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MISSIO APOSTOLICA

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CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE	2
EDITORIAL	3
ARTICLES	
Missiological Observations on Armed Forces Chaplaincy Mark G. Steiner.....	5
Military Chaplaincy is a Mission-Focused Ministry Rob Carter.....	12
In the Trenches: Gospel Proclamation in a Pluralistic Environment Matthew C. Christensen.....	15
Serving God and Country in the Diverse Environment of Afghanistan Russell Dewell.....	21
Certainty of Not Knowing: Life as a Navy Chaplain's Wife Jeanette Dart.....	28
Outreach in a Non-Religious Organization David Jacob.....	34
A Chaplain's Life Mark S. Nuckols.....	38
The Terrors of Conscience Matthew Prince.....	42
The Crisis of the Amoral Conscience Ryan Rupe.....	47
Proclaiming the Hope Scott Simpson.....	53
On the Distinctives of Ministry in the Military Robert Stroud.....	56
BOOK REVIEWS.....	66
BREAKING NEWS: LSFM GOES DIGITAL!.....	70

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Editor's Note

Christian missionaries throughout the world are not strangers to living on the edge and being on the frontlines wherever the Lord has placed them as his witnesses. Not a few of them live in harm's way as they walk in the Lord's footsteps, testifying in word and deed the salvation God has accomplished in Christ for the whole world, even if worldly rulers and authorities, cosmic powers, and forces of evil turn ever more hostile to the Gospel.

Christian chaplains do everything missionaries and pastors do. In addition, they serve men and women in uniform who have distinguished their vocation for the nation's defense and for freedom, peace and justice. They minister in the barracks and on the frontlines. They sweat, and smell death in enemy territory, resolve conflicts, and console those whom the fallen leave behind. As ambassadors of Christ, chaplains teach and rebuke, correct and train, amidst the diversity of cultures and pluralism of religions.

Chaplain Mark Schreiber, Director of Ministry to the Armed Forces of the LCMS has let a select group share their testimonies with our readership. We value this contribution as a demonstration of the Word that never returns void.

V. R.

Editorial

The Mission of a Military Chaplain

Mark Schreiber

This special edition of *Missio Apostolica* contains a most interesting assortment of articles written by military chaplains and one chaplain's wife. The perspective is combat ministry in a war zone and the military environment. The writers creatively penetrate the military environment with the gospel of Jesus Christ under some of the most difficult, arduous battlefield conditions.

Without a doubt no life remains unchanged after entry into a war zone. Readjustment to the normal rhythms of life must occur because after war, life is seen through a different lens. Without readjustment, this stress can easily turn into a life-long disorder. The cross of Jesus Christ assures every warrior complete unconditional forgiveness by the grace of God. The therapeutic hand of the Savior can soothe every sorrow and console every grief. The voice of our Lord beckons from the empty tomb of his resurrection by which he is able to heal our broken bodies, strengthen our fainting hearts and support our failing limbs. This word of God must penetrate the heart and soul of every service man and woman for lasting joy, peace and healing to begin. This is the heart of the task of every Christian military chaplain. It has never been easy but the satisfaction in serving is great where the grace of God is realized in the gospel mission to our uniformed soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines.

For a military chaplain to be successful he must learn the language of his environment and penetrate the military culture creatively. This culture is unique and distinctive with its own traditions and worldview. This effort requires a sharp mind, constant adaptation, and undying flexibility as compared to the stable typical paradigm of civilian parish ministry from whence the chaplain came.

To serve in the military services every chaplain must be endorsed by his own endorsing agency. Every denomination who offers candidates to the military chaplaincy has a single endorsing agent whose signature appears at the bottom of the Department of Defense endorsement form. This certifies two things; first, that the candidate is willing to serve in the religiously pluralistic environment of the military community and, secondly, that the candidate will faithfully preach, teach and offer counsel to all members of the military community in harmony with the teachings and doctrine of the church body that the chaplain represents. All branches of the military have endorsed the time-honored slogan, "cooperation without compromise." Respect between chaplains of different denominations is a two-way street. Respect must be given and received without grudging or complaint.

The chaplains of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have served throughout our nation's wars beginning with the Civil War. They have served with great distinction

and honor in some of the most trying and difficult arenas of war. They have striven faithfully and creatively to bring the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to our men and women in uniform, many of whom have suffered the terrible wounds of war. In their ministry our chaplains have made the difficult calls of notification in the middle of the night to grieving families whose sons or daughters will not be returning home. They have buried our war-dead in memorial services with distinction and honor. They have counseled and preached to all who would listen. They have offered the Lord's true body and blood to the troops in the oppressive heat of the desert, on stony altars, in front of tanks and from the backs of Humvees. They have diligently sought to bind up our nation's wounds with the life-giving words of Jesus Christ. Our chaplains have jogged with the troops, sweated in the desert, and deployed around the globe into harm's way called and motivated by the desire to make the gospel of Christ relevant to the hearts and minds of the men and women they serve.

Here then is a distinct collection of articles written by chaplains (and a chaplain's wife) of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who have been called to serve all of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines. May the reader be blessed and may the Lord of the church richly bless all his servants who faithfully fulfill their calling in serving him.

Mark J. Schreiber, U.S. Navy Chaplain (Captain–retired), serves as director for the Ministry to the Armed Forces, Endorsing Agent for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Articles

Missiological Observations on Armed Forces Chaplaincy

Mark G. Steiner

Having represented the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as a Navy chaplain for twenty-two years, the recollection of an incident continues to bring a smile to my face. Several years ago, I was preaching to Lutheran Marine recruits who had been up since before dawn. Five minutes into the sermon I heard a loud whack and saw a recruit sit bolt upright. Apparently, he had fallen asleep and a concerned comrade applied a touch of tenderness to the back of his head with the words, “That was the chaplain’s sermon ricocheting off the back wall.” It reminded me of the account in Acts 20:7–16, when Eutychus fell asleep during Paul’s sermon and fell out of a third story window.

While that recollection makes me smile, the recollection of another incident brings joy to my heart. During Holy Communion, it was a common occurrence for the Lutheran Marine recruits to whisper, “Thank you,” upon receiving the body and blood of our Savior. This response brings into sharp focus the need for an Evangelical Lutheran presence in the Armed Forces.

Overview

Allow me to offer an overview of LCMS chaplaincy involvement in the U.S. Armed Forces. The Army, Navy and Air Force each maintain their own corps of chaplains. The Navy Chaplain Corps delivers religious ministry to service members of the Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and Merchant Marines. The chaplaincy in the U.S. Armed Forces, which traces its origin to 1775, exists to ensure the free exercise of religion for men and women in the military in accordance with the First Amendment of the Constitution, U.S. Code, Title 10, Geneva Convention Protocols, and a series of Department of Defense Directives.

According to Dale Griffin, many clergymen provided worship and pastoral care in military camps during the American Revolution. “George Washington issued the first call for ministers during the Revolutionary War. Clergymen were contracted for six months to one year’s service on the same basis as surgeons of the day. Although no actual commissions were given, chaplains assigned to a year’s service were ranked as majors.”¹ Nevertheless, the military chaplaincy has not gone unchallenged. Albert Huegli discussed

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various constitutional challenges, which from time to time threatened the existence of military chaplaincy. Responding to one challenge, the House Judiciary Committee in a March 13, 1859 opinion wrote:

The spirit of Christianity has ever had a tendency to mitigate the rigors of war, if as yet it has not been entirely able to prevent it; to lend to acts of charity and kindness; and to humanize the heart. It was true philanthropy, therefore, to introduce this mitigating influence where, of all other places, its fruits were to be more beneficially realized, namely into the Army and Navy, and to abolish it, in this Christian age of the world, would seem like retrograding rather than advancing civilization.²

Although the first LCMS chaplain was Reverend Friedrich W. Richmann, who served during the Civil War, the LCMS did not officially endorse military chaplains until 1917 during World War I. In fact, the first LCMS chaplains to serve in World War I were suspected of collaborating with the enemy. Consequently, American intelligence operatives censored their mail and kept them under close observation. These suspicions were eventually overcome through the superior performance of LCMS chaplains in the execution of their duties.³ Currently, Ministry to the Armed Forces of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod operates under the auspices of the Board for Mission Services. In view of this organizational placement, it is essential that we consider the missiological context of armed forces chaplaincy.

Strategists begin planning for military operations by asking the question, “What is the desired end state?” The answer to that question determines the entire scope of operational planning and shapes the conduct of war. Likewise, it is essential that we pose a similar question with the subject of ministry in the armed forces. As we ponder our Church’s role in sounding the clarion call of the gospel in this world terrorized by sin, we ask ourselves first, “What is the desired end state?”

There is a theological imperative at the very core of our continuing support of pastors to serve as military chaplains. Of course, no one would argue that men and women serving in the United States armed forces face times of separation from their families, homes, and churches. They experience stress from frequent moves, fear of combat, and loneliness. I contend that our theological heritage demands that we support ministry in the armed forces and in so doing bear faithful witness to the teachings of the Lutheran church, that is, the teachings handed down to us from the Reformation. It is our evangelical Lutheran heritage that shapes and defines our presence in the armed forces: a scriptural presence, an evangelical presence, a credal and confessional presence, a liturgical presence, a catechetical presence, a sacramental presence, and an eschatological presence.

A Scriptural Presence

There are some who argue that socio-cultural mores and the laws enacted by our government have fostered an environment in which we should withdraw from a ministerial presence in the armed forces for fear that we will become tainted and our

theology will become compromised. Such a fear is indeed real, and needs to be assessed. The relative homogeneity of faith groups, reflected in the early years of military chaplaincy, no longer exists. More than two hundred faith groups are represented among the chaplains of the Army, Navy and Air Force and myriad faith groups are represented among the service members. Some of the so-called mainline denominations have succumbed to cultural relativism out of a sense of survival and in the name of attempting to remain relevant.

Scripture provides us with what we need to assess and address the risks of theological compromise. The book of Daniel clearly demonstrates how Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel worked in an idolatrous government but remained faithful to the one true God. Isaiah 55:11 reminds us that Scripture is God's word and that where God's word is preached and taught in its truth and purity, "it will not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Indeed, the words of St. Paul in Romans 10:14 constitute the absolute necessity of a scriptural presence in the armed forces: "And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?"

An Evangelical Presence

It is the good news of God's grace that calls Lutheran chaplains to go forth as evangelical ambassadors in the armed forces. God's holy law condemns sinful man to death and the gospel proclaims forgiveness of sins through Christ's death and resurrection. Lutheran men and women, who take the oath of enlistment or commissioning to serve in the Armed Forces, need to hear the simple truth that we are saved by grace, through faith, on account of Christ. In the fog and friction of war, this simple truth will provide comfort in the midst of confusion, direction in the midst of doubt, and courage in the midst of chaos.

An uncompromising commitment to our evangelical Lutheran heritage will assist Lutheran service members who have fallen away to rediscover the treasures of the Lutheran church. One of those treasures is the proper distinction between law and gospel. The institution of the military operates in accordance with law, regulations and policy. It can be a rather unforgiving environment. An evangelical Lutheran presence reminds Lutheran men and women of the armed forces that they are baptized children of God, sealed with the blood of Christ.

While the armed forces trains and equips service members to wage physical warfare, our evangelical Lutheran heritage trains and equips our Lutheran men and women for spiritual warfare. We follow St. Paul and don the whole armor of God (Eph 6:10ff.). Our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. We fight our spiritual warfare remembering that Christ has won the victory for us.

A Creedal and Confessional Presence

We live in a world that has abandoned absolute truth absolutely. Prevarication has been elevated to a virtue. The political realm turns to organizations that specialize in message delivery to promote their ideological agenda. The message specialists do not

consider whether the message is true; their sole mission is to craft the message in a sophisticated style and wrap it in a glossy package to sell it to the citizenry.

The creedal and confessional presence of Lutheran chaplains stands in stark contrast to an institution that is compelled to constantly change and shift with the political winds. Whether it is in the midst of the fog and friction of war or the hail and hubris of politics, our heritage points true north. When we make our creedal profession of faith in the Triune God, we do not test the air to ascertain which way the wind is blowing.

Military officers, in their commissioning, make the following oath: “I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.” Those brave souls who signed the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord pledged their lives to the teachings contained therein with these words: “Since now, in the sight of God and of all Christendom [the entire Church of Christ], we wish to testify to those now living and those who shall come after us that this declaration herewith presented . . . we have, in God’s fear and with the invocation of His name, attached our signatures with our own hands.”⁴ For Lutheran members of the armed forces, a creedal and confessional presence signifies courage and conviction in a world that celebrates doctrinal indifference.

A Liturgical Presence

A principle enunciated by Celestine I, *Lex orandi, lex credendi* (the rule of praying [i.e., worshipping] is the rule of believing), captures the importance of worship in confessing the faith of the church.⁵ The manner in which we worship testifies to the substance of our faith. According to Peter Brunner, “As the church professes its faith in worship, it is reminded that it, as a wayfaring church, is engaged in combat.”⁶ Brunner’s observation puts us on full alert against the forces of evil, who will direct their attack against worship and thereby disrupt the confession of faith and the proclamation of the gospel.

The teachings of the Lutheran church remind us that for worship to be true, God’s word must determine worship. While Article VII of the Augsburg Confession stated that it is not necessary that ceremonies, instituted by men, be observed uniformly in all places, Article XXIV of the Augsburg Confession stated that the Reformers made no conspicuous changes to worship services except that hymns, in the language of the people, were added and that the purpose of all ceremonies was to instruct believers about Christ. Additionally, Epitome Article X of the Formula of Concord emphasized that while ceremonies are neither commanded nor forbidden by God, they support good order and welfare and avoid frivolity and offense.

For the Lutheran men and women serving in the armed forces the Lutheran Worship Service transports them, spiritually, back home. It reminds them of their baptism, affords them an opportunity to find rest in the proclamation of the gospel and offers them nourishment in Holy Communion. It reminds them that they are members of a community of faith.

A Catechetical Presence

Historical records suggest that maintaining an LCMS chaplaincy program serves as a conduit for a catechetical presence. The following vignette by Chaplain Herbert C. Albrecht describes how he inculcated sound doctrine among the recruits and trainees at a Naval Training Command:

Last night 56 young men and 3 WAVES attended my confirmation class at Recruit Training Command Chapel here at Great Lakes, IL. That's not unusual, for each Tuesday and Thursday that many and more assemble for Lutheran religious instruction. I've also been privileged to confirm from 2 to 10 men each Tuesday, after a review session and personal interview. In 1951, I confirmed 84 persons and baptized 28. . . When I arrived at Great Lakes in October 1950, I worked with recruits for about two months. I was amazed at their response to the instruction program. I've never before in the navy or anywhere else encountered such a golden opportunity. . . Why do these men want instruction and seek confirmation during their busy basic training? Others might think its "foxhole religion," motivated mostly by fear; but I know that's not true because I've asked the men. Many come from Lutheran families but, for some reason, never finished their instructions for confirmation.⁷

The catechesis, described by Chaplain Albrecht, is a poignant reminder of an all too often ignored population of our church—the men and women of the armed forces. The LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces serves as the administrative structure for endorsing chaplains and ensuring that Lutheran servicemen and women are afforded regular contact with the church. LCMS chaplains identify, locate, and contact Lutheran servicemen and women at their respective units and ensure that they have devotional materials, opportunities for catechesis, and a dog tag cross with Martin Luther's seal on the front and the word Lutheran engraved on the reverse. LCMS chaplains conduct Lutheran worship services and administer the sacraments—sometimes in harm's way. When military personnel are transferred, LCMS chaplains assist them in finding Missouri Synod congregations. The words of Acts 2:42 serve as the helm for our sacramental and catechetical presence: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

A Sacramental Presence

Would Lutheran sailors, marines, soldiers and airmen have unencumbered access to the word and sacrament ministry of civilian clergy strategically placed by the church? In a lawsuit challenging the Army Chaplain Corps, G. W. Hyatt, former vice president of the LCMS and former Deputy Chief of Chaplains, stated that civilian clergy were unable to provide regular religious ministry support to service members and were not permitted to tend to the wounded on the battlefield.⁸ A sacramental presence to Lutheran service members by civilian clergy is restricted due to security procedures. W. M. McMillan, in the same lawsuit, testified that civilian clergy encounter security

problems in ministering to service members and would be evacuated along with other civilians in the event of hostilities.⁹

Summarizing the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:17, the Thorough Declaration of the Formula of Concord states:

For Christians who are of weak faith, diffident, troubled, and heartily terrified because of the greatness and number of their sins, and think that in this their great impurity they are not worthy of this precious treasure and the benefits of Christ, and who feel and lament their weakness of faith, and from their hearts desire that they may serve God with stronger, more joyful faith and pure obedience, they are the truly worthy guests for whom this highly venerable sacrament [and sacred feast] has been especially instituted and appointed; as Christ says, Matt. 11, 28: Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.¹⁰

This statement from The Formula of Concord declares that Christ instituted this meal. It also asserts that Christ instituted this feast for our salvation. Those who partake of this meal receive Christ's body and blood. Lutheran chaplains offer a sacramental presence to Lutheran service members, regularly uprooted from their congregations due to transfers or deployments.

An Eschatological Presence

Men and women of the armed forces, who face the prospect of serving in harm's way, receive grim reminders of their own mortality. The horrors of war are manifested in death, dismemberment, and disfigurement. What is it that will offer authentic hope and consolation? Will pious platitudes provide healing for the ravages of war?

The eschatological presence of our Lutheran heritage reminds the Lutheran men and women of the armed forces that true consolation comes only through the one prophesied by Isaiah in chapter 53, the one who was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was the one who bore our sins upon the tree. He is the one spoken of in Hebrews 4:14–16, who is our great high priest. This high priest was touched in every way that we are except that he did not sin. This one has opened to us the way of everlasting life. Those who have lost body members and suffered traumatic brain injury need only trust in him, who will pick them up in his loving arms and carry them to paradise, where they shall receive perfect bodies and minds. Is not this the desired end state of an evangelical Lutheran presence in the armed forces?

Conclusion

Dr. David Mulder, a convention essayist of the 61st Regular Synodical Convention, summoned LCMS Lutherans to rise up for war. Mulder underscored the urgency of proclaiming the gospel and being alert to Satan's attempts of frustrating the proclamation of the gospel. Mulder challenged the church with these words, "If we remain in our base camps, how will those who are dying hear the Good News about Jesus?"¹¹ Since World War I, the LCMS chaplaincy program responded in the affirmative

to Mulder's challenge and exerted a profound impact on the armed forces through its scriptural presence, evangelical presence, creedal and confessional presence, liturgical presence, catechetical presence, and sacramental presence.

Through the ministry of the LCMS chaplaincy program, Lutheran service members are assured of direct access to Lutheran word and sacrament ministry. The LCMS can also celebrate that some Lutheran service members, after serving honorably in the military, have gone on to serve the church as pastors, missionaries and teachers. Many more have served their church as faithful lay men and women. Our church's involvement in military chaplaincy reassures our Lutheran servicemen and women that our church is fully committed to their spiritual care and willing to send pastors into harm's way to guarantee their spiritual care. This is our responsibility and privilege.

Endnotes

¹ Dale E. Griffin, "A History of the Missouri Synod's Participation in the Military Chaplaincy," Part I, *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Winter 1999), 251.

² Albert G. Huegli, ed., *Church and State Under God*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 373.

³ M. S. Ernstmeier, ed., *They Shall Not March Alone* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1990), 15ff.

⁴ LCMS: Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord. www.lcms.org/bookofconcord/fc-sd.asp (116 of 117) [7/31/2003 4:40:20 PM]

⁵ *Lutheran Worship: Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 10.

⁶ Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 206.

⁷ Ernstmeier, 130ff.

⁸ U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit, 755F.2d 223; 1985 U.S. App. Lexis, 3/9/01, 9. *Katcoff v. Marsh and Secretary of the Army*. This court case, on behalf of tax payers, challenged the Army Chaplain Corps on the basis of the establishment clause of the First Amendment claiming that the institution of the Army Chaplain Corps constituted an establishment of religion. The plaintiffs introduced the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church as an example of a church who provided religious ministry support without being associated directly with the military. General Hyatt challenged this notion in an affidavit. "Hyatt, in his 30 years' experience in the Army chaplaincy, knew of no church other than the Wisconsin Synod whose clergy were not permitted to serve as military chaplains or who had undertaken at their own expense to serve their members in the military service."

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau eds., *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 997.

¹¹ David Mulder, "Tell the Good News About Jesus to Those Around You," (Essay presented at the 61st Regular Convention of the LCMS, July 19, 2001). www.lcms.org/convention/news/c05-37.htm.

Military Chaplaincy is a Mission-Focused Ministry

Rob Carter

In our churches and communities pastors are provided opportunities to witness to and serve others in a context where often we find more similarity than diversity. As a soldier and a chaplain, the community I serve is much more diverse and regularly provides opportunities to witness and share the gospel message with those who are un- or de-churched. As a chaplain, I am given the kind of “pass” into their lives that I would not have, say, with the members of my congregation. I am present with them where they work, on deployment, even where they are living. This access opens up opportunities for conversations and ministry in hours and days, unlike the parish that may take weeks and years to become apparent. The cross on my uniform is a sign that I will listen, take the time to hear and care, and offer help when all other options seem to lead only to closed doors.

While we all look similar because we are wearing uniforms, the group that I minister to in the military is diverse culturally, socially, and ethnically. That uniform is my “ticket in” to minister to soldiers I am serving and the veterans I meet in the community. When we are brought together to complete our military mission for a Battle Assembly (Weekend) or a mobilization and deployment, we have a much wider range of ages and backgrounds than what I have experienced in a church. There are mature, well-seasoned Christians mixed in with agnostics, atheists, and just about every faith group that one can imagine. Throughout my service in the military I have seen how the Holy Spirit has continually brought chaplains to places where people are broken and hurting and seen how God has used the chaplain to share his grace and healing presence with them.

Three key ways I have observed chaplains doing this have been through conducting field services, visiting and sharing devotions, and being available to care for those who are struggling with weighty and serious issues. Chaplains’ care for soldiers brings them to where the soldiers are, where they work, or where they prepare to execute the missions they are trained for. As a chaplain, I am able to go into the room where staff officers are preparing a briefing, provide them with some coffee, a pizza and soda, and listen to their struggles. In that time I can be God’s agent to encourage, to bring peace, and to offer comfort. As a chaplain I am called to go outside the walls of a church building and create a sanctuary for worship and prayer bringing God to where “two or three have been gathered together in his name”. This happens in the woods, the desert, on

Rob Carter, U.S. Army Chaplain (Major), serves in the Army Reserve in the Military Intelligence Readiness Command. He deployed as an Embedded Trainer in an Afghan Army Combat Support Kandak, (February 2005 to March 2006). For 22 years he has served in Infantry, Medical and Training Units in the National Guard and Army Reserve. He serves as Assistant Pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Fredericksburg, VA.

an airstrip, or on a mountain top so that our military servicemen and women can have the comfort that comes from fellowship and worship in Christ's name.

Field Services

Attending chapel field services makes a soldier's witness to other soldiers more up front and immediate because they stop what they are doing and step aside to give time to God. It shows other soldiers where they place their faith. Worship also reminds soldiers that "returning home" has eternal significance and means more than just going back to the States. The liturgy, message, hymns and readings are shared with all those within earshot at a field service, allowing the Word to work in the hearts of all those who are present and can hear. Sure, I could go out one weekend a month and stand on the corner of a main street and offer to pray and lead a worship service, but would anyone come? As a chaplain, when I offer to conduct worship, there are soldiers who step away from the work they are doing to spend time in prayer and worship.

Visiting and Sharing Devotions

Visiting with soldiers and taking time to offer a devotional lesson or prayer is another moment when I am able to witness the work of our Lord and Savior. When the chaplain goes out to meet with a group before they depart for a mission, or is asked to pray at command functions and provides the invocation and benediction, those words of faith and encouragement are shared with a very diverse group. Attending and praying at these functions is an opportunity to teach, an opportunity to model and to show where our faith rests. Under the commander's guidance and with a chaplain's creativity, these functions provide a unique arena for prayer, and a chance to express what is weighing on people's hearts and minds. It is truly a rare moment—a chaplain, using the words and encouragement provided by the Holy Spirit, is able to lift up hearts, and open minds to hearing God's plan and promise for them.

Soldier Care

Chaplains have a sacred trust to care for the soldiers they are serving and, when counseling soldiers, may not share privileged information with anyone other than God without the that counselee's permission. This can lead to some very difficult and challenging situations. Chaplains are in a position to help someone, knowing this person might share serious struggles and issues. With that privilege comes a heavy burden of trust and confidence. Soldiers know this and it leads them to seek out the chaplain for guidance and counsel on difficult issues, because they know the conversation does not go any farther. Every chaplain knows to avoid gossip and idle chat about what someone has talked. What is said to the chaplain stays with the chaplain. The "profession of arms" is challenging and messy. Those in that profession may talk about suicide, grief over lives taken, loss of comrades, family struggles, and perceived personal failures. In this ministry the chaplain provides words of forgiveness, words to ease doubt about decisions made, and words of comfort for grief and regret.

While I cannot share the conversations I have had, I can write about some of the events that have led to pastoral care that have occurred in my time as a chaplain. As an

Army Reserve chaplain, I am not limited to working only with soldiers at my unit. I may be asked to provide prayers at a Veterans Organization Event, attend a memorial ceremony, or simply traveling in uniform. A blessing that I cherish is the fellowship of the many members in the community and our own church who are currently serving who have served in the military.

Veterans Day and Memorial Day observations are a time where the Holy Spirit has led me into conversations with veterans. These have led to prayer and discussions about faith and God's presence. At those events veterans see my uniform and recognized that I am a chaplain. Though not in their unit, they know I am a good person to talk to about their experiences at war. As a member of the military I wear my experiences on my uniform. The awards and badges tell others I have the "right" experience to listen and help those who have experienced war. As a pastor I do not have the same sort of placard on my clericals. For that reason I may not ever be approached by someone struggling with their war time experiences. At a Veterans Support Group, I have opportunities to listen or to be heard, and am the only clergy member attending at this time. Those present do ask for prayers sometimes and at others for explanations. Often though, they share how they have received care from other chaplains in the past. It is humbling when a soldier shares with me the work that another chaplain has done for him, helping him to find forgiveness, grow in faith, or recovery from a tragedy. Some want to know how to get in touch with that chaplain so they can thank them and to let them know they are okay. Those times have also been a powerful witness of the healing power of confession and absolution.

It is easy to discount what a powerful comfort is present in our liturgy and traditions. Whether in a field service, at a funeral, wedding, or baptism we are feeding those present and providing them with a style and form of worship that they can find in the military and at home. When serving in an area where several units are co-located it is a tremendous joy to be present with soldiers who come together because they worship in our tradition, recognize the hymns we sing, and join us in praising the Lord. Our Ministry to the Armed Forces of the LCMS has facilitated this by providing an Armed Forces devotional which has been a great help with field services for providing soldiers a resource for daily prayer, and offering encouraging readings. Going to the rifle range, being where soldiers are training, and taking the time to create a worship space for them where they are working allows us to meet them where they are at. Chaplaincy allows me to do the work that God intends for me to do where soldiers live every day. I get to share what God has in store for them.

As an Army chaplain I have been given the opportunity to shepherd soldiers who come from a more diverse group than I am regularly presented on Sunday morning. The moments to care for the living and honor the dead come because of the privilege of serving and being present in the uniform of a chaplain. The Holy Spirit has given me the words of faith to share and a chance to explain how Christ has died for them, and of the grace, peace and forgiveness that we receive only from God. This word of hope I share with some who have never heard that message before, and yet have lived their whole lives in our "Christian" nation.

In the Trenches: Gospel Proclamation in a Pluralistic Environment

Matthew C. Christensen

The motto for the Army Chaplaincy is “*Pro Deo et Patria*,” which means, “For God and Country.” Serving as a chaplain in the Army comes with some unique challenges and rewards. My uniform tells the tale. On the left side it says “U.S. Army,” but on the right it says “Christensen” with a cross above my name. I am a soldier, but I am also a chaplain. I live by Army rules and regulations, but I also proclaim the gospel. I wear the rank of an officer, but I carry no weapon into the combat zone. I am part of the special staff for a battalion commander, but I spend most of my days talking with the soldiers. My primary function in the Army is to ensure that all soldiers have the right to practice their religion (Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment), but at the same time I am allowed to hold Lutheran services. I am called through the mission department of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, but I serve wherever the Army sends me. My calling is to faithfully serve both God and country. My challenge is to proclaim the gospel in a pluralistic environment.

Serving God through Preaching

The Army is filled with a great variety of chaplains. Most are Christian of one denomination or the other, but there are also a few Muslim, Buddhist, and Jewish chaplains as well. Lutheran chaplains are considered “Protestant” by Army standards and this creates unique difficulties. Lutheran chaplains handle this particular difficulty in various ways. Some choose to conduct and participate only in Lutheran services, while others see Protestant services as an opportunity for gospel proclamation.

I love to preach and I take every opportunity that comes my way. I am currently deployed in Iraq. There are three Missouri Synod Lutherans in my battalion that has over 600 soldiers. For these soldiers, I offer a Lutheran field service with Holy Communion. I also take my place in the preaching rotation for the other Protestant services in our location. I have noticed that most Protestant chaplains are very good at preaching the law. I have heard countless messages that focus on a moral or ethical lesson. Very few Protestant chaplains proclaim the gospel. A couple months ago I attended several Protestant services and heard nothing but the law being proclaimed.

When my time to preach arrived, I preached a simple Lutheran sermon. I proclaimed the law, but I also proclaimed the gospel. I talked about sin and our struggle with sin, but I focused on forgiveness through Christ’s death. I shared the simple message of how the Holy Spirit changes our hearts and how he creates faith as we hear God’s

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word. A soldier was there that Sunday, sitting in the same place that he had sat for several months. He had heard the law over and over again. He had been exposed to altar call after altar call, but he had never come forward. When this soldier heard the gospel, the Holy Spirit worked a miracle. Immediately after the service, without any invitation or altar call, the soldier came up and asked me what he needed to do to be baptized! Two weeks later we stood before a Protestant worship service, quoting the Apostles' Creed together, as the soldier was baptized.

Serving God and Country through Counseling

No matter what kind of problem that a soldier may be facing, the directive is often given: "Go see the chaplain." soldiers come to me when they have problems. Financial problems: "Go see the chaplain." Marriage problems: "Go see the chaplain." Anger issues: "Go see the chaplain." Basically any soldier issue, complaint, or problem that the chain of command or Non-commissioned Officer Support Channel cannot figure out quickly gets sent to the chaplain. On average I provide formal counseling for 30 to 75 soldiers each month.

As soldiers come into my office I start by asking them how they are doing. The general response: "Not too good, or I wouldn't be in your office." Then we start talking and the soldier fills me in on whatever is happening to make their life miserable, uncomfortable, etc. Before we get too far into the counseling session, I usually ask the question, "What is your religious preference?" I use this question for two reasons: The first is that I often find the source or root of their problem as they tell me about how they used to be religious, but now they are not. The second is that I find out if I will be serving God or country, or both during the counseling session.

If a soldier comes from a Christian background, or if they claim Christianity as their religious preference I provide them with pastoral, scriptural, law/gospel counseling. If they have no religious preference or if they are of a religion other than Christian I provide them with secular counseling. After I get to know the soldier and after the secular counseling usually proves to be somewhat ineffective, I ask them if it would be okay for me to use some scriptural principles. On most occasions, the soldier is more than willing to try almost anything to get his problems solved, so he consents to using the Bible. So far the Holy Spirit has given me the opportunity to counsel with five atheists, three Wiccans, two Mormons, one Jew, and a multitude of soldiers who claim "No Religious Preference."

Serving God and Country as a Staff Officer

"How are the troops today?" I get asked this question from leadership at various levels almost daily. This leadership knows that in most cases the soldiers will give them the "politically correct" answer, but they will give the chaplain the "real deal" situation. As part of the special staff for the battalion commander, I have the opportunity to provide insights that he might not otherwise be able to obtain. While my counseling with soldiers is completely confidential, I have the ability to describe "in general" the climate of the unit. If I counsel with several soldiers in one company and find out that they are all

having an issue with one thing in particular, I have the ability to make recommendations for the commander to improve the situation.

As a staff officer I attend several meetings each week. I am included in the mission planning for deployment and redeployment, I provide updates at the Commander's Update Brief, and I give my Unit Ministry Team report during Command and Staff. At each of these meetings I have the opportunity to share the "word for the day." Sometimes I find a military or leadership quote, but other times I read a Bible passage. I never attempt to preach a sermon, but simply allow God's word to be heard. So far no one has complained or asked me to stop quoting from Scripture.

As a chaplain, I am often asked to perform a religious act at a civil ceremony. It has become part of military tradition to have the chaplain offer the invocation (prayer) for change of command ceremonies. This is one area where the religious realm is allowed to overlap the civil realm. The main issue with offering a word of prayer at a change of command ceremony is that soldiers are required to be present. No one requires soldiers to attend Bible studies, religious services, or spiritual fitness events, but they are required to stand in formation during a change of command. As their chaplain, I am honored when asked to pray before a formation, but I am also very aware that the soldiers standing in formation may not all be Christian. I have a simple solution and so far no one has complained or called CNN. Before the prayer I simply say: "As your faith allows, please join with me in prayer." Those who are Christian bow their heads and pray along. Those who are not simply stand by until the prayer is complete.

Serving God and Country through MOP (Ministry of Presence)

My favorite times in the Army are those times when I get to be with the soldiers, doing what they do and experiencing what they experience. Chaplains who spend the majority of their days in their offices, drinking coffee and writing papers (I guess that's me today!) are usually not effective at interacting with their soldiers. My best days as a chaplain are those days when I get to "get dirty" with the soldiers.

Life in the Army involves maintaining some level of physical fitness. Most units have organized PT (physical training). When the chaplain does PT with the unit, the soldiers usually get excited. They have a chance to show off, compete, or simply complain about the PT session. I have noticed that whenever I take the time to do PT with a particular company, I will have more soldiers from that company talk to me throughout the week. Doing PT is a simple task, but it opens up a lot of doors for present and future ministry.

Life in the army involves working some kind of job. Each soldier is trained in combat tasks, but they are also trained in a specific job. They may be mechanics, aircraft crew chiefs, medics, and much more. Whenever I get the chance I take the time to watch soldiers at work. I am currently in an aviation battalion and they love it when I go flying with them. Some find comfort in having the chaplain in the helicopter, but for the most part they just want to show me what a great job they can do. Soldiers often receive little praise and recognition for doing their jobs, so having the chaplain shake their hand and tell them that they are doing a great job means a lot. Whenever I spend time with soldiers

as they work, they also share with me their private lives. They tell me about their families, about their plans for the future, and about their struggles with life and faith.

Life in the Army involves deployments. When I accepted the call to serve as an active duty chaplain, my family knew the price. We immediately prepared ourselves for a year-long deployment. I am currently in my ninth month of a twelve month deployment. My family is “back in the rear” while I am deployed with the unit. It is never easy and many days are lonely, but we are a military family. As a parish pastor I tried to minister to soldiers and their families and had some success, but there is no substitute for living among the people to whom you are ministering.

Deployment has given my family numerous chances to share the gospel with other family members. Spouses of deployed soldiers rely on one another for support and encouragement. My wife has become an integral part of our battalion Family Readiness Group. My children are involved in a youth group sponsored by other chaplains not currently deployed. As my family goes through the struggles of deployment, they become more and more credible to the people around them. They are not simply willing to pray for and support other soldiers; they are willing to go through a long separation as well.

Deployment has given me some unique insights and great opportunities to share the gospel. I remember well the first time that I heard a mortar being launched into our compound from just outside the perimeter. Several soldiers immediately hit the ground and crawled for cover; while I sat there wondering what was happening. I was sitting across from a soldier deeply engrossed in a counseling session. When he heard the mortar whistling overhead, he jumped up yelled, “We’re getting hit! Get to cover!” At that moment, I realized that he had been through this scenario many times before. His body was conditioned to respond, while mine hesitated. His immediate action was to get me to cover and his concern was my life, not his own. Thankfully the mortar did not land in our immediate vicinity, but I gained a valuable experience that day. Not only is my body now more conditioned to respond quickly to a mortar attack, but I also have a common “combat” experience that I share with many other soldiers. For a lot of soldiers, that common ground will open the doors for communication and sharing the gospel.

Serving God and Country in the Battlefield

The most dangerous place for soldiers is on the battlefield while engaging or being engaged by the enemy. The most dangerous place for a chaplain is on the battlefield of a pluralistic environment. The challenge is to maintain the doctrine of orthodox Christianity, while at the same time providing for the religious needs of all soldiers.

Sadly, some chaplains have been severely wounded and even killed on this battlefield. I have heard several sermons preached by “Christian” chaplains that declare that all religions are simply different paths leading to the same God. I know chaplains who carry around prayer cards with prayers from a variety of religions in the event that they are called upon to minister to a dying soldier of a different faith. I recently attended a chaplain’s conference where I was chastised for not wanting to participate in a generic spiritual hug where all religions were placed on the same level and individuals were encouraged to share their personal faith journey with everyone else.

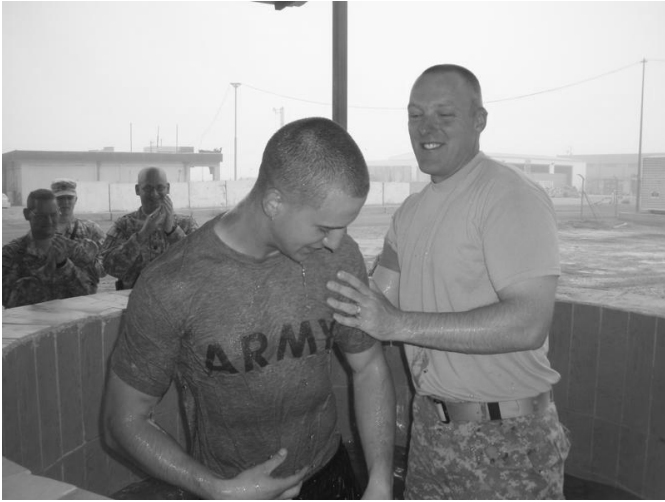
On the one hand, I defend every soldier's right to practice their religion, whatever that religion may be, as long as their religious practice does not interfere with military missions or violate Army regulations. On the other hand, I will never declare in the civil or the religious realm that their faith claims are true. Soldiers from various faith traditions stand together, fight together, and sometimes even die together in order to protect religious freedom. The greatest thing about religious freedom is the ability to openly and publically declare that all other religions are leading people down a path to eternal damnation and suffering. Defending a right and defending the truth are two very different things. It is possible to defend religious freedom, while at the same time declaring the gospel truth of salvation through Christ alone!

Pro Deo et Patria: For God and Country

I am a soldier, but I am also a pastor and a missionary. I live in a world dominated by rules and regulations, but I have opportunities for declaring the gospel. I live in a world that is dangerous, both physically and spiritually. I am very careful about how I speak and how I conduct myself while I am serving in the civil realm. My responsibility is to ensure that all soldiers have the opportunity to practice their religion without discrimination. I also publically proclaim through preaching, teaching, and administering the sacraments that Christ alone is "the way, the truth and the life." I am a soldier, but I am also a chaplain. My family and I are proud to serve both God and country.



Chaplains and assistants in the back of a CH-47 (Chinook) helicopter. I am in the back row, far left.



Holy Baptism at the Tigris Chapel Baptismal “font,” Camp Taji, Iraq.



Two soldiers constructed a mobile cross for my field services. During the week it sits outside of my office.

Serving God and Country in the Diverse Environment of Afghanistan

Russell Dewell

Ministry and gospel outreach opportunities for chaplains serving in Afghanistan are as diverse as the people and geography in that ancient, mysterious land. Chaplains focus on supporting and serving members of their immediate military unit as well as a multitude of authorized personnel. They may be located on one base or spread across hundreds of square miles of mountains, valleys, and deserts. They can enjoy performing worship services and administering sacraments for members of their church body or leading a collection of Christians in services of word and prayer. Chaplains are expected to perform military ceremonies ranging from routine changes of command to rendering the spiritual voice over the remains of the deceased. Some of the most exhilarating ministry and gospel opportunities have come in collaboration with coalition chaplains from New Zealand and France, as well as with authorized civilian religious leaders in a variety of situations.

Afghanistan's spiritual environment is as diverse as its rugged landscape with Buddhists, Muslims, and small pockets of other religions coexisting for centuries. Recent conflicts, beginning with the Soviet invasion in 1979, have altered that spiritual landscape. The coalition of militaries from around the world in Afghanistan and their chaplains add more layers to this already complex picture. The many Christian denominations of most coalition chaplains are new voices in the spiritual complexity and history of the heart of Asia. Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod chaplains proclaim the pure gospel in this very dynamic environment.

I recently enjoyed the privilege of serving in Afghanistan and representing the Synod. I experienced a widely diverse set of circumstances. The events of my tour of duty were unique and exciting, especially demonstrating how the pure gospel and faith in it are not *a* difference in people's lives serving so far from home, but are *the* difference in both individual lives and the world. I hope you enjoy reading some of my adventures and are inspired by their testimony that the gospel is still spreading to the farthest corners of the world through the challenging work of military chaplains.

My Mission

I serve the Indiana Army National Guard as a traditional (“one weekend a month”) chaplain and am also the sole, full-time pastor of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran

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Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Trinity's congregation very selflessly and lovingly supports me and my family's service to the 38th Infantry Division (ID) in Indianapolis. The 38th ID's headquarters staff of 210 soldiers was mobilized to full-time duty for deployment to Bagram Airfield (BAF) in central Afghanistan, approximately 30 miles north of the capital of Kabul. My Unit Ministry Team included Chaplain (Major-Army) Donald Nedza, an associate pastor of a non-denominational Christian church in rural northwest Indiana, Specialist Jonathan Dyar, and Specialist Cody Mackin, our Chaplain Assistants. All my experiences included them in one way or another.

The 38th ID arrived on BAF in mid-August 2009. Our mission was to provide command and control for approximately 24,000 coalition forces living and operating from BAF. Additionally, some of our directly subordinate units were spread across 9,900 square miles in the four Afghan provinces of our Area of Operations (AO) that was covered with broad and narrow valleys between towering, rugged mountains littered with Taliban insurgents and corrupt Afghan 'gangsters.' However, mostly our AO was populated by approximately 1,310,000 peaceful, poor farming Afghans among whom are children who love to play, teenage boys acting foolishly and aggressively trying to prove themselves, fathers and mothers who work hard, and towns where daily life is frequently a struggle. These were the people the coalition was there to protect and help become self-sufficient.

We led BAF to force-surge strength of almost 35,000 military and civilian personnel before receiving a change of mission two-thirds through our deployment. We packed our equipment to leave BAF and fly to Kabul on Good Friday 2010. Our new mission was to organize a previously nonexistent headquarters over eleven bases spread across the city of over three million Afghans. This included me establishing supervision over eight chapels and unifying support for around 15 chaplains and 14 chaplain assistants from the Army, Navy, and Air Force. This brief account of our tour alone shows the incredibly wide range of circumstances in which a chaplain can find himself ministering and reaching out with the gospel.

Lutheran Worship! Amen!

My primary function, and that of most chaplains, is to perform worship for authorized personnel, including uniformed coalition military, civilian coalition government representatives, and civilian coalition contractors from around the world, but especially for United States citizens to exercise their constitutional right of freedom of religious expression. Each chaplain performs worship in accord with the tenants of their religious endorsing body (i.e. Lutheran chaplains perform Lutheran or general Protestant worship, Roman Catholic chaplains perform masses, etc.).

It was my great joy to share Lutheran worship leadership responsibilities with LCMS Chaplains (Lieutenant Colonel-Army) Tim Sowers, (Major-Army) Arleigh VonSeggern, and (Captain-Army) Don Ehrke at BAF. Special thanks are due to CH VonSeggern for arranging specific Lutheran worship time at BAF before the rest of us arrived. Each week's service saw new faces as people came and went from BAF in the conduct their duties. However, each week was unified in worship from the Lutheran Service Book—even in Afghanistan!—accompanied by Concordia Publishing House's

fabulous *Concordia Organist* CD recordings. Several services were blessed with gifted singers spontaneously harmonizing favorite old hymns, even encouraging one another by increasing their volume and making eye contact while singing to make even more joyful and beautiful noise unto the Lord! I attended many other worship services of other Christian denominations during my tour as part of my responsibilities, but no other worship was ever as joyful and meaningful as a dozen to two Lutherans singing out in full voices with prerecorded pipe organ accompaniment. Also, the occasional female voice added to our regularly all male Lutheran ‘choirs’ always added a special sweetness to worship. We were always very thankful for our Lutheran sisters and our Lutheran hymnody heritage.

General Protestant and Roman Catholic worship support

Chaplains also facilitate providing worship for personnel outside of their religious body. For example, one of my routine duties was to synchronize worship time with commanders of remote units and schedule (usually by helicopter) transportation for a Roman Catholic chaplain to perform mass for Catholic personnel. In this way, chaplains support one another fulfilling our duty to ensure as many authorized personnel in our AO as possible have opportunities to exercise their freedom of religion.

Unfortunately, Afghanistan is so large and so rugged, and people are spread so far and wide that some go weeks without being led in any worship, let alone specific to their faith group. However, this also creates many opportunities for chaplains to provide ministry in various forms to a wide audience. I frequently enjoyed leading small groups in short Bible study, usually of relevant lectionary texts, and prayer. These always proved excellent times to share our Lutheran confession of certain passages with people who often never before heard the clarity and overall harmony with the rest of scripture we so graciously enjoy from our doctrine. I dare say that I sometimes found the dialogue with people in these studies more fruitful than otherwise leading them in worship.

Coalition Religious Support

I do not know about most other chaplains in Afghanistan, but I enjoyed the great honor of working with chaplains from both New Zealand and France during our time at BAF. The Kiwis, as we affectionately called our New Zealand friends, were Protestant, while French chaplains were predominately Roman Catholic. Our French counterparts more aptly bridged our language gap than we did. This was just one aspect of the French chaplains that I came to greatly admire. We learned that the French Army and Marines spend more time abroad around the world in any of their partner countries [my term] than the United States Army and Marines were accustomed to prior to Operations Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Iraqi Freedom beginning about nine years ago from the publication of this journal. Therefore, French chaplains have vast experience in places like the Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Albania, Bosnia, and Yugoslavia. Their global service was only out done by their impressive scholarship, for example most spoke several languages well, and their selfless desire to serve their soldiers and Marines. French chaplains serve in the rank of captain, (equivalent to U.S.

Army and Marine Captains), and are never promoted. They always serve at the same rank; a testimony to their dedication that I find incredibly humbling.

One Kiwi chaplain helped provide one of the most interesting and global ministry opportunities I ever expect to enjoy in my life. He found an orphanage in the mountains of Bamyan Province, famous for the location of the ancient Buddha statues destroyed by the Taliban. The orphanage is supported by Roman Catholic missionaries from India. The Kiwi chaplain told me that the missionaries said the orphans needed blankets for winter, which is very cold and snowy at the capital's elevation of 8,500 feet, the same as Aspen, Colorado.

I contacted Mike Moreno of Operation Barnabas for the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces who in turn spread the word to send blankets to Chaplain Dewell in Afghanistan for the orphans in Bamyan. The response was nothing short of miraculous! First to arrive were the boxes of blankets people bought at discount stores that were sent immediately. Soon after, the handmade quilts from sewing circles across the Midwest started arriving. These were warm works of art. I joke when I tell this story that I could have shipped those quilts home to sell at craft fairs in Indiana for \$75 to \$150 each. They were gorgeous! I cherished showing people pictures of ladies in sewing circles that accompanied many blankets.

The New Zealand chaplain, who arranged air transportation to get the many blankets from BAF to Bamyan for the orphans, was astonished and overwhelmed. I consider it a high honor to have been involved in an activity of the global body of Christ getting "Lutheran blankets" to a United Church of Christ New Zealand chaplain, to give to Indian Roman Catholic missionaries, to share with Afghan orphans, who could have been Buddhist or Muslim or with no religious belief, all in the name of Christ.

Multi-belief efforts: Wicca and Islam

As denominationally and internationally diverse as my Christian ministry experiences were, my multi-belief responsibilities added two different dimensions to my deployment. Chaplains are required to sign an agreement that they will cooperate and operate in a pluralistic environment in the military. This is often incorrectly misconstrued as being required to adopt the different beliefs of a pluralistic environment. This is not true. All chaplains are allowed and expected to adhere to the doctrine of their endorsing church body regarding worship and other religiously oriented activities. However, the military environment includes many other non-religious functions that require chaplains to work with service members who have different beliefs and even completely different religions. For example, my responsibilities included ensuring Wicca service members had a facility in which to exercise their freedom of religion. This did not require me to adopt their beliefs, but did require me to cooperate with the Wiccans to find a location that was suitable for their needs, and (the biggest challenge of all on overcrowded BAF), that was available.

I suspect this rails against the sensibilities of some confessing Lutherans. I offer this counter justification of working diligently and fairly in the pluralistic military environment. The channels of dialogue over which coordinating facilities and supplies for Wiccan service members take place are the same channels over which opportunities to

discuss a chaplain's apologetics take place. A biblical parallel is how Saint Paul conducted missionary work in a highly pluralistic environment. I firmly believe most LCMS chaplains embrace military, constitutionally guaranteed pluralism as a mission rich environment in which to find the lost sheep of the good Shepherd's flock. Without revealing details, I will testify that my openness to work and cooperate in the pluralistic environment of my deployment blessed me to be the recipient of a "lost sheep's" repentance and return to the Christian roots of his upbringing! By keeping those pluralistic channels of dialogue open, I helped keep the door of Christ open to that man who returned to being the true spiritual head of his household.

A further unique aspect of my deployment was working with Muslims on BAF improving their mosques. As the base operations chaplain, it was my responsibility to ensure that every authorized person had a facility to exercise the religious freedom, including U.S. and coalition Muslims. This involved helping contract for improvement construction of an old mosque in the heart of BAF. Given the bureaucratic hassle of contracting any work in Afghanistan through a government agency, it could be fair to say that getting the work done that we did was one of the major achievements of my deployment. I wish I could say that I had some evangelical, mission, outreach success bringing someone to faith in Christ through this effort, but I cannot. However, it was rewarding to be involved in something in which Muslims from different sides of Islam and various countries worked together cooperating in ways the Taliban could not imagine and might even disdain. The model of cooperative, peaceful achievement demonstrated at that mosque by everyone involved, even this LCMS chaplain, was not lost on the Afghan workers who saw that when it comes to peaceful freedom of religion the United States really does prove that it means what its constitution says. In a country torn apart by the struggle for religious dominance, our relatively minor mosque improvement project was a shining positive example and hope for the future of Afghanistan.

Counseling: Marriage/Relationship Deployment and Combat Stress

Despite the richness of leading Lutheran worship, working with coalition partners, and ministering in a religiously dynamic environment, I spent most of my time on deployment counseling service members. It is not an exaggeration to say that every other day included some degree of marriage/relationship counseling. As much publicity as combat stress related counseling gets, basic marriage/relationship stress from being deployed occupied the majority of my time in Afghanistan. I am not complaining.

Being a chaplain often means providing care in whatever form is needed wherever it is needed. Even in the remote mountain valleys of Afghanistan, U.S. military personnel need someone to talk to about their enduring relationships back home half the world away. I count it an honor to be trusted with people's most heartfelt feelings for loved ones they miss very much, but who also can cause them more anguish at times than even the Taliban. I considered every tear shed with me for loved ones at home validation of my presence away from my own wonderful and fully supportive family, who I also missed very much.

Sadly, much of the marriage/relationship counseling needs I encountered could be traced back to a fundamental absence of understanding and adherence to the beauty of

holy matrimony. This did not surprise me given the anti-religious themes in American culture regarding the covenant between husband and wife since the dawn of the sexual revolt. However, helping service members through their difficulties provided ample chances to teach at least one half of the marriages/relationships the better way to think of and approach their spouse/partner with hope that my assistance can make a positive difference both during the deployment and long afterward. The 38th ID headquarters was blessed with Chaplain Nedza's presence as a prolific teacher who conducted marriage enrichment seminars and offered marriage improving classes throughout our tour. He more than made up for my lack of opportunity to provide the same benefits, since we had different responsibilities. I was very grateful for him routinely.

Other chaplains probably provided more combat stress counseling than I did during my deployment, especially those closer to the Pakistan border and the Taliban, but even at relatively peaceful BAF I had several occasions to help soldiers face their burdens from having fought with and killed the enemy. In these counseling sessions, my conviction of the need for thorough spiritual and moral preparation of service members sworn to fight for our nation grew even greater. I saw the results of the spiritual vacuum and selective morality in our country in the brokenness of young men pushed to the limit of their souls by the heavy burdens of combat. Having not been spiritually and morally trained in their formative years, but instead being left to the wasteland of "making their own choices" about God and personal conduct, young men facing the weight of having killed, having fought to survive, and, worst of all, having lost close friends in combat find that they have no solid foundation on which to sort out the right and wrong of their experience. Since the important facets of God and morality were left to their own designs in youth, they are also left on their own to cope with the conundrum of life and death in battle. Great philosophers and theologians have written volumes about those same issues and not always reached satisfying conclusions. How much more are individual service members left short of answers to their deepest questions about the razor thin margins between living and killing, surviving and dying in combat? Unfortunately, I felt that my conclusions to these age old questions, having studied Luther's Two Kingdoms theology and Just War theory, were too late to the scene to help the young men I counseled. Their hearts, minds, and souls were already irrevocably scarred by their experiences having not been spiritually and morally trained for the likelihood of those exact circumstances. Spiritual and moral relativism is killing as many service members after their deployments via suicide as the Taliban is during our troops' deployments.

Death Ministry

My short three months in Kabul were punctuated by my biggest challenge during deployment; ministering to a unit who had a soldier murdered [my term] by a suicide bomber. It was also my biggest privilege to speak the prophetic and spiritual voice at his memorial ceremony. I suppose ministering in the wake of violent death is the military chaplain's own conundrum of life and death in battle. Since we are non-weapon bearing noncombatants, our "fire fight" is with the wages of sin exacted at an extraordinary toll. Never was I more thankful to be an LCMS chaplain armed with a crystal clear understanding of law and gospel than in the days between the soldier's

murder and the weeks after until all of us affected by his death resumed our lives. For me, that was about six weeks later after overcoming a bout with compassion fatigue.

Chaplains face the challenge of giving so much of themselves to their service members day to day that it is hard to preserve some spiritual energy for ourselves. This challenge becomes acute when a death occurs and a chaplain finds himself draining of spiritual resolve from emptying himself for his troops on a regular basis. I thought I had prepared myself against just that. I had observed the stalwart chaplains of the 82nd Airborne Division sending flag draped caskets home in aircraft cathedrals. I thought I had learned from them how to face my own direct ministry after the death of a soldier. I thought I was trained to write my first condolence letter to his parents, but I suppose no chaplain can be prepared for any of that until they have been through it. Regardless of the personal price I paid for having performed that ministry, if I had it all to do again, even knowing what it would do to me, I would do it again and pay the same price all over again. As strange as it may sound, especially in light of the wide variety of fun, exciting, and meaningful experiences I had in Afghanistan, I am most proud of serving that one heroic soldier, his family, and his unit. Standing in death's shadow, especially the death of a heroic, young American son or daughter, with the clear words of eternal life could arguably be the highest point of being a military chaplain. It is not for every pastor. But for those called to serve as pastors in uniform, especially in Afghanistan, it is a widely diverse, greatly rewarding, and challenging calling to serve "For God and Country."

Certainty of Not Knowing: Life as a Navy Chaplain's Wife

Jeanette Dart

Our lives are full of uncertainty.¹ We “do not know what tomorrow will bring” (Jas 4:14). Although most of us get up in the same house as yesterday and go about tasks similar to previous days, there are still unknowns. We may get injured, fall sick, or get better from something at any time. We might be home early or late from work. We may run into someone we haven't seen in a long time. We might lose a job. We might need to move unexpectedly to keep a job. There might be some unexpected conflict with a family member or a surprise party. Each and every day of our lives hold uncertainties.

My husband is a chaplain in the United States Navy. This ministry has made the uncertainties of life more palpable for me. Where anyone *might* move, we are scheduled to move. I don't know where I will live in two years, let alone in four or six. I most likely have not met the people I will call friends in two years. Where anyone *might* have to travel for work, my husband is *scheduled* to travel for work. And although he is scheduled to deploy, the schedule is anything but fixed. When asked about it, I respond, “He is scheduled to leave around such and such, unless it changes.” With his deploying come other uncertainties. Right now I don't know where my husband is. I guess that his ship is near the Philippines, but I don't know. I don't know when he will be able to email again or when in the next month or so he might be able to call me. When he does come home, I don't know how long he will be staying or how long he will be gone the next time. I don't know how my children, or I, will cope with this deployment. I also don't know if he will come home safely or not. This is the military life for spouses and families.

Some aspects of my life seem mundane. I take care of our kids. I do the dishes and laundry, diaper changing, potty-training, and discipline deciding. Wiping noses, reading books, and cooking meals round out my days. Sometimes I get the floor washed too! I have taught my children about God, and that Jesus died for them. I sing songs to them and with them. I take them to church. I try to build routine into our lives to give them some structure. And yet in the midst of my mundane routines, there are the normal uncertainties, car trouble, sickness, injury, etc. There seems to be so little of my life that is under my control.

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Neighbors in base housing often become a family of a sort as we weather the uncertainties together, both military ones and normal ones. Taking kids to the playground together gives parents a chance for much needed “adult conversation” when the dad or mom is deployed. We help each other with sick kids and back each other up for ER runs in the middle of the night. We count down days together, to both departures and reunions. We commiserate about extensions and changed orders. We listen to each other. When the rest of the world might think we are crazy for saying, “I just wish he would leave already,” (after all, it doesn’t sound good to wish your husband gone for 7 months!), the other moms understand because they have also gone through the pain that is a countdown to a departure. We celebrate and give hugs with each other when they do come home. And it hurts at times when I know that I have a peace that they don’t have.

There is peace. In the midst of the many uncertainties of life, even the uncertainties of military family life, there are certainties. God is true, faithful, sure and certain. Jesus died on the cross for my sins and those of everyone else, rose to life again, and calls people, including me, to faith by the work of Holy Spirit. He will also return as he has promised with eternal life for all whom he has called. These things are certain. These things are true. Whether I face supper burning, a floor that isn’t swept, my husband’s death while he is deployed, my own sickness or death, or anything in between, the Lord will care for me and us. He has promised to be with us now and always. His promise is trustworthy.

As certain as I am of the truth of my faith, I am not certain about how to share it. Much of the time I don’t get around to it. A question also nags from time to time, “Am I avoiding sharing my faith?” That thought is even more disturbing than the other. I wonder if other Christians might find themselves feeling the same way. All of this is more painful for me now than in the past because I know more people who don’t know the love of Christ.

Life seems to get in the way of my witnessing. Some of those neighbors who embrace me and begin to be my friends within days of my moving in don’t know the love of Christ. I want to take time and figure out how to share, convince, reason, care for them until they know that God loves them, but I have two small children and a husband who only sometimes lives at home. The diapers, the laundry, the dishes and the hungry children call to me in very pressing ways. I can say a prayer when I think of it, and then I often have to turn my mind to caring for the little ones in front of me.

Besides feeling that I do not spend enough time sharing my faith, I am also uncertain about how or when to share it. Do I make a difference with just being friendly? I hope so and sometimes I think so, but I am not sure. But even making a difference in someone’s life may not be the same as sharing the freedom to be found in Christ. So what do I say? What would they need to hear? I am uncomfortable facing such a huge task, one of life and death significance, without a coherent plan and seemingly without skill. I feel at times like a failure. Many times it is easier to let my neighbors’ need for Christ move way to the back burner.

A few conversations of the past years come to mind as I wrestle with these thoughts. When I find out that something has gone badly for a neighbor, I ask if it would

be alright if I pray for them. Once in a while if it fits the topic and can be said naturally and gently, I have mentioned my faith. I often began by saying, “Well, I am not sure how to say this, uh, we are Christians. Are you a Christian?” Asking so openly might seem invasive, yet after my sharing about us, I don’t remember anyone being offended. Surprised, yes, but not offended. I then shaped what I said next to fit their answer. To a negative response, I might say, “Okay, well for me it gives me comfort that my grandma died believing in Jesus.” To positive responses, however halfhearted, I might say something like, “you might understand then, it was a comfort to me that my grandma died believing in Jesus.” Twice I was singled out by drunken neighbors for questions about God, I think because I was the chaplain’s wife. That was interesting. Could the openness have had to do with the drinking? Sure, and I prayed that the Holy Spirit would work anyhow.

So many faces come to mind and push me toward despair. There was the Jewish neighbor, the Roman Catholic one who was working to perfect herself, another neighbor who seemed uncertain if I was saved because I was baptized as a child (not a believers’ baptism), and the many for whom whatever beliefs they had have been pushed back. I could go on and on about the people that I seem to have failed to reach.

God replaces my despair and uncertainty with his certainty. The difficulties of my witness seemed summed up in, “I seem to have failed to reach them.” It is an ironic demonstration of my being sinner and saint at the same time that I can see that Christ did everything for my salvation and then get stressed about how I need to save a person for Christ. I wrote “I,” but “my” mission work is really his work. It is a gift that God chooses to use me, but he doesn’t need me. I wrote “seem.” We cannot know this side of eternity what really “is.” Perhaps my checking on my Jewish neighbor is a seed that the Holy Spirit planted which may bear fruit long after I am dead. To judge based on what I see is to be looking without the eyes of faith. He promised, “[My word] shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose” (Is 55:11). I wrote “failed.” Of course I am failing him; that is why Christ had to die. Apart from Christ all of my life is “failure” but I am a new creation in Christ. And I wrote “reach” as if I were the one to do it, but I needed to be “reached” out to just like they do. The “Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”² What he did for me, God can do for them. None of these people is beyond Christ’s reach.

God leaves us with a sure and certain comfort in our uncertainties about witness. With all our weaknesses we can walk in the light, not denying our sin or weakness or failing, but being honest. There is safety and security with our Father. It is he who “cuddles us to himself in Christ.”³ When we seem to fail in witness, when we don’t seem to even get to the witness moment, and in the moments when we feel we blundered by saying too much, our God cuddles us to himself.

So then as God’s dearly loved children, how do we do mission in the military world and elsewhere? Praying for words and asking the Holy Spirit to guide us is good. We can care for our neighbors and especially those who are in the family of believers. We can give to those in need. We can take time to be in the word, and in fellowship with

other believers. We take the time to hear the words of forgiveness, to come needy to the table of our Lord.

Living a military life has given me three insights for mission. One is the importance of being involved with my neighbors. Marine Corps banquets and dinners (a part of Navy chaplaincy) have shown me two more: awareness of death is a gift, and learning one's history can shape one's life and faith.

Living openly and being involved with our neighbors allows them to see the difference that Christ makes in our lives. We all have struggles and we all have joys; often ours are similar to or at least understandable to those among whom we live.⁴ For me, three things often hinder openness: the idea that no one would be interested, a desire to be special, and a hesitancy to be vulnerable. Perhaps no one is interested, yet I can make the choice to be interested in the lives of those around me. I can ask, "How are you?" and mean it. When I am lonely, when the bed next to me is so very empty, I sometimes want attention for my sacrifices. Openness with my neighbors who have the same, and perhaps greater struggles,⁵ robs me of the delusion that I am unique. Being vulnerable can be hard because we can be hurt or betrayed by those we get to know. We need to discriminate wisely in our sharing, yet share we can. It is when we become more real through openness to our neighbors, that Christ can also become more visible in us.

That awareness of death is a gift for mission and a life of faith came from a conversation with my husband's commanding officer, or CO. My husband and I were speaking briefly with his CO near the end of a pre-deployment dinner, when the CO said, "It is really important to have these [dinners], to get a chance to meet the spouses, just in case." Just in case what? In case any of the Marines died or was badly injured, it was vital that the spouses had met the chaplain and senior officer and vice versa. In the midst of life, the CO was preparing for death. In our normal lives it is easy to forget that our lives end. Together with other military spouses, I have had to deal with the possibility of uniformed officers calling at my door to let me know about my husband's death. Recognizing that our days have an end, we can gain wisdom for making choices with our time.⁶

More than just trying to do better in our days, this awareness is a gift because it is about death. The military still talk about enemies. Here is our enemy: death. While there is much morality to be learned in Scripture and God has made clear that he cares about how we treat our neighbors, central to our faith is Christ's victory over death by dying and rising. Where death is put on the back burner of our awareness, so too is much of the relevancy of our faith. If there is no real death, what need is there for Christ? Additionally, with the topic of death, go also all the little "deaths"—the struggles, mistakes, hurts of body, soul, and relationship—about which it is generally not considered proper to speak. When the Father cuddles us to himself in Christ, he gives us the gift of honesty about the pains of life. It hurt when my husband left after five days, after being gone for the previous three months, and my not pretending meant my neighbor could cry on my shoulder. In our honesty other people can find rest and comfort because we do *not* deny the pains, or death, that this life brings. When, like his CO, we

live with an awareness of death and all the other hurts, we leave open the door for Christ to work with healing.

The second gift from Marine Corps banquets is the commemoration of their history. At each event there is a cycle of toasts. It begins with a toast to the Marines who fought in the Revolutionary War, and continues with commemorating the Marines who fought in each significant conflict since then up to the present day. Different Marines stand and speak from all around the room until fifteen or so toasts are finished.

Having experienced this tradition, my husband and I have thought more about the history of our faith, the lives of those who have gone before us, and how an awareness of our past is a gift to our lives of faith. Imagine for example if there were a cycle of toasts repeated at each church get together. “We give thanks for the faithful of Israel who waited with eager eyes to see the Lord’s Messiah,” “. . . for the disciples who followed the Lord and passed on what was given to them,” “. . . for Paul, for John, and the others whom the Lord used to preserve his word in the text of Holy Scripture,” “. . . for the Christians who witnessed to their faith by dying in the amphitheaters of Rome,” “. . . for the church fathers who prayed, taught, and wrote to correct heresy and pass on the truth,” “. . . for Martin Luther and other reformers, through whom the truth of the free gift of forgiveness was restored to the church,” “. . . for all the missionaries who left family and loved ones to bring the truth of Christ’s love to India, China,” and, each congregation could name those missionaries whom they support, “. . . for those Christians who suffered and still suffer for our faith,” and so on. Our history of faith is much more involved and complex than the 235 years of the United States Marine Corps; a simple list would not be easy to make.⁷ Yet if we could make such a list a part of our celebrations, we might engender among us a sense of identity and belonging, both of which are often missing in our busy, often isolated lives. Telling those stories can give our children heroes to learn from. The Marines take pride in passing on their history to new Marines. Knowing our heritage and passing it on would be a gift to new—and old—Christians and would support our lives as witness to those around us.

Openness about our lives, our own weaknesses and struggles, a renewed awareness of death in the midst of life, and a renewed appreciation for those witnesses in faith who ran the race before us—these are not, however, enough to give us certainty in this task of mission. The uncertainties of normal life, the uncertainties of military life—we go through these with our neighbors even as we try to share the love of Christ. It hurts when they don’t know and when we don’t know what to say or do.

It is clear in Scripture that God blesses our uncertain witness. When Jesus told the parable of the sheep and goats, the sheep didn’t know that they had done those good things.⁸ They didn’t say, “Oh, yeah, I did that, did that, did that. Um, Lord, I think you forgot about when I helped the neighbor on Jefferson Street.” There was none of that in the story. They didn’t know. They said, “Lord, when?”

We belong by faith to that group who did not know the good they did. With them we can look forward by faith in hope to learning what we did—whatever it turns out to be! Until that day we keep walking by faith and not by knowing. He is able to do good through and in us, in spite of our ignorance. God grants us his peace on this path of

uncertainty. He makes blessed our certainty of not knowing, for he is our certainty in the midst of not knowing.

Endnotes

¹ The March 11, 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami struck after this article was written.

² Luther's Small Catechism: The Creed: The Third Article explanation.

³ This is one of my favorite quotes, which comes from Dr. Robert Kolb. It impressed itself on my memory when I had the opportunity to learn from him in St. Louis.

⁴ I speak of my neighbors literally, but for others these people might be the ones at the work place or gym.

⁵ A woman I know survived for three years without her husband who served in World War II. My six months do not look bad in comparison, nor my email several times a week contrasted with her three letters during those years. Many, many others have greater struggles: widows and widowers, those who are divorced and single parents with full time jobs, those with chronic illness, and more.

⁶ Psalm 90:12 (ESV).

⁷ Hebrews 11 and 12 give us a good place to begin.

⁸ Matthew 25:31-46 (ESV).

Outreach in a Non-Religious Organization

David Jacob

As the United States becomes more secular and more post-Christian, the Lutheran Church will need ever-newer ways of doing evangelistic outreach to a growing unchurched population with the message of life with God through faith in Jesus. U.S. Army chaplains have been doing Christian ministry in an unchurched organization for many years. One of the ways of bringing God's word of salvation in Jesus to soldiers and their families is through a robust counseling ministry that connects war-torn and stressed soldiers and families to Christian faith.

In *The Contemplative Pastor*, Eugene Peterson asks the rhetorical question, "How do I maintain a sense of pastoral vocation in a community of people who hire me to do religious jobs?"¹ Army chaplains serve in today's United States Army, consisting of nearly one million soldiers—active and reserve. All these soldiers work together in an organization established to serve the interests of the U.S. Government, sometimes for nation-building or disaster support, but at other times to kill people and break things. How does the Army chaplain minister in such a secular environment? More specifically, how does the Army chaplain carry out Jesus's call in Matthew 28 to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" in a secular organization such as the Army?

Eugene Peterson's answer to his own question of ministry—a hired religious worker within a community of people who may or may not be religious—is "to keep telling the basic story, representing the presence of the Spirit, insisting on the priority of God, speaking the biblical words of command and promise and invitation."² Herein lies the answer to outreach ministry in a military environment. The Army chaplain keeps his or her eye on the Master, proclaims the Word of God, and performs a ministry of God's presence among soldiers and families.

Chaplains have been a part of the U.S. Army since its inception in 1775. The purpose for chaplains was then, as now, to support the spiritual needs of soldiers. Army regulations define this support as "providing those aspects of religious education, clergy counsel and reassuring presence, authentic worship, and faith group expression that would otherwise be denied as a practical matter to personnel under the varied circumstances of military contingencies."³ A subset of Army chaplain ministry is the Army Family Life Center and the Family Life chaplain. The Family Life chaplain is normally a Major whom the Army sent to school to get an advanced degree in marriage and family counseling. The Family Life chaplain's reason for being is to help train other chaplains to improve their counseling expertise. The Family Life chaplain usually takes the most difficult counseling cases at the installation, in partnership with the other

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professional helping agencies on post. The Family Life Center is usually (though not always) connected to an Army Chapel building, in outreach through counseling to the greater Army community at the installation. The Family Life Center and Army Family Life Ministry “refers to a broad range of activities undertaken by all UMTs [Unit Ministry Teams consisting of a chaplain and chaplain’s assistant] to enable soldiers to build and maintain personal spiritual health and build or restore healthy relationships.”⁴ In these days of the “long war” against terrorism, many soldiers and family members are near the end of their rope. Numerous soldiers are repeatedly deployed away from their loved ones for up to fifteen months at a time. The soldiers are subjected, in varying degrees, to war and its negative effects. Their families have their own issues experiencing the war on the home front. The Family Life chaplain has a unique opportunity to reach out with the gospel to those individuals, the majority of whom do not make an appointment for any kind of “spiritual” counseling.

Janie (not her real name), a soldier’s wife, made an appointment one day. Her major complaint was that her husband was deployed to a combat zone and having an affair with another soldier. She wanted to break off her marriage with him, but she already had four children by two different fathers. She really did not feel as though she would be attractive as a single mother with four kids. At the same time, she was finding it difficult to find the strength to leave him, due to numerous issues, including sexual abuse from her stepfather when she was a young child. Her case was an interesting one, because though she had a difficult road ahead of her in her marriage, she was also interested in the Christian faith. She did not come from a church background and did not know much about God or the Bible. She had no idea how to integrate faith and life in a way that made life work for her. Here was a great opportunity for outreach to a woman new to the faith.

This case is not unlike many that Family Life chaplains hear in their counseling rooms nearly every day. The counseling room is a place for the secular and the sacred to meet and greet. Some say psychology has no part in Christian counseling. However, as Paul used a ship bearing images of false gods to carry the word of forgiveness to the nations (“After three months we put out to sea in a ship . . . with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux” [Acts 28:11].), the use of psychology in service to the gospel, is a useful tool for the counselor. Throughout the Bible, it is the intersection of the secular and the sacred that God uses to further his kingdom. Janie had numerous issues from her past affecting her behavior. Utilizing counseling techniques from narrative therapy as a tool, the counselor prepared the ground to allow the power of God to transform Janie’s problem-saturated life story into a story that includes God. Not only that, but through counseling, the re-telling of Janie’s story can now include how God was present for her in her life. This helps her better deal with her anxieties about her past. In conjunction with the words of her narrative story, using the words of Scripture with both law and gospel, the counselor can show people like Janie the brokenness of their lives in sin through the law. The gospel is then a balm to sooth the guilty conscience filled with shame. This is the biblical story of salvation, which we read in Article IV of the Augsburg Confession:

Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight.⁵

The sacred words of God, in unison with the secular setting of psychology, is a powerful tool that God uses to increase personal wholeness in people struggling with life's issues.

Sergeant First Class Dan was an alcoholic. He left Fort Hood, Texas for Iraq as an alcoholic. He returned from Iraq an alcoholic, though he did not have a drop of alcohol for twelve months while deployed. Dan is an outstanding soldier, a leader of men and women in combat. He is physically imposing, very capable, intelligent, and good at what he does. He was all those things, and still an alcoholic. He realized his problems on his own and went to Alcoholics Anonymous. He also came to counseling for help in managing his situation, facing life as an alcoholic in treatment. Asked how it was possible to find the strength to go to an AA meeting after years as an alcoholic, his answer was "divine intervention." In the counseling sessions that followed, Dan talked about things that had happened to him in his life. Initially, Dan told his story from the eyes of an alcoholic. Through the storytelling process, using techniques from narrative therapy, Dan began to see himself as more than an alcoholic. He began to see himself as a person for whom Jesus died on the cross. Dan began to see himself as one loved by God. Throughout the story of Dan's life, one thing was clear. At important times in his life, God was there for him. These stories, now viewed through the lens of God's gracious work in his life, started to change Dan's perspective. God made it possible for him to survive Iraq. God helped him in his teenage years save the life of a drowning friend. It was God who gave him the strength to go to AA. Dan did not realize this at the time, but through the narrative process, God opened Dan's eyes to the realization that he was with him through all of his life. Through the "psychological" counseling techniques, which helped Dan see the power of God in his life, Dan was changed. The Holy Spirit illumined the effects of sin in his life. Through God's grace, the Holy Spirit also opened Dan's eyes to the work of Jesus in his life. Dan was a repentant sinner who embraced the forgiveness Jesus won for him on the cross. God gave Dan the gift of faith and his life radically changed.

By means of counseling techniques that serve the gospel, the conditions can be set for God's word to move the individual from his problem-filled story to the story of faith in Jesus. All of this is the work of God, as Luther reminds us in the Small Catechism:

I believe that God has made me and all creatures. He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my limbs, my reason, and all my senses, and still preserves them. In addition, He has given me clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods. He provides me richly and daily with all that I

need to support this body and life. He protects me from all danger, and guards me and preserves me from all evil. He does this out of pure, fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this I ought to thank Him, praise Him, serve Him, and obey Him. This is most certainly true.⁶

The work of the counselor is to be the conduit through whom the Holy Spirit can work. The work of the counselor, by the power of God, is to help the person move from their problem to God's solution for them. Many times, the soldier, married couple, or family member does not schedule an appointment with this in mind. Through Jesus's blessing, the process of counseling has that goal for them.

The type of evangelism reflected above is not flashy. There is nothing fancy or earth-shattering about using counseling to reach out to people with God's word. (However, there are very likely earth-shattering things in their hearts and lives that God works through the counseling process.) Large numbers of people do not usually come to faith in Jesus at the same time. There is no glory for the evangelistic pastoral counselor. Much the same can also be said for the evangelism we read of in the gospels. Much of Jesus's outreach was done among one or two people at a time. Jesus's discussion with the woman at the well (Jn 4:1–42) and with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13–35) are examples of where Jesus's outreach comes outside a temple. Jesus struck up simple, earthly conversations that ended with great spiritual significance. In these two instances, many more souls were affected than just the ones of the people which whom Jesus talked. In the Army counseling outreach ministry, there are normally one or two people in the counseling room at a time. Meeting these individuals at their need, the conversation can turn from the problem-filled story to the God-filled story, making a significant and eternal difference in the lives of those counseled.

In the nearly ten years after 9-11, members of the military and their families have faced many difficulties, through long, challenging deployments and time separated from their loved ones. Soldiers and families struggling with issues related to deployments and separations, along with other marital and personal issues, come to the U.S. Army chaplain Family Life Center. Most of these people are not seeking any type of religious advice. They are simply looking for help with their problems. The Army chaplain, ministering in a non-religious environment, who remains diligent in applying law and gospel to people's problems, often with the help of secular tools in service to the gospel, is a conduit through whom God's Spirit can impact lives. The same can be true of any counseling ministry seeking to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

¹ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor* (Dallas: Leadership/Word Publishing, 1989), 141.

² Peterson, 145.

³ United States Army Regulation 165–1, *chaplain Activities in the United States Army* (Washington, DC: GPO 2009), Section 2–3a, 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Section 16–3a, 50.

⁵ Paul Timothy McCain, ed. *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 2nd ed., (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 33.

⁶ McCain, 328.

A Chaplain's Life

Mark S. Nuckols

Being back in this military milieu has reopened a wound which I had thought healed. As my second deployment comes on the heels of the return from my first deployment, it seemed I had only taken an extended leave from this lifestyle. Confident that I will yet praise the Lord for the effects of this separation, I await what our loving Father has planned. Doubtless, it will be a time for internal and external growth during the upcoming year. "Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God" (Ps 42:11b). God's glory is regularly made very evident in our weakness and in our incapability, and when challenged, we have grown most through the grace of our loving God. Entering this world with nothing, we know that everything we have is merely a gift on loan from our God. Vain attempts to cling to anything in this life are met with futility. Encouragement alone comes from regular contact with his promises.

Thus, the great opportunity for the sharing of the hope that lies within us as believers is spectacular! Not *one* of these men or women will be unaffected by the circumstances and conditions which they must endure here. It is quite interesting to note that in a combat zone and among these soldiers, the discussion of the Christian faith is *not* received with negativity. There is little if any concern for political correctness. Rather, in love has the faith been proclaimed by his people, and in love has the faith been exhibited by the same. "Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor" (Jn 4:37-38), and also, ". . . so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together" (Jn 4:36b).

"I'm gonna lean on you, Chaplain." That statement, from a lieutenant colonel whose trust in religion and religious leaders was shattered during his youth, left me somewhat flummoxed. When I first met him he seemed to be one who would never be open to the message of Christ. The school of hard-knocks, cruel criticism, and personal tragedy seemed to doom him to unbelief. However, over time spent together in close quarters, through many attempted and failed conversations, and with patience, God opened his heart. Curious responses from him revealed a renewed confidence in clergy, thus confirming his ability to hear and receive the message of Christ. Where this relationship with the Triune God will end up, both ours and his, only our loving Father knows. One thing is certain though, our Lord is at work. Our heavenly Father's promise is to continue this work through the means of his powerfully effective word. In his infinite wisdom, he has chosen to use us. What a miracle, indeed; to God be the glory!

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Finding myself on the flight line of our base six times, I was privileged to honor the body of a fellow American soldier. We call this time-honored observance a “ramp ceremony” because it occurs at the back ramp of a large cargo plane, either a C-17 or a C-130. Our gathering of 24 soldiers formed two rows through which the chaplain and flag draped casket moved into the hold of the plane. Beginning at the command of ‘attention’ we slowly salute the flag as it passes, and remain in the position of a ‘salute’ until our fallen hero is set down in this flying hearse. The plane will carry his remains to his grieving loved ones in order to be laid to rest. At the conclusion, the chaplain offers a brief prayer of remembrance after which the attendant soldiers go back to their daily duties. Such ramp ceremonies occur several times weekly. Second only to the Baghdad mortuary affairs collection point, this military base (Joint Base Balad) handles the most ceremonies from across the Iraqi theater of operations. The soldiers lovingly handle the physical remains of our great American heroes. They are practiced in the rendering of proper honor and dignity. However, such a vocation is emotionally intense. Due to this intensity, one of my subordinate chaplains that performs ramp ceremonies regularly, always takes the time to talk with these quiet professionals in order to ensure their well-being.

Once, during the solemn ramp ceremony, as we were bestowing a grateful nation’s tribute, not more than 100 meters away was another cargo plane being loaded with wounded warriors being transported to Landstuhl, Germany. One can only imagine the thoughts of those injured service members as they witnessed this solemn ceremony for our fallen comrades. “In the very midst of life snares of death surround us; who shall help us in the strife lest the foe confound us? Thou only, Lord, Thou only!” (*LSB #755 vs. 1*).

Am I the man for this job? Such thoughts were quickly dissolved by the solid hope-filled theology of our faith. The doubt and even despair in our work are direct evidence that we are indeed in our proper place, in which faith is confirmed, and in which the battle against darkness continues. Luther’s words truly resonated with my heart, “Take it as a sure sign that you are in a right station which is pleasing to God, if you feel disgust and dislike for it, God is certainly at hand. He permits the evil spirit to attack and tempt you, to see whether you are fickle or steadfast, or not; and He provides an opportunity for your faith to fight and grow stronger.”

To face the reality of death so early in the deployment shocks the unit into cohesion, shattering any idealism that they may have had before their arrival. Soldiers have been facing this emotional experience since mankind has fought wars and battles, but it is one thing to read about it, and quite another to experience it firsthand. Such destruction of one’s self-made security draws everyone toward the question, “Where is God in all of this?” For many of the deceased soldier’s friends, their hope was renewed in the love of God when one of their own briefly recited these powerful words from St. Paul, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to

separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:37–39). In the midst of sorrow and weakness we witnessed powerful faith cleaving to the bridegroom who never will leave, nor forsake his bride, the church.

Serving in this environment is challenging. A chaplain’s ability to influence is directly tied to the relationship that has been established with the soldier. If there has not been a rapport initiated with the soldier, then a chaplain’s ability to shape that soldier has been greatly diminished. Simply bearing the title, ‘chaplain’ doesn’t ensure a reception of the chaplain’s advice and guidance. Soldiers, and people in general, need to know that the chaplain is sincere and sincerely cares for them, with all of their foibles. Through the medical screening process, it was revealed that one of my female soldiers was pregnant. By regulation, I could not converse with her about her pregnancy, but it was my hope that she would broach the subject herself, allowing me the opportunity to discuss with her the gift of life. Sadly, she did not bring it up. It was with a heavy heart that I received the news of her decision to end the new life within her.

Another female soldier who also received the news of new life within her allowed me the privilege to speak with her. She wrestled with many of the same decisions as her fellow soldier, such as her pregnancy inhibiting her opportunity to deploy, changing her role from soldier to mother, and so on. By God’s grace, she has decided to step away from her military career for a time, in order to have her baby. The Pharisee within me desires to ostracize the one sinner and embrace the other. However, God came into the world to save sinners—sinners such as both of these soldiers, and all of us. We have all sinned, and yet he serves us with his mercy and forgiveness. I can only entrust these young ladies’ lives into the hands of the One who was pierced for them and for their babies.

Not long after this, I preached on the Old Testament lesson from Isaiah 6 concerning the call of that prophet into the Lord’s service. Isaiah’s response to the Lord’s commission was, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” As we are people of unclean lips Isaiah’s call describes our call to be children of the heavenly Father. We, too, have had our lips, and our hearts touched by the cleansing coal of the Holy One’s forgiveness and mercy. In our baptism, we have been made sons and daughters of the King. But, daily we struggle with our flesh and its damnable desires, and daily we grapple with our adoption; either falsely justifying ourselves by the virtues of our lives, or rightly by the humble reception of the Savior’s blood. Those words from Isaiah were meant as much for me as they were for my soldiers. I will seek out both of these female soldiers with God’s service, but especially the one who will remain with our unit, without her child. She, and the other soldiers like her, who aren’t necessarily speaking and acting as children of God, need me to seek them out and bring to them God’s balm of healing, and his unconditional love.

What a gift our God has given to us, his creatures, in marriage. This gift gives joy to our hearts and yet, because it is filled with two sinful people, it also plows deep furrows of pain and brokenness. As it has been stated, if a marriage is average before one of the spouses has been deployed, the odds of that bond remaining intact and flourishing

are good. However, for those unions which are unhealthy, it follows that there will be potential for dissolution, and the separation may continue for them emotionally, even after reunion.

Two of my soldiers, a male and a female, have come to me with tear-filled eyes expressing their brokenness, their disappointment, and their shame after receiving a 'Dear John' letter. Their deep emotions left me with the nagging ache of impotency as I vicariously bore their sorrow. Each of these young people prided themselves in maintaining an emotional even keel, being the type that frequently offered counsel to others. In the habit of serving, these two were in the unfamiliar and humbling position of being served. Finding themselves in such a position, they find themselves in unfamiliar territory, but led by their loving Shepherd. Healing begins through the acknowledgement of their sins, and through their forgiveness of their former mate. Realizing that forgiveness is not a feeling, but rather a daily commitment, brings perspective, which is comforting as they are assaulted by their memories and the evil one's temptations.

"A soldier is way better than Superman. Superman has super powers and still doesn't save nearly as many lives as you ordinary people who risk your ordinary lives to save me and many others. I thank you with all my heart" (from a VBS student at a Lutheran church in Iowa). 'Ordinary people with ordinary lives,' is an apt description of our lives in Christ. Our temptation is to have lofty ideas about ourselves and to think ourselves the cause of things when, in reality, we are only the instrument; a helpless tool in a stronger hand. Instead of coming in majesty to bestow a gift upon his creatures, our God chose to place a mask before his face. He clothed himself in the form of an ordinary man who performed his work on earth. Therefore, we, as God's creatures, are to work as ordinary people with ordinary lives through which God accomplishes great things.

The Terrors of Conscience

Matthew Prince

War is fundamentally a contest of wills fought by men, not machines. Ardant Du Picq, a nineteenth century French officer and student of men in battle, reminded us that, “You can reach into the well of courage only so many times before the well runs dry.”¹

The Problem

Many US troops coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan unfortunately have wells that have run dry. Marines, soldiers, sailors, airmen and guardians suffer from the after effects of surviving a combat zone. Multiple deployments and extended tours of duty add to the stress of being in harm’s way. Many warriors return to their families and society with not only physical but psychological, emotional and spiritual wounds of war. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder² is being addressed at the highest levels of the military and government. This paper seeks to address the spiritual component of PTSD that is often overlooked by medical professionals who deal with only the health of mind and body. I also propose that PTSD is related, if not directly then certainly indirectly, to a conflicted human conscience. The only complete solution to the “terrors of conscience” from which veterans suffer must include spiritual healing. Subjective justification is the answer which comforts and restores the war veteran and the conflicted conscience to normality.

PTSD is nothing new to the military, but it has been called by many names. During the American Civil War, for example, a significant number of soldiers were treated for insanity, “soldier’s heart,” and overexertion, in addition to nostalgia.³ In the early years of WWI, tens of thousands of troops suffered from “shell shock.”⁴ In the 1970s it was called “Vietnam Veterans Syndrome.” Whatever the name, PTSD “occurs when a person has experienced, witnessed, or has been confronted with a traumatic event, which involved actual or threatened death or serious physical injury to themselves or others.”⁵

The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps are so concerned about their sailors and Marines suffering from PTSD that they have developed a new Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) program to bridge the gap between mental health science and the art of military operations. The job of these mental health professionals is to educate and be educated by Marines through repeated contact before, during, and after deployment.⁶ Prevention, early identification, and effective treatment of PTSD are the goals of the OSCAR program. As one Marine infantry battalion commander said to his

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newly-assigned psychiatrist, “I am never going to live in *your* world, so it’s a good thing that you are here to learn about mine.”

Chaplains have been living in that world through the ages. It is from this unique insight and “been there, done that” perspective that chaplains stress to the veteran the importance of care not only for the mind and the body but also for the spirit. After all, war affects all three. Medical personnel are the experts when it comes to the body and mind. They have the knowledge and skill to heal body and mind whereas most chaplains do not. But what does the medical doctor say to the Marine who says, “I lost my soul in Vietnam or Iraq/ Afghanistan.”? Usually, “Go see the chaplain.” Chaplains are the experts for all spiritual matters. And some problems of PTSD are spiritual. In fact, Duncan Sinclair argues that “the condition of PTSD is spiritual at its deepest level.”⁷ Thus, to effectively treat PTSD, the solution must be holistic which gets at the root issue. This means medical professionals must treat and care for the body and mind while chaplains care for the spirit. But what unique thing does a chaplain offer to the war veteran that can heal the (PTSD afflicted) spirit and the conflicted conscience?

The answer is the doctrine of justification. It is the central point of Christianity and the key to spiritual healing. Justification is really something that God offers the war veteran. This simple yet complex doctrine simply means that God, the judge of all, pronounces a verdict of acquittal upon sinners because of the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ.⁸ This acquittal upon *all humanity* is called objective justification. Yet, many people do not believe and therefore do not have the benefits. Subjective justification occurs when the acquittal is applied *personally* via the Holy Spirit and an individual has faith and believes. Dr. E.W.A. Koehler defines justification as an “act of God, by which He, on the basis of the perfect vicarious atonement wrought by Christ, declared the whole world to be justified in His sight (objective justification), and transmits and imputes the effect of this declaration to all whom He brings to faith by the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace (subjective justification)”⁹ Thus, the spiritual answer to PTSD is subjective justification.

Symptoms of PTSD in the Bible

King David was a man of great courage, a brilliant military leader, a powerful king and a “man after God’s own heart.”¹⁰ David also suffered from symptoms of PTSD.¹¹ Consider the following passage:

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength has failed because of my iniquity, and my body has wasted away. Because of all my adversaries, I have become reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind, I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many, terror is on every side; while they took counsel together against me, they schemed to take away my life.¹²

David was hurt physically, mentally and spiritually. He fought a giant, was almost killed twice by his own king, was pursued by thousands of soldiers, was betrayed by his own son, was punished for adultery, and saw his own son die. He struggled with depression, guilt, fear, anger, and despair. In all of his travail though, David recognized God as his healer.

There are three key steps to David's complete healing—taking refuge in God, revealing all secrets, and being restored by God. First, David takes refuge in God. He says things like “God is my shield,” “my refuge,” “my fortress.”¹³ These words indicate that David feels safe with God. Secondly, David reveals his secrets to God. In theological terminology we would say that David confesses his sin before God. David wants to calm his conflicted conscience but cannot on his own. His sin is always before him.¹⁴ He thinks about it all the time and hopes even to undo it. David's writing of psalms shows his desperation to get the “terror” inside of himself out. And finally, after revealing his secret to God (and the world) David is ready to hear the words of subjective justification. God restores him. Hearing the acquittal of God cleanses him, washes him, heals him, and renews his spirit.

The Conscience and the Standard Informing the Conscience

The conscience is a universal gift of God to all humanity (Rom 2:14–15). There is “no man on earth without a conscience.”¹⁵ To what extent God's law is written on the hearts of humanity is a subject for debate. Conscience is not the norm and source of right and wrong but rather it urges a man to comply with that standard and then judges his actions according to compliance. Thus, the conscience works to keep sin in check. In counseling, to urge someone to go against their conscience opens them up to further sin. So, how do we counsel those with an afflicted conscience?

Look for a moment at the apostle Paul. As Saul he persecuted the church of God with a good conscience (Acts 23:1). After his conversion, his sin weighed heavily upon him (1 Tim 1:13–15). What happened? Did Paul's conscience change? No, Paul's standard which informed his conscience changed. At one moment, his conscience was following a standard which allowed Paul to murder God's people and to say that it was correct to do so. In the next moment, Paul's conscience was following a standard that said to murder God's people was wrong. Paul's conscience did not change. The standard or norm of right and wrong which informed his conscience changed. Understanding and changing the norm so that it aligns with God's standard is the key to proper counseling of those returning from battle.

The Bible teaches that sinful humanity stands entirely damned before God. God demands that we be righteous and holy in his sight, without exception. The heart of the gospel and the most important teaching in Scripture is that God has forgiven our sins and has reconciled us to himself in the death and resurrection of his Son Christ Jesus. This grace is unmerited and undeserved but freely given by God to sinful people because of what Christ has done (Jn 3:16; Ti 3:4–5). Lutherans call God's actions justification. It is a reality.

To make justification a reality to the warrior with an afflicted conscience is the ultimate goal of the chaplain counselor. In other words, the warrior must believe

(subjective justification). The counselor helps the warrior understand justification by putting it in terms that apply to him. Through the Holy Spirit, the warrior trusts the justifying work of Christ.

Conscience holds us guilty before God; any easement must, therefore, come from Him. There is nothing in the wide world that can restore peace to a troubled soul except the assurance of God's grace and forgiveness. And thanks be to God, this assurance we have in the Gospel. "If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart," (1 Jn 3:20), and His grace is greater than our guilt, (Rom 5:20). The blood of Christ can purge our conscience from dead works, (Heb 9:14), and in the assurance of faith we have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, (Heb 10:22). Faith in the atoning merits of our blessed savior is the only and sure cure for an evil conscience.¹⁶

Consider for a moment the centurion in Matthew 8. When Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal your servant," the centurion responded, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come and be under my roof." In many cases, a warrior does not need to be convinced that he is a sinner. He already knows it. He knows who he is and what he has done and he lives with that every day. The job of the chaplain counselor then is to speak the grace of God which undoes the echoes of the past.¹⁷ The job of the chaplain counselor is to speak of subjective justification in the counseling process so that the warrior is daily reminded that he is also a saint of God.

Conclusion

To survive and be victorious on the battlefield, warriors must aggressively seek out the enemy and kill them. This action has far-reaching physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual implications. To step beyond personal, moral boundaries and take the life of another human being, can damage the individual soul and bring terror to the conscience.¹⁸ The solution to the "terrors of conscience" must include a personal spiritual healing (subjective justification) which restores the war veteran to normality. This may include changing the skewed norm which informs the conscience as with the apostle Paul. Or this may mean, as with King David, using three key steps: taking refuge in God, revealing all secrets, and being restored by God to healing.

So, the question remains: "What is the impact of counseling?" Well, I wish I could say that there are always significant breakthroughs and that all are spiritually healthy today. The truth of the matter is that progress is most often slow. The minimal impact speaks volumes about the destruction of war on an individual and the difficulty of penetrating a wounded mindset with subjective justification. I take comfort in the fact that God's Word accomplishes its purpose, and that there will be other Christians with whom they will cross paths bringing God's complete healing to these wounded warriors.

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Army, *US Army Combat Stress Control Handbook* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2003), 10.

² Commonly known as PTSD.

³ Eric T. Dean, Jr., *Shook Over Hell: Post-traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1997).

⁴ Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁵ Bridget Cantrell and Chuck Dean, *Down Range to Iraq and Back* (Seattle: WordSmith Publishing, 2005), 35.

⁶ William P. Nash, *Operational Stress Control and Readiness (Oscar): The United States Marine Corps Initiative to Deliver Mental Health Service to Operating Forces Meeting Proceedings RTO-MP-HFM-134, Paper 25*. (Headquarters Marine Corps, 2006), 25–1.

⁷ Duncan Sinclair, *Horrific Traumata: A Pastoral Response to the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Binghamton, NY: Haworth Pastoral Press, 1993), 65.

⁸ Romans 5:18–19.

⁹ Edward Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), 149.

¹⁰ Acts 13:22.

¹¹ Chris Adsit, *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual: Christ Centered Solutions for Combat Trauma*. (Newport News: Military Ministry Press, 2007), 165.

¹² Psalm 31:9–13.

¹³ Psalm 3:3, Psalm 7:1, Psalm 18:2.

¹⁴ Psalm 51:3.

¹⁵ Koehler, 349.

¹⁶ Koehler, 363.

¹⁷ Interview with Chris Hester, LCDR, CHC, U.S., written notes, Twenty-nine Palms, CA, August, 2008.

¹⁸ Cantrell, 24.

The Crisis of the Amoral Conscience

Ryan Rupe

Lack of Truth and the Danger to the Republic

Two-thousand years ago, the Roman governor Pontius Pilate asked our Lord “What is truth?” (Jn 18:38). Today in the United States this is a relevant question but for many of our fellow citizens it is almost impossible to answer. Can an amoral, postmodern American of the twenty-first century be taught virtue ethics? Can a conscience be rebuilt based on objective truths that were accepted from antiquity but are now negotiable by so many in our society. I believe it can be done and is essential not only in the life of the young member of the military but for the betterment and stability of the republic as a whole.

Certainly most Americans would have agreed in 1944 that Hitler and his minions were evil and deserved righteous punishment from allied forces. This belief provided the foundation for a just war against Nazi and Japanese expansionism. Can we say the same about Al Qaeda today? Will we all agree that what they do is evil? While many (if not most) Americans who had flags flew them after 9/11, there was a significant amount of debate, especially on the intellectual and political Left whether it was proper to do so. Moreover, there were voices (small right after 9/11 but larger thereafter) who couldn’t decide if the United States was a just society that could pursue noble war aims. Would Franklin Roosevelt or Winston Churchill fail to remind their listeners that the Nazi menace was, at its very heart, an evil thrust upon the world? It is this nebulous amoral state that I propose to reshape in the hearts of young soldiers, sailors and Marines.

But that still raises the question. What has changed so much in just two generations that has a country struggling to define truth? Why is it so hard and what does it mean for the republic itself? Can objective truth based on natural law be taught and can public and private virtue be “repackaged” so that American citizens, through their virtuous living can be a stabilizing influence for themselves, their families, their communities and their nation? Can they be taught that truth is not self-defined but is a product of the conscience that our Lord gives to each of us? I say it can be done and one way to do it is by an examination of our nation’s founding documents which will reveal to our citizens truths based on natural law. Hopefully this will lead each of them to a moral conscience based on objective truth and an understanding of obligation to live a virtuous life.

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In his first inaugural address George Washington said:

The basis of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality . . . since there is no truth more thoroughly established than that there exists in the economy and course of nature an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness; between duty and advantage; between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy and the solid rewards of public prosperity.¹

The founders understood that for their infant republic to survive, citizens would have to wisely use their freedom for the betterment of themselves and their society. If they didn't—if they ended up abusing their newfound independence—then ultimately the American experiment would fail because an individual's moral life is the chief stabilizing influence for a nation.

For over 220 years we have endured countless hardships; wars, economic distress and political discord but we have held the nation together. How different do we look today as opposed to the early days of the republic? Is the average American citizen a virtuous one and does he understand the need for virtue, for a morality that obligates him to act in a way that is in keeping with commonly held standards? Certainly the answer is a resounding “No!” We accept public vice as a matter of course. We simply do not have many “truths” that we agree on anymore—and that is the great danger. As Duke University ethicist Stanley Hauerwas states, “no matter how sincerely what it is they believe about God, they in fact live lives of practical atheism.”² Our founders assumed God's role in the life of the world and that he granted rights to the people he created. Without a belief in God the argument for any truth becomes tenuous and is no longer subject to a set of mutually agreed upon maxims. If our republic's survival depends on a common understanding of what is true then our citizens need to understand the depth of the problem and be trained as “virtue warriors.”

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Lutheran theologian and ethicist Gene Veith said, “We were going about our business pursuing what Francis Schaeffer considered the only values we had left: personal peace and affluence. Suddenly an airplane—and then another—flew into that great monument to American affluence, the World Trade Center . . . Soon we were at war, and the peace Americans had taken for granted was gone.”³ Schaeffer has a strong point, if we had any values left they were simply that we were fairly rich and people generally left us alone. However, these values are not nearly enough for our republic to survive. We need a stronger set based on objective truths that for most of our history most of the body politic accepted. Why do we need them? University of Texas ethicist J. Budziszewski makes the case clear when he states, “If you really suspended moral judgment, you couldn't judge what to tolerate. You couldn't even judge *whether* to tolerate. Tolerance requires practicing moral judgment, not suspending it.”⁴ Here we see the danger. Without any agreed upon framework of truth we cannot judge—whether it is in a formal sense (a civil or criminal trial) or an informal one (in your family or your neighborhood). If free citizens in a republic are not allowed to judge one another, the society itself becomes unstable, and, if not soon corrected, unworkable.

This demonstrates the need to reform and rebuild the conscience of the amoral citizen. Through a long narrative of training, counseling and “deck plate ministry” the chaplain has to take on the great task of rebuilding the conscience for the well-being of the citizen and the republic. Again Harry Jaffa illustrates the danger:

The answer is that in our time, truth has been disarmed by the opinion that reason is impotent to know what is just or unjust, right or wrong, true or false. If there is not truth, or if the truth is beyond the power of the human mind to know, then free argument and debate as means of arriving at the truth are meaningless. Truth is thereby disarmed of her natural weapons a priori. This challenge to the principle of a free society is one that neither Jefferson nor Lincoln anticipated.⁵

Rebuilding

How does a chaplain retrain his warriors? Two tools are the Declaration of Independence and Abraham Lincoln’s famous Gettysburg Address. It is from these fonts that natural law can be shown and may begin to make an impression on soldiers who need to understand their role in the republic and their obligations as free citizens. It is hoped that this training will be an epiphany for many young men and women who not only have a very faint idea of their nation’s foundation but also that this foundation is based on natural law. Once realized, the young citizen can begin, through a continuing narrative of formal and informal training with the chaplain, to rebuild his conscience into one based on universal truth and a life based on obligation and virtue.

The Declaration of Independence

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.⁶

Here we see the ultimate expression of human freedom based on natural law in the words of Thomas Jefferson from July, 1776. What the framers clearly believed was that each citizen had rights given by God and that these rights were beyond debate. Surprisingly, our country is built on a very small, but rock-solid foundation based on a relatively new idea that each free person in America has rights that no man or government can take away. Furthermore, if the government does trample on those intrinsic rights, it is incumbent on the citizenry, because of conscience obligation, to rise up and rebel against tyranny.

If it is beyond debate that we hold these truths to be self-evident then it is also true that we have an obligation as citizens to not only guard our liberties but to use them virtuously to keep society stable. Simply put, we cannot act as unruly children but must strengthen our society with a common set of values. If in fact that is true there must then be some anchor, some measure of common understanding. Without it we begin to fall apart as a country.

The Gettysburg Address

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal . . . We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live . . . It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom— and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.⁷

This is a great example of the idea that our Creator gives us our rights and we as citizens must do all we can to keep the fledgling republic together. Filled with Christian language it brought the ideas of the Declaration of Independence into full view on a November day in Pennsylvania in 1863. Renowned Lincoln scholar Harry Jaffa says this about the effect of the address on history, “In all the literature of the world, perhaps only the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord’s Prayer have been repeated so often or have evoked such feelings of reverence and piety as has the Gettysburg Address.”⁸

“Our fathers brought forth a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Here we see Lincoln directly speak to the ideas of the Declaration of Independence and the idea that our Lord made us equal. He calls it a proposition because equality among men was not a widely shared view around the world and certainly not among most soldiers fighting for the Confederacy.

“That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom.” This phrase is wrapped in Christian redemptive language as many in the crowd would recall not only Christ’s death for all mankind but the idea that there is no greater love than a man should give his life for his friends. To understand that sacrifice it becomes absolutely necessary that each man be ready to make the proposition a certainty. Moreover, the experiment in human freedom and responsibility based on natural law became a reality for the generation listening at Gettysburg and becomes a reality for the postmodern listeners in the twenty-first century. This, then, demands that we cannot be antinomians in our own lives and in the life of the society at large.

The Strength of the Chaplain-Warrior Relationship

It is true that a training module that teaches the Declaration and the Gettysburg Address is only a starting point for virtue ethics training. Certainly one of the great objections to the endeavor is that there is not enough time to rebuild the conscience in a few short hours of military training. However, a hard-working chaplain can use the time

he has to begin the inculcation of truth through his words and work in formal and informal settings. As most chaplains are in commands for twelve to thirty-six months, he will get to know his members better than almost anyone else, and can offer advice and counsel based on the objective truths that were conveyed to the soldier in general military training.

One advantage that many chaplains have over their civilian counterparts is that they see the day-to-day life of a soldier. While pastors may see their parishioners once a week, a chaplain, especially one on deployment, will see much more of his people and be able to teach, mentor and preach to them in a way that civilian pastors may only dream of.

Summary

In April, 1945, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor who had worked for the overthrow of Adolf Hitler, was found guilty and executed just days before his concentration camp was liberated. To ensure that he could pronounce sentence on Bonhoeffer, the Nazi judge rode the last few miles on a bicycle. Why would he do that? He had to know that the war was lost. Moreover, he and Bonhoeffer had almost certainly received a similar education as children and it would seem that their consciences would have developed in a similar way. Why then, was one a Christian and one a Nazi? Adolf Hitler took power in early 1933 and by 1939 had led his nation into a war that ultimately killed fifty million people and turned a sophisticated, cultured nation into a xenophobic, hate-filled place that killed countless innocents. How? The Nazis were able to fill their people with hatred and rebuild enough of their consciences that many of those people would willingly commit crimes against humanity—all the while thinking they were doing a good thing. This happened in twelve short years. Harry Jaffa clues us in to the sea-change in the German conscience when he says this:

Leo Strauss, commenting after the Second World War on the fate of the self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence, cites as authoritative a German scholar who said that by “abandoning the idea of natural right, and through abandoning it, German thought has ‘created the historical sense,’ and thus was led eventually to unqualified relativism.”⁹

It took a little more than a decade for Adolf Hitler to seize power and change the consciences of enough of his countrymen to lead the rest of Germany into a world war that promulgated evil in ways that the world had not yet seen and could hardly believe. He didn’t come close to changing all the people in the society but he and his minions were able to tear down the collective conscience of millions of Germans and rebuild them with disastrous results for himself, the nation, and the world.

This is a stark warning to all of us. In this postmodern air we must battle those who teach and preach that there is no objective truth and that virtue is self-defined. Our republic started as one that took it for granted that our Creator not only granted us rights but assumed that its citizens would practice virtue. Hauerwas frames the subject well when he states:

Once there were no Christian ethics simply because Christians could not distinguish between their beliefs and their behavior. They assumed that their lives exemplified (or at least should exemplify) their doctrines in a manner that made a division between life and doctrine impossible.¹⁰

We have had to teach virtue ethics at this late date because old assumptions about what is right and what is wrong simply do not hold. In the twenty-first century, it is simply not to be assumed that any twenty-year old will believe in objective truth. Therefore, it is incumbent upon chaplains to use their authority as trusted teachers and mentors to take the wisdom of the ages and rebuild the consciences of our young servicemen and women so that they can be virtuous warriors and citizens and by doing so keep the flame of liberty alive.

Endnotes

¹ Harry V. Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom. Abraham Lincoln and the Coming of the Civil War* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 11.

² Stanley Hauerwas, *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000), 140.

³ Gene Veith, *Christianity In An Age Of Terrorism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 11.

⁴ J. Budziszewski, *What They Can't Not Know* (Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 2003), 129.

⁵ Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom*, 83.

⁶ Elder Witt, *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to the Supreme Court, 2nd Edition* (Washington, DC Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1990), 933.

⁷ Joseph Nathan Kane and Janet Rodell, *Facts About the Presidents, From George Washington to Barack Obama, 8th Edition* (New York, The H. W. Wilson Co., 2009), 196.

⁸ Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom*, 78.

⁹ Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom*, 83.

¹⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in Truth: Holiness Exemplified* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 20.

Proclaiming the Hope

Scott Simpson

Serving as an Army chaplain means being ready to proclaim the hope that lies within you. As a Lutheran chaplain, I find it easy to proclaim the truth about the word of God and his love for his creation. Our church has a clear confession of faith as proclaimed in the Bible and in the Book of Concord. It is a common question for a chaplain to be asked if they are Catholic or protestant. The soldier wants to know what kind of man he is dealing with since there are many Christian denominations in America. To this question, I respond that I am Lutheran. Most are grateful for a clear answer even if they are from a different religious tradition. They don't want fuzzy answers that avoid offending. A soldier's life is a hard life with a hard-edged culture. They don't have time for wishy-washy answers or non-answers. They have questions, problems, and needs to be addressed. They need to know if you are willing or able to help them. And, often that begins with simple direct questions.

A principle that I was taught about missionary work is the value of understanding the culture. The military certainly has a distinctive culture. Time, timeliness, vocabulary, and physical fitness all have distinctive value within the military that many outside of it do not understand. My father was career military so in a way I was born into the military culture as a native speaker. Subsequently, I entered active duty service myself at 17 years of age, two weeks after high school graduation, and served as a cadet and as an infantry officer for the next nine years. I left the Army to enter the seminary and while there maintained a connection through the reserves even though I never intended to return to active duty. At the time, I was certain that a small rural parish was all that was in my future.

As I left active duty for the civilian world of St. Louis and Concordia Seminary, I was confronted by one of my fellow infantry officers asking if I wouldn't consider serving as a military chaplain to our young soldiers. I delayed thinking about that question for quite a while. Yet, the question of military service came up regularly and from many directions. In reflection, before finally accepting a call through the mission board to serve as a chaplain it seemed as if the proverbial "hound of heaven" would not rest until I left the parish to return to the Army.

Serving as an Army Chaplain is just that—serving. It is about service to God, service to our nation, service to the Army, and service to the children of God who volunteer to risk their lives for the cause of freedom. There are many ways to reach out to the soldiers and their families, but the most effective ways I have found involve getting

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out where they work, meeting them in their areas of comfort, learning about their lives and work, and demonstrating to them that they are valued as people created and loved by God.

Part of my work includes working as an instructor in a training setting for soldiers. Some classes are more memorable than others. I met one former student a year later in another country who remembered me as the chaplain during his training not because of the lecture I gave, but because I had taken time to get up earlier than usual to do physical training with the students. He remembered my willingness to spend time with him and the other students. On some level, he equated that with care and concern. That opened doors to develop relationships and later to demonstrate the love of Christ.

Another avenue of relationship building can be found in what the Army calls the Gas Chamber. The military trains with equipment designed to protect the soldier from chemical agents. To develop confidence in that equipment we periodically expose ourselves to CS gas, a non-lethal riot control agent. We walk into a room filled with the gas wearing our protective masks in order to gain confidence that they work. Once the soldiers are sure that they can breathe with the mask and function with no ill effect from the gas, it is time to remove all doubt about the functionality of the equipment. The soldiers remove the masks and remain in the room exposed to the gas answering questions and doing pushups. This way they are convinced that they really were exposed to the gas the whole time and their mask had protected them from the effects. One way of using this training exercise to develop a relationship with soldiers is to endure this with every group of soldiers. With one unit, I spent four hours a day, five days in a row in the gas chamber. It gave me the opportunity to meet all the soldiers, and spend some significant time with those in charge of the training. In addition to meeting most of the soldiers in the unit at a time when many of the younger ones were very anxious, I added reading Scripture to the challenges of stating your name, hometown and doing pushups within the cloud of riot control agent. Beginning the day with a five mile hike, and spending the rest of the day breathing CS gas only gets better when you have volunteers to proclaim the Great Commission from Matthew and Psalm 46 as they struggle to breathe at all. The tainted air is like breathing ground glass. But that bonding is only the start of learning about their struggles, their hopes, and their needs. When they need to hear God's comfort the most, they turn to people they trust, they turn to people that they know care about them. This connection doesn't develop overnight and it doesn't happen simply because we have a cross on our uniform. Soldiers who have had experience with their pastor at home or a previous chaplain, may give a chaplain the benefit of the doubt. For most though, they need to find out who you are and what you believe.

The privilege of serving our nations soldiers and their families is immense. I am able to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the guardians of our nation from Afghanistan to Iraq at all hours of the day or night. Serving with a unit that is deployed into harm's way is very rewarding. Soldiers see that you are so willing to bring them the gospel that you are will go into a warzone with no weapon. The chaplain can be a beacon of God's love and light. A soldier can draw strength from the gospel of Christ in the darkest of times.

Time zone changes and scarcity of phones often leads to soldiers receiving troubling news at odd hours. In times of turmoil, the unit chaplain rarely has traditional office hours. When a young man finds out that his favorite aunt was diagnosed with cancer and passed away in the last three weeks since he was able to make a phone call, he needs God's comfort no matter the time. Chaplains have the privilege of being available at all hours. Being ready to give an account for the hope that lies within you has new meaning when the young man that you have counseled for the last few weeks has a realization in the middle of the night that he needs to be baptized before the next patrol through the neighboring Iraqi town. There is overwhelming joy in being awakened to, "Sir, come with me. John is ready to be baptized. He wants you to baptize him right now."

As a Lutheran chaplain, serving all soldiers as a minister of the gospel is a privilege. Yet, it is an even greater joy to celebrate the Divine Service for the Lutheran soldier who wants to share in the body and blood of Christ before the next raid. It is an honor indeed to pray the daily offices of matins, vespers and compline and have Lutheran soldiers join in these daily prayers as their spirituality is strengthened by this ancient discipline.

The Army chaplaincy has many facets. Serving as a staff officer of a team seeking to accomplish the commander's mission. Serving as a soldier in the forces that guard our country and way of life. Yet most of all, serving as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Standing ready to mirror the love of Christ and proclaiming his truth.

The privilege is to serve the finest young men and women of our nation and others in the time of their darkest struggle. The honor is to be there among them and listen to their struggles when they feel alone, isolated, and in despair. The highest honor is to be a vehicle of God's comfort in the midst of their pain and struggle. We proclaim to them the redemption and forgiveness that comes through the gift of life in Jesus Christ.

On the Distinctives of Ministry in the Military

Robert Stroud

The ministry of military chaplains is a mystery to some. How can they offer God's blessings to the conduct of war when Christianity is a religion of peace? How can they submit themselves to secular military authority since a Christian cannot serve two masters? How can they work side-by-side with clergy of other faiths without compromising the gospel? This article will address some of these issues.

The truth is that walking the fine line between faithful proclamation of the gospel and genuine respect for the constitutional rights of all Americans, to worship as they please, requires great skill. Facilitating the worship needs of those who do not know Christ is challenging, but it can be accomplished with integrity by those who possess a genuine calling to this mission field.

While chaplains are absolutely free to proclaim the law and gospel in Christian worship contexts, they must learn to respect the boundaries of other contexts. In the past chaplains often hijacked mandatory formations, proclaiming sectarian messages to these involuntary audiences. Those days are gone. Today we must *earn* a hearing. Like successful missionaries the world over, the chaplains whose ministries bear fruit are those whose compassion for the lost is evident. By being truly present with Soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen and coastguardsmen and meeting them wherever they might be in their spiritual journey we till the soil for the day when they will ask, "What makes us different from chaplains who seek their own agendas?"

Thus it is that the bulk of a chaplain's ministry is one "of presence." Being *there*, genuinely engaged with the life and struggles of each military member, makes or breaks the chaplain. The military is not a refuge for pastors who find the civilian parish too demanding. In fact, I have found that in the military we confront every single circumstance and challenge of the parish, often in exaggerated forms. However, the purpose here is not to raise one field of service above another. Each is necessary and consecrated by the calling of the Lord who appoints us as he deems best.

All Mission Fields are Not Created Equally

While I was serving my vicarage in Tulsa, Oklahoma, an appeal went out, seeking vicars willing to accept a call to the foreign mission field. There was a shortage of ordained volunteers for vacancies. My wife and I, although we had never sensed a "call" to foreign missions, were eager to serve wherever the Lord desired. We

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immediately contacted the appropriate offices to make ourselves available for such a ministry. We expressed a single requirement. We would eagerly serve *anywhere*, in *any role* (e.g. pastor, church planter, professor, etc.), for *any duration* . . . as long as our children could remain with us.

After considering several quite exciting mission opportunities in Africa and the Pacific, our lack of a call to foreign missions was confirmed as the various doors closed for a variety of reasons. While we were somewhat disappointed at the time that an exotic ministry setting would not be in our future, we drew comfort knowing we would end up serving much closer to our families, a deep desire of our hearts.

How does this relate to the theme of this article? Well, chaplains are often likened to those who serve in foreign missions. Like many other religious bodies, our own Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod intentionally situates our Ministry to the Armed Forces within the broader context of the LCMS World Mission. Occasionally people even refer to chaplains as missionaries.

Despite this, and independent of the distinctive challenges between the two fields of ministry, there exists a major difference between the two. Those who serve in military uniforms receive far more than their share of any *honor* that may be due to those who accept a call to serve in missions. While our civilian counterparts are not *intentionally* short-changed in this regard, the fact remains that most American churches do an exceptional job of showing their gratitude to clergy who have served as military chaplains. Even our nation's secular society extends a similar appreciation to military chaplains, without offering the slightest thought to the sacrifices made by civilian missionaries bettering the lives of people throughout the world.

As a chaplain, I appreciate the abundant affirmation which is poured into our cups to the point where they overflow. In fact, at times the love of our church for our chaplains can almost seem excessive. I am proud to have received the bronze Saint Martin of Tours award, which our church created to honor exceptional chaplaincy ministry. Yet I am curious as to what similar visible expressions of our gratitude exist for our civilian missionaries.

This unintentional disparity in how civilian and military missionaries are regarded is something that should be rectified. The solution would not, of course, be to deny expressions of affection and approval offered to chaplains. On the contrary, the church might continue to explore more effective means of uplifting and praising each member of all of our missionary families.

The irony of this inequity is two-fold. First, although it could be argued, I am strongly persuaded that the typical civilian missionary family makes greater sacrifices than their military counterpart. The quality of residences, healthcare, educational opportunities, salaries, and even safety itself would often favor the members who follow the military path.

Second, no *true* missionary answers their call with the goal of receiving any earthly honor, so in that sense the entire matter is moot. They simply hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and heed his call. Nevertheless, as a retired military chaplain, I gladly

raise my voice in the hope that we may uncover dynamic new ways of extending to our civilian missionaries the honor they truly deserve.

Understanding that Christians Can Serve in the Military

I was stationed in England when the Berlin Wall fell. I was amazed to view the swift collapse of the Communist hegemony. The Soviet Union's rapid disintegration revealed our shockingly absolute victory in the Cold War. What a glorious time that was for the democracies of the world, courageously led by the United States. The barbarians who had for so long pounded at the gates in Eastern Europe were shattered, and the liberated masses were savoring freedom.

This was an era in which the purpose of the military was absolutely achieved, while avoiding a major military confrontation. If there was ever a time to celebrate deterrence and peacemaking through strength, it was then. However, at our installation we had one chaplain who did not consider this peaceful transition sufficient. He was a Roman Catholic priest, Irish by nationality, and he was a classical "pacifist." He not only abhorred war (as we all should); he also condemned nearly everything associated with the military method of avoiding war. As odd as it may sound, the majority of his sermons gave voice to his profound distrust of the armed forces. Naturally, this barrage of disapproval about their vocation troubled many members of his parish. Fortunately for them we were stationed in a kingdom where English was the mother tongue . . . and many of them exercised their freedom to worship off base.

While chaplains are free to preach as they feel led, I found it perplexing that a pacifist would seek out a military pulpit from which to question military service itself. It is certainly conceivable that a member of the clergy representing a denomination within the Just War tradition could experience a personal "conversion" to pacifism. However, in such cases one would anticipate they might subsequently begin the process (amazingly simple for chaplains) of separating from the armed forces.

Clergy in uniform are free to speak on moral issues, but wise to avoid political matters. In fact, there are definitive guidelines to ensure an apolitical position when speaking as a representative of the military (e.g. in uniform). Naturally there are cases where these two aspects overlap. And strident secularists, if they had their way, would purge the moral/religious voice completely from the public forum.

In order to serve in the unique vocation of military chaplaincy, common sense suggests the successful candidate will possess respect for those who pursue the profession of arms. This is not to demand a politically militaristic or psychologically martial identity, of course. Nevertheless, there are in the ranks of chaplains some individuals who might be more true to their character by laying aside the Psalter and taking up an XM25, the Army's newest Counter Defilade Target Engagement System.

The requirement is to remain balanced. While chaplains should not be undermining the morale of the troops by speaking ill of the military profession, neither should they be offering the institution a *carte blanche* to run amuck without being held to account. While that is unlikely in a democracy like our own, as advocates for those with the faintest voices, chaplains cannot afford to be associated too closely with the disciplinary authority of the chain of command. And, God forbid that a chaplain

succumbs to the temptation to become a “court prophet” who merely prophesies whatever their master desires to hear. Tickling their ears with words like victory even in the face of God’s judgment, the fate of these lying clergy is clearly seen in the prophecies of Jeremiah: “For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly treacherous to me, declares the LORD. They have spoken falsely of the LORD and have said, ‘He will do nothing; no disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine.’ The prophets will become wind; the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them!” (Jer 5:11–13).

For Martin Luther, military service was fully justified because it is by means of war that there exists the possibility of peace. In *Whether Soldiers Too Can Be Saved* he writes “if the sword were not on guard to preserve peace, everything in the world must go to ruin because of a lack of peace. Therefore, such a war is only a little, brief lack of peace that prevents an everlasting and immeasurable lack of peace, a small misfortune that prevents a great misfortune.”

So, the chaplain is required to maintain a biblical balance in terms of loyalty to the state and faithfulness to their holy vocation. And we possess a fine example in Augustine. We echo his prayer that we must “even in waging war, cherish the spirit of a peacemaker.”

The Patronage System Military-Style

Over the years, I’ve laid aside my idealistic blinders and become a realist. Realists, of course, are perceived by optimists as cynics. Thus it is that I can accept the misunderstanding that I am rather cynical . . . but that in no way contradicts the fact that when I was ordained, I was extremely optimistic and irrationally naïve. After my ordination it took several years of assisting traveling panhandlers for me to fully comprehend not everyone is honest. I would repeatedly fall for stories I later learned were common cons. As a consequence of my own unbridled honesty it really took that long to come to grips with the fact that we live in a world populated by *dishonest* people.

The reason for this biographical note is to relate that my naïveté persisted even after I became a chaplain. I assumed that a person’s “yes” meant “yes.” One example of my ignorance came when I was asked by a line officer “Who’s your patron?” I fully understood what he meant. The patronage system in which senior officers groom their selected younger officers for future stars is a firmly entrenched military tradition. Many would argue that this pre-selection for promotion is good, primarily due to the conscious mentoring that becomes one of its essential elements.

However, knowing that this inherently reeks of unequal treatment, and invites the grossest expressions of personal prejudice, I knew there was no place for patronage in the chaplaincy system; I earnestly blurted out, “oh, we don’t do that in the Chaplain Service.” Oh how blissfully ignorant I was.

I cannot imagine how civilian ministers might be encumbered by a similar system. But I do recognize some of the negative consequences arising from the patronage system among chaplains.

Benefits such as the aforementioned mentoring aside, the dangers are serious. Even the selective mentoring aid itself suggests an unjust structure in which not all

participants possess equal opportunities. However, that is just the beginning of my concerns. Several possible consequences include: the enticement to pander to senior chaplains in the hopes of securing a sponsor, the temptation to become more focused on the progression of one's career than on serving God's children, and the possibility of becoming discouraged or disgruntled when a junior chaplain does not experience anointing by a senior patron.

Lest anyone misinterpret my criticism of the patronage tradition as a consequence of not personally receiving its benefits, I must make it clear that I did in fact benefit from the personal support of several senior chaplaincy leaders. That, however, does not dispel my wish that my ignorant statement about its nonexistence were true. The patronage dilemma—based upon favoritism by definition—is a beast with which missionaries in the military must grapple. Some will triumph over it; others will be trampled by it; still others will surrender to its siren call and be devoured by it.

We must never forget that as children of God, each of us requires only one Patron—that unique Advocate who takes upon himself our failings and replaces them with a pristine garment cleansed in his purifying blood.

A Case Where Silver is Deemed Better than Gold

Throughout my career I tirelessly voiced a message that found little affirmation among my peers. I argued that the addition of military rank to our uniforms actually provided a net loss to our influence. Whereas we now fit in more uniformly with our military colleagues, we did so at a loss to our unique identity. Formerly we had been “in but not of” the military system. Now we possess two insignia—our rank and our religious emblems—which vie for influence in our ministry.

Case in point, there is a single occasion when an Air Force chaplain possesses the authority to make a personal choice between the two. When wearing a camouflaged uniform, it is left to the discretion of a chaplain as to which insignia should crown their head, so to speak. I always advocated wearing a cross, “since that is the first place a fellow military member looks and it is far more important to be introduced to them by our identity rather than our rank.” Unfortunately, even some of my own subordinates yielded to the example of other, more senior, chaplains who opted for the rank.

One night I was walking with my boss as we visited campsites for teams who had come to Guam for a deployment competition. He was of the camp that believe rank is a perk for which we work and that we already wear a cross over our hearts anyway . . . so people could eventually figure out that we are chaplains. I pointed out that we already wore our rank on both collar tabs, and that it was the cap to which individuals first looked.

As we approached the first camp fire, the troops surrounding it peered at us as we approached in the darkness. When they could make out the insignia, the senior NCO said with obvious relief and welcome, “Hello chaplain!” And in the next breath with a rising tension in his throat he awkwardly added, “Oh, hello colonel!” What had begun as a cordial reception immediately became a potentially uncomfortable one, and even after we clarified that we were both chaplains, the initial awkwardness persisted. I looked at my supervisor hoping he had recognized what had just happened. Sadly, he was basking

in the glow of being welcomed as a chaplain and being treated with deference (or more likely, apprehension) as a senior officer.

During the better part of our nation's history, chaplains did not wear military rank. They were considered to be officers and members of the commander's direct staff. But they were clearly distinguished from their fellow officers and regarded first and foremost as clergy who were present to serve the needs of the Soldiers, sailors and Marines. (The Air Force only being born in relatively recent history.)

Are chaplains clergy, or are they military officers? The answer, of course, is that they are both. However, since perfect balance would be a subjective matter, the simple fact is that chaplains lean in one or the other direction. In essence, they either find their primary identity in their religious vocation or in their military profession. If the latter is dominant, then it is all about promotion. Exchanging the gold bar for a silver one, and eventually replacing that with a pair of bars, marks the successful transition of a chaplain through the "company grade" ranks.

This system generates tremendous angst and disappointment. Those who fail to exchange their captain's bars for the bronze oak leaf of a major are not only disappointed, many are actually forced to *leave* active duty. It's crassly called the "up or out" system. Once attained, the longing for the bronze leaf gives way to a yearning for a silver one. And should an individual be fortunate enough to become a lieutenant colonel or commander, they are confronted with the true hurdle. Can they exchange their leafy trinkets for the respected eagle, the emblem of the Navy captain or the "full" (read "real") colonel of the Air Force, Army and Marine Corps? The epitome for virtually all chaplains is to attain an eagle, along with the prestige and special parking spaces that accompany the honor.

The irony is that no matter how high one rises, there is always the promotion they did not achieve. After all, there can only be one Chief of Chaplains (per service) at any given time. And God have mercy on those men and women who deem themselves the very best candidates for the two star pinnacle of the corps, but fail to attain it.

Whatever one's rank, that rank is not the determiner of their character. There have been many senior chaplains who never succumbed to the temptation to find their validation in their promotions. Likewise, there are some vain chaplains who do not advance far in terms of rank, but still attempt to lord it over all who fall within the small orbit of their power.

The question is not actually how much rank a chaplain has; it is about the way chaplains balance their identity. Am I a pastor first, or an officer first? One must take precedence. As our Lord said, "No one can serve two masters . . ." (Mt 6:24).

I have occasionally pondered the possibility of writing a satire about the chaplaincy similar to the entertaining *How to Become a Bishop Without Being Religious*. After guiding the aspiring novice through the proper decisions throughout their career, the author addresses the question of humility in the final chapter which is fittingly called "The Final Lap."

What you must aim for, then, is a convincing pose which projects the image of competence, success, mastery of your profession, etc., but

which is diluted by a magnum or two of modesty. The church fathers, even those notably short on it themselves, have always been strong for the virtue of humility. Since it is widely recognized that mediocrities and failures have no need of humility, it is a grace reserved for winners. The fact that you possess it is a public proclamation that you have outdistanced the herd which began the race. So when you pour on the coal for the last lap, begin by cultivating this cardinal Christian virtue.

So that you will not stumble in the home stretch, the author has formulated an easily-remembered equation which we shall call the Humility-Ability Balance. If you will commit it to memory you will not fail to balance any observable mark of ability, success, superiority or extraordinary competence with enough humility to take the curse off it, spare the sensibilities of your less-fortunate and less-gifted peers, and clinch your image as an unusually successful practitioner of the ecclesiastical arts and at the same time an enormously modest man.

Oh for the days when all who looked upon us saw us first, and last, as chaplains.

Hither or Yonder, Proclaiming the Gospel Faithfully

During my second assignment, I spoke with a senior chaplain about a mutual acquaintance who had been promoted to major. “Do you really think he should have been promoted?” asked my Command Chaplain. Taken aback, I responded, “yes.” The colonel said he questioned the leadership talents of the individual and his ultimate role in the chaplaincy. I said that even if he did not display a strong ability to lead other chaplains, he genuinely cared about airmen, “and if there isn’t room for a chaplain who simply has a pastor’s heart to serve out a full career in a tactical unit context, then that is a sad state of affairs.”

In the eyes of the military, not all assignments are created equal. They might be grouped into several categories. The subjective groupings are not static; unique circumstances such as the introduction of new weapon systems can transform one “backwater” location into a dynamic setting for ministry. The relative hardships of respective contexts are not a major factor in determining the professional “desirability” of a given assignment. While the institution would stridently object that this sort of distinction exists, I believe most candid observers would acknowledge some version of the following:

1. Top-tier assignments—with high visibility for senior chaplaincy and line leaders. These would include operational (as contrasted with staff) combat zone roles, formal Professional Military Education courses which are typically reserved for those being groomed for promotion, jobs at high tempo operational bases with important missions.
2. Mid-tier assignments—where most chaplains faithfully serve out their careers and where even the anointed frequently need to “pay their dues” at different points in their career. These would include the majority of

duties a chaplain performs during his career. These are represented by many bases with training or logistical focuses (in contrast to more “operational” missions).

3. Other assignments—where billets need to be filled but few wish to go. These include many small locations that fly below the radar providing little visibility to senior leadership and remote tours where even peacetime requirements require lengthy separations from loved ones.
4. Punitive assignments—where a specific chaplain is singled out for duties that superiors think will be unpalatable to him. It is, of course, arguable that this category exists, but the fact is that when the institution wishes to encourage a chaplain to consider retirement, they are commonly offered a less than desirable assignment. While one individual’s worst location would be a gem to another, these assignments may include moving to a location especially far from one’s family or a sort of informal demotion from a leadership role to a secondary position under an individual of the same rank.

Each branch has its own career path for optimizing promotion and continued progression. Usually these involve occupying high visibility jobs, and balancing out “regular” chaplain work such as pastoral care with “staff” positions that emphasize administrative skills. In a word though, “promotable” assignments essentially translate to “highly visible” duty stations.

Certain locations gain reputations as “dumping grounds” for less-than-stellar chaplains. Often these reputations are undeserved. However, I was privy to a conversation at one major Air Force installation where the wing commander was deeply concerned about his base becoming sort of a holding place for chaplains who were not perceived as being in the top half of their year group. He was adamant that the Chaplain Service provide him with evidence that his replacements that particular year were among the best available. On this occasion the commander got what he demanded. However, one can sympathize with the predicament of senior chaplaincy leaders. They have to find an assignment for everyone on the roster, not just the premier chaplains. The chaplaincies have their share of lazy, confused, hypocritical and angry personnel whose failings fall short of grounds for dismissal from the ranks. They must find assignments for all of these. At best, they go to a spot where they have access to either helpful training (such as clinical pastoral education) or a mentor who can draw out the best from them.

Into this cynical context breaks the gospel truth. Wherever we go, there are *people to be served*. Indeed, it is frequently in the most isolated or neglected fields that the most rewarding ministry takes place. The healthiest chaplains are those who do not bemoan the fact they have been overlooked for the prime assignments. Instead, they focus on the task at hand, loving and proclaiming the good news to women and men with whom they serve. To begin to understand the deep *privilege* of serving even far from the limelight where accolades are few is to grow in our own spiritual maturity. Is it not better, after all, to store up our treasures in heaven? This is, of course, a lesson well recognized

by the civilian clergy of the church who faithfully labor in small but vital fields that are rarely recognized and affirmed.

While most Chiefs of Chaplains and the members of their staffs have been leaders of integrity, they are not infallible. Some chaplains have been deeply discouraged by the arbitrary course of their own careers and the favoritism they perceive in the case of others. Yet joy and purpose invariably come when we focus instead on the needs of the precious individuals with whom we serve. Jesus died for these. When we do that, even what some in authority may have intended for ill, is invariably used by God for good.

The *Esprit de Corps* of Comrades in Arms

My father joined the Marine Corps at the age of seventeen. Although he barely missed the Second World War, he served in Korea and Vietnam before retiring as a sergeant major. He was only able to share in a single military ceremony during my career. I happened to be stationed only five hours from home when I pinned on lieutenant colonel, and he was delighted to participate in the event.

Since he likes his “personal space” even when traveling, he had me reserve a room for him in military lodging. Due to his distinguished rank he secured a VIP room far nicer than any I stayed in during my military career. When helping him check into the room I said to the very young lady working the counter that the grizzled veteran before her was a Marine Corps sergeant major. A smile burst across her face and she shouted “I’m a Marine too! Semper Fi!” It turned out that she had served a stint in the Corps and as they say, once a Marine always a Marine. Still, the picture of the two Marines separated by two generations was both peculiar and poignant.

Everyone who has been fortunate to have honorably served in any branch of the armed forces has something no one can steal from them—a sense of camaraderie replicated nowhere else. Whenever we encounter other veterans, there is an immediate bond. Numerous military organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion attest to the impulse to remain connected to one another. Many veterans also belong to smaller groups associated with individual units or ships, and they attend reunions religiously.

Even though we chaplains are the only absolute noncombatants in the armed forces, we are welcomed fully into the family. And the intensity of this *esprit de corps* correlates directly to the hardship or isolation encountered by our shared experiences. A pastor who has prayed with military members in the foxholes or combat flightlines or decks has forged a bond with his charges that will last a lifetime.

It is similar to the affection and communion of spirit experienced by civilian pastors with the members of their congregations with whom they have shared intense joy and tragedy (especially the latter). It is similar, but it is not the same. The utter immersion in the same military culture for years or decades leaves a deep imprint on those who have served. And externals—like the privilege of still saluting the flag during the national anthem rather than holding our hand over our heart—do not begin to reveal the depth of the camaraderie that chaplains savor.

In Closing

Some of the comments made above would be challenged by other chaplains. Certainly their personal experiences differed from my own. And their evaluation of the chaplaincy would doubtless highlight many other valid impressions. Still, I believe the majority of chaplains—especially those who served faithfully in unseen settings with modest recognition—will concur with the majority of what I have written. To have served honorably as a veteran is something of which a person can rightfully be proud. But to have served faithfully as a shepherd of God's people is something of far greater magnitude. To combine the two is a rare blessing.

Book Reviews

BELIEVING AGAIN: Doubt and Faith in a Secular Age. By Roger Lundin. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. x + 292 pp. Paper. \$26.00.

Lundin's book is a unique contribution to the ongoing discussion about the origin and significance of secularization in the contemporary western world. That discussion has recently been defined by Charles Taylor's immense and masterful exploration of the subject in *A Secular Age*. Lundin's book, however, does not aim to be as comprehensive or academic. Rather, he invites the reader to think along with him about the possibilities of making the journey from unbelief to 'believing again.' The question Lundin addresses in this book is whether belief in the Christian God is possible after the culture formed by that belief has lost its faith. And if belief is possible, what form will it take? In order to think through that problem, he grounds his account of secularization in the nineteenth century's sudden shift to a culture of unbelief. He employs key poets and novelists from that period to illuminate the intellectual, cultural and spiritual implications of that shift. And he draws upon influential twentieth century theologians to direct a way forward.

Lundin divides the book into seven broad topical chapters, which include subjects such as "History," "Science," "Beauty," and "Story." Each chapter introduces a new focal point for understanding the possibilities of believing again in our time, and the main argument takes shape only as one travels through the chapters and finds that themes are repeated, deepened, and connected. Although several lines of argument run throughout the book, the central one has the following elements.

The problem of unbelief has arisen because the materialist account of the world has proven to be just as probable, if not more so, than the Christian one. The rise of this problem as a cultural phenomenon took place within a few decades of the nineteenth century. Already by the time of the nineteenth century, the study of science and the rise of 'pure' reason had severed the connection between our conception of the world and the biblical narrative's description of it. This separation had the effect of making faith in the Christian God depend on a personal choice, which heightened our sense of subjectivity. In fact, an early nineteenth century answer to this problem was to find human consciousness itself as a transcendental point of contact with the absolute. So, belief in the power of the humanities, such as literature, the arts, and even the study of history, replaced belief in the God of Abraham. However, this solution to the problem did not last the century. For it could not withstand Darwin's claims that even man is historically constituted, or Nietzsche's critique that all human perceptions are driven by contingent human desires.

While someone like Nietzsche would have us joyfully embrace the consequences of our contingency, Lundin draws upon Dickenson, Melville, and Dostoevsky, as well as the work of twentieth century poet Czeslaw Milosz, to express the sense of confusion, disorientation, and orphanage at the death of God. But Lundin also

weaves into his account theologians like Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Hans Urs von Balthasar as resources for moving forward. He finds these theologians helpful because they came to discard the spatial modes of thinking about the world that Christianity had relied on prior to the nineteenth century. Their focus on the narrative character of Christian belief enables them, in different ways, to account for radical unbelief while maintaining faith that the world is created by the God of Abraham.

Lundin brings together an amazingly large and diverse group of contributors for such a brief book. And his use of those contributors is almost always unsystematic. Thus, his argument frequently makes giant leaps within chapters that are hard to follow, even after several readings. On the one hand, this character of the book leaves room for intuition to form an imagination and get a deeper impression of the issues. For instance, in an intriguing chapter titled simply “Reading,” Lundin traces the way that silent reading increased our sense of inwardness so that the knowledge gained by the word became idiosyncratic and self-absorbed, contributing to what Heidegger calls the age of the world picture. Thus, Lundin finds Bonhoeffer’s emphasis on the church’s oral proclamation of the gospel in such an age helpful. At the same time, however, this kind of argumentation leaves large scholarly gaps that make the argument hard to grasp and swallow if one is not following Lundin’s own intuition. And Lutheran readers will probably not like the way he casually casts Luther as a central figure in the rise of subjectivity. But his ability to use some of the twentieth century’s most prodigious theologians appropriately makes it well worth the effort.

Finally, Lundin’s book is focused on questions about the plausibility of Christianity in the western world. On the one hand this seems to limit the scope of the work and its importance for Christian missions. However, implicitly, this book raises a central question for all mission work today. How can western Christians reach out with the gospel when the civilization in which historical Christianity grew has turned against Christian belief? At the beginning of his book, Lundin uses a quote from Alexander Schmemmann that captures the point well. It is one thing to condemn western disbelief, and quite another to “detect the question it implies, and to give this question an adequate answer” (12). Lundin’s book helps us western Christians detect the legitimate questions that western disbelief implies to the greater Christian faith.

Joel Meyer

THE TRUTH, THE WAY, THE LIFE: Christian Commentary on the Three Holy Mantras of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Hindus. By Francis X. Clooney. S.J. Christian Commentary Series on Non-Christian Sacred Texts. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 203 pages. Paper. \$56.00.

Credit is due to the nineteenth century German philologist Max Muller for creating the discipline of comparative religion and making available for English readers the monumental fifty-volume collection of the Sacred Books of the East. This

compendium had been the companion of Christian missionaries who saw the challenges and opportunities before them as they were interacting with the scholars and practitioners of other world religions.

A century later, Eerdmans has launched a new series, a sequel, if you will, to the Sacred Books, a Christian Commentary Series on Non-Christian Sacred Texts. The series offers those who are accustomed to a Christian worldview exegetical methods and lexical aids to discovering the deeper meaning of the sacred writings of non-Christian religions with a view to reflecting on “how they help nourish the Christian’s own faith and practice.” Author Francis Clooney serves on the editorial board of this new series.

Clooney is in no way compromising his identity, that of a professedly Christian commentator. His loyalties are with the Society of Jesus within the Roman Catholic Church. Even so, he engages, in this case, the sacred texts of the South Indian Śrīvaiṣṇava Hindus with the conviction that the followers of one religious tradition have much more to learn from another religious tradition than one could possibly anticipate. If nothing else, studying non-Christian texts, and coming to grips with their (intended) meaning helps Christians deepen their own self-understanding (12).

To that end, in this volume Clooney presents his Christian commentary on the three holy mantras (sacred incantations) of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Hindus in which are embedded sacred truths and mysteries expressive of the core truths, practices and goals of the Hindu tradition as they ‘encode in three ways the ideal of complete dependence on God’ (16). These truths—the Truth, the Way, the Life—explicate succinctly what is real, what is beneficial to do, and what is the goal of human life. As a student of comparative religion, Clooney works on these texts as a Christian outsider building on the exhaustive commentary on the mantras by the thirteenth century Hindu commentator Vedānta Deśika with the conviction that “meaningful and efficacious learning across religious boundaries is possible in the twenty-first century” (21).

As promised in the introductory chapter, Clooney presents his commentary on the mantras methodically. Reading along, Christians unfamiliar with non-Christian traditions will find it intriguing that the Śrīvaiṣṇava Hindus approach God in utter dependence on him, respond to the divine invitation by surrendering to the Lord in absolute trust, and do not doubt his promise of liberation and grieflessness as he spoke, “from all sins I will make you free. Do not grieve” (27).

Clooney’s method in this book parallels that of a seasoned, yet practical, exegete. First he states in simple terms the meaning of each mantra by analyzing each word individually, and interpreting their meaning as a whole. He utilizes primary and secondary sources—ancient and modern—in order to get to the essence of the mantras, especially those that interest the Christian reader.

The stated goal of this series is reading a (religious) text within a tradition yet across religious boundaries. Thus the final section of each chapter presents an explicitly Christian context for the commentary by reading simultaneously the biblical texts that parallel the Hindu mantras. Throughout this experiment the author asks the reader this intriguing question, “Can a Christian pray with this Mantra?” and he does not let the reader answer it until the book has been read to the end.

Clooney acknowledges that there are no easy answers to this question. There is a universal semblance to the mantra in a biblical text that is the heart and core of the Christian gospel, and very dear to the Christian. While there is common ground in Hinduism and in the Christian faith for the prayers for liberation and grieflessness, Clooney argues that the two religions are bound to part ways when Jesus Christ is identified as the only mediator between the transcendent God and all living beings. He remains the scandal.

Well-informed familiarity with this book and others like it is vital for all Christians who interact with those who do not share with them a common faith. Its relevance is considerable for those who work across cultures, who are involved in interreligious dialogue, and who study contextualization as a means to gospel proclamation. How does a convert from the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition express his faith in the One Lord in his own words? Does he go wrong if his prayers to the Triune God are modeled on the mantras, as much as Christians rooted in non-biblical worldviews confess the faith in indigenous ways? Reading a book like this raises numerous related questions, most of which may not ever have conclusive answers.

Victor Raj

Breaking News: LSFM Goes Digital!

Rev. Dr. Paul Mueller
Executive Director – LSFM

Why is there a Lutheran Society for Missiology? The LSFM Board has been discussing this question. Our purpose? That has not changed. The LSFM gathers together excellent missiologists to discuss old and new missional methodologies and grasp a theologically sound missiology under the guidance of a Lutheran missiological understanding of God's mission. Those insights are then globally disseminated.

The LSFM has been successful in regards to the first part of that vision. Unfortunately over the past 20 years, the LSFM has brought together only a small portion of the extensive global audience interested in mission. The word is simply not getting out.

Leonard Sweet spoke about the move from the Gutenberg Age to the Google Age. He noted that when the printing press was invented, Lutherans immediately saw the value of the new technology and used it to spread the Gospel and further the Reformation. Sweet now encourages Lutherans to move from the Gutenberg Age into the Google Age and to use digital media as effectively as the Gutenberg printing press.

In an attempt to do just that, the LSFM is "reinventing" itself by "going digital" and will begin to use the internet as a primary tool. This journal, *Missio Apostolica*, will be moving from a print based format to a digitally based format. "What does this mean?"

The LSFM website, lsfmissiology.org, will take on a new look and become a more valuable missiological tool. It will include a blog, connections to Facebook and other social networking sites, access to missiological authors, practitioners, and leaders, timely news items, mission trip opportunities, and workshops and conferences.

Most importantly for readers of this journal, *Missio Apostolica* will be available on the website free of charge. Any person subscribing to the website by registering with a username, password, and basic contact information will have access to the digital journal. We hope to post all back copies of the journal on the site as well.

As a result, the LSFM will no longer charge a fee for access to the journal. Income to support the work of the LSFM will now be realized through generous donations from people like yourself who believe that what the LSFM does is important, and that the journal, freely available to the world, is a valuable change in its structure.

The LSFM does recognize that some libraries, organizations, and individuals might still wish or require the printed format. In those cases, the LSFM will provide print copies for \$12.50 each.

A "beta" version of the website is up and running. As a test, this spring journal is also on our website. Go to the website lsfmissiology.org. Click on the **Register** link on the top menu bar. Browse the site. Read the spring journal on line. And please pray for a successful transition, the LSFM's vision, and continue to support it now with your gifts. Send your generous gift to LSFM, 801 Seminary Place, St. Louis, MO, 63105.

What is the Lutheran Society for Missiology?

The Lutheran Society for Missiology, Inc. (LSFM) is a society of Lutherans who are interested in the apostolic mission of God in today's world. The society was born on October 25, 1991, out of a concern to provide Biblical attitudes for missions.

This is the last journal to be printed in bulk. Future journals will be digitally posted online at <http://lsfmissiology.org>. There is no cost to access the journal. Any person subscribing to the website will have access to the digital journal. All back copies of the journal will become available as well.

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We welcome your participation in contributing to *Missio Apostolica*. Please observe the following guidelines for submission of manuscripts.

Missio Apostolica publishes studies of missiological issues under discussion in Christian circles across the world in the twenty-first century. Exegetical, theological, historical, and practical dimensions of the apostolic mission of the church are to be explored in these pages.

The editors submit every manuscript to the editorial committee for examination and critique. Decisions are reached by consensus within the committee. Authors may expect a decision normally within three months of submission.

Manuscripts should be submitted electronically to Professor Victor Raj, rajv@csleu.edu. A submission guarantees that all material has been properly noted and attributed. The author thereby assumes responsibility for any necessary legal permission for materials cited in the article.

Manuscripts should not exceed 5,000 words. Manuscripts of less than 3,000 words will be considered for the “Mission Reflections” section of the periodical.

Authors should include an autobiographical description of not more than fifty words.

Direct quotations exceeding four manuscript lines should be set off from the text in an indented paragraph, without quotation marks. Omissions in a quotation should be noted by ellipsis, with an additional period to end the sentence.

Spelling should follow the latest edition of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. Words in languages other than English should be italicized. Numbers from one to twenty and round numbers should be spelled out. Full page references (123–127, not 123–7) should be used.

The Chicago Manual of Style defines the manner of documentation used in *Missio Apostolica* and should be consulted for details beyond the following basic guidelines:

David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 243–255.

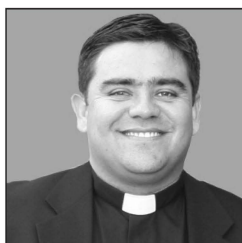
Hans Küng, *Does God Exist? An Answer for Today*, trans. Edwin Quinn (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 184–186.

Robert J. Priest, Terry Dischinger, et al., “Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement,” *Missiology, An International Review* 34 (2006): 431–450.

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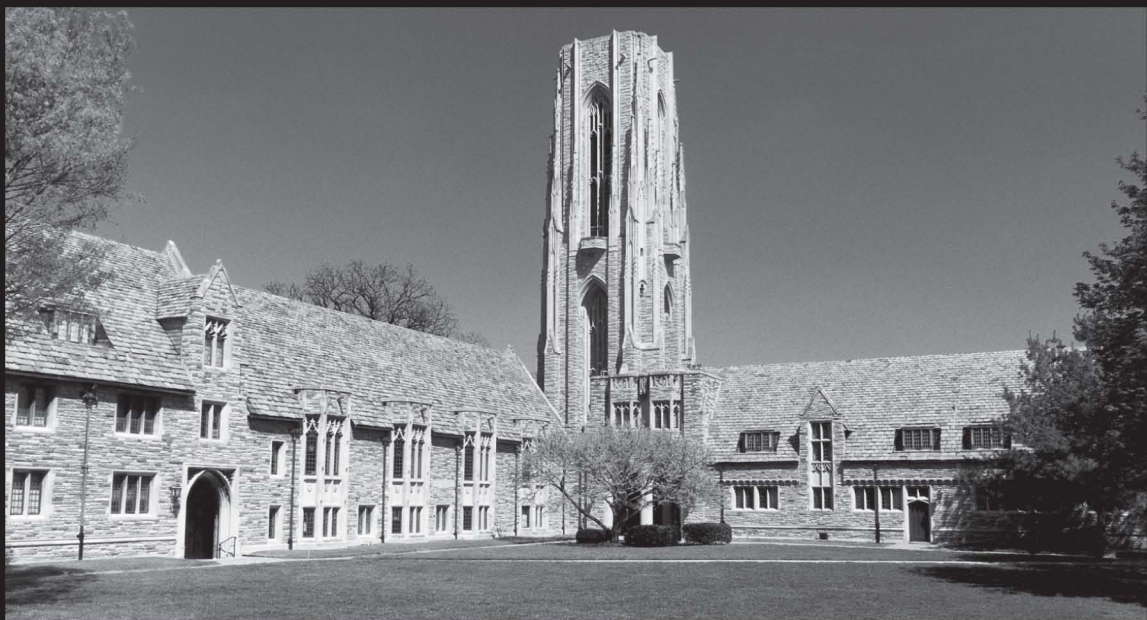


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