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Jordan Pittman

LU ID: 29512673

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Introduction

The Big Question

The United States Army is an organization that is rich with diversity. Anyone who has served in the military environment for a long time has seen a multitude of differences among the ranks. Soldiers come from an array of backgrounds, cultures, upbringings, ideologies, and value systems. The key area of diversity that will be highlighted for this paper is the area of religion and beliefs. Soldiers come from many religious backgrounds. There are those who practice religions such as Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Mormonism, and Paganism. There are also those who claim they do not even practice religion (i.e., Agnosticism, Atheism). This creates quite a mixing bowl of worldviews on the meaning of life and death. This kind of environment can unfortunately be a breeding ground for friction. This friction is characterized by conflicting views, heated debates, and controversial situations.

The Army chaplain is essentially a minister who is part of the military as a servicemember. He is a part of the well-oiled machine! He wears the uniform, has a military rank, follows military orders, obeys military regulations, and assumes a key position on a military commander's staff. This concept is referred to by Dr. Steve Keith, a retired U.S. Air Force chaplain and director of Liberty University's School of Chaplaincy, as the "incarnational ministry," which is the key characteristic that makes the chaplain ministry stand out.¹ In light of this, the Army chaplain is immersed into this diverse culture where he serves as a pastor to his flock, being the unit to which he is assigned. To narrow it down even more by taking the position of a *Christian* Army chaplain, which will be the case for the duration of this paper, shifts the discussion into a lens of biblical perspective as the problem at hand is introduced. For it is the

¹ Steve Keith, PhD. "Military Chaplaincy" (lecture at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, March 1, 2021).

case that a Christian chaplain will obey the teachings of the Holy Bible.

The Christian chaplain has a mission from God that is above everything else. This is his most important task as he ministers to his organization. The key task given to believers that was stated by the Lord Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry is, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20, English Standard Version). This is a command given by the Lord and Savior to go and train others of this world to follow him and to obey his teachings. The fact remains, even in a diverse organization like the military, that the Great Commission is a command specifically for the one who calls himself a Christ follower.

If the Christian chaplain’s duty from God is to teach and help others to follow Jesus, how will this mission reconcile with the religious diversity of the military? How will those of other religions react to this influence? The United States Constitution, which will be discussed later, grants each American citizen the freedom to choose their own religion (U.S. Constitution, amend. 1). Army regulation, which will also be discussed later, states that chaplains are required to protect that freedom of religion for each soldier.² This paper will answer the question: How does the Christian chaplain in the Army fulfill the Great Commission from Jesus while facilitating the religious liberty of military servicemembers in a pluralistic environment? Ronald H. Nash, in his book *Is Jesus the Only Savior?*, defines a pluralist as “a person who thinks humans may be saved through a number of different religious traditions and saviors.”³ Nash’s

² Department of the Army, *Chaplain Activities in the United States Army*, AR 165-1 (Washington DC: Department of the Army, 25 March 2004), 7-8.

³ Ronald H. Nash. *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 22.

quote can introduce the concept of *pluralism*, but that term will be discussed more in-depth later on. What kind of friction can a chaplain expect to encounter and where must his resolve lie to properly address these points of friction? Is it even possible to perform both the task of the Great Commission and the task of facilitating the free exercise of religion simultaneously? Will the chaplain be forced to stand at a crossroads where he must decide between obedience to God or obedience to the U.S. Government?

The Purpose

What this paper intends to accomplish regarding the big question that was just established is to help Army chaplains and chaplain candidates strengthen and solidify their resolve in this area. This paper does so by analyzing the scope of the situation, which involves looking at the laws and regulations surrounding the chaplain's duties and analyzing the culture of the Army from a religious perspective. Any Christian chaplain worth his weight in gold is going to want to abide by the teachings of Jesus in Scripture at all costs! He has also been called by God to this ministry and it is ultimately *God's* calling for him. Dr. Joel Jenkins, a retired Army chaplain who spoke at a military chaplain intensive course at Liberty University, said that one must be called to this ministry.⁴ The chaplain does not own his ministry and he has no room to make decisions nor judgments that supersede that of God. The chaplain must remind himself that the whole reason he is embarking on this endeavor to enter the military ministry is because of obedience to God and his purpose, not for his own benefit. Therefore, for the chaplain to compromise a single letter of what Scripture teaches makes his journey into this calling void of its real purpose. Scripture tells us that, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

⁴ Jenkins, Joel, PhD. "Military Chaplaincy – Religious Liberty," (lecture at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, March 1, 2021).

A stronger resolve in this area will assist chaplains in successfully navigating the pluralistic terrain of the military's religious and spiritual environment. They must seek to stay true to Scripture and keep the Great Commission at the center of all their ministry endeavors. This paper provides Scripture-based guidance, complimented by the wisdom of historical documents, laws, regulations, scholars, and experienced Army chaplains regarding how a Christian chaplain can traverse his way through the military's religiously diverse environment while fulfilling the mission given by Jesus. The reader should be able to make his roadmap of how he will make disciples of his flock while addressing the diversity of the different beliefs in his organization.

Why This Topic is Crucial

Why does this issue need to be addressed? Quite frankly, the chaplain must leave no room for error as far as biblical truth and the teachings of Christ are concerned. He cannot prioritize anything above the Great Commission. As a Christian chaplain, this mission must be his main purpose for his ministry to the flock. He must avoid being distracted or hindered by the many different beliefs, opinions, and spiritual attacks that come his way. He cannot be swayed nor diverted from his most important mission. One can see how the concept of following *one* spiritual mission would be challenging for someone who is working in an environment full of multiple versions of spiritual truth with differing principles and values in tow. Not only that, but the chaplain is also the go-to member of the commander's staff for advice on "religious, moral, and ethical issues" according to Army Regulation (AR) 165-1, the manual for *Chaplain Activities in the United States Army*.⁵ Suppose the commander, or whoever is approaching the chaplain for this advice, holds a different set of truths and principles than the chaplain. One can see the

⁵ AR 165-1, 7.

potential for controversial storms to start brewing at any given moment.

Pondering the Problem

A Christian chaplain should find himself able to remain loyal to the organization to which he serves if that organization continues to allow him to operate under the principles and truths given by Scripture. If there comes a situation where the chaplain is being forced across a line that means choosing between the organization and his own convictions, will he end up compromising the latter? Dr. Keith Travis, a well-seasoned and retired Army chaplain, laid out the priorities for a chaplain to follow while teaching about chaplain self-care: God first, family second, and ministry third.⁶ What should a chaplain do if he is met with resistance on these priorities? God's mission for us is to fulfill the Great Commission. Can the chaplain, while certainly maintaining respect and Christ-like humility, stand his ground on fulfilling this mission?

There are many people in the Bible who were pressured to compromise for the sake of idolatry, such as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's idols and were then persecuted and punished as a result (Daniel 3:8-23). The Lord showed up and was with them in their persecution, giving them no reason to fear (Daniel 3:26-28). The chaplain must have the same resolve if faced with the pressure to compromise his Biblical principles and truth for the sake of saving his career. If he ever faces that situation, will he realize that he can trust that the Lord will be with him and that he has no reason to fear? If Christian chaplains are not trying to fulfill the Great Commission, what exactly are they doing in their ministry? Can they put their trust in the Lord and stay the course on their God-given mission, even if their organization tries to convince them otherwise? If chaplains continue

⁶ Keith Travis, PhD. "The Call" (lecture at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, March 1, 2021).

without God and without making disciples, are they still actually answering a calling? What must a chaplain do to ensure he never sways from his calling?

Research Conducted

The research conducted for this paper consists of historical U.S. doctrine, U.S. laws, Army regulation, books, journal articles, news articles, statements from chaplains and professors, and interviews with experienced Army chaplains. Holy Scripture is primarily used throughout the paper to maintain a sound theological direction for our discussion on this topic. The idea is to utilize the insight and experience of scholars, real chaplains and military personnel, laws and regulations, and Scripture (most importantly) to develop the type of resolve that a Christian chaplain should strive for as he navigates through the pluralistic environment of the military.

While the military branch of focus will be the U.S. Army, the discussion will occasionally address situations, examples, and knowledge surrounding other nations or military branches. The focus will be more on the Army, but this does not necessitate throwing out all research and knowledge associated with chaplains, spiritual matters, and moral situations in other settings. There are plenty of situations and matters that can overlap across different military branches regarding their nature and how they are dealt with by chaplains and leaders.

The method for analyzing research data was to see how each source addresses situations and factors surrounding the thesis topic. It operates through the lens of a Christian chaplain in the Army with biblical views and beliefs. The idea is to utilize all the research to develop key elements that play into how chaplains handle working in a pluralistic setting while conducting his ministry. Scripture will be continuously applied to all discussions. In this paper, Scripture is considered the perfect, undebatable, and inspired word of God (2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm

119:160). It will be the overarching voice of truth and reason in this paper throughout.

Founding Documents & Principles

Since the discussion is about how a chaplain in the U.S. Army must approach fulfilling the Great Commission while obeying the regulations of the U.S. Government, it should start by looking at some of the nation's founding values and principles. What is the government's stance on religious liberty and pluralism? How do they address this topic? Do they provide leverage for the chaplain to be able to perform his duties as a follower of Christ? The best place to start is back at the beginning of the nation's history, discussing the founding doctrine that was put into place by America's forefathers.

What the Founding Fathers Said

The discussion of America's founding doctrine should start with none other than the U.S. Constitution. This will provide the ground-level doctrine of America's approach to religious freedom. The First Amendment, titled "Freedom of Religion, Speech, Press, Assembly," says that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (U.S. Constitution, amend. 1). The two directives in this statement are known as the "establishment clause" and the "free exercise clause." From this language, one can see that the government is not able to force any kind of religious practice on citizens. According to Ellis McKinney West, in the book *The Religion Clauses of the First Amendment: Guarantees of States' Rights?*, both the Federalists and Anti-Federalists agreed to put a specific amendment in place to ensure the protection of religious freedom.⁷ Additionally, as pointed out by Leonard W. Levy in *The Establishment Clause: Religion and the First Amendment*, the Constitution, unlike the Declaration of Independence, was sterilized of any

⁷ Ellis McKinney West. *The Religion Clauses of the First Amendment: Guarantees of States' Rights?* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011, chap. 4.

references to God, and the convention did not even pray over the meeting that was held to discuss this matter.⁸

The Constitution shows the government's intentional decision not to establish a state religion, and also not to prevent citizens from practicing their religion of choice. So far, this forecasts that both chaplains and soldiers will not have their religious practices infringed upon. The two-fold reality is that the practice of Christianity as an American citizen is protected, and so is the practice of other religions. Therefore, according to the Constitution, a Christian chaplain in the Army is free to practice his Christian faith and, at the same time, must acknowledge the reality that non-Christian soldiers are free to practice their preferred religions. This statement does not serve to spitefully kick dirt on other religions, but to speak from the foxhole of a Christian chaplain whose desire is to see all people enlightened by Christian truth and its way of life. Certainly, every Christian chaplain should desire for all others to become followers of Christ.

What U.S. Law Says

Branching down from the founding doctrine, the discussion will now look to the laws that are in the United States Code. This will show how the laws of the nation address religious liberty. Public Law 112-239 of the United States Code, Title 10, "Protection of Rights of Conscience of Members of the Armed Forces and Chaplains of Such Members," says that the military cannot require chaplains to carry out any action or service that violates their convictions or religious beliefs.⁹ The code also protects them from adverse action should they choose to

⁸ Leonard W. Levy. *The Establishment Clause: Religion and the First Amendment*. Second, revised ed. London; Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994, 79-80.

⁹ General Military Law, Public Law 112-239, U.S. Statutes at Large 126 (2013), 1727, codified at U.S. Code 10, § 1001 et seq., <https://uscode.house.gov/statviewer.htm?volume=126&page=1727>.

exercise that right.¹⁰ It is clear from this that military chaplains are protected from being forced into violating their religious beliefs and convictions as well as any retaliation for their refusal. This law echoes the principle of the First Amendment in the Constitution (U.S. Constitution, amend. 1). The only exceptions to this rule are situations where “military readiness, unit cohesion, and good order and discipline” are at risk of being compromised.¹¹ This means that service members are free to practice their religion of choice if it does not get in the way of the Army’s effectiveness. The Army itself has a dog in the fight when it comes to needing accommodation. The bottom line is that the practice of all religions in the Army is protected if it does not get in the way of what the Army is doing. The law’s argument is that the military’s mission cannot simply be shoved to the side and denied all its needs and provisions for the sake of everyone’s religious freedom. The military still has wars to fight and missions to accomplish.

What Army Regulation Says

The discussion will now shift to U.S. Army doctrine and look at what it says regarding the religious freedom of both chaplains and soldiers. This will show how the Army specifically addresses religious liberty and the chaplain’s requirements. AR 165-1 says that “Chaplains will minister to the personnel of their unit and/or facilitate the free-exercise rights of all personnel, regardless of religious affiliation of either the chaplain or the unit member.”¹² Upon reading this, one might think that this basically requires the chaplain to completely embrace pluralism in the ministry, to the point of contaminating his own convictions. However, the next sentence says, “Chaplains will perform their professional military religious leader ministrations in

¹⁰ US Code 10, Public Law 112-239.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² AR 165-1, 8.

accordance with the tenets or religious requirements of the RO [Religious Organization] that certifies and endorses them.”¹³ This sentence links the chaplain’s requirements from the Army to the requirements of the religious endorser, an entity which will be discussed later. In other words, the Army actually requires chaplains to abide by the guidance of their religious organizations. Therefore, the Army requires chaplains to conduct their ministry in accordance with their religious beliefs and convictions. This is in accordance with the United States Code that was discussed earlier, which mandates not forcing chaplains to perform any religious support outside of their own religious beliefs.¹⁴

At this point, it can be concluded that Christian military chaplains are protected by fine print. A Christian chaplain has the freedom to operate within the boundaries of his religious traditions, beliefs, and convictions. This is a major plus for Christian chaplains. Army Regulation is highly regarded by Army leadership and the Army way of life. CH (MAJ) Grace Kim, a chaplain instructor from the U.S. Army Institute of Religious Leadership (the schoolhouse for Army chaplains) says, “when you know Army Regulation, no one will question you.”¹⁵ Her point in saying this is that commanders and leaders place high emphasis and value on Army Regulation. One could say that Army Regulation is the “sacred text” of the Army. It is the final word of the Army’s standards and way of conducting its operations. To have Army doctrine on your side as a chaplain is already winning most of the battle. So far, the freedom of movement to make disciples is looking good for Christian chaplains serving in the Army.

¹³ AR 165-1, 8.

¹⁴ US Code 10, Public Law 112-239.

¹⁵ Grace Kim, MAJ. “Mission Analysis Brief” (lecture at US Army Institute of Religious Leadership, Fort Jackson, SC, July 28, 2022).

What Pluralism Entails

The discussion will now proceed with a more in-depth discussion of the term *pluralism*. This is certainly warranted as it is a key element of the big question of this thesis. Ronald Nash's definition of *pluralism* was noted back at the beginning of the discussion to serve as an introduction to what it means (see page 5).¹⁶ How can one take a closer look at the topic of pluralism? D.A. Carson, in his article "The Challenges of Contemporary Pluralism," takes a deep look at this topic, proposing and describing three types of pluralism: "empirical pluralism, cherished pluralism, and philosophical or hermeneutical pluralism."¹⁷ *Empirical pluralism*, as described by Carson, and in the case for the discussion, refers to the diversity across many fronts (ethnicity, religion, language, etc.) that exists in the American culture.¹⁸ With regard to religion, Carson gives a statistic which says, "Protestants declined from about 67 percent to 57 percent between the years 1952 and 1987."¹⁹ He also makes references to how immigration has contributed to religious diversity because other countries have brought in people who practice certain religions (Roman Catholicism, Buddhism, etc.).²⁰ He notes that Roman Catholicism is declining due to a sharp decrease in Catholic church clergy.²¹ Other religious groups and cults have become more prominent as well (Mormons, pagans, etc.).²² Carson's article says that mainstream Protestantism has been on the decline while marginal religious groups are

¹⁶ Nash. *Is Jesus the Only Savior?*, 22.

¹⁷ D.A. Carson. "The Challenges of Contemporary Pluralism." *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 5.

developing.²³

The U.S. Military is a hot spot to witness these changes highlighted by Carson. It has been stated that military service members come from all ethnic groups and backgrounds. Furthermore, they are constantly on the move, especially those on active duty. A service member can find himself in the snowy terrain of New York on one assignment only to be sent to the hot desert of Arizona on the next assignment, not to mention overseas assignments around the globe which provide considerably more exposure to cultural and religious diversity. Christian Army chaplains are immersed in a whirlwind of religious diversity where their own beliefs are becoming less and less popular while opposing beliefs are on the rise.

Cherished pluralism is worth mentioning briefly as it highlights a common mindset of the nation today. It is probably the most evident form that can be seen in the news and media. This type of pluralism embodies a celebration of the diversity in the culture, according to Carson's article.²⁴ The idea he presents is that the culture is in favor of having much diversity while some traditional groups fight to maintain the integrity of their own beliefs, avoiding any cross-contamination.²⁵ It is easy to see how a Christian chaplain could get caught in this tension. He swears to support and defend the U.S. Constitution which provides religious liberty to all and is also expected to facilitate this religious freedom. However, he also knows that he cannot "add or take away" from the teachings and values of Christianity, as his Sacred Text commands (Revelation 22:18-19). This seems to place the Christian chaplain with one foot in the camp of religious diversity and the other foot in the camp of those who fight off the potential

²³ Carson. "Contemporary Pluralism, 4-5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

contamination of their beliefs from that same diversity. The idea of cherished pluralism alone is enough to generate the big question of this paper.

Philosophical or Hermeneutical Pluralism is another form that is becoming more and more evident in the culture. This form gives the biggest stiff arm to Christianity's exclusive truths. It is basically the idea that one religion cannot be either exclusively true or "superior" to other religions.²⁶ This ideology is obviously a problem for those religions who view their beliefs as the only truth. This is the case for the Christian chaplain as well. Jesus says that he is the only truth without any sugarcoating or beating around the bush (John 14:6). This may be a point of friction at times for the chaplain as he holds to his own Christian truths while in a pluralistic setting. However, there is currently no law or regulation stating that chaplains must affirm or validate all religions as true. Hopefully that will not change, but only time will tell.

Military Life and Religious Freedom

In addition to knowing regulation, an understanding of the military culture and lifestyle is a crucial step in understanding the dynamic of religious freedom within its ranks. As stated before, the discussion will be focusing on the U.S. Army. Anyone who has spent a few days in the Army knows that its ranks are made up of men and women from all walks of life. The Army has soldiers from the East Coast, West Coast, Midwest, Northern States, Deep South, and even some originating from other countries. The Army has soldiers of many different ethnic groups, cultures, and traditions. In essence, the Army mirrors the cultural diversity of the United States of America herself. With that being said, it is true that with an array of cultures and traditions comes an array of religious practices and beliefs.

The overarching point of the religious diversity discussion is that the Army is a prime

²⁶ Carson. "Contemporary Pluralism, 8.

example (maybe even the top example) of an organization where the facilitating of religious freedom is paramount. This is because, as it was already said, there are many different religions to accommodate. Ed Waggoner, in his journal article “Taking Religion Seriously in the U.S. Military: The Chaplaincy as a National Strategic Asset,” points out that the diversity of religions in the military is more in the spotlight than it has been before, where the “center of gravity” of First Amendment religious rights no longer rests primarily on Christians but now has a more “generic” stance.²⁷ Basically, Chaplains in today’s Army have their work cut out for them with facilitating religious freedom more than what was necessary in earlier times. Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie, in their book *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving*, tell us that “ministry in the twenty-first century will involve working with people who have radically different perspectives on life and the world.”²⁸ The military religious setting has gone from a gumball machine of one type to a candy store full of multiple options.

Foundational Chaplain Knowledge

Knowing the originating story of the chaplain branch will help readers appreciate the progression of its ministry over time. The next topic will be about how the chaplaincy got its start to provide more thorough context to the discussion. AR 165-1 says, “The Continental Congress established chaplains as an integral part of the Army of the United States on 29 July 1775.”²⁹ It also says that Army chaplains have served in America’s wars dating all the way back

²⁷ Ed Waggoner. 2014. "Taking Religion Seriously in the U.S. Military: The Chaplaincy as a National Strategic Asset." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82, no. 3 (September): 706.

²⁸ Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie. *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 147.

²⁹ AR 165-1, 1.

to that same time (American Revolution).³⁰ To zoom in closer to the topic of discussion, the regulation states: “The Chaplain Corps itself is a product of the nation’s commitment to religious freedom and its recognition that religion plays an integral role in the lives of many of its Soldiers. Chaplains have contributed to Soldiers’ religious freedom, moral development, and spiritual well-being throughout the history of the Army. Army chaplains represent many religious traditions present within the pluralistic religious culture of the United States.”³¹ It can be said that the Army Chaplain Corps was essentially cut from the fabric of the nation’s belief in religious liberty. It is as if the Army set up the Chaplain Corps, put a spotlight on it, and said “this is what religious freedom looks like!” The Army is a shining example of America’s religious freedom!

The first U.S. President, George Washington, was very much an advocate of chaplains in the military. His endeavors are certainly worth mentioning in the discussion. According to Phillip Vincent Muñoz, in his article “George Washington on Religious Liberty,” President George Washington (General George Washington at the time) wanted “chaplains of every denomination” to enable the free practice of religion by soldiers in the Continental Army.³² Washington foresaw much value in having military chaplains in the ranks because “they supported the war effort, which itself was directed at the common good.”³³ Regarding this *common good* concept, “Washington’s definition of the public good was expansive—it included the formation of individual’s characters—but, nonetheless, he did not promote support of

³⁰ AR 165-1, 1.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Vincent Phillip Muñoz. 2003. "George Washington on Religious Liberty." *The Review of Politics* 65, no. 1 (Winter): 21.

³³ Ibid., 22.

religion as an end in and of itself.”³⁴ Muñoz also says, “Washington explicitly connected military chaplains to the discipline and morale of the armed forces.”³⁵ From this kind of language, it seems that Washington’s goal of facilitating religious freedom for soldiers was centered on the good order, discipline, and mission accomplishment of the Army. Washington was not professing the Gospel of Christ as the main reason for the presence of chaplains. He saw religious endorsement as a necessary ingredient to victory on the battlefield (granted there is certainly a lot of truth to this as well).

The government’s goal of facilitating religious freedom across the ranks of the military seems to revolve around the interests of the United States. While this is certainly not a big shock, it is well worth discussing with regard to the big question of this paper. AR 165-1 states: “In many nations of the world, religious beliefs influence perceptions of power, diplomacy, law, and social customs. Throughout the Army’s history, chaplains have advised commanders on the impact of religion both within their own ranks and within the larger operational environment.”³⁶ From this type of language, it is clear that the government sees religion as a means to an end, being that religion helps the United States achieve her interests by being a source of motivation and morale boosting to her soldiers. While it is understandable that the nation’s leaders would only be too happy to utilize religion to bolster the interests of the United States, the Christian chaplain must discern the primary intention of the government from what should be his own primary intention. The chaplain, while certainly being obedient in carrying out his military duties, must also remain focused on the mission he carries because of his ultimate “citizenship.”

³⁴ Muñoz. "George Washington on Religious Liberty," 22.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ AR 165-1, 1.

This is the citizenship that we are given in heaven because of God's redemptive work (Philippians 3:20-21).

It has already been discussed how the Army facilitates religious freedom up to the point that it interferes with the mission, as stated in USC 10.³⁷ The success of the mission is a non-negotiable term for the Army. FM 1-05, the manual for *Religious Support* states: "The Army accommodates religious practices when such accommodations do not impede military readiness or hinder unit cohesion, standards, health, safety, or discipline."³⁸ The regulation makes it clear that the Army always puts the mission as the highest priority, which is actually the first of the Army's "Warrior Ethos," which says, "I will always place the mission first."³⁹ The mission of the Army always takes the top priority. To put it bluntly (and at the risk of suffering a potential lightning strike), Jesus does not come first in the Army nor the U.S. Government. Mary Ellen Konieczny and Christophe Bertossi, in their article "Religious Conflict and the Chain of Command in the American and French Militaries," tell us that the military has "a responsibility to manage the relation of religion and state."⁴⁰ Religion is meant to be a player on the board but is not meant to be the pinnacle of a soldier's focus. Rather than being the answer to everything about life and its purpose, religion is simply part of the comprehensive formula for a properly functioning military.

³⁷ US Code 10, Public Law 112-239.

³⁸ Department of the Army, *Religious Support*, FM 1-05 (Washington DC: Department of the Army, 21 January 2019), 1-6.

³⁹ Department of the Army, *Soldier's Guide*, TC 7-21.13 (Washington DC: Department of the Army, November 2015), 3-7.

⁴⁰ Mary Ellen Konieczny and Christophe Bertossi. 2017. "Religious Conflict and the Chain of Command in the American and French Militaries." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56, no. 2: 249.

The Chaplain's Duties

The next point of discussion will be the duties required of the chaplain by the Army. Having a thorough understanding of the chaplain's duties as prescribed by the Army will assist in better understanding how well the Great Commission fits into those duties. Army regulation tells us that the chaplain is supposed to "provide responsive religious support at all levels across the full range of Army operations."⁴¹ Army chaplains operate at all echelons and must be ready to provide support when and where it is needed.

This religious support spans a number of different religious services. Chaplains do way more than just preach sermons and hand out candy. The regulation says that "Religious support includes providing essential elements of religion to include worship, religious rites, sacraments and ordnance, holy days and observances, pastoral care and counseling, and religious education."⁴² The chaplain conducts many of the same services that a civilian church pastor provides. The other responsibility that the chaplain owns is to "advise commanders on the impact of religion."⁴³ As every staff section is responsible for advising the commander on how their subject matter impacts the unit's mission, the chaplain must be the subject matter expert of religion and how it impacts the mission.

Now to focus more categorically on the major functions of the chaplain. This will show that there are two lines of effort the chaplain must walk. His responsibilities are summed up by the "dual role of the Chaplain Corps: professional military religious leader and professional military staff advisor."⁴⁴ In an advisor role, "the chaplain advises the commander and staff on

⁴¹ AR 165-1, 6.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

morals, morale, ethical issues, and the impact of religion on all aspects of military operations.”⁴⁵ While this role does include religion at the table, it is a generic inclusion at best. In a religious leader role, the chaplain provides “religious support that accommodates the soldier’s right to the free exercise of religion, and support resilience efforts to sustain soldiers, family members, and authorized civilians.”⁴⁶ Again, religion is included in the role, but the focus is on the sustainment of the Army’s forces. These roles contain the “three core competencies” of the Chaplain Corps which are to “Nurture the Living, Care for the Wounded and Honor the Fallen.”⁴⁷ These are the fundamental duties of the chaplain. Everything that he does in his ministry falls under one of these competencies.

As explained before, chaplains provide many kinds of religious support. All religions (at least the major world religions) are represented and accommodated by the military. To focus on the issue of the Christian mission, this arrangement of religious support certainly does not *exclude* the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus. However, there is certainly some “competition” (for lack of better terms) since there are many faith groups influencing and drawing the flock to a life of worship and devotion in their own forms. Jesus does not get placed on a pedestal above all other religions. He is not revered as the only pathway to God. Naomi K. Paget and Janet R. McCormack state in their book, *The Work of the Chaplain*, that “Chaplains serve in a pluralistic arena—multifaith—and therefore, must provide the same ministry to *all* people in the identified ministry group.”⁴⁸ They further clarify their point by stating that “in the 1980s a Jewish army

⁴⁵ AR 165-1, 6.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Naomi K. Paget and Janet R. McCormack. *The Work of the Chaplain*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006, 4.

chaplain helped define the ministry of chaplains by clearly stating that the chaplains purpose was to provide for the free exercise of religion for everyone in the command, not just the people who were of the same faith tradition as the chaplain.”⁴⁹ The chaplain must give care and ministry to *all* soldiers in his flock.

The Chaplain’s Challenges

What does this mean for the Christian chaplain serving in the Army? The Army and the Christian chaplain seem to have conflicting priorities. The chaplain should, of course, place high importance on the mission of the Army, as indicated by the Warrior Ethos.⁵⁰ He should perform the job he has been given, both by God and by the government, to the best of his abilities. However, as stated before, the Christian chaplain has a much higher mission than that of the United States, given Jesus’s command to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). The United States democracy is a beautiful institution that should be valued and defended. However, there is a Kingdom that is above the nations of this world for which those who are disciples of Christ are called to serve above all else. Jesus commands his followers to seek this Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, above all else (Matthew 6:33). The Christian is essentially a dual citizen. How does this chaplain remain faithful to both? Does he find himself caught in the trap explained by Jesus who says that “no one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24)? Will he “be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Matthew 6:24)?

If one knows Scripture, then they know what Jesus is calling them to do. He makes no bones about what is required of his disciples in the New Testament. He says that anyone who does not put God above everything else in life (even their closest loved ones) is not fit to follow

⁴⁹ Paget and McCormack. *Work of the Chaplain.*, 4.

⁵⁰ TC 7-21.13, 3-7.

him, or as the military often says, is unfit for duty (Luke 14:26). He also commands his followers to love him with all of their being, which leaves no room for any other persons or objects of reverence or worship (Matthew 22:37). Jesus requires the Christian chaplain to place him above everything else. The Stars and Stripes come in second to the “Old Rugged Cross.”⁵¹ The Christian chaplain cannot simply consider Jesus to be another player on the chess board. Jesus is the reason why all the pieces on the board operate and even exist! The Bible tells us that everything came from him (John 1:3). The Christian chaplain must be devoted to Jesus first and America second. To reverse these priorities would put the chaplain in a place of disobedience and disloyalty to God.

The Chaplain’s Perspective

However, it is worth taking some time to view the religious culture of the military through the lens of the Bible and Christian principles. Is the fact that the Christian chaplain is in a pluralistic setting a negative reality? Is the fact that he must minister to soldiers of all religions a cause for despair? Perhaps some would assume or automatically label this idea as an assault on the church. How can one determine if this is a good or bad environment for the Christian chaplain to conduct ministry? Is there any insight from Scripture that can shed some light on the subject?

This calls for some examples in Scripture, more specifically Jesus’s ministry in the Gospels, to see some of the environments where Jesus ministered. The New Testament shows that Jesus did not work out of a church office or parish. Dr. Steve Keith said that Jesus is the best example of a chaplain in all of history.⁵² Jesus basically described himself as homeless

⁵¹ George Bennard. “The Old Rugged Cross,” 1912.

⁵² Steve Keith, PhD. “Military Chaplaincy” (lecture at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, n.d.).

when he said, “The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20). He traveled from place to place during his earthly ministry, going out into the world to reach those who were on his spiritual radar. To recap what Dr. Keith said before, the chaplain ministry is “incarnational,” embedded into the organization which it serves.⁵³ The chaplain goes and ministers to the people outside of the church. Former Army Chaplain and author Dr. Robert Crick, in his book *Outside the Gates: The Need for, Theology, History, and Practice of Chaplaincy Ministries*, says that ministry is needed outside of the church walls.⁵⁴ Jesus visited the synagogue, and even spoke during the service, but never worked out of a temple (Luke 4:16-21). In fact, if we really want to get technical about it, Jesus was actually *kicked out* of a temple for claiming his Messiah status (Luke 4:28-29). Yes, that is correct! The best chaplain in the history of the world got kicked out of church!

Not only did Jesus conduct his ministry work outside of the temple walls, but he also associated with the unbelievers and sinners. Scripture gives accounts of Jesus approaching and socializing with sinners. It tells of Jesus specifically going out of his way to meet with the woman at the well, where he ministered to her and gave her hope (John 4:1-42). It also tells of Jesus sitting at the table with tax collectors and prostitutes, claiming that they are spiritually “sick” people in need of a spiritual “doctor” (Mark 2:15-17). Not only did Jesus say this, but he also said that these were the very people that he came to draw unto himself (Mark 2:17). Dr. Crick also reminds readers that “Christ embraced a broken world in need of hope, redemption, and healing” as his “specific mission.”⁵⁵ Christian chaplains must not forget that the broken and

⁵³ Keith. *Military Chaplaincy*.

⁵⁴ Robert D. Crick and Brandelan S. Miller. *Outside the Gates: The Need for, Theology, History, and Practice of Chaplaincy Ministries*. Oviedo, FL: HigherLife Development Services, Inc., 2011, xiii.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

lost unbelievers are the mission of Jesus and should therefore be their mission as well.

Another great point by Dr. Crick is that God created all life and, therefore, God is the owner of every living and created thing.⁵⁶ Dr. Crick even says, “The wicked, the inconsiderate, and the inhumane belong to God” whose “lives are even sacred simply because they possess the breath of God.”⁵⁷ Scripture says that mankind was created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:26-28). He was “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). He is not junk, just by nature of being created by God! Dr. Crick reminds readers that God had revealed to Peter that no one created by God should be called “unclean” and that God “never let go of the secular” because “it has always belonged to him” (Acts 10:28).⁵⁸ Christians are not meant to stay fortified behind the church walls nor exclusively commune in spiritual gated communities. They are meant to go out and engage a fallen world that is lost and in need of Jesus. They are not supposed to treat the lost and unbelieving like plague victims. Jesus actually went up and touched the leper when he cleansed him of his disease (Matthew 8:3). Christians are called by God to *engage!*

To round off this discussion, it has been established that the chaplain is called to be outside of the church and part of the organization he is given to serve. The Gospel of Mark says to “go forth and preach the Gospel” (Mark 16:15). Jesus was out in the wilderness and in the communities preaching that people should repent of their sin and that God’s kingdom was coming (Matthew 4:12-17). Therefore, the Christian chaplain should not be discouraged by the pluralistic environment in which he is called to minister. Rather, he should be very *encouraged* by the opportunity with which God has blessed him. By being assigned to an environment with

⁵⁶ Crick. *Outside the Gates.*, 6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

such a diverse demographic, the chaplain has been given a grand field of “spiritual crops.” Scripture does say, after all, that “the harvest is plenty, but the workers are few” (Matthew 9:37). The Christian chaplain has his work cut out for him in the Army, which should motivate him to get to work for the Lord!

The Chaplain’s Dilemma

However, considering all these encouraging truths and facts, one might raise the question of how feasible it is for the Christian chaplain to make other disciples. How much freedom of maneuver, as the military calls it, does the chaplain have? It is clear just from the First Amendment that the Christian chaplain has the right to practice his own religion, thanks to the free exercise clause (U.S. Constitution, amend. 1). However, does the chaplain encounter any friction with this same clause when it comes to influencing others to become disciples of Jesus?

These questions seem logical, but when it comes to the Christian faith and its requirements, it actually creates a terrible paradox. This whole discussion is based on the concern of the Christian chaplain being able to make disciples of Jesus, as he has commanded his followers to do (Matthew 28:19-20). In the Old Testament, God called Israel to be his witness to the world, glorifying him before all the nations (Genesis 12:2-3). Will Metzger, in his book *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel Wholly By Grace Communicated Truthfully & Lovingly*, helps readers understand the term “witness” as “to testify that Christ is who he said he is.”⁵⁹ The Christian life is not meant to be lived in a stove pipe. Christians are meant to spread the glory and Gospel of Christ to the world, that others might become his disciples. Therefore, for a

⁵⁹ Will Metzger. *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel Wholly By Grace Communicated Truthfully & Lovingly*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 53.

Christian chaplain to practice his own religion means that he *must* go and make disciples of Christ. He cannot simultaneously practice his religion and yet *not* make disciples. To back down from making disciples is to back down from practicing Christianity! This is a command straight from Jesus! Orders from Headquarters!

Can the Christian chaplain be guaranteed the freedom to go and make other disciples in a pluralistic environment? Will this be the limit of what he can do as he practices his faith?

Chaplains should be very thankful for the government's blessing in allowing a government-paid clergy member to remain in accordance with his faith tradition, as stated in AR 165-1.⁶⁰

However, as it was already discussed, the government does not have its finger in any particular pie when it comes to a religion. The government's interest is in maintaining religious harmony among the ranks of the Army's soldiers so that they have maximum effectiveness in battle, as was shown by George Washington, USC 10, AR 165-1, and FM 1-05.⁶¹ Again, this is not a knock against the government. Of course, their primary interest is to look out for the nation's interest! America should hope so! But it is worth noting that the government is not specifically rooting for the Gospel of Jesus to reach the masses. The Christian chaplain just happens to be fortunate that government regulation clears him to practice his faith alongside the other religions. Does this mean that the chaplain is all alone in this chain of command when it comes to being a voice for Christ? Is there anyone who is specifically in his corner when it comes to spreading the Gospel? Anyone who can share in his burden to preach Christ to his flock?

Thanks be to God, there is!

⁶⁰ AR 165-1, 8.

⁶¹ Muñoz. "George Washington on Religious Liberty," 22; US Code 10, Public Law 112-239; AR 165-1, 1; FM 1-05, 1-6.

Religious Endorsement

There cannot be an adequate discussion about the chaplain ministry without talking about religious endorsers. The religious endorser is a vital and integral part of the chaplain ministry. They range across many denominations and religions. These religious endorsers will be discussed more in-depth in this section.

What is a Religious Endorser?

Religious endorsers are churches and faith group organizations that provide endorsement for chaplains so that they can perform their ministries. The chaplain's faith tradition matches the faith tradition of the endorser. Their mission and faith statements should be in accord. A chaplain cannot function as a chaplain without a religious endorsement, according to AR 165-1.⁶² This regulation also says that the chaplain answers to his endorser and stays in constant communication throughout his service.⁶³ Failure to do so can result in the endorser withdrawing their endorsement of the chaplain, which can then lead to that chaplain being separated from the Army.⁶⁴ It is non-negotiable for a chaplain to have an ecclesiastical endorsement and to remain in good standing with that endorser. This is accomplished through abiding by the endorser's standards and guidelines for their chaplains.

This not only *allows* the chaplain to practice his religious beliefs, but actually *requires* the chaplain to abide by them. Therefore, a Christian chaplain who is endorsed by a Christian organization is required to operate within the boundaries of Christian (and therefore biblical) values and boundaries. Paget and McCormack say that the government leaves the ordination

⁶² AR 165-1, 17.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

process in the hands of the endorser and there is no issue on the government side as long as the chaplain completes the educational requirements for the Department of Defense (DOD).⁶⁵ The government fully acknowledges the responsibility that the chaplain has to his endorser.

How Do Religious Endorsers Protect Chaplains?

Not only does the endorser determine ordination potential and religious guidelines for the chaplain, but it also serves as a powerhouse that the chaplain can contact for help, especially in the event of a difficult situation where religious boundaries are a concern. For example, if a chaplain were to be pressured into performing a certain kind of religious support that goes against his convictions (and by direct association, the guidelines of the endorser), he would call his endorser for backup. Another potential situation is for the chaplain to be pressured *not* to perform a certain practice (such as using the name of Jesus) when it is something that is required by his religious convictions. In this case, he would also contact his endorser for support.

As briefly stated before, the religious endorser provides the actual religious guidelines by which the chaplain shall abide. Failure to comply with these guidelines puts the chaplain at risk of losing his endorsement which disqualifies him from serving as a chaplain. For example, the Liberty Baptist Fellowship (LBF) has their guidelines on what chaplains can and cannot do. One example of the biblical guidelines is that an LBF chaplain cannot have an ecumenical worship service with other religions or conduct an infant baptism.⁶⁶ Another example is that the LBF Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) says that chaplains cannot perform same-sex wedding ceremonies.⁶⁷ If the chaplain were to be in a situation where he was being pressured to perform

⁶⁵ Paget and McCormack. *The Work of the Chaplain.*, 37.

⁶⁶ Liberty Baptist Fellowship. Biblical Guidelines, January 5, 2022.

⁶⁷ Liberty Baptist Fellowship. Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), February 8, 2021.

one of these services, the LBF would be the first phone call he should make.

Dr. Keith shared a story from his chaplain experience where he was told by his commander not to preach about Jesus.⁶⁸ Knowing that he was cleared by law and regulation to preach in accordance with his faith and endorser, Dr. Keith defied the unlawful order of his commander and preached about Jesus in chapel that Sunday.⁶⁹ The point of that story is that the Christian chaplain can expect to encounter situations where leadership and influential people may challenge him to not act in accordance with his religious convictions and endorser. When this happens, the chaplain can turn to his religious endorser for their support. The endorser will go to bat for the chaplain if they are doing their job correctly. The Christian chaplain should remember that it is not the commander nor any other superior officer who grants him the privilege of serving in this ministry. The religious endorser is who enables a chaplain to serve in the ministry. While it is true that commanders and superior officers have influence over a chaplain's military career, there should never be negative repercussions for a chaplain abiding by his religious endorser and convictions. Any such friction between the endorser and military leadership should be promptly addressed.

The main takeaway from this discussion, in accordance with the main topic, is that the religious endorser is a vital asset for the Christian chaplain who is fulfilling the Great Commission. The chaplain can call his endorser whenever his ability to abide by the endorser's guidelines is being infringed. The endorser will be able to speak for the chaplain and provide coverage. However, this does not take away from the chaplain's responsibility to provide for the free exercise of religion. For example, the LBF DOMA guidelines also mandate that the

⁶⁸ Steve Keith, PhD. "Spiritual and Professional Development of the Chaplain" (lecture at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, March 2019).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

chaplain will ensure the freedom for those under his care to exercise their religion of choice.⁷⁰

The religious endorser is the backup for the chaplain to help him stay within the boundaries of his faith tradition. Chaplains should always stay connected regularly with their endorser for the sake of mentorship and ensuring they are staying in step with their values.

Perspectives from Real Chaplains

This discussion would be severely amiss if it were to continue without bringing in more views and experiences of real Army chaplains. Aside from the wisdom of Scripture, the best sources that one can consult regarding the challenge of obeying the Great Commission in the pluralistic environment of the Army are Christian chaplains who have been serving and have experience in the Army. This section will discuss and ponder a few interviews of Army chaplains conducted by the author. The questions that were given to each chaplain in their interviews are as follows:

1. How did you receive your calling to join the Chaplain Corps?
2. Have you ever found it challenging to obey the Great Commission as a chaplain in the Army?
3. Do you ever find it difficult or conflicting with your own Christian beliefs to facilitate the religious freedom of those with different faith traditions from yours?
4. Do you think chaplains can get wrapped up in pluralism and start to lose sight of their Christian duties?
5. Do you think we will reach a point where Christian chaplains will be told they cannot influence others to become Christians?
6. What do you think should be the Christian chaplain's response to a restriction on preaching the name of Jesus?

The chaplains who were interviewed are of different military rank and different job positions within the Chaplains Corps. The differences in rank, echelon, and job position help to ensure a more diverse and thorough research effort where views of the main topic are offered

⁷⁰ LBF. DOMA, February 8, 2021.

from multiple levels and vantage points of the Army’s chaplain branch. Some of these chaplains also have prior service experience in the military where they served in other occupation specialties. These interviews will offer firsthand experience of Christian chaplains with the issues and questions that have been discussed in this paper.

CH (CPT) Caleb Dunnam

Chaplain Caleb Dunnam is a chaplain in the U.S. Army National Guard, who has held the position of chaplain since November of 2021, with prior service experience as an Aviation officer and company commander.⁷¹ This shows that Chaplain Dunnam is still fairly new to the chaplain ministry, yet also has a lot of experience with the Army due to his prior service. His views from both sides of the aisle are very valuable as someone with an in-depth knowledge of military culture and leadership. Chaplain Dunnam received his calling to chaplaincy in stages throughout his life, sensing a call to ministry in general as a teenager, feeling called to join the Army as an officer when he was in college, and finally detecting the call to the chaplaincy specifically while studying for ministry in seminary.⁷² He said that the story of Nehemiah in the Bible was a large inspiration for him.⁷³

When asked if he has ever found it challenging to fulfill the Great Commission as a chaplain, he shared his own philosophy of what that means to make disciples.⁷⁴ His philosophy is that we “make disciples, not converts.”⁷⁵ This is a tension that may resonate with many people

⁷¹ Caleb Dunnam, interview by author, Fort Jackson, SC, July 21, 2022.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

who have pondered the concept of leading others to Christ. Chaplain Dunnam even admitted that he also wrestled with the process of leading others to Christ because he has not had many moments in ministry where he led someone through the actual conversion moment.⁷⁶ Anyone who has grown up in youth group during the late 20th century to early 21st century is likely familiar with the aim to get as many people to say the “sinner’s prayer” as possible. This often develops into a door-knocking, tract-distributing practice where Christ is presented as if selling vacuums or encyclopedias. Chaplain Dunnam recalled a fellow officer who would deliver the Gospel in this fashion which ended up being off-putting to everyone around him, to the point where they would limit their interaction with him to brief, simple pleasantries.⁷⁷ Jonathan K. Dodson, in his book *Gospel Centered Discipleship*, says, “the reason I struggled with sin so much as a Christian was because I only became a *convert* when I was six but finally became a *disciple* when I was twenty.”⁷⁸

Chaplain Dunnam said that it is not just about making converts and that one should also not forget about discipling those who have already made a commitment to the Lord.⁷⁹ He has had many great spiritual conversations with people that did not lead to a “harvest moment” (to put a label on it) where the person said they were ready to commit their life to God.⁸⁰ He shared the story of a night where he clearly felt the Holy Spirit leading him to talk to a homeless man whom he gave a ride and shared a great conversation about the Gospel.⁸¹ At the end of the

⁷⁶ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Jonathan K. Dodson. *Gospel Centered Discipleship*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 27.

⁷⁹ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

encounter, the man left without actually making a commitment to Christ, but Chaplain Dunnam was confident that this was a God-ordained moment and that he had planted a seed in the man's life.⁸² We can recall this concept in the passage of Scripture where Paul the Apostle says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6-8). Perhaps it is not just about the one who is present for the *harvest* moment in a new believer's life. There appears to be more to discipling than just being the one to witness and help facilitate someone's new commitment. There is a lot that leads up to that climactic moment.

Regarding the difficulty of facilitating religious freedom for soldiers of different faiths, Chaplain Dunnam admits that one does "have to wrestle with it," but it is something that future chaplains must come to terms with if they want to be Army chaplains.⁸³ Simply put, it is a reality that Army chaplains must face. Chaplain Dunnam has asked himself the question that many Army chaplains have probably asked themselves when accommodating other religious beliefs: "Am I showing approval of what they are doing?"⁸⁴ Certainly any Christian chaplain who has assisted a Muslim or Buddhist find a way to conduct their worship must have had this question present itself in his mind, even if it is in the back of his mind. How can one answer such a question? Chaplain Dunnam responded by reminding himself of the current state of humanity, being that lost people are broken people, and they will continue to be broken and indulge in destructive behaviors unless they are drawn away from it by the Holy Spirit.⁸⁵ Chaplain Dunnam

⁸² Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

also made the valid point that many people are turning to these other religions because they have had bad experiences with the Christian church.⁸⁶ William Fay and Linda Evans Shepherd, in their book *Share Jesus Without Fear*, give an example of someone complaining about this type of situation, who says, “Christians...are rude and are in my face trying to convert me. When I don’t respond the way they want, it ruins our friendship. I feel like they look down on me.”⁸⁷

This segues into Chaplain Dunnam’s concept that he mentioned multiple times which is “building bridges versus walls.”⁸⁸ The difference between the two is that walls bring division while bridges cultivate relationships.⁸⁹ Chaplain Dunnam says that some walls are necessary, meaning that Christians cannot budge on certain values and principles.⁹⁰ For example, Christians know what Scripture has to say about certain practices. Paul the Apostle says, “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people” (Ephesians 5:3). Proverbs says that “haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers” are all acts “that are an abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 6:16-19). These kinds of “walls” must be stood upon without exception by God’s people. They cannot be compromised for the sake of other’s validation.

⁸⁶ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

⁸⁷ William Fay and Linda Evans Shepherd. *Share Jesus Without Fear*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1999), 83.

⁸⁸ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

However, there are times when Christians must build bridges to connect with people instead of being divisive with walls. One possible example of this would be when Paul the Apostle is giving instruction to the Corinthian church regarding meat sacrificed to idols. He tells them, “If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience” (1 Corinthians 10:27). What is Paul saying essentially? He is telling the church, “Look, if you’re invited to eat with an unbeliever, just eat what they give you and don’t worry about whether the meat was used in a pagan ritual. You don’t want to cause chaos over something so trivial!” While the goal of not causing a Christian brother or sister to “stumble” is also major point of this passage, one can speculate that Paul likely had relationships with unbelievers in mind when instructing Christians not to get hung up over religious rituals, if they are able to do so without causing believers to stumble (1 Corinthians 10:24, 28-29).

To bring this concept full circle to the discussion on facilitating religious freedom, one can ask this question: would a Christian chaplain be erecting a divisive, unnecessary wall by getting wrapped up over something like providing space for Buddhist soldiers to worship? Would this sort of matter be considered trivial? Perhaps if Paul were here today, he might look at the modern Christian chaplain and say, “If a Buddhist soldier approaches you and wants a place to worship, allow him a place to do as he wishes. Do not raise any question about conscience.” Paul also never told the Corinthian church to judge the unbeliever’s sacrifice of meat to idols when they were invited to dinner. Perhaps doing so could have forfeited those potential relationships with the unbelievers.

Speaking of which, Chaplain Dunnam also believes that Christians must cultivate relationships with people, and they can only do that if they are building bridges.⁹¹ He has a strong theory that facilitating their freedom to worship might be showing “sensitivity” to where they currently are and could be the start of building a bridge that leads them to Jesus.⁹² Is it better to dismiss a soldier from another faith tradition over a small accommodation and burn a potential relational bridge? Realistically, no one of a different faith group is going to want to approach someone who so easily dismisses anything to do with what they believe and value. Christian chaplains must always remember that they are never being required to actually take part in other religious activities with these soldiers of different religions, as explained by USC 10.⁹³ No Christian chaplain will ever be leading a Catholic Mass nor performing a Muslim prayer. This echoes what was discussed earlier, being that chaplains are called to engage with the secular world. Jesus said, while sitting at the table with sinners, that he came “not to call the righteous, but the unrighteous” (Luke 5:32). How are Christians to go and reach the unrighteous unless they engage them? Can they engage them without stepping into their world? Can they form relationships with them without coming into contact with what they believe? Did Jesus ever reject anyone due to different beliefs or lifestyles? No! He was engaging these people throughout Scripture. He called some of them to follow him (Matthew 4:18-22). They were the purpose of his ministry! Therefore, these same people should be the purpose of the Christian chaplain’s ministry!

⁹¹ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ US Code 10, Public Law 112-239.

Two great examples provided by Chaplain Dunnam from Scripture were the stories of Daniel and his service in a Pagan kingdom and Jeremiah’s instructions to Israel as they were about to go into captivity in Babylon (Daniel 1:3-7; Jeremiah 29:4-14).⁹⁴ Chaplain Dunnam pointed out that Daniel worked in a high position as an advisor to the king in a Pagan nation (Daniel 1:3-7).⁹⁵ Although he was deep in this pagan environment, “he was not of it,” as Chaplain Dunnam said (Daniel 1:8, 6:10-13).⁹⁶ Chaplain Dunnam explained that Jeremiah’s instructions to the Israelites as they were getting ready to go into exile in Babylon never said anything about having to be “separate” from the pagans nor endeavor to maintain some kind of religious purity.⁹⁷ God, through Jeremiah, instructed them to live normal lives (marriage, houses, farming, etc.), knowing that he had his own plans for them (Jeremiah 29:5-7).⁹⁸ Even though God called Israel to be a separate and holy nation, he still intended for them to “bless” other nations (Genesis 12:2-3). Christians are called to be separate from the world in the sense of holiness, but they are not called to be separate from the world in the sense of isolation. Their holiness should be a blessing to those who are deeply in need of God’s forgiveness and grace.

As far as getting wrapped up in the pluralistic setting and losing sight of the Great Commission focus, Chaplain Dunnam said that there can be a “temptation to sugarcoat and water down” the teaching and wisdom given to the soldiers.⁹⁹ He followed this up by saying that there

⁹⁴ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

is a “time and place to apply wisdom and not cause offense,” which echoes the need to build the relational bridges.¹⁰⁰ Teamwork and camaraderie are very much encouraged within the Chaplain Corps and the Army as a whole. Therefore, it can be easy to get overly-focused on fostering a harmonious environment among the sea of faith traditions that make up the chaplains. Obviously when someone is trying to foster esprit de corps and unity among a group, they naturally want to avoid saying or doing anything that could cause division and discord. Christian chaplains must be careful not to forget their true purpose while striving to have good teamwork and friendships with a variety of chaplains.

Chaplain Dunnam’s opinion on the risk of Christian chaplains being denied their freedom to exercise Christianity in the future is that the country is trending in that direction, but it would take a “huge national shift” before the nation would actually reach that point.¹⁰¹ His statement was, “as goes society, so goes the Army,” meaning that the Army tends to eventually mirror society’s movements (for example, the acceptance of gay marriage).¹⁰² He also pointed out that Christian leaders and the church still have large impact in the nation, so it would take a lot to bring about that shift.¹⁰³ Doctrine would also have to be rewritten for this shift to take any actual effect.¹⁰⁴ This goes back to the discussion earlier which acknowledged that having doctrine on one’s side is winning the majority of the battle. However, Chaplain Dunnam did not deny that this shift is possible, citing the passage where Jesus warns that the world will hate Christians

¹⁰⁰ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

since they hated him first (John 15:18).¹⁰⁵ Therefore, Christian chaplains should be aware of the potential for a national and societal shift toward a decrease in the tolerance of Christianity in the future, however near or far it may be.

Upon discussing what a Christian chaplain's response should be in the event of such a shift that forbids Christian chaplains from preaching Jesus and making disciples, Chaplain Dunnam stated that "we must obey God," the same words spoken by the Apostles in Scripture when they showed this same resolve during their persecution for preaching the Gospel (Acts 5:27-32).¹⁰⁶ Chaplain Dunnam pointed out that this kind of situation would create a "weird dichotomy" because chaplains would still have the support of their religious endorsers, but not the Army.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the Army would have to forfeit the majority of its chaplain formation since Protestants make up that majority.¹⁰⁸ This would cause a critical detriment to the Army's readiness and spiritual fitness. Another great point by Chaplain Dunnam is that the chaplains from other religions would likely dispute this kind of change, as they may question how secure their own religious rights are if the rights of the Protestants are removed.¹⁰⁹ It would take a significant event for chaplains to be denied their right to exercise their religion. However, chaplains should not be complacent and should still expect persecution, as Jesus said would happen (Matthew 10:22).

¹⁰⁵ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Finally, Chaplain Dunnam said that chaplains need to treat their calling like a missionary ministry, not so much a pastoral ministry.¹¹⁰ He pointed out that missionaries, by nature of their ministry, go into new places, embed themselves into new cultures, learn to speak new languages, and connect with the people of that culture.¹¹¹ In much the same way, Army chaplains learn the culture and language of the Army and connect with the soldiers and their family members. Chaplain Dunnam cited the ministry of Paul the Apostle when he came to Mars Hill and took note of the “Unknown God” monument, using this concept to communicate the Gospel to the people of that culture (Acts 17:22-34).¹¹² A principle in *The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Chaplains of the Armed Forces* by the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces tells chaplains to use common beliefs between religious traditions in order to establish connection and rapport.¹¹³ Christians are called to build relationships with people. When asked to give the Greatest Commandment, Jesus responds that his followers must love God with their whole heart and that they must love their fellow man to the same degree that they love themselves (Matthew 22:37-39). This commandment is about a relationship with God and fellow man. The Gospel itself is about the most important relationship one could ever have! The Bible says that God is drawing men to himself (John 6:44). God wants his relationship with mankind to be restored. Preaching the Gospel to soldiers involves building relationships with them because the Gospel is about relationships.

¹¹⁰ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces. *The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Chaplains of the Armed Forces*.

CH (MAJ) Ken May

Chaplain May is an Army chaplain and a Chaplain Captain's Career Course (C4) instructor at the U.S. Army Institute for Religious Leadership (USA-IRL) at Fort Jackson, SC. This is the institute where all Army chaplains must receive their chaplain specific professional military education (PME), which is a requirement to serve in the Army as a chaplain. Chaplain May received his calling while pastoring a civilian church, after already having served 19 years in the civilian pastoral ministry.¹¹⁴ God spoke to Chaplain May one night to become an Army chaplain, and also used a woman in his church who worked for the Army Reserve office in Oklahoma City to recruit and encourage him to join the chaplaincy.¹¹⁵ God had also been speaking to Chaplain May's wife about this at the same time.¹¹⁶ Chaplain May also was in communication with a chaplain who was a roommate of Chaplain May's company commander from the Oklahoma National Guard, who was also instrumental in Chaplain May answering his call to military ministry.¹¹⁷

When asked if he has ever found obedience to the Great Commission challenging as a chaplain, Chaplain May confidently said that he has never found it challenging.¹¹⁸ He believes that he has been faithful to the Lord both in being a witness for him and also in working in a pluralistic environment.¹¹⁹ Chaplain May's view of evangelism is to go and minister where the

¹¹⁴ Kenneth May, interview by author, Fort Jackson, SC, August 8, 2022.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

“Holy Spirit is already at work,” relying on the leading of the Spirit and not simply on his own zeal or discernment.¹²⁰ Chaplain May has received much evangelism training as someone who came up through the ranks of the church, and therefore has plenty of experience to which he can refer.¹²¹ Chaplain May’s opinion of the modern-day concept of evangelism is that the church has been going about it the wrong way.¹²² Instead of it being a disciple-making ministry, it has become more like “closing a deal” as would be done by a “used car salesman,” pressuring someone into an arrangement that they do not understand, nor are they necessarily prepared to take on.¹²³ He also likened it to an evangelistic “SWAT team,” kicking in the door and “spraying their gospel bullets around the room” before making a quick exit.¹²⁴ Many of who are reading this paper can probably remember being in youth group and approaching people in the mall, asking them if they can “talk about Jesus” with them. They were most often greeted (which may not be the best term) by shaking heads, rolling eyes, scoffs, and harsh rejection. They stood there in shock and discouragement, clutching their gospel tracts and WWJD bracelets, wondering where they went wrong. Chaplain May’s view is that perhaps Christians have been approaching a lot of people with evangelistic intent, yet the Holy Spirit was not actually at work in the situation.¹²⁵ Is it possible that Christians are trying to influence people when the Holy Spirit never told them to approach in the first place?

¹²⁰ May, interview, August 8, 2022.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Chaplain May said that evangelism in the Army has not been a challenge for him because he allows the Holy Spirit to lead as he offers to talk about his faith with others and ask about their faith.¹²⁶ Chaplain May shared that he has not had much experience leading people to Christ, meaning he was not the one to facilitate that “harvest” moment where the person officially passed from death to life in Christ.¹²⁷ He is at peace with this because he concludes that God must have made him to be more of a sower than a reaper.¹²⁸ This is the exact same point made by Chaplain Dunnam during his interview, where he shared the story of talking to the homeless man to whom he was led by God, yet it also did not result in a “harvest” moment.¹²⁹ Chaplain Dunnam and Chaplain May both agree that evangelism is not simply making converts, pressuring them into a prayer in order to receive a “get out of hell free” card.¹³⁰ Rather, it is about yielding to the Holy Spirit’s leading, meeting the people God puts in Christian’s lives where they are, and forming relationships with them that, Lord willing, leads to a discipleship ministry opportunity.

When asked if he has ever felt conflict between his convictions and providing religious freedom to soldiers, Chaplain May said that this one has been a challenge.¹³¹ He shared a personal story of a National Training Center (NTC) rotation where he provided space for his unit’s S4 NCOIC, a Wiccan soldier, to conduct a religious service.¹³² He admitted to feeling

¹²⁶ May, interview, August 8, 2022.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

¹³⁰ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022; May, interview, August 8, 2022.

¹³¹ May, interview, August 8, 2022.

¹³² Ibid.

conflicted, though he was not participating in the service.¹³³ Ultimately, Chaplain May reconciles this awkwardness to the fact that he wears the military uniform and is given the duty to provide religious freedom for all soldiers.¹³⁴ He concludes that if other groups are not allowed their religious freedom, then neither is he allowed his religious freedom to practice Christianity.¹³⁵ While Chaplain Dunnam was sharing about his religious endorser during a class at CHBOLC, he used this same type of situation as an example, stating that “people have the right to be wrong,” and that it is not his job to force his beliefs on them, but to be a Christ-like example and “show them that there is another way.”¹³⁶ Chaplain May also shared that his favorite type of interaction as a chaplain with those of other faith traditions is when they approach him in order to challenge his beliefs.¹³⁷ An example he gave was an Atheist approaching him and saying, “Chaplain, I’m an Atheist! What are you going to do for me?”¹³⁸ Chaplain May loved to respond with the fact that he was still available to talk about “life issues” and that religion did not have to be a part of it if the soldier did not want to discuss it.¹³⁹ He would also say, “I am still your chaplain” and would share Scriptural principles that were useful for simply living a good, honorable life.¹⁴⁰ This would throw soldiers for a loop as it was not the

¹³³ May, interview, August 8, 2022.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Caleb Dunnam, *Class Presentation*, Fort Jackson, SC, August 10, 2022.

¹³⁷ May, interview, August 8, 2022.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

reaction they were expecting.¹⁴¹ One could conclude that they were likely expecting (and maybe even hoping for) a theological firefight.

When asked if he believed that Christian chaplains could get caught up in pluralism and lose sight of their duties and convictions, he said that this can happen.¹⁴² He shared a story of a Christian chaplain who ministered to a nonbelieving soldier, where she essentially abandoned the topic of her own faith in the conversation and used the topic of “spiritualism” to help the soldier with his issue.¹⁴³ Chaplain May felt that this ministerial tactic was “a bridge too far,” because this chaplain got too far away from her own faith and too close to the beliefs of the soldier.¹⁴⁴ One could illustrate this idea with someone trying to help someone else out of a slippery, muddy pit, but they go too far down into the pit and away from the safety of the solid ground above. Chaplain May said that there is the possibility of chaplains going too far in this sense, but it can be difficult to narrow down where that line is exactly.¹⁴⁵ This echoes the need for chaplains to approach each situation with discernment and prayer, as not all situations will be the same.

When asked if he thought there would come a time when Christian chaplains would be prevented from influencing others to become Christians, Chaplain May said that it depends on how it is viewed.¹⁴⁶ He cited the first general order of deployment, which says not to

¹⁴¹ May, interview, August 8, 2022.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

“proselytize.”¹⁴⁷ He said that commanders would likely put “disciple-making” in the category of proselytization, but would not frown upon a soldier who comes to the chaplain, asking questions and seeking to understand more about Christianity of their own free will.¹⁴⁸ Chaplain May cited the verse where Jesus instructs his disciples, “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves,” to support his point that we have freedom to minister but we must do it in wisdom (Matthew 10:16).¹⁴⁹ Chaplains must approach each situation both in love and with discernment. Jesus would not have given this guidance if his followers were not going to encounter situations that could be tricky and uncertain.

As far as being restricted on preaching the name of Jesus, Chaplain May believes this is an area where censoring will be concentrated.¹⁵⁰ His primary examples were situations that involve preaching against the big controversial issues of the day such as transgender ideology and homosexuality.¹⁵¹ There are others that could be named such as abortion, racism, and politics. Chaplain May gave the example of commanders criticizing chaplains regarding the content of their sermons, which can and does happen.¹⁵² Chaplain May said that chaplains will most likely lose on these kinds of issues if friction ensues.¹⁵³ When one considers how sensitive the world is about these issues, that theory seems very plausible. This should not discourage

¹⁴⁷ Department of the Army. General Order No. 1.

¹⁴⁸ May, interview, August 8, 2022.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

chaplains from preaching the truth, but they should have these potential friction points on their radar.

CH (MAJ) Brian “Chip” Satterlee

Chaplain Satterlee is the course manager for the Chaplain Basic Officer Leadership Course (CHBOLC) at Fort Jackson, SC. He has much experience and insight to offer as a Christian chaplain. He graduated from Virginia Military Institute and commissioned through Army ROTC as an Adjutant General (AG) officer.¹⁵⁴ He eventually lost the desire to be an AG officer and sought the Lord on his purpose in life, which ultimately led him to make the switch to the chaplain candidate program.¹⁵⁵ He emphasized the fact that he had just completed AG school prior to switching to the chaplain candidate program, and the fact that the Army was willing to switch him over after just paying for him to attend AG school helped confirm for him that this was what God wanted him to do.¹⁵⁶ He likened his change to the chaplain corps to Gideon placing the fleece on the ground in the Bible to get confirmation from God (Judges 6:36-40).¹⁵⁷

When asked if he ever found it challenging to obey the Great Commission as a chaplain, he expressed gratitude toward the freedom that the nation gives everyone to practice their religion of choice.¹⁵⁸ He believes that Christians are given freedom of choice by God which is in

¹⁵⁴ Brian Satterlee, interview by author, Columbia, SC, August 11, 2022.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

line with America’s provision of freedom to choose religion.¹⁵⁹ He also made reference to Matthew 10:16, “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves,” and that Christians should be doing this in modern-day America (Matthew 10:16).¹⁶⁰ This connects to what Chaplain May said about chaplains likely having a difficult time with the big controversial issues in the culture today.¹⁶¹ Chaplain Satterlee also emphasized how important it is to establish relationships with people when it comes to ministry and sharing the Gospel.¹⁶²

When asked if he has ever found it challenging to facilitate religious freedom as a chaplain, Chaplain Satterlee quoted a friend who once said, “freedom for one is freedom for all.”¹⁶³ He pointed out the fact that chaplains are placed in units to provide soldiers the ability to freely exercise their religion and that the chaplain never has to do anything that goes against his own religious convictions.¹⁶⁴ This echoes what USC 10 says.¹⁶⁵ He also noted that because his soldiers knew that he was a Christian chaplain, he was able to perform almost all of the services that soldiers asked of him.¹⁶⁶ He also indicated that providing for these soldiers of other faith traditions can be a gateway to build relationships with them, citing an example of when he provided space for a soldier of another faith tradition to practice his religion which resulted in the

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

¹⁶¹ May, interview, August 8, 2022.

¹⁶² Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ US Code 10, Public Law 112-239

¹⁶⁶ Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

soldier being very grateful to him.¹⁶⁷ Chaplain Satterlee had cracked open the door to a building a relationship with this soldier just by showing him respect and giving him his freedom.¹⁶⁸

Chaplain Satterlee basically said that religious freedom is a two-way street, being that one person sharing their beliefs means the other person gets to share theirs as well.¹⁶⁹ He said it can only be done effectively through relationship.¹⁷⁰ Everyone knows that a relationship takes two people. It consists of two people interacting and communicating. Both people share their ideas and thoughts. Relationships cannot be done by having one person preaching at another without the other person being able to offer their thoughts and feelings on the matter. Ajith Fernando, in his book *Jesus Driven Ministry*, talks about how Jesus was reclining and spending time with sinners in the house of Levi and how Paul was talking theology with Socrates fans (Mark 2:15-17; Acts 17:16-17).¹⁷¹ Fernando points out that the sinners and tax collectors were attracted to Jesus because he understood them, and that Paul was having theological discussions with people in the marketplace of Athens (Luke 15:1; Acts 17:16-17).¹⁷² We see that Jesus and Paul are building relationships and having open communication. Jesus is in a relaxed posture at Levi's house. This is not a professional setting, nor is Jesus trying to shame these sinners by preaching at them. Jesus is being relational with these lost people. Paul is likely discussing theology with people of different beliefs. A discussion means that both sides are allowed to

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ajith Fernando. *Jesus Driven Ministry*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 211.

¹⁷² Ibid.

speak, not just one side getting to speak. Who are we to criticize the methods of Jesus, God in the flesh, and Paul, one of the great Apostles?

Chaplain Satterlee also said that chaplains must figure out the harmony between taking care of the soldiers and their own convictions.¹⁷³ The chaplain has a job to do which is taking care of those in the ranks. Not being confident and assured of his convictions degrades his ability to have a clear picture of how to take care of his unit. Chaplain Satterlee said chaplains have to know what “hills” they “are willing to die on” as they conduct their ministry, knowing what beliefs and actions are non-negotiable and what can be set aside for the sake of the Gospel.¹⁷⁴ He stated some of the obvious “hills” that Christians should never stray from (i.e. “The Gospel, deity of Christ, freedom of chaplains”), and implied that there are other potential hills that must be given a wise response.¹⁷⁵

As far as the pluralistic environment, Chaplain Satterlee said it is easy for chaplains to get wrapped up in it and drift from Christian-centric responsibilities.¹⁷⁶ A chaplain can get swept up in the Army culture, being a staff officer, and other things that he would be able to do apart from devotion to Christ.¹⁷⁷ This takes the heart out of the ministry. Chaplain Satterlee also pointed out that the concept of “relativism” is prevalent today, and there are many soldiers coming into the ranks that believe in it.¹⁷⁸ He also reasoned that Army is not a place where relativism can work

¹⁷³ Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

because it is a place of concrete ideas and standards.¹⁷⁹ He said that relativism is present in society and culture.¹⁸⁰ Chaplain Satterlee quoted the proverb that says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death” (Proverbs 14:12).¹⁸¹ There is a lot that can cause distraction to the chaplain, but he must ensure he is staying on course as a disciple of Christ.

When questioned about whether chaplains will be stopped from making disciples in the future, Chaplain Satterlee said to refer to the book of Revelation.¹⁸² It is not hard to see that there is some large event looming in the future when one reads these passages.¹⁸³ Chaplain Satterlee said it probably will not be soon, but Christians have to consider the lifespan of this “American experiment” that they are in.¹⁸⁴ The United States of America is not that old compared to the other nations of this earth. She has only existed for a few centuries whereas other nations and kingdoms have existed for thousands of years. How long will America hold out with her new and revolutionary freedoms? Only time will be able to tell. Chaplain Satterlee said that what Christians should really be asking is what God’s purpose is for them.¹⁸⁵ He also referred to Esther when he said that God has called the current church “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14).¹⁸⁶ Chaplain Satterlee implied that Christians should be using their God-given “talents” in

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

the way that God wants (Matthew 25:14-30).¹⁸⁷ Albert L. Winseman, Dr. Donald O. Clifton, and Curt Liesveld, in their book *Living Your Strengths: Discover Your God-given Talents and Inspire Your Community*, encourage Christians to pursue their talents so that they may improve at their “tasks and roles.”¹⁸⁸ If the church is focused on the task that God has given them on this earth, do Christians really need to worry about what may come in the future with regard to national freedoms? Can anyone even make a solid prediction? Jesus has already commanded his followers not to worry about tomorrow (Matthew 6:34). None of it will catch God by surprise, and he is obviously far more capable to handle it than any man. After all, God “is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).

The Line in the Sand

As it currently stands in the nation, Christian chaplains in the Army are protected and enabled to stay true to their religious beliefs while they are providing for the free exercise of religion for all soldiers. Christian chaplains have the green light to conduct their ministry while staying true to the Lord. This right is founded in the Constitution and is echoed in the laws and military regulations (U.S. Constitution, amend. 1).¹⁸⁹ However, this does not mean that there is no trouble in ministry paradise. There has been plenty of opposition to the Christian church and her mission. Many people would like to see the Christian church done away with entirely. This is evident because Jesus told his followers that this would happen. He tells his disciples, “You will be hated for my namesake” (Matthew 10:22). Christians should not only be aware of persecution, but they should expect it to happen. The next discussion will be about how this

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Albert L. Winseman, Donald O. Clifton, PhD, and Curt Liesveld. *Living Your Strengths: Discover Your God-given Talents and Inspire Your Community*. (New York: Gallup Press, 2003), 11-12.

¹⁸⁹ US Code 10, Public Law 112-239; AR 165-1, 8.

persecution is manifesting in the current world and what it means for the Christian chaplain and his ministry.

The Cultural Shift

It goes without saying that a lot of cultures change over time, some faster than others. Culture has especially changed a lot in the past century. This has happened not just in the United States, but around the world. To use the nation of Canada as an example, Joanne Benham Rennick, in her article “Canadian Military Chaplains: Bridging the Gap Between Alienation and Operational Effectiveness in a Pluralistic and Multicultural Context,” talks about how there was a time where “religion presided in many institutions in Canada. However, the Canadian military is not the same as it was in the 1940s when military chaplaincy was established as a Canadian institution in its own right.”¹⁹⁰ She says that the church had a closer relationship with the state and that religious traditions were more highly regarded.¹⁹¹ In more modern times, “both the culture and context are quite different, with increasing diversity, changing ideas about what it means to be Canadian, decreasing influence from the churches, legal protection for religious minorities and growing religious pluralism.”¹⁹² There is not nearly as much harmony on the religious side of the house as there was back then. Canada seems to be going through a complete shift in their overall culture. One could say that, based on this article, they are having an identity

¹⁹⁰ Joanne Benham Rennick. 2011. "Canadian Military Chaplains: Bridging the Gap Between Alienation and Operational Effectiveness in a Pluralistic and Multicultural Context." *Religion, State & Society* 39, no. 1 (March): 97.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

crisis. They are diverse in religion as well as Canadian principles. They do not know who they are nor what (or whom) they should worship.

Sadly, the United States of America seems to be in the exact same predicament as Canada. Everything is being questioned and redefined. The nation is divided over many issues such as the family structure, marriage, abortion, race, religion, politics, gender identity, the economy, energy sources, and even the historical foundations of our nation. Anyone can see this just by watching five minutes of the news. Americans are not living in the glory days of America where traditional religion carried a lot more weight and value. Even the Declaration of Independence gave four references to a “God.”¹⁹³ But now, there are people who are offended by the Pledge of Allegiance, the National Anthem, and even the American Flag. For someone to challenge (or in some cases, even ask) what someone believes is considered “hate speech” and taken as a personal attack. Just like with Canada, there is a loss of identity regarding what it means to be an American. The point of saying all of this is to explain how the chaplain has a much rockier cultural terrain to navigate today’s world. He can expect to encounter more resistance and hostility amidst all the controversial issues of today. The soldiers who are coming into the Army are people who have grown up in this culture. They will be carrying a lot of ideological baggage and controversial views with them when they take their place in the formation.

Many people in the culture today are also simply anti-religion. They think that religion has no place in the public life. For example, in the news article, “Do team chaplains infringe on religious freedom?” from the Tuscaloosa News in Alabama, 18 universities found themselves under fire from the Freedom From Religion Foundation over a matter of the sports team

¹⁹³ United States Declaration of Independence.

chaplains providing religious support to athletes.¹⁹⁴ According to the article, the Freedom From Religion Foundation originated in Madison, WI and is a “nonprofit organization that seeks the complete separation of church and state.”¹⁹⁵ The foundation released a report speaking out against chaplains being allowed to share their religious beliefs with athletes, their co-founder claiming that these athletes would feel pressured to go along with it to remain in good standing with their coaches, who have the ability to “make or break their careers.”¹⁹⁶ They refer to this involvement of religion as “religious pandering” or “self-serving pandering” as well as “unconstitutional.”¹⁹⁷ A bill was introduced by Representative Craig Ford from the Alabama House of Representatives in response to the foundation’s accusations, which would allow colleges and universities to hire chaplains.¹⁹⁸ The Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) made the claim that chaplains are a great asset to the athletic teams, and Representative Ford insisted that they also provide support to these student athletes who go through different life events as college students.¹⁹⁹ The FCA also insisted that any participation in religious services or events by the students is strictly voluntary, and there is no adverse action for those who choose to refrain.²⁰⁰ Representative Ford’s stance is against the Freedom From Religion Foundation’s ideas and in heavy support of these chaplains.²⁰¹ The foundation argued that having religion

¹⁹⁴ Jamon Smith. “Do team chaplains infringe on religious freedom?” Tuscaloosa, AL: Halifax Media Group, October 18, 2015, 1.

¹⁹⁵ Smith. “Do team chaplains infringe on religious freedom?,” 1.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 1-2.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

involved in the program is a “violation of students’ rights to freedom of conscience” and that any athletes on the team who are religious need to “seek it privately in churches, clubs, etc.”²⁰²

The good news from this article is that these chaplains still have the state in their corner. Representative Ford was clearly opposed to the notion presented by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, and rightfully so. The foundation seemed to be making baseless claims about the nature of the chaplain’s ministry to the athletes so they could advance their agenda. At no point in the article was there any logical or reasonable use of a law or statute that supported the foundation’s argument. They basically condemned the chaplain for doing his job! We also know that for him to do his job is very much constitutional (U.S. Constitution, amend. 1)! Certain actors in the political arena love to throw around buzz words such as “unconstitutional” or “violation.” The state was on the side of the chaplains in this case fortunately, but there was still an opponent set on destroying their ministry efforts.

The Christian chaplain can expect to encounter organizations who are targeting religious liberty and ministry efforts. One can refer back to the discussion on religious endorsers and the situation that occurred with Dr. Keith when he was told by his commander not to preach on Jesus during his chapel service.²⁰³ This is a similar situation to Smith’s article, where there is a person or organization who wishes to stop the influence of religion (or a certain part of the religion) on an organization to which the chaplain is responsible. The culture in America is growing more and more hostile to Christians and their values.

This is no cause for panic or surprise. This cultural shift may be new to America, but it is certainly not “new under the sun,” as King Solomon’s expression goes (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Jesus

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Steve Keith, PhD. “Spiritual and Professional Development of the Chaplain” (lecture at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, March 2019).

says, “you will be hated for my namesake” (Matthew 10:22). He also warns his followers that they will be hated “because they hated me first” (John 15:18). Honestly, having no friction or disturbance in the Christian walk and ministry work would be a cause for concern. If things are not going the way Jesus said they would go for his disciples, they are probably doing something wrong! The cultural shift against Christianity is an expected event, but also something to have on the radar. Besides, God has a history of sending people into places that conflict with Christian values. After all, is that not an ideal setting for ministry? Why would God send his chaplains into places that already have the light? Daniel served in a pagan kingdom because that is where God sent him and used him (Daniel 1:3-7). Jesus sat at a table with sinners because they were the ones who needed him the most (Mark 2:15-17). Jesus says that the purpose of a lamp is to give light to a dark room, implying that the lamp belongs in a dark setting (Matthew 5:15).

In much the same way, God sends chaplains where they are needed. Christian chaplains can expect to be in places where sin and rejection of Christ are rampant. The fact that Jesus says expect persecution for having faith is enough to tell Christians that there *will* be opposition to their mission. Persecution and opposition to the Gospel is not a matter of *if* but *when*. It has been that way since biblical times. Christians see it manifesting in the modern-day world as well with all the opposition to Christianity. The Freedom From Religion Foundation, who was discussed earlier, is a good example of society’s turning away from God which is happening in the hearts of man.

Discipleship, Evangelism, and Proselytization

Discipleship requires time and investment, not simply getting someone to convert to the Christian faith. In many cases, people have led those who are unsaved to pray a quick prayer

and then that is the end of it. Readers can recall Chaplain Dunnam and Chaplain May discussing this matter.²⁰⁴ However, in Scripture, Jesus spends much time teaching and investing in his disciples so that they could make more disciples (Matthew 4:19, 28:19-20). The terms, “evangelism” and “proselytism” are used often in ministry. There is debate and controversy with these terms when it comes to what they mean and how they shape ministry. This can cause confusion between whether disciple-makers are actually trying to make disciples or make converts. One should first reiterate that Christians are called to make disciples and not simply “win converts.” Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make more disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). But how did Jesus make disciples out of them? Did he simply make “converts” out of the twelve? He did not, but he took them under his wing, teaching them the truths about God from his own knowledge as God in the flesh, one example being his teaching them about the future events of God’s kingdom (Matthew 24). He invested time in them and their growth. He did not get them to say a prayer and then leave them sitting in their boats wondering what just happened, but told them, “follow me” (Matthew 4:18-22).

In the same way, Christians should be telling new disciples to follow them. Is that because Christians are on the same level as God? As Paul would say, “by no means!” (Romans 6:2). But Paul also said, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV). Once again, here are Jesus and Paul fostering an environment of relationships like in the other passages referenced in Fernando’s book (Mark 2:15-17; Luke 15:1; Acts 17:16-17).²⁰⁵ They both tell their flocks to follow them. How can a person follow someone without building a relationship with them? Jesus never left anyone standing at the altar wondering about the next step, nor did Paul. Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, in their book *Disciple Making*

²⁰⁴ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022; May, interview, August 8, 2022.

²⁰⁵ Fernando. *Jesus Driven Ministry.*, 211.

Is...How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence, say, “In many ways the role of the disciple maker is to be a human voice in the ear of the disciple, providing continual encouragement to go to the next level.”²⁰⁶ Disciple-making is a process that requires time and investment. Discipleship desires to see disciples move on to greater stages of growth!

A Christian cannot disciple someone by spending only one brief moment of “conversion therapy” with them. Christians are not quick salesmen! Readers can recall Chaplain May’s analogy of a used car salesman essentially smooth-talking or convincing a person that they need to get saved.²⁰⁷ One can be confident that this pressuring is not effective. Paul the Apostle even said to the Corinthian church that he did not come preaching the Gospel to them using clever words and “lofty” speech (1 Corinthians 2:1, ESV). Not only is pressuring people to convert ineffective, but it is also dangerous. Elmer John Thiessen, in his book *The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion*, talks about the times in history where emperors and rulers forced Christianity on their citizens which rendered some very bad results, including violence and division.²⁰⁸ Is there any point to forcing someone to be a Christian? Absolutely not! The Christian faith is meant to be accepted in a state of surrender to God. Christ’s salvation takes no prisoners! His salvation *releases* prisoners!

More specific to Army chaplains, those Christian chaplains serving must build relationships with their soldiers. They must be willing to recline with them in the dining facility and discuss their beliefs with them in the motor pool. There is no room nor usefulness for a relation-less Gospel. The Gospel itself is about relationships, and God wants to be reconciled to

²⁰⁶ Dave Earley and David Wheeler. *Disciple Making Is...How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic Publishing Group, 2013, 126.

²⁰⁷ May, interview, August 8, 2022.

²⁰⁸ Elmer John Thiessen. *The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 38-39.

his people. Dave Earley and David Wheeler, in their book *Evangelism Is... How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence*, state that “building relational bridges is the most effective way of leading others to Christ.”²⁰⁹ This echoes Chaplain Dunnam’s concept of relational bridges.²¹⁰

Christian chaplains must also abandon any mindset that would try to put the burden of someone’s salvation and discipleship on their own shoulders. Chaplain Satterlee mentioned that some chaplains basically think that it is up to them to make something happen.²¹¹ But how can a person emplace such a burden onto themselves? How can a chaplain personally take on the responsibility of a soldier’s response to the Holy Spirit, let alone several hundred soldiers? Jesus said in Scripture, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44). The same God also says in Scripture that he chooses whom he will show mercy and compassion (Exodus 33:19). It is not up to the chaplain to navigate the course of his mission. Chaplain Dunnam, Chaplain May, and Chaplain Satterlee all agree that a chaplain and disciple-maker must allow the Holy Spirit to lead the way in all missions.²¹² Mel Lawrenz, in his book *Spiritual Influence: The Hidden Power Behind Leadership*, uses the original disciples as an example when he points out, “When they were naïve and unformed, they thought they were in control, but when the Spirit of God filled them, they realized that any authentic influence they would have on others would be the influence of the Spirit.”²¹³ One can see this in Scripture where Peter and the other disciples spoke boldly before men as a witness for Christ after being

²⁰⁹ Dave Earley and David Wheeler. *Evangelism Is...How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic Publishing Group, 2010), 199.

²¹⁰ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

²¹¹ Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

²¹² Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022; May, interview, August 8, 2022; Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

²¹³ Lawrenz, Mel. *Spiritual Influence: The Hidden Power Behind Leadership*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 38.

“filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 4:8, 31). David Clyde Jones, in his book *Biblical Christian Ethics*, says, “If it is the Spirit’s ministry to lead, it is our responsibility to follow, to submit to his control, to yield to his impulses, to walk in his direction.”²¹⁴ An attempt at disciple-making without the power of the Spirit is doomed to fail.

This discussion has already briefly mentioned the term, “proselytism.” Some of the language and opinions of today indicate that there is a difference between this term and “evangelism.” For example, in a USA Today article regarding religious freedom in the military, Lt. Cmdr. Nate Christensen of the U.S. Navy and the Pentagon is quoted as saying, “Service members can share their faith (evangelize) but must not force unwanted, intrusive attempts to convert others of any faith or no faith to one’s beliefs (proselytization).”²¹⁵ This is a senior military leader drawing a fine line between evangelism and proselytism. Rosalind I. J. Hackett, in her book, *Proselytization Revisited: Rights Talk, Free Market and Culture Wars*, makes the statement, “The proselytizing activities and methods of cults are considered to be dishonest and subversive. They are often accused of making individuals into obedient zombies through mind control.”²¹⁶ She also says that proselytization is a concern throughout multiple countries.²¹⁷

Quite frankly, however, the cause for Christ can still march on without spending a plethora of time trying to solve the debate over evangelism vs. proselytism. It is a worthwhile debate as these terms are important. However, the most important concern is what military

²¹⁴ David Clyde Jones. *Biblical Christian Ethics*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 72.

²¹⁵ Bob Smietana. “Military clarifies policy on faith-sharing.” *USA Today*, May 3, 2013. [Military clarifies policy on faith-sharing \(usatoday.com\)](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/05/03/military-clarifies-policy-on-faith-sharing/2728117).

²¹⁶ Rosalind I. J. Hackett. *Proselytization Revisited: Rights Talk, Free Markets and Culture Wars*. (London: Equinox Pub., 2008), 35.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

leadership considers acceptable, permissible behavior for military service members regarding their religious beliefs. Christians can rest assured that military service members are allowed to talk about their beliefs. This alone is a cause for encouragement and celebration! The Christian chaplain and soldier are not held back from talking about the good news of Christ with others! The point is that military leaders are concerned about the use of forced or pressured conversion, and to convert is not the job of the Christian anyhow. Again, Jesus stated, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44). It is the responsibility of God to draw people to himself. It is not the Christian’s job to shove them in God’s direction.

The Williamsburg Charter, a document from the late 20th century written to address the controversies and concerns with the religious clauses in the First Amendment, states, “beliefs are most our own when a matter of conviction rather than coercion.”²¹⁸ The charter also states, “No threat to freedom of conscience and religious liberty has historically been greater than the coercions of both Church and State.”²¹⁹ It continues by explaining how the combination of these two entities causes a terrible conflict where the church has her hands in the affairs of the state and the state wields the church as a way to manipulate the people.²²⁰ It becomes a twisted dance of death and corruption when the church is caught in the web of politics and state functions. It would be like if a chaplain had the authority to grant a commander permission to drop indirect fire or bombs on a target, and likewise, if a commander used the chaplain for religious rhetoric with the aim of manipulating the troops into conducting certain operations (likely of questionable moral integrity). It is a line that the church cannot cross, and by association, a line

²¹⁸ Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas. *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Schools*. Nashville, TN: First Amendment Center, 2007, 285, 289.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 290.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

that the chaplain must be aware and mindful of, whatever his setting, echelon, or paygrade.

Where to Draw the Line

The Christian chaplain serving in the U.S. Army is protected when it comes to practicing Christianity and conducting Christian ministry. Nobody can legally tell the Christian chaplain that he is not allowed to conduct his ministry in accordance with Christian and Biblical values and teachings. We have the Constitution's First Amendment on our side to protect these rights (U.S. Constitution, amend. 1). However, there is one major question lingering that must still be answered: *Will that change, and what happens if it does?* Any serious, devout Christian would agree that they must obey and follow God no matter what happens. Jesus commands his followers to love him with *all* their hearts and minds (Matthew 22:37). He also tells them that they are unfit to serve in his kingdom if they "look back" at their old ways and lives (Luke 9:62). They are also told not to have any idols that take the place of God in their hearts (Exodus 20:3-6). Jesus leaves no room for anyone or anything to share his place on the throne of the Christian's heart. It must be him and him alone!

While Christian chaplains are currently protected by the Constitution, it cannot be ruled out that things can change. At some point in the near or far future, Christian chaplains may find themselves faced with a choice. They may be facing a different set of laws and regulations. As Chaplain Dunnam said, it would take a very large shift in American laws and regulations.²²¹ It may not be something that those currently on earth see in their lifetime. It could take several years before such a drastic change would take place. However, it cannot be denied that there is a shift in the culture's view of religion that is currently taking place in this lifetime. The growing

²²¹ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022.

hostility toward Christianity is proof that America has been turning her back on God. Even if a waterfall, figuratively speaking, is far away, it still behooves people to know that such an outcome could very well be ahead. Therefore, the Christian chaplain needs to spend time reflecting on this potential situation, be it near or far in the future. This goes back to what Chaplain Satterlee says about knowing which hill Christians should be ready to die upon.²²²

The Christian chaplain needs to know what he will do if he faces a crossroads between preaching the Gospel and keeping his job as an Army chaplain. A great degree of courage and intestinal fortitude will be required to stand in the face of superiors, those who hold the keys to careers, those who can make or break someone's situation. Even if this crossroads is far down the path of the journey of American Christianity, this is far from being a new concept for the Christian church. There are multiple accounts of persecution in the Bible. Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were tossed into a fiery furnace, Peter and James were beaten, and Paul and Silas were locked in prison, just to name a few accounts (Daniel 3:8-30, Daniel 6; Acts 5:40; Acts 16:16-24). These men did not take their calling and discipleship lightly. They knew what was at stake when they committed to following Christ and preaching his Gospel of peace and salvation to the world. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, says, "The call goes forth, and is at once followed by the response of obedience."²²³ Like the disciples in the Bible, Christians must be ready to respond with obedience, and not delay in doing so!

Christians may like to think that they could easily make the same courageous decisions that the disciples and Apostles made before them. However, they must be careful not to get

²²² Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

²²³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *The Cost of Discipleship*. (New York: Touchstone, 1959), 57.

arrogant and overzealous as Peter did when he promised he would never deny Jesus, only to turn around and deny him *three* times in the same night (Matthew 26:35, 69-75). Scripture warns Christians against being too sure of themselves. Paul tells the Corinthian church, “If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Jesus also says to “count the cost” of being disciples (Luke 14:25-33). He gives the example of someone building a house who fails to take the time to sit down and determine whether he has enough to actually finish the project (Luke 14:28-30). Another example is the king getting ready for battle, making sure he has enough men for the fight (Luke 14:31-32). Just like no one is promised tomorrow, no one can predict what may happen tomorrow. The point of all these examples in Scripture is that the Christian chaplain must already have his resolve to be committed to the Great Commission, no matter what.

If there comes a point where a Christian is forced to stop his ministry of Jesus in whatever setting he is currently serving, if he must choose between his faith and his place in an organization or group, and if the organization or group chooses to reject the Gospel, then that Christian has reached a point where the presence of the Holy Spirit has been quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Jesus tells the disciples that if they come to a town that will not receive their offerings of peace and the message of the Gospel, that they should “shake the dust” off and continue with their ministry somewhere else (Matthew 10:12-14). What is Jesus telling them exactly? He is telling them to completely disconnect themselves from that place and move on to the next opportunity for ministry. There is nothing left to be done or said with those who harden their hearts and refuse to yield to the healing and peace-bringing message of the Gospel. The Spirit tearfully tells the disciple, “Let’s go. There is nothing more we can do here.” It is a heartbreaking truth, but there comes a point where God will release a person to their choices and

lifestyles, no longer pursuing nor calling them (Romans 1:28).

However, while Christian chaplains must be ready to take a stand in this kind of possible situation, they must not let it completely cover their view as they move forward. Christians should not continue their mission in constant fear and anticipation of a potential “last stand.” As Chaplain Satterlee pointed out, the more important question Christians should be asking themselves is how they are utilizing the talents that God has given them in the calling he has placed on their lives.²²⁴ Furthermore, if they are walking in the calling that God has given them, if they are being obedient to his will for their lives, then what do they have to fear? They are walking in the sovereign will of God! Psalm 118 says, “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (Psalm 118:6).

Conclusion

At the beginning of this discussion, the question was posed, “How does a Christian chaplain fulfill the Great Commission while facilitating religious freedom?” How does the Christian serving as a U.S. Army chaplain make disciples while ensuring that all soldiers are able to practice their own religions? To finish piecing together the answer to this question, this conclusion discussion will recap on the key elements that have been pulled from the research and discussion throughout this paper. Capturing the key elements of what has been learned throughout the discussion will help conclude with a concrete answer to the big question. Hopefully, this will help the reader begin to develop the resolve needed in this area while conducting ministry.

Religious Freedom

Both the chaplain and the soldier have the freedom to exercise their religion of choice.

²²⁴ Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

At this point in time, no one has the authority to tell the Christian chaplain that he is not allowed to practice Christianity, nor can soldiers of other faith traditions be prevented from practicing their religions. The Constitution protects these rights for both the chaplain and the soldier (U.S. Constitution, amend. 1). The chaplain can also cite Army regulation and find the leverage he needs to ward off any opposition to his mission to spread the Gospel. AR 165-1 actually requires him to abide by his religious beliefs.²²⁵ The Christian chaplain needs this protection because, from an eternal stance, his mission from God is paramount.

Meanwhile, as was discussed before, the Army has their own paramount mission. They are more concerned with soldiers having a well-rounded, comprehensive fitness level so they can go forward, fight the nation's wars, and accomplish the unit's mission. Readers can recall this being the focus of George Washington's effort to implement chaplains, a principle which is echoed in USC 10, AR 165-1, and FM 1-05.²²⁶ The Army's priority is always the accomplishment of the mission, as one can recall from the Warrior Ethos.²²⁷ However, every Christian, whether they are chaplains or not, has a priority mission to go and make disciples, as commanded by Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20). The Army's mission is always changing as the world turns, but the Christian mission *never* changes. This does not mean that the chaplain should neglect his military duties. God has placed the chaplain in the military setting and expects his chaplains to serve well. The Bible has much to say about the necessity of being obedient to the earthly authorities (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 2:18; Romans 13:1). Not only that, but hard work should glorify God most of all (Colossians 3:23-24).

²²⁵ AR 165-1, 8.

²²⁶ Muñoz. "George Washington on Religious Liberty," 22; US Code 10, Public Law 112-239; AR 165-1, 1; FM 1-05, 1-6.

²²⁷ TC 7-21.13, 3-7.

Calling

It is true that chaplains will face challenges in the ministry. This should not be a surprise, but rather an expectation, strange as that may sound to the normal human mind. Jesus said to expect opposition (Matthew 10:22; John 15:18). This ultimately should not be a concern, for the reader should remember that chaplaincy is a *calling*. Dr. Joel Jenkins, who was referenced earlier, said that this ministry is a calling from God.²²⁸ If God is calling someone to be a chaplain, all points of friction the chaplain will experience are already known by God. Therefore, that chaplain can have confidence that God will ensure that those whom he has called will be able to navigate those friction points successfully. After all, why would God call a chaplain to serve in a setting that would require him to be disobedient to God's own standards? If God has not called someone to be a chaplain, then there is no reason for that person to pursue such a ministry. Again, as Scripture says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

Relationships

It has been stated multiple times in this paper that building relationships is key to disciple-making. Relationship is such a crucial area of ministry, which should go without saying. Examples have been presented of Jesus and Paul the Apostle spending time with the lost, sharing meals and having discussions about theology (Mark 2:15-17; Acts 17:16-17). The amazing chaplains from the interviews all agreed that relationships help chaplains conduct ministry and share the Gospel.²²⁹ It has been discussed how taking time to get to know people

²²⁸ Jenkins. "Military Chaplaincy."

and building those bridges is what helps ministers get closer to people and perhaps grants avenues for the Gospel to come in. The relationship is a highway upon which the Gospel is delivered. For any given Christian, it may not involve walking that person through the “harvest” moment where they make their decision to follow Jesus. That Christian may be the seed planter, or he may be the one who simply helps the person along their journey to bring them a little closer to that harvest moment. Chaplain Dunnam and Chaplain May, as the reader can recall, have both learned this lesson and shared it.²³⁰ But whether one is a sower, a cultivator, or a harvester, does not negate the importance of building relational bridges. The reader can recall that Dave Earley and David Wheeler said that this is the best method of evangelism.²³¹

Wisdom

Wisdom is such a valuable treasure to be had, not just in ministry, but life itself. Without godly wisdom, a ministry is doomed to fail. Scripture tells how precious wisdom is above all the treasures of the world (Proverbs 3:14-18). There are a couple of parts to be said about wisdom. First, when conducting our ministry, one should “be wise as serpents and gentle as doves” (Matthew 10:16). We recall Chaplain May and Chaplain Satterlee giving reference to this verse when it comes to ministry.²³² The Christian chaplain should always use Scripture as his primary source of wisdom, both for chaplaincy and for life. However, even the Bible does not lay out a perfect step-by-step plan for every situation that a chaplain will encounter on the job, which necessitates the need for wisdom and discernment. When it comes to performing and providing religious support, there are many different situations that can occur. A chaplain should approach

²²⁹ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022; May, interview, August 8, 2022; Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

²³⁰ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022; May, interview, August 8, 2022.

²³¹ Earley and Wheeler. *Evangelism Is.*, 199.

²³² May, interview, August 8, 2022; Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

each situation with the love of Christ but also with discernment to determine the best course of action. The other part about wisdom is that the chaplain must be certain of his own convictions as he is conducting ministry for the soldiers. There are certain non-negotiable principles that Christian chaplains cannot stray from (i.e., only one Supreme God, the Resurrection, the reality of sin). As expressed in the interviews with Chaplain May and Chaplain Satterlee, there are certain truths that a chaplain cannot compromise, but there are also certain controversies and debates that could very well be distractions, and do not require a martyr's death.²³³

Holy Spirit

This discussion is certainly saving the best for last in this list of key elements. It was discussed that the chaplain should rely on the Holy Spirit and his leading when it comes to sharing the Gospel and leading others to Christ. All three of the chaplains from the interviews agree that this is essential in ministry.²³⁴ A person's own knowledge and ability is not enough to help navigate through a ministry. Jesus pulls no punches in telling readers that they are utterly powerless apart from *his* power (John 15:5). Christians need to get away from the "convert" mentality of evangelism where they are trying to get people to "sign up" for the Christian army as if it were some kind of club or five-step program. Chaplain Dunnam and Chaplain May agree that this is not the way to conduct true disciple-making.²³⁵ One could compare it to recruiting efforts with the military, where they strive to get soldiers to sign up for the Army and then ship them off, never to see them again. Christians are called to more than just recruiting soldiers of God. They are called to make disciples, which can only be done with the help of the Holy

²³³ May, interview, August 8, 2022; Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

²³⁴ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022; May, interview, August 8, 2022; Satterlee, interview, August 11, 2022.

²³⁵ Dunnam, interview, July 21, 2022; May, interview, August 8, 2022.

Spirit's power. It is like the Non-Commissioned Officer, coming alongside the soldier and training him, with the authority of his commander supporting him. One can see the difference that it made for the proclaiming of the Gospel when Peter and the other disciples were filled with the Spirit (Acts 4:8, 31). Jesus even told the disciples that he had to depart this earth after his earthly ministry so that he would be able to send the Holy Spirit, and that the Spirit would be their teacher and reinforce those lessons Jesus had already taught them (John 14:26; 16:7). Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to give wisdom and empowerment to his followers.

The Answer

After reviewing the key elements of disciple-making in the military as discussed throughout the paper, it is time to piece these together to form the answer to the big question. How does a Christian Army chaplain fulfill the Great Commission while facilitating the free exercise of religion for all his soldiers? The chaplain fulfills the Great Commission in this pluralistic setting by acknowledging and pursuing this calling from God, standing firm on God's word and the laws and regulations protecting his right to freely exercise his religion, protecting that same right for all personnel in his unit while building meaningful relationships with them, exercising wisdom and discernment along with the love of Christ for each religious support situation that he encounters, and relying on the leading of the Holy Spirit to direct and empower him in each Gospel-sharing opportunity.

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