

# Dissertation Approval Sheet

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HEARING THE CALL AFRESH:  
A GUIDE FOR MILITARY CHAPLAINS FACING RETIREMENT

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HEARING THE CALL AFRESH:  
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## ABSTRACT

### **Hearing the Call Afresh: A Guide for Military Chaplains Facing Retirement**

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Military chaplains are both clergy persons and officers in the armed services who minister to the members of the military and their families. The military is a unique subculture with its own geography, customs, traditions, and even clothing and hairstyles. Chaplains become a part of this subculture, serve under the same requirements and limitations as any other service member, and enjoy the same benefits, which include a very generous retirement package. When the time comes to transition out of this subculture, retiring chaplains face unique challenges. This dissertation will identify and examine the challenges facing retiring chaplains, the unique gifts and abilities these chaplains have to offer the church, and some of the negative stereotypes they will have to overcome.

This study will look at the underlying biblical and theological issues involved in the retirement of military chaplains. Relevant literature and biblical passages will be reviewed in an effort to develop an understanding of clergy retirement. This work looks carefully at the meaning of ordination as a life-long state and at the concept of vocation or calling as it relates to clergy, with a special focus on retired clergy.

This dissertation argues that to successfully transition to civilian life, retiring military chaplains need to go through a period of liminality, a time where the chaplain examines his or her life journey thus far and listens for God's leading for the future. The study offers some concrete suggestions of ways chaplains can find healing for the spiritual and psychological wounds they may have received during their time in the military. Finally, this study will give some concrete ways that retiring military chaplains can discern God's call for the next phase of their lives.

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## PART ONE

### MINISTRY CONTEXT

## INTRODUCTION

In his novel *You Can't Go Home Again*, Thomas Wolfe introduces the reader to George Webber, a young writer living in New York City. In April 1929, after a year of wandering around Europe in an effort to escape from Esther Jack, a prominent and married socialite with whom he was having an affair, Webber returns home to America. Things are going well for Webber. Soon after his return to Manhattan, one of the major publishing houses, James Rodney & Company, agrees to publish his book *Home to Our Mountains*, which was drawn largely from his experiences growing up in the small town of Libya Hill. Although Webber is excited about the prospect of being a published novelist, he is also anxious about the response it will receive in Libya Hill and the judgment of its residents.

While waiting for the publication of his book, Webber receives a telegram from his Uncle Mark Joyner: "YOUR AUNT MAW DIED LAST NIGHT STOP FUNERAL THURSDAY IN LIBYA HILL STOP COME HOME IF YOU CAN."<sup>1</sup> Webber decides to attend the funeral and boards a train where he meets a number of the town's residents. Judge Bland, a disreputable man who made his living as a loan shark, asks George a piercing question. He asks George if he can actually go home again. These words serve as a warning to Webber, who reflects deeply on them. He is convinced that he is going home to the Libya Hill he knew as a child. The author writes, "All he knew was that the years flow by like water, and that one day men come home again."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again* (New York: Scribner, 1968), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 76.

When Webber arrives in Libya Hill, he discovers that the community has changed drastically. The excesses of the Roaring Twenties have made an impact on the community in the form of uncontrolled real estate speculation. The quiet streets are filled with traffic. The quaint old buildings in the center of town have been torn down and replaced by modern, steel and concrete structures that lacked any character. The easy-going friendliness of the people has been replaced by competitiveness as everyone tries to get in on the real estate boom:

The faces of natives and strangers alike appeared to be animated by some secret and unholy glee. And their bodies, as they darted, dodged, and thrust their way along, seemed to have a kind of leaping energy as if some powerful drug was driving them on. They gave him the impression of an entire population that was drunk—drunk with an intoxication which never made them weary, dead, or sodden, and which never wore off, but which incited them constantly to new efforts of leaping and thrusting exuberance.<sup>3</sup>

To George, Libya Hill's success was hollow. The boom has resulted in needless construction and fifty million dollars in debt. The people no longer owned the town; the money-lenders now owned the people:

This visit to Libya Hill, which he had dreamed about so many times as his homecoming, and which had not turned out in any way as he had thought it would be, was really his leave-taking, his farewell. The last tie that had bound him to his native earth was severed, and he was going out from here to make a life for himself as each man must—alone.<sup>4</sup>

The story of the writer George Webber is really the story of the writer Thomas Wolfe. Libya Hill is Thomas Wolfe's native Asheville, North Carolina. George Webber's story is also the story of many who face the challenge of re-entering a society they have left for a long period of time. Examples include employees of multi-national

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 121.



corporations, missionaries, and volunteers with the Peace Corps. Less socially acceptable examples would include prison inmates and patients of psychiatric hospitals. Whether the individual is a returning executive or a former prisoner, the re-entry process has similar characteristics. Those going through the process typically exhibit similar behaviors and experience similar problems:

Re-entry is the process that occurs when the individual attempts to return to the social system of which he once was a part. In re-entering the former social system, he may try to regain his former status, or because his values have shifted while away he may reject his former position and try to redefine his relationship to those around him. In either case, the re-entry process is likely to be slow, painful, and under certain circumstances, terrifying.<sup>5</sup>

The experience of being out of society for a period of time and then returning is not the normal behavioral pattern in most communities. It differs in significant ways from society's behavioral norms, whether or not the reason for the absence was socially approved. Sociologists refer to behavior that differs from social norms as deviant behavior. In the minds of those who have spent all their lives in the community, the returnee is a deviant, although they would not label them as such because the word has gained a negative connotation. Kai Erickson defines the term in this way:

Deviance is not a property *inherent in* certain forms of behavior; it is a property *conferred upon* those forms by the audiences which directly or indirectly witness them. Sociologically, then, the critical variable in the study of deviance is the social *audience* rather than the individual *person*, since it is the audience which eventually decides whether or not any given action or actions will become a visible case of deviation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Diane Jansson, "Return to Society: Problematic Features of the Re-entry Process," *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care* 13, no 3 (July 1975): 136.

<sup>6</sup> Kai T. Erikson, "Notes on the Sociology of Deviance," Paper presented at the 55<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, New York, 1960. Accessed May 1, 2014, [https://www.soc.umn.edu/~uggen/Erikson\\_SP\\_63.pdf](https://www.soc.umn.edu/~uggen/Erikson_SP_63.pdf).

All military members at some point complete their service and face the re-entry process and challenge of returning home. As they do so, they are in many ways social deviants. For example, in the Navy most sailors have had the experience of being away from their families for long periods of time while at sea. Family separations are the norm in Navy culture, common in the community of a naval base, but are seen as odd or deviant by those in the home community. When former soldiers, sailors, airmen or Marines return to their home community following their military service, they may develop a deviant identity. They may label themselves or be labeled by others solely in terms of their former status, such as “retired military” or “veteran.” The result is conflict, stress, and anxiety in both the returnees and the members of the community.<sup>7</sup>

This dissertation will examine the unique challenges one group of military members, retiring military chaplains, encounter as they face the re-entry process of transition back to civilian society. Military chaplains are both clergy persons and officers in the armed services who minister to the members of the military and their families. Christian chaplains in particular seek to model the example of Jesus, who in his incarnation set aside his status as equal with God and took on the nature of a servant, becoming fully human (Phil 2:6-7). Similarly, chaplains choose to leave the civilian world and become a part of the military subculture with its unique geography, customs and traditions in order to effectively minister in that context. For twenty years or more they have lived in a military world. They have conformed to the same uniform regulations as other military members, lived in the same base housing, shopped in

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<sup>7</sup> Jansson, “Return to Society,” 137; Robert Faulkner and Douglas B. McGaw, “Uneasy Homecoming: Stages in the Reentry Transition of Vietnam Veterans,” in *Cross Cultural Reentry: A Book of Readings*, ed. Clyde N. Austin, Ph.D. (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University, 1968), 111.

commissaries, and deployed to war zones and other areas of potential combat. Chaplains are as much affected by the military experience as any other service person.

But like other military officers, and like George Webber, the time comes when retiring military chaplains will have to return home, whether that home is the geographic community from which they originally came or the denominational community that endorsed them and sent them to the military in the first place. Like George Webber, returning military chaplains are not the same people who left twenty or more years ago. They return as a success; they have seen the world. Often they have served as senior officers in the military system. They have ministered to people from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures. They have far more training and experience than the typical parish pastor. But, like other members of the armed forces, returning military chaplains are also deviants. They have chosen to minister within an institution rather than a church. They have worn a military uniform to work rather than a coat and tie. Unlike their civilian counterparts, they are usually financially well off and receive a generous pension equal to half their final base pay for the rest of their lives.

When George Webber returned to Libya Hill, he discovered not only that he had changed, but also that the town had changed. This experience has been called “reentry shock.”<sup>8</sup> Returning military chaplains are likely to discover that the community to which they return is not the one they remember leaving. The geography of the community is different. Businesses patronized in the past are no longer there. New highways have been constructed, and strangers are living in the homes formerly occupied by friends. Civilian

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<sup>8</sup> Nobleza C. Asuncion-Lande, “On Re-entering One’s Culture,” The University of Kansas Office of Study Abroad, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://archive.news.ku.edu/~osa/alumni/adjust.shtml>.

friends and acquaintances have had their own experiences, successes and failures during the military member's absence, and have grown and changed as a result. The challenge for returning chaplains will be to understand these changes, both in themselves and in the community to which they are returning, and to adjust accordingly.

Returning military chaplains have much to offer in ministry after they transition back to civilian society. Many are still quite young, and because of the military's emphasis on physical fitness, most are quite healthy. During their time in the military they have received training and experience in both pastoral care and leadership beyond that of many of their civilian counterparts. Nathan Davis writes, "The missionary or chaplain who successfully transitions into retirement has more to offer to the Kingdom of God after retirement than at any previous time of life."<sup>9</sup> Retired Navy chaplain Charles Marvin elaborates:

Retiring chaplains hold enormous potential to strengthen churches with highly skilled and experienced leadership, often dealing with intensely stressful environments and wide diversity in their flock. Their potential value added to the fellowship is too great to be ignored and should be exploited by our churches, but it appears that chaplains will still be faced with individual ingenuity to open doors and prove their worth.<sup>10</sup>

This dissertation examines some of the unique challenges retiring military chaplains will face as they return to the civilian world. It is intended as a chaplain-specific supplement to the military's Transition Assistance Programs (TAP).<sup>11</sup> The goal of this

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<sup>9</sup> Nathan Davis, ed., *The Finishing Well Handbook: Retirement Transition Skills for Missionaries and Chaplains* (Springfield, MO: The Gospel Publishing House, 2008), 6.

<sup>10</sup> Capt. Charles Marvin, USN ret., "Introduction to Chaplain Retirement," in *The Finishing Well Handbook*, 33.

<sup>11</sup> Each of the services has their own unique TAP program, which is intended to help all military members leaving the service with transition issues.

dissertation is to help retiring chaplains identify the challenges of the transition ahead of time and provide resources to meet those challenges. This paper is broken into three parts. The first part will examine the unique context and challenges retiring chaplains face. The second part focuses on the biblical and theological issues raised when speaking of clergy retirement. The third part will give specific guidance for transitioning chaplains as they make the journey from the military to the civilian world.

Not all chaplains leaving the military receive a military retirement. Some are forced to leave because they failed to be selected for promotion or as a result of legal problems. Others simply choose to pursue another field of ministry before they achieved twenty years of service. This latter group often chooses to join the reserve forces, where they can receive retirement compensation when they turn sixty. Chaplains leaving the military without a retirement may benefit from some of the suggestions offered here, but the focus of this paper is on retiring active duty Christian military chaplains from church communities who use a congregational or presbyterian form of church government, that is, traditions that do not have a bishop to assist in determining their next place of service. The paper will explore in some depth the challenges facing these chaplains as they return home. It will also look at the concept of retirement, both its historical development, and current models. We will further reflect on a number of theological issues raised when considering the retirement of clergy, including the meaning of ordination, calling or vocation, and Sabbath.

The ultimate goal of this project is to assist retiring chaplains in developing a lifestyle that balances service and grace. As explained above, retired military chaplains are an asset to the Christian community, are often eager to serve, and have much to offer.

At the same time, a military retirement and the income it provides offers these men and women an opportunity to pursue new interests, live life at a more leisurely pace than was possible during their years of military service, and enjoy the blessings that they have earned after so many years of hard work, sacrifice, and service. Successful retirement means achieving a healthy balance between service and grace.

## CHAPTER 1

### MILITARY CHAPLAINS IN TRANSITION

At the entrance to Marine Corp Recruit Depot in Parris Island, South Carolina, there is a sign welcoming visitors with the words, “We Make Marines Here.” A similar sign can be found outside Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego. These two facilities are not called bases but recruit depots, and the people going through boot camp at these facilities are not Marines but recruits in the process of becoming Marines. The final day of their time at the depot is graduation day. On that day, recruits are given the title of Marine, a title full of honor and pride that they use to identify themselves for the rest of their lives.

What the Marine Corps communicates with its signs and traditions is true for the other services as well. A major change takes place during the early months in military service, which marks a change in identity, self-image, and the very soul of the initiate. Whether he is in boot camp or an officer in one of the officer training schools, the graduates of these programs become uniformed members of the nation’s armed forces,

authorized and equipped to fight the nation's wars.<sup>1</sup> The former civilian has become a soldier, a sailor, an airman, or a Marine.

Edward Tick describes this transition from civilian to soldier in especially picturesque language:

Whether it is Parris Island or a terrorist training compound, the goal of boot camp is to prepare the uninitiated for war. To create a soldier, the mold of civilian identity must be broken. Training must overcome acculturation and restore the individual's access to the primitive bundle of instinctual impulses that can destroy without hesitation.<sup>2</sup>

The language used here is instructive: civilian has at its root the word civilized, one who has been acculturated and conforms to the norms and behaviors of civilization, or society. To wear the military uniform means one is no longer a civilian. The civilian identity must be broken. Training overcomes acculturation. A soldier is no longer civilized, rather, he has become something different.

Nancy Sherman, a professor at Georgetown University, uses the metaphor of conversion to describe this transformation from civilian to soldier. The conversion is not necessarily religious, but drawing on the work of William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, she suggests that it is a "metamorphosis where the focus of life shifts and a new organizing principle takes hold," a shift in one's "habits and focus of activities" and "center of gravity."<sup>3</sup> This conversion has obvious external manifestations

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<sup>1</sup> Eighty-five percent of the members of the military are male. While I recognize the presence and great value of women in the military, for the sake of simplicity, I have chosen to use the male pronoun "he" when speaking of a single military member, as do most of my sources. The issues I will address are issues faced by all military members regardless of gender.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Tick, *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 2005), 175.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Sherman, *The Untold War: Inside the Hearts, Minds, and Souls of our Soldiers* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 16.



such as haircuts, uniforms, salutes and language. But, says Sherman, beneath all this external change is an internal change that takes place:

That outer world of the uniform might . . . suggest a role that someone can take on and off easily, like clothes. But soldiering, and especially war-time soldiering, does not grow skin that a soldier sheds lightly. Combat is nothing if not existential: It pits an individual against life and its ultimate challenges. It requires seeing the unspeakable and doing the dreaded. It is a role that is immersed and transformative and lingers long after a soldier takes off the uniform. Because of the stressors it involves—unpredictable attack, helplessness in the face of that unpredictability, pervasive and gruesome carnage—it embeds deep. In this sense, and in an obvious way, becoming a soldier is not just a *social* or *sociological* phenomenon, It is a *psychological* phenomenon, a *deep* psychological phenomenon.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Challenge of Transitioning Back to Civilian Life**

Sherman's image of taking off the uniform is a helpful one. A military member does not easily take off the uniform. He is told repeatedly that he is a Marine or a Soldier, that he is always on duty and must always be ready. But there does come a time in every military member's career when he must take off the uniform. Whether that is at the end of one or two enlistments or after a decades-long career, eventually every member of the military must go through a second transformation. This is the transition back from the military to civilian society. Unfortunately, the conversion that takes place when the recruit joins the military, that deep psychological phenomenon of which Sherman speaks, does not go away when the uniform is taken off:

Coming back to 'The World,' as it is called by Vietnam veterans, involves two things. First, the veteran has changed. Second, the home has changed with respect to the veteran. The homecomer has experiences he feels he cannot relate to the nonveterans. He also has to face some of the community's apprehensions, misunderstandings, and distinctive systems of relevance. This kind of interaction between the returning soldier and his social world is significant for what it tells us

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 20.

about reentry, both as it affects status transition and as it implicates general features of interpersonal process.<sup>5</sup>

Note that on completion of this second transition, military members do not simply become civilians once again. They are given a new status and take on a third identity. They are now called veterans.

In order to be effective in the institution in which they have served, military chaplains have also undergone the conversion or psychological transformation that Sherman talks about. Although they are non-combatants, their civilian or civilized identity has indeed been broken. They have had to conform to the expectations and mores of the military institution in order to work within it. When it comes time to retire, chaplains must also undergo that second transformation, the re-entry process, which allows them to function and minister in the civilian world.

### Internal Challenges

In addition to the challenges of the re-entry process, retiring military chaplains potentially face a number of internal challenges. The successes achieved in the military often come at a price, paid not in dollars, but in the currency of the soul. Many have accompanied their people onto the battlefield, where they have been exposed to the same experiences as their soldiers or marines. Although they are non-combatants, while in a combat environment, chaplains are exposed to trauma. They are therefore as vulnerable to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and many of the other horrors facing a combat veteran. The mental health challenges and other social issues facing veterans are extensive and well-known:

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<sup>5</sup> Faulkner and McGaw, "Uneasy Homecoming," 104.

Veteran suicides average one every eighty minutes, an unprecedented eighteen a day or six thousand a year. They are 20 percent of all U.S. suicides, though veterans of all wars are only about 7 percent of the U.S. population. Between 2005 and 2007, the national suicide rate among veterans under age thirty *rose 26 percent*. In Texas—home of the largest military base in the world and third-highest veteran population—*rates rose 40 percent* between 2006 and 2009. These rates continue, despite required mental health screenings of those leaving the military, more research on PTSD, and better methods for treating it. Veterans are also disproportionately homeless, unemployed, poor, divorced, and imprisoned. The statistics, however, do not disclose the devastating impact of war on veterans' families and friends, on their communities, and on other veterans.<sup>6</sup>

While some retiring military chaplains do indeed suffer from PTSD, much more common is secondary traumatic stress (STS, or Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder, STSD), otherwise known as compassion fatigue, secondary victimization, vicarious traumatization, or burnout.<sup>7</sup> Much of a military chaplain's ministry is with those who have experienced trauma. In addition to accompanying their men and women to the battlefield, they hear the stories of what happened after the fact. They also regularly counsel men and women who have experienced other kinds of trauma, including family of origin abuse, rape, crime, and other experiences of victimization. As Charles R. Figley, a recognized expert in the field of traumatology, points out, those who work closely with sufferers of trauma are themselves "traumatized by concern."<sup>8</sup> He defines STS as "the natural, consequent behaviors and emotions relating from *knowledge about a* traumatizing event experience by a significant other. It is the stress resulting from *helping*

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<sup>6</sup> Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini, *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), xiii.

<sup>7</sup> Stephane Genier et al., "The Operational Stress Injury Social Support Program: A Peer Support Program in Collaboration Between the Canadian Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada," in *Combat Stress Injury: Theory, Research, and Management*, eds. Charles Figley and William P. Nash (New York: Routledge, 2007), 278.

<sup>8</sup> Charles R. Figley, "Compassion Fatigue: Toward a New Understanding of the Costs of Caring," in *Secondary Traumatic Stress: Self-Care Issues for Clinicians, Researchers, & Educators*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. B. Hudnall Stamm, Ph.D. (Baltimore: Sidran Press, 1999), 7.

or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.”<sup>9</sup> According to Figley, those at risk include not only family members but also mental health and other helping professionals.<sup>10</sup> STS is not pathological, but is the natural consequence of caring for another.<sup>11</sup> Figley contrasts STS with burnout:

In contrast to burnout, which emerges gradually and is a result of emotional exhaustion, STS can emerge suddenly and without much warning. In addition to a faster onset of symptoms . . . STS includes a sense of helplessness and confusion; a sense of isolation from supporters; and the symptoms are often disconnected from real causes. Yet, STS has a faster rate of recovery from symptoms.<sup>12</sup>

At the heart of STS, which for Figley is the same as the more common term compassion fatigue, are the two concepts of empathy and exposure. He writes, “If we are not empathic with, or if we are not exposed to, the traumatized, there should be little concern for Compassion Fatigue.”<sup>13</sup> Obviously military chaplains experience both exposure to and empathy for those who have been victimized, and so are at great risk for STS.

Little attention has been given to the impact of second hand trauma on chaplains. Mary Beth Williams and John F. Sommer, Jr. point out that people often go into trauma work in an attempt to deal with their own unresolved issues.<sup>14</sup> This can make the caregiver even more vulnerable to STS. They explain:

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Beth Williams and John F. Sonner, Jr., “Self Care and the Vulnerable Therapist,” in *Secondary Traumatic Stress: Self-Care Issues for Clinicians, Researchers, & Educators*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. B. Hudnall Stamm, Ph.D. (Baltimore: Sidran Press, 1999), 235.

Avoiding one's own issues before entering into the field in earnest can leave one vulnerable to retraumatization and have a negative impact on practice. Therefore, it is important to conduct a thorough analysis of one's own history and construct a trauma timeline of both primary and secondary traumas. It is also important to undertake one's own necessary therapy earlier, rather than later, in one's career.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike hospital, hospice, and many other chaplains, military chaplains are not required to have any Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), one of the main ways in theological education that one's personal issues are identified. There is no requirement for supervision over the chaplain's counseling, or for the chaplain to be in therapy to address his or her own issues. In fact, although it is slowly changing, the military environment often discourages its members from seeking therapy. So the chaplain, unless internally motivated, is not likely to seek out help for his or her own issues.

Another concern here is the workload of military chaplains. The sheer amount of human suffering the chaplain is faced with day after day, year after year, is certain to take its toll. I spoke with one Navy chaplain who during a one-year deployment to Afghanistan had to help his Marine battalion deal with the death of seventy-four of its members. When he started showing symptoms of STS, rather than providing him with additional help, the Chaplain Corps leadership gave him the message that perhaps he was not up to the challenge of being a Navy Chaplain. Williams and Sommer pointedly ask:

Just how many buried bodies can emergency workers who work with stressed fire and rescue workers witness or hear descriptions of? How many dozens of bodies of drowned persons can one view as a police psychologist who is a member of a mass casualty Dead Victim Identification team? How many hundreds of stories of rape, molestation, abuse, pain, and suffering can a therapist who works with survivors of sexual abuse hear or imagine before secondary traumatization becomes manifest?<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 239.

Thus, the retiring military chaplain who has been doing this work for twenty or more years may well be emotionally or spiritually exhausted, burned out, or suffer from STSD.

PTSD and STSD are psychological wounds. Additionally, service in the military and exposure to so much human suffering is likely to affect the chaplain's own spiritual life and his or her relationship with the loving God that he or she is called to represent and serve. Lisa McCann and Laurie Anne Pearlman of the Traumatic Stress Institute in Connecticut suggest that working with victims of trauma over a long period can result in "a long term alteration in the therapist's own cognitive schemas, or beliefs, expectations, and assumptions about self and others."<sup>17</sup> They explain:

... much of the therapist's cognitive world will be altered by hearing traumatic client material. It is our belief that all therapists working with trauma survivors will experience lasting alterations in their cognitive schemas, having a significant impact on the therapist's feelings, relationships, and life. Whether these changes are ultimately destructive to the helper and to the therapeutic process depends, in large part, on the extent to which the therapist is able to engage in a parallel process to that of the victim client, the process of integrating and transforming these experiences of horror or violation.<sup>18</sup>

According to McCann and Pearlman, people develop their own personal understanding and framework, what they call cognitive schemas, to assist in their understanding of the world. "These schemas or mental frameworks include beliefs, assumptions, and expectations about self and the world that enable individuals to make sense of their experience."<sup>19</sup> McCann and Pearlman identify seven fundamental psychological needs that these schemas address: safety, dependency/trust, power, esteem,

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<sup>17</sup> Lisa McCann and Laurie Anne Pearlman, "Vicarious Traumatization: A Framework for Understanding the Psychological Effects of Working with Victims," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 3, no. 1 (1990): 132.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 137.

intimacy, independence, and frame of reference. Just as the experience of trauma can disrupt these schemas for the victim, so working with trauma victims over a long term can also disrupt these schemas for the therapist or chaplain. Those schemas that are most significant and central for the helper are most likely to be disrupted by the experience of working with trauma victims.<sup>20</sup> “It is thus important for the helper to assess which of the seven need areas are particularly salient for him or her. This is important because therapist’s reactions to trauma survivors will be shaped by his or her own schemas,”<sup>21</sup> but also for the therapist’s own personal health and wellbeing. The authors write that,

The helper must be able to acknowledge, express, and work through these painful experiences in a supportive environment. This process is essential if therapists are to prevent or ameliorate some of the potentially damaging effects of their work. If these feelings are not openly acknowledged and resolved, there is the risk that the helper may begin to feel numb or emotionally distant, thus unable to maintain a warm, empathetic, and responsive stance with clients.<sup>22</sup>

Most of the research focusing on PTSD was done with psychotherapists, and so the language used is psychological. But recent research uses the term moral injury to describe very similar symptoms.<sup>23</sup> The term moral injury is most commonly used to describe the psychological response to taking human life. For example, moral injury is evident in the words of Marine Captain Timothy Kudo who writes, “I killed people in Afghanistan. Was I right or wrong?”<sup>24</sup> Chaplains, of course, are non-combatants and unless they have

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>23</sup> Kent D. Drescher et al., “An Exploration of the Viability and Usefulness of the Construct of Moral Injury in War Veterans,” *Traumatology* (March 10, 2011), accessed February 1, 2017, <http://tmt.sagepub.com/content/early/17/1/8.short>.

prior military service have never taken a human life. But with their spiritual sensitivity and theological education they are perhaps more prone to be victims of moral injury than the average military officer.

Moral injury has been defined as “perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs or expectations.”<sup>25</sup> Moral injury is a spiritual injury that occurs when someone’s coping strategies violate their core moral beliefs.<sup>26</sup> Writers such as Brock, Litz, and Sherman often use the word transgression when speaking of moral injury. Brock writes, “Moral injury . . . comes from having transgressed one’s basic moral identity and violated core moral beliefs.”<sup>27</sup> Litz and the other authors describe that it “involves an act of transgression that creates dissonance and conflict because it violates assumptions and beliefs about right and wrong and personal goodness.”<sup>28</sup> Nancy Sherman elaborates on moral injury as she writes:

Roughly speaking, it refers to experiences of serious inner conflict arising from what one takes to be grievous moral transgressions that can overwhelm one’s sense of goodness and humanity. The sense of transgression can arise from (real or apparent) transgressive commissions and omissions perpetrated by oneself or others, or from bearing witness to the intense human suffering and detritus that is a part of the grotesquerie of war and its aftermath. In some cases, the moral injury has less to do with specific (real or apparent) transgressive acts than with a

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<sup>24</sup> Timothy Kudo, “I killed people in Afghanistan. Was I right or wrong?” *The Washington Post*, January 25, 2013, accessed February 1, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/i-killed-people-in-afghanistan-was-i-right-or-wrong/2013/01/25/c0b0d5a6-60ff-11e2-b05a-605528f6b712\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.20ca75d5e6dc](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/i-killed-people-in-afghanistan-was-i-right-or-wrong/2013/01/25/c0b0d5a6-60ff-11e2-b05a-605528f6b712_story.html?utm_term=.20ca75d5e6dc); For more on the psychological results of taking human life, see Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (Boston: Little Brown, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Brett T. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 29 (2009): 700.

<sup>26</sup> Brock and Lettini, *Soul Repair*, xv.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>28</sup> Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 698.



generalized sense of falling short of moral and normative standards befitting good persons and good soldiers.<sup>29</sup>

These sources make it clear that chaplains, who witness and hear of moral transgressions and atrocities on a daily basis, are prime candidates for moral injury. Unfortunately all too often moral injury in military chaplains results in in moral transgressions. In my twenty years of military service, I encountered Navy chaplains abusing alcohol, having extra-marital affairs, and serving brig time for abuse. I was told that in the Navy the Chaplain Corps had more of these kinds of problems than any other corps. Wollom A. Jensen and James M. Childs, Jr., in a recent work on moral injury in military chaplains, point out that moral injury often expresses itself in inappropriate behaviors.<sup>30</sup> Chaplains exhibiting inappropriate acting-out behaviors often need to be treated for moral injury.

For example, a chaplain may be called to serve in a war that he or she feels is morally objectionable. The United States military does not allow for selective conscientious objection. In order to be excused from service in time of war, one must be a pacifist, opposed to all wars. Many chaplains, like the men and women they serve, come out of the Just War Tradition as taught by St. Augustine. They accept the moral right and even obligation to wage war under certain circumstances. But when a chaplain concludes that a given war does not fit that criteria, he or she is at great risk for moral injury. Specifically, chaplains who were required to serve in the Iraq war but sincerely believed that the war did not meet the criteria of last resort might be vulnerable to moral injury. Another example would be if a chaplain believed that the United States use of its superior

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<sup>29</sup> Nancy Sherman, *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers* (London: Oxford University Press, 2015), 8.

<sup>30</sup> Wollom A. Jensen and James A. Childs, Jr., *Moral Warriors, Moral Wounds: The Ministry of the Christian Ethic* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 3.

military power to bring down the regime of Saddam Hussein violated the principle of proportionality. In any of these cases, participating in the war would be a violation of the chaplain's conscience, cause a moral dilemma, and potentially result in moral injury.

Another avenue for potential harm would be if the chaplain was endorsed and sent into the military by a denomination or church body that later made an official pronouncement opposing a war. Such a chaplain would be caught between the conflicting loyalties to his or her church body and his or her military unit. As Wollom and Childs point out:

A given war itself may be judged unjust. Obedience to command is an expectation and requirement of military life. It is a promise one makes upon entering military service. When a command or a mission in any activity of military life is judged to be unethical there is a serious ethical conflict. For persons whose understanding of military ethics is undergirded by the values and precepts of their faith this is a conflict between the ethical principle of promise-keeping (a sworn commitment to the state to obey orders) and another norm whose violation is a betrayal of one's faith, a species of conflict between God and country. Chaplains are susceptible to such struggles of conscience, they are called to minister to those who feel deeply conflicted, and they have a responsibility to help commanders sort out and deal with ethical conflicts.<sup>31</sup>

Col. Herm Keizer, a retired Army chaplain who served in the Vietnam war tells of the long-term affect this kind of experience has had on his own soul:

The conscientious objector laws and directives of the military protected only those who belonged to pacifist religious traditions. Whether draftees or volunteers, soldiers who judged this war unjust and immoral had no legal way to resist. Watching them go to jail rather than fight was heart rending. So was watching those who fought. *I am tormented to this day* remembering the soldiers who tried hard not to kill, even while they were conscious of their religious obligation to protect their fellow soldiers. I watched their moral sensitivity erode. I was haunted by something one of my seminary professors told me, "*to violate your conscience is to commit moral suicide.*"<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>32</sup> Brock and Lettini, *Soul Repair*, 56.

His language in this passage is of a chaplain who is struggling with moral injury.

Another form of moral injury for a military chaplain is a unique form of guilt called guilt by association. Dewylon, a young soldier whose unit was among the first to invade Iraq in 2003, spent most of his time in the rear, maintaining and repairing weapons and vehicles and delivering communications to senior officers. He never fired a weapon at the enemy, but suffers from moral injury nonetheless.

I didn't want to equate what I did to those who had to kill people. I know I cannot imagine having to do that, to stare down your gun at someone, squeeze the trigger, and see them dead—to have the courage to do that and then to adjust to this when you come home. When I think about my own role, it messes with me, because I didn't squeeze a trigger but I did the same thing.<sup>33</sup>

This is guilt by association, a form of moral injury to which chaplains, as non-combatants are also vulnerable. For example, my first duty station was the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command, where both enlisted sailors and officers are given the needed training to operate nuclear reactors on aircraft carriers and submarines. It is intensive work requiring a high level of intellectual competence. Only the top 10 percent of sailors qualify for the school. Once there, these sailors are put through a rigorous program that includes mandatory study in addition to forty hours of classroom instruction a week. Some do not complete the program and fail out. Others find that their recruiter, who must recruit a certain number of people for the nuclear program, lied to them about the program to get them to join. When a sailor is unable or chooses not to complete the program, he or she is often punished and shamed. As a newly commissioned chaplain, I did what I could to fight against such abuses. But I often wonder if I did enough, or

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 58.

whether my desire to succeed in the Navy and bring a paycheck home to feed my family controlled my actions.

Guilt by association can also occur when the chaplain looks critically at military history. I have visited Hiroshima twice and Nagasaki once. After reflecting deeply and over time on the dropping of the atomic bombs at the end of World War II, I have concluded that the decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki violates Just War criteria.<sup>34</sup> I have had similar experiences of reflection and soul-searching after visiting the country of Vietnam. As an American, but more importantly as a member of the military, I share in the guilt over what happened in those places which is guilt by association. I still believe in the ideals of military service. I believe in fighting for and defending our freedoms. I believe that the Navy, in which I serve, can be “A Global Force for Good” as the current recruiting motto suggests. But I also believe that it is difficult to live up to these lofty ideals. It may be possible to fight a just war in a just way, but that seldom if ever happens in the real world. There are very few places where I can express these views safely. Within the military, expressing such views is looked at with suspicion. Within the civilian world, such views are either seen as unpatriotic or are exploited by those with much stronger anti-war and anti-military views. So I am careful to keep my opinions mostly to myself. But the question whether my twenty-year association with the military has impacted my perspective, my objectivity or even my soul is valid. This also be a form of moral injury.

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<sup>34</sup> The debate over the dropping of atomic weapons on these two cities is ongoing and beyond the scope of this paper. My position is based on moral, not strategic, grounds. It is interesting to note that the Just War Tradition does not have any legal standing in the United States.

Probably the most devastating way moral injury can affect a military chaplain is the affect it can have on the chaplain's theology. Moral injury was defined above as perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs or expectations. Whether the chaplain witnessed these acts firsthand while serving in theater or learned about them later through counseling, the retiring military chaplain has been privy to a great deal of human suffering. This exposure to human suffering is not just limited to the battlefield. The military chaplain in his or her counseling role has also heard numerous stories of human suffering, from childhood abuse, poverty, or the consequences of such trauma as victimization by rape or other criminal activity. This constant exposure to human suffering can affect both the soul and the theology of the chaplain, whose training and focus is not first and foremost in the behavioral sciences but in theology.

McCann and Pearlman's work is helpful when examining moral injury in terms of theology. McCann and Pearlman write using psychological language, but their insights can be restated in theological language. McCann and Pearlman's "fundamental psychological needs" are the same spiritual needs that religion and faith seek to address. What they call "cognitive schemas" can also be seen as the theology or worldview the military chaplain brings with him into the military. It follows then that those theological concepts that are most central to the chaplain's worldview will be the ones most impacted by long-term exposure to trauma victims. For example, a Calvinist like myself might have a difficult time reconciling the conviction of God's ultimate sovereignty with the constant exposure to ongoing human suffering. The theodicy question might be a very real struggle for such a chaplain, resulting in a deep struggle over the psychological and

spiritual issues of safety, power, and trust. Another chaplain, rooted in a tradition drawing more deeply on God's love and kindness, might struggle with esteem and intimacy issues. It is important for the retiring military chaplain to re-examine his or her theology, to identify one's own cognitive schemas or central theological concepts and worldviews and reflect on how they have been changed by the military experience.

Sebastian Junger points out that women are more likely than men to display moral courage.<sup>35</sup> He points to the Righteous Among the Nations award that is given to non-Jews who were involved in saving Jewish lives during the Holocaust. Of the 20,000 recipients of this award, women outnumber men. Women donate more kidneys to strangers than men do. This raises some important questions, such as whether women are more prone to moral injury than their male counterparts and whether the causes and symptoms of moral injury differ in women and men. More research is needed both on the effects of moral injury on chaplains and the different ways that moral injury may show up in women and men.<sup>36</sup>

Military chaplains at retirement face a number of internal struggles, including possible PTSD, STSD, and moral injury. One final internal struggle a retiring chaplain faces, like anyone else facing retirement or other major job transition, is the struggle with identity. Much of our identity as adults comes from our work and our work-related roles. In chapter 24 of *You Can't Go Home Again*, George Webber reflects on this reality in a letter to his friend Randy Shepperton in Libya Hill. Webber contrasts two identities he finds within himself, the artist which he calls "Man-Creating" and the member of society

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<sup>35</sup> Sebastian Junger, *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging* (New York: Twelve, 2016), 57.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

which he calls “Man-Alive.” He reflects on what his success as “Man-Creating” has cost him as “Man-Alive”:

As an artist, I can survey my work with a clear conscience. I have the regrets and dissatisfactions that every writer ought to have: the book should have been better, it failed to measure up to what I wanted for it. I am not ashamed of it. I feel that I wrote it as I did because of an inner necessity, that I *had* to do it, and that by doing it I was loyal to the only thing in me which is worth anything.

So speaks Man-Creating. Then, instantly, it all changes, and from Man-Creating I become simply Man-Alive— a member of society, a friend and neighbor, a son and brother of the human race. And when I look at what I have done from this point of view, suddenly I feel lower than a dog, I see all the pain and anguish I have caused to people that I know, and I wonder how I could have done it, and how there could possibly be any justification for it— yes, even if what I wrote had been as great as *Lear*; or as eloquent as *Hamlet*.<sup>37</sup>

As I read their letters [complaints from the citizens of Libya Hill] I no longer know why, I can’t answer them. As Man-Creating, I thought I knew, and thought, too, that the answer was all-sufficient. I wrote about them with blunt directness, trying to put in every relevant detail and circumstance, and I did it because I thought it would be cowardly *not* to write that way, false to withhold or modify. I thought that the Thing Itself was its own and valid reason for being.<sup>38</sup>

For George Webber, “the Thing Itself,” his novel, was its own and valid reason for being. But now that it is published, George has no reason to continue.

Retiring from the military can cause a similar struggle to the one faced by George Webber. H. Becker and A. L. Strauss point out that transitional points are the most psychologically stressful periods of any career.<sup>39</sup> This is especially true for the individual who is transitioning out of the military. Just as George Webber became Man-Creating, so the member of the armed forces became Man-the-Warrior. But “then, instantly, [at retirement], it all changes, and from Man-Creating . . . [military retirees] become simply

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<sup>37</sup> Wolfe, *You Can’t Go Home Again*, 302.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>39</sup> H. Becker and A.L. Strauss, “Careers, Personality, and Adult Socialization,” *American Journal of Sociology* 62, no. 3 (November 1956): 261.

Man-Alive— a member of society, a friend and neighbor, a son and brother of the human race.”<sup>40</sup> This creates several problems at retirement. As has already been noted, the military identity has become the whole of one’s identity. Furthermore, this identity is a deviant one. Military members are not members of society, and in many ways never will be again. This is as true for chaplains as it is for any other military member, even though they are non-combatants. At retirement the military chaplain will leave the identity Man-Creating, or Man-the-Warrior, behind and become simply Man-Alive. Sherman sums up the issue, writing that “though soldiers don uniforms and then take them off, the transitions are rarely seamless. For many, soldiering is not just a job or career; it is an identity, it is who they become. Leaving it behind is not easy.”<sup>41</sup>

In addition to being members of the armed forces, military chaplains are also ordained ministers. This status and the roles and expectations it brings also offers the chaplain a sense of identity. Chaplains often have a pastor’s heart. They are required to fulfill roles such as preacher, teacher, and counselor. They have even been encouraged in their training to develop a “pastoral identity.”<sup>42</sup> It is difficult for the pastor to know who he or she is when not fulfilling one of these roles:

when one’s ministry is firmly blocked or taken away by retirement, he/she loses one of the major purposes in life, and his/her physical and emotional health often fails. For the retired missionary or chaplain, retirement is often a time when he/she experiences the ‘roleless role’ It may be the first time that you are no longer characterized by a role such as a teacher, preacher, speaker, evangelizer, counselor, writer, leader or missionary. Without a role as a missionary or chaplain, what are

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<sup>40</sup> Wolfe, *You Can’t Go Home Again*, 302.

<sup>41</sup> Sherman, *The Untold War*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: Harper Collins, 1983), 3.



you to do?<sup>43</sup>

### Alienation from the Church

The transition process from the military to the civilian world presents challenges to the retiring military chaplain. One final challenge facing these ministers is an alienation from the church. For twenty years or more, retiring military chaplains have operated outside their denominational circles, while their colleagues have continued to build relationships with each other. It can be very difficult to break in to established clergy groups after retirement. One retired Air Force Chaplain writes: “Don’t expect any help from outside sources. The church has many problems in accepting a former chaplain. Be ready for a cold shoulder from fellow ministers. . . . When you retire you are ‘out’ except for personal friends.”<sup>44</sup> Civilian clergy are often jealous of the military chaplain’s generous retirement benefits. The orthodoxy of the military chaplain may be suspect in more conservative fellowships. There may be the suspicion that the military chaplain, who has served in a pluralistic environment for so long, does not really believe the tenants of the denomination’s faith.

Additionally, the denominational hierarchy, with the exception of the endorser, may not understand the retiring military chaplain. As has been noted above, the military chaplain is a deviant. His resume does not look like a standard one, and often those in the church hierarchy do not understand the significance of the experience the chaplain has to offer. I experienced this myself recently in a telephone interview with the denominational

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<sup>43</sup> Caring Connection Team, “Stage II: Leaving,” in *The Finishing Well Handbook: Retirement Transition Skills for Missionaries and Chaplains* (Springfield, MO: The Gospel Publishing House, 2008), 51.

<sup>44</sup> James W. Millsaps, *Military Retirement: Dream or Dilemma for Air Force Chaplains?* (Maxwell AFB: Air War College Research Report, 1983), 61.

executive responsible for certifying interim pastors in my own denomination. He suggested to me that I lacked parish experience. I reminded him of my twelve years of parish experience prior to joining the military, which he said was long ago. I then pointed out that prior to my current position as a hospital chaplain I served for two years in a chapel, where I not only conducted two worship services every Sunday in different locations, but had to take into account the variety of theological perspectives represented in a general protestant military congregation. He then conceded that such experience probably counts.

Finally, military chaplains may face a number of stereotypes among the general laity. A common perception is that chaplains cannot preach. Another common perception is that military chaplains are overly disciplined and militaristic. In mainline churches there are those who have a negative view of the military as an institution. Others go so far as to question whether it is even possible to be a Christian and serve in the military.<sup>45</sup>

Like George Webber, the success of the military chaplain is often not recognized or appreciated back home. Like Libya Hill, which did not understand its native son George Webber, the community to which the retiring military chaplain returns does not understand or appreciate the chaplain's experiences. On the other hand, it will take time for the military chaplain returning home to recognize what has taken place in his home community while he or she has been gone, and to rebuild meaningful relationships with family, colleagues, and friends.

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<sup>45</sup> All three of my children attended a Christian college connected to my denomination and all three were asked this question directly on more than one occasion.

## The Unique Gifts, Talents and Experiences of Military Chaplains

Retiring military chaplains face numerous challenges. The transition from the military back to the civilian community is as significant as the original transition from the civilian community into the military. This project has already identified some of the internal factors within the retiring chaplain that might increase the difficulty of the transition. It has also pointed out that the civilian church to which the military chaplain returns may not initially understand or appreciate the chaplain's experience. However, military chaplains possess a unique set of gifts, talents and experiences that need to be utilized for the kingdom of God. It is important for retiring military chaplains to make the adjustment back to the civilian community and for the civilian church to assist them wherever possible in this transition. Chaplains are often quite young when they retire from the military, many in their late forties or early fifties, and have a great deal of energy and desire to serve. As ordained clergy, they have accepted a life's vocation of ministry, which does not end with the conclusion of a military chaplain career. As members of the body of Christ, they have spiritual gifts that are to be used to build up the larger body (Eph 4:11-13). Their skills, training and expertise are desperately needed in civilian churches, both at the congregational and denominational level.

One example of the additional skills a retired military chaplain has to offer is the experience of working in a pluralistic environment. Military chaplains are used to ministering in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-faith environments and have generally become very comfortable in such settings. One soldier sums up the experience in words that are true for chaplains as well as enlisted members of the military:

I learned important things in the service about discipline and respect for all kinds of people. I know I am much more aware of how people live, especially poor people in conditions that are horrible, and I got to know and talk to people who I probably would never have gotten to know otherwise because we served together. Learning so much really humbled me. I thought I knew a lot before I served, but I learned so much more.<sup>46</sup>

Pluralism is threatening to many in the church. However, with the rise of the internet and globalization the issue of pluralism is one that is increasingly important for the church to face. Many homogenous congregations find themselves in urban, multi-cultural communities with a variety of not only ethnic and racial groupings but religious diversity as well. A military chaplain who is comfortable with the Buddhist priest or the Islamic imam who ministers down the street can be a real asset to a congregation.

In addition to being familiar with working in pluralistic environments, military chaplains have a great deal of additional training and experience in a wide variety of pastoral issues including stress management, suicide prevention, conflict resolution, money management, relationships, and grief. They have taught numerous workshops and seminars on these subjects while in the military and may have special credentials to deal with these issues.<sup>47</sup> These pastoral issues are not unique to the military, but are commonly faced by all church leaders. A chaplain's skills in these areas can be transferred to a civilian context with little difficulty.

Finally, military chaplains often bring with them well developed organizational and leadership skills. Many have risen to senior ranks in the military, have supervised numerous junior people, have been responsible for large budgets, and have developed the

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<sup>46</sup> Dweylon Lightsey as quoted in Brock and Lettini, *Soul Repair*, 84.

<sup>47</sup> Naomi K. Paget and Janet R. McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006), 33.

ability to think strategically. These are skills that are not common among clergy, but are needed in larger congregations and at the denominational level. Chaplains will have to make some adjustments to working in a volunteer organization, but the skills they have learned in their military service are readily transferrable to the civilian context.

At the end of Wolfe's novel, George Webber retires. At age thirty-seven he terminates his relationship with his editor, Fox Edwards. As he reflects on his experiences and his relationship with Fox, George realizes that he cannot hold on to the past, but must move forward. "It is only the fool," he writes, "who repines and longs for what is vanished, for what might have been but is not."<sup>48</sup>

George . . . began to look for atavistic yearnings in himself. He found plenty of them. Any man can find them if he is honest enough to look for them. The whole year that followed his return from Germany, George occupied himself with this effort of self-appraisal. And at the end of it he knew, and with the knowledge came the definite sense of new direction toward which he had long been groping, that the dark ancestral cave, the womb from which mankind emerged into the light, forever pulls one back— but that you can't go home again. The phrase had many implications for him. You can't go back home to your family, back home to your childhood, back home to romantic love, back home to a young man's dreams of glory and of fame, back home to exile, to escape to Europe and some foreign land, back home to lyricism, to singing just for singing's sake, back home to aestheticism, to one's youthful idea of 'the artist' and the all-sufficiency of 'art' and 'beauty' and 'love,' back home to the ivory tower, back home to places in the country, to the cottage in Bermuda, away from all the strife and conflict of the world, back home to the father you have lost and have been looking for, back home to someone who can help you, save you, ease the burden for you, back home to the old forms and systems of things which once seemed everlasting but which are changing all the time— back home to the escapes of Time and Memory.

In a way, the phrase summed up everything he had ever learned.<sup>49</sup>

Like George Webber, the wise military chaplain making the transition to retirement will take time to reflect on his or her life's experiences. This dissertation tries to assist

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 628.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 602.

retiring military chaplains with this reflection. The hope is that at the end, the chaplain will recognize that “It is only the fool who repines and longs for what is vanished, for what might have been but is not;” that the retiring chaplain will accept the truth that “you can’t go home again” to the familiarity of the community and denomination left two or three decades ago or to the familiar routines of military service. Like George Webber, knowing this truth opens up a new sense of direction. As Wolfe poetically puts it in the final words of his novel:

To lose the earth you know, for greater knowing; to lose the life you have, for greater life; to leave the friends you loved, for greater loving; to find a land more kind than home, more large than earth—

—Whereon the pillars of this earth are founded, toward which the consciousness of the world is tending— a wind is rising, and the rivers flow.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 638.

PART TWO  
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

## CHAPTER 2

### A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Military chaplains face a number of challenges as they transition to retirement. As already noted, the wise chaplain will take this opportunity to engage in some serious reflection on his or her experiences. As the chaplain begins this process of reflection, they will face number of questions, including the meaning of retirement, the significance of the church's practice of ordination at this point in life, what opportunities are there in this new phase of life, and how to further develop and use the unique experiences and training already gained in the military.

This chapter reviews some of the literature that can be useful in finding an answer to these questions. Each of these works offers insight into our overall theme of military chaplains transitioning to retirement. It also includes an evaluation of the works from a biblical and theological perspective.



**Vital Involvement in Old Age by Erik Erikson, Joan M. Erikson,  
and Helen Q. Kivnick**

Erik Erikson is a pioneer in the field of human development. He identifies eight stages of human development. Each stage is characterized by the developmental task of balancing two opposite tendencies. Successfully resolving these psychosocial tensions results in the development of an important virtue, which is needed to navigate the next stage. For example, the infant faces the challenge of balancing trust with appropriate mistrust. When this balance is achieved, the virtue of hope is gained, which is needed to effectively face all successive stages.

In *Vital Involvement in Old Age*, Erikson and two of his colleagues look at the final developmental stage of life, old age, in which the tension between integrity and despair must be faced. When this psychosocial tension is properly resolved, the result is the virtue of wisdom. Erikson defines wisdom as “the detached concern with life itself, in the face of death itself. It maintains and learns to convey the integrity of experience, in spite of the decline of bodily and mental functions.”<sup>1</sup> According to the authors, in any developmental stage the individual does not just experience the tension highlighted in that particular stage. He or she also re-experiences earlier tensions that were not fully resolved and anticipates tensions that will be faced in the future. Thus, the older individual’s challenge in the tension between integrity and despair rests both on the past success in resolving each of the psychosocial tensions of a lifetime and in re-experiencing and resolving those tensions that have not yet been resolved. The authors write that “An

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<sup>1</sup> Erik H. Erikson, Joan M. Erikson, and Helen Q. Kivnick. *Vital Involvement in Old Age* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), 37.

essential aspect of what is involved in integrating the final two opposites is a renewed and old-age-specific willingness to remember and review earlier experiences.”<sup>2</sup>

Obviously, for the elderly most of their life is behind them. Part of the challenge is a growing disinvolvement that comes with the limits of old age. For example, grandparents do not offer the same levels of care to the next generation as parents who are dealing with the psychosocial tension of generativity versus stagnation. However, grandparents are often still involved in the lives of their grandchildren in ways that are appropriate to their life stage. According to the authors, wisdom “is truly involved disinvolvement.”<sup>3</sup>

While this book is somewhat dated and focused on a population considerably older than is the focus of this project, Erikson anticipates some of the issues treated by later writers. For example, Erikson points out that the traditional notion of retirement comes too early, and with an increasing percentage of the population over the age of sixty-five is unsustainable.<sup>4</sup> He notes that the issues of those over eighty-five are much different from those of younger retirees. We live in a society where youth is valued and old things are viewed as obsolete and therefore discarded. The elderly must fight ageism, which is seen in some of the common stereotypes of the elderly and as their value as contributing members of society is diminished. Additionally, the high cost of medical care and treatment can put a real burden on the oldest members of our society.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 294-296.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 300.

Erikson's emphasis on the elderly as depositories of wisdom echoes a similar emphasis found in Scripture. Job asks, "Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?" (Jb 12:12).<sup>6</sup> In the book of Proverbs there are several occasions where a father encourages his son to listen to his teaching and gain wisdom (Prv 1:8, 2:1-2, 4:1, 5:1). It seems, judging from these repeated warnings from a father to his son, that devaluing the benefit of the wisdom of the elderly is not a new occurrence.

### **A Fresh Map of Life: The Emergence of the Third Age by Peter Laslett**

Peter Laslett, a historical sociologist from Great Britain, is one of the writers that takes Erikson's treatment of developmental theory in later life and moves it forward. Laslett suggests that contemporary society continues to work with outdated concepts of the value, ability, and role of those who are in the later years of life. Echoing Erikson, he points to what he calls "the secular shift in aging," secular meaning "the long term, enduring character of this irreversible change."<sup>7</sup> This shift is the result of two major developments in the last 125 years. The first is a dramatic increase in life expectancy, which began around 1891. At that time, life expectancy at birth in Britain was 43.9 years (45.7 for women, 41.9 for men). By the year 2021, life expectancy will have risen to 77.1 years (80.2 for women, 75.1 for men).<sup>8</sup> The numbers are similar for other developed countries, with the United States having a slightly higher life expectancy than Britain.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> All Scripture quoted is from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Laslett, *A Fresh Map of Life: The Emergence of the Third Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 65.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 79.

The second major development has been the reduction in the number of children per family since the Victorian era in Britain. This has resulted in an increase in the proportion of the population over age sixty. In 1891, approximately 8 percent of the total British population was aged 60 and over. By 2021 that number is expected to rise to 24.25 percent, almost a quarter of the total population. The numbers are somewhat less dramatic for other western countries, including the United States, because of immigration. However, these nations will both face a high percentage of the population in what has historically been considered the post working or retirement years. With the advances in modern medicine, this is a population that is for the most part healthy and active, with much to offer. The idea that being old means being feeble and homebound, or living in a nursing home, is one of those outdated concepts that Laslett tries to counter.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of this secular shift in aging, Laslett suggests that the typical life now includes four rather than three stages. In the past, life included the three stages of childhood, adulthood, and old age. Childhood and adolescence were marked by “dependence, socialization, immaturity and education,” adulthood by “independence, maturity and responsibility of earning and of saving,” and old age by “final dependence, decrepitude and death.”<sup>11</sup> For contemporary citizens of industrial countries, the typical life includes an additional stage between adulthood and old age, the so-called third age. This stage of life, according to Laslett, is marked by personal fulfillment.<sup>12</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 4.

contemporary trend of moving retirement earlier and earlier along with the lengthening of the lifespan means that this third age can last twenty or thirty years, or perhaps more.

Although written from a British perspective, this book is a landmark work on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean in the development of thinking regarding post-retirement life. Laslett gets the concept of the third stage of life from a French work, *Les Universites du Troisieme Age*, which was influential in that country in the 1970s.<sup>13</sup> The influence of the concept of the third age, which Laslett has made available to the English-speaking world, can be seen in other writers such as Richard Bolles and Bob Buford.<sup>14</sup> According to this model, retiring military chaplains, regardless of age, have the opportunity to enter the third age. Their health is generally good after years of a military physical fitness regimen and a military pension provides financial security. Rather than seeing themselves as retiring, these chaplains may find it helpful to make a paradigm shift and see themselves as entering the third age of their lives.

Laslett highlights a number of issues associated with the rise of the third age. On several occasions he points out the issue of justice in the distribution of resources between generations.<sup>15</sup> He also points out that the freedom of those in the third age must not be an excuse for what he calls “mass indolence.”<sup>16</sup> With the freedom of the third age comes responsibility. Life in the third age includes extensive leisure time, far more than

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>14</sup> John E. Nelson and Richard N. Bolles, *What Color is Your Parachute? For Retirement: Planning a Prosperous, Healthy, and Happy Future* (Berkley: Ten Speed Press, 2010); Richard N. Bolles, *The Three Boxes of Life and How to Get Out of Them: An Introduction to Life/Work Planning* (Berkley: Ten Speed Press, 1981); and Bob Buford, *Halftime: Moving from Success to Significance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Laslett, *A Fresh Map of Life*, 7, 92, 198.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 141.

is available to those in the second age. Laslett suggests that this time should be used to maintain the traditions of fine craftsmanship, for which the time pressures of making a living in the second age does not allow, the maintenance of the cultural institutions of society, and the continued development of the fine arts and humanities.<sup>17</sup>

In my experience, these kinds of creative activities highlighted by Laslett are especially important for those leaving the military in general and the Navy in particular. Life at sea is drab and colorless. The blue of the sea and the Navy working uniform and the grey of the ship are virtually the only colors a sailor sees for days on end. I recall pulling into Bussan, South Korea and being absolutely amazed at the beauty of the color green. On other occasions following an extensive time at sea I found myself drawn to art museums. I have spoken with numerous sailors who have described similar experiences of finding the aesthetic part of life starved while at sea. Rubem A. Alves points out the importance of beauty in human experience, using the image of music:

Our souls are like a canon, a perpetual fugue. Beauty is when this fugue is played again. ‘This is how life is composed,’ says Milan Kundera, ‘like a musical score. The human being, guided by the sense of beauty, takes an accidental fragment and transforms it into a theme which will become a part of the score of our lives. . . The human being unconsciously composes life’s score according to the laws of beauty, *even in the moments of deepest despair* [italics added].<sup>18</sup>

Seeing retirement as the third age of life offers retiring military chaplains the opportunity to become more involved in aesthetic activities. Such involvements could well have a therapeutic effect on some of the internal challenges of retiring military chaplains that were identified in chapter 1.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 144, 200-201.

<sup>18</sup> Rubem A. Alves, *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 126.

Laslett falls short from a biblical and theological perspective in his definition of the third age as a time of personal fulfillment. Lassen says that it is the obligation of people in the third age

to fulfill themselves as far as personal circumstances and history permits. . . Finding self-fulfillment implies making judgments which are necessary to sustain independence, to create a proper relationship with others, especially in the interchange with younger members of society.<sup>19</sup>

Personal fulfillment is not a biblical concept. The obligation of Christians, including retired military chaplains, in the third age is to continue to fulfill their calling, their vocation, and to use their gifts for kingdom service. This is a central point behind this project. For retired chaplains, as all clergy persons, this vocation or calling is closely connected with their ordination, the topic examined next.

### **Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry by Thomas C. Oden**

Thomas Oden of Drew University identifies the purpose of this book humorously in the first chapter: “My intent is undistinguished. I am hoping to offer a classically grounded systemic pastoral theology that is not insufferably dull.”<sup>20</sup> His concern is that the development of the ministry of the laity has diminished the understanding among Christians of the significance of the ordained ministry.<sup>21</sup> According to Oden,

Ordained ministry is different from the general ministry of the laity in that one is duly called, prepared, examined, ordained, and authorized to a representative ministry on behalf of the whole people (*laos*) of God. . . our basic task is to show how a well-equipping general ministry of the laity stands in constant need of an equipping, ordained ministry (Eph. 4:11-14).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Laslett, *A Fresh Map of Life*, 197.

<sup>20</sup> Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

This idea that ordained ministers have a representative ministry on behalf of the whole people of God is at the heart of chaplaincy ministry. Military chaplains are examined, called, and endorsed to provide religious ministry on behalf of the church to the members of the military. The chaplain always ministers on behalf of the church that has sent him or her in the name of her Lord.

Oden notes that there are a number of titles that are regularly given to Christian ministers, including parson, elder, curate, preacher, priest, minister, clergy, and reverend. Each title has a corresponding set of images and expectations associated with it.<sup>23</sup> For Oden, the chief metaphor for the pastoral office that includes all the others is the image of shepherding.<sup>24</sup> Thus, he writes, “The task about which we are seeking to think integrally is none other than learning properly to shepherd the body of Christ.”<sup>25</sup>

The problem with Oden’s understanding of the pastoral office is that it is too limited. His vision is that ordained ministers shepherd those who are already a part of the body of Christ. They are the ones to be equipped for ministry, and the means to do that are the traditional acts of ministry. “Suppose,” he writes, “someone is called pastor yet never preaches or breaks bread or teaches Christianity. The question eventually must arise how that person can be a pastor without doing what pastors do.”<sup>26</sup> This raises the question of the place of chaplaincy within the tradition of Christian ministry. A military

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., xi.



chaplain assigned to an operational unit, a Flag Officer's staff, or a hospital could well go an entire tour without ever preaching or presiding over the sacrament (although, presumably, he or she would still have opportunities to teach Christianity). Such a position, according to Oden, must then be inconsistent with the vocation of a Christian minister. Oden clearly rejects as appropriate ordained ministry those who become professional pastoral counselors. He insists that Christian ministry never asks for money in return for services rendered, as is commonly done by pastoral counselors.<sup>27</sup> Oden apparently believes that Christian ministers have no responsibility towards the other sheep Jesus spoke of, "that are not of this sheep pen" (Jn 10:16).<sup>28</sup> Chaplains believe that God is concerned about those sheep that have made no commitment to the Christian faith and perhaps never will. In fairness to Oden, at one point he does speak of Jesus' pastoral concern for all:

Jesus prayed: 'As thou hast sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world' (John 17:18). A moving analogy here begins to unfold between incarnation and apostolicity, between God's engagement in the world in Christ and our engagement in the world as ambassadors for Christ. As Christ was sent by the Father into the alienated world, so are his ministers sent into the darkened world by the Son.<sup>29</sup>

For those who do the work of chaplaincy whether in the military hospitals, prisons or any other setting, this incarnational image of being sent into the same darkened world that Jesus was sent to is central. The chaplain embodies God's concern and love for all, with a special focus on those who are suffering:

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>28</sup> The original reference is to the Gentiles, but today these sheep would be those who are outside the Christian church.

<sup>29</sup> Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 61.

The chaplain often ‘shepherds’ sheep of other religious pastures. That is, chaplains often provide spiritual ministry (what we call ‘pastoral ministry’ in the Christian tradition) to people in and out of their own faith tradition. In a very broad way, the chaplain assists in emotional support, physical assistance, relational reconciliation, and spiritual encouragement. All of these expressions of caring ministry represent ways in which the chaplain provides spiritual care for the soul—regardless of faith tradition, denomination, or lack of religion.<sup>30</sup>

### **Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry by William H. Willimon**

Like Oden, William H. Willimon deals with the significance of ordination in his book, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*. He begins his book by telling of his own baptismal experience, as an infant, when the preacher “made me a Christian.”<sup>31</sup> This is the starting point of every Christian’s story in Willimon’s mind, and every Christian is commissioned by virtue of his or her baptism to minister to this world on Christ’s behalf. For Willimon, the difference between the ordained clergy and the laity is not that one ministers and the other does not, but rather that the clergy are given the additional responsibility of providing leadership for the body of Christ. He writes:

All Christians, by virtue of their baptism, are called by God to witness, to teach, to heal, and to proclaim. All Christians are amateurs so far as their relationship to God is concerned. Yet from the ranks of the baptized, some are called to lead.<sup>32</sup>

Willimon identifies the laying on of hands as “central liturgical gesture of ordination” by which “there is in this gesture a conferral of power and authority from those who have borne this burden to those newly called to lead . . . The laying on of hands is a sign that the call to ministry is preceded by the baptismal call and arises out of

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<sup>30</sup> Paget and McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain*, 22.

<sup>31</sup> William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abington Press, 2002), 27.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

the general ministry of all Christians in baptism.”<sup>33</sup> For Willimon pastors are called to be leaders:

Who are pastors? What are they for? Those questions are answered when the church makes its leaders—the Service of Ordination. In these rites, the church says and shows what it believes about its clergy. For twenty centuries the church has called some from among the baptized to serve as leaders, to fulfill the role of pastor. Theological reflection upon these rites reveals much to contemporary pastors about who they are and what the church means when it designates them as leaders.<sup>34</sup>

Like Oden, Willimon tries to find a central metaphor for the role of the pastor. His list of possible titles for the task of the clergy is more contemporary and far more colorful than Oden’s and includes such possible roles as media mogul, political negotiator, therapist, manager, and resident activist. He suggests that there is a move back to the role of preacher as a central role, which he views positively.<sup>35</sup> He also likes the idea of the pastor as a servant of the servants of God, an image he connects to the pastoral task of presiding at the Lord’s table:

Those whom we designate as ‘ministers’ are, in the New Testament, *diakonoi*, Paul’s favorite title for Christian leaders, derived from the Greek word for ‘service’ (I Cor. 12:4-30). Significantly, it is the same word that is the root for ‘butler’ and ‘waiter,’ terms that have a greater edge to them than ‘ministry.’ How odd of the church to designate its leaders by so mundane and lowly a term. No pastor rises much higher than being a butler. Yet, in the topsy-turvy ethics of the Kingdom, this is as high as anyone rises—a *servant of the servants* at the Lord’s Table (cf. John 13).<sup>36</sup>

But in the end, Willimon refuses to settle on one image for ordained, but rather embraces the diversity of images that have arisen throughout the church’s history:

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 35.

My point . . . is to remind us that the Christian ministry is heir to a rich legacy of patterns for leadership. Each of us is suited, by inclination, to certain patterns. Scripture has a rich diversity of church leaders. Different ages call forth different styles of leadership. There is therefore no single and normative style or focus for pastoral work. My impression is that contemporary ministry is groping for an appropriate metaphor for our pastoral work. Perhaps there has always been a certain tension in the guiding images for what we do. It is the nature of Christian ministry to be multifaceted and multidimensional. The gospel does not change, but the contexts in which the gospel is preached and enacted *do* change. A predominate pastoral image that might have been fruitful in one age may not be so in the next.<sup>37</sup>

The two themes of leadership and service are familiar for military chaplains.

Military life is a life in service to one's country, and the rank structure is designed to foster the development of leadership. There is a great need for leadership within the church, a need that retiring chaplains are well equipped to fill. Oden points out that pastoral leadership is based on the leader's commitment to those he seeks to lead and its "authority is not primarily a coercive authority, such as that of a judge or policeman, but rather an authority based on covenant fidelity, caring, mutuality, and the expectation of empathic understanding."<sup>38</sup> This is no different than good leadership within the military, which is not only concerned with the accomplishment of the mission, but also the needs of the men and women for whom the leader is responsible. It is important, as the retiring military chaplain takes off the uniform and removes all the markings of authority and power attached to it, that he or she once again embraces the identity of being the humble servant of the servants of God.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>38</sup> Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 53.

## Halftime: Moving from Success to Significance by Bob Buford

In his book *Halftime: Moving from Success to Significance*, Bob Buford provides yet another useful metaphor when considering the post-working stage of life. He uses the metaphor of a football game to illustrate life's stages. In the first half of the game of life the primary concerns are "achieving and gaining, learning and earning."<sup>39</sup> This is the period of life when people gain an education, establish themselves in a career, marry and raise a family. It is usually a very busy time with numerous competing demands and little time for reflection on the deeper issues of life.

Halftime comes about halfway through life, somewhere around ages forty-five and fifty, when success has been achieved but deeper questions continue to gnaw at the soul.

Buford calls this the still, small voice:

Yet, just as it was for Elijah, the still small voice—barely audible, always gentle—kept calling me as I was sitting there in a cold, middle-aged sweat brought on by the still-roaring flames of my success. The gentle but insistent voice was asking me to consider—what else? – a question that I had deferred and suppressed for all of my adult life: *Do you understand the difference between being called and being driven?*<sup>40</sup>

For Buford, this is halftime, a time when an individual gets the opportunity to pause and look carefully at how the game is going.

If you are hearing a voice speak softly to you, it is time to head for the locker room, catch your breath, and get ready for the second half—a better second half than the first. For a football coach and his team, this is the time to take stock, to look back on what was accomplished . . . Many times a good second half depends on what is done during halftime.<sup>41</sup>

Buford encourages those in halftime to examine carefully their gifts, personality, and

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<sup>39</sup> Buford, *Halftime*, 35.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 67.

experiences thus far in the game in order to maximize their effectiveness. For Buford the second half capitalizes on the lessons learned and skills developed in the first half:

I don't believe that God creates us with specialized abilities and temperaments and then asks us to do things for him that would require completely different abilities and temperaments. Why would a Creator who put together such an efficient and sensible natural world violate his design template when it came to humans? Significance need not be a 180-degree course change. Instead, do some retrofitting. God has a wonderful plan for the second half of your life: to allow you to serve him by doing what you like to do and what you are good at.<sup>42</sup>

For Buford a good second half is one where an individual takes back control of his or her life and personally calls the shots in order to be more effective for a greater good, which in Buford's Christian worldview is God's kingdom.<sup>43</sup> A good second half is a win-win situation in which God's kingdom is advanced and we experience personal fulfillment through the effective use of the gifts and talents God has given us.<sup>44</sup>

Like Laslett, Buford speaks of personal fulfillment as the goal of the second half. But his understanding of personal fulfillment is theologically much deeper and more biblically sound than Laslett's. He points out that our society is filled with an unhealthy, even pathological individualism that leads to "selfish isolation, alienation, greed, callousness, and guilt."<sup>45</sup> Buford suggests that there is a healthy individualism in which we identify our own uniqueness and use it in community with others:

The individualism in the Bible is the individualism of an eye or a foot—a part that functions as part of a larger, harmonious whole. The individualism so rampant in our culture is a first-half individualism that borders on selfishness; its focus is almost always personal gain. Second-half individualism always finds its strength

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 134.

in concert with others of like-minded vision. I learned long ago to build on my own strength and natural giftedness and to depend on others with complementary strengths to make the work I'm doing complete.<sup>46</sup>

Retiring military chaplains find themselves at halftime. They have successfully completed a first half with their military career. They have been successful whatever the rank at which they retire and now need to take the time for a locker-room examination of how the game is going. This project is aimed at helping them take that look, so that they can have an even better second half in the game of life: a second half that is not only successful but filled with significance; a second half in which their gifts, training, talents and experiences are all used effectively to advance God's kingdom.

### **Military Retirement: Dream or Dilemma for Air Force Chaplains? by Lt Col James**

#### **W. Millsaps**

The final two works deal specifically with the topic of military chaplains in retirement. The first is a research project submitted to the faculty of the Air War College by Lt. Col. James W. Millsaps entitled *Military Retirement: Dream or Dilemma for Air Force Chaplains?* The first part of this report surveyed 125 active duty Air Force chaplains with twenty or more years of service time, asking them, "I have given some thought to retirement and am wondering about the following: How will I take the transition from military to civilian life?"<sup>47</sup> Forty percent of the respondents had a very positive view of what the experience would be like, 30 percent expressed some reservations about it, and the remaining chaplains were very hesitant about the transition

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>47</sup> Millsaps, *Military Retirement*, 5.

or had not given it any serious thought. Over 70 percent of these chaplains said they planned to stay in the parish ministry. When asked about being stereotyped in the civilian churches, there was a clear difference between the Catholic chaplains and the Protestant chaplains. The Catholic chaplains felt that this would not be much of an issue since the bishop would facilitate their return to the parish. The Protestant chaplains, however, seemed to think this would be an issue and were ready to face it in one way or another. Chapter 1 of this study identifies a number of these stereotypes.

In the second part of Millsap's study, 112 retired Air Force chaplains were sent a questionnaire about their actual experience as retired military chaplains. Fifty-seven percent responded. Of the respondents, 55 percent were presently working in a full-time ministry related field and 39 percent were working part time in a ministry related field. Nine percent indicated they were working in "another field."<sup>48</sup> Over 70 percent of those chaplains still on active duty had indicated that they intended to stay in parish ministry after retirement. Clearly, retired Air Force chaplains overwhelmingly remain in ministry. "Retired chaplains, for the most part, are not retired—they have transitioned into other forms of ministry or other jobs."<sup>49</sup>

For many of these chaplains, the transition was simply from one job assignment to another. When asked about their free time, 67.2 percent said they were as busy as ever, 16.3 percent said they have some free time and another 16.3 percent said they have all the free time they want.<sup>50</sup> Overall the chaplains indicated they spend 19.7 percent of their

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 48.



time in hobbies and 10.8 percent of their time in travel. The chaplains gave a variety of views to the question, “Do you feel lifelong labor is really essential in order to achieve and maintain a sense of personal worth?” These answers ranged from, “Yes, I cannot imagine, at age 51, being fully ‘retired.’ It contradicts my understanding of ministry. If we have been ‘called’ to a special task, equipped with special gifts, then how can we at an early age say that we are through doing ministry,” to “No. The time comes when one has finished and there ought to be a time for something else—or nothing.”<sup>51</sup> This project will look at these issues of work/leisure balance and a theological understanding of retirement.

For the final part of his work, Millsaps sent fifty-one letters to the various religious endorsing agents for chaplains. Nineteen responded, of whom “ten indicated and/or included specialized efforts which they make in order to help the soon-to-retire chaplain return to the civilian work force or total retirement.”<sup>52</sup> Millsaps points out that over one-third of military chaplains come from denominations and churches that use the call system, where local congregations hire a pastor rather than have one appointed by the church hierarchy.<sup>53</sup> Many of these church bodies maintain some kind of placement service, but whether or not such a service exists, the endorser is in a unique position to offer retiring chaplains assistance as they re-enter civilian ministry. Millsaps concludes:

Based on the response to my inquiry, most endorsers are genuinely interested in helping chaplains (or other clergy for that matter) to locate or relocate to parish ministries as well as to other specialized ministries in their communion. That

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 48-50.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 67.

effort works only IF the chaplain takes some initiative to “let the endorsers know” of retirement plans and desires for help.<sup>54</sup>

In his concluding chapter, Millsaps suggests that retiring chaplains need to take some responsibility for their career, including the transition into post-military ministry. Chaplains need to maintain a healthy relationship with their endorsing body throughout their military career. This includes regular contact, reports, and attendance at denominational conferences.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, the broader community of faith has a responsibility to military chaplains to offer assistance to chaplains who are transitioning from the military. As the Apostle Paul writes, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). The endorsing agents for the churches are the primary ones who offer this assistance on behalf of the entire church.

### **The Finishing Well Handbook: Retirement Transition Skills for Missionaries and Chaplains edited by Nathan Davis**

The final book is a compilation of essays that address a number of issues facing retiring missionaries and chaplains. In the title of the opening essay, editor Nathan Davis asks the question, “What Is Successful Retirement?” His answer is valuable and concise, “successful retirement occurs when an individual is able to thrive physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually in retirement.”<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately in American culture a successful retirement is too often seen as one where proper medical and emotional care is provided for broken, decrepit, worn out people over a certain age. This image results in

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>56</sup> Davis, *The Finishing Well Handbook*, 3.

psychological abuse of retirees and a neglect of a valuable national resource.<sup>57</sup> Davis

gives an alternative view of a successful retirement:

In contrast to the common images of retirees in North America, successful retirement is the intentional planning and development of a new transitional lifestyle in which they are more productive and thrive more than any prior chapter of life. Successful retirees do not begin to reach their most productive years until they are seniors.<sup>58</sup>

This is as true for missionaries and chaplains as anyone else. Davis writes, “The missionary or chaplain who successfully transitions into retirement has more to offer to the Kingdom of God after retirement than at any previous time of life.”<sup>59</sup> A successful retirement is like a four-legged stool, with the four legs represented by physical health, social interaction, intimacy with God, and meaningful ministry.<sup>60</sup> The key to a successful retirement is making a successful transition to retirement. This transition “reflects an internal adjustment of attitudes, and assumptions . . . . Retirement transition has the potential to alter your future more positively or more negatively than any other life transition.”<sup>61</sup>

The essays of this book are ordered around the Transition Model developed by Dr. David C. Pollock, founder of Interaction International, which works with third culture kids (TCK) around the world.<sup>62</sup> This model identifies five transition stages as

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 34.

involvement, leaving, transition, entering, and re-involvement.<sup>63</sup> The involvement stage is a time of active ministry prior to retirement.<sup>64</sup> The leaving stage is the time when the emotional reaction to the changes retirement brings begins to occur. This is a time for retirement planning and ought to begin at least two years before the actual retirement date.<sup>65</sup> The key question to be faced in this stage is not the financial question, but the question of vocation: “What will I do with the rest of my life?”<sup>66</sup> The transition stage begins on the first day of retirement and can last anywhere from several weeks to several years. It is a time of chaos and grief. This stage generally lasts longer if the retiring missionary or chaplain has not planned to move into a new ministry.<sup>67</sup> The entering stage occurs when the missionary or chaplain begins working in a new ministry and developing a new retirement lifestyle. It is characterized by superficiality, newness, and vulnerability.<sup>68</sup> Finally there is the re-involvement stage in which the retiree is fully engaged in a new ministry and has adjusted to a new life.<sup>69</sup>

This is the most directly relevant of all the works examined in this literature review. An essay by Kin Mayo “Retirement: Some Insights from Scripture” offers a sound biblical perspective on retirement. Many of the issues identified in chapter 1 of this project are touched on in some way in this work. The emphasis on the transition to

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 125.

retirement and retirement itself as an opportunity to develop a deeper relationship with God is an especially valuable contribution this book brings to this project.

## CHAPTER 3

### A THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL RETIREMENT

This chapter will develop a theological understanding of ministerial retirement. It begins by examining a number of historic and contemporary models underlying the concept of retirement. It then examines several biblical passages that are relevant to this topic. Drawing from this biblical material, it will offer reflections on two theological issues that are true for all clergy as they face retirement, and finally this chapter will look at two of the unique challenges of military chaplain retirement.

#### **Contemporary Models of Retirement**

The meaning of the word retirement has changed over time. Fifty years ago in the United States, the word brought up images of no work, endless golfing and fishing, and winters in Florida. Retirement happened at the magical age of sixty-five when a worker was set free from the slavery of a job and became eligible for Social Security. This government insurance program, together with a pension and whatever savings had been accumulated over a lifetime of employment, allowed the worker to quit his job and live a life of leisure for the rest of his life (workers were almost always male in this model).

Times have changed. Social Security is not as secure as it once was. Pensions have been eliminated in many American companies in favor of Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) and other market investments to which hopefully both the employer and the employee contribute. The Baby Boom generation, the current generation that is entering their retirement years, is putting its unique mark on this stage of life as they have at every stage before. People in the fifth and sixth decades of life today find themselves far healthier than previous generations and far less secure financially.<sup>1</sup> Retirement is taking on new meaning in the twenty-first century.

The military uses the term retirement in its own way. To a military person, retirement means leaving the armed forces, receiving a military pension, and rejoining the civilian world and most likely the civilian workforce. In most cases, this takes place when a worker is still quite young, usually in his or her early forties. Retirement is not the end of working life, but simply the transition from one job to another.

### Retirement in the Industrial Revolution

The concept of retirement is of relatively recent origin. For most of human history, people worked until they died. Elderly people often slowed down, but in agrarian societies the men and women continued to help with the fieldwork, childcare, and domestic chores as much as they were able. A few wealthy individuals might stop working in their later years, and those with serious physical disabilities were relieved

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<sup>1</sup> Laslett, *A Fresh Map of Life*, 54 and 131.

from many work responsibilities, but for the most part workers did not have the financial means to stop working.<sup>2</sup>

With the coming of the Industrial Revolution, the primary location of work moved from the family farm to the factory. In the factory, work was mechanized and so was the worker. Workers were interchangeable, working eight-hour shifts doing the same task repeatedly, only to be replaced by a new set of workers when the shift was over. As people aged and began to slow down, they became an impediment to the process. In order to remove older, slower workers and replace them with younger, faster and according to the thinking, more efficient workers, the concept of retirement was born. In the words of Nelson and Bolles, “It was similar to replacing the worn-out part of a machine.”<sup>3</sup> Like the machines they worked on, workers became subject to a replacement timetable. With life expectancy being around seventy years of age, sixty-five became the normal retirement age. Soon office workers and government employees were considered ready for retirement at sixty-five. The implementation of Social Security in 1936 reinforced the practice.<sup>4</sup>

Life in the Industrial Revolution therefore consisted of three boxes, to use Richard Bolles’ term.<sup>5</sup> The first box was from birth to around eighteen or twenty-two and was seen as a time for education. Some time was devoted to leisure and a small amount time was devoted to work (often called chores), but the cultural expectation was that the

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<sup>2</sup> Nelson and Bolles, *Parachute*, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>5</sup> Bolles, *The Three Boxes of Life*, 7.



primary task of those in the first box was to get an education. The second box, from ages eighteen or twenty-two to age sixty-five, was seen as primarily a time for work, with a little time available for leisure on weekends or short vacations and a little time available for education, for example, taking a course in the evening. The final box, retirement, which began at age sixty-five and lasted until death, was primarily a time for leisure with a small amount of time devoted to education and work. Graduation and the retirement ceremony were the markers separating the three boxes.

### Retirement as the Third Age

A number of changes have taken place over the past fifty to sixty years, many of which have already been noted in this paper, that make the Industrial Revolution model of retirement obsolete. The most obvious is that America is no longer primarily an industrial economy. Fewer workers are needed for today's factories, and those workers that are needed have a much less physically demanding job and so are not as worn out at sixty-five. As was noted in the review of Peter Laslett's book above, many workers in the last decades of the twentieth century began retiring earlier, often as early as fifty. Improved healthcare has lengthened life expectancy from around seventy to close to ninety, so that the average five year retirement of the 1930s can now last as thirty or forty years or even longer. Thus the three boxes of life in the Industrial Revolution have been replaced with Peter Laslett's four ages of life. The first two ages of life are roughly equivalent to the first two boxes of life in the Industrial Revolution. The fourth age of life equates to retirement in the Industrial Revolution model, while the last few years of life are marked by feebleness and preparation for death. The new development is the Third

Age of Life, a time marked by flexibility, freedom, and fulfillment. John E. Nelson and Richard N. Bolles describe the third age as “most likely to occur between the ages of fifty and seventy-five. We may be working, retired, or somewhere in between. But that’s less of a factor than our commitment to fully explore, develop, and express ourselves.”<sup>6</sup>

According to Nelson and Bolles, the old retirement of the Industrial Revolution meant simply not working.<sup>7</sup> They suggest that the new retirement known as the third age, needs a new organizing concept.<sup>8</sup> The concept they offer is “well being . . . [which is] a state characterized by prosperity, health, and happiness.”<sup>9</sup> They suggest that its goal “is to figure out how to have the *not working* of the old retirement and the *well being* of the new retirement too.”<sup>10</sup>

Well-being, according to this model, has three parts. The first part is prosperity, “creating a state of well-being for our physical environment,”<sup>11</sup> or to put it simply, finances. The second part is health, “creating a state of well-being for our physical body,”<sup>12</sup> which means access to proper medicine. The third part is happiness, “creating a state of well-being in our nonphysical self.”<sup>13</sup> This includes inner happiness and a meaningful social system. Nelson and Bolles suggest that prosperity and health are the

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<sup>6</sup> Nelson and Bolles, *Parachute*, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

foundation of well-being, and happiness rests on them:

Some amounts of prosperity and health are probably *necessary*, but not *sufficient* to produce happiness. If you don't have much prosperity (you're poor), you probably won't be happy. If you don't have much health (you're sick), you probably won't be happy either. But no amount of prosperity or health, either alone or in combination, can *produce* happiness. They make it more likely, but they cannot create it. You need to create happiness directly. Also, remember that prosperity and health are physical states and happiness is a nonphysical state. For all these reasons and more, there's an actual structure to well-being. . . prosperity and health are the *foundation*, and happiness rests upon them.<sup>14</sup>

While Nelson and Bolles' retirement well-being model is helpful, from a biblical and theological perspective, it falls short in the same way as Laslett's model from which they draw much of their inspiration. For Laslett, the third age is seen as a time of personal fulfillment. Nelson and Bolles urge their readers to make a commitment to use this time to fully explore, develop, and express themselves. In both cases something is missing. A full life needs more than just self-expression or personal fulfillment. It needs a transcendent or spiritual dimension, a commitment to something that is bigger than oneself.

### Successful Retirement

Nelson Davis' four part model in *The Finishing Well Handbook* reviewed above includes this spiritual dimension. For Davis, successful retirement occurs when an individual thrives physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. He suggests that a successful retirement is supported by four legs: pursuing physical health, growing ever more intimate with God, engaging others socially in a widening support network and

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 29.

thriving cognitively in meaningful ministry.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, Nelson Davis does not include the issue of financial stability, which was a primary concern for Nelson and Bolles. If financial stability is included along with physical health as part of what it means to thrive physically in Nelson Davis' model, then a contemporary, usable model for a successful retirement emerges: physical security, increasing intimacy with God, social engagement, and thriving cognitively in meaningful ministry.

### **Biblical Perspectives on Retirement**

Only one book of the Bible speaks directly about retirement. In the Old Testament book of Numbers the Bible speaks of mandatory retirement for one group of workers. Interestingly enough, that group is the clergy.

#### **Mandatory Retirement for Levites**

The Bible prescribes a mandatory retirement age for Levites in the following passage:

The Lord said to Moses, 'This applies to the Levites: Men twenty-five years old or more shall come to take part in the work at the Tent of Meeting, but at the age of fifty, they must retire from their regular service and work no longer. They may assist their brothers in performing their duties at the Tent of Meeting, but they themselves must not do the work. This, then, is how you are to assign the responsibilities of the Levites. (Nm 8:23-26)

In this passage the work of caring for the movable Tabernacle is given to the Levites who are between the ages of twenty-five and fifty. In Numbers 4 the beginning age is spoken

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<sup>15</sup> Davis, *The Finishing Well Handbook*, 7.

of seven times as thirty but the terminal age is consistently fifty (Nm 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 42, 47). Those over the age of fifty could assist but must not do the work.<sup>16</sup>

The tabernacle or tent of meeting was a movable worship tent that contained the Ark of the Covenant and represented God's presence among the Israelites. As the Israelites moved from camp to camp on the forty-year wilderness journey from Sinai to the Promised Land, the tabernacle moved with them. The men from the tribe of Levi were responsible for taking down, carrying, and setting up the tabernacle. It was physically demanding work and Levites over the age of fifty were released from this responsibility.

There is another theme going on in these verses, which will be developed later in this study. The Levites over the age of fifty were not to do the work. This points back to God's great work of creation which lasted for six days. On the seventh day God ceased his work and entered a time of rest (Gn 2:2). In the book of Numbers, the Israelites are on a journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, a land where they will have rest from their enemies. Once they cross the Jordan River, they will find that rest (Dt 12:8-10, Jo 1:13). King David recognized that the Israelites had been granted this rest, and that there was no longer a need for the movable tabernacle. He therefore released the Levites from this task, but continued to utilize the services of those over twenty for other worship related duties (1 Chr 23:24-27). In the New Testament this theme is further developed in Hebrews 4, where it says that believers have not yet fully entered this rest, "For there remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest

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<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that the Septuagint omits any reference to the Levites continuing to serve after the age of fifty.

also rests from his own work, just as God did from his” (Heb 4:9-10). The retirement of the Levites, then, is a kind of a foreshadowing of a eternal retirement, where Christians will no longer experience the curse that has been placed on work (Gen 3:17-19), where work will no longer require heavy lifting and battle against the enemy, but will be a joyous service in the worship of the Lord.

### The Pastor’s Charge

The words of the Apostle Paul to the young Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-2 have become a standard part of ordination services in every Christian tradition: “I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”<sup>17</sup> The following passage is the context for these words, and the study of these verses informs this project’s examination of ministerial retirement:

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of thing happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come

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<sup>17</sup> The question of authorship of the pastoral epistles is beyond the scope of this paper and irrelevant to the issues we are considering. For simplicity’s sake I have chosen to refer to the author as the Apostle Paul; see Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 32.

when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Tm 3:10-4:8)

In the first half of chapter 3, Paul writes in some detail about the godlessness that people will exhibit in the last days. He follows this with the words quoted above that describe Paul's life in contrast to the life of the godless and urges Timothy to follow his example. Timothy has, in fact, been living in just this way, having learned a godly lifestyle from infancy through his education in the sacred writings of the Old Testament and continuing to be equipped to live this life through his use of the Scriptures (2 Tm 3:15-16). Paul's challenge to him is to continue on this path and to persevere in godliness.

A modern reader may wonder whether these words were written to Timothy as a church leader or as a member of the Christian community. It is certainly true that all Christians are called to live godly lives in contrast to the godlessness of those who refuse to acknowledge the truth (2 Tm 3:7). However, Paul's reference to the *θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος*, or man of God, in verse 17 indicates he is referring to Timothy as an upcoming Christian leader. The same term is found in 1 Timothy 6:11 in a very similar context: "But you man of God [*ἄνθρωπε θεοῦ*], flee from all this. . ."<sup>18</sup> Commentator J. N. D. Kelly points out

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<sup>18</sup> The 2011 edition of the NIV, probably in an attempt to be gender inclusive, translates these words in our passage as "servant of God" and gives a footnote with the more literal "man of God." For some reason in 1 Timothy 6:11 it keeps the term "man of God."

that throughout the Old Testament the term man of God was used to refer to those who were in special service to God, including Moses, Samuel, Elijah and David.<sup>19</sup>

In the beginning of chapter 4 Paul charges Timothy to “be prepared in season and out of season” to fulfill his duties (v. 2). The language throughout this passage is drawn from the athletic arena. A good athlete must be in physical shape throughout the year, not just during the sports season. Paul himself has run the race (v. 7) and has earned the victor’s crown (v. 8). Now he challenges Timothy to do the same. Kelly points out that the phrase in season and out of season comes from the military arena and refers to standing one’s post or watch. He suggests that this meaning may be unclear to the modern context.<sup>20</sup> However, the language of the athletic field and the language of the battlefield are often very close. In biblical times, there was a season for battle (2 Samuel 11:1), and even today military exercises are usually scheduled for the spring and fall. To use military terms, Paul has been relieved of his watch: “The time has come for my departure” (2 Tm 4:6). Clearly this is a reference to his upcoming death. Timothy now keeps watch and must remain at his post until the time when he is relieved.

Numbers 8 and 2 Timothy 3-4 give two perspectives on clergy retirement that must continually be kept in tension. On the one hand, it is appropriate for a clergyperson to enjoy a Sabbath rest in the senior years that is a foreshadowing of our eternal rest. On the other hand, the servant of God must not leave his or her post until properly relieved.

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<sup>19</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981) 139, 204.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.



## Spiritual Gifts and the Laying on of Hands

A third perspective to consider as we look at clergy retirement is the significance and meaning of the ritual of the laying on of hands. Paul twice speaks to young Timothy of the gift that God has given to him. In 1 Timothy 4:14, Paul writes, “Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.” Later in 2 Timothy 1:6 he encourages Timothy to “stir into flame the gift of God which is within you through the laying on of my hands.” In both cases Paul connects ministerial gifts with practice of the laying on of hands. To understand these passages, the reader must learn what gift young Timothy received, the significance of the laying on of hands, and the connection between the two.

The laying on of hands was a common rite in the Old Testament, and in ancient times in general, as a means of publicly commissioning someone for office.<sup>21</sup> The Levites were commissioned in this way (Nm 27:18-23) and Moses laid his hands on Joshua (Dt 34:9). Jewish rabbis were commissioned for service by the laying on of hands.<sup>22</sup> In the early church the apostles commissioned the first deacons through prayer and the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6), and the church in Antioch laid hands on Paul and Barnabas before sending them on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:3). Timothy is instructed not to lay hands on others too quickly (1 Tm 5:22), indicating that the young leader should be careful whom he commissions for service.

However, in addition to commissioning, the laying of hands is used for other purposes in the book of Acts. Ananias was told in a vision to go to Saul of Tarsus and lay

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<sup>21</sup> Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 28.

<sup>22</sup> Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 106.

hands on him to restore his sight (Acts 9:11-12). He did so, stating that the reason for this action was so that Saul “may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:17). Following these words, Saul was healed, got up, and was baptized (Acts 9:18). In Acts 8, following the martyrdom of Stephen, persecution broke out in Jerusalem which forced all except the apostles to be scattered (v. 1). Philip, the second deacon named in Acts 6:5, traveled to Samaria preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ; many believed Philip’s message and were baptized. Luke points out that “both men and women” were baptized (v. 12) and that that they were only baptized into the name of Jesus (v.16). When the apostles in Jerusalem learned that Samaritans had received the word of God and had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, Peter and John went and prayed with these believers and laid their hands on them. Following this act, the new believers received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17). When a sorcerer named Simon heard that the Holy Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered money to attain this ability (Acts 8:18-19). Finally, in Acts 19 there are disciples in Ephesus who had been baptized with John’s baptism but did not receive the Holy Spirit. The apostles explained that John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. These believers were then baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, Paul placed his hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:6).<sup>23</sup>

In summary, in the early church the laying on of hands was used for three different purposes: healing (Acts 9:17, 28:8), commissioning (Acts 6:6, 13:3) and for the reception

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<sup>23</sup> Timothy was not present for this because he had been left behind with Silas in Berea (Acts 17:14). However, by the time of the writing of the pastoral epistles, Timothy was in charge of this church (1 Timothy 1:3).

of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17, 18, 19; 9:12, 17, 19:6).<sup>24</sup> However, the writer of 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 does not refer to the laying on of hands in regard to healing. Then here it must either be a commissioning ritual or it conferred on young Timothy the Holy Spirit. This question is further complicated by the fact that these two verses give two different pictures of Timothy having hands laid on him. In I Timothy 4:14 it is the body of elders that laid hands on the young leader while in 2 Timothy 1:6 it is the Apostle Paul who lays hands on Timothy.

Most English translations, including the King James, Revised Standard, and New International quoted above, imply some kind of cause and effect relationship between the laying on of hands and the reception of the gift, which is generally seen as the Holy Spirit. Scholarly support has been given to this view by D. Danube. He points out that there are two words in the Old Testament for the laying on of hands:

Where an offering or a consecration is concerned, the [Old Testament] texts invariably employ *samakh*, ‘to lean one’s hands upon somebody or something’; but where a blessing is concerned, the verbs used are *sim* or *shith*, ‘to place one’s hands’. Unfortunately the LXX translates both *samakh* and *sim* by *epitithemi* and *shith* by *epiballo*; and in English we do not distinguish at all, speaking indiscriminately of a laying on, putting on or imposition of hands no matter which of the three Hebrew verbs is in question.<sup>25</sup>

According to Danube, *samakh* means “to lean”:

A person who is exhausted, for example, may ‘lean his hands upon the wall’. The rite of ‘leaning one’s hands upon somebody or something’ involves the exercise of some force, and the force is concentrated at the base of the hand, near the joint . . . It is not the typical attitude of one pronouncing a blessing. What may have been the import of the ceremony in Old Testament times? In all probability, by leaning your hands upon somebody or something, by pressing in this way upon a

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<sup>24</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 786.

<sup>25</sup> D. Daube, “The Laying on of Hands,” in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, Athlone Press, 1956), 224.

person or animal, you were pouring your personality into him or it . . or in other words, you were making him or it into your substitute.<sup>26</sup>

This is the word used in Deuteronomy 34:9 when Moses laid his hands on Joshua, who in effect “became a second Moses.”<sup>27</sup>

The Hebrew words *sim* or *shith*, on the other hand, are better translated as “to place,” and often refer to a blessing:

The verbs have a far wider range, are far less specific, than *samakh*. The rite of ‘placing one’s hands upon somebody’ will be of a gentler character than the rite of *samakh*. Vigorous pressure is not essential. Possibly there are occasions when it is enough to use the fingers. The main element of the ceremony is the touch. The idea no doubt was that, by placing your hands on a person, some magic attaching to them took effect upon him. At a later stage, maybe your hands were conceived of as transmitting an influence from above, one might almost say, like conductors.<sup>28</sup>

Danube suggests that the Greek of 1 Timothy 1:14,  $\pi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma\ \tau\epsilon\iota\chi\epsilon\iota\tau\omicron\ \tau\omicron\ \pi\rho\epsilon\sigma\beta\upsilon\tau\epsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon$ , is:

$\pi\rho\epsilon\sigma\beta\upsilon\tau\epsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon$ , is:

a rendering of the Hebrew *semikhath zeqenim*, literally “the leaning on of elders,”; its meaning being ‘the leaning on of hands on persons in order to make elders, Rabbis of them’ . . . As *semikhath zeqenim* denotes not the ordination of specified individuals, not the appointment of certain men as elders, but the rite of ordination in general,  $\pi\rho\epsilon\sigma\beta\upsilon\tau\epsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon$  is here the proper equivalent of *zeqenim*. On this basis we ought to translate: “Neglect not the gift which was given thee by prophecy, with *semikhath zeqenim*, due ordination, ordination conferring full authority.”<sup>29</sup>

In summary, retiring military chaplains, like all retiring clergy men and women, still have the authority and responsibility of someone who has had the hands of the leaders of the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 244. Note that Fee rejects this view, *The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, 775.

church laid on them. One is still a pastor, even after retirement. This is why the church has traditionally used the term emeritus when referring to retired clergy.

### **Clergy Retirement**

Based on the above biblical material, there are two possible conclusions concerning clergy retirement in general. These will also apply more specifically the retirement of military chaplains. The sections below outline these conclusions and their significance for retiring military chaplains.

#### **Emeritus: Ordained for Life**

First, it is clear from the biblical material examined above that ministerial ordination continues even after retirement. This is seen in the title given retired ministers: they are generally not referred to as retired, but as emeritus. A retired minister remains a minister; ordination is for life.

J.N.D. Kelly notes that in 2 Timothy 4:6 when the author writes “the time for my departure is at hand,” the word departure is a word used for ships weighing anchor or soldiers breaking down camp. Kelly notes, “The verb is used in late Greek as a euphemism for death, the suggestion being that the deceased is going home.”<sup>30</sup> Here again the author uses military language. The pastor is not relieved of the watch until it is time for him or her to go home.

Oden makes the analogy between ordination for the clergy and the baptism of all Christians. Ordination is

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<sup>30</sup> Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 208.

a lifelong, indelible covenant. . . . analogous to baptism for the general ministry. Like the baptized, however, it is possible for the duly ordained to neglect, reject, or re-interpret the gift of ministry. Thus, in most church bodies, procedures exist by which ordained ministers can elect to follow other paths than full-time ministry of word, sacrament, and order. In these cases, ordination is not, strictly speaking, withdrawn or withheld, but rather it is inactive or quiescent and could by due process be later re-activated.<sup>31</sup>

In the words of the Apostle Paul, “God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable” (Rm 11:29). Ordination is for life and does not end at retirement.

### Ministry in Retirement

A retired minister remains a minister. The above analysis of contemporary models of retirement and the concept of the third age leads to the conclusion that retirement is not the complete stopping of work, but a transition into a new phase of life and of ministry. What this new phase looks like will depend on the gifts, skills, imagination and creativity of the individual pastor. For some, the third stage may look remarkably similar to the second stage. A pastor might choose, for example, to continue serving in a parish until his or her mid-seventies, or a retired military chaplain might choose to continue to work with people who have a military background by working in a Veteran’s Administration (VA) hospital. Alternatively the retired pastor might use this opportunity to explore a whole new area of ministry, such as teaching, writing, or volunteering for an overseas mission assignment. Like any ministry, the important issues to consider when looking at ministry in retirement are calling and giftedness.

An honest examination of the ministry journey so far is a good way to once again reconnect with the original call to ministry and to identify where the retiring pastor is

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<sup>31</sup> Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 29.

most effective. Denominational offices and Christian counseling centers are places where the pastor can find additional help through psychological testing tools and individual counseling. It is wise to take the first year or more of retirement as a sabbatical from ministry to allow time for healing, reflection, travel or other leisure pursuits and for gaining a more objective perspective before making any decisions about future ministries. Ultimately, as a chapter of *The Finishing Well Handbook* points out:

The most important question facing average retiring missionaries/chaplains is the same question that they faced when they first decided to become a minister, ‘What will I do with the rest of my life?’ This singular issue sets retirement transition as a much more significant transition than any other life transition. Until the retirement age minister can adequately answer this question, he/she will not retire successfully regardless of his/her financial status. When you first decided to enter ministry, your prospective financial income was probably not the deciding factor. Likewise, your financial income is not the most important issue as you transition into retirement.<sup>32</sup>

### **Military Chaplain Retirement**

The two conclusions concerning clergy retirement in general also apply to military chaplains. They remain ministers, ordained for life, and they now have the opportunity to transition into a new phase of life and ministry. Though the work and journey will be unique to each individual, there are some overarching truths that delineate this new phase.

#### **Ordained for Life**

The core conviction of this dissertation is that a military chaplain is first and foremost an ordained minister, and that ordination is for life. The retired military chaplain has fulfilled the responsibility of the military commission and has hopefully received an

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<sup>32</sup> Caring Connection Team, “Stage II: Leaving,” 53.

honorable discharge. But the authority of one who has had hands laid on him or her remains; the charge to “preach the word . . . in season and out of season” is still in force (2 Timothy 4:2). Ordinarily there is no discharge from a life of service as an ordained minister: “God has called you into ministry *for life*. We expect to minister for as long as we live. . . It’s an honor and a joy to serve God and others. We want to serve for as long as He provides us with life. One never retires from ministry; we merely shift horizontally to another means of ministry.”<sup>33</sup> A retired military chaplain must still stand the watch.

A senior chaplain that I know once observed that most military chaplains leave traditional ministry when they retire and pursue careers in other fields. They often use the degrees they earned while in the military to become psychological counselors, directors of non-profit agencies, or university professors. According to this chaplain, their military experience has simply worn them out and they no longer have the energy or vision for pastoral ministry. There is certainly nothing wrong with a retiring chaplain pursuing such fields, and often such chaplains will be quick to say that this is a continuation of ministry. But when retiring chaplains pursue such careers, it is a loss for church and may well be a denial of the call and irrevocable nature of ordination. Sadly, such losses could be prevented if chaplains were willing to push through the pain of the transition period and gain the valuable gifts it has to offer.

### The Transition to a New Phase of Ministry

There is no doubt, as has been noted above, that the demands and pace of military chaplaincy are among the highest of any ministry and continue to increase. On the other

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.



hand, the experiences of the military chaplain are often some of the most exciting one could ever have in ministry.<sup>34</sup> It is these experiences as well as the quality training military chaplains regularly receive that results in the unique gifts, talents and experiences of military chaplains which were identified in chapter 1. The danger in all this is what Leanne Payne calls “spiritual lust”:

It is a mistake to pursue experience, to desire ‘high impact’ encounters. There is such a thing as *spiritual lust*. Like the more physical lusts, we must uncover and deal with the motives behind it. We may find, for example, a desire to prove God to oneself or to impress others. We may find the type of unbelief or even ignorance of the immensity of divine reality that leaves us pridefully demanding to walk not by faith but by physical sight.<sup>35</sup>

The retiring military chaplain may well be grieving the loss of such an exciting, high paced lifestyle. But the pace of military ministry is unsustainable, both physically and spiritually. Age and the demands of the military on the body eventually take a toll. Years of getting up early for physical training, long work days and duty calls at all hours of the night can often lead to a neglect of the chaplain’s own prayer life and walk with God.

Retirement offers a wonderful opportunity then for the military chaplain to gain greater balance in life and to practice better self-care in ministry. Earlier in this chapter the point was made that a successful retirement is one supported by the four legs of pursuing physical health, growing ever more intimate with God, engaging others socially in a widening support network and thriving cognitively in meaningful ministry. These four legs can only be gained by achieving a good balance between continued service to

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<sup>34</sup> As an example, in my own military experience I had the privilege of being part of the response effort in New York City after the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and the response effort in Ishinomaki, Japan following the earthquake/tsunami/nuclear disaster on March 11, 2011. To my knowledge, I am the only military chaplain that had the privilege of being a part of both events.

<sup>35</sup> Leanne Payne, *Listening Prayer: Learning to Hear God’s Voice and Keep a Prayer Journal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994), 143.

God's kingdom and renewal of the chaplain's own spirit and soul. The additional leisure and recreational time in retirement offers the opportunity to develop aspects of one's unique personhood that have been left dormant. It offers an opportunity for the re-creation of our whole personality and identity.

Laurie Ann Pearlman's words for trauma therapists are applicable to chaplains:

Balancing work, play, and rest helps us to remain grounded in various aspects of our complex identities. Practices that renew a cherished sense of identity or that expand one's identity beyond that of trauma therapist are helpful in this realm. This might mean socializing with friends and family to reconnect with oneself as friend, parent, child, partner, or sibling . . . engaging in activities that allow one to feel particularly like a man/woman or that allow one to be in a dependent or receiving role; engaging in creative endeavors such as writing, playing music, creating art, gardening, being physically active through exercise, dance, or hard physical work; reconnecting with one's body through massage, dance, yoga. Each of these activities in its own way balances some aspect of the helper/ listener/nurturer roles we play in our work as trauma therapists.<sup>36</sup>

A successful retirement lifestyle, then, might include two or three days of hands-on ministry, two or three days of recreational activities, and one or two days of quiet reading, reflection, and prayer. It might mean six to nine months in full time ministry and three to six months spent on extended vacation or travel. The balance may shift over time, with the chaplain spending a larger amount of time in the younger years of early retirement being used for continued service while in later years spending more time in leisure and recreational activities. The chaplain may decide that self-care is a greater need early in retirement, leading to healing and growth that will produce the fruit of service in later years. Each retired military chaplain will need to find his or her own balance

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<sup>36</sup> Laurie Ann Pearlman, "Self-Care for Trauma Therapists: Ameliorating Vicarious Traumatization," in *Secondary Traumatic Stress: Self-Care Issues for Clinicians, Researchers, & Educators* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. B. Hudnall Stamm, Ph.D. (Baltimore: Sidran Press, 1999), 54.

between work, play, and reflection based on personal needs, personality, resources, and opportunities.

The retiring military chaplain may also want to look at adjusting the balance between work and family in his or her life. For twenty years or more, the needs of the military service often took priority over the needs of the family. The chaplain spent many periods away from the family because of deployments and other responsibilities. He or she missed birthdays, holidays, and school functions to meet the demands of the job. The chaplain may have feelings of sadness or guilt over these sacrifices. As the chaplain transitions into retirement and possibility moves from parenthood to grandparenthood, time spent with grandchildren might take priority over taking on additional ministerial responsibilities. This can be a healthy rebalancing of one's life and priorities and should be done without guilt. Playing with children is wonderful therapy for a hurting soul.

In summary, retiring military chaplains reenter the civilian world with both significant needs that need to be attended to and some significant assets that can be of great benefit to the church and God's kingdom. The next chapter will examine some ways to bring healing to the wounds that may have come after twenty years or more of military service. Finally, chapter 5 will look at the concept of call or vocation and consider ways that the retiring military chaplain can discern a new calling for the next phase of his or her life.

## PART THREE

### MAKING THE TRANSITION

## CHAPTER 4

### HEALING

Military chaplains are not only clergy, but also military officers. As retiring ministers, military chaplains remain ordained pastors called to a lifetime of ministry just like any other ordained minister. As retiring military officers, they have challenges as well as unique gifts, talents and experiences that their civilian counterparts do not have. This chapter returns to the challenges facing retiring military chaplains, providing some theological guidance and insight that will help overcome these challenges, so retirees can effectively use their unique gifts, talents and experiences in the civilian world.

#### **The Walking Wounded**

As noted in chapter 1, in order to be effective in the institution in which they have served, military chaplains need to undergo a conversion or psychological transformation. When it comes time to retire, chaplains must undergo a second transformation, also known as the re-entry process, which will allow them to function and minister in the civilian world. Retiring military chaplains may well be struggling with any of a number

of internal struggles, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder (STSD), or moral injury.

Edward P. Wimberly writes about the dangers of ministers who are the walking wounded. He writes that the walking wounded are:

those of us who deny our vulnerability and woundedness and who, consequently, walk around as wounded people seeking to help others. Instead of achieving good enough empathy, we become dangerous to ourselves and to those we seek to care for. We cannot temporarily set our own needs aside or keep them out of the way of our caring effort. Sometimes, as walking wounded, we use our caring relationships to *receive* care ourselves by reversing roles with those who are actually in need of pastoral conversation.<sup>1</sup>

The likelihood that the retiring military chaplain will be one of the walking wounded that Wimberly is talking about is high. According to Richard Gabriel, as quoted in Grossman, “in every war in which American soldiers have fought in this century, the chances of becoming a psychiatric casualty—of being debilitated for some period of time as a consequence of the stresses of military life—were greater than the chances of being killed by enemy fire.”<sup>2</sup> Nancy Sherman cites a study that found that thirty percent of soldiers returning home from Iraq have severe emotional problems.<sup>3</sup> Chaplains who have deployed to combat zones are just as susceptible to these emotional problems. Even those chaplains who never saw combat are likely to return to civilian life wounded. A former Navy chief of chaplains who served when I was on active duty would often say, “If you are not thinking operationally, you are not thinking.” Today’s Navy chaplains spend far more of their career in operational (sea duty or operational Marine Corps) assignments

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<sup>1</sup> Edward P. Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1997), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Grossman, *On Killing*, 43

<sup>3</sup> Sherman, *The Untold War*, 173.

and much less of their time in non-operational, shore-based ministry where the pace is slower and there is more time for family, personal growth and healing. Even when chaplains are given a shore-based assignment, the more with less mentality that has been the norm over the last decade means that means that chaplains are likely to operate at an unhealthy pace which may turn them into the walking wounded.

Wimberly suggests that the walking wounded “need times of retreat and care to tend to our own needs so that . . . [they] can return to the caring task of providing good enough empathy.”<sup>4</sup> He uses the phrase coined by Dutch theologian Henri Nouwen, the wounded healer. The walking wounded need to be transformed into wounded healers. According to Wimberly, this is accomplished through the journey through “liminality,” by which he means “a period of retreat wherein we must suspend the ordinary routine of life so as to have time to regroup. The intention in such a liminal period is to allow the call to resurface.”<sup>5</sup>

This concept of liminality comes out of the field of cultural anthropology. Arnold van Gennep develops this idea in connection with territorial passage in more primitive societies:

Not so long ago the passage from one country to another, from one province to another within each country, and, still earlier, even from one manorial domain to another was accompanied by various formalities. These were largely political, legal, and economic, but some were of a magico-religious nature. For instance, Christians, Moslems, and Buddhists were forbidden to enter and stay in portions of the globe which did not adhere to their respective faiths.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>6</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 15.

The boundary of a territory was generally marked in some way, either by a natural feature such as a river, rock, or tree, or by a man-made marker such as a stake, gate, or an upright rock (milestone).<sup>7</sup> Surrounding each country was a strip of neutral ground, which was often used as a marketplace or battlefield:

The neutral zones are ordinarily deserts, marshes, and most frequently virgin forests where everyone has full rights to travel and hunt. Because of the pivoting of sacredness, the territories on either side of the neutral zone are sacred in relation to whoever is in the zone, but the zone in turn, is sacred for the inhabitants of the adjacent territories. Whoever passes from one to the other finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds.<sup>8</sup>

Religious ceremonies or transition rites such as purification rituals or sacrifices would often be observed in the movement from one area to another. Kings would offer sacrifices to the gods before leaving their home territory to wage war and would again offer a sacrifice before entering the enemy's territory.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, an army returning from battle was also required to perform certain rituals. An example is the Roman arch of triumph where "the victor was first required to separate himself from the enemy through a series of rites, in order to return to the Roman world by passing through the arch. The rite of incorporation in this case was a sacrifice to Jupiter Capitoline and to the deities protecting the city."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> A biblical example of this can be found in Joshua 4, where the Jordan River becomes a natural boundary, a monument of stones taken from the Jordan River is erected, and the Israelites are circumcised indicating their covenantal relationship with Yahwah.

<sup>8</sup> van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 18.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 21.



Van Gennep suggests that similar ritual ceremonies, or transition rites, often mark the transition from one stage of life to another: “The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another. . . . A man’s life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings: birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization, and death.”<sup>11</sup> Christian examples of these rites include baptism, confirmation, the marriage ceremony and funerals. Van Gennep calls the rites of separation from a previous world preliminal rites, those executed during the transitional stage are called liminal (or threshold) rites, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world are post-liminal rites.”<sup>12</sup>

For the retiring military chaplain, the retirement ceremony serves as a preliminal rite. This is an important transition rite and should not be overlooked. Many military retirees want to skip the ceremony because they are uncomfortable being the center of attention. But the accomplishments of years of service must be acknowledged before the retiree is ready move forward. The installation ceremony into a new, civilian ministry is a post-liminal rite. The importance of the liminal stage, however, cannot be overstated. Wimberly helpfully suggests that it is in this luminal period that the call resurfaces. He quotes C. Doehring, who suggests that liminality is “an ‘in between’ time when new models of reality are disclosed.”<sup>13</sup> Wimberly further explains that “the call is a shaping

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 20. Dr. David C. Pollock has developed a five stage model of the transition experience that is used in Davis, *The Finishing Well Handbook*, 35. Stages 2 through 4 are essentially the same as von Gennep’s three rites of passage.

story that creates new meanings so that our lives and ministry regain a freshness and are renewed. During the liminal period, the call crosses a threshold of perception and brings new meaning, a new world, a new self, and a new future.”<sup>14</sup> The liminal stage is often very painful, similar to what the mystics called the dark night of the soul. The chaplain in this stage will often experience feelings of chaos caused by both reverse culture shock and an assault on his or her self-esteem.<sup>15</sup>

At the heart of the liminal stage is grief. The retiring chaplain has lost a great deal including the familiar military lifestyle, the power of rank, the dream of future promotions and military friends. These fresh losses may well trigger deep pain from earlier losses in the chaplain’s life. Such losses, both new and old, are wounds that can only be healed through the grief process. The temptation is to rush through this stage and the grief it entails as quickly as possible. When this is done, the wounds remain. The chaplain must resist this temptation and instead turn toward the pain. As Peter Scazzero writes, “turning toward our pain is counterintuitive, but when we do so, we will reap rich rewards.”<sup>16</sup> God uses grief and loss to enlarge our soul: “There are many rich fruits that blossom in our lives as a result of embracing our losses. The greatest, however, concerns our relationship to God. We move from a ‘Give me, give me, and give me’ prayer life to an intimate, loving prayer life characterized by loving union with God.

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<sup>13</sup> C. Doehring, *Taking Care: Monitoring Power Dynamics and Relational Boundaries in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 143.

<sup>14</sup> Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Davis, *The Finishing Well Handbook*, 66.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2015), 140.

When we grieve God's way, we are changed forever."<sup>17</sup> To gain this rich fruit, however, Scazzero explains that one must "wait in the confusing in-between,"<sup>18</sup> which is similar to Wimberly's liminal stage.

The liminal stage can be compared to the final mile of a marathon. The chaplain has already covered over twenty-five miles in the marathon called military ministry. The liminal period is that final mile which is painful but necessary if one is going to get the medal. The retiring chaplain must neither avoid nor rush through this stage. The psalmist writes: "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10). At the heart of this project is the conviction that getting in touch with both the original call and the ongoing call on the life of the retiring military chaplain is essential to finding continued fulfillment in ministry following the transition out of the military. To accomplish this, the chaplain must first follow God through the painful journey of the liminal period.

Wimberly identifies four steps one must take in the liminal stage. The first is "identifying the themes that inform our lives," looking for "the effects of personal, marital, family and ministerial myths."<sup>19</sup> For Wimberly, the concept of myth is important:

In the spiritual renewal process that I propose in this book, the concept of mythology is immensely helpful. By *mythology*, I mean *the beliefs and convictions that people have about themselves, their relationships with others, their roles in life, and their ministry*. As used here, myth refers to the way beliefs and convictions are constructed and how these constructions shape our lives and our behavior. Beliefs and convictions are represented by certain repetitive themes that appear in the stories we tell. At times, I may use the words *myth* and *theme*

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>19</sup> Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories*, 13.

synonymously, although they are different. Myths are the stories we tell, while themes reflect the beliefs and convictions in the stories.<sup>20</sup>

Wimberly devotes a chapter to personal, marital and family, and ministerial myths that often influence a minister either consciously or unconsciously. The chaplain seeking healing in the liminal stage must identify these myths. Personal myths that the chaplain is trying to live up to, such as the myth of perfectionism or the myth of invulnerability, need to be identified. Marital and family myths may reveal themselves as the chaplain returns to and tries to assimilate into his or her extended family or family of origin after many years away. Ministerial myths may surface as the chaplain struggles with self-esteem issues that can arise when he or she is not in a full time paid ministry position. Military chaplains are likely to be men and women operating with personal myths such as perfectionism, self-sacrifice, and invulnerability, all of which military culture encourages with its zero defect mentality, the strong pressure to perform in order to achieve promotion, the emphasis service before self, and the strong pressure to perform in order to get promoted.

Secondly, Wimberly says the chaplain in the liminality stage needs to “assess whether these themes or the related myths are producing growth in ourselves and others; or are they contributing to our remaining wounded?”<sup>21</sup>

Attribution, or assigning meaning to live experiences, is the result of our encounters with life transitions and traumatic events. Myths are formed from attributions that help us make sense of things. Life transitions and traumas such as accidents challenge our existing, attributed structure of meaning. Existing attributions are often inadequate in helping us respond to new challenges; they need to be modified to “explain” the new situational demands. Failure to alter

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 13.

existing attributions in the face of new situational and transitional challenges hampers our ability to respond. Our emotional, interpersonal and spiritual well being is at stake.<sup>22</sup>

Wimberly identifies four stages needed for the reauthoring of personal myths that are contributing to our remaining wounded. The first stage is to identify the themes that make up our personal myths. The second is to assess the influence of these themes on our lives over a period of time. This assessment determines if the themes are growth-facilitating or growth-inhibiting, and whether they contribute to our being wounded healers rather than remaining walking wounded. The next stage is to attempt to discern God's presence or a spiritual force at work in transforming these themes into themes of a wounded healer. Finally, one must make plans to alter the themes of the personal myth in order to increase the growth possibilities.<sup>23</sup> When steps are taken there is movement from being wounded to a path of growth.

The third step for the chaplain in the liminal stage is to discern "the ongoing, continuously unfolding nature of our call; what is it doing to bring renewal to the life themes and myths at work in our lives?"<sup>24</sup> For Wimberly, it is the call to ministry that is the defining aspect of the pastor or chaplain's life:

The project of our existence has at its core the call coming from God. For my father [who was a pastor] and the apostle Paul, renewal came because the source of the call was outside themselves. God provided the call, the power to fulfill the call, and the historic meaning for the call. What people who are called have done historically, then, is orient themselves and their personality, relationships and ministry in terms of the call from God. Spiritual renewal is a reorientation process

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 13.

of allowing the original call and its ongoing nature to continually transform our lives in the present.<sup>25</sup>

This is a radical idea in modern American society which is so focused on self-actualization and personal fulfillment. But it is consistent with themes in 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6, and the idea that the minister who has had hands laid on him or her is ordained for life.

Finally, the chaplain in the liminal stage “sets goals... and make plans to alter our myths and bring them in line with our continuing call”:

Making plans is the final phase, wherein we outline the specific steps we will take to modify the myth. The plans vary as widely as the individuals who make them. Some people contract with spiritual guides to explore in more depth their various mythologies. Some commit to doing research on their favorite biblical character, to learn more about how that person lived out his life. Some chose to enter personal counseling, while others seek accountability groups of peers to help them care for themselves better. Many choose the path of continuing education focused on spiritual disciplines. Some choose to be coached on how to go home, to work on family-of-origin issues.<sup>26</sup>

The goal is to discover once again the ongoing call and set oneself on a path of personal and spiritual growth. Completing these steps will set the retired military chaplain on a path to success in retirement.

### **The Need for Sabbath**

The retiring pastor, as noted above, would do well to take time to conduct an honest examination of his or her ministerial journey so far. The first step would be to take a sabbatical in the first few months of retirement before starting a new ministry. This is especially true for retiring military chaplains. They need time for self-reflection, for

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 13 and 80.

evaluating their military career, and for once again getting in touch with the call of God on their lives. This may take much longer than the chaplain might expect. Davis and colleagues point out that the transition to retirement can take several years or even longer.<sup>27</sup> A one-year sabbatical is likely the minimal amount of time needed to effectively transition. Two years is a more realistic timeframe for an effective sabbatical.

The suggestion that retiring military chaplains need to take up to a two year sabbatical is likely to be met with a great deal of resistance. It goes against the military culture's repressive attitude toward inner wounds. The retiring chaplain probably heard many stories over the years of retirees who retired on Friday and began a new job on Monday. This is seen in military culture as the ideal.

In his book *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, Peter Scazzero offers another reason why retiring chaplains are likely to resist taking a two year sabbatical. In a chapter entitled "Practice Sabbath Delight," Scazzero tells the story of going to a clinical psychologist in frustration over the fact that pastors are so reluctant to take a weekly Sabbath: "Pastors and leaders agree with me every time I speak to them about slowing down for God, about Sabbath, about our need to sit at the feet of Jesus. Not only do they agree, they often say it is one of the most impactful truths they get out of my talks. Some of them even turn right around and preach it to their congregations. But very few of them actually do anything about it."<sup>28</sup> The psychologist's response was very insightful:

They can't stop. If they stop, they'll die. They're terrified. They're frightened to death of what they'll see inside themselves if they slow down. And you want them to immerse themselves in things like solitude, Sabbath, and silent reflection.

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<sup>27</sup> Davis, *The Finishing Well Handbook*, 64.

<sup>28</sup> Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 143.

. . . Do you have any idea how foreign this is for *any* leader—Christian or not? Something so much deeper is driving them; they just have no idea what it is. . . The terror of stopping reveals the depth of their emptiness . . . you’re inviting them into practices that might well obliterate their entire sense of self—the self that’s rooted in their work performance. Can’t you see the magnitude of that?<sup>29</sup>

What is true about congregational pastors taking a day per week as a Sabbath is even more true for chaplains coming out of the competitive environment of the military, where they have been constantly pushed to prove themselves stronger and more resilient than the other chaplains in order to get promoted. For many chaplains, a two year sabbatical following retirement would be the toughest and most frightening tour of their entire career.

Rita Brock and Gabriella Lettini offer historical insight on the spiritual value of a sabbatical while transitioning out of military service. They point out that “in many traditional societies, all returning soldiers were required to undergo a period of ritual purification and rehabilitation before entering their ordinary lives after war.”<sup>30</sup> They give as examples both the Navajo tribe of the American southwest and the early Christian church:

Christian churches in the first millennium required anyone who ‘shed human blood’ to undergo a rehabilitation process that included reverting to the status of someone who had not yet been baptized and was undergoing training in Christian faith. Now long in disuse, this ancient form of quarantine was required because early Christians understood that killing or participating in war, regardless of the reasons, injured the souls of those who fought. Returning soldiers were commonly expected to spend at least a year among the order of the penitents.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>30</sup> Brock and Lettini, *Soul Repair*, xvii.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., xviii.



Chaplains, of course, have not shed human blood. They have, however, undergone the conversion from civilian to service member. Even though they are noncombatants they have become warriors through their close identification with the military. Like all warriors, military chaplains need to undergo the intense rehabilitation process or quarantine of a sabbatical for their own spiritual health before embarking on civilian ministry. In the words of the Apostle Paul, “I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself have not been disqualified for the prize” (1 Cor 9:27).

### **Moral Injury**

One final issue that needs to be addressed in this chapter on healing is the issue of moral injury. In chapter 1 moral injury was defined as perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs or expectations. Moral injury is a spiritual injury, an experience of serious inner conflict arising from what one takes to be grievous moral transgressions that can overwhelm one’s sense of goodness and humanity. It is a crisis of conscience. Chapter 1 noted that chaplains, with their spiritual sensitivity and theological training, are even more prone to moral injury than other military officers. Edward Tick highlights the prevalence of moral injury in modern warfare and the importance of healing the soul from such injury:

The moral trauma calls for particular attention, since it is so severe in veterans, so neglected by the therapeutic community, and under modern political and technological conditions, more endemic to the practice of warfare than ever before. During the Vietnam War, William Sloan Coffin, chaplain of Yale University, said, ‘The most profound experience of the self is the experience of the conscience, not

the experience of private sensations or inner visions.’ Modern war inevitably traumatizes this center of the self, the conscience.<sup>32</sup>

Matthew Williams is a good example of a former military chaplain with moral injury. Once a United Church of Christ minister, he served two deployments as an army chaplain, one to Afghanistan and one to Iraq. In Afghanistan he spent a year in the morgue where he had the experience of “seeing [his] friends’ faces all blown apart.”<sup>33</sup> Now a disabled veteran, Williams travels the country continuing to minister to others by performing music on his guitar and visiting suffering veterans. “At the end of the day,” he says, “what I know now is: I’m alive, I believe in God, I have faith, and that’s where it stops. It doesn’t get much deeper than that.”<sup>34</sup>

While moral injury as a term is new, the concept is a familiar one in pastoral care. Anton T. Boisen, the founder of Clinical Pastoral Education, wrote these words in the introduction of his book *The Exploration of the Inner World* which hold true for veterans with moral injury:

As I look around me here and then try to analyze my own case, I see two main classes of insanity. In the one case there is some organic trouble, a defect in the brain tissue, some disorder in the nervous system, some disease of the blood. In the other there is no organic difficulty. The body is strong and the brain in good working order. The difficulty is rather the *disorganization of the patient’s world*. Something has happened which has upset the foundations upon which his ordinary reasoning is based. Death or disappointment or sense of failure may have compelled a reconstruction of the patient’s world view from the bottom up, and the mind becomes dominated by the one idea which he has been trying to put in its proper place.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Tick, *War and the Soul*, 110.

<sup>33</sup> Michelle Boorstein, “What Happens when the Military Chaplain is Shaken by War?” *The Washington Post*, May 29, 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

PTSD is a psychological injury, and is best treated with the tools of the behavioral scientists such as psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, social workers. Moral injury, however, is a spiritual illness and is best treated with the spiritual tools offered by the community of faith and pastoral care. Unfortunately, most priests, pastors, rabbis and other spiritual leaders are not even aware of this condition and have not received the education and training necessary to offer treatment and healing.

Brett T. Litz, Nathan Stein, Eileen Delaney, Leslie Lebowitz, William P. Nash, Caroline Silva and Shira Maguen point out that traditional treatments for PTSD such as exposure treatment or cognitive processing therapy are ineffective or even counterproductive. This is consistent with the definition of moral injury as primarily a spiritual rather than a psychological problem. They propose a “modified CBT [cognitive-processing therapy] designed to address the three principle elements of combat: life-threat trauma, traumatic loss, and moral injury”<sup>36</sup> consisting of eight elements. These eight elements are a strong working alliance and a trusting and caring relationship; preparation and education about moral injury and its impact, as well as a collaborative plan for promoting change; a hot-cognitive, exposure-based processing (emotion-focused disclosure) of events surrounding the moral injury; a subsequent careful, directive, and formative examination of the implication of the experience for the person in terms of key self- and other schemas; an imaginal dialogue with a benevolent moral authority about

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<sup>35</sup> Anton T. Boisen, *The Exploration of the Inner World: A Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience* (New York: Willett, Clark & Company, 1936), 11.

<sup>36</sup> Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 702.

what happened and how it impacts the patient now and their plans for the future or a fellow service member who feels unredeemable about something they did or failed to do and how it impacts his or her current and future plans; fostering reparation and self-forgiveness; fostering reconnection with various communities; and an assessment of goals and values moving forward.<sup>37</sup> The military chaplain who may or may not have experienced combat but is now dealing with moral injury will need to look at each of these eight elements for his or her own life. It is helpful to focus on each of these elements from a pastoral care perspective.

#### Strong Working Alliance and Trusting and Caring Relationship

Litz and the other authors write, “Because of the sensitive and personally devastating and disorienting nature of moral injury, a strong and genuinely caring and respectful therapeutic relationship is critical.”<sup>38</sup> The importance of developing an empathic relationship is one of the basic tenants of pastoral care and counseling.<sup>39</sup> The returning chaplain needs to find someone he or she can trust to walk with them through the difficult process of healing. At the core of moral injury is the issue of shame. and “the expectation of censure, disgust, and disdain.”<sup>40</sup>

The chaplain with moral injury needs to find someone who is willing to listen. This person must be someone who is willing to hear the stories of the chaplain’s military

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 702.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 702.

<sup>39</sup> Gerard Egan, *The Skilled Helper: A Problem-Management Approach to Helping*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1994), 107.

<sup>40</sup> Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 702.

experiences with interest and respect and without passing judgment. This is difficult for most civilians who have not experienced the challenges of military life. Not passing judgment is especially difficult for clergymen who come from authority-centered traditions that encourage the offering of verbal responses and answers, and for clergy with strong convictions or unresolved feelings about military service and war.<sup>41</sup> The ideal person to build such a relationship with is another retired military chaplain, assuming the other chaplain has worked through his or her own moral injury. A fellow veteran who understands and values the role of the military chaplain can also be helpful. The VA may be a good resource in finding such a veteran.

A civilian, either lay or clergy, who is able to demonstrate what David W. Augsburger calls interpathy would also be beneficial in this kind of relationship.<sup>42</sup> Interpathy differs from sympathy, which is a response to another's suffering based on having been through a similar experience and also from empathy, which is a more intentional compassionate response based on being able to imagine what such a situation might be like. Interpathy is described by Augsburger in this way:

an intentional cognitive envisioning and affective experiencing of another's thoughts and feelings, even though the thoughts rise from another process of knowing, the values grow from another frame of moral reasoning, and the feelings spring from another basis of assumptions. . . Bracketing my own beliefs, I believe what the other believes, see what the other sees, value what the other values, and feel the consequent feelings as the other feels them.<sup>43</sup>

Interpathy is essential for cross-cultural counseling; "In interpathic caring, I, the

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<sup>41</sup> Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling: New Resources for Ministering to the Troubled* (New York: Abington Press, 1966), 29.

<sup>42</sup> David W. Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 29.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

culturally different, seek to learn and fully entertain within my consciousness a foreign belief. I take a foreign perspective, base my thought on a foreign assumption, and allow myself to feel the resultant feelings and their cognitive and emotive consequences in my personality as I inhabit, insofar as I am capable of inhabiting, a foreign context.<sup>44</sup> Any relationship between a civilian and a military veteran is a cross-cultural relationship. If the civilian desires to be of help to the veteran struggling with moral injury, he or she must be able to exhibit the quality of interpathy.

### Education about Moral Injury and a Plan for Promoting Change

Litz and the other authors describe the next element in the process of healing moral injury in this way:

At the beginning of treatment, patients need a model or plan of action to guide the difficult work ahead. They need to hear that approaching psychologically painful content is both possible and crucial in promoting a healthier life and that shameful material can be shared without condemnation. Patients need to appreciate that concealment and avoidance, although understandable, is maladaptive, as it not only narrows the repertoire of wellness behaviors, it restricts exposure to corrective and reparative experiences. In addition, patients need to be educate about the impact of moral injury and various elements of the treatment plan.<sup>45</sup>

The situation is not hopeless. Moral injury can be healed. However, it requires the light of the truth be shined into the darkness. Obviously, if the patient needs to be educated about moral injury, the one offering treatment must first understand it. Unfortunately too few civilians and especially clergypersons are even aware that such a condition exists.

### Hot-Cognitive, Exposure-Based Processing

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>45</sup> Litz et al., "Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans," 703.

The third element in the healing process is hot-cognitive, exposure-based processing. It is a unique step because:

In this context, exposure is operationalized as a real-time sustained consideration of particularly upsetting deployment experiences that will unearth or reveal harmful and unforgiving beliefs so that they can be processed (reconsidered and changed). The basic mechanics of exposure therapy apply, and we assume that it will be helpful to patients to have their eyes shut so that they can be less constrained by the relational aspect of sharing (e.g., direct eye-contact). Throughout the process, the therapist needs to be fully engaged and directive to encourage, support, prompt, provoke, and cue the patient to process particularly painful elements so that meanings, needs, and motivations can be discovered and examined.<sup>46</sup>

While few clergypersons are aware of the condition of moral injury, even fewer are trained in exposure therapy. If the injury is particularly difficult, it would be wise to refer the chaplain to a professional counselor. The VA is a valuable resource in this regard. However, Litz points out that this step needs to be done together with steps four and five, both of which are more typically areas of clergy expertise. As chapter 1 noted, a major issue facing retiring military chaplains is alienation from the church. A series of conversations with a fellow minister of the same denomination can be a powerful means of healing and growth because operational beliefs at work in the situation can be identified and an authoritative word from the faith community's sacred text, confessions, or doctrinal statements are spoken to the chaplain.

#### Examination of the Implication of the Experience

Next, the chaplain needs to move toward subsequent careful, directive, and formative examination of his or her experiences:

An important step in self-forgiveness, reclaiming a moral core and a sense of personal worth, that is, reducing the toxic psychological and relational impact of

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

morally injurious experiences, is the examination of maladaptive beliefs about the self and the world. These beliefs are examined with the aim of promoting the development of new, more constructive meanings, or at least a dialogue about the possibility and implication of alternative habilitative constructions.<sup>47</sup>

The chaplain at this point will need to wrestle with a number of difficult questions such as what these experiences say about the individual struggling with moral injury and about the world, the depth of impact of the moral transgression, the safety of the world, and the nature of humanity. A re-examination of the basic teachings of the faith community, together with a trusted colleague, can be of great value. For example, from the Christian perspective the doctrines of sin, the creation of people in God's image, the meaning of redemption, the reality of the kingdom of God and the final eschatological conclusion to human history can all provide sources of meaning and healing for the morally injured chaplain. This is known as theological reflection on the experience, something with which seminary-trained chaplains are very familiar. Litz offers a warning to therapists that is equally applicable to the pastor who is dealing with someone with moral injury:

While processing and dialoguing about the meaning and implication of events, it is also important for individuals to be able to express remorse and to reach their own conclusions about the causes of the events, albeit with guidance from the therapist. Psychotherapists are often too eager to relieve guilt, and, thereby, undermine the patient's need to feel remorseful. Therapists should not assume that they have enough knowledge or credibility to offer judgments about how understandable a given morally injurious experience may be, given the unique context of war or that service members and veterans did not have a choice, per se, and so forth. This may invalidate service members' and veterans' thoughts and beliefs about the event or be distracting or annoying. The goal is to help patients consider more useful and contextual appraisals. Service members and veterans may first need the experience of telling another person about the event, without it being excused, and still be viewed as a person of value.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



### Imaginal Dialogue with a Benevolent Moral Authority

The fifth element of healing moral injury is described in the article “Moral Injury and Moral Repair”:

In service of promoting new growth-promoting and hope-inducing learning, our treatment model employs a modification of an empty- chair dialogue in imagination with a caring and benevolent moral authority. The goal is to have patients verbalize what they did or saw, how it has affected them, and what they think should happen to them (or others) over their life course as a result, to someone who does not want them to suffer excessively and who feels that forgiveness and reparation is possible.

Patients are guided through an imaginary conversation with another person who they have great respect for and who can weigh in as a relevant and generous moral authority.<sup>49</sup>

What Litz and the authors propose as an exercise with imaginary beings is the Christian practice of prayer. The chaplain with moral injury needs someone who will pray with him or her, who will encourage the chaplain to bring the pain and anguish to God’s throne of grace, and to hear whatever confession needs to be made before the Almighty.

### Fostering Reparation and Self-Forgiveness

Litz and the other authors posit that the next step includes forgiveness of oneself and fostering reparation for wrongs done:

During the preparation and education step, the therapist introduces the idea that in order to repair moral injury, the service member or veteran needs to find decency and goodness and ways of doing good deeds as a vehicle to self-forgiveness and repair. In simple terms, this is couched as making amends. To amend something means, literally, to change. Making amends means drawing a line between past and present and in some way changing one's approach to how he or she behaves and acts so that one moves towards the positive, towards better living. During the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

treatment, the therapist employs concrete and detailed patient-generated and realistic and doable behavioral task assignments in service of this goal.<sup>50</sup>

From a Christian perspective, people can never truly make amends for the past. The authors suggest that to amend means to change; this is what the gospel calls repentance. The line between the past and present is the cross. The Christian leader working with the chaplain struggling with moral injury must take the victim to the cross. Healing for moral injury is ultimately found at the foot of the cross, where believers can experience the healing power of Jesus and the gospel message.

### Fostering Reconnection with Various Communities

The seventh element of healing is fostering reconnection with various communities such as the church, family, and local community. The authors explain that this step should reveal if therapy has been successful or not:

By the end of successful therapy, the patient has had a positive experience of accessing painful material in the presence of a caring other, demonstrating that it is possible, and perhaps healing, to disclose thoughts and feelings, no matter how disturbing. However, if patients fail to use their therapy experience to connect or reconnect with important people in their lives and become less dominated by beliefs that they are not worthy of caring and loving relationships, gains will not last. Veterans and service members need to improve their relationships with others and, more importantly, with themselves as relational demands arise over their life course.

In the Christian community there are not only the healing resources of pastoral care, prayer, and the gospel but also the healing community of the church. Doug Murren suggests that the “primary healing zone” of the church is families.<sup>51</sup> Murren writes that most healing “takes us back to our families in one way or another. . . . The pathway to

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 704.

<sup>51</sup> Doug Murren, *Churches that Heal: Becoming a Church that Mends Broken Hearts and Restores Shattered Lives* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing, 1999), 55.

healing goes through the family secrets we all carry.”<sup>52</sup> Like so many other issues, moral injury is a family injury. The victim of moral injury needs to examine whether there is a need to rebuild trust with a spouse, children, or other significant family members.

Domestic violence, alcohol abuse, and other dysfunctional ways of dealing with the pain of moral injury and their impact on important relationships must be squarely faced.

Marital and family counseling should be considered where necessary.

The community of faith, the church, ought to be a source of reconnection, healing and connection, but care must be taken. As noted above, the veteran is a deviant as someone who has not followed the normal norms of the community. This is often true of the faith community as well unless there are a large number of military veterans in the congregation. There may be those in the congregation who oppose military service or the war in which the veteran fought, especially in mainline congregations. Many are uncomfortable dealing with the kind of spiritual struggles the veteran is facing. More particularly, chaplains are often alienated from the church. The authors give practical guidance to the individual suffering from moral injury concerning when and how to reveal the pain to others:

Because many people do not know what to say about such things, and their reactions may be difficult to predict or interpret, guidance will be needed. Significant others may not know what to say, or they may have good intentions of helping, but are ultimately unhelpful. A dialogue might be awkward, if not destructive. It is important to tell patients to remember that they are not responsible for others' feelings or what they “do” with their feelings. However, it is up to the patients to make sure their relationships are a useful and positive force in their life. It might mean that patients will have to tell people exactly what they need from them, so that family and friends do not end up feeling like they have no idea what to do or say. A conversation about preparing for moments of possible self-

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 56.

disclosure is important before therapy ends.<sup>53</sup>

Unfortunately, many churches are not places where self-disclosure is safe, especially when the issue involves mental or emotional illness. Too many churches promote a simplistic theology that minimizes the reality and complexity of human suffering. Quick and easy answers or spiritual judgments can reinjure the veteran. On the other hand, healthy small groups in the church that focus on care and unconditional acceptance are ideal settings to foster reconnection and healing.

This may be an area where gender plays an important role. A small group of men may be much more comfortable with the war stories of a male veteran than a group of women listening to the stories of a female veteran. Other veterans will play a key role in this area, and there are more male veterans than there are female. Too few churches have ministries focused on veterans' needs. As a result, veterans often look to veteran groups such as the American Legion to reconnect. Too often a large part of their programming centers on the use of alcohol. The church needs to look carefully at how it can minister effectively to the many veterans that continue to return from the battlefield.

#### Assessment of Goals and Values Moving Forward

Finally, the veteran seeking healing from moral injury needs to set goals and plan for those times when the injury continues to be a struggle.

The therapy should end with an extensive conversation about what patients will take with them from the work they have done and their plans for the future. The therapist should specifically assess values and goals moving forward. In other words, what would patients like to see for themselves and the people they care

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<sup>53</sup> Litz et al., "Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans," 704.

about over the long haul, in light of their values? If therapy has been helpful, these values should be thematically useful, positive, hopeful, and relational. As is the case with serious and sustained combat and operational trauma, there should be the expectation that there will be challenging times ahead—periods where the moral

injury becomes more the figure than the ground. As a result, it is important to plan for times when the person is at risk for being defined by the moral injury.<sup>54</sup>

At some point decisions about the future must be made. As Wimberly points out, these decisions must be in line with the continuing call. The chaplain with moral injury must not be defined by the injury, but by the call. The call may be expressed in a number of ways in the future, whether in full-time employment, part-time employment, volunteer service, or a combination of these options. The final chapter of this project will take a closer look at the concept of call and identify some elements that will help in its discernment.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 5

### REDISCOVERING THE CALL

Retiring military chaplains have a great deal to offer God's kingdom and the church. Their resumes include a host of experiences and training not common among civilian pastors such as overseas and cross cultural care, mass casualty disaster situations and ministry in a wide variety of environments that may include chapels, operational settings, hospitals and incarceration facilities. After twenty years or more in the military, they have highly developed leadership skills that can be transferred and utilized in a wide variety of settings. With all the opportunities for ministry available, the retiring chaplain needs to choose where to invest his or her energies. The biblical basis for this choice is a theme at the heart of this project, the theme of being called.

The call is likely to resurface through the journey through liminality, which was defined as an in between period of retreat from the ordinary routines of life. A time of Sabbath is needed to turn the walking wounded into wounded healers and it is important for retiring military chaplains to take time to pursue their own healing before embarking on a new chapter in ministry. This chapter will look at a number of other issues the

retiring chaplain needs to face in the liminal period if he or she is going to recover the sense of calling needed to effectively pursue further ministry.

### **Identity and Purpose**

I once had breakfast with a senior chaplain who was a Navy captain. He was sitting across the table from several people who were junior to him in rank. He was reflecting on that fact that he was dreading his impending retirement. He made the comment, “When I take this eagle off [the symbol of his rank], I will be a nobody.” I felt sad that this child of God, uniquely created in the divine image and redeemed in the blood of Jesus Christ, called to be a minister of the gospel, had placed his identity completely in his military rank. This military chaplain had lost or had never had his real identity.

In order to recapture a sense of call, it is important to have a sense of identity, of knowing oneself as a unique, gifted, and valued individual that God has created. This has already been identified in chapter 1 of this work as one of the major challenges retiring military chaplains face. George Webber in *You Can't Go Home Again* reflects on the transition from Man-Creating to Man-Alive when he goes from New York City to Libya Hill: “Instantly, it all changes, and from Man-Creating I become simply Man-Alive— a member of society, a friend and neighbor, a son and brother of the human race.”<sup>1</sup> George Webber’s novel, “the Thing Itself,” was his whole reason for being. Now that it is published, George has no reason to continue. Similarly, for the retiring member of the armed forces, the military identity has become a part of one’s personal identity. But the military identity can become too much a part of an individual’s identity. As Edward Tick

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again*, 302.

points out, if the military identity is too complete, the soul is lost:

*The soul* is our will, our individual volition. Plato said, ‘That which is moved from within has a soul.’ In contrast, when we are moved from without we are soulless. Soren Kierkegaard declared that ‘purity of heart is to will one thing.’ Friedrich Nietzsche spoke of the will to power. William James of the will to believe. Will is the intention arising from within that drives us to think, feel, act.

But in war, the gigantic will of the collective replaces that of the individual. For the military to function efficiently, it must run on a hierarchy of power, tradition, and discipline. Basic training curtails our personal will, and then brutal combat damages or destroys it as we are forced to act in ways that oppose our civilized natures and established identities.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the military identity which is being left behind, a part of the retiring military chaplain’s identity has been given to him or her by the church. As noted in the treatment of 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8 in chapter 2, the minister is a man of God. This is a technical term that is not a reference to gender but rather is used for those who are in special service to God throughout the Old Testament. In 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 the ministers have had hands laid on them, conveying on them the full authority of the church. Therefore retiring military chaplains retain the authority and responsibility of someone who has had the hands of the leaders of the church laid on them. This commissioning includes the authority, as Willimon points out, to serve the servants of God at the Lord’s table.<sup>3</sup>

In *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* Thomas Oden begins with a chapter entitled “The Discovery of Pastoral Identity.” He describes this pastoral identity in eloquent and lofty words:

All the varied activities of the pastor have a single center: life in Christ. Pastoral theology seeks to point to that center in credible contemporary language and to see

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<sup>2</sup> Tick, *War and the Soul*, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Willimon, *Pastor*, 35.



every single function in relation to that center. The center is Christ's own ministry for and through us, embodied in distortable ways through our language, through the work of our hands, and quietly through our bodily presence.<sup>4</sup>

The soul of the pastor, the inner center from which the will and behavior arise, should be the spirit of Jesus Christ. This is true of every Christian, but is especially important in the life of the ordained who is set apart by the laying on of hands to give leadership to the church. Unfortunately this is not always the case. Oden acknowledges in the above quotation that the Christ center is embodied in distortable ways. He goes on to acknowledge that not all pastors have yet developed a pastoral identity when he writes that "The best way to battle through the pastoral identity crisis is to think thoroughly about the pastoral office in one's earlier periods of study for ministry. But there are always opportunities, often through continuing education, to reformulate pastoral identity after a significant mid career period of questioning."<sup>5</sup>

The senior chaplain mentioned above with whom I had breakfast had clearly not "battled through the pastoral identity crisis." In Plato's words, he was "moved from without" (symbolized by his rank insignia), had too completely identified himself as a Navy Captain, and was therefore soulless. Karl Marlantes in *What it is Like to Go to War* gives a chilling description of another chaplain who has not developed a pastoral identity, who was soulless:

Along with food, water, mail, and ammunition came the battalion chaplain. He had brought with him several bottles of Southern Comfort and some new dirty jokes. I accepted the Southern Comfort, thanked him, laughed at the jokes, and had a drink with him. Merry Christmas. Inside I was seething, I thought I'd gone a little nuts. How could I be angry with a guy who had just put his life at risk to

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<sup>4</sup> Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5.

cheer me up? And didn't the Southern Comfort feel good on that rain-soaked mountaintop? Years later I understood. I was engaged in killing and maybe being killed. I felt responsible for the lives and deaths of my companions. I was struggling with a situation approaching the sacred in its terror and contact with the infinite, and he was trying to numb me to it. I needed help with the existential terror of my own death and responsibility for the death of others, enemies and friends, not Southern Comfort. I needed a spiritual guide.<sup>6</sup>

Marlantes was looking for a spiritual guide. He was looking for a word of comfort, encouragement, and hope. He had a right to expect this from the man of God. But the comfort he got was in a bottle, and the word of encouragement and hope came in the form of the latest dirty jokes. Unfortunately, this archetype is far too common.

Military chaplains are not unique among clergy who lack a pastoral identity. There are pastors who are little more than CEOs of mega-churches, pastors who are little more than advocates for social justice, and pastors who in their counseling draw more from the wisdom of the behavioral sciences than the wisdom of Scripture. This raises a number of questions, such as why it is that so many pastors, who as Oden says have the center of their life and identity in Christ, behave in ways that make it clear that they have not developed a pastoral identity. Another inconsistency is that pastors, both military chaplains and civilian pastors, sometimes live and behave in inappropriate ways not only in terms of expected Christian morality but also of broader societal expectations of clergy. Certainly the human tendency to sin is universal and military life is full of challenges that intensify the appeal of temptation. But there is more going on here. Chapter 2 of this project addresses some of these issues.

The review of *Vital Involvement in Old Age* in chapter 2 made the point that those in any developmental stage will experience not only the tension of that particular stage,

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<sup>6</sup> Karl Marlantes, *What it is Like to Go to War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011), 7.

but also a re-experiencing of the tensions of earlier stages that were not fully resolved. According to Erikson, it is during the fifth stage of development, adolescence (ages twelve to eighteen) that the tension between identity and role confusion occurs.<sup>7</sup> When this tension is successfully navigated, the result is a solid sense of self. According to Erikson the two identities which need to be developed during this period are the sexual and the occupational. When this tension is successfully resolved, the resulting virtue is fidelity.

Erikson's stage six occurs during early adulthood (ages twenty to thirty-nine) when the tension between intimacy and isolation needs to be faced. The upper limit of the age requirement for joining the military is thirty-five, although waivers are often given for chaplains up to the age of forty or even higher for Roman Catholic priests. It is safe to assume, then, that few if any Protestant military chaplains attended seminary after age forty. They needed to develop their pastoral identity and center their life in Christ, which according to Oden is the foundation of pastoral theology, while also dealing with the developmental tension between intimacy and isolation. In an ideal world, this would be the perfect time to do this kind of inner growth work. But if this adolescent tension between identity and role confusion has not been successfully resolved, the way is opened for the development of what Murray Bown, the father of family systems therapy, calls the "pseudo-self":

the pseudo-self is created by emotional pressure, and it can be modified by emotional pressure. Every emotional unit, whether it be the family or the total society, exerts pressure on group members to conform to the ideals and principles of the group. The pseudo-self is composed of a vast assortment of principles,

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<sup>7</sup> S. A. McLeod, "Erik Erikson," Simply Psychology, last modified 2017, accessed August 23, 2017, <http://www.simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson>.

beliefs, philosophies, and knowledge acquired because it is required or considered right by the group. Since the principles are acquired under pressure, they are random and inconsistent with one another, without the individual's being aware of the discrepancy. Pseudo-self is appended onto the self, in contrast to solid self which is incorporated into self after careful, logical reasoning. The pseudo-self is a "pretend" self. It was acquired to conform to the environment, and it contains discrepant and assorted principles that pretend to be in emotional harmony with a variety of social groups, institutions, business, political parties, and religious groups, without the self's being aware that the groups are inconsistent with each other. The joining of groups is motivated more by the relationship system than the principle involved. The person may "feel" there is something wrong with some of the groups, but he is not intellectually aware. The solid self is intellectually aware of the inconsistency between the groups, and the decision to join or reject membership is an intellectual process based on careful weighing of the advantages and disadvantages.<sup>8</sup>

When a solid self has not been developed from within, an individual will most likely take on the identity of the group. For the military chaplain, this might be the military identity, like the senior chaplain I had breakfast with, or the identity of a specific faith tradition, with its established belief systems, cultural trappings and behavioral expectations. The retiring military chaplain is most likely in the latter period of Erikson's seventh stage of development, adulthood (ages forty to sixty-five) when the tension is between generativity and stagnation. During this period, "we establish our careers, settle down within a relationship, begin our own families and develop a sense of being a part of the bigger picture."<sup>9</sup> Individuals in each psycho-social stage of development re-experience earlier tensions that were not fully resolved and anticipate tensions that will be faced in the future.

For the retiring chaplain in the seventh stage of development, the only future tension to be faced is the eighth tension between ego integrity and despair. In this stage

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<sup>8</sup> Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978), 362.

<sup>9</sup> S. A. McLeod, "Erik Erikson."

an aging adult looks at his or her life's accomplishments and falls on one side or the other. Ego integrity means they feel successful and despair means they feel guilty about the past, have not met their life's goals, and generally feel unsuccessful in life.

This is where Bob Buford's concept of halftime is helpful. The transition period, liminal period, Sabbatical break, or the concept of halftime all point to the same reality. The retiring military chaplain needs to slow down and take some time to reassess the life he or she has lived so far:

Getting back to the center requires us to downshift, to slow down. And once we return to the core—once we know who we are and what's in the box—we can accept the fact that some of the things on the perimeter will not receive as much attention as they once did. Some things will be more important than others; some may need to be ignored altogether. But regardless of what stays and what gets tossed aside, the point is that we no longer let someone else decide that for us. We create capacity for the things that matter.<sup>10</sup>

Buford says halftime is a period where serious and difficult questions about one's life need to be carefully looked at and answered:

Getting ready for a better second half is not daydreaming. You need to honestly face the tough, nitty-gritty questions about finances, other family members, long-range goals, and so on. And when you *do* ask the hard questions, don't fudge on the answers. To make the second half better than the first, you need to discover the real you. For much of the first half, you had to be someone else. That's not duplicity, it's just the reality for all of us as we climb the ladder. Your second-half self is your genuine self, so be honest enough to discover it.<sup>11</sup>

These halftime questions boil down to two important topics Buford borrowed from Peter Drucker. The person identifies what he or she has achieved which is competence and what he or she cares deeply about which is passion.<sup>12</sup> Halftime is about "regaining

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<sup>10</sup> Buford, *Halftime*, 125.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 121.

control of your life—about calling your own shots.”<sup>13</sup> This is done not only because it will make for a more fulfilling second half of life but also because it enables retirees to be more effective servants of God’s kingdom in the later stages of life.<sup>14</sup>

Davis in *The Finishing Well Handbook* suggested that a successful retirement is supported by four legs of pursuing physical health (or physical security), growing ever more intimate with God, engaging others socially in a widening support network and thriving cognitively in meaningful ministry.<sup>15</sup> The second leg is where the transitioning military chaplain can develop his or her soul and increasingly be moved from the center, which is Christ, rather than being moved by without. Military life is difficult on relationships. The divorce rate in the Navy is 50 percent higher than the national average. The long hours, frequent deployments, and lack of privacy take a toll. Personal and family relationships can suffer, but so can the chaplain’s relationship with God. As Davis writes, “Most missionaries and chaplains know well how to connect with God. We simply get too busy to do it consistently. Retirement transition is a great time to institute new habits for spending consistent and prolonged time with God.”<sup>16</sup> In contrast to Buford’s halftime model, he suggests that retirement transition is a never-ending process:

Some missionaries and chaplains transitioning into retirement expect that retirement transition is a point in time, or at most, a slightly longer phase of passage. They assume that they will emerge from this process as a finished, new product labeled “retiree.” While this might be true for many transitions, it is a huge fallacy for the retirement transition. Instead of seeing it as a point in time, you will discover that retirement transition is a *never-ending process* lasting until

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>15</sup> Davis, *The Finishing Well Handbook*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 15.

death. As physical constraints progressively affect your ministry and social network, you will experience a never-ending process of retirement transition. This is not simply a process of “letting go.” It is a never-ending process of partnering with God to refocus yourself, constantly discovering new avenues in which God can use you, and constantly learning new, deeper ways to facilitate communion with God and others.<sup>17</sup>

The retiring military chaplain ought to use the transition or liminal period to “institute new habits for spending consistent and prolonged time with God.”<sup>18</sup> The chaplain’s schedule, both daily and annually, is completely open at the beginning of this period. This offers a unique opportunity to fill the schedule with activities that are chosen from the chaplain’s center rather than from the outside. For example, the chaplain might commit a specific hour each day for personal devotion, an afternoon or two a week for reading and reflection, or a week every spring and fall for a personal retreat or to audit a course at a favorite seminary. In this way, the development of the chaplain’s intimacy with God takes priority over ministerial accomplishments. People are after all, as Peter Scazzero writes, human beings and not human doings.<sup>19</sup>

It is out of this sense of identity that the call will arise and the chaplain will discover the fourth leg of a successful retirement, a meaningful ministry. The goal for the successfully retired chaplain is not simply to exist, but to thrive as he or she develops a sense of purpose and meaning for the post-military life. Chris Hedges, a journalist for *The New York Times*, addresses this issue in his very powerful and emotional book *War is a*

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 16. See also Jan Cullinane and Cathy Fitzgerald, *The New Retirement: The Ultimate Guide to the Rest of Your Life* (Emmaus, PA: Rodale, 2004), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Davis, *The Finishing Well Handbook*, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 154.

*Force that Gives Us Meaning*. As the title makes clear, war is something that gives meaning to people whose lives are otherwise empty:

The enduring attraction of war is this: Even with its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living. Only when we are in the midst of conflict does the shallowness and vapidness of much of much of our lives become apparent. Trivia dominates our conversations and increasingly our airwaves. And war is an enticing elixir. It gives us resolve, a cause. It allows us to be noble.<sup>20</sup>

This is true not only for the warrior but also for those who remain behind. Whether it is the patriotism of the right or the social criticism of those on the left, “none of us is immune. All find emotional sustenance in war’s myth.”<sup>21</sup> Hedges compares war to a drug: “Once we begin to take war’s heady narcotic, it creates an addiction that slowly lowers us to the moral depravity of all addicts.”<sup>22</sup>

Karl Marlantes makes a similar point when he describes a fellow Marine in Vietnam who when his rifle was blown out of his hands ran back into the fight with Karl’s rifle: “Why? What was he doing this for? What is this thing in young men? We were beyond ourselves, beyond politics, beyond good and evil. This was transcendence.”<sup>23</sup> In a later chapter Marlantes writes of his own emptiness of the hole of trivia. He recounts an experience five years after returning from Vietnam when he was busy redoing the basement of his house: “Suddenly everything seemed so trivial, me trying to fix up this old house, my job, the news, marriage, history. Everything. There I was, in the basement of my new fixer-upper with ‘no particular place to go.’ It seemed

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<sup>20</sup> Chris Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), 3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>23</sup> Marlantes, *What it is Like to Go to War*, 174.



that nothing, absolutely nothing, could stack up against the intensity of war and war's friendships."<sup>24</sup> In the words of Thomas Wolfe, the Man-Creating (or destroying) of the military has become simply Man-Alive, even though he is busy in a creative endeavor.

What is true for war is no less true for all military service. Putting on a uniform and serving one's country is something noble that makes life worthwhile. Little boys play with plastic soldiers. People take notice when a military member goes out into the community in uniform and often greet them graciously. This sense of being someone special can be as intoxicating as any drug. Once the uniform is taken off, as the Navy captain across from me at the breakfast table observed, this sense of meaning, of heroism and value to others is lost.

Similarly, the words of Marlantes are true for the retiring chaplain. Nothing can stack up against the intensity of military ministry. In the last chapter in the psychologist's response to Peter Scazzero about why pastors are so resistant to taking a Sabbath that this need to find a sense of meaning and of value to what are otherwise empty lives is true for the clergy as well:

They can't stop. If they stop, they'll die. They're terrified. They're frightened to death of what they'll see inside themselves if they slow down. And you want them to immerse themselves in things like solitude, Sabbath, and silent reflection . . . Do you have any idea how foreign this is for any leader—Christian or not? Something so much deeper is driving them; they just have no idea what it is. . . The terror of stopping reveals the depth of their emptiness . . . you're inviting them into practices that might well obliterate their entire sense of self—the self that's rooted in their work performance. Can't you see the magnitude of that?<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>25</sup> Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 144.

Marlantes offers hope for returning veterans who are seeking meaning in the final decades of life and hope for chaplains as well: “All veterans can return to a world where they can pursue their individual callings. To do this, however, eventually the war has to be integrated, the horror absorbed, the psyche stretched to accommodate the trauma.”<sup>26</sup> He employs the same metaphor as Hedges when he calls war a drug. He suggests that before taking off the uniform, during the preliminal stage, the warrior needs to be detoxed, “If war detox is required while people are still in uniform, the shame and fear will be faced cleanly and won’t have to come out twenty years later after painful divorces, lost jobs, and alienation from society in general and their own children in particular. It wouldn’t be perfect, but it would be better.”<sup>27</sup>

Unfortunately, this detox does not happen while the military member is still in uniform, so the retired military chaplain may enter the liminal period still intoxicated with the intensity of military ministry and terrified of slowing down and facing their true selves. They may enter the civilian world needing to be detoxed. They will likely need trusted companions to support them in this process. This hopefully includes a loving spouse if the chaplain is married, but that is not enough. Other retired military chaplains, especially from the detoxing chaplain’s own faith group, will be an invaluable source of support. Ideally the transitioning chaplain will be able to find a civilian colleague who will also be open and understanding to listen to the chaplain’s inner struggles. The Veterans Administration (VA) offers counselors and chaplains who are available free of charge. The chaplain may also choose to schedule time to visit one of the many retreat

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<sup>26</sup> Marlantes, *What it is Like to Go to War*, 204.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 206.

centers across the country that specialize in ministry to clergy and their spouses, enjoying the well-maintained grounds and speaking with counselors. A wide variety of spiritual companions, mentors, guides, and counselors need to be sought out as companions on this journey.

Only after the transitioning chaplain is living out of his or her true identity centered in Christ and has successfully detoxed from the intensity of military ministry will he or she be ready to successfully discover and embrace God's call. Bob Buford calls this "finding your one thing":

Most people never discover their "one thing" . . . . We desperately long to find it, but we don't know where to look. Too often we try to fill that void with things that offer only temporary relief, such as making and spending money, getting involved in projects and competition (winning), and forming relationships.

Larry Crabb, author of *Insight Out*, refers to this longing as a desire to fill "a hollow place located centrally within us . . . the core desire of our soul." The seventeenth-century French philosopher Blaise Pascal called it the "God-shaped vacuum" . . . Your one thing is the most essential part of you, your transcendent dimension. It is discovering what's true about yourself, rather than overlaying someone else's truth on you or injecting someone else's goals into your personality.<sup>28</sup>

The challenge facing retiring chaplains is finding their one thing, or what Carl Jung called their life's task and what the Greeks called their destiny.<sup>29</sup> It can also be referred to as their call. According to Buford, it is found by spending time in solitude with God, "All I can tell you with any certainty is that you will not find an abiding sense of purpose and direction by rushing from business appointment to church meeting to your child's soccer

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<sup>28</sup> Buford, *Halftime*, 80.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

game to dinner with friends and then to bed. If you cannot afford to spend the time in solitude with God that finding your ‘one thing’ requires, you are not ready to find it.<sup>30</sup>

Buford is right in pointing out the need to spend time in solitude with God.

Leanne Payne calls this listening prayer and emphasizes the importance of keeping a prayer journal to record what is discovered in times of solitude.<sup>31</sup> But she also points out that people need others to join them in any prayer where they are seeking God’s leading:

There is the matter of our blind spots. We all have them. I thank God for prayer partners who speak light and vision into my blind spots. In this way, our listening is enhanced and judged, our idiosyncrasies revealed. Our prayer journals therefore prepare us for the kind of honesty and openness that is required for listening to God with our spouses and prayer ministry partners. Open communication with God enables us to be open, in discerning wisdom without fear, to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Individual and corporate listening prayer are complementary one to the other. Neither is to be neglected.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to prayer, the wise chaplain in transition will take time to review life’s journey so far. A number of questions need to be addressed in this life review such as origin, family background, childhood experiences and needs, geographical origins, key life and community events, and consequences of all these things on one’s development. This process may include a visit to places that have been important in the chaplain’s life, including the community where the chaplain grew up or a church where the chaplain was disciplined. As the chaplain reviews life thus far, certain themes will emerge which will be useful in discerning God’s call for the future.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>31</sup> Payne, *Listening Prayer*.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>33</sup> For example, during my transition time I revisited the affluent community where I grew up, Grosse Pointe Woods, which is on the edge of the city of Detroit. I grew up in this community during the

Frederick Buechner's famous words summarize the experience of calling:

There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of Society, say, or the Superego, or Self-Interest.

By and large a good rule for find out is this. The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world needs most to have done. . . The place where God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.<sup>34</sup>

Buechner's use of the word gladness is perhaps a bit misleading. Calling is not just about being happy or fulfilling a passion. It also includes the use of the gifts with which God has equipped us. The next section examines the themes of kingdom and gifts.

### **Kingdom and Charisms**

In the Gospel of Mark after John the Baptizer was put into prison, Jesus appears on the scene proclaiming the good news of God. The first words Jesus spoke were: "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mk 1:14-15). Matthew shortens this to simply, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Mt 4:17). In Luke, Jesus begins his ministry in his hometown of Nazareth where he preaches a sermon on Isaiah 61:

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racially turbulent period of that late 1960s. I was ten years old during the 1967 race riots in Detroit. I remember the tensions surrounding the visit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to Grosse Pointe High School in March of 1968, one month before his assassination in Memphis. My family attended First Christian Reformed Church of Detroit in Grosse Pointe two blocks from the Detroit city limits. It literally was a church on the boarder. We got a new pastor soon after the riots named Dr. Franklin Steen. He asked repeatedly what the church's responsibility was toward the surrounding city. This made a deep impression on my young mind. The church sponsored a Christian school that was the first school in Grosse Pointe to allow black students during the time when forced bussing for racial desegregation was being discussed. The bus carrying young black students was met at the city limits of Grosse Pointe by members of the community who threw rocks at it, on one occasion breaking a window. These experiences made a deep impact on my perception of the world. It stirred in me a deep commitment to social justice. Throughout seminary, my career as a civilian pastor, and my military career I can see this passion at work. Any ministry I am called to will probably incorporate this passion for social justice.

<sup>34</sup> Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 95.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to release the oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Jesus said as he began his sermon, "today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:18-21). At the heart of Jesus' ministry was not his teaching on love, which had already been given in the Old Testament, but the radical good news of the kingdom.<sup>35</sup> In Matthew's gospel John the Baptizer speaks the same words as Jesus: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Mt 3:2). As George Eldon Ladd points out, although the words are the same, the essential message between the Baptizer and Jesus is completely different:

The difference between John and Jesus is suggested by Mark's formulation which interprets Jesus' message to mean that "the time is fulfilled" (Mark 1:15). Jesus did not merely proclaim, as did John, the imminence of divine visitation; he asserted that this visitation was in actual progress, that God was already visiting his people. The hope of the prophets was being fulfilled. . . .

Here was an amazing claim. John had announced an imminent visitation of God which would mean the fulfillment of the eschatological hope and the coming of the messianic age. Jesus proclaimed that this promise was actually being fulfilled. This was no apocalyptic Kingdom but a present salvation. . . The promise was fulfilled in the action of Jesus: in his proclamation of good news to the poor, release to the captives, restoring sight to the blind, freeing those who were oppressed. This was no new theology or new idea or new promise; it was a new event in history.<sup>36</sup>

Ladd writes that the arrival of Jesus is a new event in history. However, he misses the point in his emphasis on the action of Jesus being the fulfillment of the promise. Jesus is

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<sup>35</sup> Bruce Chilton and J.I.H. McDonald, *Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987), 3.

<sup>36</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 111.

Immanuel, or God with us. It is the incarnation rather than the ministry of Jesus that is the new event in history. God has taken on human flesh. God is at work in this world through the person of Jesus, establishing a kingdom where the poor have good news preached to them, the captive are released, and the other promises of Isaiah 62 are fulfilled. This is the good news of the gospel.

According to Miroslav Volf, a proper understanding of God's kingdom is central to a Christian understanding of work and more specifically to the notion of calling:

Human work, properly understood theologically, is related to the goal of all history, which will bring God, human beings, and the nonhuman creation into 'shalomic' harmony. Neither personal development (self-realization), nor communal well-being (solidarity) alone are adequate contexts for a theological reflection on human work. To do justice to the nature of its subject (work) and its source (Christian revelation), a theology of work must investigate the relation of work to the future destiny of the whole creation, including human beings as individual and social beings, and the nonhuman environment. The appropriate theological framework for developing a theology of work is not anthropology, but an all encompassing eschatology.<sup>37</sup>

As Volf points out, theologians differ on the relationship between this present age and the eschatological future. Some emphasize the discontinuity between our experience in this world and our future. They hold that the present world will be totally destroyed and replaced by a completely new one. Others emphasize the continuity between this world and the future one and speak of the transformation of this world into the new heaven and the new earth. One's understanding of the relationship between this world and the one to come has tremendous implications for understanding the significance of human work. Those who emphasize the discontinuity between this world and the world to come view work as a means to provide the needed material support so that the worker can spend time

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<sup>37</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 85.

focusing on eternal concerns, what Volf calls the *vita contemplativa*. On the other hand, those who emphasize the continuity between this world and the one to come view work as having an inherent value in and of itself, what Volf calls the *vita active*:

If the world will be annihilated and a new one created *ex nihilo*, then mundane work has only earthly significance for the well-being of the worker, the worker's community and posterity—until the day when 'the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will dissolve with fire' (2 Pet. 3:10). Since the results of the cumulative work of humankind throughout history will become naught in the final apocalyptic catastrophe, human work is devoid of direct ultimate significance.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand,

The picture changes radically with the assumption that the world will not end in apocalyptic destruction but in eschatological transformation. Then the results of the cumulative work of human beings have intrinsic value and gain ultimate significance, for they are related to the eschatological new creation, not only indirectly through the faith and service they enable or sanctification they further, but also directly: the noble products of human ingenuity, "whatever is beautiful, true, and good in human cultures," will be cleansed from impurity, perfected and transfigured to become a part of God's new creation. They will form the "building materials" from which (after they are transfigured) the "glorified world" will be made.<sup>39</sup>

The value of human work, then, is found in the value of the creation:

[T]he significance of secular work depends on the value of creation, and the value of creation depends on its final destiny. If its destiny is eschatological transformation, then, in spite of the lack of explicit exegetical support, we *must* ascribe to human work inherent value, independent of its relation to the proclamation of the gospel (human work and the proclamation of the gospel are each in its own way directed toward the new creation). Since much of the present order is the result of human work, if the present order will be transformed, then human work necessarily has ultimate significance.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 91. Quotes are from H. Berkhof, *Christ and the Meaning of History* (Richmond: John Knox, 1966), 190.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 94.



For Volf, human work is “cooperation with God” and therefore has great value.<sup>41</sup>

In my own Reformed tradition, the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper posits a similar value in the creation. In a lecture entitled “Calvinism and Science” given at Princeton University under the sponsorship of the L.P. Stone foundation in 1898, we see his high view of creation:

A dualistic conception of regeneration was the cause of the rupture between the life of nature and the life of grace. It has, on account of its too intense contemplation of celestial things, neglected to give due attention to the world of God’s creation. It has, on account of its exclusive love of things eternal, been backward in the fulfillment of its temporal duties. It has neglected the care of the body because it cared too exclusively for the soul. And this one-sided, inharmonious conception in the course of time has led more than one sect to a mystic worshipping of Christ alone, to the exclusion of God the Father Almighty, *Maker of heaven and earth*. Christ was conceived exclusively as the Savior, and His *cosmological* significance was lost out of sight.<sup>42</sup>

Kuyper develops the teaching of “common grace,” which he uses to explain “that which is good in fallen man”:

The confession [of common grace] . . . places the Christian in quite a different position over against life. For then, in his judgment, not only *the church*, but also *the world* belongs to God and in both has to be investigated the masterpiece of the supreme Architect and Artificer.

A Calvinist, who seeks God, does not for a moment think of limiting himself to theology and contemplation, leaving the other sciences, as of a lower character, in the hands of unbelievers; but on the contrary, looking upon it as his task to know God in *all* his works, he is conscious of having been called to fathom with all the energy of his intellect, things *terrestrial* as well as things *celestial*; to open to view both the order of creation, and the “common grace” of the God he adores, in nature and its wondrous character, in the production of human industry, in the life of mankind, in sociology and in the history of the human race.<sup>43</sup>

For Kuyper, common grace makes the study of the creation a way to worship God the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>42</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: Six Stone Foundation Lectures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943), 118.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 123 and 125.

Father and creator. It is at its core an activity that looks backwards to the creation's beginning. God is the supreme architect and artificer. Volf's creational perspective is more forward looking, focusing on the new creation that God is already in the process of building. This difference is significant when it comes to the value of human work as cooperation with God.:

Depending on how we conceive of human cooperation with God in work, we can differentiate between two types of theologies of work. One rests on the doctrine of creation and sees work as cooperation with God in *creation continua*, the other rests on the doctrine of the last things and sees work as cooperation with God in anticipation of God's *transformation mundi*.<sup>44</sup>

Kuyper is a good example of the *creation continua* approach while Volf argues for the *transformation mundi* perspective.

Volf goes on to critique the vocational understanding of work, especially as developed by Luther but also found in the teachings of Calvin.<sup>45</sup> First, Volf points out that the vocational understanding of work requires only that the task must be a call from God and it must be of service to fellow human beings. Even the most humble of human tasks can be a call from God. "[V]irtually every kind of work can be a vocation, no matter how dehumanizing it might be." But such dehumanizing work can cause alienation for the worker. The vocational understanding of work is indifferent to such alienation.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the vocational understanding of work eventually led to an over identification of vocation with one's occupation. "Luther elevated work in every

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<sup>44</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 98.

<sup>45</sup> For a good treatment of Calvin's understanding of kingdom, see Timothy Pavitt Palmer, "John Calvin's View of the Kingdom of God," PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1990, accessed September 12, 2017, <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.253715>.

<sup>46</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 107.

profession to the level of divine service”:

As the nature of human work changed in the course of industrialization, vocation was reduced to gainful employment. Lutheran social ethic followed this sociological development and, departing from Luther but in analogy to the singularity of *voatio spiritualis*, reduce its notion of vocation to gainful employment. The reduction of vocation to employment, coupled with the belief that vocation is the primary service ordinary people render to God, contributed to the modern fateful elevation of work to the status of religion. The religious pursuit of work plays havoc with the working individual, his fellow human beings, and nature.<sup>47</sup>

In contrast to the traditional vocational understanding of work, Volf proposes a pneumatological understanding of work:

In the vocational understanding of work, God addresses human beings, calling them to work, and they respond to God’s call primarily out of obedience. They work out of a sense of *duty*. In a pneumatological understanding of work, God does not first and foremost command human beings to work, but empowers and gifts them for work. They work, not primarily because it is their duty to work, but because they experience the inspiration and enabling of God’s Spirit and can do the will of God ‘from the heart’ (Eph. 6:6; cf. Col. 3:23). . . . Though not fully absent, the sense of duty gives way to the sense of inspiration.<sup>48</sup>

Leanne Payne offers us a similar understanding of work as inspiration: “Man is a *maker*. This is part of what it means to be in the image of our Creator God. As we learn to collaborate with Him, He confirms and mightily blesses the work of our hands. . . . When we allow God to bestow His favor and beauty and delightfulness . . . on the work of our hands, He makes artists of even the humblest (in terms of natural giftedness) among us.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 108-109.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 125. For a similar idea from a psychological perspective, see Bryan J. Dik and Rayan D. Duffy, PhD., *Make Your Job a Calling: How the Psychology of Vocation Can Change Your Life and Work*, (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2012).

<sup>49</sup> Leanne Payne, *The Healing Presence: Curing the Soul through Union with Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 75.

In the synoptic gospels the good news is that kingdom of God (or Heaven) has come in Jesus of Nazareth. Matthew uses the word kingdom fifty-four times in his gospel, Mark uses it nineteen times and Luke uses the word forty-three times. The Gospel of John, however, only uses the word kingdom three times. It appears twice in John 3 where Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God to Nicodemus and once in John 18 where Jesus tells Pilot that his kingdom is not of this world. John's emphasis is that God has once again begun his creative work by making a new creation. He starts his gospel with words from Genesis "in the beginning" and ends with a woman living in *shalom* in a garden having seen the resurrected Jesus (Jn 1:1). This is in contrast to the first woman who was expelled from the garden of the first creation (Jn 20:10-18).

The message that Jesus gave to Mary Magdalene for his disciples was not news of his resurrection but an ascension prophecy that Jesus would once again leave. "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go, instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (Jn 20:17). As the first resident of God's new creation garden, where God's kingdom rule once again has a foothold in this sad world, Jesus' first task was to demonstrate the obedience in the presence of evil that Adam and Eve were unable to maintain. "I will not speak to you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me" (Jn 14:30-31). But before Jesus left, he gave his followers a *shalom* peace that can no longer be found in this old creation when he said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (Jn 14:27).

Humans are co-creators with God who is bringing into reality a new creation. God has given believers spiritual gifts that are to be used in this creative process. Charisma is not just a call by which God bids us to perform a particular task, but also an inspiration and a gifting to accomplish the task.”<sup>50</sup> In the kingdom, in God’s new creation, work is being transformed from the painful toil of work under a curse (Gn 3:17) to a creative expression of our giftedness in co-operation with the Master Creator. Christians’ response to God’s call is not one of obedient response, but of creative release. As part of the development of a sense of identity that is needed to discern God’s call, there is a need to identify one’s spiritual giftedness and spiritual gifts. These gifts are then to be developed so that they can be used effectively in creative activity as co-creators with God of the new creation:

One should . . . not merely passively receive the gifts of the Spirit. The . . . impartation of charisms requires activity by the recipient, and attitude of active receptivity. For according to this model, charisms are partly constituted through the way a person relates to situations she encounters or lives in; she acquires new charisms or develops existing charisms partly through her own activity. It is the task of every Christian to seek new charisms (see I Cor. 14:12) and to reactivate and develop existing charisms (see 2 Tim 1:6), whether during the work experience or outside of it.<sup>51</sup>

[T]he reception, development, and use of gifts must be accompanied by the nurture of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22f). The fruit of the Spirit, which consists in the values of the new creation, determines how the gifts of the Spirit should be used. In a pneumatological understanding of work, the development of human beings through their work is, therefore, taken out of the domain of individualistic search for self-actualization.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 114.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 131.

This pneumatological understanding of work as the exercising of spiritual gifts (or the Greek word *charisms*) provides a solid understanding of the place and purpose of work in the Christian's life.<sup>53</sup> Work is central to what it means to be image bearers of God.<sup>54</sup> But work is neither the source of our personal identity nor a striving to find personal fulfillment:

[T]here is very little that is either specifically Protestant (religious) or ethical about the contemporary drive to work. This is not to deny the historical contribution of the Protestant work ethic to modern workaholism. But after Western civilization has climbed up the ladder of the Protestant work ethic to a state in which incessant work has become one of its main features, it has pushed this ladder aside but continued to work even more frantically. Work thrives today more on the insatiable hunger for self-realization than on the Protestant work ethic. In their own eyes and in the eyes of their contemporaries, modern human beings are what they do. The kind of work they do and what they accomplish or acquire through work provides a basic key to their identity.<sup>55</sup>

In Volf we find a biblical critique of Laslett's third age goal of personal fulfillment.

Personal development replaces personal fulfillment as the goal. This is consistent with the fourth leg of a successful retirement which is thriving cognitively in meaningful ministry. The call from God is not just a call to serve, but a call to continue to grow and develop one's spiritual gifts to become a more effective instrument of God's creative power building his kingdom or new creation:

My own development is an end in itself because it is integral to the new creation and hence a good to be affirmed. But my development is not self-contained because I as an individual am not self-contained. I can be fulfilled only when the whole creation has found its fulfillment, too. Because I am an essentially social and natural being, my development, which is an end in itself, is at the same time a means of benefitting others. Hence I cannot concentrate on the development of my capabilities while disregarding their use for the

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<sup>53</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 110.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

well-being of the social and natural world I inhabit. My development must be attuned to the well-being of the whole creation.<sup>56</sup>

Volf's pneumatological understanding of work also helps keep work in its proper perspective. The tendency in contemporary society to both over identify with one's work and to overwork gives way to a more balanced view of the place of both work and leisure. The following section examines this balance.

### **Balance**

The chaplain who has followed the retirement journey outlined in this project will be well equipped to enter a new ministry in the civilian world. He or she will have taken up to two years as a sabbatical to go through the liminal stage. During this time a renewed sense of calling will begin to take shape. As a chaplain identifies his or her unique spiritual giftedness and the place where he or she can serve as a co-creator with God in the building of the new creation, he or she will develop a renewed sense of purpose and meaning. At this point, he or she will face the challenge of maintaining balance.

Volf points out that historically in much of Christian thinking work has been subservient to leisure. The *vita activa* was meant to make possible the *vita contemplativa*. Even today many work five days at jobs they hate in order to be able to enjoy the weekends. On the other hand, Volf points out that in much of contemporary society leisure has become subservient to work. "Partly under the influence of Protestantism, which made worship subservient to active life in the world, there arose in Western Societies the persistent belief both 'that all leisure must be earned by work and good

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 131.

works’ and that, while leisure is enjoyed, ‘it must be seen in the context of future work and good works.’”<sup>57</sup> Volf reminds us that the *vita activa* (life of work) and *vita contemplativa* (life of leisure) are “two basic, alternating aspects of the Christian life that may differ in importance but that cannot be reduced one to another, and that form an inseparable unity.”<sup>58</sup>

Keeping a balance between work and leisure is a constant challenge in contemporary society and in Christian ministry. Marva Dawn writes that work as pastors is both important and never ending:

If we stop long enough to pay attention, we all similarly discern that our lives frequently (usually?) fall out of balance. We endure enormous pressure to keep working, for the tasks of nurturing belief in others or of trying to right the injustices in the world can never be finished. How has it come about that we who work such impossible-to-complete tasks feel so guilty when we cannot perform them?<sup>59</sup>

For the retired military chaplain maintaining the balance between work and leisure is likely to continue to be a challenge. Military life is an unbalanced life. In the Navy, for example, an officer typically does not leave the ship before the commanding officer, who is all too often a workaholic putting in far more hours than is healthy. Members of the military are granted thirty days of leave every year, but are often looked down on if they take their leave. When they do, they often fill the time with high-energy activities that allow for little rest. The military is the ultimate work hard and play harder culture. The

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>59</sup> Marva J. Dawn, *The Sense of the Call: A Sabbath Way of Life for Those Who Serve God, the Church, and the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2006), 48.



retired military chaplain who is a co-creator with God will find it difficult to take time off. The work is far too important.

Marva Dawn points out that in leisure people regain the energy, vision and inspiration to do their work well. When people take time to rest and bask in grace, they will discover once again the joy of knowing that they are God's beloved children and the humility of knowing that they are not in charge, or responsible, for all that happens in this world:

Could we learn to rest in the grace of that partnership with God? Could that free us to cease our work and recover our vision for it, for indeed God will bring to completion the restoration of the cosmos. God is at work in the spiritual lives of those we serve and in the process of global restoration for which we labor. Our worth does not lie in how much we accomplish in that work, but in how much we are God's beloved, chosen to partner with the Trinity in that to which we are called.<sup>60</sup>

In the words of Bob Buford, retired military chaplains need to

*Play around a little.* Not in the sense that would get you in trouble, but as a way to keep a handle on who's in charge. There is something about skipping out of work to catch a baseball game in the middle of the week or taking your spouse to a movie instead of attending a church committee meeting that reminds you who is calling the shots. Play ought to be a big second-half activity, not so much in terms of time spent, but in importance.<sup>61</sup>

The discussion of Numbers 8:23-26 in chapter 2 noted that the retirement of the Levites was a foreshadowing of our eternal retirement, the "Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). In the words of Henry Numan "we need to dare to recognize that growing older is not the beginning of the end, but is, in fact, the other way around. It is instead the end of the beginning; the transition of the 'now' to the glorious

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>61</sup> Buford, *Halftime*, 131.

reality in Christ when the mortal becomes immortal.”<sup>62</sup> Willimon suggests that if pastors are men and women ordained to give leadership to the people of God, they need to lead by example.<sup>63</sup> They must strive to achieve a balanced life where the four legs of a successful retirement, pursuing physical health (or physical security), growing ever more intimate with God, engaging others socially in a widening support network (which, together with solo activities like hobbies and reading, will require leisure time) and thriving cognitively in meaningful ministry, are all given their proper place. As they do so, their retirement years will be ones in which they thrive, living in the *shalom* that is theirs as people called to be co-creators with God in this marvelous world.

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<sup>62</sup> Henry Numan, “Finishing Well,” *The Banner*, October 2014, accessed October 12, 2017, <https://thebanner.org/features/2014/09/finishing-well>.

<sup>63</sup> Willimon, *Pastor*, 30.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Judge Bland's question to George Webber on the train between New York City and Libya Hill was "do you think you can go home again?" George's response was, "Why—why yes. . . I haven't done anything— honestly I haven't!"<sup>1</sup> But George had done something—he had wandered around Europe for a year, published a novel and had experienced the life of a successful novelist in New York City. Libya Hill had also changed. It was no longer the quaint town of easy-going friendliness George depicted in his novel. Steel and concrete structures had replaced the quaint old brick buildings of George's youth. The people were driven and competitive. Ironically the community of Libya Hill that George returned to displayed many of the same characteristics as George's new home, New York City. George responds with judgment:

The faces of natives and strangers alike appeared to be animated by some secret and unholy glee. And their bodies, as they darted, dodged, and thrust their way along, seemed to have a kind of leaping energy as if some powerful drug was driving them on. They gave him the impression of an entire population that was drunk— drunk with an intoxication which never made them weary, dead, or sodden, and which never wore off, but which incited them constantly to new efforts of leaping and thrusting exuberance.<sup>2</sup>

George Webber has returned to Libya Hill as a success. But Libya Hill has also been successful. That success, for both George and Libya Hill, has come at a price:

Yes, that was it! That was the answer! That was the very core of it! Could he as a novelist, as an artist, belong to this high world of privilege without taking upon himself the stultifying burden of that privilege? Could he write truthfully of life as he saw it, could he say the things he must, and at the same time belong to this world of which he would have to write? Were the two things possible? Was not this world of fashion and of privilege the deadliest enemy of art and truth? Could he belong to the one without forsaking the other? Would not the very privilege that he might

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again*, 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

gain from these, the great ones of the city, come between him and the truth, shading it, tempering it, and in the end betraying it? And would he then be any different from a score of others who had let themselves be taken into camp, made captive by false visions of wealth and ease, and by the deadly hankering for respectability—that gilded counterfeit which so often passes current for the honest coin of man’s respect?<sup>3</sup>

The retiring military chaplain also returns home to the civilian word as a success.

But that success has come at a price. This project examined some elements of the price.

The chaplain has undergone a conversion experience from civilian to warrior and is in the process of a second conversion from warrior to veteran. The military experience has had an effect on the chaplain’s identity. It may well have inflicted deep inner wounds that need to be healed. It has likely had an impact on the chaplain’s understanding of both God and theology. Whether the chaplain returns to the community he came from before his military service, decides to live in a community where he or she was stationed at some point, or chooses to retire to a completely new community, the chaplain will be returning home to a civilian life. But he or she cannot really do that because of the changes that have taken place in their own life.

The community has also changed. Issues that were major concerns to the religious community that the chaplain is affiliated with have been resolved and new issues have arisen.<sup>4</sup> Technology has made its impact on people’s lives.<sup>5</sup> The chaplain’s family of

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>4</sup> For example, when I joined the military in 1996, the major issue my denomination was focused on was the ordination of women. When I retired in 2016, that issue had been resolved and the major issue was how to minister to the LGBTQ community.

<sup>5</sup> Again, from my experience, when I joined the military the Internet was just beginning to be a major influence in people’s lives. When I retired there was a whole new world of smart phones and the wired generation. I was a part of this during my military service time, but I had to learn the impacts of this on the civilian world. For example, resumes are not printed out and handed to a potential employer in person. Instead they are electronically distributed by such means as e-mail and Linked-In.

origin has changed. Parents have aged or died. Siblings and children may have their own lives centered around their families. Grandchildren who have been separated by distance may now be nearby and able to be visited on a regular basis. One cannot go home again, one can only move forward. The awards given during the twenty years of service and proudly worn on a uniform, the military version of George Webber's "false visions of wealth and ease . . . that gilded counterfeit which so often passes current for the honest coin of man's respect" are now meaningless. What matters now is the soul of the chaplain, that individual volition Plato spoke about, that movement from within that is the essence of having a soul. This project examined the importance of the chaplain's own soul as a beacon to guide oneself through the journey of transition.

As with any academic study, this project has identified further work that needs to be done. More work needs to be done on the effect of military service on the soul of the chaplain. More work needs to be done on the differences between male and female chaplains and the distinct effects that serving as a military chaplain can have on each gender. Much more work needs to be done educating civilian spiritual leaders on the reality of moral injury and equipping them with the pastoral care tools that can be employed in healing those whose souls have been morally injured. More work needs to be done in faith communities to educate and equip them to be places of grace and healing for those who have been morally wounded by the military experience.

Thomas Wolfe ends his novel with George Webber writing his *credo*, his statement of belief. The concluding words of the novel are as follows:

Something has spoken to me in the night, burning the tapers of the waning year; something has spoken in the night, and told me I shall die, I know not where. Saying: "To lose the earth you know, for greater knowing; to lose the life you

have, for greater life; to leave the friends you loved, for greater loving; to find a land more kind than home, more large than earth—  
“—Whereon the pillars of this earth are founded, toward which the consciousness of the world is tending— a wind is rising, and the rivers flow.”<sup>6</sup>

Much of what the retiring chaplain is used to will have to end. The military, with its familiar lifestyle, traditions, and camaraderie will have to die so that a new life, “a greater loving, a land more kind . . . more large,” can be embraced. It is my hope and prayer that this dissertation will be helpful for military chaplains going through the Good Friday and Easter journey of transitioning from the military to the civilian world.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 638.

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