

BROKEN SPIRITS: A HISTORY OF SPIRITUAL FITNESS TRAINING IN THE UNITED
STATES ARMY SINCE WORLD WAR II

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ABSTRACT

Shenandoah Lia Nieuwsma: Broken Spirits: A History of Spiritual Fitness Training in the United States Army since World War II
(Under the direction of Randall Styers)

In 2009, the United States military mandated the teaching and promotion of “spiritual fitness” training for all personnel--over one million people. This training was part of a force-wide initiative called Comprehensive Soldier & Family Fitness (CSF2), aimed at educating soldiers about physical, social, emotional, familial, and now, spiritual well-being. The CSF2 program demonstrated that spirituality’s purchase had extended beyond rubrics of alternative healing to those of mainstream medicine. While those responsible for the program framed spirituality as an “evidence-based” treatment, some viewed the implementation of medicalized spirituality as a form of religious tyranny. The concern that the US military had entered an era of religious coercion under the aegis of spiritually-based healthcare merits serious consideration.

This dissertation offers a cultural history of the authoritative production of spiritual knowledge in wellbeing projects for large-population, non-religious institutions. By tracing a genealogy of mandatory spiritual education programs in the US Army since World War II, this project explores what “spirituality” has meant in various contexts and investigates what historical and contemporary conditions have made the “spiritual fitness” requirement possible in a secular space like the US military. Additionally, this dissertation addresses the pressing social and political challenges to the freedoms of secular publics that this reconfigured notion of non-religious spirituality presents. Although the term “spirituality” is often invoked axiomatically and commonly posited as subjective (by the public and scholars alike), this project demonstrates

that there are complex politics at play in the production of “spiritual” education that must not be ignored. Far more lies beneath than the rhetoric of spirituality betrays.

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It has been said that “it takes a village” to raise a child, and after raising two children while writing a dissertation, I have concluded that the process of undertaking such a large writing project is not unlike raising children in some ways. Children and dissertations demand a lot of time and energy and while only one of these dispenses hugs at night, the nurturing of both requires extensive social support. I could not have completed this project without the advice, encouragement, and help of hundreds of individuals. While I can neither list everyone I owe thanks to nor adequately convey the depth of gratitude I feel, what follows is a recognition of at least some who have been instrumental in the completion of this dissertation.

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INTRODUCTION

Freedom is Not Free

It was a steamy Monday night in the middle of July. Twenty-three-year-old Noah Peirce drove a rusted red pickup truck down a well-worn path to a spot in the woods where he had shot at targets and fished since he was thirteen. Once home in Sparta, Minnesota, after being deployed in Iraq, Peirce had promised his mother many times that he would not kill himself. But perhaps it was all too much.¹

Was he reliving the horror of realizing that he had accidentally crushed an Iraqi boy with his vehicle? Was he recalling the mad scramble to collect the body parts of a friend who had been torn apart by a roadside bomb? No one will ever know. After taking one last bleary-eyed picture of himself, he scrawled “I have taken lives, now it’s time to take mine” on the back of a pistol-safety certificate. Soon after, his body was found in the truck, next to stabbed pictures of his own face and glass from a shattered rearview mirror. Carved on the dashboard was the message, “FREEDOM ISN’T FREE.”²

After returning home from deployment, Noah coped by drinking heavily. His sister came to fear him after a few violent outbursts, and his mother was weary from receiving alarming texts

¹Ashley Gilbertson, “The Life and Lonely Death of Noah Pierce,” *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 84, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 33.

²*Ibid.*, 51.

from him.³ Letters Pierce had written suggested he felt he could not continue living after what he had done and experienced in Iraq. He angered at the suggestion that soldiers were heroes, writing in a letter to his mother that all of his friends in the service thought the war was “bullshit.” Soldiers were just people who had “invaded [Iraq] and murdered a lot of innocent people.”⁴ The war and all it required seemed pointless.

At the beginning of the Iraq/Afghanistan conflict, the army’s suicide rate per 100,000 soldiers had risen from 9.0 in 2001 to 19.3 in 2008.⁵ By 2009, suicide and accidental deaths claimed more lives than combat, an alarming fact that was well-publicized by the media.⁶ Suicide rates would continue to climb, along with rates of veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).⁷

It was clear that the climbing military suicide and PTSD rates had staggering emotional costs, but there were also associated financial costs. A 2012 *Time* magazine cover featuring a lone soldier bugling taps with the all-capped title “ONE A DAY” told the stories of Rebecca Morrison and Leslie McCadden, both widowed by suicide. Each wondered why the army did not do more to combat suicide and PTSD, if for no other reason than to “protect their assets.”⁸ It was estimated that their husbands’ educations alone cost around \$2 million in taxpayer funds. In

³Ibid., 50.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Rajeev Ramchand, Joie Acosta, Rachel M. Burns, Lisa H. Jaycox and Christopher G. Pernin, *The War Within: Preventing Suicide in the U.S. Military* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011), 23.

⁶For example, see Associated Press, “U.S. Military Suicides Exceed Combat Deaths,” *CBS*, January 14, 2013, accessed September 8, 2015, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-military-suicides-exceed-combat-deaths/>.

⁷A 2008 RAND Center for Military Health Policy Research study found that at least 20% of the 2.7 million American veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars suffered from PTSD. Terri Tanielian and Lisa Jaycox, eds., *Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), 62.

⁸Nancy Gibbs and Mark Thompson, “The War on Suicide?,” *Time*, July, 2012, 31.

2008, the estimated financial cost of lost productivity and medical treatment for just two years ranged between \$4 billion to \$6 billion.⁹ Clearly, something had to be done.

Two years after Pierce's death, the military launched a new force-wide program called Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) that included a new training component aimed at helping soldiers cope with trauma by encouraging them to find a sense of purpose, even amidst the rubble of a war-torn life.¹⁰ CSF required that all personnel--over a million service members--learn about "spirituality," explained as a search for that "which you value most deeply or hold sacred" in an effort to stem the skyrocketing suicide and PTSD rates.¹¹ The rationale was that if soldiers could be taught how to be strong not just in body or mind but also in spirit, then perhaps tragic deaths like Peirce's could be avoided. This 2009 program constituted the most sweeping attempt to date to institutionalize education about spirituality in a public organization, as every service member was required to complete online educational modules about spirituality and to take tests that gauged "spiritual fitness."¹²

Although the military is the largest public institution to employ the concept of spirituality in education or training in the twenty-first century, it is only one of many institutions to do so. For example, public universities like the University of North Carolina include spiritual education

⁹Ann Scott Tyson, "Combat Stress May Cost U.S. Up to \$6 Billion," *The Washington Post*, April 18, 2008, accessed June 20, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/17/AR2008041701749.html>.

¹⁰In August 2011, the name of the program changed to Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2) to reflect the inclusion of family members in its training development. Throughout this dissertation, I will refer to the program as "CSF" to minimize confusion.

¹¹"Spiritual Dimension," screenshot of CSF transcript shared by interviewee, last modified Dec. 29, 2010, http://www.sft.army.mil/CSFModules/Transcripts/DIM_SPIRITUAL_ITEM-1.htm

¹²"Millionth Soldier Takes the Global Assessment Tool," accessed August 13, 2012, <http://www.army.mil/article/51516/>.

as a service of their Student Wellness Center.¹³ Large corporations like Tyson Foods provide employees access to spiritual care and professional schools like Harvard Business School hold discussions about the valuable productivity that a spiritual life can generate.¹⁴ Spirituality, it seems, is now good for health and business. Its power in public, secular places only continues to grow.

Although the term “spirituality” can mean a wide variety of things, in the past it was often used primarily in reference to religious beliefs and practices. Religious historian and theologian Philip Sheldrake identifies the Christian tradition as the source of the word “spirituality,” which derived from the Latin *spiritualis*, and before that, from the Greek *pneuma*, meaning “spirit.” In early Christian usage, a “spiritual” person was one within whom the Spirit of God dwelled. Only in seventeenth century France did “spirituality” begin to reference a lifestyle aimed at religious piety. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this meaning and the word that signaled it came to be used in English-speaking circles.¹⁵

If spirituality most frequently indicated religious life before, how did spiritual education come to have such prominence--or possibility at all--in public, nonreligious organizations? And what exactly does spiritual education teach, especially in mandatory educational programs like

¹³For example see “Spiritual Wellness,” *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*, accessed Sept. 8, 2015, <https://studentwellness.unc.edu/your-wellness/spiritual-wellness> or “Spiritual Wellness,” *University of Illinois*, accessed Sept. 8, 2015, <http://www.campusrec.illinois.edu/wellnesscenter/dimensions/spiritual.html>. Other public academic institutions that teach about spirituality in wellness programs include the University of Maine, University of California at Riverside and Los Angeles, University of Texas at Austin, and University of New Mexico, to name just a few.

¹⁴Corporations like Tyson Foods (which employs over 120 chaplains to ensure the spiritual health of its workers) have built educational centers devoted to dispensing information about the relationship between spirituality and health. In 2009, Tyson funded the development of the University of Arkansas’s Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace. For conversation in the Harvard Business School, see for example Martha Legace, Sean Silverthorne, and Wendy Guild, “Does Spirituality Drive Success?,” *Working Knowledge* (blog), April 22, 2002, <http://www.hbswk.hbs.edu/item/2899.html>.

¹⁵Phillip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 2–3.

CSF? My dissertation offers answers to these questions in an investigation of how and why knowledge about spirituality is produced in wellbeing projects for large-population, nonreligious institutions. My primary interest in “spirituality” therefore concerns not its purported essence but how the concept has been shaped, managed, and sometimes resisted. Although quotation marks adequately convey my interest in “spirituality” as a formulated and deployed concept, because these belabor reading I have limited their use only when extra emphasis on spirituality’s distinctive use is needed.¹⁶ As a way of pursuing the broader inquiry of how and why spiritual knowledge is deployed in institutions, my dissertation tracks the United States Army’s deployment of spiritual education in mandatory training programs.¹⁷ This education has been ongoing since at least the late 1940s until today, although not without controversy.

Part of the difficulty of studying constructions of spirituality at all is that there exists, even in some academic scholarship on the subject, the notion that nonreligious spirituality is uniquely resistant to cultivation or definition. For example, some scholarship falsely characterized nonreligious spirituality as an ahistorical vapor or the socially unstable product of the fanciful whims of metaphysical anarchists.¹⁸ This characterization of spirituality as repellant to

¹⁶Also, unless otherwise noted, the spirituality referenced in this project is the sort conceived by authorities as potentially nonreligious. When I wish to emphasize the concept’s purported distance from religion I qualify it as “nonreligious,” but readers should assume that spirituality’s alleged nonreligious quality is implicit.

¹⁷My study is limited to the army because it is the largest branch of the American military and the one most engaged in the CSF program. When I discuss mandatory spiritual education I use the term “army,” but readers should note that this type of education is found in every military branch.

¹⁸See Robert C. Fuller’s *Spiritual, But Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 12; Wade Clark Roof’s *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Martin Marty’s preface in Richard Foster’s *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001).

investigation prompted scholar Courtney Bender to remark in her book *The New Metaphysicals* that such understandings make “studying spirituality...appear to be akin to shoveling fog.”¹⁹

The suggestion that the concept and content of spirituality is difficult to study academically is not without merit, however. Spirituality is often invoked axiomatically, and on the rare chance that a definition is given, it is nearly always a functional one clarifying its use, not a substantive one denoting its meaning. Although the word is frequently treated as self-explanatory and highly subjective, spirituality is neither vacuous and bereft of meaning nor a blank slate upon which individuals can project any kind of meaning. The truth is quite the opposite: even nonreligious spirituality, touted as subjective, contains carefully cultivated content aimed at achieving particular social ends.

The form of spirituality presented in US Army education has been formulated as a religiously-neutral, health-oriented and scientifically-based concept that makes claims about what I call existential concerns, a particular set of deep and important issues in life. For the purposes of this dissertation, “existential concerns” communicate beliefs about individual agency and identity, meaning and morality, the supernatural, and what constitutes true health. Because such concerns are contested, the story of this particular formulation of spirituality is rife with controversy. Many groups, religious and secular, military and civilian, have been involved in the ongoing project of negotiating spirituality’s meanings and making it fit for public consumption. Though often touted by authorities as a neutral and subjective term that soldiers can populate with their own meaning, an examination of the rhetoric of spirituality reveals the term to be a site of complex political contest.

¹⁹Courtney Bender, *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 182.

Spiritual Rhetoric's Sites of Contest

My dissertation traces these conflicts over spirituality's meaning as they have risen in the army's production of training literature since the 1940s. Three main overlapping dynamics fuel the greatest conflicts over spirituality's cultivation for public consumption: spirituality's relationship to religion, spirituality's relationship to science, and spirituality's relationship to institutions and the individuals working in them. The first two dynamics of conflict illumine assumptions about spirituality's meaning as it has been communicated in training materials and debated about by those subjected to it, while the last dynamic focuses on the conflicts over the implications of this education.

Spirituality's Relationship to Religion

What is spirituality's relationship to religion when it is used in public institutions? More specifically, are religious forces driving the increasing use of this notion? As I have stated, spirituality has viability in twenty-first century public spheres partly because it has been deliberately and strategically distanced from religion, but not without contest. Founder and president of Military Religious Freedom Foundation Mikey Weinstein argued in a 2010 letter addressed to the Department of Defense that CSF was evidence of "the imperious fascist contagion of this fundamentalist Christian tsunami that is sweeping through the military."²⁰ Was Weinstein's interpretation accurate? My project examines charges like this because it illustrates the tensions involved in the project of cultivating an understanding of spirituality as appropriate or serviceable for the public sphere.

²⁰"Military Religious Freedom Foundation | The Constitutional Conscience of the United States Military," accessed August 13, 2012, <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/>.

My investigation of the dynamic of conflict over spirituality's relationship to religion also includes considering the assumptions regarding what counts as religious or secular in discussions about spirituality in the military. This inquiry examines how military chaplains, as the military's gatekeepers of religion, have responded to these assumptions and contributed as well in cultivating spirituality for training programs. So although my project is primarily a history of how conceptions of spirituality changed over time, it also offers a history of shifting public perceptions about religion since the 1940s.

Spirituality's Relationship to Science

A more recent source of conflict concerns spirituality's relationship to science. The current iteration of spiritual education in public institutions is made possible largely because of the assertion that there is scientific evidence for spirituality's health benefits. Yet the presentation of spirituality as a legitimate object of scientific study has problematic implications for those protesting its use in public spheres.

What if research on spirituality demonstrates, for example, that belief in God helps to sustain a person through hardship, or boosts longevity, or lowers blood pressure? Can public health policies be guided by research that finds that faith is conducive to health? Where lies the state's burden of responsibility to the public in this scenario, to educating the public about how to be healthy or to protecting the public's right to freedom from ideological coercion? Part of this dissertation examines developments in the Religion, Spirituality, and Health (R/S) research field, takes stock of how this research has shaped an understanding of spiritual fitness in the military, and weighs the implications of the public implementation of such work.

Another part of this project attends to how the understanding of spirituality as healthy practice has provoked protests from secular military groups. One of the most pronounced lines of protest from these nonreligious groups is that the training requirement to be spiritually fit is absurd. Their protests challenge the assumption that CSF's version of scientifically-based spirituality is universalizable and illumine that civil liberties are possibly at stake in the recent institutionalization of health-oriented spirituality.

Spirituality's Relationship to Institutions and Individuals

The word "spirituality" lends itself to wide interpretation, since it is often viewed as being open-ended and subjective. If spirituality refers to "the continuous journey that people take to discover and realize their spirit, that is, their essential selves," as authors of the CSF program put it, then a soldier can decide for him or herself what that journey will look like.²¹ Underlying the assertion that spirituality is highly subjective is the understanding that this subjectivity secures individual freedoms and makes it permissible in secular education.

Yet the question of whom spiritual education serves, the institution or the individual, requires attention. In *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*, one of the only books on the institutionalization of spiritual education, Jeremy Carrette and Richard King argue that corporate spirituality has "always reflected political interests" and that institutions use spirituality to reorder religious knowledge for the interests of the modern liberal state.²² They contend that the form of spirituality incorporated into institutional life is religion disguised, and

²¹Kenneth I. Pargament and Patrick J. Sweeney, "Building Spiritual Fitness in the Army," *American Psychologist* 66, no. 1 (January 2011): 59.

²²Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 30.

because it is an institutional product, it drains power from individuals. My dissertation examines this claim in the context of the military's spiritual training programs.

Perils and Progress in Studying Spirituality

The critical study of spirituality as a concept distinct from religious belief or practice is a relatively recent enterprise. Multiple problems have plagued this effort. In the 1980s, religious studies scholars began identifying a decades-old social trend: it appeared that a subset of people, mostly "Baby Boomers," were self-identifying as "spiritual-but-not-religious." This term apparently indicated that they were rejecting traditional religious institutions and practices like going to church and some traditional religious beliefs while maintaining vibrant inner lives and belief in the supernatural. Nonreligious spiritual practice appeared to have its own system of beliefs and rituals.

The social fact that a group of people were identifying themselves as spiritual-but-not-religious had religious studies scholars scrambling to reconsider what religion and spirituality might mean in this public reconceptualization. The type of nonreligious spirituality that was under investigation usually came to be characterized by its degree of being unmoored from religion.²³ Even though scholars began to see spirituality as having nonreligious content, spirituality was often understood primarily in comparison to religion. This comparative orientation was understandable given spirituality's historical association with religion, but it led

²³Religious historian Martin Marty is largely to thank for the "moored/unmoored" distinction that many books about spirituality and health invoke. The 2001 edition of the *Handbook of Religion and Health* replicates Marty's types on page 19. Harold Koenig, Dana King, and Verna Carson, eds. *Handbook of Religion and Health* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

to some problematic conclusions about both religion and spirituality, and, as I suggest later, it overlooked spirituality's potential as a powerful tool in public institutions.

Two particular paradigms formulated concepts of spirituality in contrast to religion. The first, an older paradigm, saw religion positively and spirituality negatively. Religion was stable, historically established, and it produced morally reliant adherents. As an institutional product, religion had discernible influences: it had concrete histories, physical buildings, culturally-embedded rituals, and clearly demarcated webs of authority that one could study.

In contrast, nonreligious spirituality appeared as a kind of ahistorical vapor that could be manipulated solely by individuals. Historian Martin Marty said that people practicing nonreligious spirituality “made up reality.”²⁴ Its status as intensely private and highly subjective made it the dangerous tool of a culture that was increasingly ego-centric and morally haphazard. This understanding led historian Andrew Greeley to characterize the practice of nonreligious spirituality as “at best, naïve romanticism.”²⁵

Sociologist Robert Bellah offered one of most borrowed infamous characterizations of nonreligious spirituality in his portrayal of a nurse named Sheila. Sheila had told him that although she had ceased attending church, her faith was important to her. She called this faith “Sheilaism,” which she described as “my own little voice.”²⁶ Bellah interpreted the “spiritual-but-not-religious” phenomenon reflected in “Sheilaism” as the manifestation of a growing narcissistic culture that could not be trusted because it was constantly adrift, having few social or

²⁴Quoted in Richard J. Foster, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Harper One, 2001), xii.

²⁵Andrew M. Greeley, *Unsecular Man: The Persistence of Religion* (New York: Schocken, 1985), 241.

²⁶Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 221.

ideological commitments.²⁷ Courtney Bender and Omar McRoberts summed up this paradigm by saying that spirituality had been placed in the “stultifying role as religion's sloppy shadow: the crazy uncle upon whom the dysfunction of the entire family is projected.”²⁸ Spirituality unmoored from religion appeared to be the practice of someone mentally unstable, someone *unhinged*.

Another more recent and popular portrayal of nonreligious spirituality paints spirituality as positive and religion as negative. Here, religion is a formulaic and shallow social process, while spirituality is what offers people a real depth of meaningful experience. In this conceptualization, religion is an institutional mechanism that is capable of manipulating people. In this paradigm, fundamentalism and religious conservatism was seen as the products of rigid fanaticism.

In this second paradigm, nonreligious spirituality emerges as an attractive alternative practice to those of institutional religion, which are seen as potentially deleterious and brainwashing. Spirituality promises individuals fulfilment and flourishing freed from authoritative institutions. Religion, on the other hand, is necessarily associated with institutional coercion that is sometimes inappropriately wielded in the public sphere. Religion sacrifices the self for the institution, while nonreligious spirituality offers a regime of the self for the self. In short, institutions and religion and coercion are aligned, and the individual and nonreligious spirituality and freedom are aligned. These paradigms that favor spirituality as the champion of

²⁷Eugene Taylor's *Shadow Culture: Psychology and Spirituality in America* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1999), 280, similarly denounces contemporary, nonreligious spirituality as “leaderless, pervasive, yet unnamed, seemingly everywhere and yet without a center anywhere.”

²⁸Courtney Bender and Omar McRoberts, “Mapping a Field: Why and How to Study Spirituality,” Working paper for Group on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life (Brooklyn, NY: Social Science Research Council, 2012), 20.

individual freedom on the one hand, or religion as the preserver of morality and society on the other, tell us more about shifting cultural preferences than anything else. Furthermore, they are problematic because they fail to offer a framework with which to understand the current phenomenon of institutionally-cultivated spirituality. They do not leave open the possibility of considering, for example, that nonreligious spirituality could be deployed and maintained by an institution for its own purposes. These paradigms contribute to the misleading assumption that if institutionally produced spirituality is prone to abuse, it must be religion in disguise (as Carrette and King imply). Yet religion does not corner the market on institutional abuses that come in the form of ideological coercion.

A number of important recent scholars have challenged these older paradigms by taking up the critical study of spirituality as a historically and politically shaped concept. More recent works like Leigh Erich Schmidt's 2005 *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality* attends to spirituality as a phenomenon with a historical lineage, while Bender's 2010 *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination* focuses on the ways that spiritual understandings--even ones considered subjective and nonreligious--are subject to institutional structures and norms. Like these scholars, I see nonreligious spirituality *not* as centerless or free-standing, but as "shaped by entanglements with the secular, including its powerful engagements with modern science and progress."²⁹

The Course Ahead

This history of how the rhetoric of spirituality in military education has been influenced by various factors spans approximately seventy years. Chapter One examines the conditions in

²⁹Bender, *The New Metaphysicals*, 24.

which the American military began to cultivate knowledge about spirituality in required spiritual training programs. Sources such as Army Field Manuals, monthly pamphlets published by the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of Defense announcements, Congressional Reports, and periodicals like the *Historical Chaplains' Review* and *Army Information Digest* suggest that spirituality grew increasingly relevant to government officials in the late 1940s. Not only did some officials such as General George Marshall promote spirituality as essential to national security, but the military launched an “experiment” in 1947 that required a number of soldiers to undergo “spiritual training.” The experiment, conducted at Fort Knox, Kentucky, was a highly advertised campaign to try to convince the war-weary public that militarizing the nation’s youth after World War II was necessary. The Fort Knox experiment was advertised as offering young trainees the kind of moral guidance that would make their parents proud and promised to treat young participants with an unprecedented degree of dignity. Spirituality was never clearly defined in this program, although it was explicitly tied to morality and morale, and this invocation of spirituality also assumed that soldiers were committed to religious denominations.

Chapters Two and Three investigate the ways that spiritual education was then incorporated into a military-wide program as a result of Fort Knox’s success. The 1948 Character Guidance Program (CGP), described as a “moral and spiritual” program, lasted for thirty years. Primary documents from the army program indicate that this spiritual education was explicitly theistic (in an attempt to fight perceived atheist and communist threats). It taught soldiers that belief in a Judeo-Christian God would make one moral, efficient, and happy. However, as Chapter Two highlights, the CGP’s tendency to reflect theistic and religious assumptions in its spiritual education mirrored broader cultural associations. An examination of

scholarly books like Anne Loveland's *American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military, 1942-1993* and Jeremy Gunn's *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion*, popular periodicals, and military documents from that time period serve to underscore and explain spirituality's strong association with theism and religion from 1948 until the late 1960s, when this association began to weaken.

The appropriateness of theistically-inflected spiritual training began to be debated in the late 1960s, as Chapter Three illustrates. Legal threats eventually forced military personnel to expunge overt theistic and religious messages, according to documents such as those published by the Office of the Chief of Chaplains. An examination of CGP literature reveals that by 1969, almost all overt talk about spirituality, God, and religion dropped out of the program's materials, and humanistic arguments replaced theistic ones in lectures about morality.

During the mid-1970s, spiritual education seems to have disappeared. It would formally resurface again in 1987, this time as a part of a health program called "Fit to Win." In addition to examining the cultivation of spirituality in this program, Chapter Four tracks two developments that occurred between the 1970s and the 1990s that would provide spiritual training new relevance in an increasingly secularized military. The first, illumined in military manuals and pamphlets and chaplaincy publications, included shifts in the military's warfare strategies and evolving understandings of ministry among the chaplaincy. The second development, revealed in a survey of medical literature from that time, suggested that new perspectives on health were forming among mainstream medical communities that were more open to "softer" subjects like spirituality.

Although the spiritual training component of the Fit to Win program was not mandatory (for reasons examined in Chapter Four), spiritual training would become required in 2009 with

the initiation of the CSF program. Chapter Five examines CSF's educational content concerning spiritual fitness in order to understand the specific forms of new knowledge about spirituality that is being produced in the contemporary military. This chapter also examines how research on spirituality's purportedly positive effects that began in the 1980s and grew in the 1990s contributed to spirituality's newfound reputation as a scientifically-based health ally. Because part of my interest is in understanding the mechanics of how and why spirituality came to be understood in the military as a scientifically-based health benefit, this chapter includes an overview of the professional assumptions that have shaped an area of study known as Religion, Spirituality and Health (R/S).³⁰ Selected scholarly publications from the R/S field also demonstrate the difficulties of providing an understanding of spirituality as appropriate in the context of mandatory public education.

The last chapter, Chapter Six, explores responses to CSF's spiritual fitness education in order to investigate how secular groups perceived spirituality's meaning. Although there have been both positive and negative responses to the CSF, I primarily track the critiques for two reasons: first, protest groups have been more vociferous, prolific, and organized than any other responding group; second, the critiques illumine the particularities of the political conflicts at play in the military's deployment and institutionalization of spirituality. Specifically, this chapter highlights the roles that these groups (the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, its Fort Bragg chapter Military Atheists and Secular Humanists, and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation) have played in protesting the spiritual fitness requirement through online blogs, legal action, and media interviews.

³⁰I use "R/S" throughout this dissertation as shorthand for "Religion, Spirituality, and Health," following a version of the shorthand used in the field.

The Conclusion surveys the range of spirituality's meanings observed in military training materials and offers an interpretation of mandatory spiritual training in the military. A core consideration throughout this dissertation is the question of how spirituality can and should be conceived in an increasingly secular culture. While the work of scholars such as Courtney Bender and Charles Taylor have provided critical insights on the place of spirituality in shifting landscapes of belief, my work in examining the military offers a distinctive window onto the political role of spirituality in American public life.

The message that soldier Noah Pierce carved into his dashboard--“FREEDOM ISN'T FREE”--underscored that the welfare of US citizens comes at a cost not equally shared. Throughout the decades, the military's efforts at spiritual training have served as a way of helping soldiers bear the traumatic work they are charged with as employees of the state. The following chapters explore both the cultural development of these efforts and their greater implications for American soldiers and the citizens they serve.

CHAPTER ONE

Mobilizing the Full Might of America in the Campaign for Conscription: The Army's “Moral and Spiritual” Training Experiment

One Friday night in November of 1940, the airwaves crackled with an urgent message from Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall. In his “Progress of National Defense” address, nestled in between an NBC musical variety show and a popular Western show, Marshall implored the public for help with a “serious problem” that he thought was ultimately a threat to national security: young servicemen were behaving badly in their free time.¹ On the evenings and weekends, swells of young soldiers were visiting barrooms and mingling with “persons of questionable reputation.”² The dire consequences of these behavioral problems, which Marshall attributed to poor “moral and spiritual welfare,” were now widespread.³ Morale was low, the army’s reputation was sullied, and soldiers’ futures were jeopardized.

The solution would involve providing young servicemen with moral and spiritual education. However, the army could not accomplish this on its own, which is why Marshall had taken to the airwaves to enlist civilian help. He explained that although the armed forces were expanding the Chaplain Corps in an effort to protect “the moral and spiritual welfare of the

¹George Marshall, “NBC Radio Address on the Progress of National Defense,” November 29, 1940, from Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr., eds., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 2, *“We Cannot Delay,” July 1, 1939-December 6, 1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 359.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

young soldier,” the military’s authority did not easily extend beyond military bases.⁴ Civilian churches and institutions like the Red Cross and the Jewish Welfare Board could create wholesome and entertaining activities for the tractable military youth who might otherwise “tramp the streets with the ever-present prospect of getting into trouble.”⁵

If civilian churches and groups could help the army carry out this vision of reform, it would lead to healthier civilian communities in the future, since this training would return young soldiers to their communities “with a keener understanding of the sacred ideals for which our churches stand.” Besides, Marshall argued, civilians were “moral[ly] obligat[ed]” “to assist these young men to lead clean, sound lives.”⁶

If civilians were not compelled to help out of a sense of duty, perhaps they would be swayed by the argument that “more than ever before, the efficiency of an army depends upon the quality of its soldiers, the men required to operate the complicated machines of this modern age.”⁷ Moral and spiritual training was “not simply a matter of morals or sentiment.”⁸ The ability of the army to operate efficiently was at stake. It was clear to Marshall that soldiers’ immoral behavior during off hours indicated an army culture of spiritual instability, which he felt was ultimately an issue of national security.

Army literature produced in the decades following World War II would repeat this idea that soldiers would need spiritual stiffening if they were to be entrusted with the important job of protecting the country. Despite the fact that its meaning was rarely articulated, talk of

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

spirituality grew increasingly prominent in the speeches of government and military leaders in the late 1940s. Spirituality had become an urgent security concern of top US officials, partly due to Marshall's persuasions. His advocacy facilitated spiritual training's introduction in the pilot program known as the Fort Knox experiment, which then was continued in the thirty-year Army Character Guidance program.

Marshall's emphasis on spirituality for training purposes has a continuing legacy, as no historical figure is quoted more extensively in army publications that seek to explain spirituality's worth in army culture.⁹ For this reason, the first section of this chapter investigates Marshall's most quoted speech in which he explains what spiritual training was and why it was so necessary.

Examining Marshall's understanding of spirituality is part of this chapter's broader project of investigating the conditions that governed official talk about spirituality in the late 1940s military and the cultural contexts in which this talk took place. The next two sections pinpoint the ways that those in charge produced knowledge about spirituality and religion and illumine the basic assumptions about personal identity and individual freedom at stake in these cultivations. Specifically, the second section examines the official talk about the need for spiritual training as it was discussed by leaders like President Harry Truman and in formal settings such as Congress. The third section tells the story of what spiritual training looked like when it was implemented in the 1947 Fort Knox experiment.

⁹Anne Loveland, *Change and Conflict in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps since 1945* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014), 153.

Marshall's Perspective: National Security and the "Things of the Spirit"

In June of 1941, Marshall delivered a commencement address almost entirely about the spiritual dimension to the students at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. This speech was significant because it contained statements about spiritual training that would be used to defend spiritual training initiatives in the military for decades to come. Furthermore, the speech offered clues regarding why Marshall thought spiritual training was so important for military work, what he thought "the spirit" was, and what he considered spiritual training's relationship to religious practice was. After examining these details, three subsections consider the import of Marshall's speech. The first considers whether or not Marshall thought his version of spiritual training was appropriate in the military; the second examines Marshall's conviction that spiritual training was a modern technique and that it demanded new disciplines; and the third explores three of Marshall's underlying assumptions about spiritual training that would carry over into the Fort Knox experiment.

The main thrust of Marshall's speech was that caring for the spirit was of utmost importance if America wanted to win wars. One of Marshall's most quoted statements on this subject expressed, "in the final analysis it is the human spirit that achieves the ultimate decision. It is not enough to fight. It is the spirit which we bring to the fight that decides the issue. It is morale that wins the victory."¹⁰

So what was morale and what was its relationship to the spirit? Marshall described morale as "steadfastness and courage and hope. It is confidence and zeal and loyalty. It is *élan*, *esprit de corps* and determination. It is staying power, the spirit which endures to the end--the

¹⁰George Marshall, "Speech at Trinity College," June 15, 1941, Hartford, Connecticut, in Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr., eds., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939-December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 536.

will to win.”¹¹ Here, morale appeared to be both a mixture of virtues and the agent that helped ignite these virtues.

Elsewhere, it is unclear whether or not Marshall thought morale was synonymous with the spirit, or if he believed that morale emanated from it. Consider the following: “with [morale] all things are possible, without it everything else, planning, preparation, production, count for naught. I have just said it is the spirit which endures to the end.”¹² He then reiterated, “the determining factor in war is something invisible and intangible, something wholly spiritual.”¹³ These statements appear to locate morale as the mechanism of possibility, which Marshall thought rightly belonged to the spiritual domain. Yet Marshall also appeared to equate “the spirit” with “morale” when he indicated that he was repeating himself (“I have just said it is the spirit....”). Whatever the exact relation, morale and the spirit were clearly from the same family for Marshall.

Marshall then explained why the army was suddenly concentrated on boosting the spirit’s capacities. The army was in trouble because the current state of morale in the military was deplorable, Marshall confessed to the Trinity students. Partly to blame was the drawn-out warfare of World War II. This had depleted soldiers’ spirits, rendering them incapable of making good life decisions. But the military was also partly to blame, because it had not been diligent in attending to the spirit. Marshall explained, the “ordinary educational process sometimes fail[ed] to reach” the “latent forces of the soul.”¹⁴

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., 534.

But the War Department was learning from their mistakes. Marshall assured listeners that it was starting to take the “spiritual factor” seriously and was planning to alter training accordingly. The relaxed morals and flippant attitudes that had become status quo had not produced an army that was fully equipped to compete in the new era of warfare, which was no longer “a succession of mere episodes” but a “long drawn out and intricately planned business.”¹⁵ It was clear to military leaders now that only focusing on physical conditioning was a mistake, since “total war” made increasingly greater demands of soldiers’ “mental and spiritual” capacities.¹⁶

The nature of war had changed, but Marshall also thought that young people had changed too. Military training of days past concentrated on disciplining the body to act on instinct and habit.¹⁷ The goal had been to create unthinking obedience. But the younger generation now in service demanded reasons for obedience. They simply would not put up with the old days’ “shoulder-to-shoulder formations.”¹⁸ Army training was thus shifting to appeal to “the spirit and the intellect.”¹⁹ As a result, the Charge of the Light Brigade’s “‘Theirs not to reason why--theirs but to do and die’” was, according to Marshall, “out of the picture.”²⁰

Creating a new regimen focused on the spirit meant not just treating soldiers as rational beings but doing away with using fear, the “dull edge of routine,” and honing instincts as the standard training tactics. Clearly, respect, “the white flame of enthusiasm,” and spiritual

¹⁵Ibid., 535.

¹⁶Ibid., 535-6.

¹⁷Ibid., 537.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid, 536.

²⁰Ibid., 537.

intuition respectively were better. The “force of habit of mind” would be far more efficacious than the army’s previous “force of habit of body.”²¹

If the new goal was to ignite morale based on respect for the individual rather than on fear of retribution, then officers would have to be good examples for their men.²² Moral standards would need to be raised all around. Additionally, all service members, regardless of rank, would need to be provided with sufficient reasons for orders given. Last, a focus on the spirit meant redoubling efforts to instill a sense of duty and *esprit de corps* in the troops.

But perhaps the most thrilling aspect of this current training innovation was that it would build the morale necessary for winning wars using an endlessly renewable resource. Marshall triumphantly announced that morale would be built neither on the assurance that the army could complete its missions, nor on the strength of weaponry. It would be built on something “infinitely more potent”: the power of belief.²³ Belief, this mighty “something in the spirit of man,” was greater than enthusiasm, optimism, or self-confidence.²⁴ Furthermore, belief could not be understood adequately as emotion or intelligence. The sort of belief that the army sought out was found in the “spirit of man, something encompassed only by the soul.”²⁵ This belief, produced in the spirit or soul, created in people a superior drive Marshall called, “the morale of omnipotence.”²⁶

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., 538.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

What sort of belief was Marshall talking about? While he does not explicitly address this, he does boast to those at Trinity that the War Department was building a Christian Army to defend a Christian nation and Christian values. Marshall triumphantly announced that the government was ensuring that this Christian Army would not have “to live on rations alone.”²⁷ Because soldiers fought with their spirits, the War Department was making sure that their spirits would be well-fed by providing hundreds of newly-enlisted chaplains and building 555 new chapels.²⁸ Marshall explained that this “spiritual food” would help create “omnipotent morale,” “a living thing that is contagious, that spreads and fastens.”²⁹ In no uncertain terms, Marshall asserted that Christian belief and practice would provide people with the motivation to perform well in the armed service.

This conviction that belief was necessary for morale persisted for decades in official talk on the subject, despite objections that grew more numerous over the years. The contexts of those discussions often implied or directly articulated that it was religious belief, or even more specifically, Christian belief that was so important. Marshall’s speech made clear that at least in his mind, morale and religious belief went together. If the troops were suffering from low morale caused by war, then they could be revived with religious inspiration and respectful treatment. They could report for duty refreshed. Christian ministry could ultimately result in producing the omnipotent morale that won wars.

²⁷Ibid., 537.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

Was Spiritual Training Appropriate in the Military?

As bold as it may seem today, Marshall's pronouncement that the War Department was building a "Christian Army" was in keeping with the religious rhetoric of the time: Americans thought of their country as a Christian nation, and much of this religious identity drove American involvement in World War II. Like many other Americans, Marshall likely understood the practice of Christian beliefs and virtues as part of Americans' patriotic duty.

Obviously, this message would have been appropriate and well-received in a place like Trinity. But Marshall's exuberance over building a "Christian Army" likely would have been matched or at least tolerated among the general American public. What is curious then, are the few comments he made that suggested an awareness that this new emphasis on the spirit might not be publicly appropriate or welcomed by all.

Towards the beginning of his speech, Marshall told the Trinity audience that "this association with you here this morning is good for my soul."³⁰ Immediately after, he hinted at prejudice in the workplace, confiding that if he were in his office, he would have to replace the word "soul" with "morale" in order to communicate the "spiritual benefit" he felt from being there.³¹

At first glance, it seems strange that Marshall would feel that he could not use the term "soul" in his own office at the same time that the War Department would support an explicitly religious agenda. Perhaps Marshall characterized the agenda as Christian to this audience because he felt comfortable with them or maybe he would not have called this new focus "Christian" in his office. Perhaps Marshall's assertion that he could not use the word "soul" in

³⁰Ibid., 535.

³¹Ibid.

his office without negative repercussions was the product of an unfounded fear. Maybe he was building rapport by presenting himself and those present as part of a persecuted, righteous few.

It is not clear here why Marshall thought that referencing the soul was inappropriate in his work setting, but it is clear that the soul and spirit seemed distinctly different to Marshall and that “soul” hit the mark of his meaning better than “spirit” or “morale” did. Perhaps the word “soul” indicated an unverifiable ontological designation that assumed a belief in God as its maker, whereas “morale” and “spirit” indicated, at first blush, not ontological designations but a high degree of motivation which was a universal attribute that demanded no particular belief. Maybe he thought mention of the “soul” would not be received well at work because it indicated a system of belief too particular for someone with authority over a large group of people to espouse. Marshall could talk about morale or the spirit instead to talk about motivation, although he personally believed that motivation was best cultivated in the soul, through the practice of religious belief. The word “soul” gestured to deeper realities than could not so easily be discussed in public.

Marshall’s belief in the importance of the soul over the spirit (or morale) was also indicated in another statement. When talking about the importance of belief, he insisted, “it is what men *believe* that makes them invincible. We have sought for something ... not merely of the intellect or the emotions but rather something in the spirit of man, something encompassed only by the soul.”³² This statement indicated that Marshall understood the soul to be more expansive than the spirit and, in fact, the only domain that fully housed the spirit. The spirit, residing in the soul, was capable of producing the strongest kind of will needed for great acts. This will or drive was fed by belief that germinated in the soul, and this belief rendered a person

³²Ibid., 538.

“invincible.” Marshall concluded by calling *this* kind of morale, fostered by providing not only particular physical conditions but with belief that came from the soul, the “morale of omnipotence.” Again, Marshall expressed the understanding that the soul was ultimately responsible for motivation, even if he felt he could not publicly talk about it.

Elsewhere in this speech, Marshall acknowledged that this training had the potential for controversy when he defended this “new type of discipline” as “sought” (by the public, he implies), not “imposed.”³³ Marshall understood that others might not accept spiritual discipline as on par with other traditional disciplines like physical training. Although he clearly thought that a spiritual focus was necessary in the armed forces and tried to advocate it as something that all people could benefit from, he did not anticipate that others would feel the same.

Marshall’s opening sentence also hinted at the difficulty of negotiating a path for spirituality education in the military as he acknowledged that particular conditions, such as traditional religious parameters, were more felicitous to spiritual life. He remarked that the church-like atmosphere of Trinity “gives the spiritual in us a chance to exclude the uncertainties and complexities that harass us in these unpredictable times.”³⁴ The military setting might not have been an appropriate place to talk about the soul, but Marshall would aim to make the military a place where the spiritual could flourish.

Clearly, the concepts of the soul, morale, morality, spirituality, belief, and the Christian religion were inextricably tied for Marshall. Were the more neutral terms “spirit” and “morale” meant to hide a government agenda to convert the nation’s youth to Christianity? Yes and no. The new agenda to focus on motivating soldiers through moral and spiritual education did

³³Ibid., 536.

³⁴Ibid., 534.

intentionally promote Christian beliefs, but this was a product of the times. When Marshall gave this speech, “Christian” served as a primary indicator for morality in American culture. It was generally assumed that one was religious and that most religious people were Christian. The only recognizable religious preferences at that time in the military were Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish, and Jews were a stigmatized minority.

When Marshall invoked the terms “morale” and “spirit,” he was primarily referring to the motivation to act morally and energetically. “Spiritual training” in Marshall’s use appeared to be geared towards enhancing soldiers’ internal drive to behave in ways that were deemed moral and beneficial to military performance. Chaplains were the obvious choice to instruct about morality, and because most chaplains were Christian, the instruction was distinctly Christian. In other words, the push to educate morality and spirituality should not be read primarily as an agenda to Christianize the military, but as an agenda towards moral reform and national transformation that naturally *would* be Christian.

Spiritual Training as a Modern Warfare Technique

The shift to focus on spiritual training cannot be understood apart from the warfare technology of the day, and the same holds for the CSF program today. Freud had been wrong to assume that more “advanced,” wealthy, civilized countries would outgrow a need for religion. In the 1940s United States, more sophisticated material conditions did not obviate the need for faith; they made faith even more necessary.

Studies on uranium enrichment made great progress in the 1930s, and by the 1940s the United States was busy building nuclear capabilities. It appeared that the destruction of the developed world was possible. What servicemen and civilians alike really needed was not more

ammunition or technology (because the greatest imagined technology was already available in the atom bomb) but moral compasses that would guide the use of these terrible weapons. After all, the world had recently witnessed the atrocities humans were capable of if steered the wrong way, and Nazi death camps were fresh reminders that might does not make right.

Military literature frequently mentioned that whole cities could be wiped off of the map with the touch of a button, and there were few protective measures against a falling atom bomb. The best way of controlling the outer physical world would be by managing the quiet, unseen world within. In a robotic, push-button age, spiritual training would provide a check on power that no machine could match. Marshall said that “investing the word ‘morale’ with deeper and wider meaning” went hand-in-hand with the military’s project of expansion.³⁵ He warned Trinity students that it would be a mistake to imagine that the War Department was only concerned with the production of steel in the service of building a perfect war machine as government leaders now fully recognized the nation’s most powerful instrument as “the fighting man.”³⁶ One of Marshall’s most-quoted statements reiterated that “weapons of flame and steel” do not win wars; “in the final analysis it is the human spirit that achieves the ultimate decision.”³⁷

Weapons were important, but this era of “total war” called for more than anything the physical world could produce. What won wars was not advanced technology, stores of materiel, or even a strong force size but something “invisible and intangible, something wholly spiritual.”³⁸ Tanks and bombs and uniforms and barracks and five a.m. drills were all stagecrafts

³⁵Marshall, “Speech at Trinity College,” 535.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., 536.

³⁸Ibid.

compared to the true battlefield of war, waged in the soul. The War Department had finally realized this and was altering its strategy to “progress from the machine to the man.”³⁹

A 1941 *New York Times* article quoted Marshall as adjusting Napoleon Bonaparte’s estimate that “morale is to materiel as three is to one,” by saying that the ratio had gone up; in the 1940s it was “six to one.”⁴⁰ Morale, spirit, the spiritual, belief, religion were all accumulating more importance for the military mission.

The most-quoted part of Marshall’s entire Trinity speech asserted, “The soldier’s heart, the soldier’s spirit, the soldier’s soul, are everything. Unless the soldier’s soul sustains him he cannot be relied on and will fail himself and his commander and his country in the end.”⁴¹ Nearly forty years later, this quote would figure prominently in a military fitness manual that codified the term “spiritual fitness” for the modern army.

But first the conditions of 1940s military life would have to change if this new discipline was to be taught. Marshall explained that the military had not fully recognized the importance of morale and how to foster its growth until after World War I. Only then was it evident that successful wars did not just require well-oiled machinery but spiritually nurtured human beings. Part of what caring for the spirit meant was treating soldiers with respect and allowing them creature comforts. In the years to come, there would be some attempts to improve soldiers’ external conditions because, as Marshall argued, it was believed that these provided the scaffolding for the spirit’s health. Chapels contributed to the life of the soul, but so did better

³⁹Ibid., 535.

⁴⁰“Marshall Links Morale to Army Health Effort,” *New York Times*, February 26, 1941. Marshall said this during an appearance for the opening session of the Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation.

⁴¹Marshall, “Speech at Trinity College,” 535.

“food...clothing, shelter, medical care, and amusement.”⁴² These improvements, which would be trumpeted to the civilian public in the coming years, also would have the purpose of advertising the importance of Universal Military Training.

Three Underlying Assumptions about Spiritual Training

Marshall’s radio broadcast and his Trinity speech contained several underlying assumptions about spirituality’s place in the human condition that would drive mandatory moral and spiritual programs in the army for decades. These assumptions, which figured most prominently in the deployment of the Fort Knox experiment, were anchored in opinions about youth, individualism, and time management.

First, the army was, on average, composed of young men.⁴³ Marshall echoed the common adult concern that youth were especially pliant and prone to err if not vigilantly guided. This ancient assumption about the unique fragility of young souls figured prominently in army directives but also required some fancy footwork when it came to recruiting.⁴⁴ In order to boost the armed forces’ numbers in the mid-1940s, the army would soothe parents’ concerns about their sons entering service. They did this by publicly recognizing soldiers as *sons*, dependents who would receive direction and nurturing by military officials. A focus on spiritual training would assure parents that their sons were being cared for. To America’s young men, however, the army would advertise a completely different message: that upon entering service, young men would be respected, granted unprecedented autonomy, and treated like adults.

⁴²Ibid., 535.

⁴³Men were eligible for the draft at 18, and the average age of soldiers was 26. Mark Henry, *The US Army in World War II (I): The Pacific* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2000), 3.

⁴⁴The characterization of youth as morally tractable is thousands of years old. For example, the corruptibility of youth featured prominently in the prosecution of Socrates around 400 B.C.E.

Second, Marshall recognized the importance of viewing servicemen not as reactionary puppets, but as meaning-making individuals. He consistently characterized the military's greatest challenge as a crisis of morale and spirituality, and offered that the solution to strengthening these included affording individuals the respect due to rational creatures. The soldier in the "New Army" would have to be compelled to act in a certain way, not bludgeoned into submission. Marshall had explained in his radio address that before authorities could demand discipline, they had to instill a "keener understanding of sacred ideals."

For Marshall, this "keener understanding" went far deeper than the acceptance of knowledge. It was a depth of personal conviction that ultimately relied on belief. This recognition of the importance of personal conviction for military efficiency (which Marshall signaled with "spiritual training") inspired a larger project aimed at reconstituting the individual's sense of self. Marshall's insistence on strengthening a soldier's spirit was also a call to restore the dignity of individualism to soldiers through a "new kind of discipline." Thus, the emphasis on spiritual training was presented as part of this new approach to treat young men as dignified and mature individuals while making them into morally respectable citizens.

Finally, the incorporation of spiritual training as a "new kind of discipline" was critical in helping to solve the problems that a greater recognition of agency could produce. Marshall's insistence that soldiers be respected as individuals with agency produced stricter protections of leisure time. But as Marshall made clear in his NBC speech, what a soldier did with his free time could endanger the military's missions and, ultimately, the nation's welfare. The solution to granting soldiers more of a sense of agency without compromising military missions would be found in spiritual training, which would instill in soldiers the desire to regulate themselves appropriately during leisure time. The Fort Knox experiment of 1947 would demonstrate that,

with the help of spiritual training, there was no space or time in which military moral codes would not apply, despite the increase in leisure time.

Setting the Stage for the Fort Knox Experiment

Towards the end of World War II, the army's forces dwindled. The number of monthly recruits shrank from 185,000 soldiers in November of 1945 to a mere 17,000 in December 1947.⁴⁵ President Truman and the War Department estimated that the nation's forces were short by half a million people, with no prospects of enough new recruits to fill the void. Neither the nation's youth nor their parents were interested in seeing military might expanded in the wake of a bloody and costly war. Americans were looking forward to a new era of prosperity and comfort that did not include military service.

In the span of less than a generation, Americans had gone to war with the world twice, and the hope that that there would not be a third one soon was thin. Prompted by fears of the inevitability of war, Truman asked the 79th Congress on October 23, 1945 to approve a highly-controversial plan for Universal Military Training (UMT).⁴⁶ This program would require all 17- and 18-year-old male citizens to receive one year of basic military training after high school. Upon completing the program, trainees would have the option of enlisting in one of the armed services, the National Guard, or the Reserves or entering a service academy.⁴⁷ Convincing

⁴⁵The recruiting goal was to have 1,070,000 men in the service by July 1, 1947. "The Recruiting Goal," *Army Information Digest* 2, no.3 (1947): 49.

⁴⁶Harry S. Truman, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on Universal Military Training," Oct. 23, 1945, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed Mar. 12, 2012, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12309>.

⁴⁷"Men, Money and UMT," *Army Information Digest* 2, no.6 (1947): 4.

Congress and the war-weary American public to militarize the nation's male youth would be no small feat. President Roosevelt had already tried before his death in April 1945, to no avail.

The Truman Administration and other proponents of conscription argued that UMT was absolutely critical to keep the country safe from future attacks.⁴⁸ The program would also help secure the United States' newfound identity as the world's watchdog and arbiter of international justice by demonstrating a strong and organized force presence. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson argued before the Congress in 1945 that "no nation is fit to assume responsibility for others unless it is capable of being responsible for itself...UMT is the basis for such security."⁴⁹

Addressing the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, US representative to the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission Bernard Baruch echoed Truman's insistence that UMT was a necessity that Americans could not afford to ignore: "We must not again make the mistake of not being properly organized in case another war is thrust upon us. Here is the minimum program that should be placed upon the statute books, ready to function, should war come: mobilization of the full might of America--militarily, economically, and spiritually."⁵⁰ Survival would require the full efforts of the American people, and these included spiritual preparations.

But it would be difficult to persuade the public that military service could enhance rather than deteriorate one's moral rectitude. The heroic self-perception that the United States had in emerging from World War II was dampened considerably by a series of disheartening revelations about the army's moral failings. Most damaging were the publicly known rates of

⁴⁸Gena Mitchell, "Universal Military Training and the Truman Administration" (MA thesis, Georgia Southern College, 1971), 8.

⁴⁹House Resolution 465, A Resolution to Establish a Select Committee on Postwar Military Policy, Hearings before the Select Committee on Postwar Military Policy, House of Representatives, 79th Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1945).

⁵⁰Bernard Baruch, "A Program for Preparedness," *Army Information Digest* 2, no. 11 (1947): 29.

venereal disease, which rose precipitously and threw the armed forces into a public relations nightmare. Venereal disease also presented a serious liability, as it reduced the ranks by an estimated 606 men a day during World War II.⁵¹

But the military was not the only institution in crisis; the entire country appeared to be in trouble. Mental illness rates were rising steadily, but even more alarming were what some took to be the symptoms of national moral malaise.⁵² Executive Secretary of the Washington Federation of Churches Dr. Frederick E. Reissig enumerated the nation's "moral" problems in a 1947 Washington address:

The fingerprint files of the FBI reveal that in the United States there is a criminal army of six million persons, or one criminal for every twenty-three of our population; since 1870 ... divorces have increased 2,000%. An average of more than thirteen thousand persons a year commit suicide in our country. From 1917 to 1943 there was a 100% increase in illegitimate children. There are approximately seven hundred thousand chronic alcoholics in the United States with excessive users probably numbering about two and a half million. [America spends] twenty-two million dollars [a year] for venereal disease control.⁵³

Furthermore, the American home had apparently failed in its duty to provide children with proper moral and spiritual training, and the effects were now visible. President Truman's 1946 Advisory Committee on Morals and Religion reported that many American young men had "no awareness of individual and moral responsibility."⁵⁴ They were "selfish, destructive, and

⁵¹"Venereal Disease and Treatment during WWII," *WWII US Medical Research Centre*, accessed Sept. 18, 2015, <http://www.med-dept.com/articles/venereal-disease-and-treatment-during-ww2/>.

⁵²James Gilbert, *Another Chance: Postwar America from 1945-1968* (Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1986), 28. Gilbert says that 80% of all psychiatric units in general hospitals were built after the war to accommodate the burgeoning mentally ill population. This relatively new group of patients would create an unprecedented financial burden for the government; expenditures for psychiatric care rose from 2.5 million in 1946 to 27 million in just one year..

⁵³Matthew Imrie, "The Fort Knox Experiment," *The Army and Navy Chaplain* 16 (April - May, 1947): 2-3.

⁵⁴US Army, *Character Guidance Manual*, FM 16-100 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), 5. Similar fears inspired the organization of groups like the Protestant Youth for Christ in 1944.

antisocial” and “not aware of the moral basis of the law.”⁵⁵ The committee’s extrapolations were corroborated by evidence in the national reports produced by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which found that in 1945 the modal ages of those arrested were 17 and 18. Young people would continue to drive the crime rate up in post-war years.⁵⁶

UMT’s moral and spiritual training would help eradicate the country’s most complex social and moral ills by providing young men with the knowledge of right and wrong and the will to act on this knowledge. The program would draft 17- and 18-year-olds specifically because they were the least economically productive members of society and most likely to commit crimes. Mandating service would lower national delinquency rates by keeping these youth busy and providing them with the kind of thorough education that was missing from their home lives.⁵⁷ These young men would return to civilian life and build their communities using the knowledge and discipline that the military had inculcated. Every aspect of civilian life would be penetrated by the military’s influence. The transformed youth would change the nation, and the nation would transform the world.

For the most part, the American public was not persuaded by this grand portrait of military might. Patriotic and veteran groups generally favored UMT, while religious,

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶According to an FBI report on crimes committed in 1945, the majority of people arrested that year were 17; the second largest age group arrested was 18. Arrests of males under 21 went up 10.1% in 1945, and arrests of women under 21 was 109.3% more than in 1941. Especially in rural areas, murder, rape, and robberies escalated. US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports for the United States and its Possessions* 46, no. 2 (1945): 74. Crime increased 4.4% in urban areas in 1946 and 14.1% in rural areas. Serious crime was at an all-time high for the past decade. *Uniform Crime Reports for the United States and its Possessions* 47, no. 2 (1945): 38.

⁵⁷Mitchell, "Universal Military Training," 16.

educational, labor, agricultural, and minority organizations generally were not supportive.⁵⁸ Many Americans feared that UMT would signal to other countries the United States' distrust, which would interfere with establishing world peace.

Additionally, parents were concerned that UMT would not in fact enhance the moral rectitude of young soldiers but would instead expose them to vices like alcohol, vulgar language, and sexual deviancy just like in the "old" army. Various religious groups worried that this military program would undermine religious education by teaching soldiers to kill and hate.⁵⁹ A representative of the Women's Christian Temperance Union testified before a Congressional hearing that moral vices would not just injure the soul but could also maim and kill the body.⁶⁰ Taverns near bases were especially dangerous because of the great power they wielded in luring young soldiers into harm's way; first breaking the spirit, then the body. Young men might not know enough or have the strength of character to resist seedy places like taverns, where things would surely end badly: gambling would leave one financially destitute, alcohol would injure the body, vulgar language would cripple the mind, and cavorting with "bobby sox" women would lead to disease and even death.⁶¹

The draft was set to expire at the end of 1946, and the public and Congress were still unconvinced of UMT's necessity. As the Truman Administration saw it, the nation's security

⁵⁸Of the religious groups, only the fundamentalist American Council of Christian Churches were in favor of UMT. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) denounced UMT as "the militarization of the nation in peacetime" and expressed the fear that this program would be the beginning of a government takeover that would end in diminished religious rights. The NAE was also opposed to placing youth in the care of government, away from home and church. Loveland, *American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military*, 2.

⁵⁹Mitchell, "Universal Military Training," 33.

⁶⁰*Universal Military Training: Hearings Before the Select Committee on Postwar Military Policy*, H.R., 79th Cong. 1st sess., pursuant to H. Res. 465, 294 (1945) (statement by Miss Elizabeth A. Smart, Representing the National Christian Woman's Temperance Union).

⁶¹*Ibid.*

called for drastic persuasive measures. In November 1946, Truman announced that the government would conduct a highly-publicized “experiment” at Fort Knox that would establish the feasibility of UMT.

The Fort Knox Experiment: Spiritual Training and Democracy’s Test

Only six days into the New Year, 106 trainees arrived by rail at the Fort Knox station. In an unusual personal flourish, commanding officer Brigadier General John Devine, a 1917 West Point graduate, personally welcomed each trainee as he stepped off the platform.⁶² This reception would mark the beginning of a full-fledged campaign. The mission at Fort Knox was to convey a picture of military life to the American people that they had never seen before, essentially to re-brand the military. What officials referred to when they called the project at Fort Knox an “experiment” was the test to see if post-war militarization was possible or desirable, but it appeared that a far more significant experiment was afoot at Fort Knox.

The experiment at Fort Knox mimicked what some have called the grand “American” experiment by attempting to recognize trainees as dignified and empowered beings while still extracting from them the behavioral results necessary for the group’s mission. Put differently, the test was to see if trainees could be taught to choose military discipline for themselves. An emphasis on spiritual training meant recognizing a trainee’s autonomy in making lifestyle decisions while simultaneously teaching him what decisions to make. It would be a win-win for everyone: young trainees would be treated with respect and made to feel powerful, while the army’s new high moral standards would be met, helping to offset the military’s corrupting reputation and the efficiency lost by poor lifestyle choices.

⁶²“A Report on UMT: Trainees at Work,” *Army Information Digest* 2, no. 6 (1947): 17.

UMT's new disciplinary philosophy appealed to parents, but it was also a necessary response to a generational shift that had presented a serious problem for the post-war military. "Teenagers," a term that got the rebellious connotation it has today from 1940s youth, were sloughing off the subservient demeanor of previous generations' youth and demanding autonomy. Many of these youth had been forced to grow up quickly during World War II, some joining the workforce and managing entire households in their parents' absence. Young people had been given responsibilities and opportunities that they had never had before, and when the war ended they were not about to give those up.⁶³ Perhaps the crime rates among 17- and 18-year-olds in 1945 reflected the turmoil of having the yoke of supervision placed on them again after having tasted the sweet freedoms of independence. Whatever the reason for their delinquency, it was obvious to leaders that disciplining these youth required completely new strategies and that they would benefit from moral and spiritual education.

Under General Devine's direction, Fort Knox trainees would be taught, not micro-managed. Unlike the portrait of army life that the public knew from George Baker's popular *Sad Sack* comics that painted soldiers as hapless objects of ridicule and abuse, Devine wanted trainees to feel respected. It was clear to Devine, as it was to Marshall before, that the army's World War I and II recruiting poster that featured a stern Uncle Sam looking down his menacing finger at a potential recruit with the caption "I want YOU for U.S. Army" was outdated. The military could no longer be a place where one was made to feel like an object, passively awaiting orders. Getting new recruits meant catering to a new generation, one that did not respond to the old domineering tactics.

⁶³Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 36–62.

Devine believed that “much of the bad behavior of teen-age boys in public is the result of ignorance. We make it our business to change that ignorance to knowledge.”⁶⁴ Young people were not bad, they just lacked proper education, which is what UMT could provide. One report on the program noted that Devine was convinced “that these men, being a cross-section of American youth, have good instincts; that any apparent cynicism is only surface deep; that in each of them is a deep well of ambition and self- respect to be drawn on by the sympathetic and understanding leader.”⁶⁵ This portrait of the young was in stark contrast to the Congressional reports that identified young men as recalcitrant and easily corrupted.

The new emphasis on moral and spiritual training was, as one report put it, a “radical departure” from previous military training programs, one that would require officers to “correct every fault when you see it, but you don’t have to be nasty about it.”⁶⁶ Recruits were reassured that sergeants supposedly were not “tough, hairy-chested, petty tyrant[s]” who barked obscenities at soldiers for minor infractions but knowledgeable, level-headed, avuncular figures. Devine believed that “there is not much point in training a man in techniques” without first acquiring “the simple decencies of civilized living.”⁶⁷

Moral and Spiritual Training: Training in Decency

Moral and spiritual training aimed at recovering the “simple decencies of civilized living” that Devine believed facilitated other types of training.⁶⁸ These “simple decencies” included an

⁶⁴John M. Devine, *U.M.T. Experimental Unit Interim Report* (Fort Knox, KY: Department of the Army, 1947), 5.

⁶⁵“A Report on UMT: Trainees in Profile,” *Army Information Digest* 2, no. 6 (1947): 29.

⁶⁶“UMT Progress: UMT in Transition,” *Army Information Digest* 2, no. 12 (1947): 26.

⁶⁷“A Report on UMT: This is UMT,” *Army Information Digest* 2, no. 6 (1947): 10.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

unprecedented degree of creature comforts, expanding the trainees' sense of autonomy in ways that were acceptable to the moral standards of the program. Furthermore, Devine was sure that if trainees felt cared for, they would be more likely to listen and obey. Providing these comforts was also critical in the project of advertising UMT, and these benefits were broadcasted to the public by well-heeled public relations efforts.

Audiences across the country watched professionally-produced films about trainees' experiences at Fort Knox, while a handful of representatives were hired to travel the country and endorse the program at various speaking engagements.⁶⁹ Civilian leaders from various organizations were invited to come on tax-payer-funded trips to see the program at Fort Knox. Of the 79 groups that visited the experiment, those who reported positively on the experiment got publicity.⁷⁰ The unit was watched and reported about so much that that trainees said that they felt they were living in test tubes.⁷¹

Rosy descriptions of life at Fort Knox floated on air waves from a radio station specially devised to advertise the program, while a post newspaper highlighted various achievements. Everything from the living quarters, to the food, to the intimacy of personal relationships, to the quality of religious instruction was meant to equal or exceed what trainees were used to at home. Propaganda photographs of the typical barracks emphasize the modern comforts that trainees could expect: each room had electrical outlets, individual lockers, cream-colored walls, shiny floors, and curtained windows. A dance hall, recreation room, and soda fountain provided

⁶⁹The War Department recorded that these films, produced by special personnel, cost \$35,000 to make and \$6,000 to distribute, but an investigation found those costs to be significantly underreported. It was established that they cost \$62,930 to make and \$14,244 to distribute. *Investigation of the War Department Publications and Propaganda in Relation to Universal Military Training: Hearings Before the Sub-committee on Publicity and Propaganda of Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Department*, 80th Cong., 1st sess., 44-45 (1947).

⁷⁰Mitchell, "Universal Military Training," 59.

⁷¹"A Report on UMT: This is UMT," 12.

opportunities for a rich social life. If one needed a break from socializing, one could use state-of-the-art headphones to listen to records or find quiet in individual study rooms.⁷²

Mealtimes offered more opportunities to practice--and publicize--UMT's simple decencies. Instead of standing in a buffet line and sitting according to rank, trainees and officers ate "family style," facing each other and passing large plates of food around.⁷³ Furthermore, one report touted, trainees would not be subjected to the barely palatable meat hashes and hardtack of years gone by. At Fort Knox, they were served piping hot, nutritious meals that was reportedly "tasty and attractive."⁷⁴ In one of many publicity stunts, famed food critic Duncan Hines was flown in to test the new cuisine himself, leaving behind a highly-publicized endorsement. More important than the taste for some was the quantity provided. One report advertised, "A man's capacity is the only limit to the amount of food he may have."⁷⁵ This same report devotes a few paragraphs to emphasizing the abundance of food at mealtimes, reflecting a triumphal emergence from war-time austerity.

The project of recognizing trainees as relatively autonomous did not involve allowing them to sate any appetite they desired. The production of moral and spiritual excellence at Fort Knox was achieved with the proper management of trainees' desires, which, because of their youth, were believed to be especially erratic and self-destructive. Desire could be managed by managing time. This negotiation of desire could be achieved by making every minute of the work day edifying and productive, but also by offering appropriate off-duty activities. Managing trainees' "free" time was just as important as managing their training time, as part of the goal of

⁷²Mitchell, "Universal Military Training," 58.

⁷³"A Report on UMT: Trainees in Profile," 24-25.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵"A Report on UMT: Trainees in Profile," 24.

the experiment was to produce not just good future soldiers, but citizens who would be good long after they left the service.

Like other military installations, the Fort Knox unit placed great emphasis on efficiently using every minute in the day. Trainees could expect a full 40-hour work week composed of strenuous physical training in marksmanship and defensive combat and field education on civil disturbances, map reading, mines and booby traps, and weapon maintenance. All of this would be rounded out by chaplain lectures on physical and moral hygiene.⁷⁶ Trainees were given ten minute breaks throughout the day, during which one could expect his brief repose to be enhanced by advice from his platoon leader or sergeant on anything, from proper behavior in public or at home to leaving an appropriate tip at a restaurant.⁷⁷

Unlike other military installations, the program at Fort Knox exhibited a respect for the boundaries between on-duty and off-duty time that fit with Devine's logic of respecting trainees' autonomy. Instead of having to clean uniforms and equipment during off-duty hours, two and a half hours during the forty hour week were reserved for these tasks.⁷⁸ Even less conventional was the freedom from the yoke of rank trainees experienced while off-duty, since rank differences among trainees were forbidden to be recognized.⁷⁹

Although advertisements for UMT make it sound like trainees could do what they wanted during off-duty hours, of course this was not the case. Leisure activities were carefully orchestrated, despite one 1947 pamphlet's suggestion that "practically anything [the trainee]

⁷⁶"A Report on UMT: Trainees at Work," *Army Information Digest* 2, no. 6 (1947): 17 - 23.

⁷⁷"A Report on UMT: This is UMT," 11.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

desires in recreation and education is only a stone's throw away.”⁸⁰ Devine made sure that there was an array of interesting and attractive activities to distract trainees during their free time, each having a “constructive value, each contributing to a fuller and more fruitful way of life.”⁸¹ Even when not taking advantage of the UMT off-duty programs, trainees reportedly chose to engage in wholesome and productive activities like taking dance lessons and etiquette classes, writing for a newspaper and producing radio shows, going to movies or the roller skating rink.

Opportunities to fulfill “wholesome” desires expanded, while other opportunities shrank. Profanity was prohibited by Devine because he thought that it exhibited a poor vocabulary and low intelligence. Traditional military pastimes like gambling, drinking alcohol, and fighting “dirty” were forbidden and frowned upon.⁸² Trainees were taught that these behaviors were crass and low-brow, the actions of a man with no respect for himself or for others.

The most dangerous desire--for sex, which could lead to disease--was discussed by chaplains right after a Medical Officer educated trainees about how to properly handle food, purify water, bathe, and use the latrine. The chaplain's speech followed the presentation on “Military Sanitation, First Aid and Personal Hygiene” by teaching that “continence” was the proper way to manage sexual urges based on moral law and the “natural place for sex in normal religious behavioral patterns.”⁸³ Teaching continence was the only effective educational method according to Devine. He explained, “I have long believed that films, posters, forced issue of prophylactics, and other measures in common use, are as apt to increase the venereal disease rate

⁸⁰Ibid, 13.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid., 10-12.

⁸³Imrie, “The Fort Knox Experiment,” 5.

as to reduce it. To the soldier of character and high moral standards, they are offensive; and to the morally weak, they are suggestive.”⁸⁴ Although Devine had previously stated that the cure for moral ineptitude in the young was knowledge, this statement makes clear his belief that some knowledge could produce immoral behavior.

Those identified as “morally weak” received help to curb their wayward inclinations. Trainees had to give an account of where they were going each night over their breaks, as well as a phone number where they could be reached.⁸⁵ On one special occasion when weekend passes to Louisville would be issued, one report announced that chaplains were “working closely with local church leaders of the city and fe[lt] reasonably sure that trainees [would] attend the churches in town when not on the Post.”⁸⁶ Parents were assured that their sons would not be in the sort of danger in Louisville as they might otherwise have been because of the unit’s added protection. Reminiscent of German measures used to mark Jews only three years before, this “protection” required trainees to wear distinctive patches that identified them in public as minors and as charges of the government.⁸⁷

Pious Virility: “A New Way of Looking at Things”

Part of the challenge in constructing this squeaky-clean military image was persuading young trainees and recruits that men who refrained from swearing, gambling, “dirty fighting,” or premarital sex were truly virile. One army report tried to pre-empt the suggestion that the army’s new approach that focused on human values, individual dignity, and personal liberties made men

⁸⁴“UMT in Progress: UMT in Transition,” 24.

⁸⁵“A Report on UMT: Trainees in Profile,” 29.

⁸⁶Imrie, “The Fort Knox Experiment,” 5.

⁸⁷Ibid.

soft by insisting that there was no “prissiness” at the UMT unit, despite the lack of profanity. The report explained, “It is just a new way of looking at things.”⁸⁸

The army’s reports on the program implied that responsible adults, *real* men, did not need sex. These reports insisted that because trainees had apparently “high moral standards,” they were not interested in talking about women or in having physical relations. Supposedly, there was no bawdy talk in the barracks because it was considered juvenile. Making this point, one report insisted that to the average trainee, sex was down-graded to “just one of those things” in light of the dazzling array of off-duty activities. Even off-base, trainees reportedly had no interest in sex but sought “the week-end pass ... not ... as an opportunity to go on the prowl, but rather as a chance to get a soft bed, a change of diet, meet new people, with probably a church service included.”⁸⁹

True men were moral and spiritual men who controlled their desires and disciplined themselves. In a radical departure from protocol, trainees would be subject to a Code of Conduct rather than Articles of War. This Code of Conduct, written by a committee of two civilians and one military personnel, established the rules. As a part of this “new way of looking at things,” a trainee would be brought before a court of his peers for discipline instead of before a commander. However, this court could issue punishments more severe than a commander, an *Army Information Digest* article warned.⁹⁰ Trainees seemed to like strict punishment because they valued virtue. One report boasted of the trainees’ thirst for draconian self-discipline, “That is the way the trainees want it; and it works.”⁹¹

⁸⁸“A Report on UMT: This is UMT,” 12.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 15.

⁹¹*Ibid.*

Indeed, the statistics bear out the trainees' desire for justice: in the first three months of the program, the trainee court made convictions in 27 of 30 cases.⁹² In a case cited as "typical," two trainees were sentenced by the court to five days of hard labor and two days of "restriction" for visiting too long with the mother of one of the trainees. The article that recounted this case noted with pride, "there is nothing soft about the punishment which trainees impose upon themselves."⁹³

Men could also demonstrate their brawn in ways acceptable to the program's religious standards by participating in newly-introduced athletic programs, indulging in various hobbies like model-building, and attending social functions orchestrated by the leadership.⁹⁴ One could demonstrate his virility by having a large appetite (and "good manners," reports are quick to suggest) at the mess hall. Trainees, their parents, and the public were taught that the new military man found his adulthood in minimizing reprobate desires and in having an endless appetite for work, food, crafts, and sanctioned spiritual and physical activities.

Chaplains and Spiritual Training

Much of the moral and spiritual training at Fort Knox came in the form of weekly chaplain lectures on "citizenship and morality." Early in 1946 when the War Department was planning for the Fort Knox experiment, Chaplain Harold O. Prudell, head of the Plans and Programs Division, suggested that a chaplain write the lectures for the Fort Knox youth. By October 1946, Chaplain Martin H. Scharlemann, and instructor at the Army Chaplain School,

⁹²"A Report on UMT: Trainees in Profile," 28.

⁹³Ibid., 27.

⁹⁴Athletic programs at Fort Knox were designed with civilian longevity in mind. Leaders hoped to introduce to trainees recreation that would encourage a life-long love of healthy, physical activity. "A Report on UMT: Trainees off Duty," *Army Information Digest* 2, no. 6 (1947): 31.

was chosen to draft a series of “Citizenship and Morality Talks.”⁹⁵ These would form the basis of the educational curriculum at Fort Knox, and they would continue to be used in the later-developed Character Guidance Program. This new educational emphasis and its reliance on chaplain facilitators represented yet another way that chaplains were becoming critical and valued members of the armed forces.

In Devine’s view, chaplains were the leaders most capable of teaching and getting results without snuffing out the trainees’ sense of self. They were the obvious choice for instructing morality, and chaplains were all too happy to be made an essential part of the military team, according to an *Army and Navy Chaplain* article: “for years Army Chaplains have been begging for an opportunity to make the maximum contribution of religion to the Army.”⁹⁶ The chaplain author of this same article boasted that UMT’s formal emphasis on moral training had “made the chaplain as important as the quarterback on a team.”⁹⁷

For the first time, chaplains were invited to participate in staff conferences and were officially made members of Devine’s special staff. *Finally*, one report exulted, chaplains had “been taken down from the shelf, dusted off, and put to work.”⁹⁸ Never again would chaplains’ expertise be peripheral to Army training.

Although the mandatory chaplain lectures aimed at having relevance for a diverse crowd, it was never questioned that moral knowledge and internal motivation were the products of religion, and that everyone there was religious (or should be). Because the only recognized

⁹⁵Rodger R Venzke, *Confidence in Battle, Inspiration in Peace: The United States Army Chaplaincy 1945 - 1975* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977), 40.

⁹⁶Imrie, “The Fort Knox Experiment,” 4.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸“A Report on UMT: This is UMT,” 10.

religious groups at that time were Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, all of the moral and spiritual education got filtered through a Judeo-Christian lens. Father Charles J. Murphy and Reverend Maury Hundley, Jr. served the Catholic and Protestant populations at Fort Knox (145 and 508 respectively), and Rabbi Morris E. Eson made several visits to serve the small Jewish population.⁹⁹

Chaplain Hundley described in an interview the new opportunities that UMT afforded chaplains: “In former days, the Chaplain had to dig out information whenever and wherever he could reach his men. In the UMT program a definite time and place are set for this friendly, private talk with the Chaplain as soon as a man arrives at Camp. As a result, in six days the Chaplain learns more about his men than he would ordinarily learn in six months or six years.”¹⁰⁰

The “friendly, private talk” that Hundley was referring to was the entry interview in which a chaplain asked each trainee about his denominational affiliations, church membership status, and religious interests in an effort to gauge his “willingness to support the unit’s religious programs.”¹⁰¹ Trainees were also educated about the “importance of religion in the Army” and “in the home, in society, and in the UMT.” After these initial interviews, the chaplains wrote trainees’ parents to “assure [them] of their personal interest in their sons.”¹⁰² Parents reportedly replied favorably and were relieved that the program was teaching moral and religious concepts and that alcohol and other noxious substances were banned. Chaplain Imrie, who wrote a report on UMT for the *Army and Navy Chaplain*, explained, “All parents...Jew, Catholic, or

⁹⁹Imrie, “The Fort Knox Experiment,” 10.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 5.

Protestant...feel that their sons can come to no great harm if they continue faithful in the discipline of their religious tradition.”¹⁰³

If religion protected the youth, then the young men at Fort Knox were well-protected. At Fort Knox, a trainee could not avoid encounters with men of the cloth even if he wanted to. Imrie boasted that the Fort Knox chaplains were given a minimum of thirty-three opportunities for contact with each trainee in the span of six months. He emphasized that these contacts were “augmented by casual meetings during the day: visits to barracks, day rooms, mess halls, service clubs; instructions for baptism, First Communion, Confirmation; choir practice; meetings such as Holy Name Society, Service Men’s Christian League; and Chapel services throughout the six-month period.”¹⁰⁴ In fact, Imrie reported that the unit’s religious program was so well received by the trainees that “the chaplains ha[d] been working day and night” to provide even more religious opportunities than originally planned.¹⁰⁵

Outside of the flurry of program-approved religious activities (which included delivering a “religious orientation” session in the first two weeks), the Protestant and Catholic chaplains were also responsible for eighteen lectures on morality and citizenship, and at least two lectures on sex hygiene. Far from being the usual “dull” military lectures that lulled soldiers to sleep with organization charts and “trite phrases dragged from eight grade textbooks,” these lectures promised practical, useful advice by examining “the business of normal living in families and communities.” Religion was a very practical matter, trainees were taught. For example, lectures

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Imrie, “The Fort Knox Experiment,” 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 4.

suggested that “true religious beliefs” resulted in applying the Golden Rule to behavior in everyday social spheres.¹⁰⁶

Even if some of what constituted as moral and spiritual training made it sound like practicing religion was as general as applying the Golden Rule, trainees were required to discover its particularities in church. Sunday mornings were reserved for the “Church Parade,” a squad of buses that transported trainees to nearby churches. Incorrectly noted as “voluntary” in Imrie’s report, the Church Parade was a required activity for the first four Sundays. Alternatively, one could choose to attend a lecture on morals, as one man out of a few hundred did, claiming that he had no religious affiliation.¹⁰⁷ Needless to say, he “chose” to go to church every week thereafter.

For those Episcopalians (3), Latter-Day Saints (10), and Christian Scientists (7) requiring “their own church,” transportation was specially arranged.¹⁰⁸ Jewish trainees received no mention. After the mandatory period of four weeks was up, the majority of trainees still went to church, evidencing the thorough success of the new agenda to motivate the military to morality with religious indoctrination.

The quality of religious education met the standards of the Subcommittee on Religion that Truman had appointed to oversee the unit’s progress. Composed of Rabbi Joseph Rauch, Father Charles Boldrick, Dr. Horner Carpenter (First Christian Church), and Frank H. Gregg (Executive Secretary of the Louisville Council of Churches), the subcommittee made frequent visits to Fort Knox and dropped in, unannounced, on the lectures.¹⁰⁹ Rabbi Rauch was especially

¹⁰⁶“A Report on UMT: Trainees Off Duty,” 32.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Imrie, “The Fort Knox Experiment,” 5.

¹⁰⁹Ibid, 6.

pleased: “This Experimental Unit represents the first time, outside of the Church, that good character has been the concern of so great an organization.”¹¹⁰ The religious education so impressed Brigadier General and Chaplain of the US Army Luther Miller that he argued before a Congressional Hearing that “it would be difficult if not impossible to excel the moral and spiritual excellence” that this training would produce.¹¹¹

Conclusion

What Moral and Spiritual Training Did

Nearly thirty years after the Fort Knox experiment, historian Richard G. Hutcheson denounced the UMT experiment as “probably the most massive, intensive, and carefully organized attempt at character building through education ever attempted under secular sponsorship.”¹¹² He further characterized the experiment as “conducted by a group of clergymen [to extend] their influence beyond the context of religious faith.”¹¹³ While both of these things are true--the Fort Knox experiment *was* secularly-sponsored and it did mandate chaplain-taught religious education--this unqualified description is simplistic and misleading.

The Fort Knox experiment was a campaign to sell to the public the idea that militarizing the nation’s male youth would be a good thing, for the country and for the youth. The decision to add mandatory moral and spiritual education was one that Truman and program developers thought would appeal to the public, be good for young men and the nation at large, and yield the program’s desired behavioral results. Fort Knox’s new program granted chaplains

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹*Committee on Postwar Military Policy*, Hearings on H.R. 22: 119 (1945).

¹¹²Richard G. Hutcheson, *The Churches and the Chaplaincy* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 147.

¹¹³Ibid.

unprecedented authority in “secular” domains (which some happily accepted) but this reconfiguration of power was not the product of the devious machinations of particular religious groups. Rather, it was the product of political authorities attempting to promote worldwide prominence and security for America by producing an image of the army that would convince parents to send their sons into the army, convince young men to join the service, and ensure program results. Moral and spiritual training would kill three birds with one stone. Furthermore, many in the 1940s assumed that religion was the primary vehicle of moral and spiritual education, without a hint of the social or legal transgression that this alignment might represent today.

Critics in the 1973 volume *Military Chaplains: From a Religious Military to a Military Religion* interpreted the moral and spiritual focus of the program as a way for those in power to manipulate young men into obedience. The moral and spiritual training at Fort Knox operated to coerce, to be sure. But what these critics overlooked was that this new emphasis was meant to expand the freedoms and dignities of individuals *beyond* what was typically allotted in military life. Devine was intent on changing the military culture of World War II that got results through ridicule and degradation. He did not relax regulations at all; if anything, he demanded a stricter adherence to them, and he expanded the list of prohibitions. But his method was, in his eyes, relatively self-expanding. He explained his goals in a report for the War Department:

In this unit we will prove that we can teach discipline without the evils connoted by the word regimentation. We will prove that we can produce well-trained and well-disciplined soldiers without suppressing their individuality, diminishing their self-respect, or hindering their personality development. Quite the contrary: We will teach them discipline, build their characters, give them confidence, increase their self-respect, and make them better citizens while also making them good soldiers.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴Devine, *U.M.T. Experimental Unit*, 5-6.

Of course, Devine and those in power got to determine exactly what sort of self was worthy of expansion. Although Devine saw his program as a marked improvement over the previous era's crushing regimentation, one could argue that moral and spiritual training was a crushing regimentation of a different sort.¹¹⁵ It aimed to obliterate any hesitation or contrary opinions when it came to what was being called "moral" behavior. For example, sex outside of marriage, cursing, and even play fighting were all prohibited. It dismissed the idea that any understanding of morality or spirituality could occur outside of the walls of a church. The variety of enticing off-duty programs advertised as expanding trainees' freedoms provided opportunities for them to be monitored and managed. In short, trainees could "grow" in ways that they could not before, but like plants in a greenhouse, their selves were being cultivated in very particular ways towards particular ends.

The sort of self cultivated from this program of moral and spiritual training was a religious, hardworking, energetic, polite, intelligent, self-disciplined self. Whether it was true or not, reports described trainees at Fort Knox as "alert" and "interested."¹¹⁶ The average trainee "learns rapidly, and what he learns makes sense."¹¹⁷ Trainees were described as "tireless," having insatiable appetites for (approved) play and work. These young men were not "prissy," but maturely cast a cool eye on the crass behaviors of the old army, preferring--we are told--to indulge in hobbies like model-building rather than talking about sex. The moral and spiritual self

¹¹⁵Given the propaganda nature of all of the publications about the program, it is impossible to tell what trainees themselves thought about the emphasis on moral and spiritual education. A survey conducted during the program's third week by the Troop Attitude Research Branch of the Troop Information and Education Division and War Department Special Staff reported that 69% of trainees thought the policy on church attendance was a "very good idea," 17% said it was a "fairly good idea," 4% said it was a "fairly poor idea," and 10% thought it was a "very poor idea." All "reports" on Fort Knox (which probably would not have told a different story if there was one) indicated that "moral and spiritual" training was well-received by the young men and their parents. Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁶"A Report on UMT: This is UMT," 9.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

had “respect for others, respect for oneself, coupled with a strong sense of responsibility to the team, to the mission, and to the Nation.”¹¹⁸ The moral and spiritual self was ideal in the army because this self was internally motivated, in essence, to carry out commanders’ orders.

The Nature of Moral and Spiritual Training

It is difficult to tell precisely how Devine and the often anonymous authors of reports on UMT distinguished “moral” from “spiritual” or “spiritual” from “religious.” There was never a consistent use of any of these terms: “spiritual” appeared to be used as a synonym for “religious” sometimes, and for “moral” other times. “Moral” and “religious” were also used synonymously, although less frequently. What also complicates matters is that sometimes “religion” was invoked not as a particular, but as “religion-in-general,” as in Chaplain Murphy’s following statement, quoted in a camp newspaper dated March 8, 1947: “In the UMT you are much more than a body to be bayoneted or bulleted. You are more than organized flesh to be set in the wake of some rolling barrage. You are more than an animated sandbag. You are first, last and always a religious animal; and UMT will not let you forget it.”¹¹⁹ Religion and spirituality, whatever they were, held the common vision of human beings as more than their material existence.

When the word “spiritual” was mentioned (“spirituality” and “spirit” were almost never used in the context of UMT discussions), it was almost always in conjunction with “moral,” indicating that they were considered distinct, but related subjects. “Spiritual” offered something different and apparently something *more* than “moral.” Educating the youth about morality, or the differences between right and wrong behaviors, was a critical project because it appeared that

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Quoted in John M. Swomley, *The Military Establishment* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 200.

this was a knowledge they lacked. But people needed to feel compelled to act on this knowledge, and Devine was sure that respectful treatment, which required a re-calibration of traditional power structures, would achieve this. The “spiritual” most closely aligned in that day with what people were calling “morale”: the ability to feel, deeply, the responsibility to act in ways deemed moral. But unlike “morale,” which is a noun that typically indicates the degree of a condition, “spiritual” is an adjective that indicates a thing’s “deeper,” immaterial and hidden qualities. Unlike morale, the “spiritual” conjured up the human as a dignified creature who relied on belief for moral conviction. The word “spiritual” seemed to gesture to a quality of animation that was perhaps considered unique to humans. This conjured image of the human as a spiritual being would demand a new logic of discipline in which chaplains were considered authoritative. The fact that chaplains were approved to cultivate a thoroughly religious atmosphere at Fort Knox speaks to Devine’s certainty that not just “training in decency” but belief, and religious belief in particular, would provide the quality of existence and motivational strength necessary for “right” behavior that nothing could parallel. The kind of “spiritual” training that would produce, as Marshall called it, “omnipotent morale,” unquestionably took distinctively religious forms.

Yet all of the descriptions of the training’s new emphases speak of not “moral and religious training” but “moral and spiritual training.” It is not as clear as one might think, however, that “spiritual” was a covert term for talking about particular religion, simply because religion clearly was not a taboo subject or socially undesirable. Religious agendas were openly discussed, and there was no attempt in the late 1940s to hide the fact that trainees were being educated by chaplains about Christian principles. There was some confusion (or deception)

exhibited by Chaplain Imrie over whether or not the “Church Parade” was voluntary, but regardless, the Parade was boasted about as a feature of the program and a measure of success.

Perhaps the phrase “moral and spiritual” was preferred to “moral and religious” because “spiritual” sounded more universal than “religious.” The more neutral term “spiritual” fit better with UMT’s goal of finding a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and motivating morality. It may be also that when Marshall, Devine, and Truman spoke of “spiritual” training, they were referencing the need for military culture to adhere to the belief that humans had inherent dignity; they were not just animals to be ordered around, but people, dignified with “spirits.” Perhaps this focus on the spiritual was an affirmation and recovery of human worth regardless of religious affiliation in light of what the world had witnessed in the Nazi treatment of the Jews. Neither “religion” nor “morality” adequately conveyed the “simple decencies” that human beings deserved *qua* humans. Referencing the “spiritual” was a recognition of the dignity of the human condition.

Even if this new emphasis on spiritual training appeared to offer service members more respect, the campaign to convince the public of the necessity of UMT failed. A House Subcommittee brought formal charges against the program for spending tax-payer dollars on hiring civilians to promote the program and produce propaganda films.¹²⁰ Then, in 1947, 652 religious leaders petitioned Congress to oppose UMT and begin disarmament.¹²¹ The campaign

¹²⁰*Investigation of the War Department Publications and Propaganda in Relation to Universal Military Training*, 44-45. The National Council against Conscription convinced Congress to organize a committee to investigate the War Department’s UMT expenditures. This committee was called the Harness Committee, named after Forest Harness, a House Representative from Indiana who became the chairman of the Committee’s Subcommittee on Publicity and Propaganda. The Committee concluded that the War Department had improperly used government funds for advertising purposes, violating US Code 1913. House Report No. 1510, 80th Cong., 2nd sess. (1948). This finding resulted in two resignations and curtailed spending.

¹²¹*UMT, Hearings Before the Committee on Military Armed Services*, House of Representatives, 80th Cong., 1st sess., 4235-4243, 4356-4359, 4327.

at Fort Knox had been in operation for only a few short months when Truman's Advisory Commission on Universal Training released a report on June 1, 1947 stating that the only reasonable basis for UMT was national security; the moral and physical development of the American youth had to be secondary.¹²² Halfway through 1952, it was clear that UMT would not be approved, and Truman and supporters in the State and Defense Departments dropped their requests.

Although the campaign to launch UMT had failed, Fort Knox's mission to reform youth both morally and spiritually had apparently succeeded, and this part of the training program would continue military-wide for decades to come. A report from the Chief of Chaplain's office dated March 24, 1947 quoted testimonials from parents and pastors. One gushed, "UMT affords teen-agers the best religious program I've ever seen either in or outside the Church." Another declared that "so many boys have no religious training or discipline at home. In this program they can get both."¹²³ "I know of no similar situation where so much can be done spiritually in so short a time for our youth," a chaplain told the *New York Post*.¹²⁴ The Fort Knox experiment was so successful that the Office of the Chief of Chaplains sent chaplain representatives to visit the base so that they could then return to the army and "represent this program to ministerial and denominational conventions as they take place in the US this year."¹²⁵ In less than a year, army and navy representatives would travel the country to tell church groups about the military's new emphasis on "character guidance" and spirituality.¹²⁶

¹²²A Program for National Security, 1947.

¹²³US Army, "Chief of Chaplains Report," March 24, 1947 (quoted in Swomley, *The Military Establishment*, 200).

¹²⁴April 16, 1947.

¹²⁵US Army, "Chief of Chaplains Report," (quoted in Swomley, *The Military Establishment*, 201).

¹²⁶Swomley, *The Military Establishment*, 202.

The new logic of discipline that accompanied the emphasis on moral and spiritual training would also have a continued legacy in the military. The program that treated new recruits less like “species of a low zoological order but as young citizens” would be implemented in the army in 1948.¹²⁷ Just like at Fort Knox, soldiers would enjoy new creature comforts as a part of the program geared towards respectful, polite treatment of those in the service. A *Time* magazine article from November 1948 noted of the new army climate: “Food was better, mud and duckboards were missing, and television sets, golf courses and swimming pools were close at hand.”¹²⁸

Less than a year after the Fort Knox experiment ended, the army continued this emphasis on moral and spiritual training by launching a program called Character Guidance which would last for the next thirty years. Like the program at Fort Knox, it would use chaplains to personally compel soldiers to “right” behavior, which, not coincidentally, aided military efficiency. But after the experiment at Fort Knox concluded, governmental public rhetoric about spiritual things would shift in reaction to the ideological storm the Cold War blew in. The moral and spiritual education in the Character Guidance program would include a bold articulation that belief in God alone could provide sufficient motivation to act morally. By the end of 1947, it was not enough for moral and spiritual training to offer general religious indoctrination. What Americans needed to combat the specific anti-theology of the Red Threat was a clearly articulated theology. Beginning in 1948, all soldiers would be taught under the guise of character guidance that one could be considered trustworthy, moral, and efficient by locating one’s self under God’s authority.

¹²⁷“Gently, Sergeant, Gently,” *Time*, November 15, 1948.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

CHAPTER TWO

Promoting Moral and Spiritual Education in America's Fight against Godless Communism: The Character Guidance Program

“A rough old Army sergeant stood out in front of his young men and said: ‘General says he wants you all to go to church. So you are going, see! Any atheists in the house?’ Nobody raised a hand. ‘Okeh, that’s good. ‘Cause any of you guys would have to listen to an hour lecture on religion--by me.’ That was New Army.”¹ This was the tongue-in-cheek description of the “New Army” of the 1950s, as told by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The “New Army” represented military leaders’ attempts to improve the army and refashion its tarnished image by boosting morale and self-discipline. Religious and theistic instruction became primary tools in achieving a more winsome military image and in the efforts to create a wholesome and efficient task force.

The army’s chaplain-facilitated mandatory Character Guidance Program (CGP) became the primary vehicle for this education. The program, designed to “improve [soldiers’] principles and their morals,” was instituted army-wide on July 27, 1948.² Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall described the program as encouraging “the development of moral responsibility, spiritual values, and self-discipline.”³ Royall remarked that by 1949, the program had already boosted

¹Alfred Kay, “Draftees’ Training – M-1 Still the Soldiers’ Old Reliable,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, December 18, 1948.

²Department of the Army, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Army, 1948*, 1948, 8.

³Department of the Army, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Army, 1948*, 1949, 87.

church attendance and morale among soldiers. It appeared to Royall and “many observers” that the CGP had produced “a higher type of young man ... than ever before.”⁴

Royall’s observation offered the hope that the army had found a way to raise soldiers’ moral behavior, which could be an attractive selling point to a public wary of sending young men into jobs that might internally corrupt them. The army needed some hopeful news, since the end of WWII had left the forces with a staggering manpower deficit. Royall summed up the state of soldier morale just after WWII as “typified by the phrase, ‘When do I get out?’”⁵ It quickly became clear that strengthening the volunteer postwar force would necessitate “a recruiting effort far beyond any ever attempted in Army history.”⁶

The Fort Knox experiment covered in Chapter One was one of the ways that the military attempted to maintain force size and improve trainee morale by appealing to the sensibilities of young men and their parents. Like the Fort Knox experiment, the CGP was instituted in the army to boost morale and teach soldiers discipline through religious instruction, which also had the benefit of being good advertisement for the army.

Although Fort Knox’s campaign for UMT ultimately failed, the alleged success of Fort Knox prompted the Secretary of War Robert Patterson in January 1947 to mandate that army officers include the lectures on “citizenship and morality” used at Fort Knox in regular training.⁷ Patterson’s hope was that this moral education could help reduce the problems of discipline and venereal disease among the troops. In a letter to the Army Chief of Chaplains, he pledged command support to the chaplains who would be teaching the mandatory “citizenship and

⁴Ibid., 8.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Luther Miller, “The Chaplain’s Role in Character Guidance,” *Army Information Digest* 4, no. 8 (1949): 50.

morality” classes, since they had “a special responsibility for the moral and spiritual welfare of the troops.”⁸ By September 1947, these lectures, written by Chaplain Martin Scharlemann, a Missouri Synod Lutheran, were distributed to army chaplains in preparation for weekly mandatory training called “The Chaplain’s Hour.” Scharlemann continued to author the lectures until the mid-1950s, although his name was never mentioned in any of the publications.⁹

From The Chaplain’s Hour lectures a manual on Character Guidance was produced, and from this manual came the formal establishment of the CGP in 1948 as the army-wide program aimed at boosting morale. A Presidential Executive Order from October 27, 1948 stated that it was “the policy of the Government to encourage and promote the religious, moral and recreational welfare and character guidance of persons in the Armed Forces and thereby to enhance the military preparedness and security of the Nation.”¹⁰ Writing about the government’s recent turn to religion represented in the CGP, Chief of Chaplains Luther Miller pointed out that it was not a chaplain but the Army’s Chief of Staff who promoted the idea that “the spiritual force in any man’s life is a vital and determining factor in his thoughts, convictions, impulses and actions. Officers and enlisted men ... should have full opportunity ... to acquire knowledge of divine law and its practical implications.”¹¹ Miller was quoting General George Marshall, a favorite resource of subsequent army programs endorsing spiritual training.

⁸Robert P. Patterson to Chief of Chaplains, “Discipline and Venereal Disease,” January 24, 1947 (quoted in Rodger R. Venzke, *Confidence in Battle, Inspiration in Peace: The United States Army Chaplaincy 1945 - 1975* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977), 41).

⁹Rodger R Venzke, *Confidence in Battle, Inspiration in Peace: The United States Army Chaplaincy 1945 - 1975* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977), 41.

¹⁰Exec. Order No. 10013, 14 Fed. Reg. 6343 (Oct. 27, 1948).

¹¹Gynther Storaasli, “The Evolution of the Chaplaincy,” *Army Information Digest* 5, no. 12 (1950): 30 – 31.

Although both the CGP and the Fort Knox programs were described as offering “moral and spiritual training” for the sake of boosting morale, there were notable differences in each program. Fort Knox’s commitment to “moral and spiritual” training was born from a desire to motivate young men to join the service and to be more productive, moral citizens. In contrast, the kind of spiritual education that the Cold War years forged in the CGP was focused on producing a believing force to combat the communist threats that endangered the American way of life. At stake in both conceptions of spiritual training was the welfare of the nation. In the mid-1940s when the Fort Knox material was developed, the nation’s welfare appeared to be endangered by ignorant American youth. By the later 1940s when the CGP materials were published, the nation’s welfare appeared to be threatened by faithless foreigners. Ignorant and ill-behaved American youth could injure America’s pride, but the threats of communism were much more serious: these could permanently damage the freedom of individuals, because unbelieving communists were seen as having wrong beliefs about authority. In order to maintain the democratic freedoms that characterized America, Americans would have to restore a trust in God.

While the *Chronicle’s* portrait of the New Army was not accurate (soldiers were not officially required to go to church, and sergeants rarely lectured about religion), it did capture the extent to which service education advocated for a belief in God and religious adherence as a part of training. Like the article insinuated, the mandatory CGP lectures communicated that the army was no place for atheists.

The CGP was noticeably forceful in its efforts to inculcate a belief in God. Scholar John Swomley, author of *The Military Establishment*, claimed that army reforms like the CGP effort to indoctrinate soldiers “were designed to convince people, especially those in churches, that the

Army was really a character-building agency and that a draft term would be a spiritual experience.”¹² In other words, the CGP’s religious messages were produced in order to compel civilian communities to send their sons into service. While this was undoubtedly true, CGP’s institutionalized spiritual training also represented an attempt to safeguard American liberties from dangerous communistic ideologies by educating soldiers about their true identities as creatures of God.

The CGP lectures from the 1940s throughout the early 1960s reveal the perspective that belief in God was as American as apple pie. The creation of a Code of Conduct in 1955 affirmed the CGP’s theistic messages by suggesting that belief in God would keep a soldier loyal to his country. This chapter examines the CGP lectures from the late 1940s until the late 1960s and the development of the 1955 Code of Conduct in order to investigate the contexts of official endorsements of “spiritual training.” Section one examines the theistic climate in the United States during the Cold War years, as this contributed significantly to the increased talk about the spirit and the specific theism endorsed in army education. The next section surveys the army’s CGP lectures, as these represented the most wide-spread attempt to institutionalize training articulated as “spiritual” in the military (the Fort Knox program affected 1300 trainees while the army’s CGP would affect over half a million soldiers in 1948).¹³ This chapter surveys the lecture content from 1948 until 1966, since the program would shift dramatically in 1968. The last section examines the Korean POW scandal in 1952 and the consequent implementation of the Code of Conduct.

¹²John Swomley, *The Military Establishment* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964), 81.

¹³US Army, Public Information Office, *The Fort Knox Experiment* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947): 12.

Spirituality in a Culture of Theism

The Cold War years demonstrated that concepts become spoken when they are no longer taken for granted. Talk about God and the importance of democracy became especially important in the late 1940s and early 50s because they were perceived to be threatened, not just by treasonous Americans but by a looming foreign enemy. Even more dangerous than this enemy's technology was its ideology.

The Cold War was cast as a war of ideology, a war for people's spirits. American leadership redoubled its efforts to strengthen the hearts and spirits of its people. It was in this era that the "individual" became a stressed topic in American rhetoric, in relief to communism's bland anonymity. Conceiving of people as spiritual thus had everything to do with preserving the dignity of the individual, the birthright of a democratic community given by God. In the mid-twentieth century United States, the project to preserve democracy was fueled by religious revivalism.

The CGP was an institutional product of this politically-charged religious revivalism. The program's outright references to religious beliefs and practices (outlined in the next section) reflected the fact that religious rhetoric had become a public currency that politicians, among others, took advantage of. In *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion*, historian Jeremy Gunn argues that before he ran for President, Eisenhower referred very little to God and faith.¹⁴ After he was elected, Eisenhower frequently made public

¹⁴T. Jeremy Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 54-75.

references to God, which he explained later in his autobiography as a way to curb what he observed as a tide of secularism.¹⁵

Scholars like Gunn, Lori Flynn Bogle, Mark Silk, and Jonathan Herzog have demonstrated how political officials relied on theistic rhetoric during the Cold War to create a sense of urgency to overcome communism and win the arms race.¹⁶ As a result, some presidential speeches were almost identical to some sermons during the late 1940s and throughout the 50s. Billy Graham, Harold Ockenga, and President Eisenhower had all preached from a public pulpit that the *only* way to defeat communism was through a spiritual revival based on a religious reliance on God.¹⁷ The circumstances of the Cold War meant that there was more at stake in the government's endorsement of theistic nationalism than ever before. The American public also felt the need to turn "back to God" as a way to preserve democracy.

Church attendance had been declining in the first half of the twentieth century, and it appeared to many that Americans cared more about entertainment than they did religion.¹⁸ But the 1950s were a different story. Church attendance was high, and most Americans identified as Christians. The fact that Billy Graham rocketed to rock-star-like fame during this decade reflects a culture that easily granted authority and respect to those in the church.

¹⁵In his memoir *Mandate for Change*, Eisenhower explains his sudden increase in religious comments upon entering the presidency as "seeking a way to point out that we were getting too secular." *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956: The White House Years, A Personal Account*, First Edition (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1963), 100.

¹⁶See Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons*; Lori L. Bogle, *The Pentagon's Battle for the American Mind: The Early Cold War*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004); Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America Since World War II* (New York: Touchstone, 1989); and Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁷Anne C. Loveland, *American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military, 1942-1993* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 36.

¹⁸Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex*, 19.

Despite the fact that interest in religion was robust in the 1950s, political and religious leaders were constantly calling the nation to revival because of a perceived spiritual deterioration that was often labeled as a result of the rather nebulously invoked “secularism.” In the introduction to Reverend Edward L.R. Elson’s 1954 best-seller *America’s Spiritual Recovery*, J. Edgar Hoover wrote that “the spiritual forces that motivated the country to greatness have been forgotten.”¹⁹ Secularism, which he tied to materialism, was having “devastating effects” on the Christian way of life. Americans were not thinking about God as much, and the home was no longer the center of moral and spiritual education.²⁰

Throughout the introduction, Hoover made clear that religion, Christianity, morality, and spiritual discernment went together. He explained, “When spiritual guidance is at low ebb, moral principles are accordingly in a state of deterioration. Secularism advances in periods when men forget God. And it is in these periods that godless tyranny of atheistic Communism has made its greatest inroads.”²¹ American freedoms and moral sensibilities would fail if people forgot God and lost their source of spiritual guidance.

Like Hoover, Elson thought that secular influences were corrupting the American sense of morality. The evidences of corruption were everywhere: Americans no longer respected the Ten Commandments, they produced bad art, and researcher Alfred Kinsey had just published the horrifically salacious details of Americans’ sex lives in the Kinsey Report.²² The fundamental problems in this creeping age of secularism, Elson said, were moral and spiritual.²³ How had

¹⁹Edward Elson, *America’s Spiritual Recovery* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1954), 9.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*, 10.

²²*Ibid.*, 20-21.

²³*Ibid.*, 27.

Americans fallen so far? They had turned their backs on what had made them great in the first place, their spirituality and their religion. “America began in a spiritual quest. We achieved national existence by way of spiritual emancipation. We have survived because we are a religious people. When Americans act any other way than as a religious people they are not truly themselves.”²⁴ This same sentiment that “true,” “whole” people were religious ran throughout the CGP until 1968.

According to Elson, there was hope for America’s sorry spiritual state, and it was coming from an unlikely place: the nation’s capital. The chapter “Washington, Symbol of the Awakening” argued that Washington was one of the most religious cities in the world and that it was sparking a spiritual revival with its “infectious and transmissive” religious climate.²⁵ Eisenhower especially was bringing “a new moral tone and spiritual virility into American life.”²⁶ Evangelist Billy Graham also affirmed to evangelical listeners of his radio show “Hour of Decision” that Eisenhower would help bring about the spiritual revival that America needed.²⁷ The CGP lectures are replete with this same message that America’s full recovery would depend on a “spiritual revival” that only the government could properly effect.

President Eisenhower’s assumption that belief in God was not just American but would ultimately secure the nation’s safety materialized in various ways. He signed into law the insertion of “under God” into the Pledge of Allegiance on June 14, 1954. This addition was meant to “reaffirm the transcendence of religious faith in America’s heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country’s

²⁴Ibid., 33.

²⁵Elson, *America’s Spiritual Recovery*, 169.

²⁶Loveland, *American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military*, 35.

²⁷Ibid., 34.

most powerful resource, in peace or war.”²⁸ These “spiritual weapons” were clearly understood to be both theistic and religious.

American legislation too reflected the specifically theistic culture of the 1940s and 50s. In the 1952 Supreme Court decision *Zorach v. Clauson* that allowed students to leave during school hours for religious reasons, Chief Justice William O. Douglas famously asserted that “we are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.”²⁹ At the 1954 Presidential Prayer Breakfast, Chief Justice Earl Warren’s declared that “no great harm can come to our country” as long as Americans continued to “live ... in the spirit of the Christian religion.”³⁰ In the course of four years, government officials made sure that the “spirit of the Christian religion” was strong in American civic life. Congress ruled to add “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954, “In God We Trust” was printed on paper currency and made the national motto in 1956 and ‘57 respectively, and stone slabs of the Ten Commandments were placed all over the country in 1956.

But what exactly did government officials and the American public consider to be the protective element in the spiritual realm, and if belief was protective, how particular did it need to be? If Americans were religious in general, would this protect the country, or was one religion considered more protective than another? Furthermore, did the “right” religious practice necessitate a belief in God? If so, which God? Or if America would not be safe without an explicitly Christian confession of faith, which Christian confession would be most effective in providing the kind of spiritual strengthening that the nation supposedly needed?

²⁸Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Statement by the President Upon Signing Bill To Include the Words ‘Under God’ in the Pledge to the Flag,” June 14, 1954, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9920>.

²⁹*Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306 (1952).

³⁰“Breakfast in Washington,” *Time* (1954): 51.

A general Judeo-Christian orientation might have been good enough for government officials like Eisenhower and Truman, but Protestant evangelicals had a more specific perspective of what counted as God's truth, and their numbers were growing rapidly during the same time period that the CGP was developing. Evangelicals formally coalesced in the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in 1942 in response to what they saw as increasing secularism in America. Scholar George Marsden described 1950s evangelicalism as a culture that affirmed the trademarks of preacher Billy Graham.³¹ One of these was a passionate desire to share the gospel of Christ.

After WWII, the NAE saw the dearth of new army recruits (which included chaplains) as a ministry opportunity and worked aggressively to place evangelical chaplains in the military.³² The NAE continued to pour resources in to the military. The organization sponsored spiritual retreats for personnel stationed in Japan and Germany in the late 1950s and organized ministry groups including the Officer's Christian Fellowship, Christian Ministry Fellowship and the Christian Servicemen's Fellowship in the 1960s and 70s.³³

Leaders like William K. Harrison, "The Bible-Reading General" who served under MacArthur, encouraged the distribution of bibles, invited missionaries over to his house in Japan, and wrote about his experience "as a Christian in the US Army."³⁴ Harrison was also regularly heard espousing end time propaganda on the Word of Life radio program sponsored by the

³¹George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 6.

³²Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 16.

³³*Ibid.*, 17.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 44.

Officer's Christian Union.³⁵ At a NAE convention in 1955, Harrison interpreted the main point of the Character Guidance lectures as communicating that "the course of civilization is toward self-destruction [and] only God can prevent its totality."³⁶

Evangelicals were glad that the military placed new emphasis on life's spiritual dimension in the CGP, but some were dissatisfied with the army's nonsectarian approach, as the next chapter demonstrates. Some thought that the materials were missing critical discussions about how a personal faith in Jesus Christ could save soldiers.³⁷ This particularity was emblematic of evangelical thinking: even during the 1950s, the decade in the twentieth century mythologized for its high religious adherence and stringent moral codes, the NAE's magazine *United Evangelical Action* doubted that the military's efforts could reform inherent sinners.³⁸ The CGP taught about God (until 1968), but not about Christ. For some evangelicals, this meant it could only ever be partially effective.

Because of the anonymity of the CGP authors, it is impossible to say how many self-identifying evangelicals worked to produce its content. Although the specifics are unknown, it is significant that the CGP was produced in an environment in which evangelical culture was growing in strength and prestige. While the CGP lectures were not specific enough to appease some evangelicals, some of them contained traces of evangelical belief by referring to the importance of believing in a "personal" God. Even if the CGP was not distinct enough in its

³⁵William K. Harrison, "Is the United States Right in Bombing North Viet Nam?," *Christianity Today* 10, no. 7 (1966): 25-26.

³⁶James DeForest Murch, ed., "Responsibility in Leadership and Service," *United Evangelical Action* 14, no. 6 (1955): 5.

³⁷See Loveland's chapter "Securing a Beachhead in the Federal Government" in *American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military*.

³⁸James DeForest Murch, ed., "Morals in Training," *United Evangelical Action* 14, no. 20 (1955): 8.

religious education for evangelicals, the growth of this group in the military helps to explain why the program's theistic emphasis enjoyed relative longevity.

Character Guidance Program Lectures: Spirituality and Theism in the New Army

Character Guidance lectures, which were produced irregularly, covered a range of topics about virtues like responsibility and chastity and were meant to help guide behaviors in certain environments such as in marriage or at work.³⁹ They also aimed to inculcate soldiers' sense of duty to themselves, to others, to their country, and last, to God. This section provides an outline of what soldiers were taught about God, religion, and spiritual living in the CGP until the late 1960s, when the program content was altered considerably due to societal pressures. These lectures, selected from over eighty-eight CGP lectures, represent the ways that the program emphasized the importance of the spirit, spirituality, religion, and belief in God in soldiers' lives. An examination of these lectures reveals that what counted as "spiritual training" in the mid-century military was composed of theistic education often communicated with Judeo-Christian language.

An Army Field Manual described the CGP as a "human relations" program, a tool of "moral management" for commanders, and for chaplains, a "means of laying the ethical groundwork for devoted response to the demands of God and Country."⁴⁰ The manual defined character guidance as including "all actions that tend to encourage growth in moral responsibility, spiritual values, and the strong self-discipline of the individual."⁴¹ The stated

³⁹Most of the lectures are found in the DA PAM 16 series. The process of supersession (the replacement of one manual with another) followed no apparent pattern. There were at least 88 lectures. See Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 41.

⁴⁰US Army, *Character Guidance Manual*, FM-16-100 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961), 2.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

purpose of the program was to “assist the commander in promoting healthy mental, moral, and social attitudes” by developing “the moral fiber and religious motivation of the American soldier to fortify him with the weapons of faith and courage.”⁴² The manual also described CGP instruction as “nonsectarian and nondenominational” and identified voluntary religious programs as the proper place for “denominational” religion.⁴³ The CGP, the manual assumed, was not “denominational” but based on “moral and spiritual” principles.⁴⁴

The most basic project of the CGP could be boiled down to motivating soldiers to be more disciplined in the cause of the military’s mission. In a 1955 report on the CGP, Chaplain Henry Butt described the program’s goal as “developing and maintaining in the fighting man the moral and spiritual traits that will cause him to give his life for his God and his country, if necessary.”⁴⁵ However, the program represented more than just an attempt to boost force morale and efficiency.

CGP lectures make clear that the stakes of properly educating soldiers in “character guidance” were far higher than simply meeting the military’s demands: at risk was the connection that humans had to God as creatures and the benefit of that relationship, individual freedom. Commanders might have viewed the program’s education as a tool for increasing efficiency, but the chaplain authors saw it as a chance to save democracy from the clutches of communism and to salvage individual freedom and social morality from the malaise of atheism. Belief in God would have a powerful and wide-spread effects: it would energize and empower

⁴²Ibid., 3.

⁴³Ibid., 4.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Henry Butt, “Integration of the Code of Conduct into the Character Guidance Program” (Fort Slocum, NY: The Chaplain School, 1955), 12.

individuals with a sense of purpose and duty, and these would enable them to maintain new standards of self-discipline. This energetic self-discipline would manifest in the perfection of soldiers' service and home communities. Democracy and America would flourish with both the military and civilian sectors strengthened. There appeared to be no down side to character guidance; soldiers would feel fulfilled, commanders would see performance results, civilian communities would be improved, and democracy would be saved.

Until the late 1960s when the material changed drastically, CGP lectures made clear that the key factor in creating this winning scenario was belief in God. The CGP's arguments for why a belief in God was so important followed two main themes. First, belief in God secured a sense of obligation in the soldier, and this sense allowed him to behave morally. Second, belief in God enabled a soldier to have true self-knowledge, which allowed one to live authentically, causing a soldier to be productive and happy. These two themes, examined in detail in the next subsections, can still be seen in the army's 2009 program that educated soldiers about "spiritual fitness" (covered in Chapter Five).

Belief in God Secures Obligation

A close examination of the CGP's arguments for belief in God reveals the cultivation of an extensive network of obligation. Lectures argued that Americans were obligated to God, individuals were obligated to God and their communities, soldiers were obligated to God and their country, US civilians were obligated to soldiers, and the "irreligious" were obligated to the religious. Inculcating a strong sense of obligation was an important part of the CGP because, as the lectures assumed, democratic freedoms could survive only in a culture that recognized its obligations.

According to the CGP, America had a proper understanding of its obligations. The most important obligation a nation could have was to God, but not all nations recognized this. A 1951 lecture titled “The Nation We Serve” taught that there were three types of nations: covenant nations, secular nations, and demonic nations. As a “covenant nation,” America was uniquely obligated to God because God had allowed democracy to flourish by endowing American citizens with the strength and will to dignify individualism. If America did not publicly demonstrate its allegiance to God, it might end up like the “secular nations” of France or Uruguay, which “eliminate God from all official connection with its public life.”⁴⁶ Secular nations that wrongly valued their own countries more than God put at risk the very thing that made America great: its emphasis on individual freedoms. Such nations might still value individual freedom, but if they did not recognize God as the benefactor of “Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality,” these freedoms could not be guaranteed.⁴⁷

The CGP message that democratic freedom could not be secured in countries that did not put God first was one that the American public was growing more and more familiar with. Eisenhower would espouse this same view in a televised speech he made for the American Legion’s “Back to God” program in 1955. He remarked that while the “founding fathers” “recognized God as the author of individual rights, [and] declared that the purpose of government is to secure those rights,” other countries did not.⁴⁸ He took for granted, as the writers of the CGP did, that fellow Americans agreed that democratic freedom was the natural

⁴⁶US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics: Duty, Honor, Country*, DA PAM 16-5 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1951), 25.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁸Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Remarks Recorded for the ‘Back-to-God’ Program of the American Legion,” February 20, 1955. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed August 28, 2014, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10414>.

consequence of a government that acknowledged God's authority, calling it a "self-evident truth."⁴⁹ Eisenhower also warned viewers that the states that claimed full authorship over rights without regard for God were not to be trusted to guard those rights; they might at any time, for any reason, decide to take them away. Like Eisenhower's speech, the CGP lectures displayed a deep distrust of individuals and institutions that did not pay homage to God because they could not be counted on to act on another's behalf. Only a common belief in God would provide the checks and balances needed to ensure that the powers of the federal and state governments would not run roughshod over individuals.

A nation that did not recognize God could not at the same time be trusted to care for its citizens, and unbelieving individuals could not be trusted to act responsibly towards their communities. The reason for this pivoted on an individual sense of identity based on the belief that God made people. One lecture revealed that "the real reason you and I are free is not that you are you, and I am I. The only reason why the state must never presume to dictate to me my manner of life and thought is not that I am myself, but that I am a child of God."⁵⁰ Individual freedom was not a dignified concept based on its own merits; rather, individuals deserved the dignity of freedom only as creatures of God. And if God was the benefactor of an individual's freedom, then that individual was obligated to God.

Furthermore, a person who felt obligated to God had a fundamentally different understanding of power than someone who did not believe, and this difference directly impacted the potentials of freedom within a community. A lecture on the value of worship explained this difference as "the irreligious man says, 'Freedom is my right to do as I please.' However, our

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1951), 75.

religion tells us, ‘Freedom is the right to do what I *ought* to do.’⁵¹ Lectures repeatedly assumed that the “irreligious” had less of a sense of “ought” or feeling of obligation towards others. The actions of secular nations, composed of irreligious people, could be chaotic, unpredictable, and cruel because there was no overarching divine authority that people looked to for daily guidance.⁵²

However, the religious soldier could be counted on to do the right thing because he weighed the morality of actions by considering whether or not it was something of which God would approve. Foul language was wrong because it was “a perversion of God’s gift of speech.”⁵³ Sexual abstinence outside of marriage was necessary because this was “God’s natural law,” which also dictated that those married should not divorce.⁵⁴ Soldiers were taught that when judging if a goal or emotion was a worthy pursuit, they should ask if it was “in accord with God’s law and my own obligations.”⁵⁵ It was often taken for granted that the soldier would be able to discern the answers to these questions.

A community that maintained belief in God could be trusted to work together to safeguard each other from abuses of power. This was because, as one lecture put it, “If I am free because I am a child of God, there is no risk that I’ll take advantage of this freedom to ruin the next man; for he is also a child of God.”⁵⁶ The CGP lectures make clear that only religious

⁵¹Ibid., 76.

⁵²Ibid., 25-28.

⁵³US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics: Duty, Honor, Country*, DA PAM 16-6 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961), 61.

⁵⁴US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics: Duty, Honor, Country*, DA PAM 16-8 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 54.

⁵⁵Ibid., 37.

⁵⁶Ibid., 75.

people understood how real freedom worked, and suggested that they were uniquely motivated to preserve it.

The worst sort of nation was referred to as a “demonic nation.” These were even more dangerous than “secular nations” that did not acknowledge God because they worshipped a government or ruler in God’s place. Hitler’s Germany had committed this blasphemy: instead of looking to God for an understanding of morality, Hitler “became, in fact, God made manifest to men.”⁵⁷ The consequences were disastrous.

“The Nation We Serve” lecture taught that thankfully, America was demonstrating its “covenant nation” identity in its “public institutional and official thinking,” which “reflected a faith in the existence and the importance of divine providence.”⁵⁸ The American government did this by opening each Congressional session in prayer and by having officials sworn in by placing a hand on the Bible. But the “quickest test” to see if America was a covenant nation required glancing at American currency. Such a test proved America’s status in the eyes of God, since “In God We Trust” and *Annuity coeptis* (translated in the lecture as “He [God] has favored our undertakings”) were both indicators of faith.⁵⁹ America, unlike France or Germany, was a covenant nation because of its public declaration of faith in God, and as a covenant nation, it had responsibilities towards God.⁶⁰

A soldier especially was obligated to believe in God because this belief allowed him to do his job better. If a soldier believed that freedom was God-given, then its value was higher. The more valued freedom was, the harder soldiers would fight for it. If the army could be

⁵⁷US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1951), 27.

⁵⁸Ibid., 29.

⁵⁹Ibid., 30. The phrase “In God We Trust” had been printed on coins since the Civil War era.

⁶⁰Ibid., 32.

convinced that God was the source of freedom, then it would become a more efficient force.

One lecture emphasized this by concluding that “it is people of religion who have the courage to fight for freedom and the vigilance to keep it.”⁶¹ Believing soldiers were critical members of a covenant nation because they had the determination vital for protecting democracy.

The CGP taught that the risks of spiritual lethargy in the military were so great that the entire nation could rise or fall based on the strength or weakness of each soldier’s moral fiber. Based on this assumption, the stated objective in a 1951 pamphlet taught that “each (soldier) is accountable and responsible to his Creator for the way he performs his civic and his military duty, for the maintenance of his own and the Nation’s honor, and for the quality of the service he renders to his country as a member of the honorable profession of arms.”⁶² Another lecture argued that the faith of soldiers determined the fate of the country. Soldiers were warned, “it is going to make a big difference whether you and I do, or do not, take seriously the words: ‘I am the Lord, thy God; *thou* shalt have no other gods before Me.’”⁶³ For those in the armed forces, paying homage to God was an occupational necessity.

In the CGP’s networks of obligation, the nation was obligated to the military for maintaining the beliefs of its soldiers. Veterans were recognized as especially understanding the importance of a theistic orientation. One lecture quoted Eisenhower’s claim that “veterans realize, perhaps more clearly than others, the prior place that Almighty God holds in our national life. And they can appreciate, through personal experience, that the really decisive battleground of American freedom is in the hearts and minds of our own people.”⁶⁴ Military personnel knew

⁶¹Ibid., 75.

⁶²US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1951), iii.

⁶³Ibid., 60.

⁶⁴Eisenhower, “Remarks Recorded for the ‘Back-to-God’ Program.”

the power of belief in God because they had been through times of real danger and distress. Their belief in God enabled them to make personal sacrifices that kept the country safe, and for this, the nation was indebted to the military. A 1962 lecture on “esprit” clarified that the whole nation could die if those defending it lost their motivation to perform. America’s success was largely attributed to the strength of the armed forces’ “spirits”: “Our nation owes its cohesion, its unity, its freshness, its youthful vigor to the spirit, the ‘heart’ that animates its body, the spirit of its corps of citizen-soldiers.”⁶⁵

Just as the nation owed its thanks to the armed forces for sustaining themselves spiritually, the “irreligious” were obligated to the religious for their work in securing God’s good graces. One pamphlet suggested that the instructor ask soldiers why the following quote from a *Life* magazine article was true (not *if* it was true):

No doubt most Americans are less religious than they should be. They then owe a vast and continuing debt to the saving remnant in their midst, who do hunger and thirst after righteousness and walk humbly before their God. They do not do this for America’s sake; *but without them America would be little more than a geographical expression.*⁶⁶

America would not be America without the “saving remnant” whose adoration kept the country flourishing. This exercise demonstrates the networks of obligations that the CGP taught, but also how religion and belief in God were often conflated. It was assumed that the “religious” had a belief in God and vice-versa.

Atheists specifically were threats to the future of democracy because they had no sense of the network of obligations assumed to anchor moral behavior and safeguard communities. A 1951 lecture plainly put it,

⁶⁵US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-8 (1962), 22.

⁶⁶“The American Moral Consensus,” *Life*, December 1955, 57 (quoted in US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-6, 1961, 62).

A man without God can be, and often is, something of a menace to our country. For to a man without God there is no longer any right, nor any wrong. What is to his personal advantage then becomes right; and what hurts him is wrong. Soon the next man feels the same way; and before long we are all at each other's throats or knifing each other in the back, destroying the social order by our neglect of God in our failure to worship Him.⁶⁷

Another lecture pointed out that communities that “omit God and His law from their way of doing things” jeopardize the possibility of personal liberty: “Without God we are no longer creatures of God in our convictions; instead we have become selfish animals for whom life has turned into one mad scramble of ‘dog eat dog.’”⁶⁸ A different lecture made a similar point, arguing that people who act out of disregard for God (saying, “Nuts to you [God]; I’m writing my own [rules]”) are like drivers who do not follow traffic rules.⁶⁹ This careless behavior would undoubtedly end in a crash.

Again, this message about the dangers of atheism was growing more familiar to Americans. In the same “Back-to-God” program mentioned before, Eisenhower warned Americans that the freedom they had come to enjoy was endangered by an ever-looming atheism. “Without God, there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life. Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first--the most basic--expression of Americanism.”⁷⁰ The idea that there would be *no America* and thus no freedom without recognizing God was central to the Character Guidance education throughout the late 1960s.

Lectures often assumed that people could not be trusted to maintain the social order on their own, as they did not inherently possess a sense of duty or obligation to each other. This sense of obligation all started with a recognition of God’s existence. Without recognizing God,

⁶⁷US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1951), 76.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 75.

⁷⁰ Eisenhower, “Remarks Recorded for the ‘Back-to-God’ Program.”

each person would think only of caring for his own self and would act on emotional impulse. This would lead to chaos, to everyone “knifing each other in the back.” There is no hint in this example of an unbeliever being able to appeal to logic or ethics to arbitrate errant desires. Nor is there any hint that people might naturally wish to coexist peacefully. Humankind is clearly depraved, both emotionally and intellectually. According to the lecture, the root of all problems was not economic, political, or social in nature. It was an unbelief in God or worse, “an unwillingness even to give matters of religion any serious thought.”⁷¹

This unwillingness could be boiled down to sheer selfishness, which was described as a “sickness” and “moral disease.” Those who did not recognize their dependence on God were “tin gods;” roses that had “cut themselves off from the sun.”⁷² The only medicine to cure the disease of self was found in “a return to worship,” and only worship would restore freedom in America.⁷³ Worship could cure soldiers of selfishness by helping first to “get rid of our tiny selves that make us so crowded on the inside” and then by filling the self with God instead.⁷⁴ Soldiers were told that a life of worship was spent at “the chapel on the Sabbath, not playing ping-pong at the service club.”⁷⁵

Worship, the collective endeavor to honor God, had multiple benefits. In addition to properly securing one’s sense of obligation to God and others, it also served to provide a solution to how a large group of diverse people could be compelled to live together harmoniously: “There

⁷¹US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1951), 76.

⁷²Ibid., 71.

⁷³Ibid., 76.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-6 (1961), 70.

is no finer way to get the ‘I’s’ to blending into ‘we’ than to have your life guided by the principle of adoration, the worship of God.”⁷⁶

Illustrating Americans as united was important for CGP authors, as they wanted to demonstrate to soldiers in the era of atheist communism that some conformity of belief was what ultimately sustained democracy. Even though the lectures tried to cultivate a uniformity in belief, they also suggested that religious participation did not undercut the value of diversity. In fact, a 1961 lecture on responsibility taught that Americans had a duty to protect individual differences.⁷⁷ Going to church could aid in this duty, since it offered the chance to engage with different people. There, one could encounter people with different eye colors, nationalities, racial features, and dinner preferences.⁷⁸

Church offered something even better than a mere encounter with difference, however. It offered a chance to connect on common ground. Common belief would be the bridge that would allow different people access to each other, and it would provide people with background differences a chance at civil coexistence. A 1961 field manual argued this point by insisting that “brotherhood” could be found, even in a sea of difference, by recognizing God as the father of all.⁷⁹ Church provided the common meeting ground for this “brotherhood” to form, where different people could come together and be united through the belief that everyone was made and treasured by God. In one sense, the experience of church provided an experiential blueprint for how democracy could flourish.

⁷⁶US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1951), 76.

⁷⁷US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-6 (1961), 66.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 66.

⁷⁹US Army, *Character Guidance Manual*, FM 16-100 (1961), 14.

Belief in God Offers Wholeness and Authenticity

In addition to cultivating a sense of obligation in soldiers, CGP lectures about faith in God also tried to cultivate soldiers' knowledge of the self. Lectures throughout the CGP history mention the benefits of self-knowledge, but two related lectures particularly emphasized its importance. A 1951 lecture titled "The Complete Person" and a 1961 lecture titled "The Real Self" offered two slightly different perspectives on the benefit of authenticity that one gained from believing in God.

A 1951 lecture titled "The Complete Person," taught that a soldier could only be a "complete" person by recognizing the existence of his own soul. However, the only way to recognize the soul was by acknowledging God. The soul was described as a "mysterious something" that allowed people to be more than just physical bodies.⁸⁰ Religions already knew that the body was more than just "a spinal column, a tuft of hair, dangling limbs, and a few glands."⁸¹ Religious traditions treated people as dignified and their bodies as temples because of their belief in the soul.

The soul was described as having four faculties: knowing, feeling, willing, and believing. Essentially, the soul was understood to be what animated the rest of the person and ignited the soldier's potential. Not every capability of the soul was equal, however. The "best use" of the soul was found in "remember[ing] 'now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.'"⁸² Likewise, the "highest" knowledge one could achieve was "to know God, our Creator."⁸³

⁸⁰US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1951), 55.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid., 56.

⁸³Ibid.

One's conscience was a part of the soul's faculty of knowing. Only by recognizing the soul would one be able to understand the difference between right and wrong and to have the will to behave morally.⁸⁴ By implication, a soldier who did not recognize God or the existence of his soul could not behave morally or fully function, given that the soul was what charged a person's capacity to know, feel, will, and believe. An unbeliever would always be broken or incomplete.

The 1961 lecture "The Real Person" also emphasized the importance of self-knowledge, but the religious logic it espoused was more subtle than in "The Complete Person." Instead of teaching about the soul, this lecture demonstrated more interest in authenticity and introspection, two topics that were more popular in the early 1960s than in the 1950s. Still present though less articulated was the idea that recognizing God ultimately taught that self-knowledge unlocked the capacities for right behavior.

This lecture appealed to an assumed desire for personal introspection, at least at first. "Who am I really? How can I get in touch with the real self, underlying all my surface behavior?"⁸⁵ The lecture suggested that all people asked themselves these questions, and acknowledged that discovering the answers was important for Americans because they believed in people's "inherent dignity."⁸⁶ Although the lecture states that the purpose of discussing questions about identity was to help the soldier "find your own solution," listeners were told early on that "an individual with a sense of religious responsibility does not find [the answer] too difficult."⁸⁷ The answer was, "I am a person ... created by God. If, then, I live my life

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics* DA PAM 16-6 (1961), 44.

⁸⁶Ibid., 45.

⁸⁷Ibid., 44.

according to God’s purpose, and place myself under His Divine Providence, I will achieve the greatest possible ... happiness and ... when this business of living has been completed--I will enjoy never-ending happiness.”⁸⁸

Ironically, the next paragraph described a real person as “self-owned, self-possessed, self-controlled, and therefore master of his own acts.”⁸⁹ Part of what allowed a person to be self-possessed was the ability to face challenges in life. God could help with this, the lecture taught: “a person who is conscious of a Divine Providence and aware of the existence of a personal God, is strengthened by the realization that he is not alone in his struggle with life’s problems.”⁹⁰ A real person was also “well-organized” or productive.⁹¹ A real person set goals and then focused his energy enough to achieve their objectives. Like an “efficient machine,” a real person possessed a “harmonious powerful motion” generated by the smooth and cooperative functioning of all of his parts.⁹² Like “the well-designed engine” a real person “is forcefully and energetically effective.”⁹³ This same assumption that authenticity produced more efficient workers would feature prominently in future military programs that endorsed spiritual education.

Unfortunately, there were many people who were “merely acting” or “playing a role” because they had not discovered their “real” selves, the lecture warned. These people who had not discovered how to live authentically naturally behaved in ways that were also inauthentic. Because inauthentic behavior lacked integrity by definition, people who were not real could only

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-6 (1961),45.

⁹⁰Ibid., 47.

⁹¹Ibid., 50.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

ever behave immorally. Eventually though, people who chose to “play a role” would meet undesired consequences once “the masquerade caught up...”⁹⁴ What was meant by this was unclear, but what was indicated was that the only way to have moral integrity and live a vibrant life was by being a “real self.”

Personal Benefits of Believing in God

The personal benefits to having faith in God, which anchored one’s sense of obligation to others and revealed a true understanding of the self, were numerous. The CGP lectures communicated that a believing soldier could expect to live a morally upright, fulfilled, and adventurous life full of friendship and increased productivity and motivation.

By working on their characters and growing their belief in God, soldiers were taught that they could feel energized and productive. They could become “adjusted, useful members of society, [the] community, and the Army.”⁹⁵ Another lecture promised that “religion gives you power”; it “remakes people, gives you a motor so you can ‘go.’”⁹⁶

Even more importantly, belief in God would make a person morally upright. A soldier who had proper sense of obligation and self-knowledge would be clean-mouthed, honest, chaste, self-disciplined, patient, wise, courageous, and sacrificial. In fact, a full lecture was devoted to each of those virtues.

Peppered throughout the CGP lectures was also the message that a believing soldier would have the strength to persevere. This kind of soldier would stand his ground in combat, no

⁹⁴Ibid., 44.

⁹⁵US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-6 (1961), 4.

⁹⁶US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1951), 58.

matter the circumstances. Two stories in the 1961 lecture on “Perseverance” illustrated the idea that combat pressure would not crack men “of resolute character.” The first was about 19-year-old Bobby Bush from South Bend, Washington: “He was silhouetted atop Okinawa Ridge giving plasma to a wounded buddy when the Japanese counterattacked. With one hand he held up the plasma bottle, with the other fired at the enemy. He hit six before losing his right eye.”⁹⁷

The second told of Private Harold Moon, who fought in the invasion of Leyte. After an attack he was the only able-bodied soldier left in his perimeter, so he collected all of the extra ammunition he could find and retreated to a fortified spot. He was surrounded after being under fire, alone, for four hours. When his attackers rushed at him with bayonets, he “calmly steadied his tommygun between his knees, and calling to the Japanese to come and get him, he emptied the entire magazine into them, killing eighteen before they overwhelmed and killed him.”⁹⁸

These were “men of character” who attempted to accomplish their assigned missions despite the hellacious circumstances.⁹⁹ What is notable about these stories is not just the morbidity or the rare endurance displayed by the Americans under siege but that they were held up in a lecture about perseverance as illustrating true virtue. It would be hard to imagine the same kind of example lionized after Vietnam, when emptying entire magazines into people was not as easily read as the virtuous practice of a man of faith.

But the early 1960s were quite different from the late 1960s in that American faith in the military and in God had not been shaken yet. In fact, the 1961 field manual mentioned that army research had found that “fighting” soldiers were better on numerous levels than “nonfighters,”

⁹⁷US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-6 (1961), 31.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 32.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 30-31.

soldiers who did not stand their ground during combat. “Fighters” had “higher IQ’s, higher levels of educational achievement, attitudes of cooperation and conscientiousness, higher type home background, more stable job responsibility and income.” They also “showed happy and disciplined loyalty to family, religious faith, and moral conviction.” These character traits allowed soldiers to persevere through attacks or imprisonment.¹⁰⁰

Non-fighters in combat, on the other hand, were supposedly proven to have “lower IQs, less education, less proficiency in vocational and social backgrounds, attitudes of irresponsibility, deprived home circumstances--often broken or unhappy--shiftlessness in civilian jobs, or indifference to socially desirable values.”¹⁰¹ Negative qualities like these, which were assumed to have been caused ultimately by not knowing God, tuned soldiers into “quitters” who were “nervously ineffective under enemy fire.”¹⁰² Such assumptions bolstered the axiom “there are no atheists in foxholes” by suggesting not that the atheist converted to belief in God when under fire, but that an atheist would not be capable of braving a foxhole to begin with.

Belief in God would also allow a soldier to feel worth, as a creature loved by God. This reasoning was in line with a main CGP objective, stated in the 1961 field manual as “affirm[ing] the dignity of the individual.”¹⁰³ The field manual noted that this goal was especially pertinent after the world had recently “witnessed a denial of natural rights and human dignity on a scale perhaps unparalleled in history.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰US Army, *Character Guidance Manual*, FM 16-100 (1961), 14-15.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 13.

The fruits of following God were found in a satisfying life, even if it entailed great personal sacrifice. A lecture on charity insisted that

The charitable man has the inner satisfaction of a life lived in conformity with what God asks of us, and he experiences the deep enrichment which must come from the practice of the greatest of all the virtues. No man can fail when he is genuinely concerned with carrying out the Great Commandment: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.’¹⁰⁵

Learning how to live for God and for others allowed one a fuller life because it freed a person from the burden of self. Losing the self “in something greater” was not just a “religious concept but also good practical common sense on how to achieve real happiness.”¹⁰⁶ As one lecture explained, “the legless veteran who undertakes this work of losing himself does not have time to feel sorry for himself.”¹⁰⁷

A 1951 lecture taught that worshipping God satisfied basic human needs for friendship, security and a sense of worth. Worship even provided a person with a lifetime of adventure. A believer could feel worth by recognizing himself as a forgiven sinner. Furthermore, believers could find friendship with God through prayer, as well as a sense of security. Lest one think a life of worship was dull, the lecture taught that “there is no higher adventure than that of one’s religion, the constant spiritual warfare against the forces of darkness. Since the ‘prince of this world’ never rests, there is no end to the battle against the evil one....Anyone who walks with God has discovered that there is nothing like the adventure of faith.”¹⁰⁸ The lecture author apparently assumed that soldier listeners were hankering for more adventures in battle. If they were, then a life of faith promised an epic battle with “the evil one” on an extended battlefield.

¹⁰⁵US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-8 (1962), 69.

¹⁰⁶US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-6 (1961), 98.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1951), 75.

CGP lectures taught that belief in God was important for many reasons, not least of which was that it would allow soldiers to do their jobs well. The power of faith became even more apparent to CGP authors and government officials in the wake of the 1951 Korean POW crisis. The next section outlines this crisis, the resulting development of a Code of Conduct for the armed forces, and the theistic interpretation of the crisis in CGP lectures in order to illumine the logic behind the urgency to mandate theistic education in the mid-century military.

Deciphering Treason: Korean Defectors and the Crisis of Faith

In 1952, the American public made a horrifying discovery: the year before, twenty-one GIs had defected to Korea while prisoners of war (POW). That any blue-blooded American would freely choose to side with “commies”--or as a hero in the 1951 film *One Lonely Night* described them, “red sons-of-bitches who should have died long ago”--was unthinkable. Psychological investigations quickly produced explanations for this alarming lack of patriotism that frequently invoked the term “brainwashing.” The defection made clear that the Red Threat was even greater than previously thought. Not only were communists power hungry, trigger-happy, and godless, they could also control minds. Communists had already displayed what to many Americans was a callous disregard for basic material and religious freedoms; now it appeared that they could and would steal a soldier’s mind as well.

The Korean War POW incident confirmed the idea that the real battlefield of war was both invisible and internal to an individual. But the nation was searching for reasons that would more concretely explain what internally could have gone so wrong to have caused young American men to commit treason. Could the POW weakness be explained as primarily a mental and psychological breakdown, or an intellectual weakness, or was the failure biological in

nature? Or did this incident speak more to moral infirmity or to weak religious conviction? Interpretations about what had happened abounded, along with training suggestions.

The Defense Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War, organized in May 1955 by Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson, acknowledged the harsh physical environments that detainees endured, and that some had been tortured and psychologically manipulated.¹⁰⁹ While most of the POWs had not been “brainwashed,” nearly all had been subjected to “high-powered indoctrination for propaganda purposes.”¹¹⁰ The Committee on POWs determined that it was not machinery or materiel that won wars, but each soldier’s control of internal resources: “War has been defined as ‘a contest of wills.’ A trained hand holds the weapon. But the will, the character, the spirit of the individual--these control the hand. More than ever, in the war for the minds of men moral character, will, spirit are important. As a serviceman thinketh so is he.”¹¹¹ The Committee concluded that what the defectors lacked was “spiritual stiffening.” More than anything, this was the key to winning the “world-wide war for the minds of men.”¹¹²

American POWs had demonstrated spiritual weakness partly because they were ignorant, the Committee decided. Many of the POWs were teenagers who had never heard of Marx and did not know much about communism. Furthermore, the POWs’ knowledge about the United States’ ideals and traditions was paltry; they hardly knew what they stood for as American soldiers. Because of their limited knowledge, the Committee determined that many POWs had

¹⁰⁹Vernon Davis, *The Long Road Home: U.S. Prisoner of War Policy and Planning in Southeast Asia*, Office of the Secretary of Defense (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000), 11.

¹¹⁰Department of Defense. Office of Armed Forces Information and Education. *The U.S. Fighting Man's Code* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), 12-13.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 13.

“lost their battle before they entered the service.”¹¹³ The process of spiritually stiffening the troops necessarily began with creating stricter, more explicit guidelines for soldier behavior.

These guidelines were presented in the Code of Conduct. President Eisenhower signed an Executive order for the Code in August 1955, and by December of 1957 it was issued as a part of Army Regulations. The Code provided the “fighting man” with a succinct rationale for why he should fight and offered a short guide for how to survive war traumas.

The Committee recommended that civilians also take the Code to heart because they too were responsible for the POWs’ weak resistance. Homes, schools, churches, and communities had failed to adequately educate and motivate the young soldiers.¹¹⁴ Given this failing and the internal nature of the new era of “total war,” the Committee suggested that civilians adopt the Code themselves.¹¹⁵ Besides, the thermo-nuclear technology had turned the home front into merely “an extension of the fighting front.” If “there [were] no distant front lines, remote no man’s lands, far-off rear areas” in modern warfare, then every citizen was a soldier, and had a duty to uphold the spirit of the Code.¹¹⁶ As a result of the expanding battlefield, the Committee decided that every American citizen needed special internal training to share in “the responsibility for the maintenance and preservation of the United States.”¹¹⁷ If training American citizens was not possible, it was even more critical for servicemen to get proper, thorough training so they could improve their civilian communities when they returned.

¹¹³Ibid., 13.

¹¹⁴Department of Defense. *The U.S. Fighting Man's Code*, 13.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 31.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 32.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 31.

Like the CGP, the Code was produced to cultivate a strong sense of patriotism in soldiers and civilians by educating them about their moral responsibilities. Also similar to the CGP, the Code assumed that a faith in God was critical for soldiers, especially during trying times like POW imprisonment. For this reason, Article VI of the Code included the statement, “I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.” The brief description that accompanied the Article included acknowledging that although POW life was hard, prisoners “should look to his God for strength to endure whatever may befall” for the duration of imprisonment.¹¹⁸

Because both the CGP and the Code had to do with the regulation of “character,” teaching the Code could naturally accompany the CGP lectures. As a result, CGP authors were instructed to weave discussions about the Code into character education. In teaching about the Code, CGP authors offered their own interpretation of the POW defection. This interpretation was similar to the one that the Committee on POWs had produced, but it was noticeably different from other, more “secular” interpretations. The CGP taught soldiers that the North Korean defections occurred mainly because those defecting did not have enough faith in God. The North Korean incident and the Code of Conduct offered convenient talking points for conveying the message that belief in God was an important motivator for moral and patriotic behavior.

Various CGP materials erroneously interpreted a study by psychologist Harold G. Wolff on the Korean incident as arguing that the POW weakness was caused by a lack of faith. A lecture from 1966 referring to this study claimed that it had found that the root of the problem was “lack of character development.”¹¹⁹ The lecture used this finding as proof that Americans’

¹¹⁸Department of Defense. *The U.S. Fighting Man’s Code*, 22.

¹¹⁹US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics: Duty, Honor, Country*, DA PAM 16-7 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), 10.

“real strength ... is found in our American religious traditions and our personal religious faith.”¹²⁰

The 1961 CGP field manual similarly argued that Wolff’s scientific study had confirmed that a soldier’s resilience depended largely on his religious faith. This document identified “faith” as one of the “areas of deficiencies” in army character training. Soldiers needed to have more faith, in themselves, other soldiers, commanders, the country, and they needed more “personal faith in God.”¹²¹ To bolster this claim, the manual quoted from a study on the Korean POWs, “man is so constituted that he can adhere to a faith and resist a captor so long as he acts at all.”¹²²

This quote was from Wolff’s widely-circulated article published in the *Journal of Military Medicine* in 1960 titled, “Every Man’s Breaking Point – (?)”¹²³ Wolff concluded that humiliation, abuse, sleep deprivation, and starvation could disintegrate a soldier’s “integrative capacity,” but that one who was fully “committed” could withstand even the worst treatment.¹²⁴ Although the entire article reports on the psychological aspects of deprivation and resilience and never once mentions “religion” or “spirituality,” the CGP authors again seized upon a single sentence in the Wolff article to highlight in CGP materials as scientific “proof” of the necessity of faith. Wolff wrote,

A weak development of the capacity for commitment in some prisoners was linked with never having experienced a firm faith and with living in an environment which was shifting, unsettled, opportunistic, cynical, or devoid of strong ties. ... the affective life of

¹²⁰Ibid., 10.

¹²¹US Army, *Character Guidance Manual*, FM 16-100 (1961), 15.

¹²²Harold G. Wolff, “Every Man Has His Breaking Point - (?)” *Military Medicine*, 125, no. 2 (1960).

¹²³Ibid., 98.

¹²⁴Ibid., 96.

some individuals is inherently thin, and their capacity for love, devotion, faith, and loyalty of a low order.¹²⁵

Although it is clear when one reads Wolff's article that he used the word "faith" to mean "commitment" in general, the 1961 manual took Dr. Wolff to be endorsing a "personal faith in God."¹²⁶ The manual also claimed that Wolff proved that "fighting" men "show happy and disciplined loyalty to family, religious faith, and moral conviction" which helped them survive combat and imprisonment. The CGP manual stated that men with religious faith "lived or died fighting for real loyalties which they cherished more than life itself."¹²⁷

However, one of Wolff's main points was that there were a host of factors, both material and immaterial, that explain why a man might either "break down" or be able to resist his captors. He never characterized these as religious or having to do with faith in God, as the CGP materials suggest.

Contrary to the message in the CGP lectures and in the Committee's report on the POW incident, Wolff communicated that the basic reason for why American POWs collaborated with the communists was *not* because they suffered from weak ideology but because they wished to avoid torture and secure for themselves basic needs.¹²⁸ Even so, and like the CGP authors and the Committee thought, he did not see abuse or starvation or even brain damage as an excuse for a soldier's dereliction of duty. Soldiers could survive a POW experience with more endurance

¹²⁵Wolff, "Every Man Has His Breaking Point - (?)," 100.

¹²⁶US Army, *Character Guidance Manual*, FM 16-100 (1961), 15.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 14 -15.

¹²⁸Wolff, "Every Man Has His Breaking Point - (?)," 101.

training and firmer military discipline.¹²⁹ Wolff never suggested that the likelihood of soldier survival would increase with greater religious indoctrination.¹³⁰

The CGP's misuse of Wolff illustrates that a very particular production of knowledge was at work in the moral and spiritual training of soldiers. Perhaps the authors honestly thought that Wolff was advocating for the sort of religious faith that they had in mind. Perhaps some of them were operating under such worldview strictures that there was little chance of them interpreting Wolff any other way. Whatever the case, CGP chaplain authors often understood that moral guidance could only be efficient when it was paired with religious instruction. Morality without God and without the church's aid made no sense.

Chaplain Henry Butt, a Major at the Chaplain School in Fort Slocum, New York, offered a chaplains' perspective of the POW incident in a 1955 report on how the Code of Conduct was woven into the CGP materials. Butt thought that the secular "culture of opportunism" in America which had pervaded over "Judeo-Christian principles" was largely to blame for the treasonous behavior of POWs.¹³¹ What happened in Korea was evidence of America's "moral illness" that was produced by "change and confusion," "urbanization ... and the destruction of moral standards" which had begun with WWI.¹³² The cure for spiritual deterioration would be found in exposing soldiers to "the moral and spiritual foundations of our democracy."¹³³ Butt was convinced that teaching the Code would allow for more such exposure, which would strengthen the force. Even more powerful would be teaching the Code in the context of the

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid., 103.

¹³¹Henry Butt, "Integration of the Code of Conduct into the Character Guidance Program," 8.

¹³²Ibid., 9.

¹³³Ibid.

CGP, since both worked “to develop and maintain in the fighting man the moral and spiritual traits that will cause him to give his life for his God and his country, if necessary.”¹³⁴

Butt echoed a primary message in the CGP when he argued that the only way to properly motivate soldiers to sacrifice themselves and thus secure the country’s great destiny was to instill in them an abiding faith in God and a conviction of “the principles of our Judeo-Christian background.”¹³⁵ Without an understanding that God had given Americans their freedom, soldiers could not be expected to understand how important their jobs were, and they most certainly would not be compelled to perform their duties well.

Butt described the joint task of the Code and the CGP as working to “show atheistic materialism in its true light” and developing in the serviceman “a deeper faith in God and the United States.”¹³⁶ Towards those ends, a portion of Butt’s report was devoted to suggesting teaching techniques for further integrating the Code into CGP lectures. Butt suggested that the following discussion exercise be integrated into the CGP discussion topic, “One Nation under God” in order to support the Code’s Article VI.

First, the instructor should tell the story of an American soldier who returned to the United States after spending two years in a communist prison camp. The returning soldier told a reporter that prayer to God was what had kept him faithful to his country: “I prayed! I knew my God would help me get back home. Some of the guys just gave up and died, and some squealed to the enemy to get better treatment, but I had too much to live for.”¹³⁷ Butt then suggested that the instructor ask, “Will the knowledge that our nation is built on moral and spiritual values

¹³⁴Ibid., 12.

¹³⁵Ibid., 13-14.

¹³⁶Ibid., 16.

¹³⁷Butt, “Integration of the Code of Conduct into the Character Guidance Program,” 21.

influence a man's actions in prison camp?"¹³⁸ Given the preceding story, the “right” answer of course was “yes.” Butt’s story also suggested that an abiding faith in God not only made “real men” (unlike those who “gave up and died” or “squealed” to the enemy), but also that faith could produce a rescue.

The 1961 CGP manual explained that the Korean War POW debacle proved that that there was a “modern urgency and the growing need to join spiritual power to our technological power.”¹³⁹ It is clear in the CGP lectures that what was meant by “spiritual power” was not as vague as it might first sound. That particular manual identified the entire basis of governmental law as founded on the “laws of the spirit, proclaimed in church, in synagogue, in mosque. Even more than man-made laws, these are the laws that truly set forth the eternal qualities of all men and of all races.”¹⁴⁰ A good place to find “spiritual power” was in religious institutions. Nonreligious people did not have a proper understanding of natural law that secured the freedom and dignity of all people because they were not attuned to the laws of the spirit revealed in religious communities. The POW defections might have been prevented with more religious instruction.

Conclusion

The CGP and the Code of Conduct, like the Fort Knox experiment, were often described as offering “moral and spiritual” guidance to soldiers. Unlike the Fort Knox experiment, the CGP placed special emphasis on understanding humans as God-made creatures with spirits. The

¹³⁸Ibid., 21-22.

¹³⁹US Army, *Character Guidance Manual*, FM 16-100 (1961), 14.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 9-10.

suggestion that the human body contained a spirit served to bolster the argument that soldiers needed to believe in God in order to animate the spirit's moral potentials. An examination of the CGP and Code of Conduct literature reveals the assumption that religion provided the best "moral and spiritual" guidance. What seemed to count as "religion" were "Judeo-Christian" traditions, although examples of religious faith in the text tended to favor Christianity, and sometimes conservative Christianity.

At least until the late 1960s, it appeared that the CGP's appeal to religion was appropriate as it, like the Code, aimed to inspire military obedience by using the power of religious conviction unabashedly. Both the CGP and the Code demonstrated the belief that "religious worship and practice pays high character dividends to the soldier, the Army, and the nation," as the 1961 CGP manual put it.¹⁴¹ The manual similarly clarified that "vital active religion offers the highest ideals and deepest motivation for the development of character in the soldier."¹⁴² This message is still active though less clearly articulated in the army's 2009 program covered in Chapter Five.

Most of the CGP's lectures offered no indication that any of the theistic content might have been inappropriate. If anything, the lectures made clear that "secular," nonreligious beliefs and lifestyles were inappropriate and unhealthy for both private and public sectors. This robust theistic stance was a reflection of the time and American culture.

Some lectures, mostly from the 1950s, unapologetically offered an education that was Judeo-Christian tinged. For example, one lecture taught that the perils of not specifically believing in those the Bible espoused were severe, as the Nazis had demonstrated. The Nazis

¹⁴¹US Army, *Character Guidance Manual*, FM 16-100 (1961), 37.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 38.

had belief, but it was the wrong kind. They mistakenly believed that they were the “master race” and had overlooked “belief in its highest development” which was “faith in the God of the Bible.” Ignoring the Bible meant that the Nazis had missed its teachings on “individual responsibility, dignity and equality with his fellow man,” and this oversight allowed them to commit genocide.¹⁴³

For the most part, most CGP statements about religion, faith, spirituality, or God were made without a trace of consideration that they might be inappropriate in a public context. However, a few comments hinted at how the CGP authors negotiated public appropriateness for its faith-oriented content matter. The 1961 field manual described the CGP lessons as based on “ethical and psychological principles,” and defended them as “nonsectarian and nondenominational.”¹⁴⁴ It also mentioned that these principles had a “moral and spiritual” basis. In other words, the manual indicated that the lessons were publicly appropriate because they themselves demanded no “denominational” adherence. Yet the statement also suggested that the “ethical and psychological principles” were only true because of their “moral and spiritual” foundation, which may not have demanded commitment to a particular denomination, but upon further inspection, did demand belief in God.

The 1961 manual also hinted that the content may have provoked some complaints. It stated that the goals of CGP education included developing “religious motivation” and a “conviction of responsibility to God and country.”¹⁴⁵ But then it insisted that the program’s

¹⁴³US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1951), 59.

¹⁴⁴US Army, *Character Guidance Manual*, FM 16-100 (1961), 3.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*

scope was “sufficiently broad” “to effect all activities of all military personnel,” indicating that there may have been protests that the content was not general enough before.

A different lecture preface stated that “the ideals and objectives, while moral, are not specifically religious,” indicating that “specifically religious” ideals might not have been appropriate.¹⁴⁶ Yet the very same pamphlet claimed that the program measured its success in religious adherence. In a section that discussed how to better facilitate the CGP, the chaplain author suggested that chaplain readers work to boost chapel attendance, advertise religious services more to soldiers and their families and ensure that service times were convenient. The pamphlet suggested adding “Chaplain’s Corners” in company day rooms and facilitating permission for soldiers to worship on holy days that might fall during long training sessions.¹⁴⁷

The field manual that outlined chaplain duties did not provide much clarification regarding which side, church or state, the chaplains’ work in the CGP was assumed to fall. The manual from 1952 described the CGP as an important chaplain “educational duty,” but then stated under a section titled, “duties for which chaplains are not available,” that chaplains were not available to serve “as Army welfare, morale, information and education officers.”¹⁴⁸ The official statement that chaplains did not promote morale in army training is repeated throughout field manuals and pamphlets, perhaps to avoid the appearance that they were mixing their primary work of facilitating religious expression with secular army missions.

However, the proclamations that distanced chaplains from the business of boosting morale and welfare appear to be semantic maneuvering more than anything else. Chaplains’

¹⁴⁶US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-6 (1961), i.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid*, 33.

¹⁴⁸US Army, *The Chaplain*, FM 16-5 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 11-12.

main role was to promote “religion and morality in the Army” and minister to “the spiritual and moral needs of military personnel.”¹⁴⁹ Their “role in the deliberate and systematic cultivation of moral and spiritual forces in the Army” was recognized as critical in producing superior soldiers who had “a spiritual sense of obligation to duty.” This sense of duty would turn soldiers into “faithful citizen[s]” and “devoted defender[s] of our nation.”¹⁵⁰ Surely this description illustrated a particular cultivation of morale. The word “morale” was never used in this chaplain’s role description, but chaplains were mentioned as important for helping troops to “maintain stamina.”¹⁵¹ Technically, the CGP was a command responsibility (commanders had the official responsibility for “religious life, morals, and morale”), yet chaplains were the ones who wrote the lectures and delivered them.¹⁵²

By all appearances, the CGP did not have a concrete conception of what messages were appropriate or inappropriate in the public sphere. In this regard, the military was wrestling with the same questions that the American public was, and this struggle reflected religion’s diminishing currency in public life. Americans generally agreed that a separation of church and state was a hallmark of the country, but pinpointing where that line was was difficult. A quote from the lecture titled “The Nation We Serve” summed up how this confusion could lead to opportunity for those wishing to express their beliefs. The chaplain author mysteriously remarked that although America had a policy of separation between church and state, the country

¹⁴⁹US Army, *The Chaplain*, FM 16-5 (1964), 1.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, 1, 14.

had “our own technique of expressing a relationship to God which permits us to classify our country as a ‘covenant nation.’”¹⁵³

The CGP’s education was full of paradoxes. While the CGP understood that self-discipline would be cultivated by “personal conviction,” not “external force,” it aimed to convict by applying strong ideological force, even going so far as to insinuate that nonreligious people were cowardly and stupid. In the early 1960s, it championed the importance of knowing the self, but then communicated that this knowledge was best realized by a knowledge of God.

It was described as a program that was geared towards affirming individual dignity and freedom, yet it also aspired to motivate individuals to sacrifice themselves in combat if need be. This particular paradox makes sense, given the religious logic that inspired it: people had dignity only because they were creatures, made and loved by God. As beloved creatures, people owed God and their country (a gift from God) their very lives. The same argument regarding dignity was made about freedom: the CGP saw itself as a champion of individual freedoms, but was always quick to let soldiers know where exactly their freedom came from and taught that true individual freedom meant obligation and sacrifice. Of course, military work demands many sacrifices, and sometimes these include sacrificing one’s life.

While there was a noticeable swell of patriotic religious fervor in America during the 1950s, there were also plenty of religious groups who did not approve of the CGP’s mix use of religious exhortation in the military service.¹⁵⁴ By the early 1960s, complaints about the CGP’s religious messages from groups like the American Civil Liberties Union began to garner national attention, causing disruptions in the production of character guidance.

¹⁵³US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1951), 29.

¹⁵⁴Protests of the CGP are covered in Chapter Three.

A 1966 lecture titled “One Nation under God” represented one last attempt to articulate in detail God’s authority, before the program was pressured to alter its religious emphasis. The lecture’s opening remark, “today’s leaders *still* see our need of dependency on God,” gestured to the tentative status of faith demonstrated in the public sphere.¹⁵⁵ The accompanying lesson entailed drawing two diagrams on a chalkboard. The first was a triangle with “spiritual,” “mental,” and “physical” all connected, meant to illustrate their interconnectivity and to highlight the importance of spiritual training. The second diagram was meant to clarify what counted as “spiritual” training. The chaplain was instructed to draw a stick figure on the board and write below it in all caps, “YOU.” He then was supposed to write, “UNDER GOD,” and emphasize the self’s subservient location to God.¹⁵⁶

1968 marked the year that the CGP minimized religious references in response to the pressures that various groups applied to the chaplaincy in the cultivation of CGP education. The 1968 field manual on the program demonstrated the initial consequences of those pressures with the statement, “the Character Guidance Program does not teach religion. Freedom of religion is a cornerstone in American policy, but religion of a soldier's personal choice is recognized as a basis for the strongest moral motivation either in peace or war.”¹⁵⁷

Despite this articulated recognition of soldier’s freedom from the establishment of religion, the section on “Resources for Character and Moral Development” remained unchanged: “Encouragement of religious worship and practice pays high, character dividends to the soldier, the Army, and the nation. Vital active religion offers the highest ideals and deepest motivation

¹⁵⁵US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-5 (1966), 4.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷US Army, *Character Guidance Manual*, FM 16-100 (1968), 10.

for the development of character in the soldier.”¹⁵⁸ Perhaps the national consensus regarding the role of religion in the public sphere was shifting, but the CGP’s message would still imply that soldiers without religious faith would not have the internal resources to do their jobs well. They would ultimately fail themselves, the army, and their country.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 12.

CHAPTER THREE

Breaking Trust: The Character Guidance Program Challenged After Vietnam

In October 1963, Lt. James N. Rowe and two other soldiers were heading to their base camp Tan Phu in the An Xuyon Province when they were ambushed by National Liberation Front (NLF) fighters, blindfolded, and taken into captivity at a hidden prison. There, he and his fellow soldiers would spend their days performing manual labor, listening to propaganda lectures, catching fish to eat, or enduring punishment in a Prisoner of War (POW) cage. After five years of failed escape attempts, Rowe finally succeeded to elude his captors.¹

In an interview by the *Army Digest*, he was asked how he survived such tortuous conditions for so long. He replied that he had good “mental discipline” and that his faith in God strongly motivated him to live. When asked for more clarification on this topic, Rowe explained that he had been “a very poor Protestant” until receiving spiritual training at West Point and this training allowed him to be mentally strong.² His experience as a POW led him to face “the fact that there is a Supreme Being,” confirming what he had learned at West Point: “there is nothing materialistic you can grasp, and there are times when you have no place to turn except to God.”³

The kind of story that army syndicates like *Army Digest* published during the 1960s, like this one, gave the impression that theistically-oriented spiritual training was effective military

¹“Five Years as a Viet Cong Prisoner,” *Army Digest* 24, no. 5 (1969): 4.

²*Ibid.*, 5.

³*Ibid.*

training. It would be easy to get the impression from reading Character Guidance Program (CGP) materials through the mid-1960s that the CGP was attempting to lead the army to a spiritual revival. It would also be easy to assume, given the charismatic tone of the CGP lectures, that chaplains relished the chance to teach morality from a theistic perspective and that the program had improved their station since it required cooperation between chaplains and the command staff. The truth was that the CGP grew increasingly unpopular among the command, servicemen, and chaplains.

In 1956, the Army Chief of Chaplains Patrick Ryan reported that the CGP was the strongest it had ever been.⁴ Unbeknownst to Ryan at the time, 1956 was likely the apex of the program's popularity. The program received a handful of complaints in the 1950s, but in the 1960s, the protests that the program's religiosity was a violation of individual rights grew more numerous, and in the decade's tumultuous climate they could not be ignored.

This chapter surveys the historical conditions during the 1960s and early 1970s that significantly altered the nature of spiritual training in the US Army and challenged the legitimacy of the military chaplaincy. An examination of the historical conditions of 1960s America and the evolution of the CGP demonstrate that a fundamental assumption held in previous decades was being radically challenged. In the 1940s and 1950s, Americans generally took for granted that people needed to believe in God and be religious in order to be motivated to behave morally. This increasingly was no longer so widely assumed in the 1960s for two fundamental reasons. First, the American Vietnam War experience had dissolved the trust in authority and institutions that had been built up during the 1950s. Vietnam and other cultural conditions had cast into

⁴"Quality of Soldiers Praised by Chaplain," *New York Times*, October 7, 1956.

doubt the social contracts from a decade before that had presumed that institutions (including religious organizations) would adequately care for the individuals in their keep.

Second, the unraveling assumption that belief in God was necessary for moral behavior reflected and contributed to a wider cultural phenomenon, the recognition and growth of difference. Many of the cultural tensions in the 1960s were the result of the public recognition, growth, and eventual validation of a variety of differences (e.g., racial, ethnic, sexual, gendered, ideological, political, religious) that had been suppressed, ignored, or unrealized in the 1950s. This public recognition of difference had many implications for Americans; one of them was a reconsideration of what constituted as appropriate public expression. If, as it increasingly appeared in the 1960s, such variegated differences among people existed and their existence was acceptable in American life, then Americans would need to revisit legal guidelines and recalibrate social mores in order to preserve newly validated differences and maintain peace in public spheres. History makes clear that this was not an easy project as there were many disagreements over what kind of differences should be recognized and validated, and how this recognition should alter the existing legal landscape. The conflicts provoked by disagreements over difference also manifested in debates over the role of religion in public life, as it was no longer taken for granted that everyone was religious or even theistic.

This same climate that facilitated the possibility of publicly recognizing difference also produced an atmosphere conducive to protest. The possibility of difference being valued signaled a pivotal shift of societal values, as it indicated a greater respect for individuals than before. In many cases, this meant that individuals and individualism came to be honored more than the societies or institutions that housed them, which were increasingly suspected of mishandling individuals.

These related cultural developments, the recognition and validation of difference and the distrust for institutions, both had significant implications for the military chaplaincy and the CGP. Section one looks at how the American experience of the Vietnam War helped to produce these cultural developments while section two examines how these developments affected perceptions of the military chaplaincy especially in the wake of the Vietnam War. Section three investigates how one of the greatest challenges produced by the historical conditions of the 1960s--the question of how large institutions like the military chaplaincy could appropriately care for diverse populations--manifested in the debates over the CGP's legitimacy and ultimately resulted in radically altering the program. The changes in the CGP that these debates provoked illumine evolving ideas about individual freedom and the nature of morality, as both the chaplaincy and those challenging the institution struggled to articulate an acceptable plan for co-existence in newly pluralized environments.

Vietnam: America's War with Itself

Many factors contributed to the problems that the CGP and the institution of the chaplaincy in general faced, but the most significant factors were reflected in the unpopularity of the Vietnam War. A fundamentally different mindset was being cultivated in American culture in the 1960s from previous decades. For much of the early twentieth century, social cohesion was a survival tactic for individuals who needed to bond together to withstand foreign attacks. This value often translated into institutional attempts to homogenize American belief and practice (as the CGP material in the last chapter demonstrated) and an ingrained insularity when it came to difference. Those born between the 1920s and the 1940s, the Silent Generation, were

known for generally accepting authority and valuing social cohesion.⁵ These individuals trusted institutions to care for them, and those who protested institutions in unacceptable ways alienated themselves by forfeiting the protection of society. A life of social and cultural conformity was, for the most part, portrayed in the public eye as a happy life.

Of course, appearances can be deceiving. Scholars have suggested that glossy 1950s images of happy conformity exemplified in the smiling white families of Campbell's soup ads was a cover for America's many domestic problems.⁶ Perhaps the veneer of cohesion was meant to be protective. The CGP materials in Chapter Two suggest that the 1950s efforts to produce a uniformed national image, even if it was willfully ignorant, was theoretically in service to the nation's survival as a democratic and free country. Whatever the reason, the unspoken social rules that had allowed McCarthyism in the 1950s broke down magnificently in the 1960s as a new generation came of age.

The Vietnam War was a major catalyst for the changes in 1960s American culture partly because it provided an important platform for individuals to protest institutions. The horrific and graphic public nature of the war coupled with its weak justification had irrevocably damaged the American self-image as a righteous defender of injustice. When the American self-image as morally upright crusaders during World War II was damaged by high venereal disease rates in the 1940s, a solution for errant behavior was found in tightening the institutional control of individuals. By contrast, the damage wrought by the Vietnam War appeared to be the result of too much institutional control over individuals. Vietnam made possible a very different solution

⁵Linda Mercadante, *Belief without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual but Not Religious* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 37–38.

⁶For example, see Anthony Bushard, *Anxiety Muted: American Film Music in a Suburban Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) or Daryll Jones, Elizabeth McCarthy, and Bernice M. Murphy, *It Came from the 1950s! Popular Culture, Popular Anxieties* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

to errant behavior than the wars earlier in the century: protest the establishment, distrust the government, and resist institutions.⁷

In other words, the turbulent cultural atmosphere of the 1960s and the anger, fear, and disappointment over Vietnam provided the crucible in which formulations of power could be reconceived. Objection to war in the World War II era was often stigmatized as the yellow-bellied response of a weak-willed and lazy individual.⁸ But this was the age of black power and bra-burning, and protest grew beyond being just a valid form of resistance in the 1960s to being the hallmark of an enlightened person, at least among certain young people among whom the seeds of discontent with the status quo were heavily sown. The fact that some individuals tried to dodge the draft by starving themselves--an outwardly visible sign of objection that might have been seen as shamefully emasculating during WWII--reflected the greater cultural acceptance of the ability to object to war.⁹

The Vietnam War had upset American faith in institutions for a number of reasons. For one thing, both the nature of the warfare and the way the United States entered into war were jarringly uncommon. Roger Venzke, author of the US Army Chaplaincy's history of the Vietnam engagement, described the unceremonious way that the United States entered into warfare with the NLF fighters as "a quiet and unfamiliar way to go to war...there were no beachheads to storm, no conventional invasions to repel, no discernible front lines to combat,

⁷Protest was likely made an even more popular form of resistance by the burgeoning personality cults of the 1960s. People like Harvard professor Timothy Leary whose provocations earned him celebrity status famously wielded his authority by encouraging youth in 1966 to "Turn on, tune in, and drop out."

⁸Peter Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers: Ground Combat in the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 9.

⁹David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2005), 5.

and no easily-identified enemy.”¹⁰ Neither the American public nor American soldiers had any idea what sort of conflict they were getting themselves into.

Young soldiers were cast into hellish conditions when they were sent to fight using foreign guerilla warfare tactics. The misty jungles of Vietnam did not lend themselves as easily to attacks from the air, where a fighter pilot could maintain distance from the enemy. Instead, soldiers had to fight enemies that were hidden in unfamiliar and suffocating junglescapes, thick with fog, mosquitoes, and wild animals. Soldiers constantly doubted the success of individual missions, as they had to operate within the unpredictable conditions that included the dark fog of the jungle, booby-trapped tunnels, and torrential downpours.

The unstable and chaotic conditions of warfare in Vietnam had deleterious results on soldiers. In Vietnam, the horrors of war manifested in American soldiers’ obscene language, numbness, and “berserk” states. Scholar Jaqueline Whitt suggested in a working paper that American soldiers in Vietnam’s thorough rejection of “clean” language for “profane” language signaled an attempt to mark the horrors of Vietnam as exceptional, thereby safeguarding conceptions of traditional life as meaningful and orderly.¹¹ Soldiers in Vietnam took to calling a common meal of lima beans and ham as “beans and motherfuckers,” new soldiers in the unit as “Fucking New Guys,” or sometimes referred to God as a “motherfucker.”¹² This profanity, which according to Whitt was “ubiquitous” in transcripts from that time, illustrated that the war experiences in Vietnam were so violently unsettling that it required the creation of a

¹⁰Ibid., 139.

¹¹Jaqueline Whitt, “The Soldiers’ Prayer, Revised Standard Version: Soldier’s Vernacular Religion and the Rejection of God in the Vietnam War” (working paper, presented at American Society of Church History, Washington, DC, January, 4, 2014), 1-2.

¹²Ibid., 14.

transgressive language to clearly mark the war conditions as separate from “sacred” life back home.¹³

In *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, psychiatrist Jonathan Shay wrote about the numbness that soldiers in Vietnam experienced after having witnessed horrendous events like the death of a friend. This numbness, or apparent unfeeling attitude often resulted from when a soldier’s conception of what was right had been brutally violated. The death of a friend was an insufferable transgression of justice, causing a soldier’s inner “themis of ideals, ambitions, and affiliations ... to collapse.”¹⁴ This inner collapse is what allowed many US soldiers in Vietnam to react to friends’ deaths coldly, saying, “Fuck it. They’re dead. No big fucking deal. Move on.”¹⁵

Sometimes, however, the horrors of war produced a “beastlike fury” in soldiers that Shay referred to as a “berserk state.”¹⁶ A transcript from a Marine Vietnam veteran illustrated what this this state looked like. After being pushed from a helicopter into a jungle thick with bullets, the veteran recalled that he “started hating the fucking government.”¹⁷ When approached by a North Vietnamese Army soldier, the veteran remembered that he

pulled the trigger on my M-16 and nothing happened. He fired and I felt this burning on my cheek. I don’t know what I did with the bolt of the 16, but I got it to fire, and I emptied everything I had into him. Then I saw blood dripping on the back of my hand and I just went crazy. I pulled him out into the paddy and carved him up with my knife. When I was done with him, he looked like a rag doll that a dog had been playing with.¹⁸

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 37.

¹⁵Ibid., 38.

¹⁶Ibid., 77.

¹⁷Ibid., 78.

¹⁸Ibid., 78.

After this event the veteran observed, “I lost all mercy ... I really loved fucking killing, couldn’t get enough. For every one that I killed I felt better.”¹⁹

Popular movies like *The Deer Hunter* (1978) immortalized the image of Vietnam soldiers and veterans as either numb to the world or in a berserk state, excited only by the prospect of killing or being killed.²⁰ One infamous scene depicted how the hellacious Vietnam experiences of the character Nick, a young man from small-town America, had turned death into a game for him. Every night, he would play Russian roulette with a pistol in his mouth, spinning the gun’s barrel, loaded with one bullet.

But the most heinous and shocking display of the “berserk state” during Vietnam occurred in real life, in the My Lai incident of 1968. American soldiers had abused and slaughtered an estimated 200 - 500 unarmed men, women, and children in a small fishing hamlet. The details were so horrific that the American public became aware of the atrocities committed by American soldiers more than a year after the massacre occurred.²¹

At first, the My Lai incident was reported as an American victory over NLF soldiers in the area. The actual details of the event were scrutinized only after several veterans requested that Congress and the Pentagon investigate. Investigator Lieutenant General William R. Peers concluded in 1969 that the Army Battalion had indeed unjustly killed around 200 unarmed

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Robert De Niro, Christopher Walken, Meryl Streep, *The Deer Hunter*, directed by Michael Cimino, released December 8, 1978.

²¹Joseph Eszterhas, “1st Photos of Viet Mass Slaying,” *The Plain Dealer*, November 20, 1969.

civilians. By late 1970, fourteen officers were court-marshalled for the roles they played either in the massacre itself or in covering it up.²²

The heinous experiences of American youth in the Vietnam jungles and the shocking My Lai incident constituted as a breach in the social contract between the US government and its citizens. The conflict had resulted in institutional violations of public trust that could not be ignored, and these offered further evidence to an already doubtful American public that the military and the government in general was not properly concerned for the welfare of its citizens.

One result of this broken social contract was found in heaping public scorn on soldiers when they returned to civilian life. Serving in the unpopular war had an unprecedented and stigmatizing effect on soldiers, and this no doubt contributed to the problems that they experienced upon returning home. The act of dishonoring home-bound soldiers was also one of the only concrete recourses against the government that an angry public had. Unlike the soldiers returning from World War II, Vietnam veterans were not received with welcome-home parades.²³ It was the experiences of Vietnam veterans that would eventually lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as an official medical diagnosis in 1980.

American soldiers also sought recourse for this broken contract on their own terms. Disgust for “the establishment” manifested in the practice of “fragging,” the act of placing a live grenade in a commander’s bed to kill him. By 1972, there were 551 recorded fragging incidents that left 86 soldiers dead and 700 injured by their own men.²⁴ Soldiers also took to deserting

²²The My Lai incident and related court proceedings were covered extensively in Joseph Goldstein, William Peers, Burke Marshall, and Jack Schwartz, *The My Lai Massacre and Its Cover-Up: Beyond the Reach of Law? The Peers Commission Report* (New York: Free Press, 1976).

²³Bob Green’s book *Homecoming: When Soldiers Returned from Vietnam* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1989) is devoted to how poorly Vietnam veterans were treated upon returning home. For example, many were spat upon or cursed at by strangers.

²⁴Cortwright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 267.

their troops in unprecedentedly high rates. The army desertion rate had climbed nearly 400% from 1966 to 1970, adding to the sense that the military was in serious crisis.²⁵

Furthermore, soldiers had taken to coping with the abominations of war by abusing drugs and alcohol. Over half of soldiers in Vietnam had tried marijuana at least once and nearly 14% smoked every day.²⁶ Some enterprising soldiers even started selling hashish to fellow troop members while in Europe, making as much as \$100,000 a year supplying friends with the contraband. Reports indicate that 50% to 80% of an artillery unit in New Ulm was high while on duty, some of them using heroin and opium.²⁷ 20% of 4600 soldiers in a survey said that they became addicted to narcotics in Vietnam.²⁸

At the same time that soldiers were warring against authorities through fragging, desertion, or rendering themselves ineffective with substance abuse, they were also warring with each other. Racial tensions ran just as hot in military circles as they did in civilian circles. In the military, these conflicts quickly turned deadly, with disputes erupting between black and white soldiers. There were at least 18 recorded race riots in the army that required police intervention between September 1970 and August 1971.²⁹

Unlike the world wars in which Americans rallied together to defeat a clearly-defined foreign enemy, it appeared on many fronts during Vietnam that America was really warring with itself. American society and several American self-conceptions were fragmenting. Vietnam dissolved the mythos of American war as always honorable. My Lai illumined that Americans

²⁵Ibid., 11.

²⁶Ibid., 31.

²⁷Rick Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line: The American Journey of West Point's Class of 1966* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2009), 375.

²⁸Cortwright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 31.

²⁹B. Drummond Ayres, "Army is Shaken by Crisis in Morale and Discipline," *New York Times*, September 5, 1971.

were just as capable as foreigners of committing heinous war crimes. The American presumption of manifest destiny that undergirded foreign policy and contributed to American involvement in wars like Vietnam was clearly in need of revision. Maybe Americans in the nineteenth century had reason to believe that God had blessed the expansion of the United States because they were a believing people, but Vietnam cast into doubt the notion that God would always bless American might. The conflict also cast into doubt the assumption that those who believed, such as chaplains, would choose wisely how and when to engage in conflict.

Were Chaplains “Men of God” or “Men of War”?

Conveniently broadcast on his last day in office in 1960, President Dwight Eisenhower issued the warning that government and military power were becoming increasingly centralized. The formation of a “military-industrial complex” was dangerous; it could threaten individual creativity, politics, and spirituality.³⁰ It is unlikely that Eisenhower had any idea what tides of upheaval would soon threaten to dismantle the military chaplaincy as it came to be understood as a part of the “military-industrial complex,” but the president had gestured to a fear that would only grow in the following decade. The US government and military were becoming self-interested machines, capable of crushing the individuals it employed.

Years after the Vietnam War, the country was still reeling from the ramifications of US involvement. Under serious review was the role that chaplains played in the military, since they were regarded as defenders of moral virtue. In the climate of anti-institutionalism, even the legitimacy of the military chaplaincy’s existence was questioned. In a 1972 edited volume titled

³⁰Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Farewell Speech,” January 17, 1961, Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Papers as President Speech Series, Box 38, Final TV Talk (3), NAID #16972223, accessed June 18, 2013, http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/farewell_address/1961_01_17_Press_Release.pdf.

Military Chaplains: From a Religious Military to Military Religion, Harvey Cox summed up the question that drove debates over the role of the military chaplaincy during the 1960s as, “The man of God, and the man of war: what have they to do with one another?”³¹ By the end of the book, one is made to feel that the answer should be “not much.”

Vietnam allowed chaplains’ roles to be more heavily scrutinized by military personnel and civilians than before. The most serious concern, given the failures of Vietnam, regarded their relationship to morale-building. In past wars, chaplain work was known and praised for its ability to increase the motivation of soldiers to fight. The unabashed promotion of chaplains as morale-boosters in the CGP materials indicated this purpose as honorable, likely because World War II was largely considered justified and necessary. American involvement in Vietnam however, had been viewed by many as shameful and at times, downright immoral. Vietnam prompted more people to question whether there was a conflict of interest in the church serving the state, and American civilians and service members alike began to negotiate and refine what the role of the chaplaincy should be in the military.

Could chaplains as paid employees of the state serve the church if, as Vietnam experiences suggested, it was possible for the two to have incongruous values? Or were chaplains necessarily bound to the state? These questions that were nearly irrelevant during World War II suddenly dominated American conversations in the 1960s and ‘70s. Retired Navy chaplain and Rabbi Martin Siegel spearheaded public debate by expressing in a 1962 *Christian Century* article the concern that the military chaplaincy was hopelessly enmeshed in military

³¹Harvey Cox, ed., *Military Chaplains: From a Religious Military to a Military Religion* (New York: American Report Press, 1972), v.

agendas. He argued that chaplains' allegiances had naturally swayed towards the military and away from their church communities by challenging two traditions of the establishment.³²

Part of the problem was that chaplains were paid members of the military. As employees, their allegiance would always first be to the military, then the church. As "a military man," a chaplain could not act in ways that compromised military missions. Another factor contributing to what Siegel saw as misaligned loyalties was that chaplains were a part of the rank system, which meant that they were incentivized to please the command by helping to achieve the commands' goals. Chaplains' status and pay were also directly affected then by how well they could support the command. An embarrassed and anonymous Navy chaplain corroborated Siegel's opinion when he explained in a *New York Times* article that "after a while, a chaplain begins to identify with the military. Off the record, if he wants to survive in the system, he has to repress some things."³³

Siegel indicated that despite whatever their official role was, military chaplains had no real option but to promote enthusiasm for military work, even to soldiers having emotional difficulties. If a soldier turned to the chaplain in distress, Siegel predicted that the chaplain would not offer sympathy but "just another lecture on doing their 'duty.'"³⁴

Data supported Siegel's opinion. A 1953 study of chaplain roles by Walter W. Burchard and a 1969 study of British Royal Air Force chaplains by sociologist Gordon Zahn both concluded that military chaplains generally leaned towards supporting the service over the

³²Martin Siegel, "Revamping the Military Chaplaincy," *Christian Century* 79 (1962): 959 -60.

³³Blumenthal, "Chaplains' Role Questioned Because They Support War," 37.

³⁴Siegel, "Revamping the Military Chaplaincy," 60.

church when the two were in conflict.³⁵ It became more and more obvious as the 1960s wore on that institutions as powerful as the military had the power to influence even ministerial work.

Part of the reason why this influence was able to be recognized was because the United States' involvement in Vietnam was interpreted as morally questionable. Because of the circumstances of the Vietnam conflict, the 1940s and '50s military project of boosting "morality and morale" held the possibility of being inherently conflicting. Boosting morality might result in weakened morale, at least when it came to military work.

Because of this growing sentiment among chaplain-endorsing religious institutions, filling each denomination's chaplaincy quotas grew increasingly difficult as the morality of the war was protested.³⁶ At one point in the early 1960s, the troop to chaplain ratio was alarmingly low, forcing the few chaplains in Vietnam to travel long distances through the thick and dangerous jungles to minister to various encampments. In 1962, a reported eight chaplains were in Vietnam, which by one chaplain veteran's estimation was half as many as were needed to cover the numerous encampments, spread out over 600 miles.³⁷ The military chaplaincy was suffering from the same kind of moral crisis found among civilians.

However, one religious group in particular had a different perspective when it came to serving in Vietnam. Evangelical Christians felt religiously compelled to join the war efforts, even if the war was unpopular. They had come to see the Vietnam jungles as providing ministry opportunities, and were eager to fulfill their prophetic duties to support the troops, if not the war.

³⁵Waldo Burchard, "Role Conflicts of Military Chaplains." *American Sociological Review* 19 (October 1954): 196-210; and Gordon Zahn, *Chaplains in the RAF: A Study in Role Tension*, (Manchester: University of Manchester University Press, 1969).

³⁶Jaqueline Whitt, *Bringing God to Men: American Military Chaplains and the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 49.

³⁷Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 141.

As a result, the chaplaincy became dominated by evangelicals during Vietnam.³⁸ While other religious groups protested the war by staying out of it, some groups, like the American Bible Society (ABS), sprang into action, giving out free Bibles to servicemen. In fact, Bible distribution during Vietnam surpassed the World War II record: in 1970, the ABS distributed 4,272,596 Bibles.³⁹ For this group, sharing the gospel trumped moral qualms about serving in the war.

Yet the line between ministering to suffering soldiers and encouraging them to fight in an unpopular war appeared to be very thin at times. Veterans expressed resentment for the ways that chaplains appeared to support the war through prayer by blessing troops, missions, guns, and even killing.⁴⁰ During The Dellums Committee Hearings on War Crimes in Vietnam, one veteran recalled a conversation with a chaplain about his guilt over killing a Vietnamese woman. Instead of sympathizing with him, the chaplain reportedly offered to pray that God would allow the soldier to complete his work with the military. The soldier reported that he stopped going to church after this conversation because it so “upset my thinking with the religion. [The chaplain] was praying for God to give us courage and strength to keep doing what we were doing.”⁴¹

Exchanges like this one demonstrated the understanding that religion was supposed to be outside the reach of political influence. By not actively denouncing the war, some thought that the chaplaincy had displayed its true colors and that it was ultimately a pawn of the

³⁸Anne Loveland, *American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military, 1942-1993* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 154–158.

³⁹Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 123.

⁴⁰Doris L. Bergen, *Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-First Century* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 236.

⁴¹Robert Dellums, ed., *The Dellums Committee Hearings on War Crimes in Vietnam: An Inquiry into Command Responsibility in Southeast Asia* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 212.

government.⁴² The recognition that the church and state were intertwined in often unsavory ways came to be expressed in amalgams like “civil religion” and “military religion.” These conjunctions signified the suspicion that there were plenty of factors at work in religious belief and practice that were not necessarily related to the supernatural realm or the pursuit of a virtuous life.

It is no coincidence then, that the same climate that bred revulsion over Vietnam allowed scholar Robert Bellah’s concept of “civil religion” to gain traction.⁴³ Iterations of the concept were introduced by philosophers John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte in the nineteenth century but reconstituted by Bellah in 1967. “Civil religion” encapsulated two fears that became more publicly visible in the 1960s and that manifested in debates over the CGP: the fear that an institution as powerful as the military would use religion to achieve its purposes, and the fear that the government’s use of religion-in-general would extinguish religious difference.

In 1971, sociologists Peter Berger and Daniel Pinard tailored the “civil religion” idea to the military chaplaincy in the term “military religion,” which they defined as “establish[ing] a close affinity, sometimes even unity, between the symbols of the Judeo-Christian tradition and of the nation state.”⁴⁴ Based on a survey of CGP materials, Berger and Pinard argued that the program was a good example of “military religion,” which they distinguished between “religion in the military.”⁴⁵ The former sought to provide religious therapy for soldiers that also benefitted the government, while the latter only sought to provide religious solace regardless of its

⁴²Blumenthal, “Chaplains’ Role Questioned.”

⁴³Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus*, 96, no. 1 (1967): 1-21.

⁴⁴Peter Berger and Daniel Pinard, “Military Religion: An Analysis of Education Materials Disseminated by Chaplains” in *Military Chaplains*, ed. Harvey G. Cox, 90.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 99.

implications for military service. Military religion problematically omitted the possibility that a religious conscience might resist the state's authority.⁴⁶

As Berger and Pinard put it, the phenomenon of military religion brought focus to the question of whether religious expression was truly free in the armed forces. Siegel similarly concluded in a *Military Chaplains* chapter, "No one has the right to define religious teachings for other people. And no one can tell religion what it must be. If religion comes under external nonreligious control, it ceases to be religion."⁴⁷ Debates over religion's proper place in the American public tended to imply that "true" religious expression should be divorced from webs of power: it could neither be exerted forcefully in mandatory spheres nor could it be imposed upon in voluntary spheres. The chaplaincy's legitimacy, because it existed in service to the state, was on shaky ground.

Often, critiques of the chaplaincy went hand in hand with critiques of the entire military institution, like in the case of *The Military Establishment*, published in 1964. Activist John Swomley warned that the military was slowly and deliberately wresting control from civilian populations over the government and civilian institutions.⁴⁸ The effects of this takeover could be seen in the military's control over Congress and penetration of civilian sectors, and its influence on foreign policy decisions.⁴⁹ If military power was not decentralized in some way, the effects would be disastrous for the American people: "Democracy can flourish only when the people

⁴⁶Ibid., 104.

⁴⁷Martin Siegel, "Being a Chaplain in Today's Military," in *Military Chaplains*, ed. Harvey G. Cox, 113.

⁴⁸John Swomley. *The Military Establishment*. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964), 1.

⁴⁹Ibid., 6.

make their own decisions after full discussion. No people can turn the important decisions of life over to its army without eventually being enslaved.”⁵⁰

Like other critics, Swomley recognized religion as one of the military’s most powerful tools. In a chapter called “Religion and the Military,” Swomley argued that churches and synagogues specifically were targets of military propaganda because historically they proved powerful in their opposition to military action. For example, religious organizations launched the most protests to UMT in the 1940s.⁵¹ When describing the extent of the military’s manipulation of the civilian religious, Swomley did not mince words. He accused the military’s “propaganda machine” of going beyond simply persuading religious authorities to support conscription to encouraging them “to soften or eliminate their opposition to mass extermination of human beings.”⁵² Swomley’s book dealt a harsher blow than Siegel’s critique in that it argued that the military’s power over individuals was not only a natural consequence of the “military-industrial complex,” but that the military had long been engaged in intentional deceptions geared towards manipulating civilian populations.

In Swomley’s opinion, Americans had abdicated civilian control over the military after World War II in light of the terrible weapons of the day and the threat of the Soviet Union.⁵³ Out of necessity, Americans had largely bought into the narrative that military might and religious devotion would secure individual freedoms. But Vietnam had called into question both the military and religious establishments, the fundamental building blocks for the edifice of

⁵⁰Ibid., 254.

⁵¹Ibid., 199.

⁵²Ibid., 203.

⁵³Ibid., 6.

democratic freedom. What once was considered edifice in the 1940s and '50s appeared to be artifice in the 1960s.

Other factors related to the shifting religious landscapes in America contributed to the critique of the chaplaincy establishment and institutions in general. As the introduction of this chapter stated, a defining feature of the 1960s was the recognition of difference, and this included religious difference. Even atheism, which had been tied to communism and evil a decade before, received some recognition.⁵⁴ Religious choice flourished as young Americans particularly became acquainted with a variety of Eastern traditions as well as a home-grown tradition, Scientology. The Christian viewpoints expressed in the CGP and modeled by the chaplaincy appeared increasingly provincial as the decade wore on.

But there was a much deeper cultural shift that the increasing religious pluralism indicated, and which was no doubt tied to America's Vietnam experience: the American triumphalism from the 1950s had fallen flat in the 1960s. Nationalism was passé, the product of an older generation's misplaced passions. Remaining loyal to the old remnant just for the sake of tradition or commitment or community was absurd.

The "Age of Aquarius" was an age of recognizing difference, and this recognition required what Cox called a "new religious vision."⁵⁵ In the introduction to *Military Chaplains*, Cox explained in 1971 that young people, because they grew up on a "shrunk globe," were "born cosmopolitans."⁵⁶ Their "global sensitivity" had caused them to value the "Family of Man" over the "fatherland."⁵⁷ This value realignment made it "increasingly difficult for

⁵⁴Gavin Hyman, *A Short History of Atheism* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2010), 16.

⁵⁵Cox, *Military Chaplains*, ix.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

religious men to swallow the modern myth of the national state or to undergird it with heroic sacrifice.”⁵⁸

Living in a “shrunk” world meant increased engagement with other people, and increased engagement meant that the rules of survival had shifted. It was increasingly apparent that homogenization was ultimately impossible and furthermore, undesirable. Looking for commonalities among difference and celebrating difference across the globe would be a better tactic than trumpeting the superiority of one race or culture over another. Globalization challenged the portrait of a thriving democracy as based on a religiously-fueled nationalism, demonstrated in the previous chapters. Thus, the “new religious vision” that honored difference and downplayed nationalism cast into question the 1950s certainty that the Judeo-Christian tradition was the sole source of morality and ethics.

Chaplains in the 1960s and 1970s found themselves in very different cultural environs than before. The ambiguity of the chaplains’ role in serving both the church and the state was repeatedly criticized, forcing the chaplaincy to be more reflexive about their positions. Vietnam had indicated that the interests of church and state could conflict, and military chaplains were left to figure out how to negotiate a way to carry out their service to both.

In her book *Bringing God to Men: American Military Chaplains and the Vietnam War*, historian Jacqueline Whitt characterized military chaplains as constantly inhabiting “liminal spaces.”⁵⁹ Chaplains continually existed in the spaces between military and civilian life, between being officers and enlisted personnel, between their own religious denominations and the broader religious community, and between the sacred order and secular politics. Whitt

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Whitt, *Bringing God to Men*, 1.

contended that “by institutional design and by personal choice, chaplains are fundamentally people in the middle.”⁶⁰

This middle place proved hard to straddle. Some chaplains would explain how they could inhabit the two worlds by insisting, as one chaplain told the *New York Times*, “I don’t like killing, yet I like to minister to those whose business it is.”⁶¹ But answers like this were not fully compelling. Sometimes, military directives that delineated how chaplains should relate to soldiers considering conscientious objection were just as ambiguous as chaplains’ roles had become. Chaplains were not supposed to “talk soldiers out of [their conscientious objection]” but were supposed to “help them ascertain what their convictions [were.]”⁶² Could a chaplain adequately do this if, as Chief of Chaplains Gerhardt Hyatt put it in 1971, “a man of discernment has to give his government the benefit of the doubt”?⁶³ The next section traces how these “people in the middle” negotiated their legitimacy in the military institution when the ambiguity of their position, which was made especially clear by the CGP’s agenda, was under attack.

The Character Guidance Program under Siege

The Office of the Chief of Chaplains (OCCH) had received several complaints about the CGP beginning in the 1950s, but they were too few to register any real concern in the military. However, during the 1960s the volume and severity of the complaints increased, forcing the chaplaincy to reconsider the program’s focus. Examining the evolution of these complaints and

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Blumenthal, “Chaplains’ Role Questioned Because They Support War,” 37.

⁶² Ibid. See also Whitt, *Bringing God to Men*, 83-85 for an examination of chaplains’ relationships to conscientious objectors.

⁶³“Most Military Chaplains Support the War Effort,” *Ames Daily Tribune*, July 23, 1971.

how the OCCH responded to them illuminates two important points that ultimately had implications for spiritual training's continued legacy in the military. First, conflicts over the CGP demonstrated how the division between church and state was being renegotiated in the 1960s military, given changes in wider American culture. Over time, both the OCCH and protesting parties refined their conceptions of what was appropriate in mandatory education to include the understanding that the connotative power of teaching materials was just as important as what the materials denoted. In the late 1960s the chaplaincy was under great pressure to avoid even the appearance of connoting something inappropriate. Although the OCCH defended the right to make religious references in historical contexts, they also eventually removed nearly all religious language that stood a chance of invoking protest. Among the terms considered offensive were "God," "Supreme Being," "Creator," "faith," and "spiritual values."⁶⁴

But the word "spiritual" was unlike the other words discussed in that apparently it did not have the same potential for being understood as inappropriate in mandatory training settings. Although it was included in debates over the CGP as one of the offensive terms, it would linger on in military training literature and remain unchallenged until 2009, when it was accused of connoting religiosity. The term "spiritual" appeared to be just as flexible, ambiguous, and liminal as chaplains' roles seemed to be.

Second, conflicts over the CGP highlighted the liminal nature of chaplains' roles, as Whitt put it. Whether responding to the concern that the CGP had become too secular or to the complaint that it was religiously coercive, the OCCH nearly always attempted to maintain an ambiguous middle ground to satisfy all parties. For example, the office would insist to the

⁶⁴US Army, OCCH, *Historical Review, 1 July 1968 to June 30 1969*, (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1969), 82.

protesting American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) that the CGP was not religious while assuring concerned Christians that they were not secularizing the program. As “people in the middle,” chaplains offered responses in the middle, and these were often confusing or contradictory.

The debates demonstrate the struggle that many chaplains had in maintaining a middle ground. This struggle suggested that the need was urgent for the OCCH to find a language that would solidify their unique importance in the military system but that was not overbearing by the quickly changing standards of the 1960s. Although “spirituality” did not come up much in the debates over the CGP, the debates over the CGP demonstrate the chaplains’ need to fill increasingly variegated and culture-sensitive roles, and this variegation ultimately helps to explain the following decades’ growth of talk in the chaplaincy about “spirituality,” an ambiguous and multi-dimensional term that would prove uniquely useful to people in the middle.

Charges against the CGP generally fell into one of three categories. Early complaints from the 1950s accused the program of erasing Judeo-Christian religious differences and promoting one kind of Protestantism. By the 1960s, the nature of the complaints grew more serious, as the CGP was accused of trampling soldiers’ constitutional rights with mandatory religious indoctrination. However, the OCCH also received complaints that the CGP materials were not Christian enough, mostly from civilians and veterans. So while it appeared to some that the CGP’s religious content violated individual rights, it seemed to others that the content was not religious enough.

The program would undergo a few major changes in response to the growing concern that its religious content was no longer appropriate for soldiers in the 1960s. By 1973, nearly everything about the program, even its name, was different than when it was initiated in 1948.

The only constant factor throughout the program's three decades of tumultuous change was that chaplains remained as the program's primary content creators and facilitators. The following examination of the CGP and how it changed thus provides insight into the ways that chaplains, as men of the cloth and the state, navigated the quagmires of shifting cultural and legal sensibilities in search of appropriate ways to implement their particular ministries.

Early Complaints: Concern for Christian Minorities

The controversial columnist Drew Pearson was one of the first to publicly besmirch the chaplaincy as an institution by accusing it of "trying to mold all Protestant churches into one all-embracing religion for American soldiers."⁶⁵ His 1957 *Washington Post* article titled, "One Church for Protestant GIs?" charged the military with forcing even non-Protestants like "Orthodox, Mormons, Mohammedans, Buddhists and atheists" to "receive 'general Protestant' instruction against their will."⁶⁶ Pearson thought that Protestants had formed a coup and aimed to sequester the religious expression of minority groups.

The circumstances that had led to this miscarriage of justice were equally damning: Pearson accused the military of intentionally manipulating the quota system in order to allow conservative Christians to dominate the Chaplain Corps. The quota guidelines at that time stated that the number of military chaplains should be based on American church membership, but Pearson argued that if that were the case, then Orthodox and Mormon Christians should have 100 and 80 chaplains each rather than 10. Pearson recalled that one army regulation even articulated

⁶⁵Drew Pearson, "One Church for Protestant GIs?" *Washington Post*, July 14, 1957.

⁶⁶Ibid.

unabashedly that “the general Protestant education program provides for all Protestant groups.”⁶⁷ Religious minority groups could not even seek reparations for this unfair treatment or they would be punished, according to Pearson.⁶⁸

Pearson’s complaint hit on a number of issues that would plague the chaplaincy in the decade to come. First, he pointed out that the chaplaincy was largely Protestant, a fact reflected in the CGP’s educational content. This was true; Protestants did make up a majority of the chaplaincy, and chaplaincy quotas were supposed to represent national church membership.⁶⁹ But because some denominations simply did not fill their quotas, other denominations were allowed to fill in the gaps. What this usually meant was that zealous denominations, like Protestant evangelicals, ended up taking the spots of the Orthodox and Mormons who did not choose to go into service. It was not necessarily the case, as Pearson implied, that a Protestant faction of the military were bending the rules to achieve a majority, but the heart of his contention held true: the culture and official education in the military was heavily influenced by the growing evangelical Protestant population.⁷⁰

Pearson’s article brought to the public foreground the argument that a power imbalance in the military chaplaincy had resulted in abusing religious liberties. Although he recognized atheists as a wronged people group, Pearson’s contention was not that religion or even Christian instruction had no place in the military, but that only having one kind of Christian instruction

⁶⁷Regulation from Scott Air Force base in Illinois (quoted in Pearson, “One Church for Protestant GIs?” E5).

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Clifford Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps’ United States Navy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), 44.

⁷⁰When the National Association of Evangelicals began in 1942 evangelical chaplains in the military were nearly nonexistent. By 1955, there were 154. Jeremy Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion* (London: Praeger, 2008), 91.

was an infringement of rights. The OCCH apparently agreed with Pearson because, possibly as a reaction to his concern, the 1961 field manual for the CGP described the program as “nonsectarian and nondenominational.”⁷¹ This understanding of only sectarianism being inappropriate appeared to reflect the assumed consensus that all Americans were religious and mostly Christian. However, this opinion would not be expressed just five years later when the ACLU would make the more serious accusation that the CGP taught religion out of its proper voluntary context.

Concerns about Religious Coercion in a Secularizing Culture

In the 1960s, complaints about the unconstitutional nature of the CGP began to trickle in. Early in the decade, a letter from an unnamed Private to Senator Robert S. Kerr accused the CGP of “not keeping with the principle of separation of Church and State” in forcing soldiers to attend the lectures.⁷² The Private felt that the CGP was a chance for chaplains to pressure soldiers into going to church, stating that they were made to feel that “those who don’t go to church... aren’t very good religiously.” By his understanding, the CGP was a mandatory “class in religion.”⁷³

The OCCH chose not to respond to this particular incident but defended the CGP at large by maintaining that while it was “theistically oriented,” it was “not a religious program and is not devised to sustain or support any religious doctrine or institution.”⁷⁴ It asserted that “the topics discussed in monthly training classes are not presented as religious principles but rather as the

⁷¹US Army, *The Character Guidance Manual*, FM-16-100 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961), 3.

⁷²OCCH, *Summary of Major Events and Problems, 1 July 1962 to June 30 1963* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1963), 70.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

moral principles underlying traditional American concepts of personal integrity and responsible social conduct.”⁷⁵ In other words, the Office understood the program’s theistic content as offering teaching that was widely applicable to Americans or anyone who valued “integrity” and “responsible social conduct.” Yet the OCCH also suggested that CGP training was secular enough that anyone the command chose could teach it.⁷⁶ Pearson’s complaint insinuated that the CGP education could be appropriate as Christian; here, the OCCH took for granted that the program legally could be theistic as long as it did not cater to any one religion.

In 1962, the OCCH was forced to face its most damning charge yet, that the CGP was a vehicle for religious indoctrination. In mid-December of that year, director of the ACLU Lawrence Speiser wrote to the Secretary of the Army that trainees at Fort Devens, Massachusetts had been subjected to religious dogma. Earlier that month, soldiers had been shown a CGP film on “Opportunity.” After the film, the facilitating chaplain proceeded to preach to the trainees, reportedly explaining that the prescribed discussion topic had “left him cold.”⁷⁷ The chaplain supposedly announced to the soldiers that he would stick to the topic of “opportunity” by “giving you the opportunity of knowing more about what different religious groups think about Christ.”⁷⁸ According to Speiser, this was clear evidence that the army program was not “nonsectarian and nondenominational” as described in manuals. According to the ACLU, this was the kind of religious instruction that ought to occur only in voluntary spheres.⁷⁹

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid., 72.

⁷⁹Ibid.

The OCCH formed a response and replied to Speiser. The Office agreed that given the mandatory nature of lecture attendance, the chaplain's choice to sermonize was improper. The Office's official stance was that "chaplains will not, under any circumstances, utilize scheduled Character Guidance training periods to deliver a sermon, to announce religious services, to upbraid troops for nonparticipation in chapel programs, to show religious films or to expound their own theological views."⁸⁰ Clearly, this incident was a transgression, but it appeared to be an isolated incident.

The Office then defended the CGP generally by repeating that while the program was theistic, it was not religious.⁸¹ It is hard to tell what the OCCH meant by this statement since it made clear only that espousing one's "own theological views" were inappropriate, but a few contextual comments help illumine what the OCCH was determining as publicly appropriate.

The OCCH considered the program's content to be founded on universal, not religious, principles that were "ethical, moral, and psychological."⁸² According to the OCCH, the CGP mentioned "God, morality and the religious heritage of the American people" only in "historical rather than theological" contexts.⁸³ This statement too was not explained, but suggested that a theological reference made "historically" would not be coercive because it could be made objectively, as a historical fact without the pretense of making a value judgement. A comment made in "theological" context, on the other hand, assumed an activation of personal opinion rather than fact. A chaplain teaching a mandatory CGP could not argue for theological truth but could point out its significance in American history, as a history teacher might.

⁸⁰Ibid., 75.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid., 73.

⁸³Ibid.

The Office's reply to the ACLU was confusing in that on one hand, it defended the CGP's teachings as appropriate by insisting that religious references were used only to illustrate timeless human values, yet it also articulated towards the end of the letter that teaching "Judeo-Christian" theism as a basis for morality was necessary.⁸⁴ The former statement implied that religion offered one of many ways to illustrate a value system that was innate to human nature, whereas the latter statement indicated that human values were to be found only in the beliefs and practices of the Judeo-Christian religion. At the heart of this ambiguous exchange was a problem regarding human nature that would plague military spiritual and moral education for years to come: what exactly did the military teach as the "basis of morality?" In other words, what allowed soldiers to be morally good? CGP lectures from that time period are clear on this point: the Judeo-Christian God enabled people to be good, and only by believing in God could one hope to make moral progress. Perhaps the Office had a different opinion about how the CGP should operate, but the lectures make clear that the purpose of religious references were neither purely illustrative nor historical. On the contrary, religious belief was absolutely necessary for moral behavior.

Other complaints picked up on this basic problem. For example, in 1965, a Roy Ruff wrote to the Secretary of Defense to object to a brochure sent by Fort Dix to new soldiers' parents. Ruff complained that the CGP perpetuated the "Army's belief that spiritual guidance is essentially the same as military guidance, and that the Ten Commandments are the basic law of mankind."⁸⁵ Neither of Ruff's complaints remarked on anything new. However, what was significant about this complaint (besides the fact that it was made at all), was that it drew a

⁸⁴See Chapter Two's discussion of the 1951 lecture manual.

⁸⁵OCCH, *Historical Review, 1 July 1965 to 31 December 1966* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), 148.

distinction between religious values and beliefs and morality in general. This distinction was almost non-existent in the public iterations of government officials from the 1950s. If anything, religious values and beliefs and morality in general were intentionally tied together in 1950s public discourse. Ruff's complaint reflected a broader shift in American understandings of morality during the 1960s which no doubt factored into the evolution of First Amendment interpretations.

Attitudes towards religion rapidly shifted in the 1960s. In a rare incident in the beginning of 1967, a soldier requested that his religious identification be officially changed from Methodist to Atheist. He had informed the Inspector General of the Army Security Agency that, as an atheist, he objected to the CGP's "compulsory religious training" and to the supposed fine or imprisonment that soldiers were punished with for failing to attend.⁸⁶ The soldier asserted that it was illegal for the US government to "force upon its citizens the moral views of any one school of thought or of any one man."⁸⁷

This complaint widened the frame of culpability to include the US government and characterized the crime more generally than previous complaints by stating that imposing moral views on any one person in general was a travesty of justice. Americans from the twenty-first century are probably more familiar with the soldier's contention that any kind of imposed moral education was violating, but this particular complaint was emblematic of the 1960s generation that distrusted both religious and governmental institutions.

The next month, a similar complaint was forwarded to the OCCH by a soldier at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. He too called for the program's dissolution, saying he was an

⁸⁶OCCH, *Historical Review, 1 January 1967 to 30 June 1968* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968), 86.

⁸⁷Ibid.

“atheist admirer” of Ayn Rand.⁸⁸ He argued that the CGP violated the rights put forth in the Declaration of Independence, which, correctly interpreted, would indicate that soldiers should have the choice to attend. Because “any character guidance program ... is bound to be discriminatory,” it could not be mandatory.⁸⁹

This comment also indicated the problem with moral education in the military that others had hit on by articulating that behavioral engineering programs like the CGP could only ever be normative. Again, what was significant about this recognition was that it indicated a new way of thinking about American institutions and the individuals within. In the 1950s, the CGP was seen by many outsiders as a positive unifying force; by the 1960s, such education had possibility as a manipulative and alienating force. In fact, as a tool of moral instruction it was necessarily manipulative, as this soldier’s comment indicated. Clearly, a primary value had shifted from one generation in the 1950s to the next in the 1960s. Whereas a comprehensive moral education program was seen as preserving society in one decade, it came to be seen as possibly destroying individual freedom in another.

The OCCH’s response was similar to its previous responses to complaints, only this time, it was even more explicit in highlighting the historicity of religious references. The Office insisted that the program did not teach religion, but only “about [underline original] [it] and the undeniable part it played in the founding of the nation.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, the Office argued, the program was no more theological than the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, or the Bill of Rights.⁹¹

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

Again, the Office conveyed mixed signals regarding what made the CGP publicly acceptable in the new culture of secular awareness. First, it suggested that the CGP was appropriately mandatory because of its secular mission to “train the soldier in the rights and responsibilities of the American citizen in uniform.”⁹² The Office argued that in this regard, it was not unlike classes on Military Justice and Command Information.⁹³

However, two other comments indicated an admission that CGP classes were perhaps not as secular as suggested. The Office remarked that soldiers were not required to “accept the conclusions of the character guidance instructor concerning the application of historic morality.”⁹⁴ This comment acknowledged that “the application of historic morality” was subjective enough that soldiers might be exposed to dogmatic opinions during CGP lectures. Ultimately, the Office seemed to suggest that the best defense against unwanted teachings would have to come from the students’ refusal to be indoctrinated. Obviously, this logic was at loggerheads with the assumption that there was nothing in the program controversial enough to refuse.

The Office then claimed that there was “no unreasonable infringement on [the soldier’s] religious liberty or personal integrity” because soldiers were not “graded, scored, ranked, or disciplined for participation.”⁹⁵ This too hinted at the program’s potential for controversy. If the program was both as widely applicable and as integral to military training as it was purported to be, then surely assessing soldiers’ learning would be not only appropriate but smart from a training perspective. Ironically, the Office’s defense of the program as legitimate because it did

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid., 87.

not measure progress exposed precisely what was rapidly becoming the CGP's central problem: its religious, moral, and theistic teachings were no longer considered relevant enough or appropriate enough to be universally applied.

In the span of one year, from October 1961 to October 1962, Sunday School attendance in the armed forces had noticeably decreased.⁹⁶ The decline of enthusiasm for religion also could be seen in the growing displeasure with the CGP that the OCCH had tracked in two surveys of attitudes towards the program, conducted in 1961 and in 1966. According to the 1966 survey, active duty soldiers skipped the CGP instruction over twice as much as they had five years earlier, when absence rates were at 8.2%.⁹⁷ Furthermore, soldiers distinctly indicated that they liked the program less: approval ratings dropped by 12% and soldiers who said the program had a positive impact on their lives declined by 14%.⁹⁸ Given these disappointing results and the complaints about the program, the Office met to decide how to revise the CGP.

Attempts to Make the CGP Relevant: Battles over Theistic Belief

In March 1966, the OCCH requested that the Adjutant General publish guidelines that ordered chaplains to stick to the topic addressed, and forbade the use of chapels or chapel facilities for CGP instruction classrooms.⁹⁹ In order to emphasize the CGP's secular importance, the new edition of the field manual for chaplains highlighted the program as a command responsibility and integrated the Code of Conduct.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶OCCH, *Historical Review, 1962-63*, 67.

⁹⁷OCCH, *Historical Review, 1967-68*, 80.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹OCCH, *Historical Review, 1965-1966*, 141.

¹⁰⁰US Army, *The Character Guidance Manual*, FM-16-100 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966).

The most significant change to date was that the OCCH recommended that the lecture with the most religious content, “One Nation Under God,” be replaced by “Espirit.”¹⁰¹ The Office explained that “an inadequately instructed chaplain might present” it in “such a way as to provide at least a superficial basis for criticizing the CGP as trespassing on the sphere of religion.”¹⁰² The old lecture (detailed in Chapter Two) contained a mixture of “historical” and “theological” references. That is, it both justified belief in God as historical and applied ideological force in trying to compel soldiers to believe. The Office’s main concern, that a newly-appointed chaplain might not understand that the religious content of the lecture did not signal a license to impart religious zeal, was reasonable. How was a chaplain, who initially secured the job of facilitating religious expression by successfully demonstrating religious commitment, supposed to know that none of that applied when giving CGP lectures? This very concern also prompted the Office to rename the discussion topic “The Golden Rule” to something less religious-sounding in November 1967.¹⁰³

Unfortunately for the Office, removing the “One Nation Under God” lecture only produced complaints of another nature. Retired Army Reserve Major Ivan C. Peck complained to the OCCH that the decision to drop “One Nation Under God” with its “historical background of this country’s belief” and its “positive approach to spirituality for today’s soldiers” signaled the nation’s moral decline.¹⁰⁴ Peck thought the new topic contained “no reference to things spiritual,” and insisted that faith in God was critical in military work in his experience.¹⁰⁵ Even

¹⁰¹OCCH, *Historical Review, 1967-1968*, 84.

¹⁰²OCCH, *Historical Review, 1965-1966*, 145.

¹⁰³OCCH, *Historical Review, 1968-69*, 88.

¹⁰⁴OCCH, *Historical Review, 1967-1968*, 85.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

civilian communities would be affected by ignoring God, since soldiers without faith would not be as capable of making a smooth transition back to civilian life. Plus, Peck argued, education that occluded theism impoverished soldiers personally. Clearly, the army's secular evolution represented the nation's "continual erosion of spiritual matters."¹⁰⁶

Complaints like this put the Office in the awkward position of having to legitimize the criticism leveraged at it by the ACLU. The OCCH explained to Peck that the lecture had been removed because "competent legal opinion of this headquarters deemed that it violated the First Amendment."¹⁰⁷ But it also assured Peck that "the army was as interested as ever in the spiritual welfare of its members and that the chaplains" were working to create "the most comprehensive religious program ever offered."¹⁰⁸

The Office wrote its reply in 1968, six years after it had defended the program to the ACLU as "moral" and "theistic" but "not religious." Yet here, the Office characterized the CGP to the veteran not only as "religious" but "comprehensive," making possible the impression that despite the ACLU's best efforts, the chaplaincy still aimed to provide religious education to the most people possible. As it had done with complaining parties before, the Office attempted to signal its alignment with Peck's concern that the program was losing its religious flair while explaining why compromises had to be made.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

Complicating the Negotiations for an Appropriate CGP: The Rise of Evangelicals

There were other religious soldiers, veterans, and civilians who would continue to criticize the OCCH's attempts to revise the program. During the 1960s especially, the chaplaincy struggled to find balance between the competing ideologies of the nation's growing evangelical contingent and those who felt that such moral education was no longer appropriate, while maintaining a valued status in the US military. Proving the chaplaincy's use to such diverse groups was difficult, and the chaplaincy became only more squeezed by the demands of both conservatives and liberals in the last half of the 1960s.

As previously indicated, the chaplaincy became dominated by evangelicals during the Vietnam War primarily because other religious groups and denominations protesting the war had not sent chaplains. Out of necessity the official protocol for filling the chaplaincy ranks allowed any approved religious group to make up the difference of another group's failed quota. Inspired by missional zeal, evangelicals were quick to fill in the quota gaps.¹⁰⁹ In fact, some evangelicals desired to be a part of the military mission so much that they ceased their membership with the National Association of Evangelicals and donned an "independent" status in order to increase their chances at getting accepted into the military chaplaincy.¹¹⁰

Given the paucity of information on the subject, it is hard to say exactly how evangelicals might have influenced the CGP specifically. However, what is widely documented is how the growing evangelical military population created an environment in which passionate Christian

¹⁰⁹Loveland, *American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military*, 24. Examples of mainline churches that failed to meet their quotas in the 1960s included Roman Catholics, Jewish groups, Eastern Orthodox, African Methodist Episcopal groups, and various black Baptist churches. OCCH, *Historical Review, 1969-1970*, 128-29.

¹¹⁰Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 24.

expression could flourish, even well into the twenty-first century.¹¹¹ Evangelicals' particular view of righteousness likely nuanced their interpretations of the CGP, bringing yet another dimension to the debate over its proper role in military training. The CGP had taught that soldiers needed to believe in God to do their jobs well. But evangelical rhetoric demonstrated that many of them believed that general theism, like the kind that Eisenhower once encouraged, was not good enough for those seeking righteousness.¹¹²

The belief that one had to have a “personal relationship” with Jesus Christ to be holy was quickly developing among evangelicals. Army Chief of Staff Harold Johnson typified this viewpoint in the statement that “only Christ would provide “the inner strength essential to meet the wide variety of conditions encountered in the environment of the warrior.”¹¹³ Evangelicals did not believe in a general God, but, as Johnson put it, “in finding strength and purpose in a deep and abiding faith in our Father through His son, Jesus.”¹¹⁴ A nominal belief in God would not sustain a soldier through trying ordeals; only a carefully nurtured relationship with God would give one the strength to endure. Furthermore, many evangelicals, like Johnson, felt that this belief had been proven in their own grueling combat experiences, and felt compelled to tell about these.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹In addition to Loveland's books, see Bergen's *Sword of the Lord*; Gunn's *Spiritual Weapons*; and Bogle's *The Pentagon's Battle for the American Mind: The Early Cold War*.

¹¹²See Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014) for numerous examples of how Billy Graham and the burgeoning evangelical culture he was instrumental in emphasizing faith in Christ for salvation.

¹¹³Michael L. Weinstein and Davin Seay, *With God on Our Side: One Man's War against an Evangelical Coup in America's Military* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2006), 46.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹¹⁵Johnson was well-known for telling about his encounters with God during combat situations. See Loveland, *American Evangelicals and the US Military*, 100-117. He also suggested that his religious experiences were not so unique: “anyone who has heard the whine of a bullet fired in anger is deeply aware of the presence of a Supreme Being.” *Ibid.*, 102.

Part of the reason for why the American culture wars grew so red-hot during evangelicals' ascendancy was that there was so much at stake for this religious group. Everything, from one's ability to live a moral life to the possibility of flourishing after death, hung on a personal faith in Christ. When evangelicals entered the military, out of concern for fellow soldiers some of them encouraged the idea that one's ability to endure the military's grueling conditions was contingent on the quality and depth of one's relationship to Jesus Christ.¹¹⁶

One soldier known as "First Lt." in the OCCH's *Historical Record* voiced the evangelical concern that the CGP did not "push soldiers to accept Christ."¹¹⁷ The Office responded by reminding the "Lt." that chaplains were forbidden to "preach the gospel" during the CGP, but added that "Christians have the religious responsibility of supplementing this basic moral training by preaching the Gospel and by personally witnessing for their Lord."¹¹⁸ In this response, the Office acknowledged the legitimacy of the "Lt.'s" concern by suggesting that evangelicals should personally evangelize when the CGP legally could not. In the next few years, however, the CGP would be forced to secularize in ways that would be even more repugnant to evangelicals.

Concerns about Connotation: The Entire CGP Threatened

In 1967, the OCCH met to plan future CGP publications, operating under the belief that in making a few changes, the program had secured its longevity. However, the most serious

¹¹⁶Loveland's *American Evangelicals and the US Military* gives the richest accounts of attempts to proselytize in this way. She especially highlights the influential activities of evangelical military leaders William K. Harrison, Harold K. Johnson, and Ralph E. Haines.

¹¹⁷OCCH, *Historical Review, 1965-66*, 147.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 148.

critique was yet to come, as the ACLU was not satisfied that the program was publicly appropriate.

On April 15, 1968 ACLU director Speiser again wrote to the Under Secretary of the Army with a charge that was more damning than the last. Six years earlier, Speiser had complained that a chaplain abused his authority as a lecturer by “sermonizing,” an apparent isolated incident. This time, the ACLU charged the entire program with violating First Amendment rights, based on the overall “flavor” of the program.¹¹⁹ The ACLU objected not its “concept” or “the control and implementation ... by the Corps of Chaplaincy,” but to the legal legitimacy of the entire program, which Speiser argued was called into question by several Supreme Court cases.¹²⁰ He demanded a review of the program and a suspension of its requirement.

By mid-May of 1968, the Acting Judge Advocate General had analyzed the legal issues raised by the ACLU and concluded that while the CGP did raise troublesome constitutional issues, the program could be successfully defended if all religious passages and images were deleted from training materials. Writers responsible for producing new program material would be told not to use religious references or illustrations to “authoritatively propound a truth or doctrine,” but they were not forbidden from using such language.¹²¹

The Chief of Staff disagreed with the Advocate General that excising religious references was a proper solution. He thought that nothing was amiss with using “the Bible as an example of

¹¹⁹OCCH, *Historical Review, 1968-69*, 89.

¹²⁰Speiser argued that *WVS Board of Education v. Bernadette* in 1943, *Engle v. Vitale* in 1962, and *Abington Township v. Schempp* in 1963 had all set precedents that made the CGP’s existence questionable, Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid., 90.

outstanding literature”; chaplains just needed to be reminded to not preach while lecturing.¹²²

The Chief of Staff approved the new direction for the program in June 1968.¹²³ The next year, however, the Chief of Staff apparently relented to the General Advocate’s concern by requesting that all CGP materials omit religious elements.¹²⁴

In July 1968, the General Counsel of the US Army drafted a response to the ACLU’s April 15th complaint that the OCCH was not satisfied with. It stated that the review of the CGP had found “a few” instances that could “be considered improper under the First Amendment.”¹²⁵ He described them as “very minor” and stated that action was being taken to eliminate them, but also that “years of experience had validated the efficacy of the CGP.”¹²⁶ The program was necessary because it helped military leaders take a heterogeneous group of soldiers and “weld them into a smoothly functioning team with each man recognizing his responsibility to his associates.”¹²⁷ Chaplains functioned, “in most cases” as a “trained sociologists,” able to gain rapport with soldiers that officers cannot.¹²⁸ Chaplains were uniquely useful because they could serve as advisors and teachers since they were not technically in command. Enthusiastic chaplains might confuse the two roles, but the General Counsel thought those cases were rare exceptions.¹²⁹

¹²²Ibid., 89.

¹²³Ibid., 90.

¹²⁴Ibid., 91.

¹²⁵Ibid., 72.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ibid.

General Ralph E. Haines, Vice Chief of Staff, feared that this reply was too pliant, and there were “fundamental issues” at stake in admitting too much.¹³⁰ He wanted the reply to “admit some inconsistencies” but still firmly support the CGP.¹³¹ He suggested an alternative draft and asked for a meeting with the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Army if the General Counsel resisted his revisions. The OCCH had agreed to delete the religious references that the Judge Advocate General had called for, and to remind chaplains of the CGP’s secular purpose.¹³² The Office was under the impression that this was an acceptable compromise for all army parties and that the matter had been resolved.

But in early December 1968, the General Counsel of the Army responded to the ACLU quite differently than the Office expected. Against Haines’ wishes, the letter was even more apologetic than before. The Office reported that despite the fact that there were relatively few religious references in the CGP, the General Counsel stated that there were so many that clearly, “inadequate attention had been given in the past to assuring that the CGP is wholly secular in its approach to training our personnel on matters of duty, honor, and patriotism.”¹³³ He assured the ACLU that the army was “eliminating all passages with religious connotations” and would make sure that this problem would not recur.¹³⁴ The tone and content of the General Counsel’s letter made clear his understanding that the chaplaincy could not be trusted to police themselves and that religious references in any context, “historical” or “theological,” would be inappropriate.

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid., 73.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Ibid., 73-74.

Days later, the Secretary of the Army reviewed the Office's revised CGP guidelines, which included the suggestion that instructors could incorporate religious references in teaching but could not "preach" or use religious material "in any manner which implies exclusive authority, priority, or validity for that particular source."¹³⁵ He removed that ability, and replaced it with the statement that chaplains could participate in the program only as "a staff officer performing a military function for the command."¹³⁶ They could not incorporate religious references into lessons because "it reinforces the religious nature of his position and can lead to the charge that the CGP is a compulsory religious training program rather than a proper secular program related to training Army personnel on matters of duty, honor, and patriotism."¹³⁷

The Secretary of the Army's contention that chaplains could not include religious references based on their identity as religious authorities was somewhat new in the short history of the debate over the CGP. Previous reservations regarding the CGP's appropriateness primarily hinged on lecture content and delivery methods, both of which could be properly managed, at least in theory. The Secretary's position was distinct in that it assumed that religious references made by a religious authority would appear by default to have a sermonizing tone regardless of the lecture's general content, context or manner of delivery. This opinion threatened to strip the chaplaincy's power to even utter religious words in all but voluntary contexts. It was a drastic request compared to previous suggestions, but the Secretary's fear of doing anything that *might* result in an accusation also indicated the degree of sensitivity that the military had accumulated around religious matters during the 1960s.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid.

The OCCH Draws a Line in the Sand

The Office felt the Secretary's demand went too far. In December 1968, the OCCH published a "Chief of Chaplains Position Paper on Character Guidance Instruction," in which it "strongly opposed ... any inclusion of religion or religious dogma in the subject matter taught in Character Guidance instruction" because this was a violation of rights.¹³⁸ But it was also "just as strongly opposed to any attempt totally to prohibit the use of religious references, illustrations, or materials in this instruction" as long as they illustrated the point and did not imply exclusive authority.¹³⁹ If instructors were forbidden to mention religion, this would be a stricter limitation than those imposed on any other educator, and would deny the instructor "recourse to the historical-religious or cultural-religious foundations of civilization as these are reflected in the great literature of the ages."¹⁴⁰ It would also "preclude many applicable and appropriate quotes and illustrations from the founding documents of the United States."¹⁴¹ It reinforced the idea that as the materials were, there were few religious references anyway, and those that were there simply clarified or illustrated a point. The paper concurred with the former Chief of Staff, General Harold K. Johnson's contention that chaplains could "distinguish between their role as staff officer-instructor in the CGP and their role as clergymen in the Army's religious program."¹⁴² The paper suggested that chaplains should still be allowed to use examples from "great literature" that "reflect the cultural/religious/historical development of human

¹³⁸Ibid., 75.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Ibid.

civilization,” but also that this should be done without implying “exclusive authority, priority, or validity for that particular source.”¹⁴³

The points in the paper, especially the last one, indicated just how much change had occurred in the last decade. Authoritative public rhetoric and CGP lectures of the 1950s argued that Americans’ security and freedom rested on recognizing God as the sole source of moral behavior and implied (when not directly articulating) that the Bible contained God’s truth. The OCCH’s recognition that such an exclusive claim constituted a violation of rights suggested the possibility that moral truth could be found elsewhere, even outside the bounds of religion. If this was the case, then what unique authority did chaplains have as CGP lecturers or moral educators? Chaplains’ relevance and special moral authority were increasingly challenged.

Throughout December 1968 and into January 1969, meetings between the Offices of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, the Judge Advocate General, and the Chief of chaplains were held to discuss the CGP’s fate. Those from the Office of the Judge Advocate General thought that “religion in any form and with any connotation” should be excluded, but a representative from the Office of the General Counsel of the Army warned all present that if religion and God were eliminated, it would cause “wide-spread furor.”¹⁴⁴

After these talks, the Office strengthened its arguments in its position paper. It argued that omitting religious references would set a troubling precedent, given that it would deny the United States’ Judeo-Christian historical heritage, but also Article VI of the Code of Conduct and the entire second sentence of the Declaration of Independence. It characterized the suggestion to ban chaplains from using religious references based on their role as religious

¹⁴³Ibid., 76.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

authorities or the call to ban quotes that might be “constitutionally suspect” as taking the striving for secularism “to the point of absurdity.”¹⁴⁵ Religious content per se should not be illegal, only the use of it to coerce a person into religious belief. As the Office understood it, content used “to expose for understanding” was legal; if used “to impose for commitment,” it was illegal.¹⁴⁶ The CGP, the Office argued, did not impose religious commitment on soldiers, but used religious illustrations “to expose for understanding ... the need for a sense of personal responsibility.”¹⁴⁷

The distinction that the Office made between “commitment” and “understanding” was an important one: the former insinuated a personal choice or dedication to something, whereas the latter only assumed a degree of knowledge. Surely the aim to facilitate “understanding” sounded better than instilling commitment in the cultural climate that valued personal ideological freedom, but it was clear that neither the Office nor the military at large had a need for soldiers to “understand” their duties without personally “committing” to them. The difference between helping soldiers to “understand the need for a sense of personal responsibility” and instilling “commitment” was mostly semantic. If religious references were employed in the first sense, they would likely be used in the second sense.

Despite the fact that at no point in military educational history has the commitment to duty been presented as something that one in service might reasonably refuse, in the late 1960s the Office had accumulated an interest in distancing the use of religious references from the necessary project of inspiring “commitment” by characterizing their primary function as illustrative. The words the Office chose to delineate between legal and illegal usage (“expose” v.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 77.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

“impose”) signaled the understanding that individuals attending a mandatory class in the public sphere had the right to not be pressed upon. However, it also signaled that underlying truths existed that applied to all people, and that these only needed to be “exposed.” In maintaining that religion could do this important work of exposure, the Office neglected to see what many complaints implied: namely, that religious references, regardless of their historicity or roles in “great literature” did not have the same power to “expose” knowledge as a decade before because they operated on assumptions that were no longer as common.

The position paper concluded with an attempt to at least verbally appease those taking a harder line on the CGP material by saying that the Office agreed with the statement that chaplains should not incorporate “references to religious materials” into the CGP materials, but only if that statement was “understood within the purview of this document.”¹⁴⁸ Since the document in question was devoted almost entirely to defending the right to use religious references to illustrate national values, this concurrence was obviously an attempt to signal good will more than actual agreement.

In February 1969, the Office sent a proposal of CGP guidelines to the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel to review. The Judge Advocate General requested a more stringent wording for the delivery of lectures, requiring that chaplains avoid not just religious language, but “any manner that may connote religious instructions.”¹⁴⁹ The Office hyphenated “religious references” in order to further circumscribe the type that were appropriate to use: only “historical-religious and cultural-religious references” that aided soldiers’ “understanding of

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 77.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 78.

concepts that underlie western civilization and our nation's moral heritage" were allowed.¹⁵⁰

However, the Judge Advocate General (JAG) did not think this was good enough, and altered the sentence to read, "Historical and cultural references which have incidental religious significance will be used in a strictly secular sense and only where necessary for an understanding of the subject matter of a particular Character Guidance lesson plan."¹⁵¹

This alteration, although seemingly slight at first, had significant implications. Contrary to the Office's understanding that religious references could legitimately be used to illustrate historical values, the JAG implied that they could not be intentionally chosen for this purpose. If, incidentally, a reference was religious, it could only be "secularly" employed, and only when absolutely necessary to illustrate a point. This statement, unlike the Office's, gave every indication that religious language should be avoided if at all possible.

Public Reactions

By 1969 when the CGP changes were reported to the American public, they were characterized in the *New York Times* as "plans to eliminate references to God and religious philosophy" that the ACLU had forced.¹⁵² This characterization did not fully represent the conclusions of the negotiations over the revisions, but the mistake was reasonable given how slippery those negotiations were. Sure enough, as a representative from the Office of the General Counsel of the Army had predicted months earlier, the thought of the army deleting theistic content did indeed "cause a furor." Upon hearing the alleged changes to the CGP, some

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Ibid., 78-79.

¹⁵²Associated Press, "Pentagon Curbs Religious Talks," *New York Times*, March 28, 1969.

civilians, like Rev. Charles Allen of the Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, thought that this was yet “another stab at the heart of America to take the name of God out of everything we hold dear.”¹⁵³

Some Americans, however, were thankful that the ACLU had, as they saw it, lobbied for justice. An editorial letter in *The Nation* thanked the ACLU for ending the requirement that soldiers endure “sanctimony” in the CGP.¹⁵⁴ The *New York Times* quoted Methodist minister James Nash as saying that this was “a valuable effort to prevent [the] kind of propaganda” that “associate[d] the deity with acts of government.”¹⁵⁵ Some, like the Rev. Dr. Sterling W. Brown, offered more measured perspectives. Brown stated in the *New York Times* that while he was “not for a godless military,” he did support the decision to separate “efforts to promote a particular religion from all areas of national government.”¹⁵⁶

On March 24, 1969, outrage broke out in Congress as William G. Bray, a representative from Indiana, announced that the ACLU had “pressured the Pentagon to make [CGP materials] conform to what the ACLU deems fitting and proper.”¹⁵⁷ Bray assumed that the ACLU had taken offense at the CGP’s role in teaching soldiers “the moral principles that sustain the philosophy of American freedom” which “regard[ed] man as a creature of God” and demanded an “accountability to his Creator.”¹⁵⁸ Bray was incredulous that this would be “remotely” offensive to anyone, given that “all but a tiny minority” recognized “a ‘Creator’ in some

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴“Pentagon Piety,” *The Nation*, March 17, 1969.

¹⁵⁵“Pentagon Curbs Religious Talks,” *New York Times*.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Representative William G. Bray, “Just Who Runs the Office of The Chief of Chaplains?” *Congressional Record*, 24 March 1969 [7343].

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

form.”¹⁵⁹ He also pointed out that the OCCH’s “knuckle[ing] under” the ACLU’s “unjustified meddling” set a troubling precedent. He thought that the Supreme Court, not the ACLU, should have the power to alter training classes.¹⁶⁰

Four days after Bray’s call for action, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird called for an investigation into how the CGP change occurred. He wanted to ensure that the army’s actions to remove religious references were legal while being mindful of commanders’ “special obligation to present an inspiring program of character guidance.”¹⁶¹ This response hinted at the still uncertain role of religion in military training by gesturing to competing needs: the unfolding need to circumscribe public religious expression for legal purposes and the need for religion to “inspire” soldiers in their jobs. Another comment, made by an army spokesperson at a press release, also gestured to these competing needs in an explanation of the program’s shift. The spokesperson explained that while “it was not believed proper to have soldiers attending mandatory classes with religious overtones,” soldiers were still being “encouraged to attend religious services.”¹⁶² If chaplains could no longer legally encourage religious belief through the CGP, the military would still encourage voluntary religious expression.

Resolution

Two weeks later, Laird clarified that he had misunderstood how the CGP was being revised. Terms like “God,” “Supreme Being,” “faith,” and “spiritual values” would not be

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹“Pentagon Curbs Religious Talks,” *New York Times*.

¹⁶²Ibid.

stricken from CGP lectures.¹⁶³ Laird refined his position to allow that teaching “religious dogmas or particular sectarian beliefs” were unacceptable in a program like the CGP. However, he believed that exercising words like “God,” “Creator,” and “faith” would ultimately not aid the program’s purpose to “instill and strengthen patriotism and a sense of moral responsibility.”¹⁶⁴

Speiser also clarified the ACLU’s position. They had not asked for all references to God to be excised, but only that the “religious flavor” be altered. Speiser suggested this could start by altering, for example, an excerpt on chastity that taught soldiers to “seek God’s help in ... practicing chastity” or in removing the suggestion that soldiers who are mindful of their “obligations to the Creator” would be better drivers.¹⁶⁵

These clarifications would help to assuage some of the public fears that American “liberals” were not trying to scrub God from American life and history, but in only a few months, the CGP would be drastically altered by the OCCH, which had been discussing implementing a different approach to moral development for years anyway. Although technically still a part of the Character Guidance Program, the altered program’s title, “Our Moral Heritage,” would reflect different values for a modern age.

A New Approach for a New Generation: Our Moral Heritage and Human Self-Development

By the 1970s, the Army’s CGP was outdated because its religious “flavor” was no longer appreciated. It was time for a significant change, not just because of the ACLU’s requests, but

¹⁶³Edward Burks, “Pentagon Says Religious Terms Can Be Used in Army Lectures,” *New York Times*, April 3, 1969.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*

also because moral guidance would need to shift course to be more effective in the cultural climates of the 1970s. The OCCH had begun to recognize the CGP as outdated for another, by this time very familiar, reason: like the youth from the 1940s, the young soldiers in the 1970s army were seen as requiring new disciplinary tactics. In fact, the conversations about young soldiers in the early 1970s appeared nearly identical to the concerns that adults in command had in the 1940s. The specific problems of youth had shifted and the particular solutions were different, but the entire understanding of the nature of youth was uncannily similar: soldiers in the 1970s were fiercely independent and valued personal freedom to an unprecedented degree, which meant that they did not respect authority like soldiers before. In fact, General Michael S. Davison, Commander of the US Army in Europe, identified this lack of respect as “the toughest problem” the army had in 1971.¹⁶⁶ Like the youth of the 1940s, those of the 1970s were considered to be a “new breed,” unique in their brazen disregard for those in authority.¹⁶⁷ Soldiers’ disregard for authority was often accompanied by a youthful desire for morally errant exploration. In the 1970s, the most concerning problems of young soldiers were not found in taverns or brothels like in the 1940s, but in rampant drug use and violent outbursts.

Youth of the 1970s were seen as morally lost by military leadership, based on several social facts mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. In addition to the fragging problem and substance abuse, the violent crime rate among service members was also rising to unprecedented levels. Two thousand US soldiers stationed in Germany somehow committed a record 5,100 violent crimes *per month* during the summer of 1971.¹⁶⁸ These problems directly affected the

¹⁶⁶Maureen Mylander, *The Generals* (New York: Dial Press, 1974), 17.

¹⁶⁷Haynes Wilson and George C. Johnson, *Army In Anguish* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), 27, 29, 69.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 24.

army's retention numbers, as the rate of discharge per one thousand enlisted army personnel for "misconduct, unfitness, or unsuitability" had risen from 10.8 in 1967 to 36.3 in 1972.¹⁶⁹

There was no denying that things were a mess in the early 1970s military. Soldiers needed moral guidance, but this generation of soldiers required different techniques than soldiers of the past, who supposedly could be taught what was right or wrong. Character Guidance would not work with the generation that went to war in Vietnam because it relied too much on the audience having respect for those in authority and for religious teachings. It appeared that both kinds of respect had diminished significantly. Soldiers would need to be taught in a way that would more effectively reach them.

In an article titled "Youth's 'Why?' Key Challenge in Today's Army," Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel W.T. Kerwin argued that army youth could not just be told what to do because they demanded to know reasons for why they should obey.¹⁷⁰ They wanted a chance to engage and interact with command, "to participate and contribute."¹⁷¹ Again, in nearly the same words General Devine used to explain the "new" disciplinary techniques of Fort Knox, James H. Toner suggested in a 1970 *Army* article that commanders would need to motivate soldiers not out of fear but conviction.¹⁷²

In a 1970 keynote address at an Army Commanders' Conference, Chief of Staff William C. Westmoreland offered a vision for how to reach the younger generation who placed such a premium on individual freedom at the expense of respect for authority. Part of the solution for teaching morality would be found in adopting a more Socratic, collaborative approach. This

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 18.

¹⁷⁰Walter Kerwin, "Youth's 'Why?' Key Challenge in Today's Army," *Army* 20 (October 1970): 69.

¹⁷¹Samuel H. Hays, "The Growing Leadership Crisis," *Army* 20 (February 1970): 39.

¹⁷²James H. Toner, "Leaders Must Reply When Soldiers Ask," *Army* 20 (August 1970): 56.

would be paramount in the new goal of engendering mutual respect between soldiers and the command. Similar to the Fort Knox experiment, it was assumed that in order to be truly effective, the command could not afford to ignore soldiers' sense of dignity and power. They would need to aim for a partnership that fostered dialogue, and command would need to learn how to be "sensitive to soldiers' needs and aspirations."¹⁷³

In this cultural climate, the OCCH would produce a new series called Our Moral Heritage (OMH) that was less authoritarian and more cooperative than the old one. More importantly, it attempted to accommodate the ACLU's requests, even in its name, which the OCCH came up with. The reference to "American Heritage" was supposed to signal the program's emphasis on teaching morality from a national perspective, rather than a faith-based one. According to an OCCH *Historical Review*, the word "moral" was chosen to distance the program from religious or theological perspectives, since the program "assume[d] that all people have to make decisions about what is right and wrong, whether they have specific religious convictions or not."¹⁷⁴ OMH was approved in 1969 and first published in 1970, but it would last less than two years before being replaced by yet another series within the CGP called Human Self-Development.¹⁷⁵

OMH contained many of the same topics as the original CGP, except that it had been scrubbed clean of much of the religious content. The forward to one of the lecture manuals explained that the program's aim was to teach the "American values which are the moral foundations of dedicated citizenship and character development."¹⁷⁶ The manual also gestured to

¹⁷³William Westmoreland, keynote address, Army Commanders' Conference, The Pentagon, November 30, 1970, edited transcript, 4, 7, 11-12.

¹⁷⁴OCCH, *Historical Review*, 1968 -1969, 94.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁷⁶US Army, *Our Moral Heritage: Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 165-8 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1970).

a new yet oddly defensive attempt at cultural sensitivity by teaching the origins of American morality “without being sectarian, chauvinistic, or apologetic.”¹⁷⁷ The program’s emphasis on finding a national moral consensus was explained as especially necessary because of how quickly and how much the country was changing. Despite the staggering rate of diversification across “national origins, colors, classes, regions, and creeds” all Americans still had in common a moral heritage or a social ethic.¹⁷⁸ Some Americans made the mistake of thinking that the burgeoning “pluralistic culture” meant that values too were in a “constant state of transition and adjustment.”¹⁷⁹ OMH sought to set the record straight: although differences were undeniably multiplying, there were still core principles that united Americans in moral consensus, and this program would aim to teach them.

OMH taught that these principles could be seen in historical documents like the Declaration of Independence and in the rulings of the Supreme Court.¹⁸⁰ Unlike the CGP’s forewords, this one did not suggest that one needed faith in God or an understanding of Natural Law to grasp basic moral principles.¹⁸¹ In fact, it suggested that even people with “contradictory beliefs and behavior patterns” could reach a moral understanding with a clear knowledge of democratic ideals.¹⁸² Whereas the CGP before taught that only soldiers with a strong belief in God could be truly loyal to his country and act morally, the OMH taught that soldiers who

¹⁷⁷Ibid., iii.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., iii.

¹⁸¹This view was espoused in several previous sources such as *The Character Guidance Manual*, FM 16-100 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961), 14, where “Natural Law” was taught as “implanted in the hearts of all men by the Creator.”

¹⁸²OCCH, *Our Moral Heritage* (1970), iii.

understood that America's moral principles were "also the aspirations of all mankind" would have not only a love for country but also "a means of communicating with the hearts and minds of different peoples."¹⁸³

Although many of the OMH topics were similar to the old program, the entire thrust of the program was noticeable different: besides the occlusion of religious language, the starkest change was the acknowledgement of differences. Like the CGP, the OMH still attempted to find common ground among soldiers, but because it acknowledged and legitimized differences in belief orientations, theistic and religious consensus was no longer assumed to be the ground where commonalities would be found. Common ground would have to found in something much more encompassing, such as in ancient moral axioms like "Equality, Freedom, and Justice."¹⁸⁴

Yet in discussing democratic ideals, OMH was also distinctive in its professed scope of influence. The CGP was largely geared towards building up the motivation and patriotism of US soldiers so that they could vanquish threatening foreign enemies. In contrast, the OMH appeared to be more concerned about teaching soldiers values that would allow them to cooperate with each other and the greater world beyond. There is no doubt that the OMH's virtue lessons also served the army's missions by boosting self-discipline, obedience, and patriotism, but the program's attention was noticeably geared towards finding a way for military personnel to co-exist amidst native and global cultural differences and less on developing compelling reasons to extinguish difference or be fearful of it.

¹⁸³Ibid., iv.

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

The “notes to the instructor” in one OMH manual illustrated concrete ways that difference and individual contribution were valued in the new program in two main ways. First, instructors were encouraged to insert their own ideas, opinions, and experiences into the lecture discussions.¹⁸⁵ This was in stark contrast to the GCP directive that warned chaplains about deviating too far from the prescribed lecture outline.¹⁸⁶ Chaplain instructors were not just facilitators, but identified as valuable resources for supplementing the lecture material, which did not expressly offer “exhaustive or definitive answers to questions inherent in the topic.”¹⁸⁷ Although chaplain instructors were given far more freedom than in the CGP before, they were not to do or say anything that “would confuse character guidance training with religious instruction.”¹⁸⁸ The instructions on this topic were severe, as chaplains were instructed to “not, under any circumstances, to deliver a sermon, to sermonize parts of the topic, to upbraid troops for non-participation in chapel programs, to show religious films or to expound his own personal theological views.”¹⁸⁹ Anything else appeared appropriate.

Second, OMH encouraged instructors to partner with students in creating an engaging class, as they were told to “consciously plan to involve students in the learning process.”¹⁹⁰ Part of what this meant was feeling out what level of understanding one’s students were at and working from there, rather than walking in and teaching straight from prepared lecture material. Tailoring discussions to students’ energy and interest made sense, but this approach was

¹⁸⁵Ibid., v.

¹⁸⁶US Army, *Character Guidance Discussion Topics*, DA PAM 16-8 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), i.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

¹⁸⁹OCCH, *Our Moral Heritage* (1970), v.

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

noticeably different from the CGP's, which apparently was to lumber on despite low interest. In fact, the OMH recognized students as a helpful and necessary contributors to educational processes in the modern age, unlike the CGP's view of the student as a receptacle of information. This turn towards recognizing the agency and drive of young students and their instructors empowered the moral education of military personnel in an unprecedented fashion, and it was also a necessary turn, given the apparent social requirements of the age.

The content and accompanying drawings of the short-lived OMH series were similarly updated. A lecture on "Espirit" taught that cooperation, which built social cohesion, was what boosted morale, not belief in God.¹⁹¹ This particular lecture attempted to debunk a myth that was perpetuated at least in insinuation in the CGP of the 1950s, the myth that all cultural and ethnic differences disappeared in America's melting pot.¹⁹² It taught that it was important to recognize individual identities, especially those of cultural minorities. Sounding very twenty-first century, the lecture also argued that technology had made personal relationships more difficult.¹⁹³ However, soldiers could learn to trust each other and the institutions they found themselves in by being more reflexive and intentional about cooperating, engaging with others, and learning to trust again.

Like "Espirit," the lecture "Respect for Others" also took up the OMH's new emphasis on co-existence, highlighting the need to respect differences in order to build relationships and contribute to society. But whereas "Espirit" focused more on the social problems produced by rapidly proliferating pluralism, "Respect for Others" argued that the goal of co-existence was

¹⁹¹Ibid., I-B-1.

¹⁹²Ibid., I-B-2.

¹⁹³Ibid.

exceedingly urgent, based on several technological advances.¹⁹⁴ Americans and all of humankind were in jeopardy, due to a few key circumstances. Technology had advanced enough that many jobs that humans once had were replaced by machines. This “cybernetic revolution” had a devastating impact on people’s abilities to feel connected to each other (since they could not work together as before), and it depressed people’s sense of worth. Even worse, this era of technology had produced a “weaponry revolution” that meant that one person could “destroy civilization” at the touch of a button. A third revolution, the “Human Rights Revolution,” was a positive development, aimed at promoting the dignity of every person and race.¹⁹⁵

This lecture is notable because it fleshes out the cultural context for OMH’s shift. Both the CGP and the OMH recognized the insidious threat of modern technology, which bequeathed to anyone with enough power the ability to obliterate the world. Yet the responses to this threat were worlds apart: the CGP understood nurturing theistic belief whereas OMH saw fostering engagement as the solution to curtailing destructive impulses. One program saw atheists as a threat to society while the other saw machines themselves as the threat.

This outlook helps make sense of OMH’s sudden impulse to expand its influence to reconciling all different kinds of people to each other. OMH rhetoric had illumined that the battle lines had been drawn once again. If machines were the primary enemy, then humans could find a way to unite and cooperate with each other using fewer pretenses than ever before: being human was enough of a reason to search for ways to peacefully co-exist.

Another lecture, “The Good Life,” demonstrated how drastically different the OMH’s messages were to those of the CGP. In a few different lectures, the CGP had taught that one

¹⁹⁴Ibid., III-B-1.

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

could experience “the good life” by cultivating a vibrant faith in God. It was faith that would provide a person with a sense of security and happiness and purpose. But the OMH lecture, in contrast, described “the good life” as broadly as possible. A person’s quest for a “philosophy of life” was understood as never static, and the lecture taught that there were no necessary philosophic continuities between people. In fact, the summary described life philosophies as being “as diverse as people are.”¹⁹⁶ The experience of the good life was summed up as experiencing emotions more clearly and strongly, even negative emotions like fear and anger. Living the good life simply meant having the “courage to be.”¹⁹⁷

This courage often manifested three different ways: the accepting social responsibility, understanding the past, and preparing for the future. All of these aspects of the good life were clearly in sync with OMH’s larger aim of fostering cooperation among differences. People living the good life would understand their responsibility for “underprivileged people” and act on it.¹⁹⁸ They would likewise take historical study as a moral duty, since this would contribute to the project of understanding the self and others.¹⁹⁹

In the beginning of 1971, the OCCH described the new CGP as “assisting [the soldier] to develop his own meaningful value system, which will not only benefit the Army, but motivate him to be a more constructive citizen when he complations [sic] his military obligations.”²⁰⁰ No longer was belief in God or the practice of religion suggested as a way to develop a “meaningful value system.” In fact, one of the rare references to religion and belief in God employed the

¹⁹⁶Ibid., V-B-5.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., V-B-1.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., V-B-2.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., III-B-3.

²⁰⁰OCCH, *Historical Review, 1 July 1970 – 30 June 1971* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1971), 86.

distant third-person to avoid any pretense of preaching, and even then, almost immediately dismissed theism as one option among many. The lecture “Respect for Others” taught, “Religionists have stated that they respect others because all men are created in the image of God; others have found their reasons for respecting others in believing that man is the noblest form of life and is the chief source of value.”²⁰¹

Despite the drastic changes to the CGP, there were still calls either to make the OMH voluntary or to get rid of the program completely. Towards the end of 1970, Lt. Gen. George I. Forsythe, Special Assistant of the Chief of Staff for the Modern Volunteer Army, suggested that suspending mandatory education like the CGP would create a more inviting military atmosphere, which would help to attract recruits.²⁰² Throughout 1971, the OCCH received several proposals to discontinue the program. Each time, the Office replied that eliminating the program would have disastrous results, since the program’s engaging orientation helped to foster relationships between officers and their subordinates. Even more seriously, ending the program would jeopardize national security, according to a 1971 letter from the OCCH that identified the CGP as “the one training area that truly deals with the problems that are seriously challenging the ability of the United States Army to provide national security.”²⁰³ The Office explained that the program’s unique effectiveness relied on the fact that it treated the “causes of human turbulence and bad behavior,” not just the symptoms.²⁰⁴ Last but not least, the program helped to deflate the damaging public perception of the army as a place that dehumanized people.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹OCCH, *Our Moral Heritage* (1970), III-B-2.

²⁰²OCCH, *Historical Review, 1970-71*, 88.

²⁰³*Ibid.*, 89.

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 90.

²⁰⁵*Ibid.*

Forsythe, as well as several other Army officials, were not persuaded. Throughout 1971, the production of CGP materials was temporarily suspended, and midway through the year, the Chief of Chaplains instructed all chaplains to refer to the program as “Moral Heritage” rather than Character Guidance, since it seemed that the old name had baggage that was impeding the facilitation of the new program.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, chaplains were encouraged to convince the command that the program would help them by explaining to them that the OMH topics “were oriented toward supervisory problems.”²⁰⁷

This argument proved unsuccessful. A study conducted on the efficacy and desirability of OMH concluded that it appeared to many that this was yet another “chaplain’s program,” having very little to do with the command. It appealed very little to both chaplains and commanders: 39% of chaplains and 24% of commanders expressed enthusiasm, while 30% and 50% were moderately enthused, and 31% and 26% showed no enthusiasm at all.²⁰⁸ One of the main problems cited was that the subject variety was too broad and too general, but it also appeared that the low energy of the chaplains facilitating the lectures was at fault.²⁰⁹ On the whole, it seemed that only a few people high up in command wanted the program and understood its use.

By October 1971, OMH was replaced by a new program called Human Self-Development (HSD). This program sought to rectify a few problems that plagued the CGP series. First, chaplains would be warned that although the program was a command responsibility, their energy that they brought to the program as facilitators was invaluable. If the

²⁰⁶Ibid, 93.

²⁰⁷Ibid., 95.

²⁰⁸OCCH, *Historical Review, 1 July 1971 – 30 June 1972* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), 71.

²⁰⁹Ibid.

program failed like the CGP or OMH, the Chief of Chaplains stated in January 1972 that chaplains were “almost invariably at fault.”²¹⁰ Second, the Character Guidance moniker was erased from usage because of its controversial history. Third, this program was designed to include the command more than the old programs, with the hope of gaining more command support. Last, the end goals, to help the soldier “develop his full potential” and “seek healthy goals for his life,” were slightly different from before. The program still focused on altering behavior like the CGP before, but HSD’s main thrust, “to improve the soldier’s self-image by exploring a system of value education,” was noticeably different in several ways.²¹¹

The October 1971 Army Regulation announcing the program change clearly sought to rectify the low command support that the OMH and CGP had faced. The regulation repeatedly emphasized that the program was a “command responsibility” and that it provided a vehicle for the commander to “address today’s challenging problems of racial tensions, drug abuse, poverty, dissent, and moral behavior.”²¹² HSD had similar lessons to the CGP, but in order to appeal more to the command, it was advertised as offering a secular panacea for the most pressing social ills affecting performance.

It would also be even more participatory than OMH. HSD sessions were not “classes,” but discussions held in a “Town Meeting” format.²¹³ This orientation would allow the army “to maintain the wholesome influence of family, home, community, and culture” in a “socially creative” way.²¹⁴ Furthermore, instructors were told in a 1972 pamphlet that they should

²¹⁰Ibid., 73.

²¹¹Ibid., 62.

²¹²US Army, *Human Self-Development*, AR 600-30 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1971), 1.

²¹³OCCH, *Historical Review, 1971- 72*, 63.

²¹⁴Ibid.

establish rapport with the audience by understanding that in this program, there would be no “right” or “wrong” answers.²¹⁵ Unlike the CGP which focused on supplying soldiers with the truth, HSD would be concentrated on creating an atmosphere in which soldiers could vulnerably express their own truths. This “sensitive treatment of people in the group,” the pamphlet expressed, was “true democracy at work.”²¹⁶

In fact, sensitivity to diversity seemed to be a consistent theme of the lectures, and it was clearly assumed that such sensitivity was expected to present healing solutions to the nation’s racial tensions. This focus represented a subtle but distinct shift from the CGP theme. The CGP had been aimed at teaching soldiers morality partly because it was assumed that morals contained fundamental truth in themselves. By contrast, HSD assumed that the production of truth and the point of educating soldiers about it hinged on what made society healthy. The CGP assumed that imparting truth to soldiers would result in healthy societies, but at times it appeared that this was considered a happy by-product of the more important goal of teaching God’s truth for its own sake. If there was a fundamental truth expressed in the HSD, it was that all people needed to be more tolerant and accepting of themselves and others in order to contribute to a peaceable, global co-existence. “Truth” like the kind the CGP espoused appeared too particular and divisive to be legitimated in the new culture that placed a premium on global cohesion.²¹⁷

The HSD’s emphasis was different from the CGP in another significant and related way: it articulated its values and goals by using health-oriented language instead of belief-oriented language. Discussions that included words like “wholesome,” “holistic,” “healing,” and

²¹⁵US Army, *Human Self-Development*, DA PAM 165-5 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), vii.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*, vii.

²¹⁷OCCH, *Historical Review, 1971-72*, 63.

“illness” had largely replaced talk about “virtue” and “God” and “truth.” While the CGP was interested in building a force with a strong sense of duty, two of the HSD’s goals were explicitly geared towards improving “preventive programs needed for a healthy and vital military community” and presenting “alternatives to drug-alcohol addiction and racial bias.”²¹⁸ The CGP authors also seemed to care about creating healthy communities and hoped that CGP lessons would persuade soldiers to engage in risky behaviors less, but these desires were secondary to the need for soldiers to have knowledge and truth and they were not communicated as primary health concerns.

The dramatic differences exhibited in the HSD demonstrated that a fundamental shift had occurred in the public expression of American values. It could no longer be assumed that all Americans shared a belief system that made common values compelling. But what could be commonly assumed, at least according to the HSD, was that mental and physical ailments and “anti-social” philosophies were making society ill. “Illness” and “health” seemed to be more universally-accessible concepts than “moral decay” and “virtue.”

Nowhere to be seen were God, the spirit, spirituality, or religion. The new guidelines for the HSD program stated that the “wholesome influence” of culture was identified as coming not from God or belief or moral compunction but from “our esprit and strength as a free nation.”²¹⁹ Like OMH, the HSD pamphlet still acknowledged that there were “basic truths” that “undergird our nation’s heritage,” but unlike the OMH, it did not suggest that all Americans could find common moral ground beneath their differences.²²⁰ Instead, it presented the “consensus of

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹US Army, *Human Self Development Program*, AR 600-30 (1971),1.

²²⁰Ibid.

values” as an “ongoing” process that soldiers and commanders should both, together, take active parts in.²²¹ If truth existed, it was shifting and obscure, and would take the cooperative efforts of all individuals to realize it.

While some of the HSD topics were nearly identical to those from OMH (e.g., the “Heritage” lecture remained the same), some were noticeably progressive. For example, every lecture except one in the May 1972 pamphlet was geared towards women. “The Military Woman” addressed the problems that a male-dominated culture produced for women, and encouraged equal opportunities.²²²

Many of the topics bore similarity to those of the old CGP, but instead of referring to moral traits as virtues, they called them values. Whereas the language of “virtue” indicated that morals were elemental and absolute, “value” language appeared to highlight the subjective nature of moral normativity. Values were understandably different among individuals, and need not rely on religious sources for illumination. In fact, HSD often drew from contemporary psychological theories to discuss “values.” For example, the lecture on “Living with Others” referred to psychologist Eric Fromm’s work to bolster the point that individuals ought to value the process of mending relationships.²²³

The HSD discussion on “Making Moral Decisions” displayed an unprecedented degree of flexibility when it came to negotiating right behavior. The lecture introduced multiple scenarios and then asked a series of open-ended questions like, “What is the way to measure what is

²²¹Ibid.

²²²Although the focus on women might have been progressive at the time, nuances in the lectures suggest that they written, ironically, from a male’s perspective. For example, the topic of discussion in one lecture was “the value of womanliness.” Up for discussion was how “a person may be born female but she has to become a woman to add quality to her life.” *Human Self-Development* (1972), I-A-2.

²²³US Army, *Human Self-Development*, DA PAM 165-5 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1974), 10.

‘good’? ... Is ‘good’ definable at all?” In order to discuss this, the facilitator was supplied with excerpts from philosophers like Immanuel Kant, Bertrand Russell, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Aristotle.²²⁴ The suggested reading list for that discussion included works by Hannah Arndt and Teilhard deChardin.

HSD’s new secular orientation was a far cry from the CGP of only a few years ago, in which the question of whether or not “good” could be defined at all was unimaginable. The HSD program made clear that what counted as “good” had been reformulated to fit the times. What was good for individuals, institutions, and even democracy in the 1970s was the ability to voice one’s opinions without fear of retribution or condemnation, and warmer, more personal relations between the command and subordinates. It increasingly appeared that these circumstances could only be produced in the public sphere if religious discourse was circumscribed to voluntary occasions.

Conclusion

In the 1940s and 1950s, belief in God and religious practice were frequently offered up as solutions to the behavioral problems of youth in authoritative government discourses. Materials from the Fort Knox experiment and the CGP assumed that the freedom of individuals and the country rested on institutionally-produced “spiritual training,” which naturally required religion and belief in God. But this logic relied on the wider public to trust both the government institution and religious establishments, and the entire edifice of trust upon which this logic of freedom was built began to crumble in the 1960s with the Vietnam conflict. Because institutions such as these could not be trusted to act in the interest of individuals, traditional formulations of

²²⁴Ibid., 50-52.

power were reconfigured. These reconfigurations contributed to negotiating new standards for religious speech in the military.

In the mid-1950s it appeared that religious speech in the CGP was appropriate so long as it did not endorse a denomination. In the beginning, it was assumed that general religious talk had a rightful place in moral military education. Towards the end of the CGP in the late 1960s, even chaplains' ability to refer to religion or God during lectures was challenged as the traditional associations of religious belief and moral behavior were no longer so widely assumed. The OMH and HSD programs illumined that what constituted as moral education in the late 1960s and early 1970s had less to do with believing in God or "spirituality" and more to do with understanding the self. The language of the programs, which shifted from focusing on "morale and morality" to "values" and "health" reflected the new emphasis on individual power over societal cohesion or reliance on a higher power.

Thus, the implications of the growing unrest over Vietnam and the increasing social tensions in the United States were two-fold: first, this era made obvious that spirituality, religion, and military might were not as congruent as they seemed in the previous decade. Second, the increased recognition of differences, including religious differences, provided the possibility of avenues beyond the traditional Judeo-Christian orientation for learning how to act morally, evaluate the world, and pull meaning from it.

The wide-spread realization that there could be a conflict between spiritual and religious concepts and military missions had devastating effects on the chaplaincy and the CGP. Most critics ascertained that chaplains' roles in programs like the CGP that fostered combat morale were inappropriate, given the fact that they were the military's representatives for free religious expression. The OCCH was sensitive to the charge that chaplains existed to boost combat

morale. In 1970, the OCCH explicitly stated that chaplains were not to be viewed as tools for turning soldiers into “good fighting men.”²²⁵ It just so happened that “men of great spiritual strength” were also usually good fighters, but the Office insisted that this was not by design.²²⁶ Religion was “an end in itself” for the chaplaincy, and chaplains’ main job was to “make better children of God out of men.”²²⁷

The OCCH would try to minister in the era of expansion by devising new initiatives with broader focuses. For example, Chief of Chaplains Gerhardt W. Hyatt announced in 1971 that the chaplaincy was interested in helping not just individual soldiers but the military institution as a whole. “Institutional ministry” meant helping “replace social injury with personal wholeness, schism with harmony and dysfunctional behaviors with positive life styles.”²²⁸ Programs like the HSD were tailored to focus on healing individuals and harmful social behaviors rather than encouraging patriotism.

However, critiques of the chaplaincy only continued in the 1970s. It appeared to critics like Randolph Jonakait that the only way for religious expression to have a chance at being free was if its gatekeepers were kept out of all secular military projects. In 1973, Jonakait, along with the ACLU, published a book titled *The Abuses of the Military Chaplaincy*. According to Jonakait, even the HSD, which had successfully remedied the accusation of religious coercion, fell prone to the attack that it existed solely for the purpose of “producing an efficient fighting force.”²²⁹ Furthermore, military statements like the Code of Conduct were still active,

²²⁵OCCH, *Historical Review*, 1970 - 71, 62-63.

²²⁶Ibid.

²²⁷Ibid.

²²⁸Loveland, “Prophetic Ministry,” 250 – 51, 253 – 56 and Loveland, “Character Education,” 812 -16.

²²⁹Randolph Jonakait, *The Abuses of the Military Chaplaincy* (New York: American Civil Liberties Union, 1973), 18.

demonstrating that the military's aim to "underpin patriotism with religious sanctions, to infuse the killing of the enemy with nuances of a crusade, and to sacralize dying with the faith that one's life is surely being given for God as well as country."²³⁰ In this regard, chaplains were invaluable to the military structure, as they provided unique motivation to soldiers and helped to boost the army's public image.²³¹

Jonakait and other critics of the chaplaincy and chaplains' involvement in the CGP tended to imply that chaplains enjoyed their jobs as character guidance facilitators because of the prestige and power it gave them. Hutcheson wrote that some chaplains might have welcomed the CGP because it helped to "pull a chaplain out of religious limbo into the mainstream."²³² Even critics in the twenty-first century have looked back on the CGP as evidence of a religious take-over. For example, Mickey Weinstein's *With God on Our Side: One Man's War Against an Evangelical Coup in America's Military* argued that the CGP was a part of the formation of an evangelical coup.²³³

Observations like these make sense on paper, and surely there was a degree of truth to them. Without taking in more facts, it would be easy to assume given the critics' impassioned tones that the chaplaincy had used character guidance education primarily as a vehicle of religious indoctrination and institutional power. Surely the program did function in those ways, but available data do not support the assumption that chaplains or the command in general wanted to defend the CGP. The Office as well as a few enthusiastic commanders had a stake in defending the program, but generally, it was not received well by the command or chaplains.

²³⁰Ibid., 20.

²³¹Ibid., 21.

²³²Richard G. Hutcheson, *The Churches and the Chaplaincy* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 172.

²³³Weinstein and Seay, *With God on Our Side*, 43.

All of the program's known surveys demonstrate that chaplains and command were not enthusiastic about the program. Besides the two reports mentioned earlier, a 1958 OCCH report suggested that the CGP was crumbling due to "defects in the administration ... at the unit level," "lack of interest on the part of some chaplain instructors," and "the failure of some lecturers to distinguish between preaching and teaching."²³⁴ CGP classes were large and unruly. The staff did not have enough direction to know how to remedy the chaos. The Office suggested that one solution would be to "develop professional competence."²³⁵

But it is clear that a lack of competence was not the only downfall of the CGP. A 1965 report by Chaplain Arthur Frank Bell corroborated the idea that the program was either not popular or unimportant. In fact, he remarked that "a great many of our officers and senior leaders ... barely know of its purpose except that it is a requirement."²³⁶ Nearly a quarter of leaders thought the program was a Chaplain's course, and 3500 of 85,091 officers polled said that they never knew about the program.²³⁷ In fact, Bell reported that twenty percent of 122 chaplains polled said that they thought their abilities were better spent doing other things, and over half of them thought that the program should be cancelled.²³⁸ Similarly, Hutcheson wrote that only a minority of line officers were ever concerned about the morality of their men. Most officers saw the CGP as a religious chaplain's program, a non-essential extra.²³⁹

²³⁴OCCH, *Summary of Major Events and Problems, 1 July 1957 to June 30 1958* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1958), 29.

²³⁵Arthur Bell, "The Character Guidance Instructional Program" (Fort Jackson, SC: United States Army Chaplain School, 1965), 4.

²³⁶*Ibid.*

²³⁷*Ibid.*

²³⁸*Ibid.*

²³⁹Hutcheson, *The Churches and the Chaplaincy*, 161.

Bell was clearly not among the chaplains who wanted the program to end. His suggestion to the OCCH was that the program should be promoted more by the chaplaincy, not toned down. In his opinion, the low enthusiasm of chaplain instructors and attendees was generated by the program's insufficient marketing and organization. Instructors who were not promptly motivated should simply not be allowed to teach, in Bell's opinion.²⁴⁰ Bell's report is significant because it reflected the enduring opinion among what appeared to be a vocal and powerful few that the solution to teaching morality in the military would be best found in mandatory, chaplain-led programs like the CGP. Bell's vision of for the program, which included requiring soldiers to pass character guidance tests, do homework, and pass CGP courses before being eligible for promotion, did not come to fruition.²⁴¹ In fact, the entire character education project that had ended with the HSD program dissolved in 1977 due to a sustained lack of interest.²⁴²

This was just as well because two years later, in November 1979, the chaplaincy would face its largest challenge yet. Joel Katcoff and Allen Wieder, two students at Harvard Law School, filed a law suit against the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, and Secretary of the Army Clifford L. Alexander, Jr. that claimed that the Army's chaplaincy program constituted an establishment of religion and therefore violated the First Amendment.²⁴³ At issue was the government-supported funding of chaplain services, which Katcoff and Wieder argued should be provided by private institutions in the civilian sector. By providing

²⁴⁰Bell, "The Character Guidance Instructional Program," 9.

²⁴¹Ibid.

²⁴²In her article "Character Education in the U.S. Army, 1947-1977," Anne Loveland remarks that for all intents and purposes, HSD was essentially dismantled in 1973, with the end of the draft. It was not officially cancelled until 1977, however. *Journal of Military History* 64, no. 3 (July 2000): 818.

²⁴³*Katcoff v. Wieder*, 582 F. Supp. 463, 464 (E.D.N.Y. 1984), *aff'd in part*, 755 F.2d 223 (2nd Cir. 1985).

governmental funding, the plaintiffs argued that the government demonstrated favor for religion over non-religion, and Judeo-Christian religions over all other religions. Litigations lasted for six years and only ended in 1986 when the plaintiffs withdrew the case due to exhaustion.

Needless to say, the OCCH walked on eggshells for the duration of the case. Yet despite the fact that the governmental legitimacy of the entire religious institution of the chaplaincy had been questioned in court, discourse about “spirituality” would emerge in training materials in the 1980s. This time, though, the beliefs and practices required by spiritual training would be much harder to challenge because they were quickly becoming understood as necessary for good physical health. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, chaplains’ roles were redefined yet again, but in ways that would highlight their significance as contributors to army health care, ironically making their role as “morale-boosters” more official and acceptable. Chapter Four examines more fully the cultural conditions that contributed to the introduction of “spiritual fitness” in an army health program and how chaplains’ roles were influenced by shifting understandings of health.

CHAPTER FOUR

Public Health Care and the US Military: The Advent of Spiritual Fitness Training

In September 1987, just over a year after the *Katcoff v. Marsh* case was dropped, the army devoted an entire pamphlet to explaining the necessity of “spiritual fitness” for maintaining health.¹ This concept was introduced in a comprehensive health program called “Fit to Win.” Not long before, spiritual training in the military’s Character Guidance Program was suspected of conveying religious sentiment, and had dropped out of use. How did spiritual fitness become a topic that was considered publicly appropriate in a mandatory training program, given that the very existence of the military chaplaincy had been legally challenged and the CGP, which focused on spiritual training, had been dismantled? How did spirituality become aligned with fitness and did it have anything to do with religion?

Investigating the answers to these questions requires examining the conditions in both the military and the medical field for how the concept of spirituality could be a possibly acceptable health mechanism in the public sphere. The first two sections of this chapter are dedicated to examining how, during the 1970s through the 1990s, the cultural atmospheres of the American medical field and the military chaplaincy shifted to create felicitous conditions for the “spiritual fitness” concept that appeared in mid-1980s army training literature. The third section examines

¹US Army, *The Army Health Promotion Program: Spiritual Fitness*, DA PAM 600-63-12, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 12.

the Fit to Win program and the ways that it shaped and reflected understandings of spirituality as health-oriented.

Mainstream Health Care: Turning to Spirituality

In the case of military spiritual training, spirituality was most often invoked in the context of discussing motivation and morality. How did the concept come to have some acceptance in mainstream health care? Two main overlapping factors developing approximately in the 1970s allowed spirituality to have greater possibility in the 1980s as an acceptable public health care tool. The first was that mainstream health care paradigms were forced to expand beyond dualistic models and the second was that health care costs rose so significantly that alternative, cost-effective treatments became more valued. As a result of these developments, self-driven behavioral modification techniques had refreshed importance in mainstream health care. Past military programs had identified this type of motivation as “spiritual”; eventually, even mainstream medicine would start to accommodate the language of spirituality to talk about the need for self-motivated, wellness-driven transformations.

Expanding Medical Paradigms

The shifting landscape of medical concern in the second half of the twentieth century contributed to spirituality’s possibility as a medically legitimate concept. There were four catalysts for this shift: the emphasis on disease prevention and health promotion in the 1970s, the rising patient demand for holistic and empowering care, the increased attention to the biological effects of “stress,” and Baby Boomers’ entrance into the health care profession.

By the 1970s, infectious and communicable diseases were no longer the threats they once were. Surgeon General Julius Richmond estimated in the 1979 report *Healthy People* that Americans were “healthier than ever.”² They were living longer than any time in recent history, but this newfound longevity came with several costs. Instead of dying from viruses like pneumonia or influenza, Americans were living long enough to die from cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and various accidents.³ The good news was that all of these involved behavioral components, promising a person some control over her own physical fate. In fact, it appeared that nearly half of all American deaths, which were related to cardiovascular diseases, were “fully preventable.”⁴

Other major health concerns at the time, which included alcohol and drug related deaths and occupational deaths and injuries, were similarly determined to have behavioral causes that could be manipulated for better outcomes. Based on this, the Surgeon General suggested that Americans could benefit most not from “improved medical care [but] better Federal, State, and local actions to foster more careful behavior, and provide safer environments.”⁵ In the Surgeon General’s estimate, the era’s health climate called for better social engineering, not better technology and more skilled practitioners.

The national initiative to inspire and educate the American public about safe and risky health behaviors was rolled out in the Surgeon General’s 1979 announcement of a new course for the American medical profession. Modern illnesses called for a renewed focus on health

²US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Healthy People: The Surgeon General’s Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1979), 1-1.

³Ibid., 1-16.

⁴Ibid., 1-2; 10-19.

⁵Ibid., 1-9.

promotion and disease prevention. This focus would emphasize, to an unprecedented degree, the importance of patient behavior and personal emotions in the treatment of illness. Yet when the Surgeon General called for this new emphasis on prevention and promotion, the mainstream medical community had a poor track record for grasping the importance of either one.

Professional medicine in America had developed differently in the early twentieth century than in Europe, which embraced more readily the assumption that effective mainstream care of the body would include caring for intangible elements as well.⁶ In contrast, the medical profession in America had been busy perfecting its scientific approach to care, and this often meant primarily approaching the body as a physical entity. Lamenting how impersonal mainstream medicine could be, medical doctor Friedrich Stenn reflected in 1980 that “most physicians have lost the pearl that was once an intimate part of medicine--humanism. Machinery, efficiency, precision have driven from the heart warmth, compassion, sympathy, and concern for the individual. Medicine is now an icy science; its charm belongs to another age.”⁷ American medicine, it seemed to many, had lost the art of care.

The professionalization of American medicine was likely intentionally more mechanistic and less holistic because US doctors were desperate to distinguish themselves from the many alternative medicine groups that thrived in the free market, wherein “quackery” abounded.⁸ In fact, some scientific medical practitioners explicitly characterized alternative practices as

⁶Anne Harrington, *The Cure Within: A History of Mind-Body Medicine* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 88.

⁷James Whorton, *Nature Cures: The History of Alternative Medicine in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 219.

⁸For more on the abundance of American “snake oil” medicine and the threats it posed to traditional care, see Eric Boyle’s *Quack Medicine: A History of Combating Health Fraud in Twentieth-Century America* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013).

“cultish.”⁹ As a result, the American medical profession was far less interested than their European counterparts in incorporating softer science into medical care.

The consequences of this stridently empirical approach to medicine often had unpleasant results for patients who felt stripped of agency in the new era of self-empowerment. One practitioner summed up the problem by suggesting that “the patient knows how he feels but doesn’t know what he’s got--while the doctor knows what he’s got but doesn’t know how he feels.”¹⁰ The modern state of biomedicine had “curdled” “the milk of human kindness.”¹¹ Formal critiques like Ivan Illich’s *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (1976) went so far as to argue that the medical establishment had become “a major threat to health” and that patients would be better off avoiding the entire tradition.¹² Many patients retaliated against the mainstream medical profession by refusing its services and by publicly complaining about how cold, impersonal, and dualistic the medical profession had grown.¹³

Throughout the 1970s, patients turned to Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) treatments in larger numbers than before.¹⁴ These treatments offered patients greater flexibility in the number of treatments available, and more importantly, they honored the patient

⁹Martin Kaufman, “Homeopathy in America: The Rise and Fall and Persistence of a Medical Heresy,” in Norman Gevitz, ed., *Other Healers: Unorthodox Medicine in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 112-3.

¹⁰Herrman Blumgart, “Caring for the Patient,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 270 (1964), 449.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (New York: Penguin, 1977), 3.

¹³A good resource on the growth of patient advocacy groups in the later half of the twentieth century is Beatrix Hoffman, Nancy Tones, Rachel Grob, and Mark Schlesinger, eds., *Patients as Policy Actors: A Century of Changing Markets and Missions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

¹⁴Harrington, *The Cure Within*, 98. Historian John Haller suggested that the dissatisfaction with traditional medicine was an inevitable consequence of postmodernist thinking, which implied that “the ‘truth’ of an illness is no longer in the physician’s objectivist and biomedical account, but in the patient’s narrative, which is not only distinctive, but often confusing, if not self-contradictory.” *Shadow Medicine: The Placebo in Conventional and Alternative Therapies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 32.

as a powerful and complex individual. Alternative treatments would allow patients to choose a care regimen that empowered them to *feel* good.

Patient demand for more caring, empowering medical practices was a product of the era of longevity for another reason as well. Not all of the major health threats were preventable; some were terminal. Many Americans could expect to live long enough to either die naturally of old age or to experience deadly diseases later in life. The expectation of long lives that might include painful treatments forced a focus on helping patients achieve a higher *quality* of daily life.¹⁵ This too would require restoring to the modern practice of medicine the ancient arts of healing, which necessarily included caring about the patient's experience of illness.

In the late 1970s, medical professionals had finally recognized that some patients were dissatisfied enough with traditional care that they were turning to CAM for treatment. Psychiatrist George Engel announced in a formative 1977 article in the journal *Science* that it was time for dualistic, biomedical models to be replaced by a "biopsychosocial model," one that took into account the psychological and social aspects of disease.¹⁶ The move to recognize the "biopsychosocial" features of health and disease was a step towards incorporating spirituality into health care. The acceptance of the model reflected and further enabled medical professionals to recognize officially the role of non-physical factors such as emotions, social relationships, and religious beliefs on the body's health.

Yet perhaps part of the reason for why the biopsychosocial model resonated so much in the 1970s was that the trappings of modern life were taking a noticeable toll on Americans, and

¹⁵The nursing profession was one of the first groups of medical professionals to focus more on quality of life care, which was one reason why patients began to see visiting a nurse rather than a doctor as a viable option in the 1970s. Hoffman *et al.*, *Patients as Policy Actors*, 220–221.

¹⁶George Engel, "The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine," *Science* 196 (1977): 129–36.

the cause of this toll was often identified as “stress.” Although the concept of stress had existed for decades before the 1970s, the new focus on disease prevention and health promotion made the project of understanding stress and its causes even more important because of its strong behavioral components. References to stress were ubiquitous in the Surgeon General’s 1979 report, which linked it to “cardiovascular disease and deaths, gastrointestinal disorders, and other diseases and physical health problems as well as much mental illness.”¹⁷ The sources of stress were everywhere, including in family dynamics, social relationships, and the workplace.

The scientific validation and public recognition of stress’ impact on the body were crucial in setting the circumstances for spirituality to be received as a medical concept, as later models would essentially posit spirituality as stress’ antidote. Discovered in the 1930s by physician and biochemist Hans Selye, stress became understood as a “non-specific” response to the trauma of change.¹⁸ Selye predicted the path of health care into the twenty-first century when he said in 1953, “The secret of health and happiness lies in the successful adjustment to the ever-changing conditions on this globe; the penalties for failure in this great process of adaptation are disease and unhappiness.”¹⁹ Spirituality would later be advertised in military training programs as providing soldiers with the ability to withstand the modern whiplash of change.

The implications of the scientific study and recognition of stress were significant for the study of spirituality in other ways as well. First, it significantly expanded the scope of medical inquiry by legitimizing seemingly nebulous and “non-specific” factors as biologically relevant.²⁰

¹⁷US Department of Health, *Healthy People* (1979), 10-28.

¹⁸Hans Selye, *The Stress of My Life: A Scientist’s Memoirs* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1979), xi.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, vii.

²⁰When Selye first observed “stress,” it manifested so vaguely that he had a hard time even describing it. It appeared to him to be “the syndrome of just being sick.” *Ibid.*, 16. Only an expanded medical model could adequately address Selye’s recognition of a general presentation of sickness or its “non-specific” causes.

The increased focus on stress legitimized greater medical interest in, for example, the role of social relationships on the body's health.²¹ This line of research would develop so substantially over time that Robert Putnam could come to advise readers of his popular 2006 book *Bowling Alone* that joining a social group would increase one's longevity and be as salubrious as losing weight, exercising, or quitting smoking.²² If one's relationships could affect one's biology, then surely other "non-specific" factors were important as well.

No generation in recent history took more seriously the impact of modern stress than the Baby Boomer cohort. Baby Boomer youth, disgruntled by the starchy expectations of their parents and suffocated by post-war materialism, were longing for environs that would promote emotional authenticity. Because of the Baby Boomers, practices that promised emotional exploration such as meditation, yoga, and mindfulness could be touted as tools to boost health and decrease stress.

Meditation accumulated cultural cache during the 1960s when American youth were enamored with Eastern religious practices, but the method did not receive much scientific attention until those youth grew old enough to replace the old professional guard. Many researchers who went on to scientifically study meditation were young practitioners first, and these immersive experiences likely made them far more accepting than those in their parents'

²¹Studies on the effect of things like living conditions and social relationships on health began in the 1960s and proliferated as the century continued. For example, a ground-breaking 1964 study on a community in Roseto, Pennsylvania concluded that various social conditions accounted for the community's abnormally low heart disease rate. Clarke Stout, Jerry Morrow, Edward Brandt, and Stewart Wolf, "Unusually Low Incidence of Death from Myocardial Infarction," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 188, no. 10 (1964): 845-849. By 1976, the term "social support" was coined by epidemiologist Sidney Cobb, who helped cement the idea that the positive impact of "love, esteem, and feelings of belonging" on biological health was scientifically supported. Sidney Cobb, "Social Support as a Moderator of Life Stress," *Psychosomatic Medicine* 38 (1976): 300-314. In less than a decade, Cobb's work was cited in over four hundred studies. James House, D. Umberson, and K.R. Landis, "Structures and Processes of Social Support," *American Review of Sociology* 14 (1988): 293-94.

²²Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

generation of the idea that good science could encompass soft and even “fringe” subjects like meditation.²³

As many Baby Boomers saw it, meditation and other Eastern practices offered a safe haven from the chaotic wilderness of modern life. “Eastern” life, it was often assumed, was relatively gentle and free. Americans interpreted it as nature-focused and non-materialistic, nothing like the stress-inducing Western world, which by the 1970s abounded in fast cars and junk food. Not all of the practices that traveling yogis introduced to Americans would stand the test of time, but two--meditation and yoga--would. These would increase in use and popularity, and by the 1980s, meditation was advertised as secular method of relaxing one’s stress levels.²⁴ Mindfulness, another eastern-inspired practice, also started to gain traction as an empirically-based technique to cope with chronic pain.²⁵ By the 1990s, major news sources began to report on the health benefits of these practices.²⁶ The newfound possibility that meditation, yoga, and mindfulness appeared to have as acceptable health care agents signaled that cultural conditions were starting to ripen for spirituality to be considered in a similar manner. Beginning in the late 1970s, the American medical profession proved its ability to look past meditation’s religious

²³Jon Kabat-Zinn, Robert Keith Wallace, and Richard Davidson were all spiritual practitioners before they became scientists.

²⁴Harrington, *The Cure Within*, 220.

²⁵Jon Kabat-Zinn, who practiced and taught Buddhist meditation and had a PhD in Molecular Biology from MIT spearheaded the effort to study mindfulness in 1979, when he initiated a program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. His program would provide evidence that mindfulness could help alleviate chronic pain. For information on his findings, see Jon Kabat-Zinn, “An Out-Patient Program in Behavioral Medicine for Chronic Pain Patients Based on the Practice of Mindfulness Meditation: Theoretical Considerations and Preliminary Results,” *General Hospital Psychiatry* 4 (1982): 33-47.

²⁶E.g., Bob Condor, “Seeking Silence can Keep You Healthy Meditation during a Workday Or a Monastery Retreat on the Weekend are Increasingly Sought to Ease the Stress of a Busy Life,” *Toronto Star* (1997): E.6. Julia Lawlor, “Meditation ‘takes the Edge Off’ at Work,” *USA TODAY* (1993): 1-B; and Steve Chawkins, “Combating Cancer with Peaceful Meditation: Ventura County Edition,” *Los Angeles Times* (1999): 1.

sources and associations in order to test its efficacy for bodily health; in the 1990s, it would do the same for spirituality.

Many other new fields of research sprang up after the 1960s that would fit the optimistic aims of health promotion and disease prevention by aiming to improve patients' experience of daily life. Disciplines like the Quality-of-Life (QOL) research field, which originated in late 1970s psycho-oncology, essentially demonstrated that the cultivation and negotiation of moral normativity regarding what constituted "a good life" was no longer the purview of philosophers and theologians. Scientists and public health administrators were intensely interested in the answers to the question, and busily investigating it from a scientific perspective.²⁷ "Spirituality" came to be considered part of what a good life might include: as early as 1978, researchers called for "spiritual well-being" to be included in QOL studies.²⁸

The Positive Psychology movement, announced officially in 1998 by Baby Boomer Martin Seligman in his Presidential Address to the American Psychological Association, also paved the way for spirituality to be a wellness concept by prioritizing the role of positive emotions for health. This field and its emphasis on the importance of flourishing contributed significantly to making spirituality, understood as a vehicle for flourishing, more central to health care. Only a few years after his address, Seligman developed the army's current primary resiliency training program, introduced in the next chapter.²⁹

²⁷M. Joseph Sirgy, Alex C. Michalos, Abbott L. Ferriss, Richard A. Easterlin, Donald Patrick, and William Pavot, "The Quality-of-life (QOL) Research Movement: Past, Present, and Future," *Social Indicators Research* 76, no. 3 (2006): 343–466.

²⁸David Moberg and Patricia M. Brusek, "Spiritual Well-being: A Neglected Subject in Quality of Life Research," *Social Indicators Research* 5, no.3 (1978): 303–23.

²⁹ In his manual *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 599, published as a counterpart to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, Seligman lists spirituality as a "strength of transcendence."

The mass appeal of empowering, patient-centered approaches to care that manifested, for example, in Positive Psychology no doubt also contributed to the rise and popularity of spirituality as a health mechanism. Researchers such as Seligman have capitalized on the positive waves of self-empowering techniques that emanated from health promotion initiatives in best-selling books with titles like *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*; *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*; and *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*.³⁰

The messages of books like these were similar to those espoused by New Thought prophets and religionists a century before, people who had little authority in mainstream health care. In the twenty-first century however, the idea that thoughts could positively alter the body was touted as evidence-based. One of Seligman's former graduate students, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill professor Barbara Fredrickson, argued that positive psychologists were not just regurgitating old religious messages. Her high-grossing books, *Positivity: Top-Notch Research Reveals the 3-to-1 Ratio That Will Change Your Life* and *Love 2.0: Creating Happiness and Health in Moments of Connection*, emphasized that the salubrious effects of positive emotions had been rigorously studied and empirically demonstrated.³¹

The wide-spread popularity of techniques aimed at patient empowerment, the need for more humane medical treatment, the practicality of preventive approaches, and the rise of Baby

³⁰Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002); *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991); and *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being* (New York: Free Press, 2011).

³¹Barbara Fredrickson, *Positivity: Top-Notch Research Reveals the 3-to-1 Ratio That Will Change Your Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009) and *Love 2.0: Creating Happiness and Health in Moments of Connection* (New York: Hudson Street Press, 2013).

Boomer scientists all facilitated opening the mainstream medical aperture to spirituality's healing potential.

Cost of Care: The Big Business of Prevention and Promotion

Another influential factor in the national initiative to focus on disease prevention and health promotion, both of which necessitated self-driven behavioral modification, was the issue of rising health care costs. Put simply, behavioral engineering would be a far less costly technique of care than many of the traditional interventions, whose costs were continually ballooning. Between 1965 and 1975, health care costs in the United States increased threefold, from over \$41 billion to almost \$130 billion, while out-of-pocket costs doubled.³² The rising cost of traditional care was one important factor in leading people to seek out less expensive CAM treatments. In his 1979 *Healthy People* report that announced prevention and promotion as new medical initiatives, the Surgeon General articulated the hope that prevention could be a modern solution not just for health ailments, but for personal and national debt crises.³³ If people could be taught to modify their health-related behaviors to be fit in the first place, then perhaps they could avoid the plethora of ills that appeared to cascade from poor health.

American corporations, like the US government, increasingly recognized promoting fitness as a smart financial investment in the 1980s. This recognition, which required a cultural shift in the relationship between corporations and their employees, helps illumine how spiritual education could come to be an acceptable part of public corporate life. In a nutshell, corporations that understood the financial payoff of employee health came to package holistic

³²Health Care Financing Administration, Office of the Actuary. *National Health Expenditure Projections 2000-2010* (2001), accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.hcfa.gov/stats>.

³³Department of Health, *Healthy People*, 1-11.

health care offerings as an employee benefit and as a sign of good faith. This repackaging allowed anything understood do with wellness, such as spiritual education, to be presented as an asset.

Some American corporations promoted fitness programs before the 1970s, but only as a perk to attract high-ranking employees. It was not until the late 1970s that corporations began to consider promoting health in all employees as a good investment despite the fact that some thought of workplace wellness as “fluffy” or “New Age.”³⁴ The impetus for change was that the cost of paying health benefits accelerated in the late 1980s and early 1990s; the average cost of employer-based health coverage rose 18.6 percent in 1987.³⁵ While attending to employees’ total health might once have been seen as a waste of resources, it came to be seen as a sound business strategy.

Johnson & Johnson and Boeing were the top two most innovative companies in this respect, as they created corporate-wide prevention programs that would set the standard for later corporations. William Weis, an associate professor at Seattle University, credited Boeing’s then-president Malcolm Stamper with ushering in the workplace wellness movement. As Stamper understood it, companies had a responsibility “to provide the cleanest, safest and most healthful environment possible for its employees.”³⁶ As early as 1981, Boeing offered to pay for smoking-cessation programs, reduced gym memberships, on-site exercise classes, and softball and volleyball leagues. Boeing also gave \$200 to every smoker who quit.³⁷ By the twenty-first

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Rebecca Vesely, “Shaping Up: Workplace Wellness in the 1980s and Today,” *Workplace*, July 18, 2012.

³⁶William Weis, “No Smoking,” *Personnel Journal* (1985).

³⁷Diana Chapman Walsh. “Corporate Smoking Policies: a Review and an Analysis,” *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 26, no. 1 (1984): 17-22.

century, Boeing would invest \$30 million annually on wellness programs for its workers.³⁸ In short, the idea that wellbeing and productivity went hand-in-hand was steadily manifesting itself in 1980s corporations looking to boost workplace efficiency, employee happiness, and profits.

By the mid-1980s, more and more corporations followed Johnson & Johnson and Boeing's leads, funneling millions of dollars into prevention programs, based on the simple calculus that prevention and promotion would pay dividends in the long run.³⁹ Available evidence seemed to suggest that such programs did pay, in ways similar to what army programs like the CGP were aiming for: they reduced health care costs and helped improve employee morale, increased productivity, boosted company loyalty, and reduced absenteeism.⁴⁰ Employees felt cared for by the company, and the company seemed to be improved in the long run.

Corporate studies of employee wellness produced valuable information that had implications for public health care policies. One significant finding was that successful health promotion programs should target everyone, the healthy and unhealthy alike. In the 1990s, employers were mainly targeting and investing in only the sickest employees.⁴¹ Research demonstrated, however, that this was not the most cost-effective strategy if part of the point was to boost health, productivity, and the bottom line. If healthy people were not also targeted, some of them would become unhealthy. The lesson was that everyone, not just the high-risk

³⁸Vesely, "Shaping Up."

³⁹Corporations such as Campbell Soup, Blue Cross-Blue Shield, IBM, Ford Motor Company, and Pepsico also created their own comprehensive fitness programs, with names like "Healthsteps" and "Total Life Concept." Conrad, "Wellness in the Work Place: Potentials and Pitfalls of Work-site Health Promotion," 256.

⁴⁰Ibid., 257. See also Ronald Ozminkowski, Davina Ling, Ron Goetzel, Jennifer Bruno, Kathleen Rutter, Fikry Isaac, Sara Wang, "Long-term Impact of Johnson & Johnson's Health & Wellness Program on Health Care Utilization and Expenditures," *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 44 (2002): 21-29.

⁴¹Vesely, "Shaping Up."

populations, would need attention when it came to engineering good health.⁴² As a result, corporate models began expanding wellness programs to include all employees, effectively retooling the corporate identity as a place where workers could expect to be fully enhanced, at least in ways that suited the company.⁴³

With the demonstration that a culture of health promotion would be economically wise at the corporate level, the workplace was also transformed into a space that promised to transform one's entire wellbeing. Forty years after the dawn of the corporate wellness movement, wellness philosophies were regularly incorporated into mission statements and business strategies. In fact, wellness was cited as a "leading corporate strategy" among 87% of sizable corporations in 2011.⁴⁴ Researcher and corporate consultant Steven Noelder remarked that wellness was "in the fabric of how employers deliver benefits."⁴⁵

The corporate wellness movement was economically driven, but according to David Anderson, chief health officer of StayWell Health Management, corporations were articulating wellness as "shared accountability."⁴⁶ In other words, wellness programs and their emphasis on disease prevention and health promotion had the potential to operate as a pledge of good will towards the individuals working in a large company. Studies on prevention in corporations

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³The many correlations between the corporate wellness movement and the military's motivational campaigns are too rich to expound on here. However, it bears mention that Army recruitment campaigns often promised potential recruits that their entire selves will be positively refashioned in much the same way that corporations have packaged benefits for employees. See Beth Bailey's *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009).

⁴⁴According to a 2011 *Mercer* report (quoted in Veseley, "Shaping Up").

⁴⁵Veseley, "Shaping Up."

⁴⁶David Anderson, "Striving for Commitment," *Living Right* paper, 2013, http://staywell.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/LivingRight_JJKeller_DA_2013.pdf. For how wellness programs articulate employer-employee commitments, see "Building a Stronger Evidence Base for Employee Wellness Programs," National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation (2011).

highlighted the point that for health promotion to work, it had to be managed and performed both at the corporate and social levels as well as the individual and personal levels. Corporations and the individuals within had to work together for the good of all. If governments and corporations could educate individuals about health risks and promote healthy behaviors, individuals would supposedly benefit by becoming healthier and perhaps happier. If individuals were healthy and happy, they would increase the “health” of the organization. Wellness and health promotion programs appeared to offer a win-win scenario for both individuals and corporations, bridging the gaps and establishing trust between employer and employee.⁴⁷

These were the institutional conditions in which spirituality became enveloped in the language and machinery of health care. As an important part of health promotion, spiritual education could seemingly offer a win-win situation within corporate cultures because it prompted individuals towards cost-effective techniques of self-care that would supposedly make them happier and more productive at work.

Implications and Consequences of the Biopsychosocial Turn, Disease Prevention, and Health Promotion for the Future of Spiritual Fitness

The turn towards a biopsychosocial medical model had several implications for the future of health care and the place of religion and spirituality in it. First, it opened up new opportunities for the existence of health organizations that were both quasi-religious and pseudo-scientific. For example, organizations like the HeartMath Institute, founded in 1991, would claim that if people could learn to “harness the intelligence of the heart” by controlling one’s emotions and

⁴⁷Muriel Gillick, “Jogging and the Pursuit of Moral Life,” *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 9 (1984): 369-87.

reducing stress, it would enhance health and ultimately lead to the Institute's mission of world peace. To help in this endeavor, the HeartMath Institute marketed a product called an emWave, similar in function and purpose to Scientology's eMeter.⁴⁸

In the United States, there have always been spiritual and religious movements that adopted scientific logics and languages (consider, for example, Christian Science). But these were often considered to be “fringe” groups whose medical authority lay beyond the bounds of common respectability. After the 1970s, groups that mixed science and religion had greater potential to be viewed as legitimate, based on the fact that mainstream health science had opened itself up to investigations of a “softer” nature: emotions and beliefs.

What helped to firm up these softer studies and lend some empirical credibility to them was the boom in technology since the 1970s. Computers, which proved useful at organizing large amounts of information and computing data, helped “modernize” all aspects of life. The 1980s was thus an era of “professionalization,” as civilian and military sectors were busy during this period updating health care programs and regimens with the newfound ability to collect more information and give faster assessments. The goal, as always, was improvement, and computers could help unlike any previous technology in this regard. Furthermore, computers offered the assurance of standardization and the appearance of objectivity.

Another significant implication of the emphasis on promotion and prevention was that medical professionals could claim a wider scope of authority than before. Health promotion and disease prevention programs were, by nature, holistically-oriented, since they shifted the medical gaze from the manifestations of disease to its multi-variate roots in behavior. If medical doctors

⁴⁸See “Expanding Heart Connections,” *HeartMath Institute*, accessed December 14, 2015, [https://www.heartmath.org/..](https://www.heartmath.org/)

cared about prevention, it appeared that they would have to think about health care in terms of potentialities, not just actualities. In other words, the science of prevention made relevant for good care the consideration of a scope of potential irritants that were far broader than the traditional range that would exhibit in manifested illnesses.

The focus on preventive health thus had an expansive effect on mainstream medical care because it made relevant the examination of every dimension of human life. Professional medicine could no longer engage a narrow or dualistic perspective. Promoting health really meant attending to patient wellness, and wellness was complex and incorporated multiple dimensions of human experience. Physicians wishing to care for the body thus had to also care for the mind, and, as some would controversially argue, the “spirit” (see Chapter Five). Although in some respects, the preventive health movement could be seen as setting individuals free from the previous paradigm’s stifling authority, ironically, the movement actually *expanded* doctors’ spheres of influence and authority.

The turn towards prevention and promotion had several implications for individuals. On one hand, the recognition that patients could modify their behaviors for greater health, which implied that doctors did not have complete control over people and their bodies, seemed like a victory for patient empowerment. Patient and care provider would have to work as a team in order to construct and implement a successful health regimen. But on the other hand, the emphasis on prevention and promotion often implied that one’s health and wellbeing were the sole responsibility of the individual.

This was quite a heavy burden to shoulder especially, for example, for those participating in innovative cancer treatment programs that developed in the late 1970s - 1980s. In the spirit of attending to patient’s emotional health, Yale University surgeon Bernie Siegel pioneered a

cancer program in 1978 that was meant to encourage patients to find their own inner strength to defeat cancer. Based on his own observations, he concluded that the type of patient who survived cancer was assertive and authentic. Those who succumbed to cancer appeared inauthentic and repressed. In his *Love, Medicine, and Miracles* (1986) book, he argued that “cancer... [is] the disease of [people who are] “nice” by other people’s standards. They are conditional lovers. They are giving only in order to receive love. If their giving is not rewarded, they are more vulnerable to illness than ever.”⁴⁹ Prevention programs implied, probably unintentionally, that whatever disease one was suffering from was ultimately one’s own fault. The failure to resolve an illness might well be due to one’s emotional frailty or moral shortcomings. Or later, when spirituality became known as a preventive measure, one’s lack of spirituality.

Of course, there were some teeth to these implications, whether or not they were easy to swallow. Everyone knew, for example, that quitting smoking would require extraordinary will power in addition to physical treatments. But how would one go about developing will power? Where would one find the motivation to change old habits and to behave in ways deemed “healthy?” Figuring out how to regulate motivation would be extremely important in the goal of engineering healthy behaviors, just as it had been important in the army for engineering productivity and morality. When the health prevention campaigns began in earnest in the 1970s, it did not address the role of motivation to the degree that later studies of human behavior would. By the 1990s, research on the connection between religion, spirituality and health would explode as the impact of a person’s beliefs and rituals on emotional states and motivation levels gained

⁴⁹Bernie S. Siegel, *Love, Medicine and Miracles: Lessons Learned about Self-Healing from a Surgeon’s Experience with Exceptional Patients*, reissue ed. (New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 1998), 94.

recognition. Like in past military programs, spirituality would come to encapsulate assumptions regarding the mechanics of motivation.

Last, the corporate recognition of the utility of employee wellness contributed to rebranding things related to wellness, such as “spirituality,” as fitting secular logics and thus appearing relevant in the public sphere. Boosting employee wellness made good sense financially for the company, but it also could be interpreted as marking an attempt to bridge the gap between individuals and the companies they worked for. Like spiritual training in previous army programs, the corporate focus on employee health signaled respect and care for individuals. Future spiritual wellness programs such as those at public universities or at Tyson Foods plants would similarly signal to students and employees that the institution cares that they feel well, not just physically, but mentally and emotionally. Fitness and wellness regimens that developed in corporate cultures during the 1970s may have been economically driven, but they also produced shifting expectations regarding what employers would provide employees. If total wellness was one of these expected benefits, then the things wellness encompassed, such as spiritual health, had a rightful place in public corporations.

In summary, the threat of chronic and preventable diseases and patients’ demand for more caring and empowering medicine encouraged professionals to recognize good health care as necessarily holistic and quality-of-life oriented. The rising cost of traditional care and the corporate recognition of wellness regimens as critical for the company helped to cement holistic and quality-of-life oriented techniques as legitimate in public spheres. The new health paradigm assumed that health as wellness was multivariate and it increasingly appeared that anything that institutions could do to boost health would yield high rewards. The acceptance of this health paradigm then created felicitous conditions for the professional ideological rapprochement of

spirituality and health that would crystallize in 1990s studies. The term “spirituality” would eventually appear in public health programs, representing a fully-customizable vehicle to an empowered, flourishing, and healthy life.

Spiritual Fitness and Changes in Chaplaincy Culture

Spiritual fitness was able to have relevance in military training programs because of health care culture’s expanding scope but also because there were several significant changes in the military culture and the military chaplaincy during the 1970s – 90s. These changes allowed chaplains’ abilities to be officially recognized as necessary for secular health care programs like the Fit to Win program. As a result, chaplains’ roles evolved and expanded yet again during this period despite the fact that the chaplaincy’s purview had been significantly challenged in the 1960s and ‘70s.

There were three main shifts that contributed to the salience of chaplains’ work as critical for health care projects. First, in the 1980s the military chaplaincy came to understand good ministry as necessarily supporting the military’s missions, a stance that they were ironically under fire for just a decade earlier. Helping soldiers meant supporting their health and wellbeing on the battlefield, which ultimately entailed encouraging them to fight. As a result, chaplains intentionally “battle-focused” their ministry to support soldiers’ rapid recoveries on the battlefield. Second, the military accepted the help that chaplains were willing to provide on the battlefield because the new era of warfare seemed to call for an expansion of the military toolkit. Furthermore, modern research on “combat fatigue” appeared to validate the specific aid that chaplains were capable of offering. Third, like other military sectors, the chaplaincy had been busy professionalizing in the 1980s. This process allowed chaplains to gain more respectability

from nonreligious professionals as experts in various developing areas, like ethics and counseling. Chaplain professionalization in many ways contributed to the legitimization of their work as appropriate in secular spheres.

Although all of these shifts helped cement chaplains' professional relevance in military health care, the most important information in understanding how a program like Fit to Win came to include spiritual fitness is the fact that spirituality was recognized by secular professionals as a matter of health, not just an indicator of moral and religious sensibility that ought to be relegated to voluntary spheres. Put differently, health-oriented spirituality accumulated legitimacy in the military primarily because non-chaplain leaders (e.g., generals and health care officials) recognized spirituality as a useful training tool that would help address various problems that the military was facing from the 1970s through the 1990s.

Changes in Chaplain Culture: Johnson, Hessian, and Two Types of Spirituality

Towards the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the army chaplaincy demonstrated a renewed focus on spirituality, although there was no articulated consensus on what was actually meant by the term. The understanding that spirituality was important in life had been implicit in CGP lectures all along (these talked far more about "God" and religious belief), but talk about spirituality increased in chaplain publications in the 1980s.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the Army Health Promotion Council emphasized the importance of spiritual fitness in 1987. What did spirituality mean to chaplains in the 1980s and what did it have to do with "fitness"? An examination of how two different Army Chiefs of Chaplains, Kermit Johnson and his

⁵⁰ Publications like Chaplain Jay Ellens' 1984 "Preparation for Combat: Emotional and Spiritual" in the *Military Chaplains' Review* grew more frequent, and an entire *Military Chaplains' Review* was dedicated to "spirituality" in 1987.

successor, Patrick Hessian, used the term illumines two understandings of spirituality with very different implications for those in service.

In 1980, Army Chief of Chaplains Johnson and his Deputy at the time, Hessian, outlined priorities for the OCCH for the next few years. One of these was “enhancing spirituality as the ‘depth dimension in our lives.’”⁵¹ Like most people using the word “spirituality,” Johnson did not articulate what he meant by it. However, other information helps to put Johnson’s usage into context.

Johnson, who became the Army Chief of Chaplains in 1979, was an outspoken critic of the Regan administration’s nuclear weapons policies.⁵² When Johnson said that chaplains needed to shore up “spirituality as the depth dimension,” it is possible that he was talking about the soul-searching that chaplains should engage in regarding whether or not their religious values could or should align with all of the practices of the military. Like many in the aftermath of Vietnam, Johnson was skeptical about the church’s ability to exercise its voice while in service. In a rare move, his convictions led him to retire early in 1982.⁵³

Even after his service, Johnson continued to advocate for peace and non-violence, and repeatedly argued that religious convictions would not necessarily align with the military’s duties. As recent as 2006, he published an article in *The Christian Century* that offered “a chaplain’s view of torture.” The following excerpt from that article illustrates his wariness of chaplains as morale-builders:

⁵¹US Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains (hereafter OCCH), *Annual Historical Review* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1980), 16.

⁵²For more on the controversy over Johnson’s opposition to the administration, see Anne Loveland, *Change and Conflict in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps since 1945* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014), 120.

⁵³Ibid.

I would say that if war causes us to suppress our deepest religious, ethical and moral convictions, then we have indeed caved in to a higher religion called war. Since this obeisance to war is packaged in the guise of patriotism, it is well to admit to the beauty of patriotism, the beauty of unselfishness and love of country, land, community, family, friends and, yes, our system of government. But this fabulous beauty makes us appreciate all the more what Reinhold Niebuhr called the “ethical paradox in patriotism.” The paradox is that patriotism can transmute individual unselfishness into national egoism. When this happens, when the critical attitude of the individual is squelched, this permits the nation, as Niebuhr observed, to use ‘power without moral constraint.’⁵⁴

For Johnson, cultivating spirituality likely meant being in touch with “religious, ethical and moral convictions” that did not necessarily support the war’s efforts.

Patrick Hessian, Johnson’s Deputy, would continue Johnson’s focus on spirituality when he became the Chief of Chaplains after Johnson’s resignation. But Hessian’s use of spirituality would deviate significantly from Johnson’s in that he, along with a growing number of personnel, understood spirituality as critical to a person’s survival during combat and to overall health. In an annual review from 1982, Hessian explained what he meant by spirituality and why it was so important. He saw “personal, spiritual health” as just as important for chaplains “as training and tactics and weaponry is for the tactical officer.”⁵⁵ Chaplains were responsible for maintaining their own “spiritual well-being” through “theological reading, study and reflection” and to keep good relationships with the religious organizations they were affiliated with. Only then would they be able to “spiritual[ly] nurture...the soldier.”⁵⁶ “Spiritual health” was so important to Hessian that he made sure to emphasize it in every speech and letter to chaplains.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Kermit Johnson, “No Comparison: A Chaplain’s View of Torture,” *Christian Century* 123, no. 8, April 18, 2006.

⁵⁵John Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith, Serving Soldiers: A History of the US Army Chaplaincy, 1975-1995* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1997), 165.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Personal interview by John Brinsfield with Chaplain Timothy Tatum, December 28, 1994 (quoted in Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 165).

Hessian's understanding of spirituality as being fit enough to endure the trials of warfare was a product of his own experiences, which had taught him that supporting the army's mission was good ministry. His military experiences had convinced him that the only way to really support soldiers was to support the environment they were in. A notorious dare devil and athlete, Hessian knew firsthand that being on the battlefield was critical in forming bonds with soldiers. Not only was he a Jump Master in the XVIII Airborne Corps and a handball champion, but he had toured for 24 years on active duty out of a "need for adventure."⁵⁸

Hessian was well aware of the hardships of the battlefield and the strain that this could put on individuals, and was sure that chaplains could not adequately serve by sitting idly on the sidelines. The only way to truly develop the rapport necessary to help soldiers was to personally participate in drill exercises and to be present on the battlefield itself.⁵⁹ Ultimately, Hessian's conviction about what good ministry required implied that the chaplaincy would need to take a stance on warfare that ran counter to the thesis that the "man of God" and the "man of war" ought to have little relation. Under Hessian's guidance, "men of God" intentionally would be "men of war" for this is what good care unapologetically required. From one Chief of Chaplains to the next, understandings of spirituality in the military chaplaincy evolved in a way that was consistent with the era's emphasis on managing behavior and emotional wellbeing to promote workplace productivity.

Only a few years before, the chaplaincy had attempted to avoid appearing to aid the military's missions by making changes to the CGP and eventually dissolving the entire mandatory moral education project. After Vietnam, the idea that religion might fuel war was

⁵⁸William Hourihan, "Oral Interview with Chaplain Patrick J. Hessian," 10 February 1986, 34 (quoted in Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 161).

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

repugnant. But by the 1980s, the chaplaincy had decided to be intimately involved in military operations. In a move unthinkable in the mid-1970s, this involvement included intentionally “battle-focused” its ministry language. Hessian’s personal logic, which concluded that more engagement in military operations, not less, constituted as real and effective ministry, contributed to this quick shift.

With this in mind, Hessian made training with the troops a chaplain priority. He wrote to his major command chaplains that they could think of engaging in training exercises as performing ministry, which he phrased in battle language as the chaplaincy’s “total mission.”⁶⁰ Hessian explained that because nothing brought service men and women closer than training together and because proximity to troops was critical for securing the chaplaincy’s goals, it was clear that “when we train for the Army’s mission, we are performing ministry.”⁶¹

This bold statement was an about-face from the doubtful stance of his predecessor, Johnson, who questioned what the chaplaincy’s allegiance to the army mission should be. Johnson was so unsure that the chaplaincy could align its religious goals with the military’s that he resigned. In a round-about way, Johnson’s understanding of spirituality indicated that a spiritual soldier might resist combat because of spiritual commitments while Hessian’s implied that a soldier’s spiritual health would allow him to stay and fight, remaining healthy and whole afterward.

Speaking at a 1979 conference as the Chief of Chaplains, Johnson had noted how relevant the theme “reaching today’s soldier” was because it was focused on ministering to

⁶⁰Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 165.

⁶¹Ibid.

people, not implementing programs.⁶² Hessian's tenure, on the other hand, understood that "implementing programs" was integral to ministering to people.

In this spirit, the chaplaincy engaged in massive projects to modernize and professionalize throughout the 1980s along with the rest of the military. As it turned out, Hessian's conviction that chaplain work was best deployed by working with the military's strictures aligned with the philosophy of the military's new AirLand Battle strategy and the latest research on "battle fatigue." Both of these developments made chaplains even more necessary to war efforts and implied that faith was a secular concern, but they also required chaplains to broaden and secularize their skill sets.

Chaplains as Critical Service Members: AirLand Battle Strategy and Battle Fatigue Research

Force-wide professionalization during the 1980s manifested in the AirLand Battle strategy, which ultimately required chaplains to be more fully integrated in units and present on the battlefield. The strategy was initiated in 1982 in order to organize and coordinate the ever-expanding array of advanced weapons technology.⁶³ By the 1980s, weapons were so powerful that the command realized that entire battles could be won faster than ever if planning efforts were efficient enough. Furthermore, if war with the well-armed Soviets was a real possibility then a thorough review of procedures could not come fast enough.⁶⁴

⁶²OCCH, *Annual Historical Review* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1979), 31-32.

⁶³Robert A. Dougherty, *The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1979) 41.

⁶⁴US Army, *Historical Summary of Fiscal Year 1983* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983), 1-1.

The AirLand Battle concept understood the battlefield as “extended” compared to previous formulations. In other words, it assumed that modern warfare included numerous geographical and temporal dimensions, as well as a variety of battle mediums, such as nuclear and chemical warfare.⁶⁵ The AirLand Battle concept made clear that the once traditional idea that there was one “main battle area” was antiquated by the early 1980s. Because modern warfare was complex and extensive, it was understood that securing victory would likely require an expansion of the military’s toolkit. The expansive ideology of AirLand Battle created an environment that was felicitous to a broader range of skill sets than before, including chaplains’ expertise in matters pertaining to “spirituality.”

Commanding officers were thus encouraged to recognize that chaplains were not fifth wheels during the unit’s active periods, but ought to be included as valuable team members. The command and the chaplaincy then both had a stake in including chaplains in battlefield operations. As Chaplain Historian John Brinsfield put it, the 1980s was the decade in which chaplains “put on their battle dress uniform.”⁶⁶ A flurry of directives helped to standardize chaplains’ expanded roles and cemented expectations regarding chaplain combat behavior.

Chaplains’ increased authority on the battlefield during the AirLand Battle era manifested in the 1984 creation of the modern Unit Ministry Team (UMT, not to be confused with “Universal Military Training” in Chapter One). The Team, composed of a chaplain and an assistant, would be more permanent fixtures in a troop, and their priority was in supporting soldiers on the battlefield in whatever way possible, whether to provide religious ministry or not. Even the process of coming up with a name for the Team exhibited intentionally crafting broader

⁶⁵Donn A. Starry, "Extending the Battlefield," *Military Review* 77, no. 1 (Jan, 1997): 151-161.

⁶⁶Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 160.

strictures for chaplain abilities. In fact, it was a non-chaplain who suggested that the team be called the “unit ministry team” instead of the “religious ministry team” in order to avoid conflicts with the law and to emphasize the team’s secular importance.⁶⁷

When the creation of the UMT was being discussed in the early 1980s, the military chaplaincy was still embroiled in litigations related to the Katcoff case. How was it possible then, with the chaplaincy’s very existence on the line, for a “ministry team” to be created that would take chaplains out of the chapel and into the heart of battle? In a nutshell, chaplain work was deemed critical to military operations by the command.

In fact, a main advocate for the UMT’s creation was artillery specialist Major Morgan Flom who convinced the Army Vice Chief of Staff General Maxwell Thurman that such a team was critical for the successful completion of the military’s missions.⁶⁸ During a meeting with Thurman, Flom argued that data from newly-instituted functional assessments suggested that a team composed of a chaplain and an assistant who could bear arms and protect the chaplain during combat could drastically improve combat operations.⁶⁹

In the 1980s, concern over soldiers suffering from “battle fatigue” grew as its damaging effects on combat efficiency were increasingly quantified.⁷⁰ Flom insisted that a chaplain team could help alleviate soldiers’ battle fatigue and increase combat efficiency, based on his involvement in the studies of combat stress and battle fatigue casualties during the Yom Kippur

⁶⁷Personal Interview by John Brinsfield of Chaplain Wayne Kuehne, 29 December 1994 (quoted in Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 180).

⁶⁸Personal interview by John Brinsfield with Chaplain Col. James Robnolt, Ft. Monmouth, July 11, 1993 (quoted in Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 185).

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Concern regarding battle fatigue had been growing so much that the Office wrote a new field circular (16-51) in 1985 titled, “Ministry to Battle Fatigue Casualties.” Bernard Lieving, “Battle Fatigue: A Pastoral Model for Prevention and Treatment,” student paper (Carlisle Barracks: US Army War College, 1986), 11.

War in Israel in 1973. This study, conducted by Walter Reed Army Medical Center doctors, had indicated that the soldiers who were treated for battle fatigue near the battlefield and then returned to duty quickly had less of a chance of becoming casualties than those who were evacuated to the rear.⁷¹ One reason given for this was that a quick return to the battlefield could reduce the probability that one might retain painful memories that could later result in long-term psychological injury.⁷² The study's two conclusions, that injured soldiers needed to be returned to battle as quickly as possible and that boosting morale was a key component in reducing battle fatigue injuries, offered attractive solutions to real problems. Particularly the first conclusion was enticing to anyone in command, as this strategy promised to reduce combat fatigue's long-term debilitations and immediately impact force strength.

Flom argued that chaplains and their assistants could be trained to minister on the front lines to the battle-fatigued.⁷³ They could also provide armed security, manage equipment and material, arrange transportation, and collect information.⁷⁴ In order for them to really be useful, chaplains would have to demonstrate that they could be assets to the unit during training exercises and in the heat of battle. Flom suggested that one step towards achieving this and to bring the chaplaincy up to "modern" standards would be found in softening some of the chaplaincy's religious language, and "battle-focusing" it instead. For example, Flom thought

⁷¹Gregory Belenky, C. Frederick Tyner, and Frank J. Sodetz, "Israeli Battle Shock Casualties, 1973 and 1982," (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983), 8.

⁷²The concept that treating soldiers with combat stress quickly, near the front of battlelines, and returning them to battle as soon as possible was the best way to avoid future psychological injuries was introduced during WWI, and seemingly confirmed by the Israeli studies. Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, "'Forward Psychiatry' in the Military: Its Origins and Effectiveness," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 16, no. 4 (2003): 412.

⁷³Personal interview by John Brinsfield with James Robnolt (quoted in Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 185).

⁷⁴US Army, *The Chaplain and Chaplain Assistant in Combat Operations*, FM 16-5 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1984), 32-33.

chaplains' "religious coverage" should be referred to from then on as "direct support," an artillery phrase already used by commanders.⁷⁵

"Battle-focusing" chaplains' work was necessarily a secular process. If chaplains wanted to be incorporated into units more fully and be accepted by the command as indispensable, then they would have to shed some of the traditional religious signifiers that limited their service to voluntary, religious spheres. As chaplains became more accepted as part of the unit, their language continued to reflect the effort to "battle-focus."

Vice Chief of Staff Thurman, himself a practicing Catholic, was easily compelled by Flom's argument that a team of chaplains and ministry assistants would be better able to support soldiers on the battlefield. He also thought chaplains were the obvious choice for attending to soldiers suffering from battle fatigue. Because of his convictions that chaplains were critical to battlefield operations, Thurman increased the OCCH financial support in 1984 for chaplains to attend the War College by twofold.⁷⁶

Chaplains' fuller integration into units coincided with increasing empirical evidence that "combat fatigue" had measurable, deleterious consequences on combat operations. In the aftermath of Vietnam, it became clear that the veteran population was still suffering from patterned psychological difficulties that could not easily be boiled down to irresolute character. Perhaps "combat fatigue" was not just the yellow-bellied trait of lesser men as commanders tended to assume in previous times. In 1980, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III would

⁷⁵Personal interview by John Brinsfield with Major Morgan L. Flom, 2 Jan. 1995 (quoted in Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 183).

⁷⁶Personal letter to John Brinsfield from Chaplain Norris Einertson, May 2 1995 (quoted in Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 185).

introduce what was previously called “combat fatigue” as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).⁷⁷

One might reasonably assume that once combat fatigue was finally recognized as a psychological disorder that psychologists would resume from chaplains the work of attending to those suffering from it. Although psychologists did become more important in the military with PTSD’s formal recognition, chaplains were officially recognized by the command as the first responders to “combat stress” after 1984.⁷⁸ A large part of the reason for this is that chaplains’ liminal status had uniquely situated them to serve in the military as healers of illnesses with moral and social components. As ranked personnel in positions of leadership, chaplains tended to have enough authority to demand soldiers’ attention, but not so much that the ability to develop rapport was damaged. As religious officials, they were seen as people uniquely capable and desirous to offer care and moral support.

This logic convinced the command. At a 1984 meeting with James H. Robnolt, the Director of Combat Developments at the US Army Chaplain Center & School in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, Vice Chief of Staff Thurman argued that chaplains, not medical staff, were the best service members to attend to combat stress victims. Robnolt agreed that Chaplains were the right personnel for this job, since they “historically dealt with people in crises by pointing them to the transcendent reality in their lives.”⁷⁹ As assistants on the battlefield, they would be able to take their “other worldly views” and put them into “practical programs of

⁷⁷“Post-traumatic Stress Disorder,” in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-Revised version* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1987) 247-251.

⁷⁸James H. Robnolt, “US Army Chaplaincy Battle Fatigue Ministry” in A. David Mangelsdorff, *Seventh Users’ Stress Workshop: Training For Psychic Trauma* (Ft. Sam Houston, TX: US Army Health Services Command, 1990), 64.

⁷⁹Ibid.

assistance and healing.”⁸⁰ Other personnel tasked with developing a strategy to ameliorate combat fatigue had also noticed chaplains’ potential: a TRADOC special study group had found chaplains highly effective in training soldiers to cope in high stress situations. By Robnolt’s assessment, chaplains were “on the cutting edge of, and play the most active role in stress management, suicide prevention education, counseling, and intervention.”⁸¹

Thurman and those present at the 1984 meeting agreed that the UMT should receive formal combat stress training.⁸² Furthermore, if chaplains were going to be more integrated members of a troop, they needed to develop doctrine regarding how they were going to offer support on the battlefield. Brigadier General D. Morelli, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Doctrine, asked the OCCH to participate in this effort, signaling the Office’s new era of combat-supporting doctrine.⁸³ By 1985, Army Regulation 165-20, “Duties of Chaplains and Responsibilities of Commanders,” was published.⁸⁴ By 1993, the modern chaplain inventory would include a Chaplains’ Logistics Handbook, a Soldiers’ Book of Worship, a field test for a Multi-Faith Ration, and a Combat Assault Chaplain Kit.⁸⁵

The official doctrine that put chaplains towards the front battle lines to assist soldiers suffering from combat fatigue was called “Forward Thrust.”⁸⁶ Although chaplains did embrace the Forward Thrust doctrine that moved them to the front and allowed them to work more with

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid., 61.

⁸³Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 176.

⁸⁴US Army, *Duties of Chaplains and Responsibilities of Commanders*, AR 165-20 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1985).

⁸⁵OCCH, *Information Letter IV*, October 1, 1993, 4.

⁸⁶Wayne Kuehne, *Faith and the Soldier: Religious Support on the Airland Battlefield* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 1988) 5.

the command, the tension this created between mission and conscience was not completely ignored. A manual on “Religious Support” fully acknowledged that the UMT was a “powerful asset to the commander” in helping with battle fatigue because of their care for the soldier and “unique spiritual focus.”⁸⁷ Yet Robnolt, speaking as the Director of Combat Developments, clarified the army’s position on battle fatigue as a perfectly normal reaction to an “uncontrollable, devastating situation.”⁸⁸ He further hinted at the crisis of conscience that war produced by suggesting that “the great handicap of the American soldier in battle is that his home, religion, schooling, and the moral code and ideals of society have taught him the worth and value of human persons. Thank God for his handicap!”⁸⁹ The manual did not offer up how to resolve the tensions between “mission and conscience” that soldiers felt, but it did recognize that they existed.

Military literature that addressed combat fatigue in this way exemplified a recalibrated perception of war as a necessary evil that recast the US soldier-hero trope as a victim in the inevitable grip of the war machine. Chaplains, who could help by bringing to morally wounded soldiers a “sense and order” by “point[ing] to a transcendent order” more powerful than war, appeared to be the war heroes. The manual instructed chaplains to preach reconciliation, forgiveness and hope in the face of tragedy. Chaplains might not be able to offer answers, but they could be “with the soldier where they are, to share with them the danger they experience on the battlefield and to be accessible to their needs 24 hours of the day.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷OCCH, *Religious Support: The Chaplain and Chaplain Assistant* FM 16-1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989), 5-31.

⁸⁸Robnolt, “US Army Battle Fatigue Ministry,” 62.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

Chaplain manuals that discussed combat fatigue illuminated the era's conceptualized perspectives of war and the soldiers' burdens as war workers. The legitimization of combat fatigue as a disorder with physical manifestations served to validate morally adverse reactions to the work of war. Soldiers experiencing intense grief and conflict over their assignments were not just cowardly or weak; their conflict and pain was real and justified. As the primary personnel tasked with handling soldiers with combat fatigue, chaplains' responses shifted with the times: in the 1940s through the 1960s, they responded with invocations aimed at bulking up soldiers' sense of moral responsibility to get the job done. By the 1980s, they were more sympathetic to soldiers' unease, probably in part because they had more experience on the battlefield themselves. Because there were no easy answers for the hardships of war, the chaplaincy would focus their care efforts on providing a "ministry of presence," which meant being with soldiers wherever they were.⁹¹

Chaplain Professionalization and the Development of Secularly-Recognized Expertise

At the same time that the entire military was upgrading its facilities and standards to meet the new demands bequeathed by modern technology, the chaplaincy had been hard at work modernizing. For example, in 1984, the OCCH acquired 218 computers and had instituted its own system of functional assessments and reviews the year before.⁹² The Office sent hundreds of chaplains to school to get specialized training. In 1983, 1655 chaplains received formal academic training, while others took courses that focused on career development, leadership and

⁹¹The "ministry of presence" concept was developed during Army Chief of Chaplain Orris Kelly's tenure, 1975 - 1979. Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 65.

⁹²Ibid., 187; and John Romjue, *The Army of Excellence: The Development of the 1980's Army*, (Fort Monroe, VA: Office of the TRADOC Historian, 1993), 103.

administration, and even tactics.⁹³ The Office's initiative to keep pace technologically, to standardize its practices, and to increase education standards helped to maintain chaplains' reputations as professional and their roles in the military as relevant.

One development that significantly contributed to seeing the art of chaplain care as widely relevant expertise was the increased popularity of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) programs. CPE, which taught standardized counseling methods, had formally existed since the late 1920s but were not introduced in the army until 1969 at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. This program would continue to be used to help chaplains guide soldiers through various problems, ranging from racial tensions to drug and alcohol abuse. Standardizations of chaplain care like CPE reduced the chance that religious indoctrination would accompany such care. As a result, this kind of training only further bolstered the understanding that, on one hand, chaplains were fully capable of providing non-sectarian aide, but on the other hand, it suggested that they could fill a particular niche that psychologists could not.

Another way that the chaplaincy professionalized and contributed to the perception that chaplain roles were not constrained to voluntary religious activities was in the move to formally train chaplains in ethics in the 1970s.⁹⁴ During the 1970s and 1980s, chaplains had been granted the important role of teaching ethics as a part of military training and as a core requirement for West Point undergraduates.⁹⁵ Chaplains' ethics training effectively demonstrated that chaplains could provide moral education that was not dogma-driven, which was important in the wake of the discontinued CGP. The fact that the chaplaincy was interested in negotiating moral behavior

⁹³OCCH, *Annual Historical Review, 1 October 1982 – 30 September 1983* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983), 10-12.

⁹⁴John Brinsfield, "Army Values and Ethics: A Search for Consistency and Relevance," *Parameters* (1998): 69-84.

⁹⁵Loveland, *Conflict and Change*, 106.

on the grounds of universal philosophical systems rather than personal beliefs signaled that the chaplaincy culture after the 1960s had become far more politically and religiously diverse than only a decade before. Indeed, Army Chief of Chaplain Kermit Johnson had hoped that ethical training would allow chaplains and commanders to work together, despite religious differences, as the army's "ethical team."⁹⁶

Chaplains' growing authority as ethics instructors helped to bridge growing cultural divides, but it also served as an important inlet into the medical field, as chaplains also became recognized as authoritative in the realm of medical ethics. In the 1980s, the role of "Chaplain Clinical Ethicist" was created at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.⁹⁷ Chaplains' authority in medical ethics was so recognized that Norris Einertson, the Chief of Chaplains from 1986 - 1990, gave the keynote address at a major Medical Ethics conference in San Antonio, Texas to a group of chaplains, physicians, nurses and health care providers.⁹⁸ By the early 1990s, Chief of Chaplains' Matthew Zimmerman observed that army chaplains' skills were finally being integrated into health care services, which meant that they were working more closely with physicians, nurses, administrators, and health care providers.⁹⁹

The challenges regarding the chaplaincy's relevancy and appropriateness faced during the 1960s through the early 1980s faded as a consequence of two main factors. First, the command recognized chaplains' roles as critical for combat operations. The expanding conditions of

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Chaplain Matthew Zimmerman, "Speech for the Ethical Dilemmas in Military Health Care Course," San Antonio, Texas, May 4, 1992, 4. Zimmerman speech files, OCCH (Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 316).

⁹⁸Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 277-78.

⁹⁹Zimmerman, "Speech for the Ethical Dilemmas," 4 (Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 316).

modern warfare encapsulated in the AirLand Battle strategy and the growing understanding that good health care was complex and holistic likely contributed to this command perspective.

But the command might not have had this view if chaplains had not proven themselves capable of far more than being mere facilitators for religious expression. Chaplains demonstrated in no uncertain terms that chaplains did not just preach. They were students and educators, medical attendants, and companions on the battlefield. They resolved social and ethical conflicts, counseled those suffering from substance abuse, and attended to the wounded. Chaplains were also asked to help facilitate programs and assessments aimed at boosting individual health and wellbeing that served the military institution. One such project was the 1987 Fit to Win program.

The Advent of Spiritual Fitness in the Military

In 1986, the Department of Defense published a “Health Promotion” directive that would be accompanied by a 1987 program called Fit to Win.¹⁰⁰ Fit to Win was a new comprehensive health program created by the Army Health Promotion Council that aimed to offer education about health behaviors and to provide new training regimens with assessment components. Developed at the Pentagon and the US Army Materiel Command in Alexandria, Virginia, Fit to Win was modeled on several private sector corporate fitness programs.¹⁰¹ Most of the health topics the program covered were already familiar, including smoking cessation, weight control, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide prevention. However, this comprehensive health program

¹⁰⁰US Army, *Spiritual Fitness*, DA PAM 600-63-12, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987).

¹⁰¹Charlotte Asch, “HSC Leads in Health Promotion,” *HSC Mercury* (1987).

was unique in that was the first known military program created by medical professionals to include spirituality as a fitness component.

Fit to Win devoted an entire pamphlet to the topic of spiritual fitness and identified the concept as part of the army's newfound emphasis on health promotion. The pamphlet stressed that because "TOTAL fitness ... involve[d] emotional and spiritual aspects" and not just "physical health," the army would employ spiritual fitness training.¹⁰² According to the pamphlet, spiritual fitness was finally being seen as relevant in the military because of the increased recognition that "soldiers function more effectively when they have a support system or framework of meaning to sustain them."¹⁰³

Furthermore, spiritual fitness' importance was conveyed by the familiar idea that if the army could not maintain its ethical and moral standards, the entire military system would crumble. This was because a weak spirituality was presumed to put at great risk the lynchpin in the entire military operation: a soldier's desire or ability to sacrifice one's life in service to the mission. The cover and the forward of the spiritual fitness pamphlet illustrated the point that spiritual fitness was what allowed soldiers to sacrifice themselves. The front of the pamphlet displayed a crude pen drawing of the silhouette of a soldier in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. Beneath the soldier in bold, capped letters was George Marshall's ubiquitous quote, "the soldiers' heart, the soldier's spirit, the soldier's soul are everything."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²US Army, *Spiritual Fitness*, 1.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴The quote was cut short after "with it all things are possible, without it everything else, planning, preparation, and production count for naught." Missing was the next part in Marshall's speech, which identified "religion" as the primary catalyst for spiritual development. Ibid.

As a fitness aspect, spirituality was presented as a concrete thing that one could exercise: “Like any good physical fitness conditioning, there are ‘muscles’ to remember and exercise regularly: a. Patience, b. Kindness, c. Rejoicing in everybody’s good fortune.”¹⁰⁵ It likened immoral character traits like “jealousy, boastfulness, arrogance, self-centeredness” to “spiritual fat,” and suggested that soldiers should avoid those traits like they should avoid unhealthy food.¹⁰⁶ By aligning it with physical fitness concepts, *Fit to Win* seemed to suggest that spirituality, understood as moral conditioning, was good for one’s health.

The pamphlet defined spiritual fitness as “the development of those personal qualities needed to sustain a person in times of stress, hardship, and tragedy.”¹⁰⁷ It explained that the qualities came from “religious, philosophical, or human values and form the basis of character, disposition, decision-making, and integrity.”¹⁰⁸ Essentially, *Fit to Win* assumed that spiritual fitness indicated a soldier’s ability to survive hardship, and understood these abilities to stem from a person’s worldview. Like the CGP before, the program assumed that a person’s belief system activated their abilities to endure and to behave morally.

Unlike the CGP, *Fit to Win* demurred when it came to pinpointing what belief or “value” system made for the best spiritual fitness. The pamphlet insisted that determining what values produced behavior was an “intuitive” process that all people were engaged in. Likewise, determining one’s level of spiritual fitness was obvious, as one would “know [it] when [one]

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*

see[s] it.”¹⁰⁹ Besides, the pamphlet admitted, there were no “universally accepted instruments” with which to measure spiritual fitness.¹¹⁰

The Fit to Win creators were clearly sensitive to the idea that the spiritual fitness emphasis had the potential to stir controversy by suggesting that a particular worldview or value system was better than another. In many ways, the program attempted to create spirituality as a subjective construct that would not be monitored or measured. However, it was also clear that not providing some moral guidance was impossible because it undercut the whole point of educating soldiers about the importance of spiritual fitness. Spiritual fitness in the Fit to Win program served a concrete purpose. It was supposed to help soldiers endure the hardships of their jobs, and the program had clear assumptions regarding what sort of values and beliefs this required even if it did not state them outright.

As a result, the Fit to Win portion on spiritual fitness displayed conflicting logic. Although at first the pamphlet avoided tacking down what spiritually fit values were (saying these could be intuitively grasped), it repeatedly drew correlations between spiritual fitness and the army ethics of loyalty, duty, selfless service, and integrity. A spiritually fit person would be loyal to the nation and army, and demonstrate a sense of duty through “obedience and disciplined performance,” regardless of the circumstances. Soldiers were taught that a fit person would “do what should be done when it should be done,” be able to serve the nation and mission before oneself, and be trusted as morally upright.¹¹¹ At one point, the pamphlet stated outright that “the

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid., 5.

quality of the soldier's spirit" determined the degree to which soldiers could follow army ethics.¹¹²

The pamphlet also avoided distinctly promoting religion as a religious value source in the introduction to the spiritual fitness concept but then in one section it taught "characteristics [of spiritual fitness] from a theological base."¹¹³ These characteristics included "faith, belief in a positive outcome, mature outlook, forgiveness for myself and others, conviction there is something beyond myself, bonding, [and] trust."¹¹⁴

The pamphlet even contradicted its assertion that there was no agreed-upon way to measure spiritual fitness, by providing a sample Spiritual Fitness Assessment. The Assessment, which was recommended as "a part of any health risk appraisal, lifestyle assessment, or other instrument used in the Army Health Fitness Program," supposedly offered a way to measure one's "ongoing search for meaning and purpose in life."¹¹⁵ It recommended asking soldiers to rate their agreement with statements with religious undertones such as "my spiritual life is good," "I consider spiritual things at times other than crises," "prayer, meditation, or quiet reflections are regular parts of my lifestyle," and "I believe there is something greater than myself."¹¹⁶ Other statements more broadly pertained to relationships with others, such as "I share my values and their meaning with other people" and "humanitarian issues are important to me." Others, like "my values and beliefs guide my everyday activities," "the professional Army

¹¹²Ibid., 1.

¹¹³Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵US Army, *Spiritual Fitness*, 8.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 8-9.

ethic—Loyalty, Duty, Selfless Service, Integrity—makes sense to me as the way to live my life,” and “I do not compromise my values,” inquired about values.¹¹⁷

These contradictions in the spiritual fitness education highlighted the difficulty of producing education that would guide soldier’s beliefs and values while remaining sensitive to ideological diversity and religious coercion. Documents discussing the necessity of spiritual fitness training also provided some insight regarding the assumed relationship of religious belief and practice in public institutions. The following examples spoke to the hardship of attempting to re-categorize spirituality as a secular health construct, alongside of other topics like smoking-cessation. The many warnings and disclaimers that attended spiritual fitness discourse made clear the many ways that spiritual fitness was *not* in fact understood to be like physical or mental fitness, regardless of the fact that it was couched in that context.

This tension caused by attempting to normalize spirituality as a potentially secular health topic and the inability to completely do so was evidenced in the Army Health Promotion regulation on the program. It stressed that although chaplains were expected to help soldiers achieve better spiritual fitness, the command was primarily responsible for making sure that spiritual fitness programs were properly integrated into training.¹¹⁸ That spiritual fitness was primarily a command and not a chaplain responsibility signaled its legitimacy and importance as a secular, mandatory aspect of training. Yet the caveat that commanders were supposed to “ensure [that the] advocacy of a religion d[id] not occur” gestured to the difficulties specific to encouraging spiritual belief and practice in a mandatory program.¹¹⁹ Leaders were told to

¹¹⁷Ibid., 9.

¹¹⁸US Army, *Army Health Promotion*, AR 600-63 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 6.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

“develop an awareness of [soldiers’] lifestyles” and “relationships to religious beliefs” in order to responsibly facilitate soldiers’ spiritual development, yet they were also told that religious practice had to “be left to the sole discretion of the individual soldier, family member, or Army civilian.”¹²⁰ Statements like these exhibited the assumption that while an individual’s spiritual fitness could and often did include religious beliefs and practices, the extent to which an officer was permitted to acknowledge or encourage those beliefs or behaviors (even if they did build spiritual fitness) was constrained.

Other instances point to the tension-filled project of acknowledging spirituality’s religious influences and simultaneously trying to distance the concept from any particular religion in order to make it more appropriate. For example, the spiritual fitness pamphlet included an evangelical prayer as a sample devotional. An excerpt included, “Come close, Lord, and hear our prayer. Come together with us as we seek to exercise our faith and increase our spiritual fitness. ... Forgive our sins and fill us with your healing power and grace. Envelope us, Lord, in your peace and love and make us temples in your creation. AMEN.”¹²¹ A small note after the prayer suggested that “other sources of inspiration may be used depending upon one’s belief system.”¹²² Acknowledging that there were other “sources of inspiration” for spiritual fitness was a good start for integrating the concept into a pluralistic atmosphere, but the fact that all of the devotional examples were Christian conveyed the religious environment in which the construct was conceived.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹US Army, *Spiritual Fitness*, 13.

¹²²Ibid.

Sometimes, spiritual fitness' potential for conflict was indicated by an asterisk. For example, the *Fit to Win Marketing Manual*, created as a resource guide for the Health Promotion Councils, listed spiritual fitness in a chart with the other health-related topics. Accompanying the term is an asterisk that suggested, "Due to special nature of this area, care should be taken to encourage individual initiative and participation to increase spiritual fitness."¹²³ Commanders were instructed specifically to encourage their soldiers in the pursuit of spiritual fitness, yet they also had to "take care" in doing this. Clearly, spiritual fitness was unlike its supposed counterparts in the amount of delicacy that it required.

The appendix of the *Marketing Manual* acknowledged the special nature of spiritual fitness as well. Each Fit to Win health topic was accompanied by a list of contracting organizations as resources for health development, with the exception of spiritual fitness.¹²⁴ Instead of a list of organizations was the statement, "Due to the subjective and personal nature at this area and its close identification with religious groups (non-Christian and Christian alike), no specific denominations and faith groups may be contracted."¹²⁵

Spiritual fitness' relative uniqueness to other forms of fitness was especially acknowledged in the repeated admission that evaluating it was impossible. However, on this point, spiritual fitness documents often made contradicting statements. The pamphlet devoted to spiritual fitness explained, "given the diverse sources of values and spiritual beliefs, a formal, objective evaluation of Spiritual Fitness is not possible."¹²⁶ Yet the pamphlet also noted

¹²³US Army, *Fit to Win Marketing Manual*, DA PAM 600-63-3 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 19.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, F-9.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

¹²⁶US Army, *Spiritual Fitness*, 8.

inexplicably that what was possible was the ability “to observe and sense the spiritual health of individuals as part of an organization.”¹²⁷ The juxtaposition of these statements indicates the viewpoint that while a soldier’s personal beliefs could (or should) not be evaluated, an individual’s standing in an organization could be monitored. It seems clear here that an individual’s “spiritual health,” as it related to the soldiers’ position in the military, referred to how conducive one’s spiritual beliefs and practices were to helping the individual achieve success within the military system. These statements suggested the assumption that the military had no right to correct a person’s belief system as long as it did not hinder the soldier’s service abilities.

Fit to Win materials on spiritual fitness make evident that implementing this kind of training would take special care. A few documents outlined a plan for how spiritual fitness training should have been implemented. For example, page ten of Fit to Win Procedures Guide suggested that commanders were to distribute spiritual fitness materials, provide soldiers with “opportunities to meditate, pray, or worship,” direct spiritual fitness activities, and oversee soldiers’ opportunities for “individual counseling, values building, and support groups.”¹²⁸ The spiritual fitness pamphlet suggested that spiritual fitness could be promoted through counseling, meditation and prayer, value clarification, liaison with community and family support agencies, and accommodation of religious practices.¹²⁹ It also suggested that soldiers get involved in

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸US Army, *Fit to Win Procedures Guide*, DA Pam 600-63-13 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 10.

¹²⁹US Army, *Spiritual Fitness*, 6.

community activities like religious services, organizations dealing with spiritual values or religious beliefs, and volunteer services.¹³⁰

The pamphlet indicated that lectures similar to those from the CGP were a part of spiritual fitness training. The Appendix offered two sample lesson plans. One taught that the nation, the army, and one's fellow soldiers relied on the strength of one's loyalty. The other, labeled a "religious devotional," was clearly theistic, and written with Christian overtones. Reminiscent of older CGP lectures, it warned against the popular urge to "do your own thing" by suggesting that soldiers build on the physical, emotional, and spiritual foundations that God alone provided. It mentioned spiritual fitness just once, in the context of describing it as a "mental and emotional outlook" "built upon God's foundation."¹³¹

While it appeared that there was some plan for what spiritual fitness training might entail, what it was in practice was unclear, if it ever formally occurred. No available evidence suggests, for example, whether commanders encouraged "developmental activities" and what those might have been, or if commanders carved out time for soldiers to meditate and pray or if they required soldiers to attend value clarification workshops. Also unclear is whether or not one method of spiritual fitness training was valued over another. Was performing volunteer service seen as on par with attending religious services in the quest to build spiritual fitness? Were "human self-development activities" considered just as effective as "meditation and prayer"?

Spiritual fitness appeared to be important enough for the Army Health Promotion Council to include it as a training component, but there is no evidence that the spiritual fitness portion of the program was ever officially implemented. The many notable silences regarding spiritual

¹³⁰Ibid., 8.

¹³¹Ibid., 13

fitness in primary and secondary documents that discuss the Fit to Win program suggest that this emphasis was considered untenable or unimportant.

The concept of spiritual fitness was even noticeably absent from Fit to Win materials. For example, the Handbook for the Fit to Win program described the program as having six focuses. These included, “cigarette smoking, alcohol and drugs, eating habits, exercise/fitness, stress control and safety.”¹³² Spiritual fitness was not listed as a focus or mentioned even once in the entire handbook. The Fit to Win Commander’s Guide suggested orchestrating a Fit to Win Health week, but there were no apparent plans for the week to include any spiritual fitness related events. The week would center around physical activities like “family Olympics” and “unit weigh-ins.”¹³³ Spiritual fitness was similarly absent from a chart that measured health risk appraisals in the Commander’s Guide. A bar graph measured each of the Fit to Win elements (physical conditioning, weight control, substance abuse, tobacco, hypertension, cholesterol, stress) except for spiritual fitness, which was not mentioned.¹³⁴

The most surprising materials to omit Fit to Win’s “spiritual fitness” concept were chaplaincy materials from the 1980s and 1990s. One might reasonably assume that the chaplaincy would have been pleased to have the Army Health Promotion Council recognize the importance of spiritual fitness and that they would have been eager to help facilitate this education. Whether they wanted to or not, army regulations charged chaplains with helping with that aspect of the program. It would seem that if spiritual fitness training had the support of the chaplaincy then there would be evidence of its facilitation in chaplaincy literature. Yet, primary

¹³²US Army, *Your Fit to Win Handbook* DA PAM 600-63-14 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 2.

¹³³US Army, *Fit to Win Commander’s Guide*, 15.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

documents published by the army chaplaincy hardly mention Fit to Win or its initiative to integrate spiritual fitness training into the comprehensive program. Even army medical publications overlook the program.

Chaplains' Review publications from that time made no mention of the program, but it did make a few passing references to spiritual fitness training. Publications from the *HSC Mercury*, the Army Medical Department's newspaper, offered descriptions of the Fit to Win program and mentioned spiritual fitness as a part of it, but said nothing more. Some articles on Fit to Win skipped over the inclusion of a spiritual dimension entirely, focusing solely on the physical aspects.¹³⁵

Possibly the most glaring silences regarding the program exist in secondary accounts of the 1980s military history. US Army Chaplain Historian John Brinsfield never mentioned the Fit to Win program or the ways that chaplains might have been tasked to help with it in his extensive 1975-1995 history of the Army Chaplaincy, titled *Encouraging Faith, Serving Soldiers*. He appears thorough in every other respect, and was on active duty in 1987 himself. Given his considerable memory and penchant for detail, it is fair to assume that if the program had been significant for the chaplaincy, it would have been mentioned. The same can be said of historian Anne Loveland's exhaustive accounts of chaplaincy history from that time period. Loveland mentioned the Fit to Win program and offered a brief account of spiritual fitness based on the 1987 pamphlet in her 2014 book, *Change and Conflict in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps since 1945*. She too appeared to find little more about the program.

¹³⁵ See Danette Rodesky, "New Health Centers Train Leaders," *HSC Mercury* 2, no. 10 (1984), 1; and Douglas Verdier, "All Soldiers Must be Fit to Win," *HSC Mercury* 10, no. 3 (1983), 2.

Available materials suggest that the health promotion program was hardly on the OCCH's radar. Besides the fact that spiritual fitness training would be hard to implement (by the program's own admission), there was a good reason for why the chaplaincy might not have emphasized the program: the Office was simply overwhelmed with too many other projects already.

During 1987 when the Fit to Win program debuted, the Chaplain Corps was busy administrating over 48 programs, many of them new.¹³⁶ The majority of these programs, such as Personal Effectiveness Training, Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention, Family Life Centers, Instruction in Ethics and Moral Leadership, Organizational Effectiveness, and Seminars in Overcoming Racism and Sexism, were innovative ministry opportunities that had the advantage of being in the spirit of the army's move to professionalize and boost troop readiness. The chaplaincy did not need to be involved in Fit to Win to prove its worth to the army; it had plenty of other ways that it was accomplishing that.

Chaplains and Spiritual Fitness in the 1990s

Even though chaplains might not have had much to do with the Fit to Win program, chaplaincy publications increasingly tied notions of spirituality to health in ways similar to the Fit to Win program. Throughout the 1990s, medical literature and chaplaincy publications increasingly reflected the understanding of spirituality as a health category. By the end of the 1990s, it is clear that the term "spiritual fitness" had accumulated salience in the military chaplaincy. What the term meant was less clear.

¹³⁶Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, v.

However, chaplaincy publications that discussed spiritual fitness tended to follow one or more of the following three themes: 1) they overstated or misstated Fit to Win's claims regarding spiritual fitness' empirical soundness; 2) they interpreted spiritual fitness using religious frameworks; and 3) they understood spiritual fitness as unique in its ability to address existential concerns and saw this ability as a combat-multiplier. The following three chaplain publications represent these three main themes.

Some chaplain authors took liberties in interpreting Fit to Win's spiritual fitness concept by overstating the program's claims to bolster their own opinions, likely in ways that were unintended by the Army Health Promotion Council. For example, a 1990 paper titled *The Religious Support System of the United States Army* cited Fit to Win material to argue for an increased military focus on spiritual fitness because the author, Chaplain Lieutenant Colonel Wilbur D. Parker, interpreted it as a "proven" technique in allowing soldiers and their units to withstand "stress, hardship and tragedy."¹³⁷

Citing the Fit to Win pamphlet, Parker suggested that studies after WWII found that the combination of a relationship with a chaplain and a personal faith "enabled the soldier to perform beyond normal expectations in spite of fatigue, danger, or environmental conditions."¹³⁸ However, the pamphlet Parker referenced did not mention WWII studies or their alleged findings anywhere. Parker's insistence otherwise appears to be sheer extrapolation. His claim that some

¹³⁷Wilbur Parker, *The Religious Support System of the United States Army* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 1990), 11. Like most documents attempting to cement "spiritual fitness" importance, Parker included the same Marshall quote as the Fit to Win *Spiritual Fitness* pamphlet, which he used for most of his citations on the subject of "spiritual fitness."

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 10. His reference for the WWII studies was *Spiritual Fitness*, 1.

of the characteristics of spiritual fitness had been “proven to sustain the spirit of the soldier” was similarly unsubstantiated.¹³⁹

Parker took liberties also in quoting the pamphlet’s “theological” traits as including “faith in some power greater than oneself, belief in a positive outcome, ability to forgive self and others, capability to bond socially despite differences, trust and confidence in self and others.”¹⁴⁰ He listed all but the first trait accurately. The spiritual fitness pamphlet actually clarified “faith” as “dependence on self and others,” *not* as “faith in some power greater than oneself.”¹⁴¹ Furthermore, in the Fit to Win pamphlet, the “theological” traits were presented as moral suggestions for those who were theologically oriented, not as characteristics “proven to sustain the spirit of the soldier,” as Parker argued. Still, given the Fit to Win pamphlet’s overall content and tone, Parker’s mistake was probably fair.

A later document, published in 1998 by Chaplain Herbert McChrystal III, offered an admittedly Christian understanding of spiritual fitness. According to McChrystal, spiritual fitness needed to be “an imperative for the army chaplaincy” because chaplains had grown spiritually weak from two decades of ceaseless work.¹⁴² Chaplains had been so busy trying to keep up with their ever-expanding responsibilities that the quality of their own personal spiritual lives was deteriorating. Furthermore, chaplains were expected to perform faster and more efficiently than before in depleting environments. Like other active duty personnel, chaplains were being deployed more often and they were fatigued. Keeping spiritually fit was a matter of

¹³⁹Ibid., 12.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹US Army, *Spiritual Fitness*, 4.

¹⁴²Herbert McChrystal III, “Spiritual Fitness: An Imperative for the Army Chaplaincy,” (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 1998), 5.

preserving themselves in modern environments of rapid change. The cost of not “deliberately make personal spiritual health and fitness a priority” was significant.¹⁴³

Chaplain who did not attend to their own “spiritual health” might losing soldiers’ respect as leaders.¹⁴⁴ Becoming a respected leader required “spiritual discipline” cultivated through “activities like reading God’s word, prayer, meditation, and worship.”¹⁴⁵ Because chaplains were “spiritual leaders,” they needed to rely on God to be effective. On this point, McChrystal was unambiguous: “There can be no such thing as a self-made spiritual leader. Chaplains are dependent upon the Spirit working through them.”¹⁴⁶

If chaplains did not maintain their spiritual fitness, it was clear to McChrystal that the entire world would suffer. Soldiers and their families would be the first to feel the consequences, but these would trickle down into civilian sectors. Echoing older CGP lectures, McChrystal warned that if the entire country was spiritually enervated, it would lose its position as the “earth’s leading democracy.”¹⁴⁷ If that happened, the entire world would feel the negative impact.

Later in the report, McChrystal suggested that chaplains were spiritually weak not just because they were straining under too many burdens, but because there was an “ever-increasing blindness to the need to be spiritual fit.”¹⁴⁸ He blamed the military hiring system for not somehow requiring spiritual fitness as an occupational requirement. Reminiscent of older

¹⁴³Ibid., iii.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 4.

¹⁴⁵Ibid. Military literature on leadership including commander manuals also supported the assumption that leadership was an inherently spiritual task. See Loveland, *Change and Conflict*, 157, 160-62, 166.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 7.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 5.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 18.

critiques of the chaplaincy that highlighted the military's misguided incentives, McChrystal mentioned that chaplains who were "good staff officers with adequate interpersonal skills" were rewarded, even though their spiritual state might be "sadly lacking."¹⁴⁹ It was a shame that chaplains could skate through the system, performing their daily ministries as "staff officers" without needing to rely on "spiritual power."¹⁵⁰

For McChrystal, the term "spiritual fitness" indicated authentic faith in God, which apparently he thought was no longer emphasized, to the detriment of everyone. Indeed, McChrystal argued that the most important reason for chaplains to attend to their spiritual fitness was because God would "not be glorified by ministry which is done apart from the spiritual power which only He can provide."¹⁵¹

By his own admission, McChrystal's understanding of spiritual fitness was one viewpoint among many and was uniquely tempered by his Christian faith. Although McChrystal's self-awareness and humility was appropriate and helpful, his particular interpretation of spiritual fitness gestured to a problem inherent in the term and its associated meanings. Spiritual fitness had been introduced in the Fit to Win program as something that soldiers needed to have "total health." It was described as an ability enhanced by personal beliefs and meaning-building behaviors that essentially would allow soldiers to do their jobs without being destroyed by war. The Fit to Win materials were clearly somewhat sensitive to the concept's potential for religious coercion, and so attempted to not populate the meaning of spirituality too much. However,

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 19.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

McChrystal's paper demonstrated that there was far too much at stake in the concept of spiritual fitness to leave certain things unsaid.

McChrystal understood spiritual fitness as more important than any other form of fitness; without it, the entire world might collapse. Furthermore, it was clear from his account that he equated overlooking spiritual fitness as cutting God out of the fabric of daily life. Good care on the battlefield relied on chaplains' willing abilities to work as conduits for the Holy Spirit. Because the Fit to Win spiritual fitness concept encapsulated existential concerns, it would inevitably be a site of conflict over beliefs regarding this life and the next, among other things. Even though McChrystal graciously located himself and his position in the paper, it is fair to question how particular, public interpretations of an institutionalized and supposedly subjective term like spiritual fitness might contribute to general understandings of the term and its concrete deployments.

The other difficulty with the military's approval of spiritual fitness was that it inextricably intertwined the concept of existential concern with military performance. Even the term's name, "spiritual" plus "fitness," demonstrated this rapprochement. Notable chaplain literature also demonstrated this interweaving, such as chaplain historian John Brinsfield's article "Army Values and Ethics: A Search for Consistency and Relevance" in the journal *Parameters*.

He described army spiritual fitness as

the ability of the individual to believe in the importance, necessity, and just nature of the mission; to have faith in the reliability of leaders, in the dependability of fellow soldiers, and in the training and equipment furnished for the operation; and to be prepared to encounter and cope with extreme danger, devastation, and even death with confidence, dedication, and courage.¹⁵²

¹⁵²Brinsfield, *Army Values*, 80-81.

This definition required the soldier to trust not only in all of the service members and machinery surrounding him or her but also in “the just nature of the mission.” This understanding was significantly different from asserting that one should engage in missions *if* they were just. In Brinsfield’s conception, trusting the military proved a soldier’s spiritual fitness and moral stability. This understanding is opposed to one that might be closer to Kermit Johnson’s understanding (the Chief of Chaplains who resigned), that one’s moral stability and spiritual fitness might be proved in the ability to reason through the politics of war or to think critically in the heat of battle. Brinsfield’s conception reinforced the military rules of authority more, but it also seemed to place a particular burden of moral responsibility on soldiers. His interpretation implied that military missions were above reproach, and suggested that trusting military authority was crucial in achieving spiritual fitness.

Conclusion

There are two main reasons for why a phrase like “spiritual fitness” was able to achieve acceptance in the 1980s military. The first reason is that “spirituality,” as a term that encapsulated existential concerns, came to be seen as important for secular, or nonreligious, ends. As a result of understanding the concept of spirituality as capable of producing particular outcomes related to health and productivity, the term assumed a diagnosable quality: the “fitness” of one’s spirituality would be reflected in one’s body and in workplace productivity.

The formulation of spirituality as a component of human experience that could be discernably assessed was facilitated by numerous developments discussed in the previous two sections. The biopsychosocial turn reflected a recognition of the utility of non-physical factors for physical health. The concept of spiritual fitness and the Fit to Win program were also aligned

with the cost-effective disease prevention and health promotion movement, as the program's stated goal was to help individuals make good "lifestyle behavior" choices and reduce their risks of disease.¹⁵³ Spiritual fitness was the product of an attempt to offer exhaustive solutions, a goal that coordinated with the totalizing AirLand Battle strategy, which sought to forge comprehensive plans to meet the challenges of the rapidly-expanding battlefield. Understandings of what counted as healthy and efficacious were expanding out of necessity in both the medical and military cultures.

Furthermore, mounting evidence suggested that chaplains' abilities to minister and heal had proven effects on force strength. Research on battle fatigue especially indicated the powerful effects of chaplain work on military efficiency. A 1987 article from *Military Medicine* acknowledged that chaplains were unique because they could do what neither a hospital nor a "counseling office" could or would do.¹⁵⁴ Soldiers could go to psychologists or hospitals for help with symptoms of battle fatigue, but it was unlikely they would find a friend there. Chaplains, on the other hand, were obligated through faith to care for and love soldiers, even at great personal risk. Their ability to empathize with soldiers by withstanding the traumas of war alongside them no doubt aided in sometimes making them more effective than mental health professionals in helping soldiers through grief, a fact which later studies would empirically verify.¹⁵⁵ Even though chaplains developed stronger rapport and empathy for soldiers suffering

¹⁵³US Army, *Your Fit to Win Handbook*, 2.

¹⁵⁴F. Garland and M. Robichaud, "Knowledge of Battle Fatigue among Division Combat Medics and Effectiveness of Training," *Military Medicine* 152, no. 12 (1987): 608.

¹⁵⁵Fifth Annual Meeting of the Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, 27-30 October 1989, San Francisco, California; and Robert Parlotz, "Trauma Pastoral Care: A USAF Chaplain Intervention Model for Responding to Trauma Environments," paper presented at the Seventh Users' Stress Workshop: Training for Psychic Trauma (1989), 49.

from war traumas, a “ministry of presence” did not mean counseling soldiers to leave the work of war; ironically it only increased chaplain support for military missions.

By the 1990s, “spiritual fitness training” was articulated as a part of chaplain ministry in alleviating battle fatigue. The 1995 field manual on Religious Support described the Unit Ministry Team (UMT) as “assist[ing] in preventing battle fatigue and misconduct stress behaviors through spiritual fitness training.” The manual argued that “the chaos of combat” often challenged soldiers’ “inner resources,” causing them to fall victim to “fear, despair, and hopelessness” which then lead “to becoming a battle fatigue casualty and to acts of misconduct.”¹⁵⁶ The solution to preventing the domino effect that ended in battle fatigue would be to strengthen soldiers’ “religious and spiritual realities” before combat with “spiritual fitness training,” which allowed soldiers to worship, pray, read religious literature, and take “the sacraments.”¹⁵⁷

The manual tied spirituality more directly to “fitness” by likening it to physical training, suggesting that just “as physical fitness is accomplished through a discipline of diet and exercise, so spiritual fitness is trained and achieved by a discipline of reading and study, by the practice of reflection and prayer, and by honoring the demands of a moral life. Spiritual fitness training strengthens the soldier’s faith, will, and hope.”¹⁵⁸ The CGP had articulated the importance of faith for moral behavior; this usage reformulated faith as a fundamental part of the disciplined life of a soldier who wanted to survive the battlefield.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.; and US Army, *Religious Support*, FM 16-1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1995), F-2.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 1-8.

Unlike Fit to Win's vision, the "spiritual fitness training" that the UMT offered was private, not mandatory. Soldiers needing such "training" could request personal visits from chaplains for themselves and their families at work or home.¹⁵⁹

Even though such training was not yet mandatory, chaplains were increasingly seen as the first responders to illnesses with emotional or "spiritual" components, such as battle fatigue. They also developed close working relationships with a variety of health-related professionals. These circumstances cemented the new reality of chaplains' expanding functions: chaplains did *not* serve in the military only as the guardians of religious expression. They were recognized as essential in helping to treat medical conditions with strong behavioral and emotional components, making them vital service members.

Chaplains' official identity as critical for sustaining soldiers' health disregarded previous critiques that argued for chaplains' work to be circumscribed to voluntary sectors. Critics like Swomley and Seigel (discussed in Chapter Three) had all argued for curtailing chaplains' roles to strictly voluntary events, primarily because they worried that if chaplains' authority was extended in any other way, it was inevitable that the work of war would appear to receive ministerial blessings. But by the 1980s, nonreligious professionals, such as the Army Health Promotion Council, invited chaplains' increased presence in training and on the battlefield. The critiques arguing for chaplains' reduced roles were all written in the 1960s-1970s, before any of them could have realized the possibility of their fears coming to light through the vehicle of public health care reform. Chaplains may not have been supporting war efforts with religiously-laced rhetoric like that in the CGP lectures, but in the early 1980s they became far more critical

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

to the machinery of war when they began serving on the battlefield as battle fatigue responders and trusted allies to the command.

Thus, a main reason that chaplains' roles expanded as they did is because their ministerial capabilities achieved concrete secular importance. It became more commonly understood among secular institutions such as business corporations in the 1980s that an individual's beliefs and values impacted job performance and physical health, and because chaplains had recognized authority in these areas, their work became valued for secular projects in unprecedented ways. The acceptance of chaplain authority in secular spheres could be seen, at least partially, as a growing medical acceptance of the emotional and hermeneutical dimensions of disease. However, just because secular medicine increasingly recognized the import of chaplain work for mainstream medicine did not mean that chaplains saw their healing work as secular.

The second reason the concept of "spiritual fitness" could be accepted in the late twentieth century military is that chaplains came to see the work of spiritual fitness training, which essentially necessitated chaplain support for military missions, as a vital part of ministry. Chaplains may not have been invested in the Fit to Win program but they were undoubtedly motivated to help soldiers in any way they could, and treating the difficult emotional components of illnesses like combat fatigue often ultimately entailed encouraging soldiers in their occupational duties.

Furthermore, some chaplains saw their own healing abilities as superior to those of secular professionals like psychologists, largely because they believed that problems such as drug and alcohol abuse were at base spiritual problems requiring sacred approaches. For example, the 1971 *Historical Review* boldly asserted that the factors contributing to drug and alcohol abuse were "outside the scope of any known medical treatment but definitely are

responsive to spiritual ministry.”¹⁶⁰ This perspective was repeated in a 1970 report written by Chaplain B. M. Williams that understood the drug and alcohol abuse problems as “theological problems which only the church is equipped to speak to.”¹⁶¹ People, not drugs, were the problem. Williams praised Dr. Howard J. Clinebell, a pioneer in pastoral counseling, when he said that the most helpful thing that chaplains could do was to “help a person discover spiritual resources so that he will be able to cope with his existential anxiety without turning to drugs.”¹⁶² If people turned to drugs and alcohol because they were stressed out, anxious, bored, or lonely, the church could help by providing “genuine relationships and a common commitment to a high calling.”¹⁶³

Chief of Chaplains Sampson had also voiced the perspective that secular treatments of drug abuse would only ever be ineffective when he doubted that the retreat houses the military built for soldiers addicted to drugs would alone provide soldiers with the resources they needed to overcome such a penetrating addiction.¹⁶⁴ What helped some soldiers was a relationship with Jesus Christ, Chaplain Tom Norton stated in a report to the OCCH. Norton recalled how much the Jesus Movement had helped soldiers overcome addictions at the Retreat House program that he was a part of in the mid-1970s: “So many troops converted to Jesus and laid aside their drugs that commanders would call us and ask what we were doing.”¹⁶⁵ Chief of Chaplains Hyatt

¹⁶⁰OCCH, *Historical Review, 1971-72*, 50.

¹⁶¹Bernard Williams, “Some Preliminary Considerations On Starting a Chapel Program To Assist in the Management of Drug Abuse in Soldiers and Dependents US Army,” (Ft. Jackson, SC: US Army Chaplain School, 1970), 9.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

¹⁶³*Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶⁴Rodger Venzke, *Confidence in Battle, Inspiration in Peace* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977), 161.

¹⁶⁵Brinsfield, *Encouraging Faith*, 191.

similarly understood “spiritual ministry” for addiction as something that “only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can reach into the life and spirit of a man to get at the real reason he resorts to drugs or alcohol.”¹⁶⁶ In an interview, Hyatt explained that while the medical corps contributed “identification and detoxification” to the army’s drug program, it could not offer “rehabilitation.”¹⁶⁷ Only chaplains had a developed plan for rehabilitation.

Viewpoints like these gestured to a major difference between the medical establishment’s view of chaplain contributions to medical care and how some chaplains thought of them: whereas medical establishments saw chaplains’ work as a necessary addition to traditional care, chaplains understood their own faith-based work as foundational because it addressed the core problems, which many thought were faith-related. Chaplains could use their skills to operate *on* medicine’s secular problems, but as some chaplains saw it, the work itself had little to do with secular medicine.

Although chaplains’ work naturally fit the contours of health care’s turn to recognize non-physical and even “spiritual” factors as important, the vast majority of chaplains saw their work as being for a very different purpose. Knowing and serving God, not optimal health, was the whole point of striving for lives of value and purpose. Improved health was simply a pleasant by-product.

Even if chaplains understood that increased spirituality, not physical fitness, was the ultimate goal of their ministrations, they increasingly saw the term “spiritual fitness” as useful. For example, Brinsfield’s history had used the term in passing only a handful of times. In contrast, his 1998 *Parameters* article titled an entire section “Spiritual Fitness: A Key

¹⁶⁶Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, 161-62.

¹⁶⁷“Interview with Major General Gerhardt Hyatt,” July 19, 1976, 56 (quoted in Loveland, *Conflict and Change*, 276 n. 29).

Component for a Wartime Ethic” and argued that military leaders had long recognized the need for “spiritual fitness.”¹⁶⁸ The term allowed chaplains to argue compellingly that ministry was important amidst swelling secular environments.

Spiritual fitness appeared in military literature as a necessary component for healthy and morally upright living, and it was taken for granted that one’s performance in the military mirrored the status of one’s health and moral compunction. Historian Anne Loveland suggested that tragedies like 9/11 would seemingly dissolve any previous qualms chaplains had had about their services being used as combat multipliers.¹⁶⁹ This “dissolution” seems a likely unintended consequence of the increased recognition of how tragedy can affect hearts, minds, and “spirits.” Whatever the case, the future of the chaplaincy was bright at the turn of the millennium, as chaplains’ unique abilities to heal and restore soldiers’ “inner resources” became highly valued and more widely recognized by secular health professionals and the command.

Spiritual fitness’ legitimacy as a secular intervention would continue to grow in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century as spirituality became an object of scientific inquiry in the 1990s. The 1980s Fit to Win program did not offer an enforceable program for boosting soldier spiritual fitness partly because it was admittedly impossible to assess and difficult to mandate. But by 2009, spiritual fitness would become an official requirement of the US Army.

¹⁶⁸Brinsfield, *Army Values*, 81.

¹⁶⁹Loveland, *Conflict and Change*, 156.

CHAPTER FIVE

The New Science of Spirituality: The Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program

Like his cousin Charles Darwin, Sir Francis Galton was exceptionally innovative. In the 1860s, Galton was engaged in an unprecedented scientific study that had such a high potential for conflict that his first attempt to publish his work (in a progressive journal, no less) was denied on the basis that it was “too offensive not to raise a hornet’s nest.”¹ Undeterred by several rejections, Galton finally published the article “Statistical Inquiries into the Efficacy of Prayer” in the 1872 *Fortnightly Review*.² The study tested the efficacy of prayer by examining the longevity of British royalty. Galton reasoned that if prayer were truly effective, then the British royalty would live longer than most since loyal subjects prayed for their health daily. Yet his statistical analysis revealed that there was no correlation between prayer and the hoped-for effects. In fact, Galton found that royalty generally died sooner than others.³

Galton’s inquiries had indeed “raised a hornet’s nest.” An anonymous respondent wrote to the popular *Spectator* periodical that Galton’s results were skewed by a secular agenda typical of scientists.⁴ The writer charged Galton with attempting to disprove God by suggesting that “if prayer is not answered, and cannot be answered, then there is in the Christian, or rather the

¹Nicholas Gillham, *Life of Sir Francis Galton: From African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 166.

²Francis Galton, “Statistical Inquiries into the Efficacy of Prayer,” *Fortnightly Review* 12 (1872): 125-35.

³*Ibid.*, 128.

⁴*Spectator*, August 3, 1872, 974-75.

religious, sense of the word no God.”⁵ There was no reason for why readers should “submit patiently” to Galton’s conclusions, which were “a direct attempt to weight mental consequences in a pair of brass scales.”⁶ So many others wrote responses that the *Fortnightly Review* could not print them all but only tell its readers that the replies would fill at least 16 pages if published.⁷

Galton’s impulse to study the efficacy of prayer scientifically (“to weight mental consequences in a pair of brass scales”) and the incensed reactions to his study illustrated what was at stake in the work of scientifically investigating religion and faith. Could religion and faith be objects of scientific inquiry? Was it possible for scientists to approach this work unbiased? Additionally, if religion and faith could be studied, did this work have implications regarding greater truths and realities, such as the existence of God? Furthermore, how did such studies and their implications affect ordinary people?

In the 1990s, medical studies examining the effects of prayer, church attendance, and religious belief--studies that were in some ways similar to Galton’s--proliferated. But the circumstances were quite different from when Galton conducted his study. For one thing, many of the researchers were themselves religious, unlike Galton. For another, the majority of the studies had found that religious belief and practice had positive impacts on the body’s health.⁸ Unlike Galton’s study, which could be interpreted as implying that prayer and belief in God were the products of misguided thinking, these studies had the potential to suggest that religious belief and practice were the hallmarks of rational, healthy, and happy living. Last but not least,

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷*Fortnightly Review* (1872): 1038-39.

⁸The *Handbook of Religion and Health* states that approximately two-thirds of all studies conducted on the correlations between religious belief and practice and health are positive. Harold Koenig, Dana King, and Verna B. Carson, eds., *Handbook of Religion and Health* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 600-601. According to my study of the field, religion’s positive health effects are often emphasized over the negative.

Galton's study had only agitated readers, while the studies in the late twentieth century were implemented in public health programs in the twenty-first century. The US Army would be the first million-person institution to implement the results of religion, spirituality, and health studies. In a 2009 health promotion program called Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF), the army began requiring soldiers to learn about "spiritual fitness."

The last chapter demonstrated how specific circumstances in the 1970s and 1980s contributed to the understanding that spirituality could be a "fitness" concept. "Spiritual fitness" was introduced as an area of military training in the Fit to Win program in 1987 but never implemented, partly due to its sensitive nature. The primary reason for why spiritual fitness training could finally be implemented in the military is because spirituality appeared to be scientifically correlated with good health.

This chapter examines the key figures and events that made possible the scientific study of religion and spirituality in the twenty-first century, the implications of the production of scientific knowledge about religion and spirituality, and the implementation of this knowledge in the US military. The chapter is divided into three sections: the first investigates researchers in the field and how concepts like "religion" and "spirituality" have been shaped in the field; the second examines the implementation of such research in the twenty-first century US military; and the third considers some implications of the construction and implementation of spirituality as a fitness concept.

The Last Frontier: A Short History of the Religion, Spirituality and Health Field

The Religion, Spirituality and Health (R/S) field developed in the 1980s as an attempt to challenge dualistic scientific paradigms that understood religious belief as either pathological or

irrelevant.⁹ The 2012 *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Health*, now in its second edition, provided a definitive answer to the question of whether religion had relevance to healthcare: 353 of nearly 1200 pages were filled with data from over 2800 studies that demonstrated overwhelmingly positive correlations between religion, spirituality and health. According to lead editor Harold Koenig, empirical evidence widely suggested that religious people (who, for example, regularly attended church, prayed, and read scriptures) had significantly lower diastolic blood pressure, were hospitalized less, had lower chronic stress, healthier lifestyles, longer lifespans, and were protected more against cardiovascular diseases than less religious people.¹⁰ Additionally, people with “strong faith” had been found to have less depression and to recover from depression faster than those with weak faith or no faith.¹¹

Although the scientific accuracy of R/S research has been challenged by several critics, the field has suggested that ignoring religion is dangerous.¹² Medical doctor and R/S advocate Larry Dossey wrote in the forward of *God, Faith, and Health: Exploring the Spirituality-Healing Connection* that physicians’ refusal to promote religion and spirituality as health care techniques were “irresponsible, like turning away from a new antibiotic or a new surgical procedure.”¹³ Given the data, R/S research pioneer Jeff Levin argued that it was the undeniable “responsibility

⁹Ibid., 5.

¹⁰Harold Koenig and Malcolm McConnell, *The Healing Power of Faith: How Belief and Prayer Can Help You Triumph Over Disease* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 24.

¹¹Ibid., 149.

¹²Notable critics include psychiatrist Richard Sloan, psychologists Roy Eidelson, Sean Phipps, Joachim Krueger, and John Dyckman.

¹³Jeff Levin, *God, Faith, and Health: Exploring the Spirituality-Healing Connection* (New York: Wiley, 2002), viii.

of physicians” to implement the knowledge about religion for their patients’ benefit.¹⁴

According to these individuals, it was time for science to overcome its secular biases.

The current possibility of studying the effects of religion on health and the existence of the *Oxford Handbook* is due mostly to the dogged efforts of a few researchers beginning in the 1980s. Harold Koenig, arguably today’s lead expert in the R/S field, likened R/S researchers to bold pioneers who had “crossed the [last] frontier and [were] now deeply exploring fascinating and unknown territories.”¹⁵ Religion was the “last frontier” for scientific research because, as one researcher put it, studying religion would surely block a scientist from getting promoted to tenure.¹⁶ Even so, the work grew rapidly. During 1994 to 1998, there were 384 articles on the R/S relationship to health, from 1999 to 2003 there were 824, and during 2004 to 2008 there were 1525.¹⁷

The project of understanding religion and spirituality’s healing potentials were spearheaded by research pioneers who got their start in the Research Triangle, an area in North Carolina where Judeo-Christian and prominent scientific cultures sometimes co-mingle. Among the leaders in this effort were Jeff Levin, Dave Larson, Harold Koenig, and Keith Meador. Each of them were religiously-devout scientists who received education at either the University of

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Koenig, ed., *Handbook of Religion and Health*, 11.

¹⁶Kimberly Sherrill and David Larson, "The Anti-Tenure Factor in Religious Research in Clinical Epidemiology and Aging," in Jeffrey S. Levin ed., *Religion in Aging and Health: Theoretical Foundations and Methodological Frontiers* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1994), 149-78.

¹⁷Steven Frenk, Steven Foy, and Keith Meador, ““It’s Medically Proven!”: Assessing the Dissemination of Religion and Health Research,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 50, (2010): 997.

North Carolina or Duke University and worked in the Research Triangle during the late 1970s and 1980s.¹⁸

In the same year that the Fit to Win program produced the pamphlet on spiritual fitness (1987), Levin published one of the first articles that made the case for an evidence-based correlation between religious practice and health and later received funding from the National Institute of Health (NIH) to study religion and health.¹⁹ In 1991, Larson created and presided over the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), with funding from the John Templeton Foundation.²⁰ The NIHR helped bring work on R/S from obscurity into prominence in the 1990s.²¹ Meador and Koenig founded the Duke Center for Spirituality, Theology, and Health in 1998. As of 2015, the Center's goals revolved around conducting R/S research, training people in R/S research and interpretation, exploring "the meaning of the research for pastors and theologians," and discussing "how theological input can advance the research."²² Although all of these researchers contributed significantly to the R/S field, the following discussion focuses on three researchers especially because of their roles in implementing this research.

Koenig has grown into the field's most prominent expert. His vita-listed accomplishments as of March 2014 spanned 82 pages, so only a few are included here.²³ As of 2014, he had published 362 peer-reviewed journal articles, 101 non-refereed articles, 67 chapters

¹⁸For more specifics regarding their training, see Jeff Levin and Harold Koenig, eds., *Faith, Medicine, and Science: A Festschrift in Honor of Dr. David B. Larson* (Binghamton, NY: Routledge, 2005), 10.

¹⁹Jeff Levin and Preston Schiller, "Is There a Religious Factor in Health?," *Journal of Religion and Health* 26 (1987); and "The Power of Love," Interview of Jeff Levin by Bonnie Horrigan, *Alternative Therapeutic Health Medicine* 5, no. 4 (1999): 78-86.

²⁰Levin, *Faith, Medicine, and Science*, 7.

²¹Koenig, ed., *Handbook of Religion and Health*, 7.

²²<http://www.spiritualityandhealth.duke.edu/>, accessed December 8, 2015.

²³ Ibid.

in books, 42 books, the overwhelming majority of which speak to a positive correlation between religious beliefs and practices and good health.²⁴ He has spoken in conferences and seminars all over the world as well as at nearly all of the elite universities in the United States, has given hundreds of national and international radio interviews, and has appeared to speak on every major broadcasting network in America on multiple occasions. He has been cited in newspapers all over the world. In 1998, he testified before the U.S. Senate Appropriations subcommittee on the health effects of religious belief and prayer, and again in 1999 before the United Nations in New York City.²⁵ He is the lead editor of the 1169-page *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Health*, in its second edition as of 2012. No one person is more responsible in the contemporary era for advocating for the work of religion and health as a legitimate field of scientific inquiry.

Psychologist and Bowling Green State University professor Kenneth Pargament's work has also been highly influential in shaping spirituality's conceptual content in the R/S field, and is important here because of his direct contribution to the army's spiritual fitness education content. A lead expert on religion and coping, he aided producing spiritual fitness as a "scientific" and thus viable category in the military's mandatory training education. In the late 1970s, Pargament was one of the first psychologists to produce empirically-based studies on the correlation between frequency of prayer and church attendance and mental health.²⁶ In the mid-1980s, he pioneered investigations of positive and negative religious coping techniques, from which he concluded that the greatest mental health benefits were gained, for example, from believing that God was more of a teammate in solving problems rather than a punitive or aloof

²⁴Duke University Medical Center, Curriculum Vita, accessed July 2015, http://www.spiritualityandhealth.duke.edu/images/pdfs/Koenig_Full_CV.pdf, updated March 2014.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶"Pargament Vita," accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.spiritualityandhealth.duke.edu/pdfs/KenPargament.pdf>.

figure.²⁷ In the same spirit and timeframe of the Fit to Win program, he published an article on the role of religion in disease prevention and health promotion.²⁸

Throughout the 1990s, Pargament lead the push for mental health researchers to pay more attention to the effects of religious adherence on health. In 1990, he published “God Help Me: Toward a Theoretical Framework of Coping for the Psychology of Religion” in *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*.²⁹ By 1998, he was publishing about the relationship between “stress and the sacred.”³⁰ Much of his previous research and his collaborations with Koenig culminated in the development of the Religious Coping scale (RCOPE) in 1995, which was then published for use in 2000.³¹

One more researcher bares mention here because of her recent role in advocating for the implementation of R/S research in healthcare practices. In 2001, Christina Puchalski founded and directed the George Washington Institution for Spirituality and Health (GWISH) at George Washington University in Washington D.C.³² In addition to helping edit the 2013 *Oxford Textbook of Spirituality in Healthcare*, Puchalski has lobbied for “spiritual inventories” to become a basic requirement of intake procedures at public hospitals.³³ Her considerable

²⁷Pargament *et al.*, “Patterns of Positive and Negative Religious Coping,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37 no. 4 (1998): 710-724.

²⁸K. Maton and Kenneth Pargament, “The Roles of Religion in Prevention and Promotion,” in L. Jason *et al.*, eds., *Communities: Contributions from Allied Disciplines* (Philadelphia: Haworth Press, 1987), 161-205.

²⁹Kenneth Pargament, David Ensing, Kathryn Falgout, Hannah Olsen, Barbara Reilly, Kimberly Van Haitsma, and Richard Warren, “God Help Me: (I) Religious Coping Efforts as Predictors of the Outcomes to Significant Negative Life Events,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 18, no. 6 (1990): 793-824.

³⁰Kenneth Pargament. “Stress and the Sacred: The Spiritual Dimension of Coping,” *Spirituality and Health* 1 (1998), 22-27.

³¹Kenneth Pargament, Harold Koenig, and L. Perez, “The Many Methods of Religious Coping: Development and Initial Validation of the RCOPE,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 56 (2000): 519 - 543.

³²George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health, accessed January 9, 2016, <https://smhs.gwu.edu/gwish/>.

³³Mark Cobb, Christina Puchalski, and Bruce Rumbold, eds., *Oxford Textbook of Spirituality in Healthcare*, reprint ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). See also Christina Puchalski, Robert Vitillo, Sharon Hull, and Nancy

influence was demonstrable when she was unable to speak at the 2013 American Academy of Religion Annual Conference because she had been summoned to Rome for a meeting with Pope Francis.³⁴

As much as each of these professionals have contributed to the development of the R/S field, the field might not exist at all without the ongoing contributions of the John Templeton Foundation. Founded in 1987, the Foundation's \$3.38 billion endowment (as of 2015) financially supported R/S research as a part of achieving its stated mission to "acquire 'new spiritual information'" through scientific investigations.³⁵ It funded 178 grants as of 2013, with the average grant size being nearly \$900,000.³⁶ As of 2013, the Templeton Press, begun in 1997, published 220 books, including 16 of the 42 books that Koenig authored or co-authored, Puchalski's *Making Health Care Whole*, and Levin and Meador's *Healing to All Their Flesh*.³⁷ In 2012, Templeton Press published its very own *The Templeton Science and Religion Reader*.³⁸

Reller, "Improving the Spiritual Dimension of Whole Person Care: Reaching National and International Consensus," *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 17, no. 6 (2014): 642-656.

³⁴See Kerri Lenartowick, "Pope Praises Elderly for their Wisdom," *Catholic News Agency*, November 23, 2013, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-praises-elderly-for-their-wisdom/>.

³⁵"Who We Are," accessed February 15, 2015, <https://www.templeton.org/who-we-are/about-the-foundation/mission>.

³⁶"Grants," accessed February 15, 2015, <https://www.templeton.org/faqs/how-many-grants-does-the-foundation-fund-each-year-and-what-is-the-average-size-of-the-foundation>.

³⁷When I visited the Templeton Press Site on April 21, 2014, upcoming books included: *Humble Before the Void*, *Got Religion?*, *How the West Really Lost God*, *Is Ultimate Reality Unlimited Love?*, *Making Grateful Kids*, and *God in the Machine*. These illustrate Templeton's commitment to advocating for religion and spirituality.

³⁸See <https://www.templetonpress.org/book/templeton-science-and-religion-reader>. Regarding the Templeton Press: I was contacted by the editor at Templeton Press at AAR 2013 regarding one of the papers I delivered titled, "Exploring a Politics of Healing: Spirituality as a Non-Religious Health Technique in the U.S. Military." Given the title, she could mistook me for advocating for spiritual education in secular health care and was wondering if I might write a book on this topic. I explained that I saw my work as historical, and thus descriptive rather than prescriptive. All of this is to say that during that meeting, the Templeton Institution representative took as a foregone conclusion that spirituality was good for health and should be widely implemented.

The Templeton Foundation also sponsored much of Koenig's career and work. As of 2014, Koenig had been nominated for the Templeton Prize twice, received seven Templeton Exemplary Papers Awards, served on the Templeton Board of Trustees for the Foundation as well as the Templeton World Charities Fund. Additionally, he served on the Board of Directors for the John Templeton Foundation Board of Advisors and the Planning Committee, the Board of Advisors for the Templeton Religion Trust, and the Editorial Board of the Templeton Foundation Press.³⁹ Of the \$10, 896,123 in grant money that Koenig had been awarded as the principle investigator between 1993 and 2014, \$7,133, 687, or 65.4% of his funding came from the John Templeton Foundation.⁴⁰ As of March 2014, the Foundation had funded \$1,370,000 or 74.9% of Pargament's total grant funding (\$1,828,000).⁴¹

The Templeton Foundation's contributions helped found the National Institute for Healthcare Research (NIHR) and GWISH (the center Pulchalski directs).⁴² The Foundation also awarded the grant that provided funding for GWISH's Spirituality and Health Research Center (SOERCE), an "online infrastructure" meant "to support medical educators and other health professionals in their quest to teach about spirituality and health by providing educational materials and resources, and eventually recognition of scholarship in the field."⁴³ To be fair,

³⁹Harold Koenig, Duke University Medical Center, Curriculum Vita.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹"Pargament Vita."

⁴²Nathan Schneider, "God, Science, and Philanthropy," *The Nation*, June 3, 2010, accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.thenation.com/article/god-science-and-philanthropy/>..

⁴³"SOERCE: The Spirituality and Health Online Education and Resource Center," *GW School of Medicine & Health Sciences*, accessed February 15, 2015, <https://smhs.gwu.edu/gwish/soerce..>

even top universities such as Harvard, University of Chicago, and Columbia have accepted millions of dollars from the Foundation for related research projects.⁴⁴

The Templeton Foundation described itself as a “philanthropic catalyst for discoveries relating to the Big Questions of human purpose and ultimate reality.”⁴⁵ There is no question that the Foundation has served as an important catalyst in this regard, since it helped to launch the careers of top R/S researchers and funded many of the R/S initiatives in the 1990s. What is less certain is whether or not the answers to “Big Questions of human purpose and ultimate reality” can indeed be “discovered” through scientific investigation or if such research pursuits are inevitably and intrinsically guided by personal assumptions to begin with.

The handful of researchers who began this work in the 1980s, even at risk to their personal careers, have attempted to excavate truths about the body and health that secular science had long overlooked. If, as the *Handbook* demonstrated, religious or spiritual belief and practice could add years to life, then it would appear that the secular-scientific biases that overlooked religion’s potentials before were misguided, and worse, dangerous. Koenig has argued that not telling people that spirituality is good for them is a poor care practice.⁴⁶ While this may be true, attempts to research spirituality and integrate it into public health care ought to proceed carefully since there is no common understanding of what spirituality is.⁴⁷ Furthermore, if the basic idea that spirituality is good for people is implemented in programs like CSF, it would be wise to

⁴⁴“Grant Search,” *John Templeton Foundation*, accessed January 9, 2016, <https://www.templeton.org/what-we-fund/grant-search/results/taxonomy%3A909?page=8>.

⁴⁵“Who We Are,” *Templeton Foundation*.

⁴⁶Winnifred Gallagher, “Seeking Help for the Body in the Well-Being of the Soul,” *The New York Times*, June 13, 1999, accessed January 8, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/06/13/health/seeking-help-for-the-body-in-the-well-being-of-the-soul.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁴⁷This is a point that Koenig acknowledges. See Harold Koenig, “Concerns about Measuring ‘Spirituality’ in Research,” *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 196, no. 5 (2008): 349-355.

investigate how the term has been cultivated in the R/S field, since this field has bequeathed spirituality scientific legitimacy.

When it comes to examining the cultivation of spirituality in the R/S field, there are too many fruitful avenues of inquiry to pursue in the space allotted here. I have thus limited my inquiry to two specific foci, as these have the most immediate bearing on considering the implications of implementing R/S work in the CSF program. Because psychologist Kenneth Pargament played a significant role in constructing the army's spiritual fitness concept, the following subsections investigate how he and fellow collaborators in the field came to shape an understanding of spirituality as nonreligious, and what his understanding of spirituality was.⁴⁸

Navigating Spirituality as Nonreligious

The earliest R/S research focused on religious practice because things like frequency of church attendance, prayer, or scripture reading were physically measurable data.⁴⁹ While spirituality was increasingly considered important during the 1980s, it was not studied as much.⁵⁰ This changed in the 1990s with the undeniable growth of the “spiritual-but-not-religious” phenomenon. The stakes for the R/S field of negotiating spirituality as possibly distinct from religion grew as the “spiritual-but-not-religious” trend continued.⁵¹

The R/S field mimicked this general trend in their work by increasingly favoring “spirituality” over “religion” during the 1990s, according to Weaver *et al.*'s article, *Trends in the*

⁴⁸Kenneth I. Pargament and Patrick J. Sweeney, “Building Spiritual Fitness in the Army,” *American Psychologist* 66, no. 1 (January 2011): 58–64.

⁴⁹Koenig, ed., *Handbook of Religion and Health*, 7.

⁵⁰Andrew J. Weaver, Kenneth Pargament, Kevin Flannelly, and Julia Oppenheimer, “Trends in the Scientific Study of Religion, Spirituality, and Health: 1965-2000,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 45, no. 2 (2006): 211.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 210.

Scientific Study of Religion, Spirituality, and Health: 1965 – 2000.⁵² In a study that examined the subject topic of over one million articles from PSYCHINFO, they found that the number of articles that referenced only religion was progressively declining since 1965, whereas those that referenced only spirituality were growing every year.⁵³ This preference shift reflected two cultural tendencies: to perceive religion negatively and spirituality positively, and to use spirituality as a universal indicator of belief, given the ongoing religious pluralization. Weaver *et al.* attributed the R/S field's dramatic success to its focus on spirituality over religion, as spirituality was becoming more preferred by the American public.⁵⁴

Even though the prevalence of the term spirituality was increasing in R/S studies, there were two main problems with its usage. First, the meaning of spirituality proved difficult to pin down, as many R/S researchers have noted.⁵⁵ Even as early as 1993, researcher Bernard Spilka bemoaned R/S studies' use of "spirituality," which he identified as a conceptually "fuzzy" term that "embrace[d] obscurity with passion."⁵⁶ A 1997 article authored by Pargament's graduate student, Brian Zinnbaur, titled "Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy" cautioned

⁵²Ibid., 211.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., 213. Also see Brian J. Zinnbaur, Kenneth Pargament, Brenda Cole, Mark Rye, Eric Butter, Timothy Belavich, Kathleen Hipp, Allie Scott, Jill Kadar *et al.*, "Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 4 (December 1, 1997): 550.

⁵⁵E.g., Jennifer Gray, "Measuring Spirituality: Conceptual and Methodological Considerations," *Journal of Theory Construction & Testing* 10, no. 2 (December 1, 2006): 58; Zinnbaur *et al.*, "Religion and Spirituality." See also Robert Connelly and Kathleen Light, "Exploring the 'New' Frontier of Spirituality in Health Care: Identifying the Dangers," *Journal of Religion and Health* 42, no. 1 (April 1, 2003): 35–46; Arthur W. Frank, "You Can't Use Plywood: The Perilous Success of Spirituality and Medicine," *EXPLORE: The Journal of Science and Healing* 1, no. 2 (March 2005): 142–43; and Richard P. Sloan, *Blind Faith: The Unholy Alliance of Religion and Medicine* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2008).

⁵⁶Bernard Spilka, "Spirituality: Problems and Directions in Operationalizing a Fuzzy Concept," paper presented at the American Psychological Association annual conference, Toronto, Canada, August 1993, 1.

researchers about using spirituality because of its lack of clarity.⁵⁷ They also noted that researchers often used spirituality and religion interchangeably and inconsistently.⁵⁸

Second, it was often unclear in R/S studies how spirituality was significantly different from religion. Zinnbaur's "Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy" was one of the most cited articles that discussed disentangling spirituality from religion for research purposes.⁵⁹ In the article, Zinnbaur, Pargament and a host of collaborators implied that researchers were glibly using "spirituality" when they meant "religion" simply because it sounded better.⁶⁰ They argued that using spirituality as an overarching construct problematically undercut the importance of religion, overlooked the vast spectrum of faith exhibited by diverse groups, and ignored the different ways that people saw themselves.⁶¹ The paper suggested that instead, researchers should think of religion as a "broad-band" term that encompassed spirituality, arguing that there was no reason to constrain religion to institutional-based beliefs and behaviors.⁶²

Despite having cited sociological evidence that some individuals tended to conceive of spirituality as separate from religion, Zinnbaur *et al.* hinted that spirituality was inherently *religious*. They claimed, "the various phenomena associated with spirituality are essential parts of religion; they lie at the core of religious life."⁶³ If researchers did not recognize religion as the

⁵⁷Brian Zinnbaur, "Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy," 549.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 550.

⁵⁹This article has been cited in nearly 1200 other articles since it was written. Most other similar articles ranked in the 200-500 range. *Google* search, February 15, 2016.

⁶⁰Brian Zinnbaur, "Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy," 563. The authors added that this was a fallacy that mental health professionals were especially prone to, given that they were likely to fall into the "spiritual-but-not-religious" category themselves. *Ibid.*, 562.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 563.

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³*Ibid.*

broad-band construct that incorporated spirituality, Zinnbaur *et al.* suggested that the study of religion would be relegated to “the study of 'narrow' institutional faith,” and spirituality would remain “fuzzy.”⁶⁴ It appeared that spirituality could only be studied as it manifested in religious practice and belief.

The majority of R/S researchers did not rally around Zinnbaur *et al.* to favor religion as a broad-band construct, incorporating spirituality. In fact, even the second author of the Zinnbaur article, Kenneth Pargament, appeared to reverse his position later as he came to promote a version of broad-band spirituality that encompassed religion. There were several reasons for why he might have done this, but one important implication of understanding religion as the operative broad-band concept was that it would make implementing R/S research conclusions in public settings more difficult. Put differently, if spirituality was understood as a subcategory of religion and religious education could not legally be inserted into public agendas, then spiritual education might be similarly constrained, even if the distinction was only semantic. If researchers could argue for spirituality as a separate construct however, then the entire field would have wider relevance. Such a shift might have been more practical than calculated. Whatever the reason, preferring the term “spirituality” over “religion” in the effort to be inclusive was the trajectory that the field took after Zinnbaur’s article was published in 1997.⁶⁵

An influential 2000 article titled, “Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure,” aimed to correct a few vague and problematic assumptions about the substantive natures of religion and spirituality.⁶⁶ However, it also provided a good

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵See the *Oxford Textbook of Spirituality in Healthcare* as a primary example of how “spirituality” has become favored over “religion.”

⁶⁶Peter C. Hill *et al.*, “Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 30, no. 1 (2000): 51–77.

example of how difficult this task could be, even for careful researchers who were aware of the need to be specific. The article, authored by Peter C. Hill, Pargament, Zinnbaur, and several others suggested that religion and spirituality had in common the “search for the Sacred” (discussed in the following subsection) but that religion may also include

a search for non-sacred goals (such as identity, belongingness, meaning, health, or wellness) in a context that has as its primary goal the facilitation of [the feelings and behaviors that stem from a search for the Sacred] and the means and methods (e.g., rituals or prescribed behaviors) of the search that receive validation and support from within an identifiable group of people.⁶⁷

This definition helpfully attempted to distinguish religion and spirituality, but it was still vague. Using this definition, it would be hard *not* to view either the CGP or the CSF programs as “religious”: both programs were aimed at developing “non-sacred goals” like meaning, morality, and health in contexts that could be interpreted as primarily facilitating the “feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search for the Sacred.” As the last section will detail, CSF directly articulated its education as teaching techniques that facilitated searching for “the Sacred.” Furthermore, CSF techniques had been validated by an “identifiable group of people,” namely military officials and Kenneth Pargament, who helped write this article.⁶⁸

Also notable about Hill *et al.*’s definitions was that nonreligious spirituality did not appear to include a “search for non-sacred goals” like health. This omission implied that “real” spirituality could not be operationalized towards secular pursuits, but religion could be. Yet the whole subfield of occupational psychology was no stranger to operationalizing spirituality for workplace efficiency, and CSF spirituality, which Pargament helped craft, similarly functioned in this capacity.

⁶⁷Ibid., 66.

⁶⁸Pargament and Sweeney, “Building Spiritual Fitness in the Army,” 59.

One more comment from the article merits mention. Hill *et al.* concluded by remarking that despite the tendency in the field to think of religion and spirituality as separate, they were “inherently intertwined.”⁶⁹ This statement could be interpreted in a number of ways, but one question it brings to mind given Pargament’s involvement in writing this article and in contributing to the CSF program is this: if spirituality and religion were understood to be inherently intertwined, then would mandatory education about spirituality have a place in the military, a government institution?

The Sacred: “The Field’s Distinctive Core”

What was the field’s understanding of spirituality, as it began to take shape as possibly distanced from religion? Again, Pargament was crucial in the academic efforts to negotiate spirituality’s meaning. Along with other contributors, he argued in the “Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality” article for understanding both religion and spirituality as fundamentally attuned to “the sacred.” This article was groundbreaking in that it sought to finally provide a unifying portrait of what exactly researchers in the R/S field studied: a “search for the sacred.”⁷⁰

Hill *et al.* emphasized that it was especially important for researchers to understand that sacredness, not simply “importance” as many studies suggested, was a critical characteristic of spirituality.⁷¹ (Hereafter in the article “the sacred” becomes “the Sacred,” a reified, dignified thing.) They insisted that something could not be “spiritual” without referencing “the Sacred,”

⁶⁹Hill et al., “Conceptualizing Religion,” 72.

⁷⁰Ibid., 67.

⁷¹Ibid., 64.

defined as “a person, an object, a principle, or a concept that transcends the self.”⁷² Hill *et al.* suggested in various examples that belief in the Sacred was important because it had a unique power to commit a person to moral action. The following examples demonstrate this implication, but they also illumine the assumptions that Hill *et al.* made in conceptualizing spirituality as a “search for the Sacred.”

In order to illustrate spirituality’s potential for confusion, Hill *et al.* examined the suggestion that vegetarian eating could constitute as spiritual practice. They argued that vegetarianism could not be considered spiritual practice unless it was explicitly tied to “a sense of the sacred.”⁷³ Without an explicit association with “the sacred,” even an articulated commitment to vegetarianism inspired by ethical considerations for the treatment of animals, or to others around the world who did not have enough to eat, or for respecting one’s body would not count as spiritual. According to the authors, what qualified as explicit associations with the Sacred was “the belief that all life is precious; the belief that the physical body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that consuming animal products damages that ‘temple.’”⁷⁴

Given this description, it is fair to wonder if the definitive marker of “properly” motivating spirituality according to Hill *et al.* was the direct articulation of religious indicators (or other culturally-accepted “sacred” markers), in the presence of all commitments basically being equal. These authors did not explain why using the word “temple” to describe the body might indicate a stronger commitment to respecting the body than some other expression. Also confusing is how Hill *et al.* came to interpret the “belief that all life is precious” as significantly

⁷²Ibid. It is important to note that Hill *et al.*’s illustration of the concept of the sacred and its relationship to spirituality and religion draws nearly exclusively on Pargament’s previous work.

⁷³Ibid., 65.

⁷⁴Ibid.

distinct from allegedly nonspiritual vegetarian beliefs, which they described as the conviction that “modern agricultural practices are unfair and cruel to animals.”⁷⁵

This example illumines the assumption that “true” spirituality would necessarily be indicated by the use of commonly-accepted “Sacred” phrases or signs, such as the “Holy Spirit.” It also suggests that orienting the self to a larger whole as the unspiritual vegetarian does in resisting the politics of farming or production does not count as an orientation to “the Sacred,” implying that such an orientation was not conducive to reaping the benefits of spiritual health. Perhaps this philosophy was unspiritual because it did not explicitly recognize the vertical stratification that appeared to count in Hill *et al.*’s conceptions of sacralization. As a result, the unspiritual vegetarian’s philosophy was identified as merely important to her but not sacred or binding.

Another example illustrates the same point. Hill *et al.* made clear that just because one drew pleasure and even spiritual enhancement from an activity like gardening, that activity was not truly spiritual if it was not in response to a perception of the Sacred (e.g., “the person gardens because caring for nature is a way of experiencing the creative forces of the universe, the person plays and listens to music because its beauty and the complex mathematical structures underlying music cause the person to contemplate the beauty and order of God or the entire universe”).⁷⁶

In other words, for an activity to be considered spiritual and ethically binding, its primary motivation must be born from a personal orientation that locates the self as smaller part in communion with or in service to a greater, higher force. Caring for nature or appreciating music

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

for their own sake would by implication not count as healing spiritual activities because they may not explicitly gesture out, beyond, and up.

Elsewhere in the article, these authors more explicitly tie the sense of the Sacred to the divine, calling this sense “a socially influenced perception of either some sense of ultimate reality or truth or some divine being/object.”⁷⁷ While the Sacred was admittedly “socially influenced,” Hill *et al.* argued that the Sacred was not left to the sole discretion of the individual; it “must be able to take on sacred or divine attributes, either in character or because it is associated with the sacred or divine.”⁷⁸ As an example, they offered that a mother might think of her children as sacred, but without the “association of this role as parent with a divine quality,” her identification was construed as mistaken.⁷⁹ In other words, spirituality might be constructed, but it was not considered subjective by these researchers. Hill *et al.*’s formation of the concept of spirituality as a “sense of the Sacred” necessarily included an articulated connection to a divine force.

There are several instances in which Hill *et al.* first recognized that spiritual belief and practice is mediated by individuals but then demonstrated in examples that the individual’s constructive and interpretive power would be measured against the researcher’s terms and standards. Even though they defined the Sacred as “refer[ring] to a divine being, divine object, Ultimate Reality, or Ultimate Truth *as perceived by the individual* [italics mine],” what counted as “Sacred” in the end was not up for debate.⁸⁰ These authors’ examples suggest that there were only so many personal interpretations of it that would count as valid, although the logic they

⁷⁷Ibid., 67.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., 66.

used to deduce what counted as “Sacred” was not entirely clear. The article hints that just because a person may think of something as sacred or spiritual in her life does not make it so, and suggests that any conception of the Sacred that does not align with the researchers’ envisioned particular, “socially-approved” conception of the divine does not count. The person who thinks she can name her own “Sacred,” (such as Robert Bellah’s Sheila, mentioned in the Introduction) is mistaken, ignorant, careless, or all of these. Furthermore, Hill *et al.*’s framework implies that people who do not retain an outward and upward perspective (such as some atheists) ultimately do not have access to the health benefits of spiritual beliefs and practices.

Even if their conclusions were problematic, Hill *et al.* deserve credit for attempting to offer a more precise understanding of spirituality. Moreover, their efforts to concretize spirituality as “the search for the Sacred” implied that there was in fact something discernable about spiritual belief and practice that researchers could observe, even in the absence of religious practice. “The Sacred” concept essentially allowed researchers to conceive of a nonreligious person as still having an identifiable meaning-making process that allegedly contributed to good health. It appeared to set research studies that exclusively focused on spirituality on more solid ground.

Pargament collaborated on the “Conceptualizing” article and was instrumental in making possible an understanding of spirituality as nonreligious which he later worked into the CSF program. But it was unclear whether or not Pargament really thought that nonreligious spirituality could be an effective vehicle for seeking out “the Sacred.” Some of his work published between the “Conceptualizing” article and the CSF program’s debut in 2009 suggested a strong preference for understanding *religion* as uniquely powerful, an inclination that had possible negative implications for the effectiveness of nonreligious spirituality.

Several of Pargament's publications indicated that he was personally interested in restoring respect for religion among psychologists, the majority of whom identified as either secular or preferring spirituality to religion.⁸¹ Because his work just a few years prior to the CSF program displayed a preference for religion over spirituality, it merits attention since his contributions to the army program so strongly defended nonreligious spirituality as an effective health practice. A 2002 article titled "Is Religion Nothing But...? Explaining Religion versus Explaining Religion Away" demonstrated this strong preference for religion.⁸²

In response to an immunologist colleague of his who suggested to him that religion was "just a bunch of hormones," Pargament argued that religion "has a unique function, the search for the Sacred," which referred to "not only the divine, higher powers, and God but to qualities that are closely linked to the divine, such as holiness, blessedness, transcendence, omnipotence, and infinitude."⁸³ Pargament reiterated that religious experience was necessarily theistic, as "the religious person" sought "the ultimate Thou."⁸⁴ He identified the sacralization of daily life as the process through which "beliefs become theologies, behaviors become rituals, relationships become congregations, and feelings become religious experiences."⁸⁵ According to Pargament, this process of sanctification that involved relating all things to a Thou had empirically been shown to enable people to draw more support from the people and things around them, and could have positive results, such as less aggressive behaviors in marriage.⁸⁶

⁸¹Brian Zinnbaur, "Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy," 562.

⁸²Kenneth Pargament, "Is Religion Nothing But...? Explaining Religion Versus Explaining Religion Away," *Psychological Inquiry* 13, no. 3 (2002): 239-244.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 240.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 241.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 240.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 241.

Religion's efficacy could not be "explained away" as just proving good social support, such as any close-knit bowling league could do. Contra to arguments that boiled religion's functionality down to sociological processes, Pargament argued that the real healing catalyst in religion was the "involvement of the sacred."⁸⁷

This "involvement of the sacred" presumably did not exist in secular groups. Pargament explained that religion was unique in this regard, and that religious coping mechanisms specifically were "designed to address situations in which we are pushed beyond our own immediate resources [to] confront our vulnerability to others, ourselves, and the world."⁸⁸ Religion, because of its emphasis on the sacred, provided a person with the strength needed to endure.

One of the main ways that religion did this was by providing explanations for hardships when no others existed. But Pargament hinted that believing in an ultimate "who" was more important than understanding why suffering occurred. He claimed that when faced with "the limits of [one's] human powers," seeking "ultimate control" through the sacred could be helpful.⁸⁹ This same idea, that nothing surpassed the benefits of believing in a higher power for a person in extremely taxing mental and physical situations, permeated the military literature on spiritual training, as previous chapters have shown. Yet what was different about Pargament's message was that it appeared to have the backing of evidence-based research.

Another Pargament article titled, "The Sacred and the Search for Significance: Religion as a Unique Process" (2005) reiterated the idea that religion was uniquely effective in allowing

⁸⁷Ibid., 242.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

people to cope with hardship.⁹⁰ Here Pargament distinguished “a search for significance in ways related to the sacred” as fundamental to religion.⁹¹ He argued that “faith, hope, transcendence, surrender, forbearance, meaning” were “religion’s language” and that these had the “special ability to provide ultimate meaning, order, and safety in place of human questions, chaos, and fear.”⁹² Here Pargament appeared to be reviving the concept of “broad-band” religion in the proclivity to mark traits like “faith, hope, transcendence [etc.]” as inherently religious. One concern regarding this philosophy is that it precluded the possibility that these traits could be shared by people who might not fit well under the “religious” umbrella.

Funded at least partly by the Templeton Foundation, both of Pargament’s previously mentioned articles that limned the contours of the R/S field’s terms received attention in R/S articles seeking to define “religion,” “spirituality,” and the entire nature of the R/S enterprise.⁹³ His work inspired an emphasis on studying people’s search for “the Sacred” as a fundamental and potentially-salubrious coping technique. Furthermore, his suggestion that the search for “the Sacred” (a divine or transcendent force) was a necessary part of religious and spiritual experience marked the boundaries of healthy meaning-making in ways that implied that others, such as atheists, were essentially less healthy.

This suggestion would have been less problematic if the R/S research had been applied in voluntary religious settings, but given his senior status as an expert on religious coping, Pargament was hired by the DoD to help construct the spiritual fitness component for the

⁹⁰Kenneth Pargament, Gina Magyar-Russell, and Nichole Murray-Swank, “The Sacred and the Search for Significance: Religion as a Unique Process,” *Journal of Social Issues* 61, no. 4 (2005): 665–87.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 667.

⁹²Pargament et al., “The Sacred and the Search for Significance,” 676.

⁹³These articles were cited 236 and 125 times respectively according to a *Google* search dated February 15, 2016.

mandatory CSF program. Pargament's portrayal of what could constitute as healthy belief shifted considerably in military literature from his previous portrayals, perhaps in an attempt to produce it as appropriate and widely-applicable in a public setting.

In the January 2011 American Psychological Association's special edition of *American Psychologist*, Kenneth Pargament and co-author Col. Patrick Sweeney debuted the concept of military spiritual fitness for the academic world.⁹⁴ There they argued that the spirituality endorsed by CSF was not necessarily religious, as the military was concerned with the "human spirit," not the "theological spirit."⁹⁵ The human spirit was defined functionally, as "the essential core of the individual, the deepest part of the self, and include[d] the essential capacities for autonomy, self-awareness, and creativity, as well as the ability to love and be loved and to appreciate beauty and language."⁹⁶

Pargament and Sweeney constructed the human spirit as universal by asserting that all people had spirits, defined as "the deepest part of the self," "an animating impulse--a vital, motivating force that is directed to realizing higher order goals, dreams, and aspirations that grow out of the essential self."⁹⁷ According to this logic, denying that humans had spirits meant denying human potential.

Pargament and Sweeney described the spirit as having "sacred qualities," which they credited scholars such as the theologians Rudolph Otto and Paul Tillich as ascribing.⁹⁸ These qualities included "ultimacy (what is true and of deepest significance), boundlessness (what is of

⁹⁴Pargament and Sweeney, "Building Spiritual Fitness in the Army."

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 58.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 13.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 58.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

lasting value), and transcendence (what is set apart from the ordinary).”⁹⁹ Spiritual fitness training would teach soldiers about these qualities in the effort to guide them on the “continuous journey people take to discover and realize their spirit.”¹⁰⁰

However, this “journey” was not a fully subjective search for identity, although some of the language gave that impression. In keeping with Pargament’s previous definitions, the APA article suggested that spirituality was “a process of searching for the sacred in one’s life.”¹⁰¹ They do not explicitly define what they mean by “the sacred” in this article, but instead cited Pargament’s 2007 *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy* book, in which he delineated the “core of the sacred” as “God, the divine, and transcendent reality.”¹⁰² Pargament and Sweeney’s logic in the APA article thus indirectly suggested that the military’s spiritual fitness education was aimed at helping soldiers “search for [‘God, the divine, [or a] transcendent reality’].”

Unlike Pargament’s prior work, in this article spirituality was characterized primarily as a search for one’s “core self” and whatever “provide[d] life a sense of purpose and direction.”¹⁰³ Instead of articulating that the most effective form of coping was found in recognizing and receiving a higher power as Pargament’s previous work stated, the authors contended that one’s spiritual health could be enhanced through self-awareness and self-regulation and a sense of responsibility, motivation, and social awareness.¹⁰⁴ This claim appeared to contradict decades of Pargament’s previous assertions. The definition of spirituality as a search for whatever

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 59.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 59.

¹⁰²Kenneth Pargament, *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy: Understanding and Addressing the Sacred* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2007), 49.

¹⁰³Pargament and Sweeney, “Building Spiritual Fitness,” 59.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 61.

“provides life a sense of purpose and direction” sounds exactly like the use of spirituality that Hill and Pargament *et al.* argued was problematic in the article on “Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality.” The Hill *et al.* article had warned that identifying spirituality as whatever was important to the individual would problematically remove the concept’s “sacred core,” and it seemed that the APA article had done just that.

The conspicuous lack of references to a “transcendent” or “divine” reality in the APA article also suggested that spirituality’s “sacred core” had been overlooked. In previous work, Pargament argued that the way to cope with hardship and build resilience was through religious expressions because of their unique emphases on seeking out “the Sacred,” known as “God, the divine, [or a] transcendent reality.”¹⁰⁵ In the APA article, he insisted that spirituality could be an effective nontheistic, nonreligious tool for providing meaning.

This same kind of maneuvering around “the sacred” was exemplified in the dearth of religiously-inflected language. Pargament and Sweeney mention religion only once. It appeared as one technique in a list of methods to “develop the human spirit,” sandwiched in between “scientific exploration” and “work.”¹⁰⁶ The only mention of God came in the form of the following disclaimer: “Department of Defense leaders are not in a privileged position to answer ontological questions about God’s existence or the truth of religious claims.”¹⁰⁷ There was no mention of the need for a divine or transcendent force. As a result, the entire article had a decidedly different tone than Pargament’s previous work.

¹⁰⁵Pargament, *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy*, 49.

¹⁰⁶Pargament and Sweeney, “Building Spiritual Fitness,” 59.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 58.

Pargament and Sweeney likely intentionally negotiated an understanding of spirituality that sounded less theistic and religious from Pargament's previous conceptions. Obviously, this negotiation was necessary, as it was the only way to advance mandatory spiritual training in the twenty-first century armed forces. The next section investigates what the CSF program, with its emphasis on spiritual fitness, ultimately taught soldiers and whether or not this education reflected Pargament's previous claims that healthy people searched for "God, the divine, or transcendent reality."

Comprehensive Soldier Fitness: Crafting Healthy Spiritual Selves in the Twenty-first Century

On December 6, 2009, more than 70 scientists, health care professionals, and military chaplains met under the direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mike Mullen in Bethesda, Maryland, for four days at the Uniformed Services University to define comprehensive health for soldiers and determine how to measure it. The committee decided that total fitness included a spiritual domain in addition to the physical, psychological, behavioral, medical, environmental, nutritional, and social domains. "Spiritual fitness," the group stated, was "the development of positive and helpful beliefs, practices and connecting expressions of the human spirit."¹⁰⁸ CSF would be the program with which the DoD and the Department of Veteran's Affairs would expand "spiritual fitness initiatives" which included hosting spiritual fitness concerts, building Spiritual Fitness Centers, educating leadership about how to monitor spirituality among troops, and issuing assessments designed to monitor spiritual health.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸Institute for Alternative Futures, *Total Fitness for the 21st Century* (conference report), December 30, 2009, 16.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*

The army's 1987 Fit to Win program had incorporated spiritual fitness into its conceptual framework of comprehensive health, but the army had never attempted to formalize force-wide spiritual fitness training and assessments. This changed in the twenty-first century, primarily in response to soldier suicide and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) rates that skyrocketed to unprecedented levels after 2001. More military personnel had died by suicide than in combat during the Iraq-Afghanistan conflicts, a fact frequently reported by the news media. Furthermore, soldier suicide rates only continued to increase, over doubling from 2004 to 2010.¹¹⁰ This crisis appeared so dire that Defense Secretary Leon Panetta remarked that "this issue, suicides, is perhaps the most frustrating challenge that I've come across since becoming Secretary of Defense."¹¹¹ Traditionally, the military suicide rate was below civilian rates. Why were soldiers killing themselves? War was heinous as always, but what was different about these conflicts or about these soldiers that would explain the high suicide rates?

There appeared to be a number of factors at work. An article in the *American Psychologist* that introduced CSF as a "resilience" tool blamed the conditions of modern warfare: "demanding missions, extreme climates, sleep deprivation, cultural dissonance, physical fatigue, prolonged separation from family, and the ever present threat of serious bodily injury or death," and exposure to traumatic events.¹¹² Soldiers were stretched beyond their limits; they were spiritually broken. Part of the solution included providing soldiers with spiritual fitness

¹¹⁰Mark Thompson and Nancy Gibbs, "The War on Suicide," *Time*, July 23, 2012, 26.

¹¹¹Secretary of Defense Speech given by Leon Panetta at DOD/VA Suicide Prevention Conference, June 22, 2012, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://archive.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1686>.

¹¹²Rhonda Cornum, Michael Matthews, and Martin Seligman, "Comprehensive Soldier Fitness: Building Resilience in a Challenging Institutional Context," *American Psychologist* 66, no. 1 (2011): 4.

training in the thorough and widely-implemented CSF program, developed by military leaders and civilian psychologists.¹¹³

CSF would aim to help reduce suicide and PTSD rates through self-directed online learning, resilience training, and testing. Of these CSF components, I primarily address the online education modules because these contain the most relevant information regarding the cultivation of the spiritual fitness concept. As of July 2014, the CSF program was still operating with no signs of retiring. My documentation covers the first version of the program, which operated from 2009 until 2014.

This section examines how spirituality's nonreligious status was negotiated in the CSF materials and investigates what CSF taught soldiers about spiritual fitness. The online training module presented spiritual fitness information in five different sections, titled "Spiritual Support," "Rituals," "Making Meaning," "Meditation," and "Hunt the Good Stuff."¹¹⁴ After logging in to the CSF site, soldiers could click on the first section of the spiritual fitness module to begin the education. There were approximately ten slides per section, each with images and text, and an occasional instructional video embedded in the slide to watch.

Two characters, "Turner" and "Kaufman," often appeared in these videos. Turner, a middle-aged black man in fatigues, was the host of the discussion topics for each section. Sometimes he looked directly at the viewer and sometimes he conversed with "Kaufman," a twenty-something white male soldier in fatigues. Turner often spoke with casual language and

¹¹³Military leaders central to the development of the CSF included Brigadier General Rhonda Cornum, General George Casey, and Colonel and PhD Patrick Sweeney. Psychologists who helped develop the CSF include Kenneth Pargament, Michael Matthews, and Martin Seligman. Psychologists Christopher Peterson and Nansook Park developed the spiritual fitness portion of the GAT.

¹¹⁴ All of the material from the CSF site on spiritual fitness were shared with me by an interlocutor whom I will keep anonymous. Citations will include the number and title of the slide and the title of the module the slide came from.

in an avuncular tone, while Kaufman often appeared troubled and lost in thought but eager to talk and to implement Turner's advice.

Instead of examining CSF's five module topics separately, I investigate three major, often overlapping, premises regarding spiritual fitness that run throughout these topics. The following three subsections discuss these premises, which taught that a spiritually fit person made positive meaning, behaved morally, and was oriented towards the sacred or transcendent. Each of these assumptions about spirituality and the potentials it unlocked in soldiers were articulated in various ways in the Fort Knox program, the CGP programs, and Fit to Win. CSF was different from each of the previous programs in that it presented its claims as empirically-based. Even though CSF's spiritual fitness education offered soldiers much-needed coping techniques that may have been evidence-based, the implications of this education for soldiers deserve consideration.

Spiritual Fitness and Positivity

The importance of remaining positive regardless of one's environment was reiterated throughout CSF literature and was the main lesson of the "Making Meaning" module. This section opened with a video of Turner and Kaufman. Turner appeared to be looking for Kaufman, who was sitting by himself in the dark. Turner asked Kaufman what he was doing, and Kaufman sadly replied, "Nothin.'" Turner rejoined, "Snap out of it, man...we're all going to miss him." Kaufman explained, "This is gonna sound stupid, but I just feel lost. Nothing makes any sense to me anymore. He didn't deserve that...he didn't do anything wrong." After telling Kaufman "it was nobody's fault, man," Turner faced to the viewer to explain that soldiers were not completely helpless when "bad things happened." Even when they were "confused, feeling

alone in the dark ... emotionally and spiritually,” soldiers still had the “power to ‘make positive meaning’” when struggling.¹¹⁵

The “Hunt the Good Stuff” module taught that soldiers could do this by concentrating on their “blessings.” These good things would remind soldiers that they were “not alone and that life ha[d] real meaning.”¹¹⁶ Remaining positive could result in more than just good feelings, however. It was important for nourishing one’s personal health and wellbeing. Soldiers were told that they could protect their bodies and minds by actively interpreting their experiences positively and by strategizing about how to “create circumstances that enable more good things to occur.”¹¹⁷

The Making Meaning module reiterated that positivity was especially important given the inexplicable hardships in life. In order remain positive, the CSF recognized that one would need a solid philosophy that addressed why bad things happened in life. Towards that end, a few slides suggested that some people were simply destructive and the world was imperfect.¹¹⁸ Soldiers were also told that sometimes there were no easy answers and no one knew why suffering occurred. According to the Meaning Making section, believing that bad things happened for a reason was an important step in finding personal healing.¹¹⁹

The suggestion that it was important to believe that all things--even “bad” things--happened for a reason was not new. However, the application of this kind of teaching in an institutional setting, and especially a military setting, had the potential to produce undesirable

¹¹⁵“Slide 1: Overview,” Making Meaning, CSF.

¹¹⁶“Slide 3: How do we Hunt the Good Stuff,” Hunt the Good Stuff, CSF.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸“Slide 6: Positive Meaning Making,” “[Popup Human Destructiveness],” Making Meaning, CSF.

¹¹⁹Ibid., “[Popup Greater Purpose],” CSF.

results. Such teaching could imply that atrocities committed in war by both individuals and the military institution were somehow meant to occur. It also could imply that it was the soldiers' occupational duty to find something positive about traumatic experiences. This teaching could be extended to imply that any number of evils, including drone strikes on civilians, might ultimately be excused because they were in service to a grand purpose.

However, the CSF material on this subject did not completely overlook notions of moral culpability. It taught that one important way to heal from inexplicable trauma was to believe that ultimately, justice would be served. Soldiers were told to believe in something, either karma or the existence of "a greater power," that would punish the guilty and comfort victims "either in life or after this life."¹²⁰ If soldiers could somehow believe that justice would be served, it would allow them to cope with immediate injustices.

Although this pretense at least recognized that injustices in war existed, it ultimately promoted belief over activism. It implied that the best way to find freedom from suffering was not by taking the actions necessary to ensure justice, but to wait patiently, even until after death, for justice to be served. The message that soldiers not attempt to personally resolve injustices had concerning implications, but it also clearly contributed to the smooth functioning of military operations.

The emphasis on positivity included teaching soldiers that they ought to think of struggles not as obstacles, but as growth opportunities. The section on Spiritual Support reiterated this idea by stressing that existential struggles could result in "a deeper commitment to your values, stronger connection to your spirit and other people in your life, patience and

¹²⁰Ibid., "[Popup Ultimate Justice]," CSF.

forgiveness, and spiritual growth, depth, and richness.”¹²¹ One implication was that the hardships and trauma that caused emotional and psychological turmoil did not need to be crippling or result in PTSD or suicide. Struggles could make a person even *more* capable of standing firm in future winds of adversity, enhance a person’s relationship with the self and others, or even strengthen one’s moral rectitude. Maintaining a positive outlook would even boost one’s overall fitness, according to the Hunt the Good Stuff module. Soldiers who could learn gratitude and positive thinking despite whatever hellish circumstances they were in were told that they would be able to enjoy life more; they would have “better overall health, better sleep, and feel calm.”¹²²

According to CSF literature, the soldier who chose not to have a positive outlook throughout “struggles of the human spirit” faced dire consequences.¹²³ The Meaning Making module taught that the inability to feel positive, morally committed, or that one’s life was meaningful could lead to “hopelessness, losing touch with the core self, lack of discipline, trouble with superiors, combat fatigue, alcoholism or drug abuse, thoughts of suicide.”¹²⁴ The image that accompanied this text depicted a large bottle of prescription medicine overturned, with blue and white capsules spilling out, suggesting that one who did not attend to his spiritual struggles could expect a downward spiral that might result in chemical dependencies. According to the module, experts confirmed that not “dealing with spiritual struggles” that “affect one’s core self, beliefs, and values” could even lead to mental illness.¹²⁵

¹²¹“Slide 1: Overview,” Spiritual Support, CSF.

¹²²“Slide 4: Why we Hunt the Good Stuff,” Hunt the Good Stuff, CSF.

¹²³“Slide 1: Overview,” Spiritual Support, CSF.

¹²⁴“Slide 3: Problems Related to Lost Meaning,” Making Meaning, CSF.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

The spiritual fitness education on the importance of positivity appeared to address struggles and challenges by suggesting that the answer lay in recalibrating one's own perception of struggle. In the CSF conceptualization, spiritual practice necessitated actively interpreting experiences and circumstances as positive. Soldiers were taught that if they could do that, they would be able to withstand the inexplicable trauma of losing a friend or some other catastrophic event. Furthermore, if one could positively assess a situation, even if it meant suspending reason in favor of employing faith, the benefits would affect every aspect of life. In other words, attending to one's spiritual fitness was not ultimately a private duty, as spirituality could affect every area of life including one's job performance, relationships, physical and mental health, and even one's potential for moral action.

Spiritual Fitness and Core Values

Similar to previous spiritual training programs, much of the CSF program taught the importance of having moral conviction, which could only be achieved by realizing the "core self" and one's "core values." Though the module made it sound as if one's "core values" might be subject to personal preference, it is clear that soldiers (healthy ones, at least) were expected to find their values aligned with the Army Values: "loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage."¹²⁶ The beginning of the Spiritual Support section taught soldiers that maintaining these values through a high level of spiritual fitness was critical to their health and wellbeing.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ "[Popup Time of Testing]," "Slide 6: Positive Meaning Making," Making Meaning, CSF.

¹²⁷ "Slide 2: Spiritual Support," Spiritual Support, CSF.

Yet, the Spiritual Support module recognized, it was especially difficult for soldiers to stay grounded in themselves and in the knowledge of their values because of how tumultuous the military lifestyle could be. Military life provided plenty of scenarios that could shake a soldier's resolve and moral conviction. These types of struggles were identified as "spiritual." The Rituals section best illustrated this perspective with a soliloquy from the narrator: "As soldiers, we go through a lot of situations that can cause spiritual struggles. We may have to do or see things that don't fit with our core values, and we experience long periods of time away from our loved ones and friends."¹²⁸ Such hardships were recognized as spiritually challenging and threatening to physical health.¹²⁹ For this reason, soldiers often needed "spiritual support."

Soldiers were asked in the Spiritual Support module to consider their own level of spiritual fitness by thinking about how they sought spiritual support when feeling "stressed" or when questioning "core values."¹³⁰ Soldiers were then told that they could get "support for their spirits" by cultivating a positive outlook which included being grateful and forgiving and believing in something "outside of the self."¹³¹ The CSF program offered soldiers education on two main techniques, performing rituals and meditating, that would supposedly help boost their own spiritual fitness and maintain their core values.

Rituals and meditation were such focal points in the CSF education about spiritual fitness that two entire modules were devoted to them. These modules described and defended both practices as appropriate in the military, a process that included attempting to distance each of them from being strictly associated with religious practice.

¹²⁸"Slide 1: Overview," Rituals, CSF.

¹²⁹"Slide 2: Spiritual Support," Spiritual Support, CSF.

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹"Side 3: Types of Spiritual Support," Spiritual Support, CSF.

The Rituals module opened with a scene of a new recruit getting his head shaved in preparation for entering the service. “Oh, man,” the soldier exclaimed, rubbing his newly-shaven scalp. The host replied, “it’s official, Bro. You’re one of us now.”¹³² The host then explained that rituals, defined as “concrete action with meaning,” were critical in helping to restore a soldier’s well-being, even in an unrestful environment.¹³³ Rituals were identified as what could “bring [a soldier] back to center,” and they could help a soldier recognize one’s “core self and aspirations.”¹³⁴ Soldiers were promised that performing rituals would “open you up to be more in touch with yourself and [make you] better able to act on your values time after time.”¹³⁵ Performing rituals appeared to allow a person to be morally consistent and self-aware.

The module on rituals made several attempts to personalize the ritual-making process, making it appear an open-ended and subjective project. For example, soldiers were instructed to “think about the rituals you would like to add to your life to increase your connection to yourself, others, and, if you so believe, a greater power so that you can add meaning to your life and stay centered.”¹³⁶ Soldiers were told to ask themselves, “How do you want [the ritual] to help you? Do you want it to help with transition, connection, living out Army values, cleansing, or coping with loss? Remember to make it meaningful and helpful to YOU.”¹³⁷

Despite the emphasis on subjectivity in the Rituals section, it is clear from several examples that a spiritually fit and fully realized person was expected to subscribe to army values

¹³²“Slide 1: Overview,” Rituals, CSF.

¹³³“Slide 10: Take Away,” Rituals, CSF.

¹³⁴“Slide 2: What are Rituals?”, Rituals, CSF.

¹³⁵“Slide 10: Take Away,” Rituals, CSF.

¹³⁶“Slide 8: Module Activity,” Rituals, CSF.

¹³⁷Ibid.

and perform actions conducive to the military environment. For example, flag folding and saluting were described as rituals that would help soldiers stay grounded in their “core selves.”¹³⁸ Other statements in the Rituals section did not hide the fact that rituals were being taught on the premise that they could “bring Army values to your life on a regular basis.”¹³⁹ One argument claimed that soldiers especially needed to use rituals to connect to their “deeper purpose and human spirit” in order to make one into the perfect soldier: “stronger, focused, and more adaptable.”¹⁴⁰ The CSF even claimed that rituals were effective in treating combat operational stress, according to unnamed “health care professionals,” veterans, and their families.¹⁴¹

CSF material distanced the concept of performing rituals from religious practice by suggesting that they were natural, universal, human expressions. Rituals *could* be religious, but they did not have to be. The Ritual module taught that anyone, regardless of belief system, could use meaning-making rituals every single day as a way to make positive meaning and cope with hardship. Soldiers were encouraged to “say a prayer or listen to a song that puts your mind in a good place before heading to a mission. Play practical jokes and use humor to keep your own, and those around you, spirits up.”¹⁴²

The most extensive discussion about rituals emphasized the power of water. Soldiers were taught that water could cleanse one’s conscience and even wash away disturbing thoughts. This section explained that although combat could leave soldiers “feeling unclean” they could

¹³⁸“Slide 6: Rituals and the Army Core Values,” Rituals, CSF.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰“Slide 3: Why do we Need Rituals,” Rituals, CSF.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*

¹⁴²“[Popup Coping Rituals],” “Slide 6: Rituals and the Army Core Values,” Rituals, CSF.

use water to “‘wash away’ the effects of events that don’t align with your core values.”¹⁴³ The module suggested that soldiers try “washing your whole body; touching or sipping water while saying a mantra or prayer; putting your full awareness on washing your hands; visualizing your struggles being washed away; touching holy water; immersion in a moving body of water, like a stream, river, or the sea; or sitting in a steam room or hot tub.”¹⁴⁴

While this particular passage recognized combat as potentially traumatic and even damaging to a person’s “core values,” the encouragement of ritualistic washing implied that the solution to the problem was the soldier’s burden. Similar to the positivity education that implied that war atrocities could be adequately dealt with by recalibrating one’s personal interpretations of events, the section on rituals suggested that seeking personal absolution was the solution for feeling guilty about or damaged by the work that they were required to do. Put differently, both the positivity education and teaching about rituals hinted acknowledgement that the work of war was often fraught with moral contradictions and even acknowledged soldiers as victims. However, this education about spirituality did not provide a solution from the institutional level. Nor did it suggest, for example, that spiritual struggles derived from the inability to disobey orders or bear arms once in service. It only provided very particular solutions on an individual level, and these generally placed the burden of responsibility for one’s actions as a soldier and any suffered consequences directly on the individual. In this way, CSF fit the mold of other disease prevention and health promotion efforts.

Meditation was also taught as a spiritual technique, and this module too recognized the great strains that combat placed on soldiers, but then suggested that the solution to this problem

¹⁴³“[Popup Rituals with Water],” “Slide 7: Types of Rituals,” Rituals, CSF.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

would be found in soldiers' personal initiatives to recalibrate their reactions to the strains.

According to CSF logic, the problem appeared to be not war, but a distressed reaction to it. CSF taught that the benefits of meditation included “gaining a new perspective on stressful situations, building skills to manage your stress, increasing self-awareness, focusing on the present, [and] reducing negative emotions.”¹⁴⁵ It also increased one's capacity for positive meaning-making.

Soldiers were told that meditation was especially helpful in the armed forces because of its potential to activate the things that make good soldiers: “motivation, discipline, and courage necessary to serve [one's] country.”¹⁴⁶ It was hard for soldiers to maintain these virtues, due to the “many stresses and responsibilities of military life,” but meditation would help. It would enable a soldier to “maintain connection with your human spirit and your deepest values” in the midst of change and hardship.¹⁴⁷ Meditation was promoted as allowing soldiers to “appreciate the values your service stands for and defends.”¹⁴⁸

It is clear from the multiple attempts to persuade soldiers of the value of meditation that its status was not widely accepted, either as a legitimate secular, scientifically-endorsed health practice or as a masculine warfare technique. One anecdote attempted to address meditation's stigma by telling the story of a West Point graduate and Black Hawk helicopter pilot who practiced meditation frequently. Even though he felt the need to mask his meditative practices by wearing headphones, he insisted that meditation helped him keep calm and collected during

¹⁴⁵“Slide 5: Why Meditate,” Meditation, CSF.

¹⁴⁶“Slide 2: Role of Contemplation and Meditation in the Military,” Meditation, CSF.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸“Slide 5: Why Meditate,” Meditation, CSF.

stressful and chaotic times. The module suggested that soldiers could covertly engage in spiritual practices like meditation if they worried about social repercussions.¹⁴⁹

One image from the Meditation section suggested that meditation was sexy and transporting. The image that accompanied the slide “Why Meditate?” portrayed an attractive young white woman in a slim-fitting, low-cut white tank top and black yoga pants sitting in the lotus position, eyes closed with a slight smile. Sitting behind her in the lotus position were two young, white men, eyes closed, wearing white tee-shirts and black shorts. They all sat positioned on clean hardwood floors, drenched in natural sunlight, in what looked like a spa or an expensive gymnasium. Here, meditation appeared to be something that could take one far away from the dark hum of military life and the noise of combat, out of the chain of command, and out of uniform.¹⁵⁰

The next few images offered a more realistic picture of what meditation looked like in the military and legitimated the practice as already instituted in the VA system, the Navy, and the Marines. The accompanying image for this text was of a group of about 50 soldiers or more sitting cross-legged on mats outside, arms extended.¹⁵¹ Rifles were piled prominently in tripods in the foreground. The soldiers appeared to be listening to an instructor not pictured in the frame. Another image depicted a similar scene with a cartoon drawing. Soldiers sat with both arms out, palms up. A soldier in the foreground sat with his head tilted up, eyes closed, a confident and serene look on his face. Next to him sat a rifle tripod. The message was clear: meditation felt good and could be practiced even by men with guns.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

A primary way that the module legitimized meditation as appropriate in the military was by claiming its scientific legitimacy. It did this in a number of ways, sometimes without providing much concrete evidence. For example, the module taught that mainstream publications like *Time* reported that soldiers who meditated had “improved aim at the shooting range, increased ability to deal with combat stress, smoother transitions to life at home, greater ability to deal with stressful situations, improved self-control and confidence, and an easier time setting goals.”¹⁵² Another slide tried to ease doubts by insisting, “even scientists and doctors have begun to research the effects of meditation.”¹⁵³ A different image attempted to illustrate meditation’s scientific and professional acceptance by presenting what appeared to be a professional article with the all-capped headline, “SOLDIERS REPORT THE BENEFITS OF MEDITATION.” In smaller print beneath, the listed “author” was “CSF.”¹⁵⁴

The module also legitimized meditation as an appropriate practice in the military by suggesting that it encompassed a range of practices that were not necessarily religious.¹⁵⁵ Soldiers were told that they may as well think of it as “contemplation,” described in the module as “consider[ing] something with attention” by thinking, journaling, and reading. Meditation was highly customizable, soldiers were taught, and they were urged to choose a style “that works for you.”¹⁵⁶ One could meditate by focusing on breathing, or on bodily sensations when walking or sitting. Or by invoking a word or phrase that may have spiritual or personal meaning.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵“Slide 4: Common Questions and Misconceptions,” Meditation, CSF.

¹⁵⁶“Slide 6: How to Meditate,” Meditation, CSF.

Examples included, “I am, love, peace to all, om, shalom/salaam, ahhhh, God is good, Thy will be done.”¹⁵⁷

If this was too much of a stretch, soldiers were told that they could simply visualize nature scenes or practice “loving-kindness meditation” for the purpose of effecting more positive, compassionate responses to others.¹⁵⁸ Soldiers were encouraged to practice “breathing in others’ sufferings, and breathing out happiness or joy” and suggested that soldiers could do this by “picture[ing] people you like and don’t like and yourself in the same room. Send them all good wishes, saying ‘May we all be well...may we all be happy...may we all be safe and secure...may we all be free from suffering.’”¹⁵⁹

Given that a concluding point from the Meditation module was that this practice would “help [one] stay in touch with [one’s] values and mission,” how could soldiers reconcile a mission that might include killing people with the suggestion that sending people wishes of safety and happiness was a desirable and healthy action?¹⁶⁰ CSF taught soldiers that meditation could help them prepare mentally and emotionally for combat, overcome the personal stress and injury of combat, and somehow become more compassionate. Was it possible for a person simultaneously to be compassionate, resilient, and deadly?

This very conundrum was brought up in the planning stages of CSF, at the Total Force Fitness conference mentioned at the beginning of the section. Samueli Institute researcher Matthew Fritts asked the Venerable Rinpoche III, who was invited to attend as a spiritual advisor, how meditation could be used in the military “unhypocritically.” Ven. Rinpoche III

¹⁵⁷“[Meditation to a Word or Phrase],” “Slide 7: Types of Meditation,” Meditation, CSF.

¹⁵⁸“[Positive Emotion Meditation],” “Slide 7: Types of Meditation,” Meditation, CSF.

¹⁵⁹“[Positive Emotion Meditation Activity],” “Slide 7: Types of Meditation,” Meditation, CSF.

¹⁶⁰“Slide 11: Take Away,” Meditation, CSF.

suggested using meditation “in post-deployment recovery” rather than in preparation for combat.¹⁶¹

Spiritual Fitness and Transcendence

Much of spiritual fitness education was geared towards helping soldiers become emotionally and psychologically stable by inculcating a sense of personal meaning and purpose. CSF materials taught that subscribing to a particular orientation, one that located the self as a smaller part of something much “larger,” “higher,” or “greater,” was critical for experiencing this sense. As the last chapter will demonstrate, some critics interpreted this assumption as suggesting that soldiers need to believe in *God* in order to be healthy. The possibility that spiritual fitness education encouraged theism was the most controversial element of the program.

CSF materials often did promote a theistic orientation that could be interpreted as Christian, but this promotion was not always directly articulated. In most cases, the importance of theism was implied subtextually, in examples, images, and testimonials. Sometimes, what the texts articulated was quite different than what the accompanying subtexts implied. At times, CSF texts depicted spirituality as an individual’s subjective construction of ultimate meaning, needlessly tied to religion or theistic belief, while the subtexts often illustrated the idea that belief in God was critical for cultivating a healthy spirituality. The following three subsections examine how theism was promoted in the CSF program, often in the underlying messages of images, examples, and testimonials.

¹⁶¹“Total Force Fitness for the 21st Century: A New Paradigm,” *Military Medicine* 175, no. 8 (2010): 76.

Images

One of the most common images accompanying CSF materials that taught about spiritual fitness depicted soldiers praying. Praying was articulated in the Spiritual Support section as just one way to “support your human spirit,” “to find meaning and cope with a difficult struggle” or to relieve stress.¹⁶² However, prayer and the theistic orientation it implicated was promoted the most in images that accompanied text.

For example, one slide about the importance of finding “Greater Purpose” for wellbeing displayed a picture of soldiers standing with heads bowed, hands clasped, eyes closed. The caption read, “Some soldiers believe in a greater power or purpose in the universe. They may trust that their struggles have a larger meaning. Soldiers who believe in a greater power might also feel confident that their situation is under control.”¹⁶³ Obviously, the implication was that the reader too should believe in “a greater power.”

Several slides contained text that did not explicitly condone theism, but the accompanying image clearly did. For example, a slide in the Rituals section reviewed the teaching that soldiers ought to “reflect on and connect with your deeper purpose and human spirit.”¹⁶⁴ This message could have been illustrated in any number of ways, yet the accompanying image was of six soldiers holding hands while sitting around a mess table, heads bowed and eyes closed. Beyond them was the bottom of a decorated Christmas tree.

A slide in the Making Meaning section similarly gestured to the importance of theism in an accompanying image. This slide taught soldiers that “increas[ing] your meaning making

¹⁶²“[Popup Prayer How to Incorporate],” “Slide 3: Types of Spiritual Support,” Spiritual Support, CSF.

¹⁶³“[Popup Greater Purpose],” “Slide 6: Positive Meaning Making,” Making Meaning, CSF.

¹⁶⁴“Slide 4: Why do we Need Rituals,” Rituals, CSF.

resources” allowed a person to “find strength to hang on until the problem passes, learn how to benefit from your experiences, reinforce your core beliefs and values, and develop your human spirit.”¹⁶⁵ Again, the image could have depicted a wide range of relevant actions, but the accompanying image depicted four men in fatigues standing up in a pew, bowing their heads with eyes closed.

Two slides in the Hunt the Good Stuff section illustrated a similar scenario. One slide expressed, “when we ignore the good stuff, our total fitness is decreased.”¹⁶⁶ The accompanying image offered a close up on a row of men in fatigues standing in chapel pews, bowing their heads with eyes closed. On another slide, the narrator told soldiers about the power of giving thanks. He intoned, “We can actually say ‘thank you’ if we want to ... be it to our families, our friends, our fellow soldiers, our God, or the stranger on the street. How you say ‘Thank you’ is up to you. The point of this module is practicing the noticing part.”¹⁶⁷ The text gave the impression that gratitude, whether directed towards any person, force, or thing, was what kept a person healthy. However, the image that accompanied this text was of soldiers standing in a ring in fatigues with helmets on, arms entwined, heads down and eyes closed.

Even the Meditation section, which made several attempts to negotiate the practice as appropriate in the military context, gestured to the importance of theism. Oddly enough, the slide that sought to naturalize meditation by identifying it as “contemplation” also implied that meditation was a theistic practice. Contemplation, the text explained, was just focusing one’s attention on something that was either inside a person or outside. However, the image next to

¹⁶⁵“Slide 5: Positive Meaning Making,” Making Meaning, CSF.

¹⁶⁶“Slide 2: What does it mean to Hunt the Good Stuff?,” Hunt the Good Stuff, CSF.

¹⁶⁷“Slide 5: When we don’t Feel Gratitude,” Hunt the Good Stuff, CSF.

the text showed five soldiers standing in fatigues in front of a truck holding hands and bowing heads. In the circle was a chaplain praying passionately.¹⁶⁸

While most of the questionable images promoted prayer, one image in the Spiritual Support section appeared to promote church attendance and another promoted religious practice. One slide contained text explaining that one could seek spiritual support in many different ways, which might include going to church. The accompanying picture depicted a scene from what appeared to be the inside of a military chapel. Men and a few women sit in the pews, some wearing fatigues. The viewer's eye-level is at the back of pews, directed straight down the center aisle between the rows of filled pews. In the center of the line-of-sight is a man, wearing a white-buttoned up shirt and dark pants, preaching at the front of the chapel.¹⁶⁹

Another image in the Spiritual Support module promoted religious practice despite articulating that part of being spiritually healthy meant being receptive to different worldviews and philosophies. Given that most of the force was Christian at the time, it would make sense if this message was aimed at the dominant religious group, prompting Christians to be more aware of various worldviews.¹⁷⁰ However, the accompanying image was of a pea-green prayer book for the armed forces.¹⁷¹ Its cover bore the title, "A Prayer Book for the Armed Forces." Barely visible beneath the title was a Celtic cross. Although not visible in the image, those familiar with the prayer book would know that the words in the Celtic cross read, "Christ died for you." Taken at face value, the text could have been interpreted as suggesting that it was healthy to be open to a variety of worldviews, even those of the military's growing atheist, agnostic and

¹⁶⁸"Slide 3: What is Contemplation?," Meditation, CSF.

¹⁶⁹"Slide 6: Spiritual Support from Home," Spiritual Support, CSF.

¹⁷⁰Defense Manpower Data Center, "Active Duty Personnel File," October 29, 2009 report.

¹⁷¹"Slide 5: Spiritual Support from other Soldiers," Spiritual Support, CSF.

freethinker communities. But this image completely reframed the text, allowing the alternative interpretation that those who were not religious or believed in a higher power should be open and receptive to the faiths of their friends.

Examples

The examples that were given to illustrate CSF's teaching points were also religiously and theistically suggestive, although often the textual points they accompanied were not. For example, the Spiritual Support section taught that there were a few ways that soldiers could strengthen their "human spirits": they could write about their values, read inspirational material, listen to music, pray or meditate, carry mementos with them, or relax with friends.¹⁷² To illustrate how a real-life service member had "supported [his] core self," the module provided a selection from the Sgt. Charles King's diary, a man who died in service on October 14, 2006. The two journal excerpts used by CSF read: "Enlisting in the army was one of the best decisions I had ever made in my life. God blessed me above all I could imagine. Like anything, you have some challenging days, but when I look back I have no regrets. ... It's been an awesome experience. Thanks, God." The second excerpt, directed at his son Jordan, included the exhortation to "believe God and trust yourself. Keep the faith, Jordan. You will be fine."¹⁷³

King's journal contained over 200 pages which were nearly all published in the 2008 memoir, *A Journal for Jordan*.¹⁷⁴ The journal contained plenty of other source material that could relevantly illustrate how to navigate problems in life or encourage Army virtues from a

¹⁷²"Slide 3: Types of Spiritual Support," Spiritual Support, CSF.

¹⁷³"[Popup Writing Examples]," "Slide 3: Types of Spiritual Support," CSF.

¹⁷⁴Dana Canedy, *A Journal for Jordan: a Story of Love and Honor* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008).

secular perspective, but the excerpts chosen for CSF explicitly included references to God. The first excerpt focused solely on how fulfilling military life was and implied that giving thanks to God for the military might be a healthy part of supporting one's "core self." The second suggested that soldiers would "be fine" if they "ke[pt] the faith." This comment represented an implied theme throughout the CSF spiritual fitness education.

After telling King's personal story, Turner, the narrator, told soldiers, "although you might not share the same beliefs as Sgt. King, you probably find strength from something outside of yourself--your commitment to your country, the goodness in others, the beauty of nature--these are all ways to build your resilience and gain spiritual support." Several times, CSF materials explicitly articulated that building spiritual could be done in a variety of possibly "secular" ways, but then the subtexts often illustrated spiritual fitness as promoting theism. As a result, spiritual fitness literature demonstrated the complexity of, on the one hand, negotiating an understanding of spirituality that could be acceptably applied in the secular sphere, and on the other hand, insinuating that a particular type of spirituality was best.

The Making Meaning module especially offered conflicting messages about spirituality. A slide on "Greater Purpose" described spirituality as not necessarily theistic while simultaneously endorsing a theistic orientation.¹⁷⁵ The slide (also mentioned in the *Images* section) exclaimed, "Some soldiers believe in a greater power or purpose in the universe. They may trust that their struggles have a larger meaning. Soldiers who believe in a greater power might also feel confident that their situation is under control." The host qualified, "Now, I don't mean you must be extremely religious or believe in a particular deity. It can be as simple as the belief in something larger than yourself in the universe ... some might call it believing in fate."

¹⁷⁵ "[Popup Greater Purpose]," "Slide 6: Positive Meaning Making," Making Meaning, CSF.

To illustrate the point that belief in a “greater power,” whether fate or God, had been scientifically demonstrated to correlate to good mental health, soldiers were prompted to click on a link that was identified as a study on US soldiers in Kosovo.¹⁷⁶

But clicking on the link did not result in reading a scientific study about the healing power of belief in a greater force. Instead, the link corresponded to a Spokane news station’s video report on a young local soldier named Wes Hickson, who had survived a 500 pound roadside bomb in Baghdad. The video explained that medics had to use the Jaws of Life to extract him from a mangled vehicle he had been riding in, but could not save four of his friends. Hickson reportedly “died twice as [medics] tried to save him.” Although his body had been “ripped in half,” the reporter told viewers that Hickson was smiling in the hospital, keeping an upbeat attitude, and maintaining hope that he would walk again. The story then turned to the issue of his faith. According to the news story, part of the secret to Hickson’s optimism was that he was putting his faith in a higher power. His father was filmed commenting, “[Hickson] believes that God did save him, and saved him for a reason.”¹⁷⁷

There are many reasons for why the story of Hickson might have come up rather than the information from the alleged Kosovo study. Perhaps someone changed the link and forgot to change the text on the slide and in the transcript. Perhaps the video of the Kosovo study was canceled sometime after the slide was made. Perhaps this video’s inclusion was just a mistake. Whatever the reason, the result was that soldiers were taught that faith in God could protect them and make them happy. The news clip also undercut the narrator’s suggestion that believing in

¹⁷⁶Ibid., link listed on the slide as <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=balqa9GmEIw&NR=1>.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

something as impersonal as “fate” might be just as effective as belief in God for building resilience.

After watching the video, CSF participants were prompted to answer the following questions: “What are your beliefs about the existence of a greater purpose in the universe? How do you think about your challenges in light of your beliefs?” The module offered the option of skipping these exercises if soldiers felt that they were “not relevant.”¹⁷⁸ The fact that soldiers were given the ability to skip this exercise hinted at the questionable appropriateness of spiritual fitness education. If spiritual fitness practices were publicly appropriate and boosted a soldier’s health, then why would soldiers, for whom health is an occupational necessity, be allowed to dismiss this information? Furthermore, if the health benefits of belief in a greater power had been empirically-based like CSF argued, then it would seem that those who dismissed this belief were ignorant or backward.

Similar backpedaling appeared in the Spiritual Support section. There, the host encouraged soldiers to use the power of prayer, but then discouraged the idea that prayer was necessarily theistic or religious. “When people think of prayer, they are likely to think of someone sitting in a church, kneeling or folding their hands, and reciting a memorized prayer to whichever greater power they believe in.” But prayer need not “look this way.” The host argued that prayer was for everyone and that it did not need to be directed towards any outer force or being. It was not necessary to think of prayer either as a religious or as a formal ritual. The host boiled prayer down to just “support [for] your human spirit [that] allow[s] you time to sit and be with your thoughts, experiences, beliefs, values, and emotions.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ “[Popup Greater Purpose],” “Slide 6: Positive Meaning Making,” Making Meaning, CSF.

¹⁷⁹ “[Popup Prayer],” “Slide 3: Types of Spiritual Support,” Spiritual Support, CSF.

This description sounds universal enough, however, the only example given for what healthy prayer might look like was provided in a reprinting of a famous written prayer that had been found in the pocket of a deceased confederate Soldier during the American Civil War. The following excerpt contains the beginning and end of the prayer: “I asked God for strength, that I might achieve; I was made weak, that I might learn to humbly obey. Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered. I am, among men, most richly blessed.”¹⁸⁰ Once again, although the host said that prayer need not “be directed towards any outer force,” the subtextual example suggested that a theistic orientation was proper, important, and desirable.

Testimonies

The CSF illustrated many of its points by using the testimonies of fellow soldiers. These were provided at the end of modules as personal evidence for the CSF education. Like any other kind of testimony, these played an important role in legitimizing spiritual fitness because they appeared to tell the unedited story of how spirituality *really* helped *real* soldiers. As the opinions of individuals and not produced by those in authority, these testimonies could directly articulate things about spirituality that the CSF program could only imply. The majority of these testimonies spoke to the importance of believing in God to overcome struggles. The following three excerpts represent the kind of testimonials that accompanied CSF education.

One question at the end of the Spiritual Support module asked, “Why is it important to seek spiritual support while deployed?” A soldier was recorded replying,

You could do deployment alone, but it would be so much easier with a good support system. It would be so much better to go with a higher power, if you are doing it alone. And, if you’re with a battle buddy that just helps. That’s all the support you could ever want. It’s always there. It’s in the hummer with you when you’re on a mission. It’s in

¹⁸⁰ “[Popup Prayer Examples],” “Slide 3: Types of Spiritual Support,” Spiritual Support, CSF.

Iraq with you at night. That can be very comforting, a higher power.¹⁸¹

The last two testimonials at the end of the Making Meaning section spoke to how sustaining religious faith was specifically. In response to the question, “What do you do to make meaning out of difficult experiences?” a soldier responded,

In my life, spirituality is belief in my God, and despite all the hardships and trouble and everything that I’ve experienced in my life, one day I’ve been promised a home with God in heaven.... So for me, and I’m a really spiritual guy, for me going through this is only temporary. I believe one day all this will pass away, and all will be beautiful and perfect forever. And for people that have that faith and that one day suffering will end and bad things will end, they’re able to deal with hard things that come up in their life and see it more as temporary.¹⁸²

The last soldier responded to the question, “How have you been able to remain spiritually strong as a Soldier during wartime?” with

whatever your higher power may be it gives you a sense of hope. If you’ve got rounds flying at you, and you’re firing back rounds, in the back of your mind and in the front of your mind, you’ve got that hope. My higher being is gonna be there to help me get through this. And if something does happen to me, my higher power will take care of me. If your choice is God, you know, God will be there to welcome me into heaven and he will make sure, help me look over my family in that aspect or whichever spiritual is your choice.¹⁸³

Each of these testimonials served to confirm various points of CSF education. Common among all three was the understanding that believing in God was especially important for soldiers because of the hardships, shifting environments, and loneliness they often experienced and the chaos and danger of combat. Each of these soldiers articulated that it was comforting to believe that God was always there with them and strengthening them, unlike anything or anyone else. Belief in God provided immediate

¹⁸¹“Slide 9: Testimonials,” Spiritual Support, CSF.

¹⁸²“Slide 8: Testimonials,” Making Meaning, CSF.

¹⁸³Ibid.

comfort that was not dependent on circumstances. Two of these articulated peace with the idea of dying in combat since they believed in heaven. Belief in God offered comfort in both life and death, redeeming all scenarios.

Making “Spiritual Fitness”: The Political Process of Cultivating and Implementing Knowledge about Existential Concerns

Given the high rates of suicide and PTSD among service members in the twenty-first century, it is not surprising that the military wanted to find a way to help soldiers heal themselves and prevent future emotional and psychological injuries. It makes sense that an important part of preventing suicide or recovering from PTSD would be found in providing guidelines for navigating existential concerns. The past few chapters demonstrated that spiritual fitness training has served as the vehicle for this kind of education in the military. Spiritual fitness education in CSF was remarkably similar to the military’s previous programs with a few notable exceptions.

Although it packaged spirituality as a fitness concept like Fit to Win, it was required training like the CGP. Also like the CGP, the CSF repeatedly promoted an outward-looking orientation. While the CGP promoted belief in God for the sake of democracy and to curb delinquent behavior, the CSF articulated that soldiers needed to believe in a higher power for their own health and wellbeing. The CGP’s endorsement grew increasingly unacceptable as perceptions of what could be promoted in the public sphere shifted in the 1960s. But the CSF could advocate for a belief in something greater because of its empirically-demonstrated health utility. Additionally, CSF could mandate spiritual training with the understanding that it was not necessarily related to religious belief or practice.

Both the argument that spirituality was not necessarily religious and that that it was good for health were granted more authority by work in the R/S field and by Pargament's work in particular, who helped craft the CSF spiritual fitness component. However, as the first section demonstrated, conceptually distinguishing spirituality from religion has been difficult in the field and it has appeared that Pargament's constructions of the term overlooked the possibility that non-theists might have sufficient coping mechanisms. The CSF's version of spiritual fitness also implied that the best way to be spiritually fit was to believe in God.

This section argues that such efforts to cultivate understandings of existential wellbeing deserve scrutiny because they necessarily entail making subjective assumptions. The R/S field and the CSF program both attempted to provide guidelines to help people navigate existential concerns. The former attempted to study what spiritual and religious meanings and practices help people thrive, and the latter attempted to teach soldiers about those findings. Both of these processes--the research process and the implementation process--were political, ultimately necessitating making personal value judgements. These judgements in the research process were clear, for example, in Hill *et al.*'s determination of what qualified as a correct orientation to the sacred. Such decisions were demonstrated in the implementation process when, for example, the CSF crafted spiritual fitness as necessarily supporting army values.

The political potential of R/S work and the suggestions for how to implement it are visible in a few other notable examples. Harold Koenig's 1999 book, *The Healing Power of Faith: How Belief and Prayer Can Help You Triumph over Disease*, illumined how personal assumptions might shape conceptions about religion and spirituality and

play a significant role in prescribing beliefs and behaviors.¹⁸⁴ The chapter titled “Helping Yourself and Your Loved Ones Benefit from the Power of Faith” advertised research-based advice to people at various stages of belief, including those who were “not religious” and those “not yet ready to consider religion.”¹⁸⁵

Based on research suggesting religion’s healing potential, Koenig advised nonreligious people to “keep an open mind to the existence of God and the value of religion or spirituality in your own life and in society.”¹⁸⁶ The nonreligious should “discuss God and faith with a religious person whose principles, behavior, and lifestyle you respect and who will accept you without being judgmental.”¹⁸⁷ Koenig indicated that not believing in God was a possibly ignorant perspective in his comment, “As you ponder God’s place in the world we can see and touch, bear in mind that cutting-edge scientific disciplines such as molecular biology and astrophysics point increasingly toward order rather than sterile chaos in the universe.”¹⁸⁸ Implicated was the idea that order in the world was evidence of God’s existence, a fundamental premise of intelligent design theology.

Koenig also made assumptions about why a person might not believe in God. He reasoned that perhaps they had had “bad experiences with religion,” and suggested that one could begin to heal by discussing those experiences “with a religious person you respect” and by visiting a church or synagogue.¹⁸⁹ Not just any place of worship would be helpful, however.

¹⁸⁴Harold Koenig, *The Healing Power of Faith: How Belief and Prayer Can Help You Triumph over Disease* (New York: Touchstone, 1999).

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 280-282.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 280.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 280.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 281.

Agnostic readers were instructed to find a place “that is ‘alive,’” and that they ought to “be ready to give of yourself” by getting to know the people there.¹⁹⁰ The unbeliever could be helped by reading the works “of inspired people of deep faith such as C.S. Lewis; Dr. Albert Schweitzer; Harold Kushner; Martin Luther King, Jr.; Mother Teresa; and Billy Graham.”¹⁹¹ Reading scriptures “like the Torah or Christian Bible in contemporary versions--for example, *The Living Bible* by Tyndale Publishers” would also help, Koenig added.¹⁹²

Last, Koenig gave advice to those who were “simply not yet ready to consider religion.” The tone indicated the expectation that everyone, if they only examined this research, would see the value in religion and work towards being religious. He suggested that these people study how “truly religious or spiritual persons” at work or in the neighborhood acted and then emulate them.¹⁹³ Koenig also suggested that they should strive to be generous and invest in others, apparently assuming that such actions could not be taken for granted among the nonreligious.¹⁹⁴ He recommended meditation as a possible mechanism for increasing religious interest. Most of all, he urged the unbeliever to “honestly reexamine your personal experiences with religion, particularly the negative aspects,” and then proceeded to debunk the likely source of those negative experiences.¹⁹⁵ Negative religious experiences, Koenig explained, often resulted from frightening theological concepts like “eternal damnation which [saw] God as judgmental or punishing.”¹⁹⁶ But his research suggested that “spiritually healthy people” “accentuate[d] the

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³Ibid.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., 281-82.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., 282.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

positive, and not the negative.” Healthy people “focus[ed] on God’s love, kindness, generosity, and forgiveness--seeing all of us as imperfect, and dependent on God’s mercy.”¹⁹⁷

This logic and its assumptions provoke concerns regarding work that cultivates existential issues. The claim that science confirms particular beliefs as healthy has the power to imply, as Koenig implied in these examples, that particular beliefs about God might be true because they are reflected positively in the natural body. R/S work thus has the potential to operate apologetically, appearing to confirm with scientific evidence assumptions about God’s existence, the meaning of life, or the possibility of an afterlife.

Such R/S work implies that a progressive, intelligent position to have, given the data, is one that is open to religion and belief in God. In Koenig’s explanations of why some people were not religious, he did not acknowledge that some people might find religious belief or practice intellectually, morally, or socially untenable. As a consequence, secularists are implicated as recalcitrant, pessimistic, provincial, self-absorbed, and certainly unhealthy.

The possibility of conceiving nonreligious people as able to make meaning on their own terms was quickly curtailed in Koenig’s discussion. He suggested that that the nonreligious might be able to reap some health benefits by “adapt[ing] the suggestions for religious people into your own situation.”¹⁹⁸ However, he also warned readers that just going through the prescribed motions was not enough to receive the “full” benefits of faith, suggesting that “simply going to church will not make anyone religious or spiritual--no more than sitting in your garage will turn you into a car.”¹⁹⁹ In other words, one could not expect full health benefits from

¹⁹⁷Ibid.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., 281.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., 271.

behaving religiously; a person must internalize belief. Koenig and other R/S researchers, including Pargament, have in other work explicitly identified "intrinsic" faith (or "deeply held" faith) as far more powerful than "extrinsic" faith.²⁰⁰ The resulting message was that one might receive some benefit from going to church or reading scripture, but the real benefits came from being committed personally to a life of belief.

This is one quandary that the R/S field faces on the path to publicly implementing its findings: if the general understanding exists that deeply-held religious faith is best for one's health, then it would appear that public implementation programs would either include education and techniques aimed at fostering intrinsic religious faith or, if the role of faith was downplayed in the effort to include secular communities, they would provide substandard service. One result is potentially illegal and the other is ineffective.

Koenig did however demonstrate an awareness of his prescriptions' coercive potential by claiming that he was not providing "spiritual counseling" but tips based on scientific conclusions.²⁰¹ Yet these two are not necessarily mutually exclusive and it was unclear which of his recommendations did *not* qualify as "spiritual counseling" even if they were based on empirical data. As the R/S field continues to implement its findings, it will be important for lawmakers and public institutions to determine where the line between proselytism and prescription exists.

Another concern related to implementation demonstrated by Koenig's advice reflects the fact that prescriptions are often formed from interpretations of the data. Many of Koenig's

²⁰⁰See, for example, Kenneth Pargament, "Of Means and Ends: Religion and the Search for Significance," *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 2, no. 4 (1992): 201-229; and Harold Koenig and Arndt Bussing, "The Duke University Religion Index (DUREL): A Five-Item Measure for Use in Epidemiological Studies," *Religions* 1 (2010): 78-79.

²⁰¹Koenig, *The Healing Power of Faith*, 267.

suggestions were not themselves empirically-based, even if they related to empirically-based data. For example, while there are studies that correlate church attendance and reading inspirational materials with increased well-being, it is doubtful that any study has concluded that attending an “alive” church or reading the writings of C.S. Lewis specifically would reduce blood-pressure. It is similarly doubtful that data suggested that reading a contemporary version of scripture (such as the Tyndale *Living Bible*) would benefit a person more than reading, for example, the King James Bible, or poetry by the Sufist Rumi, secular self-help like Tony Robbins’ *Unlimited Power*, or *The Economist* magazine for that matter.

Koenig’s suggestions might be explained by the understanding that he wrote from what he knew. One might counter that Koenig had simply given suggestions that one might be free to alter in the pursuit of helping herself to the “healing power of faith.” This may be, but these details are far more than mere suggestions. Rather, they are essential to the structural foundation of the production of knowledge about religion and spirituality as it relates to health. They steer the reader in the direction of “healthy” and thus “good” religion as the researcher interprets it. Whether intentional or not, the suggestion that one read C.S. Lewis or Harold Kushner steers the reader towards an understanding of good, healthy behavior and belief as falling within the Western, Judeo-Christian religious mainstream and away from other possible forms of religious belief. The reader is also steered away from considering the possibility that secular worldviews and communities could offer any substantive moral motivation or hermeneutic security.

Another concern given the political potential of the R/S field is the apparent assumption among some researchers that the religious know what is good for people better than the nonreligious, and that researchers know best. Researcher Christina Puchalski’s suggestions for how to implement “spiritual care” in hospitals demonstrate this assumption in *Making Health*

*Care Whole: Integrating Spirituality into Patient Care.*²⁰² She argued that “spirituality should be considered a patient vital sign. Just as pain is screened routinely, so should spiritual issues be a part of routine care.”²⁰³ Puchalski has also advocated for “spiritual screenings,” checklists that patients are required to fill out upon entering the hospital, to be part of routine care. But according to Puchalski, spiritual screenings are not enough, partly because they might falsely indicate that patients are uninterested in spiritual care. She argued that patients might be “too sick” to answer truthfully and might “just check ‘no’ on everything.”²⁰⁴ Because of this, Puchalski recommended having a chaplain visit patients routinely, whether requested or not.²⁰⁵

She suggested that chaplains ought to continue to visit even after patients decline care, identifying such persistence as a sign of “respecting” the patient.²⁰⁶ To bolster this claim, she provided an anecdote about a chaplain who was angrily dismissed by a patient five times. The sixth time the chaplain came for a visit, the patient responded, “Well, I guess you really do care about me.”²⁰⁷ Here spiritual care appears to be something that spiritual care-givers and researchers know that everyone desires deep down, whether they act like it or not. According to Puchalski, “refusal may actually be a way of communicating an indirect message: a way of asking whether anyone cares enough to keep coming back.”²⁰⁸

²⁰²Christina Puchalski and Betty Ferrell, *Making Health Care Whole: Integrating Spirituality into Patient Care* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2010).

²⁰³*Ibid.*, 73.

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 87.

²⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 88.

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 89.

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*

Surely there are instances in which this interpretation would be accurate, but what about the times when they might not be? Like other R/S researchers, Puchalski appeared sensitive to the challenges of such care (she argued that chaplains were trained to approach patients in an ‘open interfaith manner’).²⁰⁹ However, like Koenig’s suggestions to the nonreligious and Pargament’s theistic construction of spiritual health, Puchalski’s advocacy for “spiritual care” left little possibility of conceiving of health and the path to wellness in any way that did not ultimately include an intervention that might truly be unwelcome.

Critics like psychiatrist Richard Sloan of Columbia University Medical Center have argued that the premise that religion and spirituality are good for health appeared to be taken for granted rather than vigorously queried. One of the most penetrating and well-known critiques of R/S work on spirituality is that “spirituality” is often defined as enabling positive psychological states from the outset.²¹⁰ Such studies that define spirituality as a state of wellbeing thus tautologically claim, for example, that a state of wellbeing correlates with good mental health. This definitional trend reveals the *a priori* expectation that spirituality, if nothing else is known about it, is a good thing.

Par Salander, a researcher at Umea University in Sweden, also pointed out “spirituality’s” great political potential in the 2006 article, “Who Needs the Concept of ‘Spirituality’?.” Salander argued that the R/S research field’s tendency to conceptualize existential concerns as the purview of religion or spirituality and to dismiss secular cultures as uncaring about existential concerns was the product of American culture more than anything else. From his perspective, most of the spirituality discourse in R/S work best fit Anglophone religious people from the

²⁰⁹Ibid., 88.

²¹⁰Koenig, ed., *Handbook of Religion and Health*, 40.

United States and the United Kingdom. He thought that the term would not even make sense to “the majority of secularized non-English speaking Europeans.”²¹¹ Salander argued that the core subject matter of R/S work dealt with concerns that could easily employ existential or psychosocial discourse, yet in the United States, the work employed theistically-inflected spirituality discourse. What appeared to be most meaningful about spirituality in such studies, Salander insisted, was what the word “spirituality” indicated about the researcher’s own beliefs.²¹²

Conclusion

As this chapter has argued, the project to cultivate knowledge about spirituality is often political in that personal interests and understandings are likely to tincture the assumptions that are a part of this production. More specifically, some R/S work reflects Judeo-Christian perspectives. CSF demonstrated this proclivity to understand spiritual issues from a Christian perspective in the choice of distinctly Christian subtexts over, for example, Muslim, Jewish, or secular subtexts to illustrate wellbeing topics. Whether the selections of Christian and theistic examples, images, and testimonials were intentional or not, these indicated the degree to which a Christian culture--over other religious or nonreligious cultures--had been woven seamlessly into the military’s education of values and wellbeing.

Critic and founder of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation Mikey Weinstein insisted that the use of military spiritual education was clearly a vehicle for

²¹¹Par Salander, “Who Needs the Concept of ‘Spirituality’?,” *Psycho-Oncology* 15 (2006): 648.

²¹²*Ibid.*

conservative evangelical Christian proselytizing.²¹³ Critic Richard Sloan has made similar accusations of the research in the R/S field.²¹⁴ But I suggest that while some of the theistic gesturing likely has been influenced by Judeo-Christian perspectives and motivations, these critics overlook a few important considerations, and these demand a different way of looking at projects to cultivate knowledge about spirituality and the existential concerns the term encapsulates. The primary reason for why spiritual knowledge in R/S work and in the CSF program make these promotions extends far deeper than missional desire.

The United States has a rich history of attributing good things, such as morality, productivity, wellbeing, freedom, and material abundance to a communion with a “something higher,” whether called God, the divine, or transcendent reality.²¹⁵ Certainly there have been exceptions, but generally, American understandings of purpose and meaning, of what constitutes as a good and satisfying life, and of what allows people to withstand hardship have been built on the same conceptual frame that accepts the existence of God and often, that values religious practice. This framework is partly why in America, religion, understood as a social and ideological tool for directly addressing existential concerns, has served such an important role in American life.

While interpretations regarding what can be articulated in the public sphere have shifted since the 1950s, my work shows that the basic cultural understanding that ties belief in God (or

²¹³Barbara Haggerty, “Army’s ‘Spiritual Fitness’ Test Angers Some Soldiers,” *National Public Radio*, January 13, 2011, April 20, 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2011/01/13/132904866/armys-spiritual-fitness-test-angers-some-soldiers>.

²¹⁴Sloan, *Blind Faith*, 3-14.

²¹⁵Historical surveys such as Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism* (1905; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 2002), Perry Miller’s *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1956), and Sidney Mead’s *The Lively Experiment* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1963), overview how American politics, economics, and life have shaped and been shaped by Christian belief and practice.

at least the “outward and upward” orientation such belief requires) to the ability to flourish is often still woven into narratives about wellbeing. Both the military’s CSF and some R/S work exemplified this tendency. Pargament’s work demonstrated such a framework in claiming that the common catalyst for good health in religion and spirituality was a search for “the Sacred,” defined as “God, the divine, [or a] transcendent reality.”²¹⁶ Yet this claim regarding the Sacred is partly explained by the fact that until very recently in the United States, the particularities of American culture and history have made difficult the salience of an alternative understanding.²¹⁷ In contemporary American history, only since the 1960s did being nonreligious begin to be more culturally-acceptable and only in the twenty-first century has atheism begun to shed negative stigmas.²¹⁸

It may be that Pargament’s contention that a search for the sacred can make a person health and happy *is* based on solid scientific research, but this evidence indicates a cultural framework for understanding existential concerns more that it indicates a single formula for health and happiness. The danger in mistaking such evidence as being widely prescriptive is that it overlooks the ways in which the methods for cultivating existential concerns might vary and shift over time within a culture.

Indeed, American beliefs have been shifting in ways that likely affect traditional conceptions of existential concern. According to a Pew Research Center report from 2014, the

²¹⁶Pargament, *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy*, 49.

²¹⁷Penny Edgell, Joseph Gerteis, and Douglas Harmann’s “Atheists as ‘Other’: Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society,” *American Sociological Review* 71 (April 2006): 211-234 offers a detailed account of the factors in American culture that have contributed to the difficulty of recognizing atheist positions.

²¹⁸David Williamson and George Yancey, *There is No God: Atheists in America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013), 2.

number of nonreligious Americans rose from 21 million in 2007 to 36.1 million in 2014.²¹⁹ Furthermore, these nonreligious Americans (referred to sometimes as “nones”) appeared to be growing more secular with time. In the same seven year time span, “nones” prayed less often, attended religious services less, and reported believing in God less.²²⁰ A different Pew Research Center report found that the number of atheists in the United States had risen from 1.6% to 3.1% from 2007 to 2014, and the number of agnostics had increased from 2.4% to 4.0% in the same timeframe.²²¹

Yet the idea that atheists and secular people are not morally motivated and incapable of making positive or sustaining meaning has also long existed in the United States and in the military.²²² The fact that the book *Good without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People Do Believe* was perceived as a necessary corrective in 2009 by the humanist chaplain author Greg Epstein suggested that the stigma of secular people as immoral was persistent even in the twenty-first century.

Some R/S work provided evidence for Epstein’s perception. For example, in the 2012 *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Health*, Koenig described secular people, secular humanists, or others who had “no belief in, connection with, or desire to connect to the transcendent, the sacred, God, or the supernatural” as not “connected with anything outside of the human

²¹⁹Michael Lipka, “Religious ‘Nones’ Are Not Only Growing, They’re Becoming More Secular,” *Pew Research Center*, November 11, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/11/religious-nones-are-not-only-growing-theyre-becoming-more-secular/>.

²²⁰*Ibid.*

²²¹Michael Lipka, “7 Facts about Atheists,” *Pew Research Center*, November 6, 2016, January 24, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/05/7-facts-about-atheists/>.

²²²Stephen LeDrew, *The Evolution of Atheism: The Politics of a Modern Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 137.

experience or nature.”²²³ He further identified secular people as believing that “anything that cannot be observed and verified does not exist and does not matter.”²²⁴ Koenig recognized that secular people might still have values and ethics, but *if* they did any “searching” at all, it was “for purely secular objects or goals.”²²⁵ Given these assumptions, one could interpret Koenig as suggesting that “secular” people are much less motivated to care about anything or anyone in ways that did not personally benefit them. Because secular people did not believe in “the transcendent” or “the sacred” this had the power to imply that they were closed off in every way.

However, Salander’s claim that the relevance of “spirituality” as a health term in the United States relies on social and cultural understandings particular to American culture has merit. My work demonstrates that “spirituality” is a constructed term that reflects personal beliefs about a variety of important yet contested issues regarding human nature, the existence of God, and what counts as a life well lived. In the United States, the answers to existential issues historically have been negotiated by religion, and this no doubt has contributed to findings in the R/S field.

Yet this does not mean that R/S work is ultimately inflexible or disingenuous. Many R/S researchers, including Koenig, Pargament and Puchalski, appear to be sensitive to the fact that others may have different perspectives than their own and that ideologies can shift. They have each articulated the desire to proceed with R/S research and its implementation in ethical ways.²²⁶ Additionally, the fact that the field attempted to understand the “spiritual but not

²²³Koenig, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Health*, 47.

²²⁴*Ibid.*

²²⁵*Ibid.*

²²⁶E.g., see Harold Koenig, *Spirituality in Patient Care: Why, How, When and What* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2013); John Gonsiorek, Scott Richards, Kenneth Pargament, Mark McMinn, “Ethical Challenges and Opportunities at the Edge: Incorporating Spirituality and Religion into Psychotherapy,” *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 40, no. 4 (2009): 385-395; Stephen Post, Christina Puchalski, David Larson,

religious” phenomenon soon after it was widely recognized gestured to a desire to be inclusive and a willingness to shift with the times. There is no reason to doubt that R/S field researchers are motivated by the desire to provide better, more humane, care.

It is likely that secular communities have been overlooked in the field partly because their growth and visibility is largely unprecedented and relatively recent. If these groups continue to grow in the United States as predicted, studies of secular ways of negotiating existential concerns will become more and more important.²²⁷ Such studies would have the power to provide insight regarding how one might have sustaining meaning and purpose, moral conviction or respect for human life without subscribing to belief in God or utilizing the language of the spirit. Moreover, the results of such studies may have the ability to nuance the message that religion and spirituality are healthy.

The basic impetus of R/S work to take seriously the role of personal belief for wellbeing was an attempt to correct health paradigms that overlooked the value of existential concerns for health and wellbeing. While such work is important, what demands careful consideration is whether or not generalizations can be made at all regarding existential concerns, and if so, whether or not these can be implemented without transgressing freedoms.

The next chapter more fully examines these issues by investigating the reactions of public communities and atheist military groups to CSF’s requirement of spiritual fitness education. The CSF spiritual fitness requirement, which was made possible partly by R/S work, did indeed “raise a hornet’s nest,” just like Galton’s study of prayer.

“Physicians and Patient Spirituality: Professional Boundaries, Competency, and Ethics,” *Annals of Internal Medicine* 132, no. 7 (2000): 578-583.

²²⁷Pew Research Center, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050,” April 3, 2015, January 24, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/02/7-key-changes-in-the-global-religious-landscape/>.

CHAPTER SIX

The Rise of Secular Military Communities: The Requirement of Spiritual Fitness Training Challenged

Self-titled “foxhole atheist” Sgt. Justin Griffith was appalled by his Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) Global Assessment Tool (GAT) results, which indicated that he was “spiritually unfit.”¹ Because Griffith expressed that he was not a spiritual person, did not believe that his life had lasting meaning, or that his life was closely connected to all humanity and the world, the computer-based test identified him as having low spiritual fitness. As a result, the program suggested, “You may lack a sense of meaning and purpose in your life. At times, it is hard for you to make sense of what is happening to you and others around you. You may not feel connected to something larger than yourself. You may question your beliefs, principles and values. There are things to do to provide more meaning and purpose in your life.”² The test prompted, “Improving your spiritual fitness should be an important goal.”³

The GAT, a survey of 105 questions, was a mandatory component of the CSF program meant to compliment the module education.⁴ In 2009, soldiers were required to take the GAT

¹Barbara Bradley Hagerty, “Army’s ‘Spiritual Fitness’ Test Angers Some Soldiers,” *National Public Radio*, January 13, 2011, accessed November 7, 2011, <http://m.kpbs.npr.org/news/U.S./132904866?page=2>.

²Hagerty, “Army’s ‘Spiritual Fitness’ Test.”

³Ibid.

⁴Paul Lester, P.D. Harms, Mitch Herian, and Walter Sowden, “A Force of Change: Chris Peterson & the U.S. Army’s Global Assessment Tool,” *Journal of Positive Psychology* (2014): 1.

every two years and within 180 days after deployment.⁵ In an interview in 2010, Griffith explained why he thought the test was offensive: “It seems like my destiny is all messed up and that I am unfit to serve in the United States Army, if you believe the results of this test. When I think of the word spirituality I go to the root of the word: spirit. I don’t believe in that.”⁶

The concept of “spiritual fitness” in the CSF program was meant to offer guidance regarding the existential hardships of war that soldiers faced. CSF spirituality was supposed to be broad enough to cater to a diverse military population. However, several secular military groups publicly protested that the program’s implementation of spiritual fitness education and testing best served theistic, religious populations and that the term indicated that secular ways of meaning-making were ultimately deficient.

This chapter examines how particular secular military communities challenged what they understood to be the military’s religiously and theistically geared “spiritual fitness” paradigm, mostly through public protests and activism. The first section describes how several Christian groups accommodated the “spiritual fitness” term in publications and events aimed at the military community and tracks the protests of “spiritual fitness” events made by several secular military groups. The second section examines a specific instance in which one secular military community attempted to negotiate the value of “spiritual fitness,” revealing a range of opinion regarding the “right” way for secularists to navigate existential concerns.

Perhaps ironically, CSF’s spiritual fitness requirement provided a platform for protest that allowed secular orientations visibility for the first time in the American military. Thus, this chapter’s examination of how the “spiritual fitness” concept was negatively received illumines

⁵U.S. Army, “Global Assessment Tool,” *Stand-To!*, December 8, 2009, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2009/12/08/>.

⁶Ibid.

not just how and why interpretations of spirituality can differ so widely, but offers a perspective of how growing military atheist and nonreligious groups have attempted to solidify and affirm secular identities in the twenty-first century military.

Spiritual Fitness Initiatives and the Rise of Secular Groups in the Twenty-first Century Military

A year after spiritual fitness became a requirement for soldiers, various watchdog organizations, such as the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF), the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF), and the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers (MAAF) argued that spiritual fitness education promoted Christian beliefs and practices. The single most influential person in this secular protest movement was Sgt. Justin Griffith, a 29-year-old from Plano, Texas.

Griffith described his upbringing as formed by fundamentalist Christian values.⁷ Before he lost faith in God at 13, he was known as the quick-witted student who used the Bible to debate the merits of evolution with his science teachers. Eventually, Griffith began to feel that his opponents made points that he could not refute. He recalled in an interview that losing his faith was one of the most traumatic events in his life.⁸

Although Griffith's disavowal of his faith was not unfamiliar among his generational cohort, he found military culture especially ostracizing to those without faith. In 2011, Griffith began to build up a strong web presence by relentlessly advocating for secular communities and

⁷Kate Dailey, "Can the US Army Embrace Atheists?," *BBC News*, February 3, 2012, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-16859421>.

⁸*Ibid.*

reporting religious biases in the military on the blog site, “Rock Beyond Belief.”⁹ After protesting his spiritual fitness GAT results on this site in December 2010, he agreed to an interview on National Public Radio in January 2011.¹⁰ That same month, Griffith helped found the MAAF chapter called Military Atheist and Secular Humanist (MASH) at his home base in Fort Bragg, North Carolina.¹¹ Then in 2012, he helped orchestrate the first atheist event ever held on a military base.

Three other previously mentioned groups, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF), the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers (MAAF), and the Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) were also active in arguing that spirituality in military training opened up the door to illegal discriminations by requiring service members to be theistic. MAAF charged that CSF spirituality illegally required soldiers to exercise belief in “supernatural ‘spirits’” and to practice “religious piety,” while MRFF President Mikey Weinstein argued that the spiritual fitness test was the product of the “draconian fundamentalist parachurch-military-corporate proselytizing complex.”¹² In a letter to Secretary of the Army John McHugh, FFRF’s co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor suggested that the GAT was illegal, noting, “It is ironic that while nonbelievers are fighting to protect freedoms for all Americans, their freedoms are being trampled upon by this Army practice.”¹³ All three organizations contended

⁹<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rockbeyondbelief/>, accessed January 27, 2016.

¹⁰Justin Griffith, “Mandatory Army Survey Says Atheists are Unfit to be Soldiers,” *Rock Beyond Belief* (blog), December 22, 2010, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rockbeyondbelief/2010/12/22/mandatory-army-survey-says-atheists-are-unfit-to-be-soldiers/>.

¹¹“MASH,” accessed January 9, 2016, <http://mashfortbragg.org/index.php>.

¹²Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, “Army Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Case for Change,” accessed January 27, 2016; Michael De Groote, “Atheists Angry Over Army’s ‘Spiritual Fitness’ Test,” January 17, 2011, accessed January 27, 2016, <https://www.ksl.com/?sid=14030222>.

¹³Freedom from Religion Foundation, “FFRF Blasts Army ‘Spiritual Fitness’ Survey,” *Freethought Today* 28, no. 1 (January/February 2011).

that the program's basic assumptions about what makes for a flourishing life, wrapped up in the package of spiritual fitness education, were biased against nontheistic perspectives.

The fact that two of these groups had formed officially within four years of CSF2's launch (MRFF in 2005 and MAAF in 2006) says much about the time period of the early 21st century.¹⁴ The conditions in that time were apparently particularly conducive to *both* the institutionalization of spiritual education and the public formation of secular groups in the military. Chapter Five highlighted the particular conditions in which research on religion, spirituality, and health was initiated, described some of the ways that top researchers were discussing how to implement this work in public health care, and detailed what spiritual fitness looked like in the CSF program. This section examines how the public implementation of the "spiritual fitness" concept spring-boarded burgeoning atheist, agnostic, and freethinker movements into the public limelight for the first time in the military, allowing these groups public visibility and monetary support.

One of the main issues that merited discussion among nontheistic communities and the general public was the confusing use of the phrase "spiritual fitness" in the program. Was spirituality simply a vehicle for religious indoctrination as Weinstein has argued, or did it fairly communicate universal existential concerns? Part of what made understanding CSF's specific usage of the "spiritual fitness" term difficult was the fact that the phrase had been used by religious groups in unofficial publications and to promote spiritual fitness events, both aimed at the service member population. It appeared that the term "spiritual fitness" had achieved an unusual cohesiveness among conservative Christians especially, and organizations like MAAF

¹⁴ MAAF was founded in 1998, but achieved non-profit status in 2006. "Military Atheists," accessed January 9, 2016, <http://militaryatheists.org/about/>.

pointed to these religious iterations of “spiritual fitness” to argue that the term was prone to Christian inflections.

As a result, spiritual fitness had the potential to accumulate particular meanings that were possibly unintended by CSF developers like Kenneth Pargament. The following are three examples of how different Christian groups developed their own understandings of spiritual fitness. Each group’s cultivation relied on the authority of the CSF program’s basic premise that spiritual fitness was critical for soldiers’ health to promote its own version of spirituality as necessary for service members’ wellbeing.

The Spiritual Fitness Guide

According to MASH, a chaplain at Fort Bragg (author names, unit, and crest were redacted from the online copy) created and distributed a 67 page booklet titled, *Spiritual Fitness Guide*.¹⁵ In a post protesting CSF’s usage of “spiritual fitness,” Griffith pointed to this Guide to insinuate that CSF was promoting the same sort of religious beliefs. While he did not take offense at the existence of this religious publication, he expressed his outrage at the GAT, which he thought communicated the same Christian conception of spiritual fitness as this publication.¹⁶

The *Spiritual Fitness Guide* cover featured a large chaplain emblem and the author’s name, unit and crest. The Commander (name redacted) introduced the importance of spiritual fitness by suggesting that it was especially important for “building resiliency and balance in a

¹⁵“Spiritual Fitness Guide” (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), pdf file. Justin Griffith reported this guide in the post, “MSNBC and NPR Cover Mandatory Soldier Fitness Tracker Tests for Spiritual Fitness/Religion,” *Rock Beyond Belief* (blog), January 14, 2011. Griffith stated that the Guide was not mandatory reading material for soldiers, but that it was “plainly available” in every unit building he had been in.

¹⁶Ibid.

fast-paced culture.”¹⁷ He acknowledged that the guide was “written from a Christian perspective” but hoped that everyone could “find solace in reading the guide.”¹⁸ The Commander suggested that the guide was not meant to promote a particular religion, but to “encourage, inspire, motivate and promote resiliency.”¹⁹ The guide was advertised as important enough that a contributing chaplain encouraged service members to keep it “at your fingertips throughout your rotation.”²⁰ The inside listed a collection of “Emergency Scripture Numbers,” organized to address particular hardships. Instructions for spiritual exercises such as the “Biblical Guidelines for Prayer” and “The Process of Reading Scriptures” were also included.

The role of God in boosting spiritual fitness was unambiguous in the guide. The introduction explicitly stated that the guide was “not written to create spirituality; only God can do that,” suggesting that an individual could not be self-guided into a place of spiritual wellness.²¹ Spiritual stability was the product of a relationship with God.

Several examples promoted a very particular understanding of God—one that appeared to have evangelical and charismatic leanings. For example, the guide’s introduction opened with the Billy Graham quote, “Mankind has two great cries. One of those cries is for forgiveness. The second cry is for goodness. God answered that first cry at the cross. He answered the second cry at Pentecost by sending the Blessed Holy Spirit to live in the hearts of all who dare to trust Him.”²² A devotional about “spiritual warfare” warned of Satan’s plan “to keep people

¹⁷“Spiritual Fitness Guide,” 5.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., 6.

²¹Ibid., 7.

²²Ibid., 8.

from knowing God,” and stated that “[Satan was] responsible for all of the evil or hurt in the world.”²³

Like other renditions of spiritual fitness training, the guide argued that it was especially important for soldiers to boost their spiritual fitness because spiritual fitness was “a combat multiplier.”²⁴ If soldiers wanted to be spiritually fit and thus adept at combat, then “daily prayer and devotion to God” were critical disciplines.²⁵ Snippets such as “The Soldier’s Creed,” “Tribute to an American Soldier,” “Patton’s Rules to Live By,” and “Colin Powell’s Rules” reinforced the trope of the spiritually fit soldier.²⁶

Spiritual Fitness Manual

The *Spiritual Fitness Manual: For Military Service Members*, published by the Military Bible Publisher in 2010, also provided a portrait of spiritual fitness that was career-oriented and influenced by Christian thought. This manual, composed of 44 chapters that ranged from such topics as “Spiritual Fitness and Money Management” to “Becoming a Warrior Worshipper,” was edited by U.S. Army Chaplain Mark Johnston and explained the spiritual fitness concept as “‘being right’ with God, with others and with oneself.”²⁷ According to the manual, those who were “right with God” were “happier” than people who were “out of step with God’s Spirit,” the

²³Ibid., 43.

²⁴Ibid., 37.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., 11, 12, 15, 28 respectively.

²⁷Mark Johnston, ed., *The Spiritual Fitness Manual: For Military Service Members* (New York: The Military Bible Publisher, 2010), 1.

manual argued.²⁸ Soldiers were taught that one could achieve a “right” relationship by engaging in “prayer, meditation, worship, fellowship and Bible reading.”²⁹

While CSF had articulated that being spiritually fit was a necessary component of serving in the military, this manual insinuated that the inverse was also true: that “serv[ing] God and our Nation while pursuing our own personal goals” was the essence of what it meant to be spiritually fit.³⁰ The manual taught that the role of the soldier (“a Warrior for our Nation”) and the spiritual seeker (“a Worshipper of God”) were both “high calling[s] requiring intense training and conviction.”³¹ Warriors’ occupational circumstances required them to become “worshippers” and to be “right with God.”³² Being “right with God” was identified as what enabled one to “be right with others,” reiterating the understanding that one could not be morally upright without faith in God.³³

The first chapter, titled “A Soldier’s Spiritual Fitness,” aligned with Fit to Win and CSF messages by promoting spirituality as something a soldier needed to be healthy. The author, Chief of Army Chaplains Douglas L. Carver, argued that “spiritual workouts” were just as important as physical workouts, and would “ensure the resilience, endurance and strength of our souls.”³⁴ Unlike CSF texts that could be interpreted as suggesting that a person might generate spiritual fitness on her own, the manual was explicit. According to Carver, soldiers could

²⁸Ibid., 2.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 44.

³³Ibid., 2.

³⁴Ibid., 3.

increase their spiritual fitness by “lift[ing] up [y]our true condition to God,” whom he identified as “the true Source of spiritual power.”³⁵

Carver used biological analogies to explain the mechanics of spiritual fitness. Maintaining fellowship with God through prayer and reading the Bible were to the spirit what oxygen was to the body. Carver explained that just as a person needed more oxygen with harder running, calling upon God in prayer grew more necessary with increased trials. Furthermore, the Bible was like “protein” for the soul in that it contained “the promises of God” which Carver emphasized were just as essential for life, stamina, and performance as “protein and vitamin supplements” found in “health and fitness stores.”³⁶

The introduction concluded by suggesting that if soldiers attended to their spiritual fitness by eating “protein” and breathing “oxygen,” they would be able to accomplish “all that God and the military call you to do.” According to the manual, spiritual fitness was the most important form of fitness since it would enable the development of all other areas, including the body, mind and soul. It would also allow a person to “develop strong morals and ideals, your sense of meaning, and your ability to positively contribute to the lives of others.” Carver reiterated that a soldier who was spiritually fit or “remain[ing] bold in the service of God and others” was destined to finish strong in life’s journey!”³⁷

The understanding that spiritual fitness entailed having a connection to God remained apparent throughout the manual. For example, Air Force Chief of Chaplains Chaplain Cecil Richardson began the segment titled “Spiritual Fitness and Military Values ‘Above All’” with

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

the assertion that “the spiritually fit person begins the journey of a spiritual life by holding to the hand of God!”³⁸ Richardson recommended the following commitment for those in the air force: “Above All [sic], I will be an airman of integrity. I will fly high spiritually and endure all hardships. I will be cheerful and in doing so, encourage others. I will be patient and understanding with all people. I will seek to walk humbly with my God. I accept God’s unconditional love.”³⁹ Richardson clearly understood faith in God as integral to the work of an “airman.”

Faith in God was also promoted as an important suicide prevention method. The section titled “Spiritual Fitness and Suicide Prevention” argued that “the answer to suicidal thinking is in knowing that you are not alone and that you are loved. God stands with His arms open to you. His touch can heal your deepest wounds. Call out to Him and await His salvation.”⁴⁰ According to the manual, because spiritual fitness necessitated a belief in God, it could bring a lonely person suffering from a lack of self-worth comfort and dignity, potentially reversing risky behaviors that might result in suicide.

The *Spiritual Fitness Guide* and the *Spiritual Fitness Manual* offer two examples of how religious groups offered particular formulations of the spiritual fitness concept for the military population. There is no evidence that these publications were widely distributed or made mandatory reading. However, their existence suggests two things. First, these suggest that some conservative, evangelical Christians had a stake in shaping their own understandings of “spiritual fitness” and in making these understandings accessible and relevant to those in the military.

³⁸Ibid., 7.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., 27.

Chapter Three discussed how evangelicals began to see the military as a viable mission field in the 1970s, and it is possible that similar impulses were at play in these publications.

Spiritual Fitness Concerts

The most controversial application of the “spiritual fitness” term outside of the official CSF program was in the deployment of “Spiritual Fitness Concerts.” These concerts were the invention of Major General James E. Chambers, the Commanding General at Fort Eustis, Virginia in 2010.⁴¹ A self-professed “born-again” Christian, Chambers orchestrated the concerts, also known as the “Commander’s Spiritual Fitness Concerts,” under the assumption that contemporary music could help instruct the soldiers who lacked a moral upbringing so that they could become better soldiers.⁴² Although an army article described the concerts as “featuring Christian performers,” Chambers claimed they were not supposed to favor a single religion but were “to have a mix of different performers with different religious backgrounds.”⁴³

The Spiritual Fitness Concert held on May 13, 2010 at Fort Eustis was the first event to bring the concept of spiritual fitness into the light of national scrutiny. Major media outlets reported that soldiers had allegedly been forced to attend the concert, which featured the Christian band BarlowGirl, self-described as “tender-hearted, beautiful young women who aren’t

⁴¹T. Anthony Bell, “Fort Lee Commanding General Reaches out to Soldiers,” July 9, 2008, accessed December 5, 2015, <http://www.army.mil/article/10753/fort-lee-commanding-general-reaches-out-to-soldiers/>.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

afraid to take an aggressive, almost warrior-like stance when it comes to spreading the gospel and serving God.”⁴⁴

One soldier reported to the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) that his entire company (about 250 soldiers) was ordered to march to the concert event, and then were asked to decide whether or not they would attend once there.⁴⁵ He disclosed that a number of soldiers were distressed by the pressure to attend, particularly a few Muslim soldiers. Private Anthony Smith, a soldier in this company, estimated that about 80 of the soldiers chose not to attend.⁴⁶ These soldiers were marched back to their barracks and put on lock-down, which meant that they were not allowed to leave their barracks, sit on their beds, or use electronic devices.⁴⁷ The soldier maintained that those who stayed behind were told that if they were caught doing anything other than “maintenance” during the concert, their weekend passes would be revoked and they would have to be on maintenance duty for the whole weekend.

Only one soldier out of twenty who initially said they were going to file a complaint did.⁴⁸ According to Smith, the others were pressured “into accepting that nothing wrong had occurred.”⁴⁹ Secular groups such as the MRFF were outraged.

In a news segment produced by *RT America*, MRFF President Mikey Weinstein argued that “When this has happened to you in a military context, you feel as if you have gone through

⁴⁴Mike Ludwig, “Troops Punished After Refusing to Attend Evangelical Concert,” *truth-out*, August 20, 2010, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://truth-out.org/archive/component/k2/item/91383:troops-punished-after-refusing-to-attend-evangelical-concert>.

⁴⁵Chris Rhodda, “U.S. Soldiers Punished for not Attending Christian Concert,” *Huffington Post*, August 19, 2010, accessed September 23, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-rodde/us-soldiers-punished-for-_b_687051.html.

⁴⁶Ludwig, “Troops Punished.”

⁴⁷Rhodda, “U.S. Soldiers Punished.”

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Ludwig, “Troops Punished.”

spiritual rape. If you're even being slightly evangelized by your military superiors in the military, 'get the [bleeped expletive] out of *my* face, sir, or ma'm' is not an option for you."⁵⁰ In a *truth-out.org* article dated August 20, 2010, Weinstein remarked that if the concert were Islamic, it would have never occurred. He added that most of his "MRFF clients [were] Christians who [were] told that they [were] 'not the right kind of Christian' while serving in the military."⁵¹ To Weinstein, this was inappropriate Christian proselytizing, pure and simple. He threatened to prepare a federal lawsuit on behalf of Private Anthony Smith and another soldier who remained anonymous.⁵² In 2011 the issue was at least partially resolved when Army Training and Doctrine Command spokesman Harvey Perritt stated that the Fort Eustis event was the result of a misunderstanding.⁵³

The Fort Eustis controversy suggested to some that "spiritual fitness" was a vehicle for Christian proselytism. At stake were the rights of non-Christians, religious "nones," and non-theists to make life-sustaining meaning in their own ways. Could non-theistic groups achieve the same recognition and support in the army as theistic groups when it came to orchestrating events meant to encourage and sustain soldiers? This question was tested by another controversy that developed in 2010 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Two years after Spiritual Fitness Concerts took place on military bases such as Fort Leonard, Missouri and Fort Lee, Virginia, the Billy Graham Evangelical Association (BGEA)

⁵⁰RT America, "Thou Shall Not Rock-n-Roll?," January 1, 2011, accessed June 2, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q56Fx9SrmRU>.

⁵¹Ludwig, "Troops Punished."

⁵²Jeffrey Lakin, "Atheists in Foxholes: Examining the Current State of Religious Freedom in the United States Military," *First Amendment Law Review* 9 (2010): 2.

⁵³Hugh Lessig, "Army: Misunderstanding Led to Eustis Concert Controversy," *Daily Press*, March 8, 2011, accessed February 21, 2016, http://articles.dailypress.com/2011-03-08/news/dp-nws-eustis-concert-20110308_1_fort-eustis-soldiers-staff-sergeant.

co-sponsored with the Fort Bragg Garrison Religious Support Office a festival similar to the concerts. This festival, planned for Fort Bragg, North Carolina, was one of several “Rock the Fort” events. Duane Gaylord, the vice-president of television, film, and internet for the BGEA, explained that the Rock the Fort festivals, which were modeled after a BGEA-funded summer concert series meant to evangelize to youth, were a “great example of viral ministry.”⁵⁴ These festivals allowed young soldiers to hear “about Jesus for the first time and make a decision right there.”⁵⁵ From Gaylord’s perspective, the festivals were urgently needed because “within weeks, [soldiers] could be shipped off to Afghanistan.” These festivals would provide a Christian understanding of spiritual fitness and equip soldiers “to face very stressful situations in a potentially dangerous environment.”⁵⁶

The Fort Bragg event was promoted on base and in the local community as allowing participants to “have an opportunity to respond to the Gospel Evangelistic message.”⁵⁷ Although the festival was voluntary, it was advertised as involving the cooperation of “Fort Bragg Chaplains and trained counselors from off post Churches and on post Chapels.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, the festival incorporated the military concept of “resiliency” into its offerings by advertising “Biblical Spiritual Resiliency training at our military chapels and local churches.”⁵⁹

⁵⁴Janet Chismar, “Rockin’ Fort Leonard Wood,” Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, October 7, 2009, accessed December 15, 2015, <http://www.billygraham.org/articlepageasparticleid1827>.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Jennifer Rizzo, “Religious Event at Fort Bragg Protested as Violating Constitution,” *religion.blogs.cnn.com* (blog), September 24, 2010, accessed December 15, 2015, <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2010/09/24/religious-event-at-fort-bragg-protested-as-violating-constitution/comment-page-13/>.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

Attendees would be treated to performances by famous Christian artists such as Hawk Nelson, a Christian band voted 2006 “Favorite New Artist” by Christian Country Music Magazine, and Jason Crabb, a famed gospel music artist. Also featured were the “God Rocks Ministry” and speaker Josh Holland, a member of the BGEA.⁶⁰

Just four days before the event was to take place, Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-President of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), wrote a letter of protest to the commanding general of Fort Bragg, Lieutenant General Frank Helmick. She argued that the clear agenda to evangelize gave “the unfortunate appearance that Fort Bragg itself [was] part of not only one soul-winning event, but ongoing religious indoctrination of military staff and the public at large.”⁶¹ Furthermore, she contended, the event was not in compliance with Department of Defense (DoD) policies which forbid giving preferential treatment to particular groups.⁶²

Commanding General Hemlick responded that the event was appropriate because it served the interests of the DoD public affairs, military training, and community relations. He also suggested “that [Fort Bragg] would be willing and able to provide the same support to comparable events sponsored by similar non-Federal entities.”⁶³ Hemlick was quoted as

⁶⁰This information came from a screenshot captured from the BGEA website by MAAF. “Rock the Fort”, *Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers*, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://militaryatheists.org/resources/RTFsite.pdf>. The original had been deleted from the Billy Graham Evangelical Association’s website. In its place was this message: “Bad News: This page doesn’t exist. Good News: God loves you so much that He gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die for your sins. If you believe in Him, turn from your sins, and make Jesus the Lord of your life, you will have eternal life with Him in Heaven.” In a blue box beneath that, the reader is encouraged to pray to Jesus for forgiveness, express belief, and ask for Jesus’ guidance. Then the reader is asked to provide feedback by selecting either the “YES I PRAYED” button or the “I HAVE QUESTIONS” button. This experience emphasized the great drive of the BGEA to share the “good news,” as even a broken link is an opportunity to evangelize.

⁶¹Annie Gaylor to Frank Helmick, “RE: ‘Fort Bragg Rock the Fort’ a First Amendment Violation,” September 21, 2010, accessed December 15, 2015, <http://ffrf.org/uploads/legal/RocktheFort.pdf>.

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³Justin Griffith, “Foxhole Atheist Justin Griffith’s Reply to Fort Bragg Commander,” *Rock Beyond Belief (blog)*, March 24, 2011, accessed December 15, 2015,

recognizing that while the festival did cater to a specific faith group, no service member “should feel pressured to attend.”⁶⁴ He defended the right to have religious events on base and said that his duty lay in “ensur[ing] that the opportunities open to one faith [were] open to all faiths.”⁶⁵

Weinstein expressed doubts about Hemlick’s assertion during a three minute *CNN* “Situation Room” segment on the Rock the Fort controversy that aired on September 24, 2010. He charged that the US military was uniquely receptive to Christian ideology, citing as evidence the distribution of Rock the Fort advertisements to soldiers that included the Bible verse, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”⁶⁶ The event fliers included seven numbered blanks for names of fellow soldiers that one was prompted to “pray for and bring” to the event.⁶⁷

A *CNN* video that covered the controversy confirmed the missional nature of the event. In the video, Will Graham, grandson of evangelist Billy Graham, explained that Rock the Fort was meant to bring soldiers “into God’s army in the sense of giving their life over to Jesus Christ.”⁶⁸ Army post chaplain David Dreier explained the military’s position in the video: “our goal is again not to proselytize ... and our goal is not to coerce anyone.”⁶⁹ The *CNN* video then panned to a June 2 letter written on official Fort Bragg letterhead from Chaplain Dreier that addressed nearby church ministers. The opening line read, “I am privileged to announce an

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rockbeyondbelief/2011/03/24/foxhole-atheist-justin-griffiths-reply-to-fort-bragg-commander/>.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶“The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer,” *CNN*, September 24, 2010.

⁶⁷Jennifer Rizzo, “Religious Event at Fort Bragg,” embedded video, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2010/09/24/religious-event-at-fort-bragg-protested-as-violating-constitution/>.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

exciting event that will change Fort Bragg and the surrounding community.”⁷⁰ Dreier’s letter invited local churches to attend the event, since it was free and open to the public. The BGEA also encouraged local communities to get involved, explaining on its site that “The Rock the Fort outreach is designed to channel new believers into your church.”⁷¹

Weinstein reported that at least one hundred soldiers from Fort Bragg pleaded with him to put a stop to the event that proceeded on September 25, 2010.⁷² In the effort to determine the level of support that the base provided, the FFRF submitted a Freedom of Information Act request for the full disclosure of the event’s expenditures. It was found that the event cost over \$50,000 and that at least \$12,000 of alleged taxpayer funds was spent on advertising, which MASH and FFRF interpreted as governmental endorsement of religion.⁷³ The documents also revealed that the Fort Bragg Religious Support Office (RSO) tasked an Event Action Officer with ensuring that the event “receive[d] wide publicity in all media within a 90-mile radius.”⁷⁴ A memorandum indicated that the RSO was responsible for orchestrating lodging for the artists and speakers that the BGEA brought in, a \$6,668 expenditure.⁷⁵

MASH, MAAF, MRFF and those at the FFRF felt that the army had thrown down the gauntlet in proceeding to support the event despite their protests. On January 25, 2011, Gaylor

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²“‘Rock the Fort’ Draws Controversy,” *WITN.com*, September 25, 2010, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://www.witn.com/home/headlines/103780499.html>.

⁷³“Fort Bragg Rock the Fort 2010 Budget,”(FOIA’d document) found at “FFRF: FOIA Documents Army’s ‘Rock the Fort’ Subsidy,” Freedom from Religion Foundation, January 25, 2011, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/2724-ffrf-foia-documents-armys-rock-the-fort-subsidy>.

⁷⁴Department of the Army, “Memorandum of Instruction (MOI) for Rock the Fort (RTF) Concert, 25 Sep 10,” n/d, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://ffrf.org/uploads/legal/Rock%20the%20Fort%20Department%20Responsibilities.pdf>.

⁷⁵Department of Army, “Memorandum.” Expense data from “Fort Bragg Rock the Fort 2010 Budget.”

summed up the general contention of the groups: “Given [Hemlick’s] earlier response and the Army’s repeated sectarian advancement of evangelical Christianity, it would appear incumbent that Fort Bragg must now offer the equivalent support and assistance to an alternative nonreligious event.”⁷⁶ Griffith, along with the help of MRFF members, set to work immediately to test Hemlick’s assertion that the base would “provide the same support to comparable events sponsored by similar non-Federal entities” by organizing a Fort Bragg-stationed atheist event called “Rock Beyond Belief.”

In mid-February of 2011, the legal department at Fort Bragg approved all of MASH’s requests regarding the festival. Garrison Commander Colonel Stephen J. Sicinski authorized Griffith’s request to hold the event on April 2, 2011, with two exceptions: it had to be held at a much smaller venue than the Parade field where Rock the Fort was held since the program did not include any “chart makers” and the event would not receive any internal funding from Fort Bragg.⁷⁷ Sicinski also reminded Griffith that advertising materials needed to contain a disclaimer that the event was not endorsed by “Fort Bragg, the US Army, or Department of Defense.”⁷⁸

This was not the level of support that MASH and its allies were hoping for. The group sought recourse from Colonel Nelson Van Eck Jr., the Staff Judge Advocate at Fort Bragg. In a letter dated March 3, 2011, FRFF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott argued that “Colonel Sicinski has made clear that Rock Beyond Belief will not receive the same support [as Rock the Fort]. This

⁷⁶“Freedom From Religion Foundation: FOIA Documents Army’s ‘Rock the Fort Subsidy,” *Freedom From Religion Foundation*, January 25, 2011, accessed June 28, 2015, <http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/2724-ffrf-foia-documents-armys-rock-the-fort-subsidy..>

⁷⁷Stephen Sicinski letter to Justin Griffith, dated March 1, 2011, accessed July 9, 2015, <http://ffrf.org/uploads/legal/Griffith%20Letter%202.pdf..>

⁷⁸Ibid.

unequal treatment violates the Establishment Clause, the Free Speech Clause, Equal Protection under the law, and DoD regulations. We request that you address this matter immediately.”⁷⁹

The letter cited that both Van Eck and Hemlick had previously promised “the same level of support to comparable events proposed by non-federal entities,” yet it appeared that Sicinski had denied Rock Beyond Belief aid and a comparable venue.⁸⁰

Officials told Griffith that another problem with his request for support was that the speakers and performers for the Rock Beyond Belief event never issued a “Statement of Intent” to verify that they were coming.⁸¹ Griffith insisted that the group was never asked to submit these statements and that they were not requested of the Rock the Fort performers.⁸² Several of the scheduled participants issued statements upon hearing this, even though no one was sure that the event would still occur. The event’s most famous speaker, Richard Dawkins, publicly posted his statement of intent on the *Rock Beyond Belief* blog site. It read:

I wish to put clearly on record my strong intention to attend, and speak at, the Rock Beyond Belief festival at Fort Bragg, now sadly cancelled because of (blatantly discriminatory) lack of support from the officer commanding Fort Bragg. ‘Statement of intent’ is putting it mildly. I was hugely looking forward to it, and it was, indeed, my main reason for travelling all the way from England, at my own expense. I also announced my intention to accept no honorarium, so keen was I to support the festival. The suggestion that the festival could not have filled a large hall is absurd. Even when talking on my own, I regularly draw enthusiastic crowds by the thousands, especially in the so-called ‘bible belt’ where beleaguered non-believers flock to hear somebody articulate what they have long thought privately but never felt able to speak. Professor Richard Dawkins FRS, DSc., University of Oxford⁸³

⁷⁹Patrick Elliott to Nelson Van Eck, dated March 3, 2011, accessed July 9, 2015, <http://ffrf.org/uploads/legal/Rock%20Beyond%20Belief.pdf>.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Justin Griffith, “Richard Dawkins Issues Statement of Intent to Fort Bragg,” *Rock Beyond Belief* (blog), March 17, 2011, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rockbeyondbelief/2011/03/17/richard-dawkins-issues-statement-of-intent-to-fort-bragg/>.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

Other scheduled performers took the opportunity to publicly express their disappointment in what they saw as partial treatment and issued statements of intent. Performer Jeffery Lewis of *Jeffery Lewis & the Junkyard* added in his statement, “in my ten years of touring I’ve never heard of anything known as a ‘statement of intent.’”⁸⁴ Rapper Baba Brinkman argued that such a statement was unheard of in the music industry as it would be “career suicide” for an artist to not arrive at an event where they were advertised to perform.⁸⁵

Although it was unclear why this statement of intent was requested of Rock Beyond Belief performers, the performers thought it signaled doubt in the secular community. It is possible that the requirement of a statement of intent hinted at something much deeper: fear of the unknown. The growth of publicly-visible, organized, secular communities reflected a relatively new phenomenon in the United States. Little was known about the atheists, agnostics, and freethinkers who made up these groups. What did they believe? What were their values? What were their “intentions”?

These very concerns were highlighted in community debates about the Rock Beyond Belief controversy, which, due to Griffith’s tireless blogging, had accumulated national interest. Days after receiving the news that Rock Beyond Belief did not get the support requested, Rick and Donna Martinez of 680 AM Raleigh talk radio interviewed Griffith on their show.⁸⁶ What was supposed to be a six minute clip turned into an hour of debate.⁸⁷ The following are

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Talk Radio, 680AM WPTF, Raleigh, North Carolina, March 9, 2011.

⁸⁷Justin Griffith, “Foxhole Atheist Organizer on Talk Radio Taking the Heat,” March 10, 2011, accessed January 15, 2016, *Rock Beyond Belief* (blog), <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rockbeyondbelief/2011/03/10/foxhole-atheist-organizer-on-talk-radio-taking-the-heat/>.

highlights from this radio talk show discussion that illumine the perspectives that callers had of secular and atheist groups in the military.

Towards the beginning of the radio discussion, Griffith argued that Fort Bragg should provide the same level of support to atheists and agnostics that it provided to Christian groups.

Rick replied,

I can see the benefit of a Christian association coming in and providing spiritual support to soldiers and families. I just don't get how an atheist and agnostic group is going to help the mission of the people who are fighting for me. ... the US army is not a debating society; it is charged with defending this country. And I can see the benefit of spiritual motivation as far as morale, [but] I don't see atheist discussion in this same venue.⁸⁸

Griffith responded that the army was charged with defending the constitution--the rights of everyone, including atheists and agnostics, and that providing spiritual support was the job of the chaplaincy. He pointed out that the Graham event's stated goal was to convert people, and that many people, including some Christians he knew, were offended by this.⁸⁹

As Rick understood it, "an atheist and agnostic group," unlike Christian groups, was more concerned with arguing about intellectual and abstract concepts than with inspiring moral behavior and patriotic morale. An underlying implication was that groups that did not recognize a higher authority like God might be too independent-thinking to be useful in the military, a place where one's life often depended on troop cohesion. Rick indicated that "spiritual support," which in his framework was tied to motivation and morale, was inherent in Christian cultures but could not be taken for granted in atheist cultures. A proud atheist was a rebel; one who relished independence and possibly valued her own life more than another. Rick's comments insinuated the doubt that atheism could inspire the kind of self-sacrifice that military jobs demand.

⁸⁸"Rock Beyond Belief – Foxhole Atheist, Justin Griffith on 680AM Raleigh, NC Talk Radio (parts 1-3)," uploaded March 9, 2011, accessed January 28, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwU0nRhp2Xw>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

During the last half of the talk show, Griffith fielded questions from listeners calling in. A man from Fuquay, North Carolina, “Tim,” dredged up some arguments that were common on sites debating the Rock Beyond Belief controversy.⁹⁰ He first charged Griffith with misrepresenting the US constitution, which he stated “provides that there will be no preferential treatment or promotion of any religion over another.” Tim argued that because agnosticism and atheism were not religions, Griffith and MRFF’s demand that their Rock Beyond Belief event get equal support with the Rock the Fort event had no constitutional standing.⁹¹

Before Griffith could answer, Rick interjected, “Tim, do you think it was smart for Fort Bragg to have this concert?” Tim replied, “Well, my positions are tempered by my Christian faith, and I have a daughter that’s in the military, [so] anything that they can do to promote Christianity, I have to be for it.” Rick asked, “Tim, isn’t that what the chaplaincy is for?” Tim responded, “I’m sure that’s true, but generally logistics don’t enable, it’s been my experience, the majority of the people to get a chaplain as they would in this venue, so I’d have to say that I’m for it.”⁹²

Griffith replied that there were several chaplains on post, pointing out that some of them were his friends. He reiterated that he was not trying to limit legal religious expression by emphasizing, “I love the chaplains. I whole-heartedly agree with the necessity for Christians or whatever your religious preference to be able to speak out in spiritual support, especially in a deployed environment.” However, Griffith argued, he took issue with groups whose primary goal was to “convert new people.” Griffith thought that groups like the BGEA had overstepped

⁹⁰For example, see the comments section on <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rockbeyondbelief/>, <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2013/01/15/military-base-refuses-to-host-atheists-rock-beyond-belief-concert-but-activists-demand-equal-treatment/>, <http://christianfighterpilot.com/?s=rock+beyond+belief>, accessed in May 2014.

⁹¹“Justin Griffith on 680AM Raleigh, NC Talk Radio.”

⁹²Ibid.

their bounds, noting with dismay that “they were very successful...and they were bragging about it.”⁹³

Tim, after trying to interrupt multiple times, erupted, “that’s the whole point of evangelical Christianity--to convert people and bring people to Christ! My issue with you is [that] atheism and agnosticism is anti-religion.”⁹⁴

This exchange represented an impasse in military culture created by expanding varieties of religious orientations: both secular and evangelical cultures demanded the freedoms to practice unbelief or belief in their own ways, yet these appeared in some ways to be incompatible. On one hand, the fear that atheists and agnostics were “anti-religion” and thus might work to occlude the rights of religious expression if given the chance was a repeated theme in blogsite discussions regarding the Rock Beyond Belief controversy. On the other hand, Griffith suggested that the BGEA’s attempts to convert people to evangelical Christianity blocked a service member’s basic right to be free from religion. Tim argued that Griffith’s protests missed the point: attempts to convert were not tangential practices of the evangelical faith, but essential expressions. Likewise, Griffith’s contention was that being able to maintain distance from evangelical missionizing was an essential right for unbelievers.

The radio conversation was cut short to take another call, but most of it was recounted here because it illustrated three points that were repeatedly articulated in blog feeds and article comments that debate the Rock the Fort and Rock Beyond Belief circumstances.⁹⁵ One repeated argument was that because atheism and agnosticism were not “religions,” the secular groups that

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Such blogs and sites included, for example, christianfighterpilot.com, huffingtonpost.com, patheos.com, and the rockbeyondbelief blog.

were forming were not entitled to the same resources and support as religious groups, although they arguably fulfilled some of the same basic needs as those groups.

Lack of a distinctly “religious” status has been an obstacle for secular groups like MASH in other ways, as well. For example, in the early twenty-first century, some soldiers complained of the inability to designate “atheist” on their dog tags. They were allegedly told that they had to choose “no religious preference” instead, which many of them felt to be inaccurate.⁹⁶ Another opportunity affected by atheism’s unclear status was atheists’ ability to have a chaplain. In 2011, the *New York Times* reported on the secular community’s efforts to get an atheist chaplain approved, led once again by Griffith and the MASH chapter. The *Times* suggested that part of the problem was that those in administrative authority had a hard time grasping why atheists would want a chaplain. Administrators wondered if atheism technically counted as a “faith group” and if atheists were capable of providing support to religious troops.⁹⁷ As of June 2015, atheists had not been able to secure a chaplain in the military.⁹⁸

Second, Tim and Griffith’s discussion seemed to represent a fear of atheists among a particular subset of Christians. A survey of comments following stories about the Rock Beyond Belief event suggested that the people who most voiced opposition to atheist organizations were Christians like Tim who had a stake in sharing the gospel.⁹⁹ Tim’s comments indicated the fear

⁹⁶Griffith, “Many More Atheists Being Forced to Accept ‘NO-REL-PREF,’” *Rock Beyond Belief* (blog), December 12, 2011, accessed February 8, 2016, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rockbeyondbelief/2011/12/12/many-more-atheists-being-forced-to-accept-no-rel-pref/>.

⁹⁷James Dao, “Atheists Seek Chaplain Role in the Military,” *New York Times*, April 26, 2011.

⁹⁸In June 2015, the request of a chaplain suing for the right to be an atheist chaplain in the corps was denied. Andrew Tilghman, “Navy Lawyers Defend Rejection of Atheist Chaplain,” *Military Times*, June 18, 2015.

⁹⁹For example, review the comments that accompany Kimberly Winston, “Military Atheists Get Ready to ‘Rock Beyond Belief,’” *USA Today*, updated March 14, 2012, <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/story/2012-03-14/military-atheists-fort-bragg/53540022/1>, or those that followed Todd Starnes, “Church-Burning Video Used to Promote Atheist Event at Fort Bragg,” *Fox News*, n/d, accessed May 29, 2014 <http://radio.foxnews.com/toddstarnes/top-stories/fort-bragg-to-host-anti-religion-event.html>.

that atheists would try to deconvert Christians. He was afraid that atheists, whom he saw as “anti-religion,” would try to take away his freedom of religious expression.

One last point that Tim gestured to in his comments was the perception that atheism was dangerous, at least compared to Christianity. Tim said that he favored Christian outreach in the military partly because his daughter was serving, whom he presumably wanted to be in a supportive environment. It is impossible to confirm because he did not say more, but perhaps Tim thought that atheism could destabilize the values that allowed for a nurturing environment within the military. If this interpretation is accurate, it would align with the messages of previous military programs that included spiritual training. For example, the CGP had articulated the view that atheism would be damaging to the military community and its moral standards.

The understanding that atheism would undoubtedly unravel military values because it was untethered to any value system was echoed by Chaplain James Poe in a 2012 *Washington Post* article.¹⁰⁰ Poe, the president of the Associated Gospel Churches, a chaplain-endorsing organization of independent evangelical churches, was sure that atheism could not be good for the military. In the article, Poe requested the Secretary of Defense to

say enough of this nonsense and shut this thing off. It is not in any way constructive to military discipline. It reeks with rebellion. The Army has had for years a sense of core values and this tears down those values. It is an assault on the things Army people hold most dear and it needs to stop.¹⁰¹

As Poe understood it, it could not be taken for granted that atheists shared the army’s core values.

¹⁰⁰Kimberly Winston, “Military Atheists Get Ready to “Rock Beyond Belief,” *The Washington Post*, March 14, 2012, accessed January 28, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/military-atheists-get-ready-to-rock-beyond-belief/2012/03/14/gIQAICYQCS_story.html.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

After taking a few more callers, Rick concluded the talk radio show by suggesting that “it wasn’t the best idea to have the Graham group in because it opened a Pandora’s Box.”¹⁰² What exactly was this Pandora’s Box? Given the context, it seems likely that Rick used the term to refer to the great agitation caused by Graham’s group and by the secular activists. But the Pandora’s Box analogy makes sense in another way too.

What was becoming clearer in the early twenty-first century was that the number of nontheistic, nonreligious Americans were growing and diversifying.¹⁰³ Ironically, the Graham event opened up a space for this secular pluralism to be visible since it provided a platform for protest. Following the Pandora’s Box analogy, if the box stood for Graham’s particular interpretation of spiritual fitness, then what the deployment of this iteration “opened” or revealed was a secular pluralism in the military that had previously been downplayed or ignored in public perception, a pluralism that would somehow have to be reckoned with.

Griffith’s goal had been to tell the American public that “[atheists] exist, we’re here, we’re normal. We’re also in foxholes.”¹⁰⁴ Beyond demanding recognition for atheists, this secular protest movement in the military highlighted that there were many varieties and cultures of unbelief. Simply observing the names of these organizations bore this out: MASH’s title recognized both atheists and secular humanists, while MAAF’s title acknowledged freethinkers as well as atheists. Demographic data also demonstrated the varieties of unbelief in the military.

¹⁰²“Justin Griffith on 680AM Raleigh.”

¹⁰³A Pew Research Center report dated February 1, 2008 showed four different categories of those religiously “unaffiliated.” These included “atheist,” agnostic, secular unaffiliated, and religious unaffiliated.” Furthermore, these groups made up 16.1% of the American belief landscape, twice the percentage of those who say they were religiously affiliated as youth. “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation,” accessed March 10, 2011, <http://www.pewforum.org/2008/02/01/u-s-religious-landscape-survey-religious-affiliation/>.

¹⁰⁴“Army Group Says There Are Indeed Atheists in Foxholes,” *The Gazette*, April 2, 2011, accessed January 16, 2016, <http://gazette.com/army-group-says-there-are-indeed-atheists-in-foxholes/article/115634>.

Data from a 2009 Defense Manpower Data Center report listed 2,491 atheists, 0 agnostics, 101,295 “no religious preference,” and 46,890 as “unknown” in the army alone.¹⁰⁵ By comparison, there were 105, 202 Roman Catholics, 76, 008 from “Baptist Churches,” and between 1,700 to 1,900 each from Jewish, Muslim, or Buddhist faiths.¹⁰⁶ The number of people identifying as nonreligious was growing, and alternative belief perspectives were slowly gaining recognition: on May 12, 2014, the army affirmed “humanism” as a possible dog tag religious preference.¹⁰⁷

The Graham event and the ensuing protest made evident that diverse, nonbelieving populations existed in the military. During the radio interview, Griffith had spent much of the hour arguing that these groups were not interested in taking away anyone’s freedom of religious expression. But what likely made it hard for Griffith to argue that these new secular communities were friendly to religious groups was that some of the more well-known “new atheists” were notoriously unfriendly to religious communities. In the early 2000s, new atheists became known for taking a militant stance against religion, understanding it as something that “should not simply be tolerated but should be countered, criticized, and exposed by rational argument wherever its influence arises.”¹⁰⁸

Tim, the caller who insisted that atheists were “anti-religion,” had fears that were not unfounded. The so-called “four horsemen of the non-apocalypse,” Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, and the late Christopher Hitchens, were the most notable figures of the

¹⁰⁵“Religion of Active Duty Personnel by Service,” Active Duty Personnel Inventory File, August 31, 2009.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Jason Torpy, “Now You Can Have ‘Humanist’ on Your Army Tag,” *humanist.com*, April 23, 2014, <http://thehumanist.com/news/national/now-you-can-have-humanist-on-your-army-tag>.

¹⁰⁸Simon Hooper, “The Rise of the New Atheists,” *CNN*, November 9, 2006, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/europe/11/08/atheism.feature/index.html?iref=allsearch>.

early twenty-first century's new atheist movement. Contrarian books such as Harris' *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, Dawkins' *The God Delusion*, Dennett's *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, and Hitchens' *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* served to bolster like-minded atheists and enrage the opposition with their treatment of religion.¹⁰⁹ Dawkins once described faith as "one of the world's great evils, comparable to the smallpox virus."¹¹⁰ Harris had gone so far as to declare that given the choice between getting rid of rape or religion, he would choose religion.¹¹¹

However, the new atheists did not appear to represent the opinions of the atheist community at large. Some notable atheists such as Noam Chomsky were nonplussed by "militant" approaches that belittled religious people as infantile and weak.¹¹² Harvard Humanist Chaplain Greg Epstein said that atheism that advocated for destroying religion sounded like fundamentalism, and that other atheists needed to prove that there was another point of view.¹¹³

Some young atheists and religious "nones" in the early twenty-first century, like civilian activist Hemant Mehta, began to promote atheists as "friendly."¹¹⁴ Similar "friendly" positions were evident in MAAF and MASH's articulated defensive goals to provide support for secular

¹⁰⁹Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009); Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Mariner Books, 2006); Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007); and Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Hachette Books, 2007).

¹¹⁰Richard Dawkins, "Is Science a Religion?" (speech, American Humanist Association, 1996).

¹¹¹Bethany Saltman interview with Sam Harris, "The Temple of Reason," *The Sun*, September 2006, accessed January 28, 2016, http://thesunmagazine.org/issues/369/the_temple_of_reason?page=2.

¹¹²Sam Harris, "The Limits of Discourse," *Sam Harris* (published email correspondence on blog), n/d, accessed December 15, 2015, <https://www.samharris.org/blog/item/the-limits-of-discourse>.

¹¹³"Some Ask if Atheists are the New Fundamentalists," *beliefnet.com*, n/d., accessed February 8, 2016, <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Secular-Philosophies/Some-Ask-If-Atheists-Are-The-New-Fundamentalists.aspx>.

¹¹⁴See his blog, *The Friendly Atheist*, accessed December 28, 2015, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/>.

military populations and to protest unfair religious discrimination.¹¹⁵ Unlike the notorious new atheists, neither group had stated the intent to disable or destroy religious expression in the military. Even so, the argument that military atheists were friendly to religionists had likely been undermined by the outspoken views of those famous civilians.

However, what further undercut the groups' attempts at "friendly" branding was that several of the speakers and performers (all civilians) queued for the Rock Beyond Belief festival were also prone to agitating techniques. In addition to hosting Richard Dawkins, the event invited the controversial rock band Aiden to perform. At the time, Aiden had just released a music video for the song "Hysteria" that featured burning churches. *Fox News* reporters did not fail to capitalize on the fact that a burgeoning atheist group was hosting this band at a military base. Reporter Todd Starnes published damning lyrics from the Hysteria song in a *Fox News* article: "Love how they burn your synagogues, love how they torch your holy books.... Faith holding outright criminals safe.... The death of fiction will save us all."¹¹⁶ Starnes' article titled, "Church-Burning Video Used to Promote Atheist Festival at Fort Bragg," reported that Fort Bragg spokesperson Benjamin Abel was going to review the "graphic, anti-Christian" lyrics to ensure that the performance was "family-friendly."¹¹⁷ Griffith defended the band's right to free speech, but also conceded that "It's a little shocking to hear some of this stuff, [and] these types of shocking things are not going to be front and center for a rock concert that is on a military base."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵See <http://militaryatheists.org/about/> and <http://mashfortbragg.org/index.php> respectively.

¹¹⁶Todd Starnes, "Church-Burning Video Used to Promote Atheist Event at Fort Bragg," *Fox News*, n/d, accessed May 29, 2014 <http://radio.foxnews.com/toddstarnes/top-stories/fort-bragg-to-host-anti-religion-event.html>.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

Aiden's lyrics no doubt fueled convictions that "friendly atheist" was an oxymoron. But the tendency to highlight the extremist views of opposing ideologies cut both ways. For example, Griffith made sure to give significant airtime to a vehement post that a Col. David Druckenmiller wrote on the *Rock Beyond Belief* blog. In a May 2011 post addressed to Griffith, Druckenmiller identified himself as an "Evangelical, Ordained Baptist Pastor" and as one of the chaplains who helped organize the Rock the Fort event. The following are some highlights from the 1,630 word diatribe. It began,

Rock for TRUTH! I am writing this response to rebut the ongoing untruth spoken to your audience! You should be ashamed of yourself for lying! Oh, maybe you think it is ok to lie and twist truth because you do not believe in God. There is a God, His name is Jehovah. He created all things and you will bend a knee someday and your foolishness will be your folly.¹¹⁹

Druckenmiller went on to accuse Griffith of working to undermine the US Constitution, interpreting his actions as "restricting the free exercise of faith." In an attempt to rebut the idea that "nones" were a sizeable group in the military, he argued that those who self-reported as unaffiliated were "more often ... of Christian background."¹²⁰ Druckenmiller accused Rock Beyond Belief with attempting to use Christian tithe offerings to fund their event, and argued that "the Evangelical Christians" who orchestrated Rock the Fort operated under the same restrictions as the MASH group. After insinuating that Rock Beyond Belief just barely received the support of the legal office, Druckenmiller suggested that Griffith's attempts to garner support failed because atheists were stingy and "fools." He suggested that the title of the event be

¹¹⁹Justin Griffith, "Rock the Fort Chaplain Is From the Moon, Writes Foxhole Atheist a Letter," *Rock Beyond Belief* (blog), May 15, 2011, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rockbeyondbelief/2011/05/15/rock-the-fort-chaplain-is-from-the-moon-writes-foxhole-atheist-a-letter/>.

¹²⁰Ibid.

changed to “Rock in Stupidity” and questioned atheists’ moral scruples, suggesting that “more good is accomplished by people of faith than those who are self-theists = atheist.”

Druckenmiller concluded,

Well I could go on and on. I am sure I will because my faith calls me to a public voice. Shame on you and all those who are deceiving others into believing anything but the truth. Your false agenda will catch up with you when you stand before the God of Heaven who spoke and the world was created. There is a God and you will answer to Him someday. Chaplain (Retired Army) David Druckenmiller ‘The truth will set you free!’”¹²¹

Not surprisingly, this reply only stirred the anger of Griffith’s readership. One respondent, who identified as a “non-Christian spiritualist and the son of a devout Christian minister” argued that the content and approach of Druckenmiller’s post was not representative of Christian belief and practice. “Old Chaplain Turned Skeptic” wrote that he had known Druckenmiller from Army Chaplain training in 1988 and that he had always been “one of those hyper-extroverted, shallow, know-it-all Baptist preacher types.” Most saw the rant as further evidence that more work needed to be done to secure support for nonreligious communities. “Gary” concurred that Druckenmiller’s response was “representative of an underlying bias that must be overcome.”¹²²

The Rock Beyond Belief event prompted the Fort Bragg military community to debate such characterizations of Christians and secularists. Did Christians generally distrust atheists and their ability to be compassionate and morally upright? If so, was this distrust due to the perspective that atheists could not see beyond themselves, as Druckenmiller insinuated by calling them “self-theists”? Could people be good without God? Similarly, did Aiden’s more acerbic lyrics represent an underlying bias that atheists had against theists and the religiously devout?

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid.

In an effort to neutralize the climate and resolve “some of the inaccuracies reported about the Rock Beyond Belief event,” Colonel Sicinski posted comments on Griffith’s blog the day after he wrote that Rock Beyond Belief had been denied the requested support.¹²³ After reiterating the promise to “provide similar support to comparable events sponsored by similar non-Federal entities that address the needs of the Soldiers on this Installation,” Sicinski explained why he denied the request to use the Main Post Parade Field.¹²⁴ Fort Bragg officials did not believe that the scheduled speakers and bands would draw the minimum 5,000 attendees. Sicinski approved the use of a theater on post instead, based on expected attendance. As far as funding went, he explained that the Fort Bragg Morale Welfare and Recreation funded only one or two large events a year. He insinuated that Rock Beyond Belief could secure private funding and request a location and security on-base, but that the base could not provide funding for private events.¹²⁵

All throughout March 2011, Griffith argued on his blog and in interviews that nonreligious people were a growing and significant demographic that were not being catered to. He thought that a larger venue, like the one that Rock the Fort had access to, would be more appropriate given the large number of religiously unaffiliated at Fort Bragg and the star-power of guest speaker Richard Dawkins. To make this point, he posted Fort Bragg statistics on religious demographic data from October 2010.¹²⁶ Christians made up the largest group at about 30,000 to 40,000.¹²⁷ But second largest was the “no religious preference” group, at 9, 472 or 18% of the

¹²³Griffith, “Foxhole Atheist Organizer on Talk Radio.”

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Justin Griffith, “The Great Rock the Fort Swindle,” *Rock Beyond Belief* (blog), March 21, 2011.

¹²⁷Ibid.

Fort Bragg population. The third largest group were “atheists” at 212, followed by Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Wiccan, and Druid groups.¹²⁸

In the subsequent months, support for the festival accumulated. Most notably, in July of 2011, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Americans United for Separation of Church and State jointly wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Army asking for support for Rock Beyond Belief.¹²⁹ Finally, Griffith announced on August 2, 2011, that the festival was approved with the location at the Main Parade Field.¹³⁰ The Raleigh-based Stiefel Freethought Foundation donated \$70,000 to secure the event.¹³¹

Fort Bragg officials worked to negotiate the terms of the event. According to Griffith, officials wanted all of the performers to sign an agreement to not say anything critical of religion.¹³² However, by February 2012, Sinciski issued a memorandum to the Rock Beyond Belief organizers that stated, “I want to assure you that Fort Bragg will not discriminate against speech on the basis of its viewpoint. Stated another way, I understand and respect that there will be ample discussion about atheism and/or humanism during the festival and that the speakers may criticize organized religion or its practitioners.”¹³³ The Rock Beyond Belief event was held at Fort Bragg, North Carolina on March 31, 2012. Although it occurred a whole year later than

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Daniel Bullard-Bates, “Rock Beyond Belief,” *ACLU*, August 8, 2011, accessed February 2, 2016, <https://www.aclu.org/blog/speakeasy/rock-beyond-belief>.

¹³⁰Justin Griffith, “Fort Bragg Approves On-Post Atheist Festival, Rock Beyond Belief,” *Rock Beyond Belief* (blog), August 2, 2011.

¹³¹Billy Hallowell, “We’re Antagonistic toward Religious Belief: Military Atheists Hold Army-Sponsored ‘Rock Beyond Belief’ Festival,” *theblaze.com*, April 1, 2012, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2012/04/01/were-antagonistic-toward-religious-belief-military-atheists-hold-army-sponsored-rock-beyond-belief-festival/>.

¹³²Justin Griffith, “Fort Bragg: Atheist Festival *Will* be Critical of Organized Religion” (letter embedded in post), *Rock Beyond Belief* (blog), March 12, 2012.

¹³³Ibid.

the organizers had planned, it was the first atheist festival to be held on a military base. March 31, 2012 was a warm but rainy Saturday. After proceeding through the entry checkpoints at the Fort Bragg base, I and a fellow graduate student made our way across the Parade Field. I spotted Griffith immediately, walking quickly, head down, appearing lost in thought. A few people wandered around, huddled like ducks under umbrellas. It appeared that a few dozen people arrived for the beginning of the festival. They seemed like tiny flecks in the vast field, half-hidden by the spitting rain and the rising springtime mists. Griffith claimed on his blog that local church groups were praying for the event to be rained out.¹³⁴ If this was the case, it appeared initially that their prayers had been answered.

As the hours waxed, the crowd grew. People sat in folding lawn chairs or on blankets brought from home. The smell of popcorn and greasy carnival food wafted out from vendor tents located on the outer perimeter. Next to them were information booths like the Secular Students' Alliance that were giving away magnets and brochures. The MASH booth handed out information cards with the Bible verse Matthew 6:6 printed on them that read, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Another booth distributed magnets inscribed with "It took 13.7 billion years to make something this perfect... So don't mess it up www.richarddawkins.net." The MAAF booth passed out brochures that pointed out that "atheists are in foxholes ... always have been" and provided information about what humanists believed about goodness, what happens after death, and meaning in life.

¹³⁴Justin Griffith, "Christian Gloating over the Heavy Rains at the Atheist Festival," April 2, 2012, accessed February 3, 2016, *Rock Beyond Belief* (blog).

Mid-day I spotted Dawkins striding across the field with arms outstretched, flanked by fans of all ages. He later spoke, announcing that he hoped to change the minds of Christians in attendance. Throughout the day, various speakers and artists took the main stage including artist Baba Brinkman who rapped about evolution, Nate Phelps, the son of pastor and anti-LGBT pastor Fred Phelps, and evangelical-preacher-turned-atheist Dan Barker. While speeches and performances were taking place on center stage, children jumped in nearby bouncy houses. The event drew around 1,000 people, far less than the organizers had hoped for. Yet by mid-afternoon, the sun was high in the sky and the morning's dampness had evaporated.

Challenging the Spiritual Fitness Paradigm and Negotiating “True” Atheism

Protesting the Christian deployments of spiritual fitness by advocating for the Rock Beyond Belief event was one of many activist projects that the military's secular communities were involved in. As previously stated, the secular communities' lobbying for a nontheistic festival did not just achieve visibility for this community. This work represented an attempt to challenge understandings of spiritual fitness that might understand religious and theistic thought as the proper vehicles for negotiating existential concerns. Whereas this challenge was implicit in the Rock Beyond Belief protest and the endorsement of the Rock the Fort event, it was explicit in MASH's public protests of the GAT spiritual fitness requirement.

Again, Griffith was the most visible activist in these protests. When he explained his offense online regarding the GAT's conclusions (that he lacked a sense of meaning and purpose and connection to “something larger” than himself), the self-described atheist readership debated the merits of his points.¹³⁵ Griffith insisted that a “true atheist” would be offended by the

¹³⁵Haggerty, “Army's ‘Spiritual Fitness’ Test Angers Some Soldiers.”

implications of spiritual fitness, but not everyone agreed. I have included the following highlights from the online discussion because these illumined two relevant points regarding the spiritual fitness concept: first, “spirituality” was a term capable of being widely construed, and second, that at least within this particular secular community, the terms for how an atheist might appropriately negotiate existential concerns appeared highly debatable.

Griffith’s complaint about his GAT results, posted on December 22, 2010, generated a flurry of responses. Some, like “Corrine,” praised Griffith for speaking out.¹³⁶ “James Smith João Pessoa, Brazi” concurred, and wrote that he left the military as soon as he could because he “was told that, as an open atheist, I had almost no chance of being promoted beyond O-3.... I was often pressured to ‘get with the program’ and ‘think of the men’ as well as other, not so subtle threats.”¹³⁷

“John Stepp” argued that the test did not seem to correlate with performance in the military and indicated that the spiritual fitness concept was aligned with Christian ideology. He wrote, “I had ‘the lowest score in the battalion’ and somehow managed to get voted soldier of the quarter, never seem demotivated and ke[pt] morale high for other soldiers. Just because I don’t ‘love me some Jesus’ doesn’t mean I can’t thrive.”¹³⁸

Other readers, such as “SGT Vanderplas,” argued that the tests should be useful for everyone, even atheists. He explained, “I’ve known a few soldiers who took their own lives, including one of my closest friends and I think these tests are absolutely necessary. I scored almost perfect on the spiritual fitness section even though I am a firm atheist.” Vanderplas

¹³⁶Justin Griffith, “Mandatory Army Survey says Atheists are Unfit to be Soldiers,” December 22, 2010, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rockbeyondbelief/2010/12/22/mandatory-army-survey-says-atheists-are-unfit-to-be-soldiers/>.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Ibid.

suggested that spirituality should be interpreted in a “broader sense” than how Griffith took it. He questioned, “How can one ponder the vastness of the Universe, or the complexity of Life, or the indomitable spirit and capacity for goodness of all Humanity without considering oneself spiritual? And how can this type of thought, in some sense, not be considered meditation?” Furthermore, Vanderplas acknowledged that while “gross injustices” occurred in the army, he had not personally experienced the proselytizing Griffith referred to. He ended his reply, “I’ve been blessed with religiously diverse leaders and tolerant, professional chaplains.”¹³⁹

In the same post, Griffith defended his logic to Vanderplas and others in the atheist community who claimed that an atheist should still be able to pass the spiritual fitness test.¹⁴⁰ Regarding the statement, “I am a spiritual person,” he ranked himself a one on the five point scale. Griffith interpreted “My life has lasting meaning” to be asking about how enduring he thought his public legacy would be. He reasoned that since he was not on the same life trajectory as, for example, Abraham Lincoln, the chances of his life having lasting meaning were low, a 2/5. The question “I believe that in some way my life is closely connected to all humanity and all the world” Griffith thought “reek[ed] of theological woo” and was confusing. Did it mean that he considered everyone on earth to be his friends, he wondered? Furthermore, he mused, if he did feel close to all humanity, then how was he to “reconcile the fact that [it] is potentially my job to kill some of them?”¹⁴¹ He concluded, “This is disturbing, illogical, and I want it to go away,” and chose “not like me at all,” or 1/5. He rated “The job I am doing in the military has *lasting* meaning” as a 2/5, again citing that his job in the military was not as

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

significant as major historical figures like General George Patton or British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Griffith gave himself a 5/5 on “I believe there is a purpose for my life,” listing “serving my country, being a husband (father in the next few weeks), standing up for what’s right... etc.” He pointed out that even when speaking in general, he believed that he had purpose: “life (all forms of it) have at least this one purpose: to make more life. It is my responsibility as a human, as an earthling, as a conscious being to act in a way that is conducive towards more/better/longer life in all reasonable ways.”¹⁴²

Rejecting the idea that contemplating the universe and life meaning were necessarily “spiritual” activities, Griffith stated that “one can ponder in an intellectually honest way, using logic and reason, and properly applying the scientific method.”¹⁴³ For example, the universe could be explained by the “Big Bang, Chaotic/Eternal Inflation, Cosmic Inflation, relativity (general and special), cosmic microwave background radiation” He jabbed at Vanderplas, “This is easy, are you sure you are an atheist?” Griffith added that “evolution, natural selection, adaptation, sexual selection, genetic drift, [and] plate tectonics/continental drift” could account for life complexity.¹⁴⁴

Griffith then tried to disabuse Vanderplas of the notion that spiritual fitness was not religiously motivated. He insisted, “It is 100% about religion, and the term comes from a 1987 DA Pamphlet for Chaplains etc.”¹⁴⁵ The pamphlet he was referring to was the Fit to Win pamphlet on spiritual fitness. By all appearances, that component of the program was neither

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

“for chaplains” nor initiated by them but created by the Army Preventive Health Council, as Chapter Four showed.

This exchange between Griffith and Vanderplas highlighted a distinct disagreement among the nascent atheist military community over the appropriateness of spirituality to convey issues of deep, existential importance. Griffith perceived the complexity of the universe as something that science could adequately speak to, whereas Vanderplas appeared comfortable with more mystery. Griffith interpreted the question about personal connection to the rest of the world as theologically tinged, whereas Vanderplas considered this to be an appropriate and even necessary question to ask regarding wellbeing. Griffith’s explanation of his answers seemed to suggest that the questions regarding spiritual fitness were ultimately irrelevant to his own sense of wellbeing, whereas Vanderplas expressed the opinion that he thought these were critical in preventing suicide.

Griffith’s protests had the effect of bringing into view a variety of secularism that even he was apparently not familiar with. Several times, he expressed doubts regarding Vanderplas’ atheist status. He took Vanderplas’ assertion that he felt “blessed” by knowing tolerant chaplains as evidence that he was a “deceitful apologist” and perhaps really a “liar for Jesus.”¹⁴⁶

Others wondered why Griffith had complained at all, adding yet another perspective regarding what constituted authentic atheist belief. “Godless Machine” did not understand why any atheist cared about the GAT, or “put so much frigging energy into being offended at everything. In my ideal world, atheists are above stuff like this, but in reality, we’re just as whiny as everyone else.”¹⁴⁷ “Andrew” agreed, insisting that the community “quit the crying

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

right now. I had to take that survey too, and I had similar results, being in a similar position (atheist). It didn't bother me and it shouldn't bother any atheist [as] there is no belief to discriminate against. This movement is starting to be as bad as the religious ones.”¹⁴⁸

Conversations over the next few days continued to negotiate what made a “true” atheist and whether or not spiritual fitness education and testing were appropriate for atheist communities. At root were questions that related to how secular communities should negotiate existential concerns. Could an atheist believe that all of life was interconnected, or did the assumption that webs of connectivity existed necessarily imply a spider: God? Was there a right way for an atheist to “ponder the vastness of the Universe, or the complexity of Life, or the indomitable spirit and capacity for goodness of all Humanity,” as Vanderplas put it? Furthermore, were these actions “spiritual”? Could an atheist be “spiritual”?

Griffith’s blog site did not demonstrate a consensus on these topics among the atheist readership. The answers to these questions are still actively being negotiated in civilian and military circles, and so far, the range of opinions is wide. However, it seems significant that even the “four horsemen” (Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris), known for their animosity towards religion, have invariably expressed that despite the problematic baggage of the term “spirituality,” atheists can and should still claim it as a term that encapsulates existential concerns. The following discussion between the “horsemen” illustrated what an understanding of spirituality, as a term that encapsulated assumptions about existential concerns, might look like in the atheist community.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

In a recorded conversation dated September 30, 2007, the four horsemen discussed spirituality at length.¹⁴⁹ Harris, the youngest of the horsemen and the most active proponent of spirituality, said that spirituality was useful because it uniquely addressed “a range of experience that [was] rare and ... only talked about in religious discourse.” Although the term had been used in religion to “cash out various metaphysical schemes,” Harris understood spirituality as describing “extraordinary experiences, self-transcend[ence], [and] fe[eling] at one with nature.” Because religion appeared “to be the only game in town talking about these,” Harris argued that it was even more important for atheist communities to cultivate “spirituality” for themselves.¹⁵⁰

Hitchens and Dawkins agreed and said that atheists needed a word to describe the numinous, or “experiences of awe” apart from referencing supernatural entities. As they understood it, part of the problem with “spirituality” was that most people appeared to associate needlessly its potential to describe experiences of awe with a supernatural being. Dennett exclaimed, “it’s a sad fact that people won’t trust their own valuing of their numinous experiences ... that [something] isn’t really as good as it seems unless it’s from God or religion.” “Spiritual moments,” Dennett reiterated, were those in which one felt “transported with awe and joy, peace.” However, these had “nothing to do with the supernatural,” he argued.¹⁵¹

Like Dennett, Dawkins said that he understood spirituality as encapsulating “great emotional feeling.”¹⁵² It was a “poetic response” to looking at the wonders of the world. But in another discussion, Dawkins warned that the word was not so innocuous; he suggested that

¹⁴⁹Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, “Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens Conversation,” published on Jun 30, 2013, accessed January 28, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWJ7T4vIXc8>.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid.

“spirituality” had been “hijacked” by religious people, so atheists seeking to use the term needed to be wary of letting “religious people hijack you because you call yourself spiritual.”¹⁵³ He insisted that religious people had “hijacked” Albert Einstein’s self-identification as “spiritual” to suggest that the great physicist believed more than he did.¹⁵⁴

Harris agreed that the word was prone to misinterpretation, but more vigorously defended the term “spiritual” in a 2012 blog post. There he claimed that humankind could not do without the term, which he argued uniquely stood for pleasurable responses to the beauty and significance of poetry, music, and art. The reaction that visiting the Parthenon often induced was a good example of a spiritual, atheistic experience: one could be filled with awe at its beauty without any obligation to recognize or worship the goddess Athena.¹⁵⁵

Harris was the only horseman to reclaim spirituality for purposes more specific than describing an awe-filled or emotional reaction. In his 2014 book *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality without Religion*, he argued for the importance of “spiritual” practices that aimed at achieving self-transcendence through meditation and other means.¹⁵⁶ For Harris, self-transcendence did not necessitate belief in an outer power or in cultivating meaning. He believed that “a true spiritual practitioner is someone who has discovered that it is possible to be at ease in the world for no reason.”¹⁵⁷ This logic could be construed as fundamentally at odds with the core assumptions of CSF “spiritual fitness,” which taught that a properly reasoned sense of

¹⁵³“Ideas at the House: Richard Dawkins--Why the Word “Spirituality” has been Hijacked by Religions,” Sydney Opera House, published on Oct 24, 2013, accessed January 28, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Are53Pg0hZ8>.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵Sam Harris, “In Defense of ‘Spiritual,’” *Sam Harris* (blog), June 27, 2012, accessed April 7 2015, <http://www.samharris.org/blog/item/a-plea-for-spirituality>.

¹⁵⁶Sam Harris, *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality without Religion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 9.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 17.

purpose and meaning (which might be found in a connection to a higher power) would set a person “at ease.”

In his exchange with Vanderplas, Griffith appeared uncomfortable with such an interpretation of spirituality. He refuted the notion that pondering the universe was a spiritual act and proposed that one should think about the universe’s mysteries instead “in an intellectually honest way, using logic and reason, and properly applying the scientific method.”¹⁵⁸ For him, this apparently meant answering questions using material evidence and philosophical reasoning. Perhaps Griffith understood valuing awe or wonder as too conducive to speculating about God. Yet for Vanderplas, the act of wonder was a spiritual act. There were things in the universe that neither science nor reason could adequately answer and he seemed to think that an atheist could still express mystery. Similar to the horsemen’s uses, spirituality operated for Vanderplas as a holding place for mystery and the vastness of life that provoked wonder.

Why did Griffith take issue with the association of wonder and awe with spirituality? And why did he say that he did not believe in the human “spirit”? There is no way to know for certain by examining the context of those statements alone, but the fact that two self-identified atheists could disagree so much about the term “spirituality” indicated the term’s great potential to be interpreted in various ways.

Perhaps for Griffith, spirituality and the ideas it encapsulated were too associated with Christian ideology in the military and elsewhere for atheists to be able to reclaim it. For him, words like “spirituality” and “spiritual fitness” appeared to signal religious belief and practice. As the orchestrator of the atheist rights movement at Fort Bragg, Griffith was attuned to how religious ideology might have been promoted in the military in ways that Vanderplas and the

¹⁵⁸Griffith, “Mandatory Army Survey says Atheists are Unfit to be Soldiers.”

horsemen may not have been. Griffith's sensitivity was not unfounded; the military's use of "spirituality" could be religiously-inflected, as this dissertation has shown.

Another blog comment made during the debate over "spirituality's" standing in the atheist community raised a different but related concern. "Rosemary LYNDALL WEMM" argued that "the real question should be about the validity of the [GAT] scale. What proof does the military have that the items on this scale positively discriminate in favor of successful soldiers? How does one define a 'successful soldier'? Who does the defining?"¹⁵⁹ If "success" depended upon force cohesion, and if the spiritual beliefs of military personnel were found to significantly impact cohesion and be mostly of the conservative Christian variety, Lyndall wondered if the army should exclusively recruit "U.S. style fundamentalist Protestant Christians?"¹⁶⁰ She wryly suggested if asking soldiers "whether [they had] accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour" might be a more effective way of determining soldier fitness.¹⁶¹

Lyndall's line of inquiry cut to the most threatening aspect of spiritual fitness for secular communities: the assertion that its efficacy was empirically-based. What if science somehow indicated that religious belief, or even particular religious belief, like that of "fundamentalist Protestant Christians," cultivated the characteristics most necessary for a soldier's job? For example, what if belief in Jesus Christ was a proven to correlate with traits essential for soldiers, such as a higher degree of obedience to authority or group cohesion? What if atheism in the military was shown to correlate with "rebellion," as Chaplain James Poe insisted to the *Washington Post*?

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

One of the subtle take-away points from Lyndall's post indicated that one's specific religious faith or lack thereof may very well have an impact on one's ability to function in the military. The power of ideology had long been a driving force in ensuring that the military's extreme commitments are met. As previous chapters have demonstrated, theism and religious adherence have been utilized in the military as some of the most compelling ideological drivers.

As early as 2010, groups like MAAF had been protesting CSF's spiritual fitness requirement. An entire page of the MAAF website was devoted to explaining complaints about the program's use of spirituality and spiritual fitness.¹⁶² MAAF president Jason Torpy, a veteran of five years and West Point graduate, explained that the term "spiritual" "should not be an obstacle so long as the content is truly inclusive and beneficial to all."¹⁶³ The problem with spiritual fitness according to MAAF was that it assumed "spirits, souls, and other supernatural concepts," despite the fact that the program defined it as "about core values, beliefs, and the source of one's meaning in life." In a document titled, "Army Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Case for Change," Torpy agreed that it made sense for the military to "want to encourage and develop a soldier's ability to hold strongly to values in the face of the stresses of combat, and to build values that sustain soldiers," given the stresses of the job. He acknowledged that service members "benefit from a strong foundation of personal values," from a sense of "internal peace," and a "supportive community of like-minded individuals." But Torpy understood these things as "secular benefits"; they were not necessarily related to "prayer, energy, or other things generally associated with 'spirituality.'"¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Jason Torpy, "Army Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Case for Change," 2010, accessed January 16, 2016, <http://militaryatheists.org/advocacy/spirituality/#sthash.AoyGKfXU.dpuf>

¹⁶³Ibid.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

Torpy argued that the CSF program overlooked the possibility that nontheistic communities could provide the same values and sense of peace as religious institutions for nonreligious, nontheistic people. Furthermore, he doubted that chaplains could fairly mitigate some soldiers' low spiritual fitness levels because some were "uneducated or hostile to nontheism." Torpy thought the CSF should encourage nontheists to engage in their own value-building communities, such as MAAF, in addition to encouraging religious people to go to church. He also requested that CSF remove the spiritual fitness test and training until the program and leadership could include the values and members of the nontheistic community. Although hoping for this outcome, Torpy doubted that it would come to fruition: "considering the inability of CSF staff to even understand the problem, there is little hope of internal reform."¹⁶⁵

According to Torpy, CSF's cultivation of the term spiritual fitness catered to the beliefs and cultures of religious theists. The term had been constructed in such a way that did not recognize alternative communities, let alone the possibility that atheistic constructions of meaning might also provide what according to Torpy were "secular benefits."

On October 1, 2011, MAAF submitted a petition with 24,393 signatures to the Obama Administration to "end the military's discrimination against nonreligious service members."¹⁶⁶ The petition's grievances included that nonreligious service members were "forced to participate in religious rituals during official ceremonies" and "forced to take an unconstitutional religious test for 'Spiritual Fitness.'"¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶"Petition to End Discrimination against Nonreligious Service Members," accessed February 11, 2015, <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/end-military%E2%80%99s-discrimination-against-non-religious-service-members/jcfr6fWt>.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

The Official White House Response was posted online in September 2013.¹⁶⁸ It claimed that the CSF program reflected the official government stance that supported all service members. The response articulated that “the ‘spiritual fitness’ portion of the CSF program does not promote religion; instead, it encourages soldiers to develop greater inner strength and resilience, whether soldiers take a religious or nonreligious approach to such matters.” The White House clarified CSF’s “spiritual dimension” as “entail[ing] one's purpose, core values, beliefs, identity, and life vision.” These things “define[d] the essence of a person, enable[d] one to build inner strength, make meaning of experiences, behave ethically, persevere through challenges, and be resilient when faced with adversity.” One’s spirituality could draw from a number of sources, according to the official response. These might include “philosophical, psychological, and/or religious teachings.”¹⁶⁹

However, the White House acknowledged that some GAT questions had been changed in 2012 “to reflect more accurately the perspectives of both religious and nonreligious users.” Questions such as “I am a spiritual person,” “I believe that in some way my life is closely connected to all of humanity,” “I often find comfort in my religion and spiritual beliefs,” “In difficult times, I pray or meditate,” were replaced with “I am a person of dignity and worth,” “My life has meaning,” “I believe that in some way my life is closely connected to all humanity and all the world,” “The job I am doing in the military has enduring meaning,” and “I believe there is a purpose for my life.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸Official White House Response, “Protecting Military Servicemembers from Religious Discrimination and Preserving Freedom of Religious Expression,” September 20, 2013, accessed January 16, 2016, <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/response/protecting-military-servicemembers-religious-discrimination-and-preserving-freedom>.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Previous GAT questions available as of January 16, 2016 at <http://militaryatheists.org/news/2013/09/white-house-addresses-military-spiritual-fitness-training/>.

Towards the end of 2012 and again in 2014, the GAT and the CSF were revised.¹⁷¹ MAAF reported that these revisions resulted from the “continuing pressure from the humanist community” and that the spiritual fitness programs had been “made optional and less explicitly Christian.”¹⁷² Yet MAAF added that “humanists and other nontheists” were still overlooked in the development of wellness programs. As of this writing in February 2016, MAAF and the rest of the secular military community were still seeking representation in the development of military spiritual fitness programs.

Conclusion

Perhaps ironically, the military’s implementation of the spiritual fitness concept, a term meant to encapsulate existential concerns supposedly elementary to human nature, prompted the unprecedented public recognition of nonreligious, nontheistic American military populations. Examining the story of the secular military community’s reaction to spiritual fitness illumines four main points that are relevant to this dissertation’s project of investigating the military’s attempts to cultivate spirituality as publicly appropriate.

First, “spirituality” at least as it has been cultivated in the CSF program is a religiously and theistically “sticky” term. It is sticky in three ways: 1) it has been associated with concepts traditionally understood to be the purview of religion; 2) it has been reinforced as a religious and theistic term by religious groups interested in sharing their own understandings of spiritual fitness with service members; and 3) it has a particular history of being aligned with theistic

¹⁷¹Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, “Spirituality and Spiritual Fitness,” <http://militaryatheists.org/advocacy/spirituality/>, accessed February 28, 2015; US Army, *Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness*, AR 350-53 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014).

¹⁷²“Spirituality and Spiritual Fitness,” Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers.

perspectives in the army, as previous chapters have demonstrated. The import of spirituality's stickiness is that it has made difficult the conceptual untangling of existential issues, religious frameworks, and theistic orientations that must occur for the public implementation of spiritual education to be appropriate. Even if CSF administrators cultivated spiritual fitness as unquestionably secular in CSF texts and subtexts, the term's historical alignments, traditional use in the military, and religious appropriations would likely affect understandings of it.

Second, MASH's protests and struggles to garner recognition for secular military communities suggest that the atheist and secular perspectives were unfamiliar and possibly distrusted in the early twenty-first century US Army. This point was evident throughout the chapter, but was particularly clear in the story of MASH's attempts to receive support for the Rock Beyond Belief festival. If atheist and secular perspectives were unknown or possibly distrusted as "spiritual" sources capable of providing motivation, moral guidance, comfort, and resilience, then secular orientations were bound to be overlooked in the cultivation of spiritual education and testing for diverse populations.

However, the growing pains of atheist and secular communities in the military demonstrate a third, familiar point: the contours and content of the "spirituality" concept did not appear to be widely agreed upon, either within secular communities or outside of them. As stated in the introduction, "spirituality" is a site of conflict. The second section of this chapter, which included examining a particular instance when Griffith's readership debated the appropriateness of spiritual fitness, suggested that there was disagreement over whether or not an atheist could or should be spiritual. Additionally, that section indicated that debating the applicability of spirituality often meant negotiating what counted as appropriate answers to

fundamental questions of meaning, things that growing US secular military communities have just begun to publicly negotiate.

A comparison of Griffith's interpretation of CSF spirituality with the horsemen's understanding of the term reveals a final point: perhaps more than most words, "spirituality" has a high potential for being "slippery" as well as "sticky." That is, the term is prone to vastly different interpretations, owing partly to the fact that it is understood to indicate a wide range of ideas. One's interpretation of the term appears to be highly dependent on one's history of associations with the term and the context in which it appears. For example, the second section noted that even the famous horsemen atheists had advocated for reclaiming the term "spirituality" to signal mystery, wonder, and awe, and as Harris suggested, self-transcendence and connection with others. Surely Griffith would see the horsemen as true atheists, but he read the CSF assertion that one needed to feel connected to humanity as "reeking of theological woo." Why? Either Griffith's inclination regarding the status of such statements was right and the horsemen's sentiments indicated that they were really theists after all, or Griffith was reading the notion that "all life was connected" through his own particular lens of military culture, which from his experience was saturated with Christian ideology. The best way of explaining how atheists like Vanderplas, the horsemen, and Griffith might have such radically different interpretations of spirituality includes understanding the term as uniquely capable of being "heard" in many ways, just as it is uniquely capable of communicating multiple perspectives.

Secular military groups' protests against CSF's conceptualization of spiritual fitness demonstrate that spirituality's meaning cannot be taken for granted as widely applicable. The existential assumptions often associated with spirituality discourse (regarding what gives life meaning and purpose, allows a person to be motivated and moral, etc.) are variable among a

diverse population. The growth of secular communities in the military demonstrates that the ways of negotiating existential concerns are perhaps not as fixed as the CSF program assumed.

The argument that secularists may have healthy ways of negotiating existential concern is implicated in the phrase that Griffith coined and promoted while at MASH, “there are no chaplains in foxholes.”¹⁷³ The aphorism is a play on the older yet still repeated expression, “there are no atheists in foxholes.”¹⁷⁴ The historical usage communicates the understanding that when under significant duress, all people, regardless of previous orientation, reach out to God. The saying also suggests that this reaching out is a natural consequence of coming to the limits of the self.

Griffith’s adaptation indicated that such reaching out was neither natural nor universal, suggesting that soldiers could face challenges and survive limiting situations without God. Furthermore, the altered saying implied that chaplains did not have to withstand the same trials of war as soldiers. The saying suggested that as noncombatants, chaplains were in the comfortable position of dispensing religious exhortations to those in the foxholes without knowing combat fire themselves.

Of course, both sayings were inaccurate. It is likely that there was a time in US history that the statement “there are no atheists in foxholes” was mostly true, such as in the 1950s when a theistic orientation served as a backdrop for national policies and broadly informed daily living. But the quick development and growth of secular communities in the twenty-first century

¹⁷³Justin Griffith, “High Ranking Chaplain Leaves Out ‘So Help Me God’ (Awesome Video),” *Rock Beyond Belief* (blog), November 3, 2011, accessed January 5, 2016, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rockbeyondbelief/2011/11/03/high-ranking-chaplain-leaves-out-so-help-me-god-awesome-video/>.

¹⁷⁴For example, I personally heard this view espoused by a veteran at the *After the Blue Ribbon Conference*, held at Duke University in 2011, and books such as Patrick McLaughlin’s *No Atheists in Foxholes: Reflections and Prayers from the Front* (Dallas, TX: Thomas Nelson, 2013), available on Amazon, endorsed this perspective.

illuminates that American self-orientations are shifting away from belief in God in an unprecedented fashion.¹⁷⁵ This shift has possible implications for how Americans negotiate existential concerns, and as communities like MAAF have argued, one can survive a foxhole without God.

While chaplains may not literally have been in foxholes as much as other service members due to their noncombatant status, they still experienced combat and were required to undergo rigorous training to be able to endure combat environments.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, chaplains encountered the battlefield without weapons, an experience that certainly countered the implication that chaplains did not understand the terror of war.

Chaplains and atheists exist in proverbial foxholes together, and as long as foxholes remain places that test human capacities, those in them will need support. Whether or not this support can or should be understood universally as “spiritual” depends on whether or not or how groups with increasingly diversified views can negotiate the fundamental aspects of what it takes to survive and thrive.

¹⁷⁵According to the Pew Research Center, young Americans were becoming more irreligious earlier in life than older generations when they were young. Michael Lipka, “Millennials increasingly are Driving Growth of ‘Nones,’” *Pew Research Center*, May 12, 2015, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/millennials-increasingly-are-driving-growth-of-nones/>.

¹⁷⁶Eric Marrapodi and Chris Lawrence, “Preparing Clergy for War: Army Chaplains Train by the Hundred for the Combat Zone,” *CNN*, August 30th 2011, accessed February 8, 2016, <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/30/preparing-clergy-for-war-army-chaplains-train-by-the-hundred-for-the-combat-zone/>.

CONCLUSION

Spiritual Education's Virtues and Vices

This dissertation began by asking how spiritual education came to have prominence in a massive public, nonreligious organization like the American military given the term's historical linkage to religion. Part of my curiosity stemmed from the fact that the term "spirituality" is frequently used but seldom explained. This conclusion offers insights that developed over the course of my study regarding the meaning of the term "spirituality" and the implications of the use of this concept in military training. The first section surveys spirituality's range of meaning in post-World War II military training contexts. The second suggests how we might most productively understand the use of spirituality in military training.

What is "Spirituality" in the Military Training Context?

"Spirituality" in US Army education has been formulated as a religiously-neutral, health-oriented and scientifically-based concept that reflects the interests of the military while fulfilling the presumed desires of the modern individual. The term "spirituality" has grown increasingly prevalent with the pluralization of belief orientations because it offers a way to talk about some of society's most fundamental and disputed issues without necessarily signaling sectarian commitments or secular biases. Although my work has shown that "spirituality" has not always succeeded in being so neutral, it has been invoked to negotiate matters of deep importance in a seemingly safe idiom.

Throughout this project, I have designated these matters of deep importance "existential concerns." The negotiation of existential concerns inevitably presents claims about *what* makes

for an engaged, dignified, moral, and healthy life, *how* a person can achieve such a life, and *why* one ought to live in such a way. Thus, spirituality discourse is deeply shaped by assumptions regarding what it takes to overcome the hardships of living, what is required to survive circumstances that threaten the body and mind, and what allows one to not just survive but to flourish, to feel good and to be good. Furthermore, spiritual education in the military setting seeks to provide soldiers with motivation to survive and thrive.

Although the common factor in military religious and spiritual education programs in every era has been the formulation of claims about existential concerns, my study of spirituality discourse demonstrates that “spirituality” can convey a wide range of ideas regarding existential concerns. Understanding the range of meaning of spirituality discourse helps clarify why the term has assumed such importance, but it also helps explain why the concept has been so amorphous, divisive, yet still productive. After reviewing the history of “spirituality’s” deployment in military training since the 1940s, it is clear that “spirituality” has been used in four distinct but overlapping ways, identified here as qualitative, locative, hierophanic, and diagnostic modes. I will explain each of these meanings, or “modes,” and then explore how each has been reflected in the historical material I have surveyed.

The Qualitative Mode

The language of spirituality operates in the qualitative mode when it is used to refer to the degree of engagement or motivation with which an individual lives life. This use of spirituality is reflected in the meaning in the expression “having spirit”: a person who “has spirit” demonstrates a special energy, and because of this “spirit,” the person is thought to be highly productive and fully alive. When the term “spirituality” is used in this mode, it aligns with the

etymological origin of the word “spirit,” the Latin “*spiritus*,” which means “breath, breathing, air, soul, life.” One with spirit has life.

This mode of spirituality does not necessarily have sacred or religious connotations. “Spirit” here is used more to modify a state of existence rather than to describe, for example, a reified object that one possesses. Although it refers to one’s capacity to be and do (and in the case of military “spirit,” to transcend hardship and attend the work of war with passion), it does not necessarily assume that the power to be, do, and transcend comes from an outside force or one different from the self.

Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* used this function in the following passage:

In warfare the force of armies is the product of the mass multiplied by something else, an unknown X. ... X is the spirit of the army, the greater or less desire to fight and to face dangers on the part of all the men composing the army, which is quite apart from the question whether they are fighting under leaders of genius or not, with cudgels or with guns that fire thirty times a minute.¹

The assumption that armies need a “desire to fight” even more than powerful weapons and genius leaders was repeated by General Marshall and in the Fort Knox training materials, except that the “unknown X” was distinctly articulated as a “spiritual” aspect of life. Countless others, like Napoleon Bonaparte, also identified “the spirit” as what ultimately won wars. Napoleon once stated, “There are only two forces in the world, the sword and the spirit. In the long run, the sword will always be conquered by the spirit.”² George Marshall’s famous Trinity speech directly aligned “the spirit” with morale in a similar way. He claimed, “It is not enough to fight.

¹Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace* (New York: Random House, 2007), 1032.

²Quoted in Jerry Manas, *Napoleon on Project Management: Timeless Lessons in Planning, Execution, and Leadership* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2006), 185.

It is the spirit which we bring to the fight that decides the issue. It is morale that wins the victory.”³

Encapsulated in this understanding of “the spirit” is the notion that people are rational creatures who need to be inspired in order to put forth full effort. In order for people to be emotionally invested in their work, they need to feel compelled and motivated. “Spirituality” in the qualitative mode thus makes claims about what it takes to sufficiently motivate people. It offers clues as to what counts as satisfying meaning and purpose in life and suggests what might be compelling enough for one to stand ground while under fire or to struggle to continue living.

The qualitative mode often addresses how people can do extraordinary things that they may not wish to do. It often understands people as having a great capacity for heroism, but also sees people as needing sufficient drive to accomplish great things. Marshall understood the payoff of compelling soldiers to engage personally in their missions when he articulated the administrative need to appeal to soldiers’ sense of reason rather than treat them as objects passively awaiting orders. He identified this task as integral to “spiritual training.” As Marshall understood it, spiritual training would create the kind of morale that would win wars, even without the best machinery.⁴

Recent programs such as the CSF similarly formulate spiritual training as utterly important to warfare, regardless of its particular dimensions. This program is also focused on boosting morale and motivation by teaching soldiers the importance of discovering personal meaning and

³George Marshall, “We Cannot Delay,” July 1, 1939-December 6, 1941, in Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr., eds., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 534-538.

⁴See section one of Chapter One for this discussion.

purpose. Like the programs before it, the CSF suggests that the cultivation of morale occurs in the “spirit.”

The military is the largest institution in the United States aimed at boosting “spirit,” this quality of engagement that unlocks extraordinary strength and self-discipline. Because the work of war is uncomfortable and sometimes life-threatening, it requires deep inner resolve. “Spiritual training” in past and current military programs commonly refer to strengthening a soldier’s inner resolve to be efficient, hardworking, and resilient even in the harshest conditions.

The Locative Mode

“Spirituality” used in the locative sense identifies the spirit as a critical aspect or component of human identity and sometimes treats the spirit like an organ or a real but nebulous entity, like the “mind.” The spirit is framed as having a crucial place within a person (hence the “locative mode”). Discourse in this mode points to the spirit’s status as a fundamental aspect of personhood and often implies that people are dignified creatures because of their spirits.

Military literature reflects this understanding, and often implies that soldiers are able to “have spirit” because of the existence of their spirits. In fact, the spirit is often identified as the fundamental building block of being, and as such, it is seen as animating all other faculties. Without it, the body is flesh and the mind is composed of magnetic-electric signals. In this understanding, the “spirit” breathes life (enhancing the qualitative spirit) into all other parts of a person.

The assumption that people have spirits and are thus dignified beings has important implications in an institution like the military. One logical consequence of understanding people as dignified agents is the perception that people with spirits have an inherent need for meaning.

In the case of the Fort Knox experiment, understanding soldiers as spiritual creatures meant attempting to respect trainees by appealing to their sense of reason during training rather than merely barking orders. The CSF assumed that because soldiers had spirits, they were meaning-making creatures who needed existential stability (not just pills) to stave off suicidal thoughts. Likewise, medical literature on spirituality and health has argued that because people have spirits in addition to minds and bodies, good healthcare is attentive to the fact that people need a compelling sense of purpose and meaning to thrive and be healthy. It appears in this understanding that attending to the spirit often requires attending to the rational mind first.

“Spirituality” used in this way does not necessarily indicate that belief in a human spirit requires faith in an external power, like the divine. However, some narratives that posit humans as spiritual beings also eventually point to an external power as the source of the spirit. Earlier versions of the CGP distinctly articulated that God created human spirits, while *Fit to Win* indicated that the spirit was possibly an immanent aspect of personhood. In the same way that philosophers and psychologists have asserted that people have “spirits” or “souls” by virtue of their humanity, the CSF identified soldiers as people with spirits but avoided implying that the existence of the spirit assumed the existence of God. However, as the next mode will illustrate, the language of “spirituality” can be used to express religious and theistic beliefs, and my work shows that “spirituality” still often employs this meaning.

The Hierophanic Mode

The third way that the term “spirituality” gets used goes beyond referring to an imminent quality of being or a universal human component to refer to external powers or beings that exist outside of the self and have the capacity to press upon it. Such beings include, for example, God,

gods or goddesses, Islamic Jinn, the American Indian Great Spirit, ancestral ghosts, the Christian Holy Spirit or some other iteration of a possibly personified, usually immaterial, invisible force. I call this mode of spirituality the “hierophanic mode” because it indicates belief in the manifestation (“phaino”) of something considered, for my uses, broadly “sacred” (“hieros”). In this context, I follow Mircea Eliade in finding the term “hierophany” more useful than “theology” here because of its broader application.⁵ The hierophanic mode indicates the existence of something outside the self that is powerful enough to manipulate a person or to transform one’s being. It frames the self as limited and as needing the aid of an outer force. Conceived differently, “spirituality” in the hierophanic mode indicates a “porous” self-orientation, to use philosopher Charles Taylor’s term. According to Taylor, a porous self is open to greater forces that exist outside its boundaries.⁶

Spirituality discourse often portrays human life as an endeavor to be taken seriously, with intention, motivation, and engagement. Spirituality used in the hierophanic sense invokes the aid of outer forces as both a means for engaged and energetic living and a reason for it. It offers connection to a higher force as a mechanism for exceeding the limits of human capacity. As such, spirituality in the hierophanic mode often promotes human transformation, and it assumes that the ordinary and the natural can only be transcended with help from the extraordinary and the supernatural.

This form of spirituality is the sort that is most often associated with “religious” beliefs and practices because these express faith in a realm that has the power to transform ordinary human experiences and potentials. The use of “spirit,” “spiritual,” and “spirituality” in the

⁵See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, 1957).

⁶Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 38.

hierophanic mode commonly points beyond the scientifically-measurable material world to a realm of forces that are thought to be believed, not proven. In short, the hierophanic mode requires adhering to disputed logics, logics that cannot be accessed by everyone. Two sub-categories within the hierophanic mode are important to point out here.

a. Metaphysical Mode: The metaphysical mode, which is completely absent from spirituality discourse in military literature, deserves mention because it helps to clarify the particularities of military spirituality rhetoric. Spirituality in the metaphysical mode denotes the existence of spiritual beings (e.g., angels or ghosts) in the realm beyond which may or may not fit neatly with American conceptions that assume one all-powerful God. This is the category into which beliefs and practices widely considered “fringe” fall into, such as beliefs in channeled spirits and paranormal beings. Spiritual activities in this mode might include practicing astrology or using crystals. Military literature from every era avoided this mode, and both Fit to Win and CSF explicitly stated that spirituality in the military has nothing to do with “New Age” beliefs or practices. This is possibly because metaphysical beliefs and practices operate outside the bounds of mainstream religiosity and are comparatively rebellious and exploratory, traits that do not serve the military community well.

b. Theological Mode: If “having spirit” refers to a quality of being, spirituality in the theological hierophanic mode could be summed up as “having *the* spirit”: this mode indicates that a single higher force exists that requires recognition and obeisance. Military literature since the 1940s has used the term “spirituality” in this sense either implicitly (as in CSF’s subtexts) or explicitly (as in the early CGP) to indicate that soldiers need God. Furthermore, the use of this

mode in military literature has appeared to be consistently shaped by Judeo-Christian assumptions.

The Fort Knox program's spiritual training indicated that trainees needed God to behave morally and stay on task. The CGP indicated that soldiers needed God in order to protect democracy and secure national safety. Fit to Win and the CSF programs gestured to the belief that soldiers needed God, sometimes articulated as a "higher power," in order to maintain healthy meaning and purpose and to do their jobs well. In each of these programs, spirituality discourse assumed that the limits of human potential could only be transcended by finding a source of strength outside of the self. All of these programs demonstrated the view that belief in God allowed a person to behave morally, to work efficiently, and to thrive.

The Diagnostic Mode

The diagnostic mode frames spirituality as a basic aspect of human experience or potential that can be utilized for overall good health. Although this mode might also employ spirituality in one or more of the other ways to signal a quality of existence, a component of personhood, or an external power, this mode emphasizes spirituality's function as a tool for wellness. Fit to Win used spirituality in this way when it introduced spirituality as an important category of health promotion and disease prevention. By the time CSF was instituted in 2009, the body of medical research on spirituality had dramatically increased. New research seemed to confirm spirituality's value to the "secular" military and to distance it--at least at first glance--from connoting religious or theistic beliefs. Spirituality's new potential to indicate a measurement of health indicated that its range of meaning had expanded beyond its traditional use in the hierophanic mode.

As Chapter Five demonstrated, the CSF program used “spirituality” in the diagnostic sense to teach the importance of thinking positively, acting according to one’s core values, and seeking help from an external power for personal wellbeing. Although “spirituality” in previous training programs was implied as good for a soldier, CSF’s indication of spirituality as a diagnosable component of health often framed spirituality as an evidence-based panacea. “Spirituality,” understood as a health component, was advertised as allowing one an enhanced sense of meaning and satisfaction while helping one to reduce stress and risky behaviors. Spirituality thus conceived was assumed to positively impact the physical body’s health, making it appear relevant for all people regardless of faith.

The Implications of This Range of Modes

My work has shown that “spirituality” can operate in each of these four modes to make claims about the mechanics of motivation, the status of people as dignified creatures, the necessity of transcending the self in search of a higher power, and the value of spiritual belief and practice for health. Much of the confusion and conflict over the institutionalization of spirituality in military education has occurred because the single term “spirituality” could be used to refer to a broad range of very different ideas within these different modes. My work has also shown that the prevalence of these different modes in military training has also shifted over time.

For example, military educational literature from the late 1940s through the late 1960s explicitly linked the qualitative, locative, and hierophanic modes to assert that each person had spirit (or motivation) and had a spirit because of the existence of God. But by the mid-1960s, spirituality’s use in the hierophanic mode was challenged as a violation of religious freedom and

individual liberty, and in the later Human Self Development program, reference to the hierophanic was gone. That program asserted that one could live a moral and engaged life without appealing to the belief in something higher. The consequences of the term “spirituality” operating in different modes (that could sometimes overlap) was that one person could interpret a particular utterance of spirituality to be about motivation or dignity, while another could read the same statement as being about a relationship with God.

The recent controversy over the CSF program’s employment of the language of spirituality has revolved around the suspicion that it is still being used in the hierophanic mode. When Griffith, the soldier who publicly protested CSF’s spiritual fitness assessment, said that he did not believe in the “spirit,” he seemed to refer to an invisible entity that required special faith. It is not clear from that discussion whether he was specifically referring to the kind of spirit that was an ontological designation or an external force, but other discussions addressed in Chapter Six suggested that he took umbrage at both types. He concluded that these forms of spirituality should not exist in mandatory education because they invoked a logic that not everyone could accept.

But the most recent mode of spirituality rhetoric, the diagnostic mode, presents spirituality as something that does not necessarily require special belief. Spirituality framed as a scientifically-based tool for human wellness promotes spiritual belief and practice as universalizable, individually-adjustable forms of exercise. One implication of the rhetoric of spirituality in this mode is that everyone—even atheists like Griffith—should be able to participate in spiritual training. While spirituality rhetoric in the CGP sometimes employed the hierophanic mode to promote military duty as obedience to God, spirituality rhetoric in the diagnostic mode now has the capability of promoting military performance merely as a tool of good health.

The fact that spirituality can now operate in the diagnostic mode reflects the category's entrance into what I would call a "politics of diagnosis," and this has caused a whole new set of complications regarding its institutionalization. In the way that I am using the term, "diagnosis" is the process of recognizing an illness by making what theorist Michel Foucault called "statements."⁷ Statements are speech acts that are taken as authoritative and are thought to convey the "knowledge" or "truth" that "experts" dispense. Expertise and authority are created and maintained by various mechanisms; the products that they dispense, "knowledge" and "truth," are reflective of assumptions made by authoritative powers. Diagnosis, then, is always a political process because it entails the product of "authoritative" interpretations of what constitutes illness, sickness, or health. These interpretations, which reflect shifting cultural perceptions, have powerful societal consequences.

My study of the implementation of spirituality as a fitness concept underscores that what is always at stake in diagnosis, in naming illness and its healing, is the freedom of a person to choose how to interpret her own mental and bodily functions. When these functions are defined, cataloged, and measured by experts, this loss of freedom is particularly problematic in the arena of spirituality, because that zone is commonly perceived as intensely personal and subjective.

The four modes of the rhetoric of "spirituality" reflected in military training literature demonstrate the term's wide range of possible meanings. This essential ambiguity accounts for both the term's popularity and also its potential for controversy. Because the diagnostic mode can be used to frame particular spiritual beliefs and practices as healthy and therefore

⁷Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 106-115.

universalizable, it is possibly the most contested mode of all. Yet it is increasingly employed today in a variety of important social institutions.

An Interpretation of Institutionalized Education about Spirituality

My work has demonstrated that the term “spirituality” has had distinctive potency because it has offered a way to promote important types of belief and practice in secular places under the guise of neutrality. However, my work has also established that in every period since the 1940s, military spiritual training programs were not initiated by chaplains or by religious organizations. Chaplains were called upon to draft materials and to help run the programs, but in every case, the programs’ most significant advocates were not religious professionals: they were others in leadership positions--mostly commanders and medical professionals--who saw spirituality as a valuable tool for creating happy, healthy, morally upright, and productive soldiers. Although spirituality’s meaning has at times been infused with religious ideology, the requirement of spiritual training is largely the consequence of secular authorities invoking a concept that was historically tied to religious life. In short, spirituality was deemed serviceable by secular authorities for secular purposes.

In order to remain secularly useful in changing social contexts, the meaning of the term evolved. Before the 1960s, spirituality’s religious and theistic deployment by those with secular authority went smoothly. It was assumed in American culture that most were Christians (or at least theists), and the rhetoric of spirituality in training materials from that time reflected that assumption. It appears that nearly everyone (the chaplains charged with facilitating the training and the military authorities directing it) agreed on the importance of belief in God and religious practice. But during the 1960s, the previous decade’s religious homogeneity had run its course

as Americans became more open to religious diversity and secular worldviews. The legality of the US Chaplain Corps itself was challenged, and the spiritual education program that had operated since the late 1940s was discontinued.

When spirituality was introduced again as a part of the Army's Health Promotion Program in the 1980s, it looked very different from its religiously-oriented predecessor. Health professionals had taken over the job of defining the concept, and for the most part, they relegated overt talk about God and religion to the margins. In 1987, the program defined "spiritual fitness" as the "development of those personal qualities needed to sustain a person in times of stress, hardship, and tragedy."⁸ Unlike the program before it, this new program did not explicitly assume that the necessary "personal qualities" came from religious practice and a belief in God. However, it did encourage prayer, meditation, reflection, and the belief that there was "something greater" than the self.⁹ As Chapter Five demonstrated, the newer 2009 program also linked spirituality to health and encouraged the idea that a belief in "something greater" was necessary to achieve "spiritual fitness." In an increasingly secular age, spirituality could no longer be universally recognized as a religious register for morality, but it could be promoted as a health agent.

Chapters Four and Five show that spirituality's new identification as a mechanism for health did not occur overnight. Conditions in the mainstream medical field grew more favorable for recognizing the value of "softer" subjects such as spirituality in the 1970s. Secular concerns such as health care costs facilitated this shift. New research on the relationship between religion, spirituality, and health began in the 1980s, conducted mainly by those in nursing, epidemiology,

⁸US Army, *Spiritual Fitness*, DAPAM 600-63-12 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 1.

⁹Ibid., 9.

and psychology. Through the 1990s, these studies proliferated as funding increased. From the 1980s until the mid-2000s, published research on “spirituality and health” increased 688%.¹⁰ By 2012, Oxford University Press had published the second edition of the *Handbook of Religion and Health* and the first edition of the *Oxford Textbook of Spirituality in Healthcare*.¹¹ This growing body of scientific research fostered CSF’s integration of the spiritual fitness concept into mandatory military training.¹²

This project demonstrates that spirituality’s recent prominence in the American health care system has troubling implications for individuals. As described above, what is primarily at stake is the freedom of individuals to pursue their own ways of making meaning. When spiritual education is promoted by massive public institutions, spirituality’s meaning is shaped by normative claims built on ontological, moral, and (in some cases) theological assumptions that often suit those institutions and their interests. As a result, spirituality might be framed as a search for what is meaningful to the individual, but what counts as meaningful is not left in the end to individual determination. In the military, the acceptable understanding of meaning and purpose aligns with a sense of patriotism and a commitment to army values. Finding a meaningful life never seems to end in desertion or conscientious objection.

Additionally, because spirituality can now be seen as a means of producing good health, its meaning can be even more shaped by authorities’ expectations about what it means to be “fit” and it can be urgently promoted by authorities in public sectors such as the military. The form of

¹⁰Andrew J. Weaver, Kenneth Pargament, Kevin Flannelly, and Julia Oppenheimer, “Trends in the Scientific Study of Religion, Spirituality, and Health: 1965-2000,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 45, no. 2 (July 1, 2006): 208–14.

¹¹Harold Koenig, Dana King, and Verna B. Carson, eds., *Handbook of Religion and Health* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Mark Cobb, Christina Puchalski, and Bruce Rumbold, eds., *Oxford Textbook of Spirituality in Healthcare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹²Robert Connelly and Kathleen Light, “Exploring the ‘New’ Frontier of Spirituality in Health Care: Identifying the Dangers,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 42, no. 1 (April 1, 2003): 35.

spirituality featured in public health education is therefore not free for individual interpretation: its meaning, though contested, is shaped by moral and existential assumptions that are carefully directed towards particular ends. In the military, these ends must serve the institution. When soldiers enter into the service, they are required to submit their bodies, minds, and (some would say) spirits for grooming. Noah Peirce, the soldier featured in the introduction, was right in more ways than one. Freedom is not free.

My dissertation has shown that another cost often incurred by the rhetoric of spiritual fitness is soldiers' freedom from religion. Much of the controversy over the "spiritual fitness" concept and the existential concerns this concept encapsulated stemmed from the understanding that in the United States, such concerns were often considered to be the purview of "religion," broadly construed. My work has repeatedly shown that claims about the deep and important things in life in America often have been filtered through religious ideology. Before the CGP was challenged on this point, it explicitly tied existential concerns to Judeo-Christian belief and practice. Fit to Win and CSF both promoted religious practice as viable ways of enhancing one's understanding of existential concerns, and the research on spirituality and health reviewed in Chapter Five demonstrated the tendency to see religious belief and practice as primary ways of making sustaining meaning.

My dissertation is replete with examples illustrating how "religion" broadly conceived (such as Pargament's promotion of "broad-band" religion) has often been associated with existential concerns in the United States, but the inverse of this habit--of disassociating secularism with existential concerns (and especially moral capacity)--is also present in my dissertation. Early CGP lectures explicitly identified atheists as a threat to national security and to American morality. Chapter Six detailed the difficulties that recent secular military groups

have had in gaining recognition and trust. The idea that selfless morality and lasting wellbeing will ultimately only be found in a life of faith appears to persist.

Yet one complicating factor in being able to perceive existential concerns as disengaged from religion or spirituality is that these have been associated even by secularists, as Chapter Six discussed. Such associations of religion and spirituality with existential concerns have left secular communities in something of a quandary: how can they negotiate a compelling moral sense or a fulfilling sense of meaning and purpose when these things have so long been associated with cultures and belief systems they might reject? How can such groups expand beyond being merely reactionary to forming unique moral identities? Is borrowing from religion to form a set of virtues inevitable?

Only time can answer how newer secular communities in the United States will negotiate these answers. It may be that the term “spirituality” persists as a placeholder for existential concerns, or it may not. What my dissertation ultimately suggests is that learning how to negotiate the existential concerns necessary for a thriving public life in an increasingly diversified country will remain a relevant project in every time period.

For now, it remains unclear whether mandatory spirituality training as it currently stands can be legally enforced or challenged. No religious studies scholar has attended more to this issue than Winnifred Fallers Sullivan. In *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*, Sullivan argued that because there is no commonly-accepted definition of “religion” in American culture or among US lawmakers, the state inevitably defines what ends up counting as legally defensible religious expression.¹³ If this is the case for “religion,” then it certainly would seem to be true for “spirituality,” a term even more nebulous.

¹³Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

My work indicates that by the mid-1960s, the legality of spirituality training in the military had been challenged, but the real impetus for changing the religious parameters of the term was social pressure, not court mandates. For example, the CGP's language shifted after the American Civil Liberties Union charged the program with having a "religious flavor." CSF's rhetoric also apparently shifted after groups like the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers protested that it was not adequately secular. Public protest historically has been a more effective tool than legal recourse in changing the contours of mandatory spiritual education.

A 2011 *First Amendment Law Review* article by Jeffrey Lakin which examined the current state of religious freedom in the US military offers a reason for why this may be the case. Lakin analyzed the legal contours of the Fort Eustis episode described in Chapter Six, in which soldiers were punished for refusing to attend a spiritual fitness concert.¹⁴ He explained that historically, US courts and especially the US Supreme Court have tended to avoid setting military policies, often deferring to the Department of Defense and military courts instead. As a result, soldiers seeking legal recourse have had to "exhaust intramilitary remedies" first.

Lakin argued that given these considerations, it is highly unusual for the Supreme Court to rule against the military. The historical precedent of the doctrine of "military necessity" is too strong. Lakin explained military necessity as "the idea that the unique task of national defense and maintaining discipline and order in the military allows for a narrower reading of the First

¹⁴Jeffrey Lakin, "Atheists in Foxholes: Examining the Current State of Religious Freedom in the United States Military," *First Amendment Law Review* 9 (2011): 713. Lakin notes that the Military Religious Freedom Foundation often threatens to sue the Department of Defense but rarely does. In 2008, MRFF did file a suit against the DoD on behalf of atheists claiming violations of religious freedoms. This suit and a similar one filed later at the US District Court for the District of Kansas were ultimately dismissed, as the plaintiffs had not "exhaust[ed] intramilitary remedies." *Ibid.*, 718-719.

Amendment rights than what would apply to the general public.”¹⁵ If a practice is considered necessary for national defense, it can be deemed permissible in the military even if it is not constitutionally permissible elsewhere.

This history of spiritual training in the military shows just how urgently the need to boost morale, an undoubtable military necessity, has been in the military. The end of such training seems unlikely. Lakin’s prediction regarding the difficulty of overcoming the military necessity of such training has merit given the persistence of spiritual training, which in every era has been aimed at achieving military success.

Given the apparent necessity of spiritual training for the military institution, it is appropriate to question whom spiritual education serves, the institution or the individual. As mentioned in the introduction, Richard King and Jeremy Carrette have argued that spiritual education programs are often merely corporate attempts to manipulate employees into higher performance. The military chaplaincy, as the military institution primarily charged with cultivating existential concerns, has also been questioned along these lines. Chapter Three described how a host of critics, including chaplain veterans, have emphasized the extent to which military chaplains have been obligated to the state over the church in their jobs. Often military spiritual education has exhibited confusing, complex, and contradictory logic because it has taught soldiers that they are more than just workers while also attempting to extract from them the results required of them *as* workers. For the most part, the freedoms that the rhetoric of spirituality has advertised have been constrained to support the needs of the institution.

But my work demonstrates that while spiritual education in the military certainly has reflected social and political interests, it has also reflected a concern for maintaining the dignity,

¹⁵Ibid., 713.

potential, and wellbeing of individuals. Generals George Marshall and John Devine explicitly articulated the desire to treat soldiers and trainees better than before, and these desires appeared to manifest in some aspects of the Fort Knox program (such as the protection of leisure time and the emphasis on encouragement). Although the CGP began essentially as a vehicle for indoctrination, its teaching format evolved to empower those in the classroom. The Fit to Win and CSF programs aimed to dignify and empower individuals by helping them to process and recover from hardship.

Some critics of spiritual fitness education overlook the ethic of care espoused in the language and work of spirituality. “Spirituality’s” potential for abuse is undeniable, but spiritual care, even with all its problems, often reflects a position of empathy and sympathy. In this respect, it is no coincidence that “spiritual care” in medical settings was initiated in the 1980s by nurses, the people charged with attending intimately to patients. That official “spiritual care” grew out of such sustained engagement with physically and emotionally injured people suggests that people faced with the suffering of others will want to engage them on a deep and personal level.

Spiritual fitness training and education in the military appears to reflect some of these same ethics. My work demonstrates that although there are a myriad of problems with such programs, these programs, from the Fort Knox experiment to the CSF, involved an effort to understand soldiers as dignified individuals whose emotional and mental wellbeing mattered. It is possible that a military without such an emphasis would demonstrate less care for individuals, at least in certain ways.

Spiritual education is thus both entangled in webs of power that aim to shape individuals and also in projects that attempt to offer them dignity and freedom by focusing on individual

existential concerns. It is not helpful to understand institutionalized military spirituality either as a coercive or as a liberating phenomenon. It is both.

The advent of spiritual fitness education in public institutions marks a desire to return a focus on existential concerns for a range of purposes--economic, political, moral, and empathetic. The history of spirituality education in the American military demonstrates that talk about spirituality is far from being empty, meaningless, or innocuous. Rather, spiritual discourse is uniquely useful, as it has been used to coerce for the sake of institutional and collective interests, but also to address the needs of individuals desiring dignity within the institutional setting. “Spirituality’s” ability to reflect both institutional and individual interests is what makes the employment of nonreligious forms of spirituality at once so appealing and so complex. Exactly how the rights and dignity of individuals can be preserved in the context of a demanding, pluralistic society is central to what Alexis de Tocqueville called the “great experiment,” and it is something that Americans will continue to grapple with.¹⁶

¹⁶Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2003), 9.

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