in large, they are "larger, faster, and stronger than women." Her account of heroic masculinity is grounded in this concept of male physical superiority. She argues that physical dominance is what enabled a soccer team comprised of 15-year-old boys to beat the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team. It is also what allowed Mr. Fierro to overpower a man who opened fire at a club in Colorado Springs. Women and the weak depend on heroic men to keep them safe by being willing to run into a burning building or tackle a gunman to the ground, in her telling. Men are uniquely situated to do this kind of valiant work, and they should be praised for it. Because men are "larger, faster, and stronger than women," it is up to men to use these powers for good. When channeled in the wrong direction, these attributes become toxic, dangerous, and harmful. Though Flanagan argues that heroic masculinity is the antidote to toxic masculinity, in effect, she describes another problematic approach to masculinity, one that is limited only to physicality and no other meaningful dimensions of healthy manhood.

While Flanagan gives ample evidence that, in a gun fight, a struggle between good and bad cops, or even a tussle on the playground, it's important for the "good" guy to be stronger to protect the weaker ones, she doesn't account for those men who aren't physically strong because of illness, injury, physical disability, or even genetics. Can a man who is not physically "larger, faster, and stronger" still be a man? Can he be heroic or even toxic?

By focusing entirely on physical prowess as the marker for heroic masculinity, Flanagan misses important nuances how society might foster health in all men regardless of their physical capacity. She doesn't address what might encourage a man to choose good in the first place. She also does not account for the men who experience a trauma response after acting "heroically." Take, for instance, Mr. Fierro. For those moments when he took down the gunman in the night club, he was "connected to greatness." This is what Flanagan says happens when a man stops another man from hurting someone. In this case, he beat the man's head repeatedly with the butt of the pistol he took from the gunman. In the heat of the moment, he was protecting his family and other unarmed people. What happens to him after the beating? What is the price for this kind of heroism?

As a chaplain in the Army, I have seen firsthand the cost of these expectations of heroic masculinity. Strong and capable on the battlefield, warriors often face a plethora of identity crises when off of it. Many grapple with moral injury, which is a "syndrome of shame, self-handicapping anger, and demoralization that occurs when deeply held beliefs and expectations about moral and ethical conduct are transgressed."[1] These men may have embodied Flanagan's definition of heroic masculinity for a time. However, faced with a trauma response in the aftermath of doing their duty, they may no longer feel worthy of their manhood. If being wounded through combat or other traumas—either physically, emotionally, or spiritually—means that a man cannot live up to the ideal of heroic masculinity, where does that leave him? What happens to his self-perception when he feels weak or is forced to ask for help because of these wounds?

Defining masculinity so narrowly cuts out huge swaths of men from developing a more well-rounded, healthy masculinity and, even more harmfully, isolates men from seeking help to address their wounds. In fact, many men may feel pressure to protect their manhood

and reputation through staying silent about their struggles, rather than seek out healing.[2] This is a vicious cycle where men end up suffering in silence and the underlying toxicity doesn't improve.

Part of the definition of heroic involves the idea of courage. Brene Brown argues that the true meaning of courage, a word from the Latin word for heart, is "to tell the story of who you are with your whole heart."[3] While Flanagan focuses almost entirely on physical acts of bravery, she comes close to touching on a more profound act of courage. She speaks of the Nashville Chief of Police, John Drake, who addresses the overwhelming emotion he experienced in the aftermath of the Covenant School shooting. He says, "No one ever said it would be easy, but they said it would be worth it."

What if he could have taken his remarks a step further? What if he would have talked about the struggle of witnessing devastation and being powerless to change the outcome? What if he would have encouraged his colleagues to seek out help in dealing with the sadness, fear, helplessness, and anger? Sometimes being larger, faster, and stronger isn't the key to heroism. Courage is a matter of the heart, a willingness to speak truths, even when they hurt. This courage is for all of us, regardless of gender.

One area of strong agreement between myself and Flanagan is the issue of modeling. Men need role models to demonstrate what this kind of courage looks like, to teach them that addressing wounds and prioritizing healing is an act of courage. Drake takes a first step, but there is a lot more work to be done.

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NOTES

1 Brett Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure: A New Treatment for Military Trauma, Loss, and Moral Injury* (New York: Guilford, 2016), 21.

2 Kristen J. Leslie, Betrayal by Friendly Fire, in *War and Moral Injury*, edited by Robert E. Meagher and Douglas A. Pryer (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 250.

3 Brene Brown, The Power of Vulnerability, TEDxHouston, June 2010, https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability?language=en.

Chaplain (Major) Mel Baars O'Malley's Reflection

By Sergeant Major Daniel Roberts

In Chaplain (Major) O'Malley's treatment of the article, "In Praise of Heroic Masculinity," the author takes the discussion to a deeper level about the spirit of men who engage in heroic deeds. O'Malley asks readers to think about two male-centered topics. First, how should men who lack the physical strength, due to "illness, injury, physical disability, or even genetics," think about heroism? Is heroism limited to those acts of raw courage and power that involve physical combat or is there a type of courage that is based in words and thoughts. O'Malley posits that "sometimes being larger, faster, and stronger isn't the key to heroism. Courage is a matter of the heart, a willingness to speak truths, even when they hurt."

The second topic that O'Malley broaches is the idea of moral injury. What happens to men after they take part in physical combat, and as a result, take the life of another human being? "Strong and capable on the battlefield, warriors often face a plethora of identity crises when returning home. Many grapple with moral injury." Of course, military women, who are experiencing combat in far greater numbers than ever before, have faced these same challenges. O'Malley does not mean to suggest otherwise but focuses her attention on men as a counterpoint or deeper reflection on Caitlin's emphasis on physical prowess

as a sign of heroism. O'Malley asks two important questions in this area: "What is the price for this kind of heroism? [in relation to physical combat]" and, "What happens to his self-perception when he feels weak or is forced to ask for help because of these wounds [i.e. moral injury]?"

On the first point, O'Malley suggests that heroism is not limited to the corporeal and that physically weak men can be great heroes. I wholeheartedly agree. As a young man in the airborne infantry, I was a specimen of physical strength, courage, and potential killing power. Now that I am much older, those traits have left me, and I, like many other "old" Soldiers, struggled for a while to find my place and self-worth in the Army. This can be true for ex-infantrymen like me, but also for both men and women who serve in roles that do not involve combat. Administration, logistics, chaplaincy, medicine, communications, and many other fields are vital to the proper functioning of the U.S. Army. The men and women who perform these jobs routinely exhibit courage and heroism by standing up for what is right, working long hours to make sure Soldiers in the field receive the pay, food, and care they need, and by leaving their family to go on long deployments.

To O'Malley's second idea about moral injury: enacting heroism, whether as a

modern gladiator on the field of combat or as a spiritual warrior fighting against toxicity and injustice, can leave its mark. Doing the right thing is no guarantee that one will remain unscathed from the battle. The example of Jesus Christ would suggest the opposite. From my Chrisitan point of view, Jesus was the ultimate doer of good, but God allowed Him to suffer at the hands of evil men. Unlike Jesus, who arose to glory after His suffering, people who experience moral wounds after a traumatic clash with evil may be left with depression, loss of self-esteem, metaphysical disorientation, and other maladies. Some may feel that they have lost their manhood. O'Malley notes: "Many men may feel pressure to protect their manhood and reputation through staying silent about their struggles, rather than seek out healing."

Such topics are worthy of much more discussion than can be had in this forum. As a Chaplain Corps, we must continue to sort through these and other topics related to the body and soul of the warrior. Questions such as, what does it mean to be a hero? What does one look like? And how do we model heroism in the arena in which we are called to serve? We should continue to discuss these questions with our Soldiers. We should also ask how we can provide better support to those Veterans who are no longer in our ranks.

Chaplain (Major) O'Malley's Reflection

By Dr. Eugene F. Rogers, Jr.

Chaplain (Major) O'Malley points to the physical examples underpinning Flanagan's account. If we took strength and endurance as attributes of character, and the physical examples as emblematic rather than exhaustive, more of Flanagan's account would survive.

O'Malley also points to a problem in the classical account of the virtues— and in the lives of Soldiers. In the classical account, a virtue is a habit positioned as a mean between extremes, so moderated by reason that it can never harm us, only do us good. The unity that reason achieves in the virtues is strong. After Freud, the integration that the ego achieves is always still subject to challenge—and as military chaplains have learned, also to trauma. O'Malley's account of trauma precisely in the exercise of virtue is profound. As Jonathan Lear writes in the stark-titled book *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life*, a human mind is not a given but an achievement, always under threat, always unfinished, always in need of healing.[1]

NOTES

1 Jonathan Lear, *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

"In Praise of Heroic Masculinity"

"Many-Modeled Heroism"

By Dr. Eugene F. Rogers, Jr.

"In Praise of Heroic Masculinity" by Caitlin Flanagan proposes a virtue, "heroic masculinity," to counter a vice, "toxic masculinity." The article both suggests that toxic masculinity would be a vice, and worries that the concept may be overused to typecast boys and men as inclined to toxicity. Thus, it offers "heroic masculinity" as a corrective—both a virtue to practice and a phrase to reclaim a good name. I'm not against the article's goal to "teach boys that strength can be a virtue," but I want to put it into a wider context that qualifies it in some ways and extends it in others.

What's good about the article is its focus on heroes, virtues, and praise. What gender adds to this is unclear. Unless you think traditional gender roles are under attack. But what if they're under expansion? Why wouldn't expansion be a good thing? What if they're expanding under exposure to . . . reality? Why shouldn't children and adults learn from a variety of role models?

According to Aristotle and Aquinas, the life of the virtues begins in a desire to imitate others, to acquire some human excellence that we see around us. We humans share this tendency toward excellence with animals: a swallow wants to make a nest distinctive of swallows; a human being wants to practice courage formed by reason. The law of our nature begins in the elemental desire, I want to be like that! Where "that" is something seen, told, read about. Different people will find different features salient. Different features will attract different people to imitate them. The maleness or femaleness or nonbinariness of a model may or may not matter to the imitator.

The classic traditions of the heroic and the virtues are helpful for thinking outside the bounds of the contested nature of masculinity. Those traditions insist on the necessity of role models, but they do much to insulate the imitator from the model's limits. In Aristotle, the "hero" is actually a special category apart from the usual pattern by which people acquire virtues by imitating the wise. In one of Aristotle's most theological moments, a "hero" is technically someone who receives the virtues directly from God. That's quite a surprise to most readers of Aristotle. This means that Hercules cannot take credit for his heroism without sharing it with God. Although Aristotle never uses the word "grace," his Christian follower Thomas Aquinas sees grace in Aristotle's account and uses it to transform Aristotle's "hero" into someone who receives the gifts of the Spirit. There is little among the gifts of the Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord) to make the hero look particularly masculine or physically strong.

Furthermore, Aquinas modifies Aristotle to avoid tying the virtues to imitating human beings directly, since they are all infected by sin, or as we might now say, toxicity. Indeed, that means that heroism and toxicity cannot be parallel or symmetrical, because virtue is our destiny and vice is self-impairment. Tying the word "imitation" to the related word "image," Aquinas observes that the human being is made in the image of God, and therefore God is the only appropriate model to imitate. On the other hand, Aquinas admits, the imitation of God could sound blasphemous. It turns out that there is only one model to imitate, the only one who is both human (and can attract us to say "I want to be like that") and the one in whose image we are made. That one, of course, is Jesus. But Jesus is that one for women and for men. And for men Jesus seems notably not . . .

macho. But because Jesus can also inhabit each one (Aquinas's somewhat uninspiring example is Paul), the variety of models returns.

Indeed, Jesus's example left many early Christians (not Aquinas) to find the particular heroism of Jesus incompatible with soldiering, a profession gendered masculine. Jesus's longest recorded interaction with a soldier is with the centurion who asks for healing for his "servant." In Matthew the word is *pais*, "boy," which in Greek (as in English) can mean his servant or his lover. In Luke's version the word is *doulos*, which clearly means servant—but Luke's version is later, leaving the impression that Luke is trying to straighten up the most interesting aspect of the story—an aspect that varies what it means to be a centurion. Whatever that story means, Jesus responds not to the centurion's heroic masculinity but to his "softer" love.

Perhaps this is the place to admit that notions of heroism are gendered from the start: Aristotle's word for virtue is *andreia*, which has the Greek word for (male) man in it (´ανήρ/ ´άνδρος), and our word for virtue has the Latin word for male man in it (*vir*, as in virile).

Nevertheless, the classic tradition makes virtues qualities of a person, not of a gender or any other abstraction. So, masculinity, as such, cannot be heroic, no more than masculinity, as such, can be toxic. Only persons can be heroic or toxic (when "toxic" means vicious). There is a problem with toxic masculinity: it elevates a limited picture of masculinity over the virtues and becomes vicious. Heroic masculinity cannot do the same and succeed.

But because the virtues need concrete models, we cannot do without heroic men, and there must be such a thing as masculine heroism for all people to admire and to imitate to the extent that they want to be like that. We cannot do without particular ethnic and gendered and cultural heroisms of all kinds. Daniel Boyarin's *Unheroic Conduct*, for example, praises traditional Judaism's masculinity of Torah study.[1] Sometimes it's important to attend to those particularities so that the models can increase without limit. We today must insist that Black lives matter because slavery, lynching, Jim Crow, and racist policing have given the impression that they don't. We as a people must insist that masculine heroism matters because all heroism does. But we today must not identify heroism with masculinity any more than masculinity with toxicity. In short, the options are not exhausted by rejecting talk of masculinity, on the one hand, or repristinating it, on the other. We can all use the language of the virtues to expand the realm of models beyond the types that limit them. As such, we must have a variety of models to see and learn the virtues. In the end, we will be so much richer when we do not identify the virtue with the vessel.

Dr. Eugene F. Rogers, Jr. is Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He is author of *Sexuality and the Christian Body, Blood Theology*, and *Elements of Christian Thought*.

NOTES

1 Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (University of California Press, 1997).

Dr. Eugene F. Rogers's Reflection

By Sergeant Major Daniel Roberts

In "Many-Modeled Heroism," a reflection on, "In Praise of Heroic Masculinity," Dr. Eugene Rogers provides a worthwhile treatise on the original article. First, he extolls the virtues of the piece in that it "focuses our attention on heroes, virtue, and praise." These are qualities toward which all men and women should strive. The author then goes on to explain that gender is not useful as a partial identifier to heroism or toxicity. This is in part because gender roles are expanding today beyond male and female and in part because the concept of role modeling is more important than gender constructs.

The majority of Rogers' reflection has this idea of role models in view. Borrowing from both Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, the author states that, "the life of virtues begins in a desire to imitate others." In such an equation, gender, including the non-binary version "may or may not matter to the imitator." Both Aristotle and Aquinas theorize that heroic virtues come from God.

There is much to be admired about Rogers' work. Removing gender from the equation coincides with my own view on toxicity and heroism and frees a consideration of the characteristics of a hero without unnecessary modifiers. Second, using the terms hero and virtue in a spiritual context is a powerful tool for furthering the education of readers. Third, in referring to Jesus as a model, Rogers points out that the Savior is an example for both men and women.

I differ a little bit from Rogers on his view of how men view Jesus. He states that "for men Jesus seems notably . . . not macho." I believe that is true for many, but some of our most elite warriors in special operations and the Rangers look to Jesus as a model of masculinity, strength, and power. The story of Jesus driving the money changers out of the temple with a whip comes to mind, as well as images of Jesus in the book of Revelations as a quite powerful and macho figure. With no attempt to delve into the theology of these scriptures, the point is that Jesus cuts both a gentle and tough figure in the Bible, not merely a soft one. This may seem to be a finer point, but Jesus is an example of masculinity for some people.

My own reflection intersects with Rogers on a powerful point. Heroism need not be associated with a particular gender. In both of our estimations, heroic traits may be reflected in a man or a woman. While Rogers' emphasis is on spirituality and my work is more focused on physicality, both are legitimate realms of consideration with regards to heroism. The spiritual warrior brings prayer, preaching, and counseling to the fight, while the corporeal hero uses the body and steel to fight for justice and peace. Whether someone identifies as he/him, she/her, or they/them, they can enact goodness or evil in the world.

Rogers further extends this point by stating, "We must not identify the virtue with the vessel." I am in wholehearted agreement with that. I think that too often we miss the value of some role models because we are identifying too heavily with the person's gender. Men should be able to imitate women who model virtue. Women should be able to do the same. In my view, a hero uses the traits that are necessary at the time he or she is called on to act. At any given time, this might include kindness, gentleness, love, peacefulness, wisdom, courage, bodily strength, thunderous speech, or deadly force.

RESPONSE TO
Dr. Eugene F. Rogers's Reflection

By Chaplain (Major) Mel Baars O'Malley

Professor Eugene Rogers begins his response to "In Praise of Heroic Masculinity" by reframing the idea that traditional gender roles are under attack with the notion that, instead, they are in the process of expanding. This approach to gender makes space for both men and women to live out the full spectrum of the human experience. He suggests that the path toward virtue begins with imitation. He poses the question, "Why shouldn't children and adults learn from a variety of role models?" Imbedded in this question is an important acknowledgement that making the virtues one's own can arise from imitation of anyone who embodies them, which is a dynamic that is not fully restricted by gender. Rogers seamlessly moves from Aristotle's account of the "hero," one to whom God gives virtues, to Aquinas' portrait of a virtuous person, one who accepts the gifts of the Spirit, wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. Ultimately, heroism has very little to do with masculinity that is defined by physical strength. And yet, the words for heroism and virtue in Greek and Latin have been gendered as masculine for millennia.

Rogers is clear, however, that even though gender is encoded in the language, virtues themselves cannot be gendered. Virtues are characteristics of a person. They are not inherently masculine or feminine. Heroism and toxicity are not masculine either, but ways in which people choose to live and act in the world. To suggest that they are limited to the male experience is to put artificial limits on concepts that have much broader application. And yet, the only way to learn these qualities is to see them in others and decide which ones to make our own. The models who demonstrate virtues such as heroism will always be gendered in some way. Those of us who endeavor to live out the gifts of the Spirit need contextualized examples to follow. Through connecting with an expression of heroism, whether masculine or feminine, we each have an opportunity to expand beyond the limitations of binary gender.

I appreciate how Rogers enlarges our view of gender to make those attributes traditionally understood as masculine or feminine accessible to all people. While Flanagan articulates a very narrow view of the "best" kind of masculinity as heroic and physically strong, Rogers argues that such a limited approach misses the full picture. While he speaks of this in terms of individuals reaching their full, God-inspired virtuous potential, I focus, instead, on the possible harm limits to gender may place on men who don't live up to the ideal because of injury, illness, genetics, or recovering from trauma. Both critiques of Flanagan's approach to heroic masculinity recognize that limitations do not help us address the larger problem. People of every gender are looking for examples to follow. Our world needs courageous followers who accept the gifts of the Spirit, who demonstrate wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord so that others might learn to imitate these virtues, too.

The Coming Wave: Technology, Power, and the Twenty-first Century's Greatest Dilemma

by Mustafa Suleyman and Michael Bhasker

New York: Crown, 2023. 352 pp.

Reviewed by Mr. William Hubick
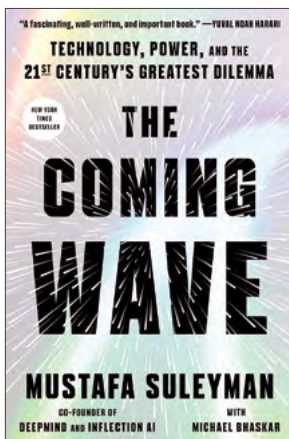
It was timely that I was asked to review *The Coming Wave: Technology, Power, and the Twenty-first Century's Greatest Dilemma* by Mustafa Suleyman. I had recently connected with collaborators at the United States Army Institute for Religious Leadership to discuss rapidly advancing capabilities such as Extended Reality (XR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI). I have been attempting to raise awareness and generate a sense of urgency around the implications of recent leaps forward in AI. This book is the most comprehensive summary I have read to date on how AI and adjacent technologies are certain to disrupt and transform civilization. The speed of these advances is dizzying, yet few of us are tuned into even the near-term implications.

What makes this book so powerful is that it systematically puts "the coming wave" of technology in historical, political, economic, and ethical context. Suleyman demonstrates the general applicability of AI to nearly every domain and the related implications, including why this wave is now inevitable. He connects AI to related advances in adjacent spaces such as biotechnology and robotics, noting how the complementary nature of each space accelerates and reinforces the others. He contrasts this technological wave with historical revolutions from the printing press to the internet (as well as a surprisingly poignant and relevant example about the

impact of stirrups). He explores how these sudden changes are similar to today and why this one underway is dramatically different. He discusses the age-old challenge of balancing freedom vs. security and the narrow, winding path between the potential dystopian outcomes associated with total openness or total closure. From every angle he presents complexity and contradictions. The same technology that makes an institution more powerful also leaves it more vulnerable to disruption by casual and entry-level participants. Suleyman discusses the challenges and risks associated with action, inaction, and the many variants between them. It is a worthwhile challenge for us to grapple with such complexity and contradictions and to seek the wisdom required to lead decisively and ethically.

The dangerously low barrier to entry is an important variable in "the coming wave." We can and should celebrate the potential for untrained enthusiasts to participate on the frontiers of science and medicine. But those new superpowers will become equally available to criminals, cults, and terrorist organizations. Ukraine's clever use of inexpensive drones to defeat Russian tanks can be framed as a classic underdog story. However, both nation states and individual bad actors are watching and learning these emerging techniques. They do so as the cost of advanced drones drop and their range,

intelligence, and autonomy increase. Imagine great swarms of drones, each autonomous and ready to deliver lethal payloads (explosive, chemical, or biological) when prompted conditions are met. Domestically, it's not a matter of if but when such technologies will deliver a September 11th-equivalent disaster of the AI age. Internationally, few if any powerful states will be outmaneuvered by simple drone tactics for long. Adversaries will not only improve their defenses, but invest heavily in creating powerful swarms of autonomous, weaponized drones. While the public expects ever-advancing technology in international conflicts, the domestic application is more worrisome. Bad actors inclined to maximize harm will have powerful, lower risk, automated, and affordable means to deliver dangerous payloads. Powerful AI will be available to help acquire and prepare the dangerous payload, to plan the most impactful delivery strategy, to fly the drone, to avoid surprises, and to apply complex decision-making logic without a person in the loop. Of course, that same technology will save countless U.S. lives in our military operations, and AI-powered autonomous operations are a key technology we must embrace. Leaders need to understand these sweeping implications and begin preparing their teams and communities. The U.S. response needs to be multidimensional, spanning technology, processes, culture, and ethics.

Advances in AI are helping to accelerate the biotech industry far more quickly than most Americans realize, with near-term possibilities belonging to the domain of science fiction just a few years or even months ago. The realities of altering the human genome, creating novel forms of life (including viruses), extending life indefinitely,

brain scanning, and cognitive attacks need real consideration. Advances in synthetic biology will allow humanity to develop new, living materials that could revolutionize construction methods, including the concept of bio-engineered structures or "living" buildings. Should the U.S. be investing in creating genetically altered super-soldiers? Who, when, where, and under what conditions should the U.S. experiment with genetic modifications of viruses? The same work that improves our chances of identifying effective treatments may also permit a catastrophic leak. Grappling with the ethics, the policies, and the oversight required to both maximize benefits and avoid catastrophe is an important challenge of our times. It may be difficult to predict the impacts on any individual mission space, but a fluency in the concepts is likely to be beneficial.

When catastrophe strikes, the natural political response will be to ramp up security and attempt to contain these suddenly obvious risks. Suleyman notes the potential for a dramatic worldwide rise in autocracy. Opportunistic leaders are likely to make the case for total government control to ensure safety, leveraging powerful AI systems for mass surveillance and sweeping control. While this may seem distant and hyperbolic, many of those components are already visible in China. Even in the U.S., the Amazon Ring doorbell system has created an ad-hoc neighborhood surveillance system of millions of units before policy discussions could weigh in. Not having enough time for a perfect response will be a repeated theme. Suleyman contends that leaders and engaged stakeholders will be challenged to accelerate and expedite the right processes while slowing others and creating intentional chokepoints and failsafes. Leaders and others will

need to maintain focus in the face of overwhelming complexity, to develop new ethical guidelines, and to create the right channels for awareness and engagement.

While much of the book calls out for closing Pandora's box with duct tape and a nail gun, there's a twist ending. Not only will it be impossible to shut Pandora's box, but we humans should not do it even if we could. Suleyman examines the fundamental nature of the global economy (i.e., the "Grand Bargain") and the criticality of technology to not only grow but even to maintain the status quo. Only with technology can we continue to feed the world and offer better lives to each generation. American scientist and historian Jared Diamond notes that archaeological evidence suggests that civilizations tend to collapse after about 400 years.[1] Suleyman believes constant advances in technology explain how we humans have continued to stave off modern collapse, and that these advances remain necessary to even maintain modern society. He summarizes, as many of us have inherently known, that technology will remain both our curse and our salvation for the rest of our civilization. Will we as a people be smart enough to survive long enough to break out of our indefinite growth model on a finite planet? Will our human population stabilize and develop new and sustainable models? This book helps readers take inventory of the variables and to consider them through relevant lenses. My guess is that our species is more likely to retain our model and to simply point it toward the colonization of space. That great frontier of science and ethics awaits if we are successful in surfing "the coming wave." Suleyman wraps up with an outline of ten ways in which society might be able to walk

that narrow path, ten concentric circles starting close to AI with safety and audit and moving farther into government policy and world culture.

The Coming Wave provides a basis for imagining both the amazing possibilities and the need to mitigate the tremendous risks of AI and related technologies. Pessimism aversion is a powerful force, often leading us to dismiss or downplay potential negative outcomes in favor of a more comfortable outlook. This impulse, while understandable, can hinder our ability as a species and a Nation to prepare for and address the complex implications of AI. Acknowledging and overcoming this bias will be crucial, especially for leaders and decision-makers who are tasked with navigating these uncharted waters.

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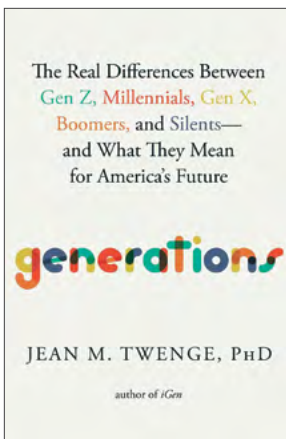
NOTES

1 Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking Press, 2005).

Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents—and What They Mean for America's Future

by Jean M. Twenge

New York: Atria, 2023. 560 pp.

Reviewed by Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Sean A. Levine

In her most recent book, Jean Twenge argues that an analysis of the differences between generations provides a glimpse into the future facilitated by a careful understanding of the recent past and the present. This premise guides her characteristically prescient studies of American culture. Alive, at present, in numbers large enough to impact American culture, from youngest to oldest, are the Polars, Gen Z, the Millennials, Gen X, the Boomers, and the Silents. In Twenge's research, these represent the generations that interact with one another in homes, schools, marketplaces, places of worship, and professional settings. Each generation represents a unique constellation of experiences and perspectives. Understanding how those perspectives diverge from one another, says Twenge, is crucial for understanding relationships in a variety of settings with an eye towards how politics, economic policy, marketing, and public discourse might affect mental health.[1]

Twenge contends that the study of generational differences forms a special way of looking at history. History, she asserts, is more than a series of events along the straight line of time. History is the ebb and flow of culture; shifts in technology, attitudes, beliefs, behavioral norms, diversity, prejudice, time use, education, family size, marriage/family dynamics, and any other constitutive elements of cultural experience. As things shift, new generations experience these constitutive elements of culture in new ways. The subjective nature of what we are often tempted to consider as objective reality manifests in the unique existential experience of each generation. Generational studies describe and attempt to account for the unique contexts represented by the generations of people living together in the ebb and flow of culture. As Twenge explains, cultural change leads to generational change, and, thus, each generation grows up in an ostensibly unique culture.[2]

Twenge, implicates three basic causal agents in the cultural changes in America that lead inexorably to generational changes: changes in technology, the proliferation of an isolating individualism, and a slowed developmental maturation. These mechanisms do not operate in a linear fashion. Rather, these three elements interact in a dynamic, circular process. According to Twenge's "Technology Model of Generation,"[3] a theory that she began developing in her previous book, *iGen*, changes in technology foster changes in culture.[4] The recent technological changes experienced in America have led to both an exponentially

increased isolating individualism and a slowed transition from childhood to adulthood due to a lengthening adolescence.[5] The modernization and commercialization of survivability have made life, in general, easier and safer, which in turn allows people to grow up more independently and slowly while still surviving. This is a contemporary, post-industrial phenomenon. These cultural changes have caused notable generational differences.

Twenge's Technology Model of generational differences has tremendous explanatory power in that it renders an evidence-based accounting for the rapid proliferation of fragmentation in American culture. Generational gaps manifest now with each wave of new technology, and this is particularly true for technologies that help us to traffic information. Both the manner of delivery and the nature the information delivered shape the end user's reception of information, the information's impact on the recipient, and the ways in which the receiver perceives the world. Rather than neutral entities passively receiving neutral data, people actively receive information that shapes their perceptions of reality. Generational gaps have become less tied to the passage of time and more intertwined with changes in the speed of the delivery of highly personalized, world-perception-shaping information streams.

Twenge provides substantial analyses of each of the generations of Americans she studies: the Silents (born 1925-1945), the Boomers (born 1946-1965), Gen X (born 1965-1979), the Millennials (born 1980-1994), Gen Z (born 1995-2012), and the Polars (2013-2029). Whereas in *iGen* Twenge bases her findings on four datasets with a population sample of 11 million people, *Generations* rests on an analysis including twenty-four datasets

studied across a population sample of 39 million people. Thus, from the perspective of statistical analysis, *Generations* represents a significant increase in the scope of the collected data. This increase in data scope results in a vastly increased specificity that helps us to discern and separate the myths from the realities of generational differences.

With this knowledge, people can understand each other better and live together more harmoniously.[6] As Twenge asserts, "Demystifying generational differences, as this book attempts, may also reduce intergenerational conflict. The more we understand the perspective of different generations, the easier it is to see we're all in this together."[7] However, the force of Twenge's presentation seems to lean in the opposite direction: we are not, in fact, all in this together. It seems clear that we are experiencing the world more and more apart from one another. The "this" we are supposedly all in together is different for each generation in the ways that Twenge expertly describes. Further, the "we" that she describes is not "together" in that our existential experiences of the world are more and more irreconcilably disparate. Although Twenge's generational studies tell some powerfully explanatory stories, nothing about those stories suggests any serious motivation toward the togetherness that she hopes to foster. Most especially at odds with this optimism is the exponential growth in the super-efficient technologies that deliver increasingly individualized priorities of experience.

Twenge suggests several key implications. She writes: "All signs point toward religion continuing to retreat among Americans."[8] Regarding spirituality replacing religion, Twenge notes that Millennials were supposed to be spiritual, but not religious.

However, "that also didn't pan out: 6 in 10 26-40-year-olds in the General Social Survey said they were very or somewhat spiritual in 2018, down from 7 in 10 in 2006. Millennials are not replacing religion with spirituality; they are both less religious and less spiritual."[9] It is true that one is more likely to hear Millennials or Gen Zers talk about spirituality rather religion, but that fact is overshadowed by the reality that the numbers of people identifying as religious or as spiritual are both declining among Millennials and Gen Z. Twenge places the decline in religion's popularity at the doorstep of the rise in technology-enhanced, egocentric individualism, which stands directly at odds with faithful religious adherence.[10] Twenge does not explain the statistically demonstrated failure of spirituality to replace religion. It may be that our cultural ability to believe in a transcendent reality of any kind is deteriorating because of the rise to prominence of a materialist metaphysics based in the physical sciences and the apparent resulting success of technological advancement.

Twenge also asserts, "The slow-life strategy has grown with each generation, delaying traditional milestones at every stage of the life-cycle."[11] She reports as well that "technology has isolated us from each other, sowed political division, fueled income inequality, spread pervasive pessimism, widened generation gaps, stolen our attention, and is the primary culprit for a mental health crisis among teens and young adults."[12] These trends show no signs of slowing in America. Thus, we face a future characterized by a decline in religious adherence and spiritual sensibility, an increasing individualized isolation facilitated by algorithmic calculations, and the encroachment of ever smaller and more complex

personal electronic devices that accelerate the efficiency of artificial information processing. All of this reduces the world to one's individual, idiosyncratic preferences.

If Twenge's projections hold, the Army will be recruiting among a less and less religious constituency that reaches emotional maturity later and later. These underdeveloped individuals will live in a more and more egocentric experience of the world, detached from collective, meaning-making stories. Many, if not most, will replace religion/spirituality with ideological fealty and fervor centered in political commitments or the advance of social justice causes.[13] The value systems created and/or supported by this sort of milieu will come into increasing conflict with the values that motivate military service if, say, the Army

Values conflict with the individualistic goals of the person or their guiding, egocentric ideology.

New Chaplains will also embody the cultural pull of extended adolescence. They, too, will experience and embody an increasing individualism that threatens to narrow one's experience of the world even as more of the world becomes available through virtual media. Already, the religious pluralism that once held the various and unique traditional religions in a unity of diversity has given way, largely, to a newly crafted spirituality-centered individualism requiring neither history nor tradition for reasonable validation. Instead, an ego-driven inner feeling of connection has replaced membership in a tradition with a time-honored story, and this serves to further fragment our culture.

As cultural cohesion increasingly fragments, the religious communities that stress a time-honored tradition of communal, in-person gathering may become some of the last bastions of cohesive social connectivity. The military may continue to foster greater levels of cohesion and social connection than the wider society, but the military may also succumb to the increasing fragmentation characteristic of the wider culture, and this may manifest either in continued challenges in recruiting, in a culture change in the military that mirrors the civilian culture, or both. There will always be phenomena that bring groups of people together, but just how much of this togetherness can resist the fragmentation and creeping dehumanization so characteristic of the present age of technology remains to be seen.

Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Sean A. Levine serves as a priest in the Orthodox Church in America, and he is currently stationed in San Antonio, TX as the Chaplain Accounts Readiness Manager for the Installation Management Command. Chaplain Levine holds Master of Arts degrees in Theological Studies (2003) and Biblical Studies (2008) from Asbury Theological Seminary, a Master of Divinity degree from St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary (2010), a Master of Science degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Texas A&M—Central Texas (2017), and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Erskine Theological Seminary (2023). His D.Min. dissertation, "Pastoral Guidance: Theological Anthropology and the Art of Pastoral Care," applies an Eastern Orthodox Christian theological anthropology to pastoral practice. He shares a busy, loving, three-generational home in San Antonio with his wife of 34 years, Jennifer, his youngest son, Andrew (17), and his oldest son, Ethan (25), Ethan's wife, Alexandra, and their one-year-old son, Philip—Chaplain and Mrs. Levine's first grandchild.

NOTES

1 Jean M. Twenge, *Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents—and What They Mean for America' Future* (New York: Atria Books, 2023), 3.

2 Twenge, *Generations*, 4-5.

3 Twenge, *Generations*, 6.

4 Jean M. Twenge, *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant,* *Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood* (and What That Means for the Rest of Us) (New York: Atria Books, 2017).

5 Twenge, *Generations*, 6-18.

6 Twenge, *Generations*, 20.

7 Twenge, *Generations*, 515.

8 Twenge, *Generations*, 502-503.

9 Twenge, *Generations*, 299.

10 Twenge, *Generations*, 301.

11 Twenge, *Generations*, 513.

12 Twenge, *Generations*, 515.

13 Twenge, *Generations*, 504.

Combat Trauma*: Imaginaries of War and Citizenship in post-9/11 America*

by Nadia Abu El-Haj

New York: Verso Press, 2022. 337 pp.

Reviewed by Dr. Joshua Morris

"Thank you for your service" is a phrase that every Soldier and veteran has either heard or uttered. On its face, the phrase is appropriate: we thank our service members for the call they answered. In other ways, though, the phrase is a symptom of a broader malaise within the US cultural landscape in knowing how to care for veterans. In our post-9/11 landscape, there remains a reverence for returning Soldiers. That reverence can, simultaneously, guide and motivate our spiritual care while also preventing any critique of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and beyond. To support the troops, therefore, is to tacitly support the war, the logic cannot work otherwise. This, however, has not always been the case. The question for this review is: whom does the gratitude serve?

In *Combat Trauma: Imaginaries of War and Citizenship in post-9/11 America*, Nadia Abu El-Haj, traces the genealogy of the United States civilian population's relationship with military service.[1] A genealogy is more than merely relaying the historical significance of events. Rather, a genealogy is interested in challenging common narratives by attending to counter stories. Furthermore, she critiques the ideological ramifications of allowing the traumatic experiences of combat to impact our collective valorization of those individuals. In other words, Soldiers are deserving of valorization due to the trauma.

Abu El-Haj's work narrates the history of post-traumatic stress disorder, "born initially of a radical, anti-imperial, and anti-war politics articulated in psychiatric terms" to our present understanding of PTSD as a "pillar holding up the enormous edifice of …'the new American militarism.'"[2]

In some ways, then, her book tells a counter story; tracing how a commitment to providing care for Vietnam veterans—that was once a source of liberation—has institutionalized that care and cemented it as a bedrock of maintaining the status quo. To get there, Abu El-Haj tells the story of America's reception of the traumatized veteran. She attends to how trauma has been narrated through American history: from the soldier's heart of the Civil War to the shell shock of World War I, to the combat fatigue of World War II to post-Vietnam syndrome. Abu El-Haj shows how the social narrative around combat trauma shifts from something is "wrong" with the traumatized veteran (individual neuroses) to an understanding that pathological responses to trauma are normal, and not a signal of individual cowardice.[3]

In 1980, the significantly revised Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM III) included a diagnosis for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). What has happened since? For Abu El-Haj, in this period, there

were two "iconic" traumatized figures: "the soldier and the female victim of rape."[4] It was precisely that shift of cultural and institutional understanding of trauma that enabled Vietnam veterans, veteran activists, and feminists advocating for rape survivors and children suffering from child abuse to lobby and begin shifting cultural opinion. This is a complex history, and one that falls outside the scope of this review. Central to Abu El-Haj's argument is a shift in the politics of trauma studies. With the country divided on its reception of Vietnam veterans, the new understanding of the traumatized veteran "allowed Americans of all stripes to set aside their political differences and focus instead on the suffering of veterans and their need to heal."[5]

It is in this post-Vietnam milieu that Jonathan Shay begins his work with Vietnam veterans in Boston. Shay, while facilitating support groups for Vietnam veterans in a Veterans Affairs (VA) clinic in Boston, coins what we now understand as moral injury. In working with those veterans, Shay noticed how often "what's right" came up in discussions and sessions. The comments centered on failed leadership and betrayal. Shay's definition of moral injury has become canonical: a "betrayal of what is right, by a person who holds legitimate authority (e.g., in the military—a leader) in a high-stakes situation."[6] The term re-emerges after the first generation of US military personnel

returned from Iraq and Afghanistan. Brett Litz, another VA clinician, moves the site of responsibility away from the organization and places it on the agent: "morally injurious events such as the perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply help moral beliefs and expectations."[7] There is a distinct strand of moral injury scholarship focused on the soul wounds, and soul repair, of moral injury. I will return to this in my conclusions. Suffice it to say, the spiritual turn within moral injury care literature signaled a shift from the political activism of Vietnam veterans against immoral wars to a focus on the internal turmoil of warfare.

Abu El-Haj argues that the care modalities for those experiencing moral injury are "severed"[8] from the politics of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. For all the attempts to move moral injury away from a medical model, including framing it as a soul wound, the phenomenon "replicates" the medical model.[9] The factors at play concern the individual veteran's personal understanding of right and wrong and the military "moral orienting system" *qua* ecosystem of receiving orders, maintaining discipline, etc.[10] Abu El-Haj contends that without any critique of the wars or recognition of the damage done to the populations we are fighting healing is "effectively impossible."[11]

Abu El-Haj's text is vital for Unit Ministry Teams (UMTs), Religious Support Teams

(RSTs), or chaplain directorates looking to support Soldiers in fresh ways. It pushes religious leaders to have difficult conversations around not just the care of those who go to war, but the integral relationship between the morality of war and that care. Within that tension, I think there will continue to be a need for a ministry of presence. There is still deep congruence with ritual and providing communal care for those impacted. With Abu El-Haj's critique in mind, UMTs/RSTs can understand their care as situated within the broader political community. Abu El-Haj is concerned that within the discourse around combat trauma, the veterans remain "eye-witnesses"[12] and "experts" on the combat experience. While true to an extent, this forecloses experiences at home that also need attention. Therefore, it is also the responsibility of the veteran community to listen to our families and the broader U.S. civilian community as well. The civil-military divide typically places the veteran as the arbiter of the experience but the responsibility for war is a collective one. We Americans must all reckon with the wars of the last two decades even as we look to an uncertain horizon of future wars. To return to the liturgical phrase "thank you for your service," may it become an initial conversation to explore ways to support our veterans while also proactively working to privilege further discussion on the same wars to which we deployed (and still deploy) our Soldiers.

Joshua T. Morris, Ph.D., B.C.C., is Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Union Presbyterian Seminary and is also a Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) serving as an IMA at USA-IRL.

NOTES

1 Abu El-Haj, *Combat Trauma*, 7.

2 Abu El-Haj, *Combat Trauma*, 13.

3 At the time of its diagnostical inception into the *DSM III, it classifies PTSD as a "normal response to an abnormal situation." American Psychiatric Association, DSM–III: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1980), 256, And further, trauma is caused by an "event outside the range of normal human experiences," 236.

4 Abu El-Haj, *Combat Trauma*, 81.

5 Abu El-Haj, *Combat Trauma*, 36.

6 Jonathan Shay, "Moral Injury," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 31.2 (2014): 183.

7 Brett T. Litz et al., "Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy," *Clinical Psychology Review* 29.8 (2009): 697.

8 Abu El-Haj, *Combat Trauma*, 129.

9 Abu El-Haj, *Combat Trauma*, 185.

10 Practical theologian and former military chaplain Zachary Moon describes the phenomenon of moral orienting systems as, "military recruit training, by design, destabilizes and diminishes the constancy of a recruit's pre-existing moral orienting system. Having stripped away such moral coding, including embedded values, beliefs, behaviors, and meaningful relationships, military recruit training indoctrinates recruits with a new moral orienting system that supports functioning in military contexts," *Warriors Between Worlds: Moral Injury and Identities in Crisis* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2019), 3.

11 Abu El-Haj, *Combat Trauma*, 185.

12 Abu El-Haj, *Combat Trauma*, 230.

The Great Dechurching: Who's Leaving, Why are They Going, and What Will It Take to Bring Them Back?

by Jim Davis and Michael Graham

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2023. 242 pp.

Reviewed by Major Jessica Dawson

For a book about the exodus from the Church, opening with a mention of scandal-plagued preachers Benny Hinn and Paula White seems an odd choice. But this mention – in the context of writing about the promise of churches in Orlando in the 1990s/2000s – frames the many paradoxes in this book about those who have left the church. While Hinn and White are named as being part of the variety of congregations in Orlando, the mention was an immediate attention grabber.

The rise of the nones and the rapid secularizing of American society has been widely written about by sociologists but whether society is secularizing is a completely different question than why people appear to be leaving their churches (across all faiths, not just Christianity though the focus of their book is on Christianity). Their central argument is that America is facing what they call the Great Dechurching, an unprecedented crisis for communities of faith. They are writing for an audience of ministers and lay people alike who hope to bring people back to the fold.

Two of the authors of this book are members of Orlando Grace Church, with Jim Davis being a pastor and Michael Graham being a center director. The authors aim to present the results from survey work they conducted to better understand why people are leaving the church. As is standard with most academic research discussions, their work opens with a description of their study. They clearly caveat that they are not academics, but they partnered with a political scientist to conduct the study: Ryan Burge, a professor at Eastern Illinois University. They conducted their survey in three phases designed to answer three questions: How big is the problem, who is leaving and why, and what, specifically is happening in evangelicalism.

The audience for this book is clearly evangelical ministers who seek to understand why people have left the church as well as mechanisms to draw people back. This is the book's greatest strength but also its greatest weakness. While they confront issues of misogyny, abuse, political intolerance, and other issues that have driven people from the church, the messages for the dechurched do not present a road map for either pastors to help people return or for the dechurched themselves. Perhaps that is not what they intended to do, which would mean that it is not the fault of the authors, but I found myself hungry for interpretations anchored in faith communities that would help explain different theological perspectives that might help inform at least initial conversations that attempt to cross some of the uncrossable chasms.

They describe five groups of dechurched: Cultural Christians, Dechurched Mainstream

Evangelicals, Exvangelicals, Dechurched BIPOC and Dechurched Mainline Protestants and Catholics. They find both similarities and differences between the dechurched across denominations – men and women are leaving the church at similar rates. That said, dechurched LGBTQ+ individuals appear to have left the church for different reasons and in larger numbers with 66% of lesbian/gay women in their survey stating they rarely attend services and over 73% of gay men saying the same compared to 51% of straight respondents.

They are aware that the same factors which drive some from the church, e.g., hyper politicization, may be the very thing that keeps others attending. They paint a very difficult and accurate picture for ministers struggling to navigate these complicated times. In one early chapter, they talk about praying with parents who are deeply saddened by their children having left the church. They state that "anecdotally, we know of almost no parents over the age of fifty who don't have at least one adult child who is dechurched."[1] This is presented as deeply painful for the parents. Rather than expanding on why those parents believe their children left or unpacking why those parents felt their adult children dechurched, we are left with a gap. Their research suggests that the top five reasons people state about their parents influencing their decision to leave the church were "emphasis on culture war; lack of love or joy; inability to listen; inability to engage with other viewpoints or racial attitudes or action."[2]

They anchor their discussion of dechurching in broader societal trends of "cultural fracturing, more privatization, erosion of institutions, loss of public trust and thinner communities."[3] Despite these larger cultural trends, the book is filled

with interesting findings that might be largely counter intuitive, particularly for those not well versed in sociological or religious literature about the dechurching phenomenon. One very interesting finding is that education is negatively associated with dechurching. Put another way, higher levels of educations are associated with remaining affiliated with a church, at least in the chapter on Mainline Protestants and Catholics.

From a methodological standpoint, they do not provide their survey questions nor do they provide many insights into how they conducted their analysis. There's no discussion of whether findings were statistically significant and it is unclear how they constructed their models. They do not define how they use the term algorithm. This however, may only be an issue to people who are familiar with survey construction and methodologies. There are other methodological issues that, for the sake of space, I won't go into however, suffice to say it is difficult to take their claims seriously due to the lack of clarity in their methodology. With those caveats in mind, probably the biggest surprise of their study is that every faith group appears to be facing a similar trend. Dechurching is not restricted to only evangelicals.

The authors are very blunt in some cases, pointing out that the modern church is "financially incentivized to target the wealthy and create a space where… those feel comfortable."[4] Dechurching is presented as bad for churches, but numerous anecdotes scattered throughout the book make the argument that dechurching may actually be good for individuals/families. The authors point out that dechurched evangelicals are more likely to be married, report lower divorce rates, and better mental health than folks who

remain in churches. This paradox is the beating heart of the problem presented in the book. Later , they point out the positive health effects of attending religious services, making it unclear, or at least contested, as to whether dechurching has a positive or negative impact on the individual.

The authors are keen on drawing people back to the church. They are frequently clear about why people left. They are less clear on how to cross nearly impassable divides or even what those divides might be. They are clear where they stand theologically – that they take the divinity of Jesus and his atonement for sin, the resurrection and eternal salvation from faith is central to what they call their primary concerns. But there are critical issues that the authors simply do not engage with in any meaningful or robust way. Fully one third of dechurched evangelicals stated they had no interest in returning to any church.

When they discuss the nearly 20% of people who have left the church due to misogyny and teachings surrounding women, they don't offer great solutions. They are very clear that "many of the dechurched perceive the church to be patriarchal, unhelpfully hierarchical and oppressive to women" and are explicit in telling their reader that "if you feel resistance [to the idea of the dechurched who cite misogyny as reasons they departed] . . . may still have some work to do in comprehending the problem."[5] For example, the chapter on "Dechurched Mainstream Evangelicals" suggests that they left largely around COVID. But the opening vignette of the chapter is about Hannah, a devout Christian woman who struggled through years of fertility treatment to finally give birth to twins. Hannah's story points out that while the church was initially

supportive through the early stages of her difficulty pregnancy, it largely was absent for much of the time that she and her husband needed them. That this coincided with COVID is given more weight than the potential feelings of abandonment that Hannah may have felt as she struggled through issues related to starting her family. The authors present care for the unborn as a central tenant but then offer very little by way of restructuring their communities to care for the born.

This falls short for several reasons. First, it doesn't help the minister who may be looking for deeper theological understandings of feminist theology (or other theologies) that might help fill gaps in their own tradition, nor does it give ministers and pastors a place to look for more inclusive churches. Perhaps this is not the goal of the book, but the lack of engagement with feminist theology to help enrich the readers feels like a critical

oversight. The only engagement with the theological implications of abortion appears to be in survey questions that indicate the question was whether the respondents would have one. This fundamentally fails to serve women who may have needed medically necessary abortions or who find little spiritual comfort in the current debate. It also obscures the historic fact that abortion was largely not a motivating issue for evangelicals until after Civil Rights legislation when church leaders began using it as a tool for political mobilization.

For those unfamiliar with the topic of dechurching, *The Great Dechurching* is a potentially a solid introduction to the discussion but with the limitations that we don't really know how generalizable their findings are beyond the communities they sampled. For those hungry for deeper understandings of the theological, political, and cultural arguments underpinning people's

decision to leave, this book will leave readers lacking. For anyone hoping to engage more seriously with bringing women back to the church, they are going to need to look elsewhere. The authors clearly understand that women are leaving the church for different reasons then men but do not engage with the theological questions around gender and sexuality that might help ministers expand their ability to engage with some of these dechurched. They offer very little by way of restructuring resources – either theological, financial, or otherwise, to make coming back to the church easier for who are not from wealthy, heterosexual, nuclear families. They focus on the spiritual mission of the church as a solution when many of the problems their survey identified are not problems of faith but of families, communities, politics, and organizations. If faith were the solution to the problem of dechurching, well, they might not have had to write the book.

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NOTES

1 Davis and Graham, *Great Dechurching*, 9.

2 Davis and Graham, *Great Dechurching*, 9-10.

3 Davis and Graham, *Great Dechurching*, 19.
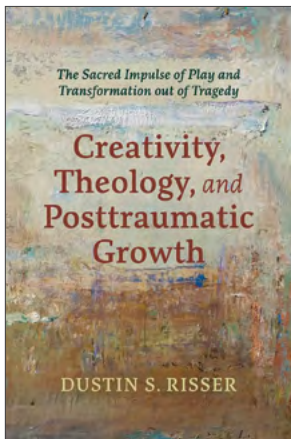
4 Davis and Graham, *Great Dechurching*, 27.

5 Davis and Graham, *Great Dechurching*, 169.

Creativity, Theology, and Posttraumatic Growth: The Sacred Impulse of Play and Transformation out of Tragedy

by Dustin S. Risser

Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022. 141pp.

Reviewed by Chaplain (Major) Soojin Chang

In C*reativity, Theology, and Posttraumatic Growth*, Dustin Risser works to fill the gap in academic research around the role of creativity in posttraumatic growth (PTG). Risser contends that an individual's innate creativity is key to unlocking potential growth after trauma. He argues that the "experiences of creativity and play can offer a holistic approach to growth and transformation, after tragic and disorganizing experiences of trauma."[1] Risser privileges "being" before "doing," arguing that an individual's relational experience in a safe environment produces creativity. Risser defines creativity as the authentic individual expression. The purpose of laboring creatively for traumatized individuals is to regain the grasp of their true selves and make meaning out of trauma rather than highlighting the innovation of the experience or product. What is most important for Risser is that the creative expression found in dancing, music, poetry, and visual arts speaks to the individual. Talent for public performance or exhibition is not required for a person to experience posttraumatic growth.

Risser's primary conversation partner is Donald Winnicott. He uses Winnicott's psychoanalytic theory to explain creativity and play in human development. He draws significantly on Winnicott's psychoanalytical theory of potential space and creative emergence to show how play enables trauma survivors to find their true selves. The upshot of utilizing Winnicott's theory is a tightly focused book with a logical flow. Risser's other sources also complement Winnicott's work. Risser also draws on Judith Herman's three-stage trauma recovery framework: safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection. He looks to both psychology and theology in an integrated way to understand the use of creativity in PTG.

The creation account in Genesis also plays a crucial role in Risser's book. The Triune God creates out of chaos and darkness. Because humans are created in God's image, Risser suggests that people, too, have the potential ability to create something meaningful out of chaos and darkness. The creation is also communal. God creates the first human community with Adam and Eve. Community is both an original gift and deep need. Risser lifts up the faith community as a place that can provide a safe physical and spiritual space, expert companionship, and a sense of belongingness where individuals can freely explore individualized creativity to find their true selves. Trauma brings fear, confusion, pain, and chaos to those who live with it. The experience of trauma shatters the worldview and faith that an individual creates throughout life within a community. However, the individual can come a renewed sense of faith and a new worldview with the support and help from a community that provides a holding environment with genuine care.

Risser's argument ultimately builds to an analysis of the desert rose. Risser sees three layers of symbolic representation with the desert rose. First, the root system represents a sacred holding space that prepares individuals to safely internalize the traumatic experience and develop healing and growth. The faith community, psychotherapy, friends and families, or other various holding places can help the root system to grow deeper and stronger to nurture individuals' understanding, hope, and power. Second, the caudex, the root stem from which new growth arises, represents perseverance over time, where an individual stores every bit of hope, meaning, honesty, and connection throughout traumatic experiences. Exploring the place of caudex requires integration from solidarity, expert companionship, and the faith community to bolster reconnection and transformation. Third, the flowering itself exemplifies the manifestations of PTG and creative life. The flowering of the desert rose is not merely a sign of hope but "a reminder of the promise of resurrection that exists through the work of Jesus, for the loving sake of the world."[2]

The desert rose illustration perfectly summed up Risser's thesis that PTG can happen with proper support from the community and innate creativity. He highlights a few times that human effort, both from a clinician and an individual, is not the source of PTG, but the life-giving source of PTG is the Triune God. For a Christian clinician or a local church minister, the work of the Holy Spirit ensures that their efforts are sealed with the power of God. I wholeheartedly agree with Risser's call to be humble before God while supporting traumatized individuals. Risser also calls individual therapists and the wider community to a posture of humility because God uses all things, including clinicians, ministers, and the community for God's glory. Risser not only proposes a conceptual account of PTG, but he shares many examples of how the integration of theological and psychological understanding of trauma can help traumatized individuals to experience authentic PTG.

Risser primarily writes for the civilian Christian context. As a result, there are some limitations around how his work might be taken up and applied in an Army context. First, the Army, in general, values productivity over creativity. It will be challenging for Army personnel to find a holding environment where they can practice and experience authentic, individualized creativity. The Army works hard to innovate its technology and fighting power but does not usually encourage individualized creativity. Risser may suggest finding a community where individuals can safely enter creative practices. A second limitation to applying Risser's work in an Army context is finding a suitable community for minority groups. While the Army comprises diverse national, religious, cultural, racial, and social groups, not all have equal or equitable access to viable community resources. Individuals from sizable groups such as Christians can conveniently identify an appropriate community that nurtures authentic creativity. However, members of smaller religious or ethnic groups may face difficulties finding a community that can provide the requisite support during the aftermath of trauma. Non-Christian Army chaplains may still find value in his work, but it will be limited. Finally, the scope of Risser's project is simply much narrower than breath of concern for Army chaplains supporting service members of all or even no faith background.

Even so, Risser's research offers a beacon of hope for members of the Army community who may be grappling with trauma-related issues. PTG is possible. Chaplains play a pivotal role in helping Soldiers remain true to their beliefs, even in the face of adversity and trauma. For this reason, I recommend chaplains examine Risser's work.

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NOTES

1 Risser, *Posttraumatic Growth*, 3.

2 Risser, *Posttraumatic Growth*, 110.

A Discussion with

the U.S. Army Institute for Religious Leadership (USA-IRL)

Tell us about the mission and purpose of your element:

The U.S. Army Institute for Religious Leadership (USA-IRL), Fort Jackson, South Carolina is the "Heart and Home" of the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps (CHC). Our mission is to generate and develop Area of Concentration (AOC)/Career Management Field (CMF) 56 Chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists (RASs) and capabilities to provide religious support and advisement across the full range of military operations of the total force.

The USA-IRL was established in December 2021 to replace the U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School (USACHCS). It fully integrates the Religious Leadership Academy (RLA) institutional training base for Chaplains, the Non-Commissioned Officers Academy (NCOA) for RASs, the Graduate School for Army Chaplain Corps Professional Development (Grad School), and the Religious Support Operations Center (RSOC). The USA-IRL is a unified organization focused on CHC training and education, and personnel and operational support.

What's one thing you'd like the rest of the Chaplain Corps to know about your element?

The USA-IRL manages training, education, faculty development, and produces leadership enrichment products in support of over 6,000 Chaplains and RAS personnel serving in the Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the U.S. Army Reserve.

Tell us about a project your element has been working on:

The planned end state of the USA-IRL transformation is a unified organization consisting of the Institute and a Field Operating Agency (FOA), formerly the RSOC, that empowers fully capable and creative strategic leaders at every echelon via improved recruitment, full lifecycle talent management, and synchronized operational support across a fully integrated Total Army Chaplaincy. As we progress towards establishing the FOA, key leaders across the Office of the Chief of Chaplains (OCCH), the USA-IRL, and the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) conduct monthly working groups to collaborate, plan, and execute FOA implementation efforts in accordance with the signed Memorandum of Agreement TRADOC-OCCH-0001 and HQDA EXORD 107-22.

Additionally, over the past year the USA-IRL has been conducting a workload analysis of current and future structure requirements via the Table of Distribution and Allowance – Change Management Plan (TDA-CMP). The TDA-CMP is the process used to request new organizations, updates, and/or changes to all TDA and Augmentation TDA organizations in the Army. It prescribes the organizational structure, the manpower and/or equipment requirements, and authorizations to perform the mission. Once finalized, the USA-IRL will submit the TDA-CMP to TRADOC for review and further coordination. These approved changes will further enhance the USA-IRL's capabilities and capacity.

Why is your element so crucial to the mission of the Chaplain Corps?

A single unified organization is critical to enhance and streamline the delivery of religious support to the Army's Soldiers and Families while improving unity of effort and unity of control under the Chief of Chaplains. The goal is to improve overall CHC integration, while posturing the CHC for continuous improvement at delivering superior value to the Army as we provide religious support for the Total Army. The USA-IRL will be fully unified with the FOA that the Chief of Chaplains intends to establish.

Take us inside your team and its dynamics.

Below are the members of the USA-IRL Executive Office and senior leaders of each organizational element:

Deputy Director/Commandant – Chaplain (Colonel) Louis A. DelTufo

Chief of Staff/Deputy Commandant – Chaplain (Colonel) Emmitt M. Furner II

Command Sergeant Major – Command Sergeant Major Thomas Roldan

Director of Training, Religious Leadership Academy – Chaplain (Colonel) Daniel Hardin

Dean, Graduate School – Chaplain (Colonel) Mark Lee

Commandant, Non-Commissioned Officer Academy – Command Sergeant Major Thomas Roldan

Below are the missions of each element within the USA-IRL:

The RLA manages the production, analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation of resident and non-resident training courses and products for Chaplains and RAS personnel of all three Army Components to produce skilled and ready Unit Ministry Teams.

The Grad School develops, conducts, and evaluates Institutional (non-PME), Operational, and Self-Development domain education on behalf of the Chief of Chaplains, Director, USA-IRL, and Commandant to provide adaptable and integrated chaplain educational programs that develop "competence, character, and commitment," to form RS professionals at echelon.

The NCOA educates, trains, and develops senior RASs to be agile, adaptive, and committed leaders of the Army and religious professions capable of providing timely and competent religious support to the Army and Joint Force through resident and distributive learning methods and technologies.

The RSOC operationalizes CHC-wide training, provides a comprehensive means for managing ministry initiatives and programs, synchronizes RS efforts Army-wide, develops future concepts, assess, provides Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facilities, and Policy (DOTMLPF-P) solutions, recruits and accesses quality religious professionals, manages eight RAS lifecycle functions, and manages talent across the Total Force.