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The military as moral community: exploring the relationship between martial and societal values

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THE MILITARY AS MORAL COMMUNITY: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARTIAL AND SOCIETAL VALUES

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PREFACE

As a military chaplain who teaches ethics and moral values to U.S. Sailors and Marines, I often marvel at how ethical questions provoke not only intellectual stimulation, but religious interest and even spiritual longing. It has been an encouraging observation, and one that has reminded me of the integral relationship between ethics and faith. More important, the observation has shaped the way I approach the very task of teaching ethics itself, producing in me what I hope is a greater sensitivity to the spiritual dynamics at work in and beyond the classroom.

However, while spiritual things are, in my view, of the most important nature, their acceptance does rest on some basic assumptions about right and wrong, truth and falsehood—assumptions that appear to be on the scaffold today. Cultural relativism, or the belief that there is no such thing as universal truth but only various cultural narratives and value systems,[1] has, I believe, far exceeded its tempering function and in a twist of irony, seized for itself the kind of universality it first questioned. That there are substantive moral philosophies and ethical systems in America today is unarguable. But therein lies much of the problem. Cultural relativism, by virtue of its chief claim that morality is a "convenient term for socially approved habits,"[2] has, it would seem, fully flowered, with the result that not a few moralities capture our attention, but dozens—all

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[1] James Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism," *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 120.

[2] Ruth Benedict, "Anthropology and the Abnormal," *Journal of General Psychology* (February 19, 1934), 73.

moving along their own trajectories, and often at odds with one another. For many Americans, this crisis of competing value systems is best described by the familiar phrase "culture wars." However, "culture wars" with its predictable parsing of constituents into liberal or conservative seems too simplistic a term to describe what we are facing today.

America, to be sure, has always been characterized by a diversity of opinions and moral perspectives. *E Pluribus Unum*, or "out of the many, one" is, after all, one of our national mottos. However, unlike previous eras in our nation's history where public debates operated under a broadly shared moral vocabulary—an "American consensus" as John Courtney Murray pointed out—moral discourse today has taken on a disturbingly asymmetrical quality. Arguments for normative values are misaligned with demands for tolerance. Rights advocates find that they are not being heard by their more utilitarian counterparts. The pursuit of truth as inquiry into objectivity is swallowed up by the claims of moral equivalency. Liberty seems at loggerheads with her twin sister, Justice. The situation reminds one of a marriage doomed to failure, where for too long the syntax of the relationship has settled into a predictable, but no less destructive exchange of accusation, defensiveness, and contempt. It is a crisis that has caused many Americans to nearly turn away from the impasse altogether and seek out more homogeneous communities—places where shared moral values and transcendent purposes unify and align their members in service and commitment to one another and to something greater than themselves.

I believe today's military is one of those communities.

Faced with a disparate culture growing more hostile to traditional sources of moral wisdom, many are choosing to identify with a distinct military community wherein a code of honor sustained by sacrifice binds its people to a clear moral vocabulary and coherent ethical principles. Taken as a whole, this choice by a few has meant the emergence of a distinct and even estranged community within the American experience. To be fair, there has always been something of a tension between the military and society. However, in recent years it seems that this public marriage has become strained beyond what it can endure; a strain that in large part comes from two very different approaches to how one distinguishes between right and wrong.

Recent Senate hearings over the military's prohibition of openly homosexual men and women serving in uniform have pronounced what is clearly an ethics disconnect between the two worlds. These points of tension reflect more than friendly disagreements, but at times utterly divergent moral outlooks. The result of this has been the emergence of a widely recognized "values-gap" between the military and contemporary culture. Of course the problem with all of this is that such a crisis, such a gap—at least in a democracy—cannot long endure. Social and moral rifts between a nation and its guardians cannot be good for anyone. The question becomes which values—military or societal—will prevail in the long run? Or is it possible that these two worlds might find new ways of understanding and even complimenting one another?

This thesis attempts to shed some light on this crisis from the perspective of one who wears the uniform; that is to say one who stands on a particular side of the gap, yet who is concerned, like many, about the larger implications that such a gap suggests.

Specifically, this thesis is written for other military chaplains who like myself desire to have an adequate response to those Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines who while valiantly serving their country are nevertheless becoming increasingly confused and troubled by this conflict of values. God has entrusted these men and women to our pastoral and prophetic care, and we should respond to that trust.

I am pleased to acknowledge Dr. John Hart, Professor of Christian Ethics and my faculty advisor, whose work in the areas of social justice has challenged me to think outside of my own tradition, broadening my awareness of human need and the scope of my ministry. I'd also like to give thanks to my wife Charity and our six children—Caleb, Justice, Phoebe, Nathanael, Ella, and Beatrice. Our sixth child, born during the course of this study, reminded me that my greatest contribution in life is not in papers and projects, but in the love and nurture I give to my family.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In its severity, regularity, discipline, the military society shares the characteristics of the religious order. Modern man may well find his monastery in the Army.

Samuel Huntington[1]

The Crisis

That there exists today a civilian-military values-gap is an observation that virtually no one contests. Civilians and military personnel alike agree that since the end of the draft and the advent of the all-volunteer force in 1973, the concept of the citizen-soldier of previous generations has gradually receded, and a distinct military culture has emerged, firmly embedding itself in the national ethos and experience. To be sure as early as 1903 Alfred Thayer Mahan, said that "in its proper manifestation the jealousy between civil and military spirits is a healthy one,"[2] acknowledging that to some extent there has always been something of a tension between the two worlds—the civilian and the military—and that such a tension is not necessarily a bad thing. In 1957 Samuel Huntington even referred to the military as an "estranged minority" within our society; and he was right. Military service does, by its very nature and mission, distinguish its members from the population they are sworn to defend—and not only in American

[1] Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 465.

[2] James H. Toner, *True Faith and Allegiance: The Burden of Military Ethics* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 22.

society—but wherever men and women leave home and hearth, don uniforms, and take up arms on behalf of their country.

However, this "estrangement," in the words of journalist, Thomas Ricks, "appears to be more complete now than it was in the past."[3] Recent Senate hearings surrounding the military's prohibition on homosexuals in the service has highlighted what appears to be a sharp contrast between contemporary societal mores and military values. Many point to a distinctly conservative ring in the voices of many of our nation's military leaders, a ring that electoral trends within the military do seem to confirm.[4] Moreover, Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, and Airmen, upon reentry into their civilian communities, are expressing a deeper sense of alienation from the values and practices of many of their friends and classmates.[5] All of these factors suggest an unhealthy, if not alarming polarity between the moral values of the military and the moral trajectory of society.

Common Conceptions of the Crisis

There are more than a few interpretations of why this civilian-military estrangement seems more pronounced now than ever. Some suggest the military has become something of a family business where more and more sons and daughters are taking up the "flags of their fathers" and entering the service.[6] Others feel that as the

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[3] Thomas E. Ricks, "The Widening Gap Between the Military and Society," *The Atlantic Online* (July 1997), http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/97jul/milisoc.htm., 4 (accessed August 21, 2008).

[4] Martin L. Cook, *The Moral Warrior* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), ix.

[5] Ricks, 4.

[6] Cook, ix.

officer corps has become more professionalized in recent years, it has come to think of itself as distinct from other professions insofar as it fulfills a more sublime or "differentiated" role.[7] A Vietnam veteran and professor of history, Andrew Bacevich, goes the farthest, asserting that many Americans today have become seduced by war, holding at once to "a blind faith in the universality of American values" and a "pronounced affinity for the sword." In his book *The New American Militarism,* Bacevich essentially argues that for decades many Americans have become enamored by a warrior culture within which a distinctly evangelical commitment to God and country has gone hand-in-hand with a drive for American hegemony.[8]

On the one hand, I share the chief concern of many of these who see a widening values-gap as cause for alarm. It is never a good sign for a nation or its military when the values to which one is committed are not shared by the other. Further, I agree with those who say much could be done policy-wise to ameliorate this condition; for instance more incentives for a national call to service; a greater presence of ROTC units at elite colleges and universities; and, when feasible, a more well-rounded civilian-based course of instruction for military officers in postgraduate training.[9] However, while I agree with many of these proposals, I do not share the more typical interpretations behind them of *why* a values-gap exists, and more important, why it has become so pronounced in recent

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[7] Anthony E. Hartle, *Moral Issues in Military Decision Making* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 1-8.

[8] Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[9] Ibid., 221.

years. In short, many of those who have rightly discerned the values-gap have, I believe, failed to identify what may be the most important side of the story.

The Hypothesis

Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre in his seminal book *After Virtue* writes:

> A crucial turning point in that earlier history occurred when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman Imperium and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that imperium. What they set themselves to achieve instead—often not recognizing fully what they were doing—was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming age of barbarism and darkness.[10]

Of course, we know this "earlier history" to be the story of the Western monastic movement initiated and exemplified by men and women like St. Benedict of Nursia. In the face of what they believed to be the near total dilution of the moral, philosophical, and religious traditions of the Christian-Roman world, many Christians turned *away from* their cultural environs and *toward* building distinct communities marked by moral conviction, philosophical coherence, and religious practices. MacIntyre's observation of this movement, is not, however, meant to merely remind us of our indebtedness to monks and hermits. In fact, his focus is not on the history of the movement at all; but rather its contemporary application. He is drawing a parallel between that earlier history and our own. Continuing, he writes:

> If my account of our moral condition is correct, we ought also to conclude that for some time now we too have reached that turning point. What matters at this stage

[10] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3d ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 263.

> is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us.[11]

The genesis of this project is born from two convictions. First, I believe that American society has indeed reached that critical "turning point" that MacIntyre said was upon us. More will be said about this condition in the pages that follow; but for now it will suffice to simply say that those oft-celebrated statements like "What's immoral for you is moral for me" and "What's true for you is not necessarily true for me," represent more than flippancy or pop culture but signal an ever-expanding relativism that is drowning nearly every attempt at honest and fruitful moral discourse. More important for this project, however, is the second conviction; namely, that in the midst of this "new dark ages," I believe the military culture has emerged as one of the clearest examples of the kind of community that MacIntyre predicted many would be drawn toward—one within which the moral life means something definite and can thus be sustained by the encouragement and accountability of a group of equally committed peers.

To be fair, there are many reasons men and women enter the armed forces today. Service to country, a chance to be tested and grow as a leader, tuition, and the security of medical care and housing—that all of these are interwoven into the motives and aspirations of our men and women in uniform is a certainty. However, the backdrop of these decisions cannot be divorced from the palatable disconnect between the culture one steps out of as a civilian and the community he or she enters as a soldier. Risking caricature, it is the transition from a world where college-age demonstrators hold up signs

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[11] MacIntyre, 263.

declaring, "Nothing is worth dying for," to a world, where phrases like "Semper Fidelis" or "Always Faithful," mean some things are indeed worth dying for, and even going to war for—things like freedom, the protection of the innocent, self-evident principles, a cherished way of life. Of course, a willingness like this to sacrifice and if necessary to take life, requires such diligent reflection and self-evaluation on the part of the individual, that a community of these individuals is bound to form, united by a constellation of virtues and values to guide them.

Martial cultures are not a new phenomenon. In fact, the history of civilizations and nation-states demonstrates the almost unending presence of warrior classes existing in the midst of their respective societies—men and women charged with the protection of the defenseless and the safeguarding of a treasured way of life. While there have certainly been abominations, many of these communities were marked by sacred warrior codes—moral traditions that enabled their members to make important distinctions, to maintain their honor, to draw lines between right and wrong.[12] What *is* more recent, however, is that while our warriors still draw these lines, for they must, the society they protect, has for several decades been revising them. To be sure, some of these "revisions" were long overdue. The long march toward freedom that America beheld in the civil rights movement threw open new horizons of freedom and equality for countless Americans; horizons which breathed light and new life into institutions like the military.

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[12] Shannon E. French, *The Code of the Warrior: Exploring Warrior Values Past and Present* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 1-20.

Indeed, the achievements of the sixties could, in some sense, be thought of as a bright testimony to *the need* for moral revision.

However, to affirm moral progress does not equate to an endorsement of the idea of moral revision *in principle*. Dr. Martin Luther Luther King, Jr., for example, in pointing the nation to a future of justice and equality, did not think of his task as one of developing new morals, or even revising old ones. In his speeches and writings, King drew repeatedly from the tradition of natural law and the idea of self-evident moral principles which he saw as timeless and unchanging. The problem, according to King, was not the need for new morals in America, but for America to go back to that moral vision that had always been there, only never truly lived out. In what is perhaps his most famous speech, King declared:

> In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of our Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note. . . . I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal . . .".[13]

That America had not made good on this promise was, according to King and others, not so much a comment on moral truth as it was on the nation's dereliction to uphold moral truth. This is why it is not too far a stretch to see in the civil rights achievements of the sixties a *second founding* of America, so to speak. The prospects of freedom and equality

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[13] Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers Projects Speeches: Address at March on Washington, http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/speeches/address_at_march_on_washington.pdf (accessed December 1, 2008).

written about in America's founding charters were finally being offered to all Americans. The dubiousness of our framers to write and even fight so passionately for the equal respect and dignity of all peoples, while in reality intending that application for only a select few, was being overturned in a way that it had not been before. And is this not the beauty and the power of the civil rights movement? What began as a public denunciation of a nation's history of injustice and oppression, became a prophetic call for that same nation to go back to those founding ideals; only this time to see them through to their promised fulfillment. Thus the critique—that in recent decades America has been revising its morals—does not, in the least, overlook or disparage the real moral progress that has occurred in this nation. The critique concerns how our society has come to view moral truth itself. In his "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail," King wrote, in part:

> I would agree with Saint Augustine that "An unjust law is no law at all." Now what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of Saint Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law.[14]

Abundantly clear in King's letters and speeches is his belief in the concept of an unchanging moral law; one given by God and written forever on the human heart.

We have come a long way from King's vision. In truth, morality today has assumed a character much more akin to personal preferences or even style. It's what Alasdair MacIntyre calls a situation of *interminability*. By this he does not mean that moral debates simply go on and on, but rather they find no *terminus*; no rational way of

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[14] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail," in *Ethics for Military Leaders* (Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2000), 53.

securing agreement.[15] For example, MacIntyre points to three contemporary examples of moral disagreement in our culture today—war, abortion, and social justice—and how opposing constituents on each side of these issues cannot seem to find any rational way of approaching consensus.

> In the first argument, for example (war), premises which invoke justice and innocence are at odds with premises which invoke success and survival; in the second (abortion), premises which invoke rights are at odds with those which invoke universalizability; in the third (economic and social justice) it is the claim of equality that is matched against that of liberty. It is precisely because there is in our society no established way of deciding between these claims that moral argument appears to be necessarily interminable. From our rival conclusions we can argue back to our rival premises; but when we do arrive at our premises argument ceases and the invocation of the premise against another becomes a matter of pure assertion and counter-assertion.[16]

More than philosophical gridlock, MacIntyre believes this condition to be the full flowering of a society that has bought into the claims of what he calls, "emotivism," or "the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character."[17] The problem with emotivism is that like its twin, cultural relativism, it "professes to give an account of all value judgments whatsoever,"[18] an account that carries one overarching message: moral values have no basis in reality.

If MacIntyre's assessment is even half-true—that contemporary society is becoming undone and fragmented by the claims of emotivism—it can only mean a

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[15] MacIntyre, 6.

[16] Ibid., 8.

[17] Ibid., 11-12.

[18] Ibid., 12.

collision with communities, like the military, within which moral agreement based on universal values is central and abiding. This civil-military "face-off" was the subject of Thomas Ricks's 1997 *Atlantic* article, "The Widening Gap Between the Military and Society." Ricks cogently writes:

> There is widespread agreement that over the past decades American society has become more fragmented, more individualistic, and less disciplined, with institutions such as church, family, and school wielding less influence. Whatever the implications of these changes, they put society at odds with the classic military values of sacrifice, unity, self-discipline, and considering the interests of the group before those of the individual.[19]

While Ricks's characterization of the civilian-military values-gap is perhaps one-sided, I do believe it offers a missing but critical dimension to this great issue of our time. Surrounded by a culture where as Yeats said, "The ceremony of innocence is drowned; the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity,"[20] many men and women are choosing to identify with a distinct military community within which clear and coherent moral convictions sustain and guide its members. For some this move may indeed be a retrenchment. But for many others, if not a majority, it is a hoped-for remedy. More than a quarter-century ago, British soldier and scholar Sir John Hackett, speaking at the U.S. Air Force Academy, said:

> The major service of the military institution to the community of men it serves may well lie neither within the political sphere nor the functional. It could easily lie within the moral. The military institution is a mirror of its parent society, reflecting its strengths and weaknesses. It can also be a well from which to draw

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[19] Ricks, 14.

[20] M. L. Rosenthal, ed. *William Butler Yeats: Selected Poems and Four Plays* (New York: Scribner Paperback Poetry, 1996), 89.

> refreshment for a body politic in need of it. … The highest service of the military to the state may well lie in the moral sphere.[21]

The claim that the military institution has become something of a moral guide for a state that seems to have lost its way is, according to ethicist James Toner, a reversal of sorts. "At one time," Toner observes, "moral philosophy was the parent of military ethics."[22] However, according to Toner, such an inversion is not altogether bad. "It may well be," continues Toner, "that now the relationship has been reversed and that the wellsprings of military ethics can help restore the health and usefulness of moral philosophy."[23] The larger point is clear. The military community, with its prizing of honor and sacrifice above all, with its recognition of virtue and one's corresponding moral obligations, with its willingness to learn from its own testaments of courage and cowardice, with its readiness to draw lines in the sand between right and wrong, good and evil—this community can, and I think must, help remind a society what it looks like to be a people of character whose lives are bound by shared moral convictions and shaped by an enduring tradition.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to examine a brief history of the civilian-military values-gap from the perspective of the military as *moral community*. As stated in the preface, I have specifically written this thesis for military chaplains. Chaplains are unique not only because they represent two spheres—the military and the religious—but

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[21] Toner, 3.

[22] Ibid., 5-6.

[23] Ibid., 6.

because they often find themselves at the nexus of the civilian-military intersection. Charged with shaping the morals, attitudes, and character of the personnel assigned to their commands, chaplains have an insightful perspective into the moral values of the society, for the young men and women entering the military bring those values with them. Therefore, any civilian-military values-gap will be especially apparent to chaplains. Because of this, it is likely to be chaplains who will be poised to play the most decisive role in the way the military community responds to this values-crisis. I offer this thesis then, as a word of clarity and encouragement to those clergy in uniform who see themselves as builders and preservers of moral and spiritual community. Because I am a Navy chaplain, most of my analogies and examples will be drawn from the Navy-Marine Corps vernacular and history. However, the points I make will almost certainly have identical parallels in the Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard as well.

CHAPTER TWO

MORAL VISION, DECLINE, AND REFORM

Marshall's Vision

In May of 1951 Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall sent a memorandum to the secretaries of all three armed services. The memorandum said in part:

> It is in the national interest that personnel serving in the Armed Forces be protected in the realization in and development of moral, spiritual, and religious values consistent with the religious beliefs of the individuals concerned. To this end, it is the duty of commanding officers in every echelon to develop to the highest possible degree the conditions and influences calculated to promote the health, morals, and spiritual values of the personnel under their command.[1]

Such an overt emphasis on moral values was no surprise to anyone who knew the retired five-star Army general. Marshall, who went on to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in rebuilding post-war Europe, was a man known for his faith who regularly spoke in spiritual terms. In a June, 1941 address to Trinity Episcopal College in Hartford, Connecticut, General Marshall, then the Chief of Staff for the United States Army, said:

> We are building that morale—not on supreme confidence in our ability to conquer and subdue other peoples; not in reliance on things of steel and the super-excellence of guns and planes and bombsights. We are building it on things infinitely more potent. We are building it *on belief*, for it is what men *believe* that makes them invincible. We have sought for something more than enthusiasm, something finer and higher than optimism or self-confidence, something not merely of the intellect or the emotions but rather something in the spirit of the man, something encompassed only by the soul.[2]

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[1] Richard G. Hutcheson, Jr., *The Churches and the Chaplaincy* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 149.

[2] Frederick W. Haberman, ed., *Peace: 1951-1970, Nobel Lectures Including Presentation Speeches and Laureates' Biographies* (London: World Scientific, 1997), 70.

It is not an overstatement to say that there have been few greater champions for the realization of moral values in the military than George C. Marshall. His 1951 memorandum did far more than summarize his own feelings, but represented a new turn in what historians of the chaplaincy call the character education movement. To be sure, classes in morals, hygiene, and etiquette had been taught by chaplains well before Marshall's time (as far back as the Revolutionary War when the military chaplaincy was first established). In most cases chaplains themselves initiated the classes. However, the Marshall memorandum was clearly aimed at commanding officers. While it was no secret that chaplains would be the ones who ran these programs, the weight of responsibility now fell squarely upon commanders, and by no less than the Secretary of Defense.

Marshall's directive gained immediate traction among the highest levels of leadership in each of the four services. The Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps issued a joint letter less than three months later stating that the protection and development of moral standards is a responsibility of leadership. The letter directed commanding officers to "ensure that all personnel are reached by group instructions and by personal interviews on all matters that promote the realization and development of moral, spiritual, and religious values, consistent with the religious beliefs of the individual concerned.[3] Again, while it would likely be chaplains behind the scenes developing and implementing these courses, the implication was that commanding officers were to lead from the front and ensure this training was carried out. Character

[3] Hutcheson, 149.

education had thus been given a kind of official sanction that it had not known in generations past. And it could not have come at a more fertile time in the history of the American military.

Former Chief of Naval Chaplains, Richard Hutcheson, in his defining book, *The Churches and the Chaplaincy,* traces the history of character education in the military from its earliest manifestations during the colonial era to its ascendancy and eventual decline in the 1960s and 70s. According to Hutcheson, no other era in the history of the American military was as ripe for the massive implementation of character education as the post-war era of the 1950s. The fifties were a high-water mark of religion in our society. Church membership roles were turning in record numbers, missionary societies were sending out wave after wave of young men and women to foreign lands, and the emergence of city-wide or "mass-evangelism" campaigns was alerting a society to a new dimension of personal and vibrant religious faith.

Of course, calling this era a high-water season of religion is perhaps more a formal observation than an objective assessment of abiding religious values. While during the fifties the phrase "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance, and "In God We Trust" adopted as our national motto, for many Americans, this was a time of troubling disparity. Churches may have been on every street corner and busting at the doors; but equally as pervasive were separate bathrooms and "whites only" signs. Hutcheson doesn't draw this out in his characterization of the era. But he does rightly point out the implications of the draft occurring within a society that at least gave formal assent to basic religious beliefs. Enacted to maintain a large standing force capable of

meeting the Cold War threat, the draft meant millions of able-bodied young men revolving through the doors of the military institution. As Hutcheson, an active-duty chaplain at the time, observed, "The climate was never more favorable for a massive experiment in clergy dominated teaching to a general adult population of moral values derived from religious systems."[4]

With the Marshall memorandum signaling the official "go," chaplains began to make character education their dominant institutional interest. While programs across the services varied slightly, Hutcheson identifies five common characteristics they all shared:

1. They were designed and promoted by chaplains, but adopted as command programs under line sponsorship, the participation of chaplains as instructors or discussion leaders being viewed as a military staff function rather than an ecclesiastical function.
2. They were viewed as separate and distinct from the religious programs in which chaplains function as clergymen leading church-oriented religious activities.
3. Religion (generally a form of civil religion) was an element in the content and orientation of all such programs.
4. The basic aims of the programs were the teaching of morality, the fostering of human growth and self-realization, and enhancement of interpersonal relations.
5. The programs were aimed at all military personnel, regardless of religious or non-religious preferences, and attendance at classes and discussion sessions was generally compulsory. They were frequently incorporated into command training schedules for all hands, along with training in rifle marksmanship, fire fighting, first aid, and personal hygiene.[5]

The programs were tailored for implementation at the three basic strata or transition points of service in the military—recruit training, enlisted or officer schools, and operational or overseas commands. This kind of successive training was known as the

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[4] Hutcheson, 147.

[5] Ibid., 145-146.

"cradle-to-the-grave" program, and reinforced the belief that character education was a lifelong process.

Ambiguity and Decline

As robust and ubiquitous as the character movement began, it saw a precipitous decline during the sixties. For one thing, what was meant by "character" was never precisely defined. Drawing from some of the insights of the newly emerging behavioral sciences, chaplains began thinking more in terms of character guidance than character education. Hutcheson notes that "increasingly, simple ethical teaching was replaced by a broader emphasis on growth and development of the whole person. Lectures gave way to group discussion. An attempt to teach moral principles was replaced by an attempt to encourage the development of personal value systems."[6] Another decisive issue in the decline of the character education movement was the ambiguity created by the fact that while chaplains taught the courses, they were carried out under the auspices of command leadership. The Marshall memorandum and the ensuing circulars all underscored that moral and spiritual health was a commander's responsibility: "It is the duty of commanding officers at every echelon . . .". While there were a number of commanding officers who greeted the directive with enthusiasm, many others continued to see it as a chaplain's program, voluntary, and not mission-essential. Chaplains, on the other hand, had mixed feelings themselves. Those who felt more strongly committed to denominational religion were typically averse to the civil religion presented in the

[6] Hutcheson, 158.

courses. Many even thought such generic characterizations of faith and spirituality were a threat to genuine religious commitment. Others felt the classes took too much of their time and kept them away from their more primary religious or sacramental duties.

With many commanding officers and chaplains unsure about the best way to handle the responsibility, if at all, commitment to the program suffered at every level. In the end, Hutcheson believes that the movement foundered because of the basic ambiguity of its nature. "Sold as a command program, it never enjoyed command support, except from that minority of line officers with a deep concern for morality and human growth."[7]

> As a chaplain's program, however, it never enjoyed the full support of chaplains either. Many of those who saw their ministry primarily in church-oriented terms perceived it as a religiously non-essential extra—at worst a threat to religion, at best a consumer of time better devoted elsewhere. Its slow demise in the sixties was mourned by few in either the line or the Chaplain Corps.[8]

Unexpected Reform

When Hutcheson put down his pen in 1975, the state of character education in the U.S. military was smoldering at best. He could never have foreseen the changes that would occur in both the military and in society and how these changes would impact the way the military would come to see the very issue of character itself. Within a two-year period, from 1973-1975, America saw the end of both the draft and its involvement in Vietnam. Few realized how the closing of these two interrelated chapters of American history would alter the demographic and persona of the military culture. Almost overnight, a critical mass of our armed forces departed, leaving behind an all-volunteer

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[7] Hutcheson, 161.

[8] Ibid.

force, or AVF. The chief difference between the newly conscious AVF and the standing forces of the Vietnam generation was that its members were now literally *volunteers*; they actually wanted to be in the military. It was no insignificant choice—to openly identify with an institution that had suffered so greatly in the public eye. Despite the many benefits one gains from joining the military, a decision to wear the uniform in the mid-seventies was unarguably a counter-cultural move. The unpopularity with a war that many felt had been fought and politicized for other than noble purposes—exacerbated by events like the My Lai massacre—had created a public disdain, or at a minimum, distrust for the military institution. Veterans of that time still talk about being warned by their superiors not to wear their uniforms in public for fear of assault or in the least, a verbal haranguing. One former fighter pilot remarked that the mission for those who decided to remain in the military during the seventies was simple: "Do your job and stay below the radar."[9]

Thus, for many in uniform, the years immediately after Vietnam were the beginning of a new "us and them" way of seeing things. While draftees could understandably grumble about their plight and quietly blame the institution, volunteers were in recovery mode, and tended to place more of the blame on society. For the officer corps the malaise of Vietnam wore off slowly. Many of those in command during the middle-to-late seventies felt like they were waking up from a "drunken stupor," unsure of what to make of the "previous night's activity."[10] Nevertheless, while large numbers of

[9] Interview with retired Navy fighter pilot and commanding officer, Boston, MA, July 15, 2008.

[10] Ibid.

officers found their way out of the military and into more mainstream vocations, many others chose to stay, believing something could be salvaged of their professional community.

Partly in an effort to recover a sense of identity, partly out of post-war restlessness, military leadership across the services began to turn inward and work to reform the way its officers thought of their profession. Massive time and energy were spent redefining standards of conduct, tightening the officer evaluation process, and defining with more clarity the uniqueness of the military vocation. Hallmarking this reform movement was a revival of military ethics in the advanced-officer curriculums at each of the service war colleges. Courses in the classics, character development, and moral reasoning were now offered and complemented courses on strategy and foreign policy. One excellent example was the "Stockdale Course." In 1978, Medal of Honor recipient and former Vietnam POW, Admiral James Stockdale, collaborated with professor Joseph Brennan to teach a groundbreaking primer on moral philosophy. Drawing from vivid accounts of his nearly eight-year experience of torture and resistance as a prisoner in the "Hanoi Hilton," Stockdale, with Brennan's assistance, taught before overflowing lecture halls at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Here officers, eager to soak in the lessons from this decorated war hero, flocked to listen to Stockdale's stories coupled with readings from figures like Aristotle, Epictetus and Boethius. The lectures were eventually published in the book *Foundations of Moral Obligation* and included selections from Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Kant, Mill, the Bible,

and a host of other great thinkers and sources.[11] Virtually every officer who served in the Navy and Marine Corps during the late seventies and early eighties felt the impact of Stockdale's presence. Through his writings and speeches, he came to redefine for an entire generation of military men and women what it meant to be an officer of moral character, a warrior who did the hard but necessary work of philosophy. In the wake of the ethical and organizational ambiguities of Vietnam, and the subsequent identity crisis facing the officer corps, this "voice from the hermetic" was a godsend.

If the reform movement in the officer ranks began in the late seventies, it culminated during the eighties. A majority of Americans stood behind the Reagan administration's face-off with the Soviet Union and largely supported the priority of national security and military spending. Into this new climate, members of the armed forces began to come out of their collective shell and enjoyed a sense of pride and affirmation they had not known for years. While the fault lines between the military and society were there, the eighties witnessed somewhat of a repair in this relationship. Much of this was due to America's increasing recognition of what Tom Brokaw, a decade later, would call, the "Greatest Generation." The decade of the eighties saw a growing acknowledgment of the unparalleled sacrifices of the G.I. generation. Who can forget Ronald Reagan's famous June 6, 1984, "Boys of Pointe du Hoc" speech given on the cliffs of Normandy forty years after Darby's rangers had scaled those cliffs in the face of withering German machine-gun fire? Gathering under the bluffs of the D-Day beaches, Reagan not only paid tribute to the generation that saved the free world from tyranny; but

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[11] Joseph Gerard Brennan, *Foundations of Moral Obligation: A Practical Guide to Ethics and Morality* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1992).

he used the images of freedom versus tyranny to characterize the Cold War crises of our own times. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 only affirmed Reagan's characterization in the minds of many Americans and especially military men and women: a strong nation and military with a clear-cut identity and a moral center of gravity can leverage freedom and democracy in the least likely of places.

CHAPTER THREE

A CRISIS OF VALUE SYSTEMS

A New Era in Political Leadership

With the passing of the eighties, the military found itself facing challenges that it did not expect; challenges that would eventually reopen or widen the old fault lines and make the civilian-military gap more pronounced than ever. At one level, there was the challenge of drawing down forces. In the absence of the Cold War threat, new domestic economic priorities rose to take center stage. This meant the military community had to become more efficient and markedly smaller. Thus, the nineties witnessed the massive base realignment and closures effort or BRAC. Simply put, bases and infrastructure were going away, and with them, jobs. Promotion channels were bottlenecked and good Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines were failing to advance. The de-emphasis on military spending signaled a new focus for the nation; one where a new social agenda would begin to capture the imagination of the public.

Symbolic of this new agenda was the election of President William Jefferson Clinton in 1992. An effective and popular governor in his home state, Clinton was also an impressive scholar and arguably a political genius. More significant for the civilian-military gap, however, was the fact that in the Oval Office was the first president since Franklin D. Roosevelt who had not served in any branch of the armed forces. Moreover, not only had he not served in uniform, but he had openly and aggressively opposed

America's involvement in Vietnam. By the time President Clinton took office, men who in the late sixties and early seventies were young corporals and first lieutenants were now senior officers; some even approaching the rank of general or admiral. Old pains do not die easy. Whether one believed in President Clinton's philosophy of governance or not was not the issue. Indeed, clearly a majority of Americans did. The issue was rather what the new president represented to many in the military establishment. To be fair, Clinton's presidency represented what every presidency represents to a man or woman in uniform—the final authority. Obedience to the orders of the commander in chief is central to the oath that every service person takes. However, the rub was there. Here was a president who symbolized the opposition to a cause that many in the military were still trying to interpret. How many of our service men and women came home from Vietnam to face ridicule and contempt from protesters and activists? How many were absorbed back into their communities and jobs, unable to talk about what they'd seen and experienced? Many Vietnam veterans were still ambivalent about it all; many others certain that the freedom of a democratic South Vietnam was worth it. The issue therefore, was not so much with President Clinton the man, as much as with the movement he called to memory.

If there *was* one issue that brought the widening civilian-military gap to crisis level, it was President Clinton's 1992 campaign promise to lift the ban prohibiting openly homosexual men and women from serving in the military. Once he was in office and the effort in motion, a firestorm of controversy ensued as the Senate began conducting hearings to explore the issue. Congressional representatives, political lobbyists, active

and retired military personnel, sociologists, psychiatrists, senior military officials, law professors, and more, all weighed-in heavily. The chief premise upon which those in favor of lifting the ban argued was discrimination.[1] Drawing from some of the recent legal challenges to the policy, opponents of the ban argued that to prohibit homosexuals from serving was a direct infringement of civil rights. In fact, for many of those opposed to the ban, if not all, the preclusion of homosexuals from military service was analogous to the policies of discrimination and segregation against African-Americans which characterized previous generations of American history. The right to privacy, First Amendment freedoms, due process, and equal protection—opponents of the ban believed the military's exclusion policy to be openly hostile to these cardinal freedoms and guarantees.[2] Moreover, many noted that the issue of homosexuals serving in the military was not really the issue at stake. Homosexuals had always served in the military—albeit unbeknownst to most of their peers and superiors. The issue therefore, was whether or not homosexuals could be allowed to be honest about being gay; whether our democratic government was going to continue to suppress the voice and rights of the few in the interests of those vital, yet illusive, concepts of mission and morale.

On the other side of the controversy, the military was basically of one voice. Senior military officers, led by the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that to allow openly homosexual persons into the military would have a devastatingly negative impact upon military morale and discipline, ultimately threatening the readiness of the

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[1] Captain Melissa Wells-Petry, "The Power to Raise and Support Armies: The Homosexual Exclusion Policy in Perspective," LL.M. Thesis, Army Judge Advocate School, 1993, 2.

[2] Ibid., 6.

force.[3] It is well known, for example, that military units frequently operate under extreme circumstances where personal privacy is minimal and trust indispensable. Military leaders claimed that placing both heterosexual and homosexual members together in such conditions (squad-bay berthing, shared showers and bathrooms, extremis-in-field settings, etc.) would erode trust and unit cohesion. It was essentially a functionalist argument, the logic being that the military, in order to accomplish its mission, *must* discriminate. For example, proponents of the ban argued that the military discriminates every day on the basis of height and weight, physical and mental ability, language, youth and age.[4] Further, people with certain handicaps, single parents, felons, conscientious objectors, and persons with any number of medical conditions are either disallowed from serving or limited in their capacity to serve.[5]

Over a six-month period Congress held hearings in which it received testimony from both supporters and opponents of the ban. The final compromise that was reached became known as the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy (1993)," in which recruits would no longer be asked about their sexual orientation; but would be considered incompatible with military service should they be found committing homosexual acts or admit they were homosexual. Both sides were largely dissatisfied with what they felt was a compromise; the effect of which only underscored the ever-widening gulf between the

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[3] Fred E. Cleveland and Mark A Ohl, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell—Policy Analysis and Interpretation," Master's Thesis (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 1994), 2-3.

[4] Wells-Petry, 3.

[5] Ibid., 2.

values and priorities of the military culture and the social and moral values gaining strength in American society.

The Homosexuality Debate: Paradigms in Tension

The military's legal basis for the argument is laid out in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) Article 125 under "Sodomy." Article 125 states "Any person subject to this chapter who engages in unnatural carnal copulation with another person of the same or opposite sex or with an animal is guilt of sodomy. Penetration, however slight, is sufficient to complete the offense."[7] The explicit nature of the military position regarding homosexuality is admittedly striking when compared with the growing acceptance of the gay lifestyle within contemporary culture. While the military's position is nourished by some significant philosophical streams in the history of Western ethics, it is also countered by a growing body of scientific and sociological analysis. Because of this, the subject is worth exploring at greater length.

Natural Law and Science

The first thing that strikes theologians and ethicists with respect to the sodomy clause is the unmistakable ring of the natural law tradition: for example, "Any person who engages in *unnatural* carnal copulation . . . ". Natural law, which is concerned with the ends for which something or someone is created, has been one of the central pillars in the history of Western ethics. Having its antecedents in Stoicism, its basic formulation was most clearly developed by St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. Aquinas,

[7] Department of Defense, *Manual for Courts Martial*, A2-27.

considered the chief representative of the great medieval synthesis between classical philosophy and Christian doctrine, writes in his *Summa Theologica*:

> Since everything that is subject to the divine providence is regulated and measured by the eternal law…it is evident that all things participate in the eternal law in a certain way because it is imprinted upon them through their respective inclinations to their proper actions and ends. Rational creatures are under divine providence in a more excellent way than the others since by providing for themselves and others they share in the action of providence themselves. They participate in eternal reason in that they have a natural inclination to their proper actions and ends. Such participation in the eternal law by rational creatures is called the natural law.[8]

It follows then that because our natural inclinations are "imprinted" upon us by God, then doing something that is contrary to its appointed function or end would therefore be considered, unnatural, and thus at odds with its intended moral purpose of participating in the eternal law of God. To use a modern architectural phrase, the natural law tradition makes the case that "form follows function." For example, one can discern the purpose or function of a building by looking at its form. What does its shape suggest that it was created to do? What did the builder have in mind when he or she gave it these visible properties? What do its features suggest are at the heart of its highest and best use? The mainstream of the natural law tradition sees within the creation or form of the sexes the reflection of a clear purpose or intended function. Men are men, and women are women. Their anatomical organs not only complement, but their union is indispensable to the propagation of the human race. This is why Thomas Aquinas

[8] Paul E. Sigmund, trans. and ed., *St Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1988), 46.

included sexual intercourse and education of children as one of the three basic precepts of natural law.[9]

St. Paul seems to come close to prefiguring the tradition when in an illustration of God's passive judgment, he declares:

> For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.[10]

It is important to note that in Paul's usage, "nature" is not necessarily to be equated with whatever the reality of the situation is. Indeed, it is clear that for Paul, the reality was often the problem – sin "rampant in the world." Along these lines, a man, for example, may experience what he considers to be a "natural drive" to participate in homosexual behavior. This is his "reality," and indeed observable by others. However, Paul viewed nature in light of creation, and more specifically, in light of a purposeful Creator whose intent has been clearly reflected both in experience and Scripture. "Male and female He created them. God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply,'" Genesis declares.[11] Thus, according to Paul and eventually Aquinas, a homosexual impulse, while observable and yes in a sense, "natural," is actually *para physin* or against nature, an observation attested to not only on scriptural grounds but also by the fact that even in the midst of a homosexual act, a man's sperm are empirically swimming for a female egg.

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[9] *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas,* Vol 2 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1971), 222.

[10] Romans 1:26-27.

[11] Genesis 1:27-28.

The claim then, that there is a genetic predisposition to same-sex attractions, while in fact supported by more and more scientific analyses, still in no way speaks to the traditional understanding of "nature" in natural law. Christian theologian and ethicist, Richard Hays, writes, "Surely Christian ethics does not want to hold that all inborn traits are good and desirable. The analogy of alcoholism, while only an analogy, is perhaps helpful: a considerable body of evidence suggests that some people are born with a predisposition to alcoholism."[12] In Hays's view, our approach to people wrestling with homosexuality then must "carefully distinguish between our disapproval of the behavior associated with it from our loving support of the person…".[13]

On the other hand, there is indeed a growing body of empirically-based analysis that is challenging some of the basic premises of traditional natural law theory, especially at it relates to normative claims about homosexuality. To begin with, biology continues to provide data that suggests a certain *given-ness* to one's sexual orientation. Researchers have offered evidence, for example, that homosexuality may originate in the genetic makeup of the human zygote, and may be related to chromosomal and hormonal anomalies.[14] While the illusive "gay gene" has not yet been discovered, studies have shown that sexual orientation does tend to cluster in families.[15] Moreover, two notable

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[12] Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1996), 398.

[13] Ibid.

[14] James A. Monteleone, M.D., "The Physiological Aspects of Sex," in Human Sexuality and Personhood: Proceedings of the Workshop for the Hierarchies of the United States and Canada Sponsored by the Pope John Center through a Grant from the Knights of Columbus (St. Louis: Pope John Center, 1981).

[15] D. H. Hamer et al., "A Linkage between DNA Markers on the X Chromosome and Male Sexual Orientation," *Science* 261 (1993): 321-27.

studies have found marked physiological differences in the brains of homosexual and heterosexual men, specifically in the hypothalamus.[16] In the field of sociology, there is evidence to suggest that sexual attraction in humans is neither uniformly heterosexual nor continuously plastic and fully open to manipulation by the will. In this way, sexual orientation has been found to often exist on a spectrum between exclusively heterosexual and exclusively homosexual.[17] And what about other species? Clearly certain non-human species in the animal kingdom routinely exhibit homosexual activity, a phenomenon that has provoked a number of pioneering studies in the areas of biology and evolutionary theory.[18]

What has the natural law tradition to say to findings such as these? Or perhaps a better question: What does contemporary science have to say to the tradition? Social ethicist Dr. John Hart offers a more recent formulation of natural law in light of the challenges that science is presenting.

> An inherent weakness of many natural law theories and systems is that their proponents tend to freeze for all time the understandings and principles developed in one particular time period, and within one particular culture…A difficulty in all these discussions is the attempt to absolutize perspectives into a single manifestation of the "natural," rather than acknowledge that it might be possible for differ-

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[16] D. F Swaab and M. A. Hofman, "An Enlarged Suprachiasmatic Nucleus in Homosexual Men," *Brain Research* 537 (1990): 141-48; S. LeVay, "A Difference in Hypothalamic Structure between Heterosexual and Homosexual Men," *Science* 253 (1991): 1034-37.

[17] Christine E. Gudorf, "The Bible and Science on Sexuality," in *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 122.

[18] See Bruce Bagemihl, *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); and Joan Roughgarden, *Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

> ent individuals to have "natural" (according to *their* nature) orientations or modes of behavior that contradict each other.[19]

In this view, then, natural law is not necessarily dismissed in principle, but as a body of norms, it becomes more clearly understood when we take in the whole of the data, especially as more information emerges from empirical analyses. In the case of homosexual behavior, because scientific observation continues to identify it as something of a *given* among many species, this *given* becomes new data for a more mature and updated reading of the natural law. Thus, one could say that it is nature's law that people have different *natural* inclinations.

All of this begs the question of the relationship between the descriptive sciences and ethics. On the one hand, there is no doubt that empirical research can illuminate the reality of the situations we face. Professor Lisa Cahill, who has done much work in sexual ethics, points out that while empirical studies [in sexual behavior] do "bear out the pervasiveness of the institutionalization of sex in marriage and family, they also clarify the circumstances of variance."[20] That is to say, scientific observation often clarifies phenomena which, in times past, theologians or moral philosophers were not privy to. This does not mean their premises are necessarily overturned. But it does mean a responsibility to bring the emerging empirical data into dialogue with respective religious or moral traditions. For Cahill, the decisive question is "which 'naturally' occurring and

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[19] John Hart, *Sacramental Commons: Christian Ecological Ethics* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006) 125-126.

[20] Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Using Empirical Information," in *From Christ to the World: Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 177.

even functionally 'healthy' facts, states, and relations also represent moral ideals."[21] She concludes, however, by stressing the limits of empirical evidence alone. Writing from the Christian tradition, she says:

> It must be remembered that even empirical data are organized and interpreted with the help of categories that are themselves not wholly value free. . . . Empirical evidence can be appropriated meaningfully in Christian ethics only if interpreted in light of other, complementary sources: Scripture, tradition, and normative, as distinct from descriptive, accounts of the human.[22]

In the last analysis, the observation that both empirical research and tradition are needed to help us determine what is moral is not a new one. In fact, when Aquinas, nearly a thousand years ago, formulated his conception of the natural law, he was in large part, doing just that—from his tradition, reflecting upon what he observed in humankind. "It is evident," he wrote, "that all things participate in the eternal law in a certain way because it is imprinted upon them through their respective inclinations to their proper actions and ends."[23] What distinguishes the work of an Aquinas from more contemporary works of empirical science is that his observations were openly informed and shaped by his understanding of God as purposeful in His creation and the Scriptures as abiding in their normative value. It is not so much the case of religious tradition trumping observation, but informing it. For in the end, as Cahill alluded to, all people come to observe and interpret data with certain values at work informing their findings and even the way they approach the subject. The question becomes, "Which set of values and

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[21] Cahill, 179.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Sigmund, 46.

traditions will one choose for this process?" And, not to be forgotten, "What fruit will that choice bear?"

Individual Liberty and the Principle of Utility

While the natural law tradition has provided a philosophical basis for much of the UCMJ, more often than not, military commanders, when seeking to determine the rightness or wrongness of a policy, have far more utilitarian questions in mind. "What will such and such behavior do to the good order, trust, and discipline of my crew or battalion?" "What impact will this policy have upon the members of my command and our collective ability to carry out the mission?" "What behaviors promote the greatest good?" "Which ones will do the greatest damage?" The implications surrounding these admittedly practical questions are why the homosexual issue is particularly a concern in all-male infantry or ship-board settings. Military leaders have argued that there is simply no way to avoid the multitude of situations inherent in an austere military environment where people undress, relieve themselves, and shower together. Many who are familiar with such harsh conditions believe that to allow openly homosexual individuals to serve would be no different than allowing mixed bathing. Columnist Mike McManus contends that for heterosexual men, "having to shower with gays is an invasion of privacy. It is as if female soldiers were forced to shower with young males."[26]

Moreover, the issue of sexual harassment becomes problematic. Even aboard ships, for example, where personal and gender privacies are stringently maintained,

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[26] Toner, 104.

tensions and innuendo between members of the opposite sex still occur. One of the most sacred refuges from this climate is the Sailor's berthing space—where he or she sleeps, lives, and relaxes. While the Sailor cannot always avoid unwanted persons in his or her workspace, that Sailor can always "flee to berthing." If homosexuals are allowed to serve, many feel that even this last refuge of privacy would be removed. Thus a very real and practical concern for military leaders is that once the day's work is done and the crew is allowed to go ashore, subterranean pursuits "held at bay in the showers," will be commenced.

Dale Carpenter, a leader in the gay community and professor of law, concedes the difficulty about the shower issue; but believes that allowing such a scenario would, in the end, actually improve things. According to Carpenter:

> Under present policy, the straight soldier doesn't know who might be leering at him in the shower. So he has to wonder about everybody—hardly a reassuring prospect. Under the policy of openness, he'll have a better idea of who might find some of his 2,000 body parts especially appealing. Thus he can take whatever modest precautions are available to minimize his exposure.[27]

For Carpenter, the burden lies on the majority to take reasonable precautions in light of the few. It is an assertion that raises the tension between individual liberty and the principle of utility. Which concept takes precedence for the military? Certainly it is no secret that the military's emphasis on mission is of a utilitarian character. The basic oath of office that every service person swears to uphold includes a pledge to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, to bear true faith and allegiance, and to obey

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[27] Dale Carpenter, "Gays in the Military Showers," *Independent Gay Forum*, entry posted January 17, 2000, http://www.indegayforum.org/news/show/26630.html (accessed November 24, 2008).

the orders of the President and the orders of one's ranking officers. This oath necessarily means the emptying of certain individual rights and liberties. For example, the right of free-speech is (to a degree) voluntarily relinquished. Thus, protests and challenges to authority, while indispensable features in the unfolding of democracy, are dramatically circumscribed in the military. While a soldier does have recourse to challenge authority when he or she feels they have been given an immoral or inappropriate order, there is a definite process to follow which still maintains respect for that same authority.

On the other hand, an emphasis on individual liberty has also played a major role in the history and development of our military. The integration of African-Americans into our nation's fighting forces in the late 1940s is a bright example of social values positively shaping, even fundamentally altering the demographic of the military. Women, as well, have in recent decades, made significant contributions in our armed services, and taken on leadership roles which were withheld from them in the past. In light of these developments what is clear is that while there is a tension in the military between liberty and utility, the two poles are not mutually exclusive, nor are they necessarily parties in a zero-sum, win-lose paradigm. In fact, in the case of African-Americans serving during World War II, an argument could be made that, in addition to civil rights, utilitarian concerns were a driving force in their integration. African-Americans served valiantly in a cause that desperately needed their numbers. Stories abound, not only of individuals who performed with great bravery, but whole units who distinguished themselves on two fronts—against the Nazis in Europe, and against societal segregation back home in the U.S. How then does the liberty-utility tension apply to homosexuals

serving? First it will be helpful to isolate the principle behind utilitarianism. Its most chief articulator, Jeremy Bentham, writes:

> By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action whatsoever, and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government.[28]

Simply put, utilitarianism seeks to determine the rightness or wrongness of an action or a policy by determining whether or not it will produce the greatest good (what Bentham calls "happiness") for the for greatest number. It follows then that whatever produces pain or "opposes the happiness" for the greatest number is to be avoided. While one can see in this philosophy of ethics the trajectories for democratic conceptions of government, one also might instinctively recoil at the theory of value behind it. In effect, something is "good" or "moral," if it brings the greatest number happiness or pleasure. Not only is this theory of value hedonistic, but can we imagine the implications if, left unaided by other theories, it were to have its way? What if the group's idea of pleasure is the oppression of others? Moreover where is the place given for dissent? Imagine a world where rigid utilitarianism was the law of the land. It would become a world where "might makes right."

But all of this does not mean utilitarianism as a principle is altogether flawed. Rather, as Alasdair MacIntyre has pointed out, the original proponents of the theory did

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[28] Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1948), 2.

not usually endorse it to be crudely abstracted apart from some very definite ideas or value judgments about what constituted the good. MacIntyre reminds us:

> When utilitarians speak of the greatest happiness they are often in practice speaking of a quite specific goal for action rather than of the generalized concept of their theoretical appetites. This goal is that of the public welfare, and it is a goal peculiarly relevant to those areas of life in which Bentham was especially interested….Prisons and hospitals, penal codes and constitutional processes...[29]

Thus, in Bentham's case, when dealing with prisons and hospitals:

> It was possible to ask and to answer adequately, the question of how many people's lot will be bettered and how many people's lot will be worsened by such and such measures. For we have obvious and established criteria for faring well or ill in these areas. Will ill-health be increased or diminished? Will the attaching of this rather than that penalty to this crime diminish or increase the frequency of its occurrence?[30]

The point is that utilitarianism in practice is almost always directed toward values which inform the meanings of the terms "good" or "pleasure" or even "moral." Unfortunately, this holds true even in scandalous cases. "Mob rule," for example has often meant the perpetration of the most vicious injustices. And yet even in this case, when the purported "good" of the whole is really something more akin to evil—like Hitler's "final solution" for the "Jewish problem" —more than raw utilitarianism is at work. Some body of values or (un)ethical content is informing what constitutes the "good" of the whole.

What this means is that utilitarianism as an ethical theory is more or less, instrumental. Whereas natural law theory or Kantian systems of ethics provide some definite content for moral norms (what Aquinas called "precepts"), utilitarianism simply calls "good" whatever brings happiness to the greatest number. Thus, for it to be useful

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[29] Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 237.

[30] Ibid.

as an ethic, it needs a guiding or corollary set of real values. In fact, such values, whether noble or base, are implicit. The challenge then for the group, institution, or state that operates according to a utilitarian ethic is to deliberately and continuously articulate and evaluate these values, so that they are nourishing and correcting the process.

Utility and the "Good"

What then are the guiding values which typically inform the military's utilitarian dynamic? What ethical content defines what the commander thinks of as the "good?" In truth, whole books have been written delineating and describing what are the military values or "soldierly" virtues which make the institution and the warrior so unique. One can mine policy papers, speeches, even prayers given by military leaders to gain a sense of the moral content which provides the military with its guiding reference points. In 1962, General Douglas MacArthur, in an address to the cadets of West Point Military Academy, said:

> Others will debate the controversial issues, national and international, which divide men's minds. But serene, calm, aloof, you stand as the Nation's war guardian, as its lifeguard from the raging tides of international conflict, as its gladiator in the arena of battle…Your guidepost stands out like a ten-fold beacon in the night: Duty, honor, country.[31]

"Duty," "Honor," and "Country" have been to this day canonized in the Army as values which define the soldier and shape the goals of the institution. We could add a whole host of others to include the Navy and Marine Corps' "Honor," "Courage," and

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[31] General Douglas MacArthur's Thayer Award Speech – "Duty, Honor, Country" (1962).

"Commitment," the Coast Guard's *Semper Paratus* or "Always Ready," and the Air Force's more descriptive "Integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do." While it is clear that some of these values are more instrumental or formal in nature, they are all predicated upon one value or moral assertion that serves the military and - more to the point - the commanding officer, as something of a "magnetic North." Article One of the Military's Code of Conduct states simply, "I am an American fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense."[32] The value which forms the basis for the military's ethic is the assertion that *freedom requires sacrifice.* It is both the axiom upon which our nation endures and the weight each soldier takes upon himself when he or she raises their right hand and swears to place their life in harm's way for the nation.

While much could be explored about what freedom actually means, or about what kinds of sacrifice are necessary to ensure this freedom, such questions often become overly reductionistic. Soldiers know exactly what this means, and probably most Americans do as well. Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr captures this sublime truth that freedom, indeed civilization, is carried along not by impersonal or deterministic forces, but by the sacrifices of individual men and women. He writes:

> The preservation of cultures and civilizations is frequently possible only as individuals disregard their own success and failure and refuse to inquire too scrupulously into the possibilities and probabilities of maintaining their own life in a given course of action. Thus effective collective historical action depends to a considerable degree upon the individual's contempt for or indifference to, his own fate; an indifference which is possible only if the

[32] Toner, 90.

> individual possesses an implicit or explicit faith in a dimension of existence which is deeper and higher than physical life.[33]

Freedom requires sacrifice. It is of tremendous importance to clarify this value as the rock from whence the military mind is hewn. While commanding officers speak mostly in terms of "mission effectiveness" as their overarching value, this term is really something of an emanation of that greater value of the inextricable relationship between freedom and sacrifice. The mission or the effectiveness of the mission only matters if it is bound to the ostensible cause of freedom. And freedom, as we are describing it, is literally unintelligible apart from sacrifice. If someone today experiences civil liberties and freedoms to do this or that, it is usually because somewhere, someone has sacrificed their freedoms and civil liberties.

Thus when we take this value into consideration as the guiding or corollary value of the military's utilitarian ethic, we can see why, for a commanding officer, the behaviors and policies which will promote the greatest good are those which promote the ability of the men and women assigned to their command to foster an environment of sacrificial service. The military unit—be it ship, squadron, or battalion—must be an environment where individual liberties are always weighed against their impact on the capacity for the whole to retain its primary ethos of sacrifice. That openly gay soldiers would be willing to lay down their lives for their fellow-soldiers and nation is a certainty. However, for the military's part, the earnestness of particular individuals to serve and

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[33] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: Human Destiny,* Vol. 2 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 88-89.

even sacrifice is not as much the issue, as are command climate and the readiness of the whole. How then, would openly homosexual men and women impact that whole?

Conclusions: Identity, Race, and a Culture of Sacrifice4

Twentieth-century French philosopher Michel Foucault warned against endowing "sex with a disproportionate centrality among human experience and goods," thus "unduly marking sexual orientation as a constituent of personal identity."[34] Foucault's position was especially paradoxical in light of the fact that he himself "struggled to define the meaning of sexuality in relation to his own homosexuality, with which he apparently was never at ease."[35] Lisa Cahill summarizes his view on modern conceptions our constructs of sexuality.

> The production and normalization of bodily experience as "sexuality" procures our complicity in our own subjugation, convincing us that the most important project of the self is to discover the "truth" of its sex. We capitulate when we seek the meaning of our lives in sexual identity, talk more and more about sex under the illusion that we must escape the "repression" of sex, and conceive fulfillment in terms of sexual liberation.[36]

Foucault's point is that when sexuality becomes one's preoccupation and the basis for one's identity or personhood, it thrusts an inappropriate and awkward category upon others and in fact, the whole. Sexuality, or in today's language, sexual orientation, becomes in effect, "too much information." Immediately when the category is introduced, it becomes a "constituent of personal identity." This is precisely what Foucault warned against. In fact, he saw this move as an attempt at power; an entry point

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[34] Lisa Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5.

[35] Ibid., 21.

[36] Ibid., 22.

for "surveillance" and regulation of individual bodies and of populations; particularly of women.[37] Men, goes the argument, introduced the category of sexuality in order to exploit the physical disparity between the sexes. In a twist of irony, this is what proponents of the homosexual exclusion policy have noted with respect to the arguments coming from the gay lobby. Homosexuality is felt to be no longer a behavior, but a category of personhood introduced in order to engineer a certain social outcome.

Thus, when leaders in the gay community like Professor Carpenter insist that straight soldiers need only to now minimize their exposure to those in their unit who they know to be gay, he is in fact affirming the very danger that military leaders feel homosexual men and women will bring into the unit. The sacrificial ethos that is the lifeblood of the battalion or squadron or ship is challenged at its very core. Remember Niebuhr said that it is "only as individuals . . . refuse to inquire too scrupulously into the possibilities and probabilities of maintaining their own life in a given course of action," only when individuals possess "an implicit or explicit faith in a dimension of existence which is *deeper* and *higher* than physical life" that civilizations are preserved. In an institution which must operate on the basis of higher purposes transcending individual identity, demanding that the whole alter and adjust themselves around a "scrupulously" held "given course of action," like sexual orientation, renders a mortal blow. To use a Kantian formula, if this posture were taken for every conceivable category of personhood or identity that one could conjure up, the military literally could not function, not for one day. The military's understanding of sacrifice, something it knows all too well, presumes

[37] Cahill, 21.

that preoccupations and personal prerogatives be kept in check so that the whole might accomplish its mission in the interests of freedom. This is why many civilians and military personnel believe the issue of homosexuals serving is not quite analogous to the integration of African-Americans. Because skin color is, in the words of General Colin Powell, a benign, non-behavioral characteristic," African-Americans, integrated rapidly. They brought no preoccupations or personal prerogatives that would radically undermine trust and the already limited rights of privacy that soldiers hold. Rather they brought only a desire to serve and sacrifice for their nation. Allowing open homosexuals to serve would likely invite a constant preoccupation over privacy and morale issues, and thus detract from the fundamental culture of sacrifice which enables the military to accomplish its mission. Speaking before the Senate, General Powell said:

> Skin color is a benign, non-behavioral characteristic. Sexual orientation is perhaps the most profound of human behavioral characteristics. Comparison of the two is a convenient but invalid argument. I believe the privacy rights of all Americans in uniform have to be considered, especially since those rights are often infringed by the conditions of military service.[38]

This is why the claim of discrimination and civil rights violations has, in truth, always struck the military community as awkward. "Ugly, almost evil," writes one former Army captain, "the word discrimination portends all manner of injustice and dismal failure of American ideals."[39] Perhaps it is more accurate to characterize the homosexual debate, not as a case of injustice and discrimination, but rather as a

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[38] General Colin Powell, Letter to Representative Patricia Schroeder (May 8, 1992) in David F. Burelli, *Homosexuals and the U.S. Military Personnel Policy,* 25-26 (1993); see also General Colin Powell, Gays in the Military, Hearing of the Military Forces and Personnel Subcomm. of the House Armed Service Comm. News Serv., July 21, 1993, 26.

[39] Wells-Petry, 2.

misaligned conversation altogether. Indeed, to use the words of MacIntyre, it has become one of the clearest examples of moral *interminability* that our society has witnessed. One side argues discrimination and civil rights, while the other argues from a principle of utility that must regard sacrifice as the highest good. In my own experience in the military, I have met very few, if any, service men or women who are against civil rights for all Americans. On the other hand, I am certain that most individuals from the gay community desire an effective and combat ready military. If the syntax of this debate can center on these affirmations rather than assertion and counter-assertion, power and pressure, then perhaps we can in the very least make a mature and reasoned turn both in the argument and for the future of the civil-military relationship.

CHAPTER FOUR

VALUES AWAKENING

Preserving Values, Impacting Culture

As the civilian-military gap only seemed to widen in the nineties, many military leaders believed that the more the society revised its values the more it became incumbent upon the military institution to remain a bastion, even a beacon, of moral clarity. The story of how the Navy and Marine Corps adopted its now-celebrated core values, illustrates this point.

In response to an executive summary of a 1991 report entitled, "Beyond Rhetoric: A New American Agenda for Children and Families," the chaplain of the Marine Corps, Captain Larry Ellis, wrote to the commandant, "Values to which the USMC are committed are no longer supported by the contemporary culture. This office is investigating the feasibility of a pilot workshop in the area of values formation and reinforcement."[1] In turn, the chaplain's office was asked to discuss the idea for a values workshop with the assistant commandant. The discussion was summarized in the following memorandum written by Chaplain Ellis:

> The need to defend and support the values fundamental to the United States Marine Corps requires a focused effort. The rising tide of social dissonance threatens to overwhelm the ability of the Corps to maintain its traditions and fulfill its mission. However, every crisis is a combination of danger and opportunity. The strength of the Marine Corps is leadership within a context of honor, sustained by sacrifice. This strength has the potential to remedy the

[1] Captain Eugene T. Gomulka, U.S.N., "Core Values Sustainment Training" (Point Paper for Marine Forces Pacific, February 2001).

> weakness of a culture that has forgotten that its young need to be mentored and nurtured, that a sense of honor must be taught, that for the good of all, individuals must be willing to sacrifice personal prerogatives. The Corps, therefore, has an opportunity and the obligation to protect Marines from the destructive consequences of an immoral lifestyle by teaching character and instilling a code of Honor. Success in that endeavor will not only sustain the Corps, it will also set a standard and establish a model for the nation.[2]

In response, the commandant, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., offered his wholehearted support by penning over the memorandum, "Need to investigate and get an ethics and moral values effort going!"[3] Months later, and after an intense period of research and reflection, "Honor, Courage, and Commitment" were adopted as the official core values of the United States Marine Corps. The Navy, which under the leadership of Admiral Jack Fetterman, had been paralleling the Marine Corps in its efforts to codify a set of values, decided to join the Marines and adopt the same three. The significance of this effort was enormous. Not only would it become a vital piece of naval heritage, but, more important, it demonstrated the collective sense of responsibility military leaders felt to "hold the line" against what they perceived as a rapidly dissolving societal moral fabric. To be clear, it wasn't an effort to stand *against society* as much as it was to stand out as an example *for the society*. Navy and Marine Corps leaders felt that these core values were the very ones our society needed the most.

As with any effort to codify sublime principles into practical language, there was always the chance that the core values would become just fixtures of the gung-ho establishment, catchwords or slogans at best. Not so in this case. While there have been

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[2] Gomulka, 2.

[3] Ibid.

many changes in the Navy and Marine Corps structure and priorities in recent years, it is clear that the core values have taken. In fact, the promulgation of these concepts started something of a moral values-awakening within the entire Navy-Marine Corps culture. Three years after the initial formulation of the core values, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jay Johnson, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Charles Krulak, together with the Secretary of the Navy, John Dalton, affixed their signatures to the "Core Values Charter," to be sent out to all members of the naval service. The charter declares:

> As in our past, we are dedicated to the Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment to build the foundation of trust and leadership upon which our strength is based and victory is achieved. These principles, upon which the U.S. Navy and U.S Marine Corps were founded, continue to guide us today. Every member of the naval service—active, reserve, and civilian,—must understand and live by our Core Values. For more than two hundred years, members of the naval service have stood ready to protect our nation and our freedom. We are ready today to carry out any mission; deter any conflict around the globe and, if called upon to fight, be victorious. We will be faithful to our Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment as our abiding duty and privilege.[5]

Not only is this charter posted at every ship, station, and command throughout the Navy and Marine Corps, but, more important, the principles it espouses have gained the grassroots traction that its designers had hoped for. Soon after the core values were adopted, General Krulak extended the basic training of all Marine recruits from eleven to twelve weeks in order to add a period of focused instruction in values formation. The period culminates in what has become known as the "crucible," an excruciating ordeal of sleep deprivation, forced marches, physical obstacles, and on-the-spot leadership dilemmas. All of it is meant to test one's mental and moral strength, the reward of which

[5] U.S. Navy-Marine Corps Core Values Charter, 1995.

is the right to earn the title "Marine." A subsequent commandant, General James Jones, desirous that these values be stressed throughout the entire career of Marines, coined a new initiative he called "sustainment training." The latter, which is the final step in the transformation process, is a continuous evolution through which leaders strengthen core values, cohesion, and the sense of mission and service that are the dominant characteristics of Marines.[6] In 2000 the Navy created the BEARINGS course to provide instruction and remediation for wayward Sailors. The course offers many life-skills and helps, to include career counseling, anger and stress management techniques, and financial advice. However, all of these skills are predicated on the reinforcement of the core values of honor, courage, and commitment, and the demonstration of how these values translate to everyday life.

At each of my first three duty stations, instruction in moral values and ethics was at the top of the commander's priorities and the troops' interest. During the months leading up to the Iraq War, I developed a class called "Personal Combat Readiness," which encouraged Marines to explore the foundations of moral virtue and just war. Its impact far exceeded my expectations. The Marines loved it! I found myself teaching almost nonstop—in lecture halls, in the field, in the desert during breaks in training, and so on. In a matter of weeks, attendance at the class was made compulsory for all personnel by my battalion commander. Moreover, it was adopted by the U.S. Army's Third Infantry Division, and distributed in pamphlet form to several thousand U.S. Soldiers already stationed in Kuwait. During my second tour of duty aboard the guided

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[6] Gomulka, 7.

missile cruiser *U.S.S. San Jacinto*, I was directed by the commanding officer to develop and implement a ship-wide moral leadership course to deal with the problems of fraternization, substance abuse, and poor decision-making. The classes were a huge success and ran throughout the entirety of the ship's six-month deployment. During my last tour as a training chaplain in Naples, Italy, I proposed an advanced ethics course for senior-level officers to be included in the standard "welcome aboard" training that every officer attends upon entry into the theater. The course was comprised of three modules: 101, Ethical Foundations; 201, Warrior Values; and 301, Moral Reasoning on War. Again, the response of the men and women in attendance far exceeded what I had expected. Month after month, the ethics portion received the highest marks on the officer evaluation sheets.

The truth is these accounts are not unique to my experience, but evidence of a collective desire and even hunger across the entire military for guidance and training in the area of values formation and ethics. From moral leadership training on the platoon level, to moral reasoning classes for overseas-based senior naval officers, to full-blown ethics departments at our nation's service academies (complete with visiting professorships, publications, and annual conferences), classes abound today at every echelon of command in ethics, core values, and personal growth. In response to this floodtide of interest in moral values, the Navy Chaplain Corps has made ethics and character education the theme of two of its most recent Professional Development and Training Conferences (PDTCs). The 2004 conference was entitled, "The Chaplain as Moral and Ethical Advisor in and to the Military Institution," and focused on classical

approaches to ethics and how chaplains might be more fully equipped to advise commanding officers. The 2006 course was "Character Development, Ethical Advisement, and Today's Sea Warrior," and translated the themes from the 2004 conference into character education programs a chaplain might initiate at his or her command.

Marshall Revisited

These developments only scratch the surface of the values-awakening that has been occurring in the military since the early nineties. In light of all this, it would seem that the hopes behind George Marshall's memorandum issued more than fifty years ago, have finally become realized. In his memo Marshall envisioned a military where commanding officers at every echelon of responsibility would seek to develop to the highest possible degree the conditions favorable for promoting the morals and spiritual values of the personnel under their command. While not every commanding officer gives priority to this task today, most of them do. Why, we might ask, is Marshall's vision being realized now, when during his own time, it seemed to barely get off the ground? I believe Chaplain Ellis put his finger on the reason in his 1993 summary to the commandant. "The rising tide of social dissonance threatens to overwhelm the ability of the Corps to maintain its traditions and fulfill its mission. However, every crisis is a combination of danger and opportunity." Marshall's directive, while visionary, eventually frayed into ambiguity and decline because it lacked the one element that has ironically worked to galvanize the place of moral values in the military today—*crisis*. In previous genera-

tions, the military felt less of an urgency to define what it meant by character; for character wasn't under siege. Today many in the military believe that it is. And so the question of what constitutes character no longer occupies the periphery as it did in Marshall's day. Instead, it has become one of the military's central preoccupations, a preoccupation that has meant the formation of a distinct and even estranged moral community within the American experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

MORAL COMMUNITY

The central thesis of this work is that in response to the frustrating and even interminable state of moral discourse in society, the military culture has emerged as a distinct community within which the moral life means something definite, and can thus be sustained by the encouragement and accountability of a group of equally committed peers. This emergence of the military as a distinct community within society has indeed pronounced a values-gap between the two worlds, which while having its modern origins in the establishment of the AVF, has become even more aggravated by recent demands from civilians for the military to fundamentally alter and even eject some of its historical legal and moral premises. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly describe: (a) what constitutes a *moral community*, (b) why the military can, at least in part, be called one, and (c) why such a community, understood in reference to its distinctive moral capacity, stands not in opposition to society, but is instead indispensable and organic to the very preservation and flourishing of society.

Moral Community: What Is It?

On the surface a moral community is a community where shared moral values and transcendent purposes unify and align its members in service to one another and commitment to a greater good. "Community of Value" or "Community of Virtue" might just as well be substituted. In any case, such a community might be a religious congregation,

institution of higher learning, agency for social action, club, or civic organization, to name just a few possibilities. Whatever the nature of the group, what is key to all such communities is that their values are built around—indeed, draw their very life from—a guiding narrative or story. Alasdair MacIntyre has observed this fundamental presence of narrative in the formation of individual persons and ultimately in the formation of communities and traditions. In *After Virtue*, he writes:

> Man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal. . . . It is through hearing stories about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, wolves that suckle twin boys, youngest sons who receive no inheritance but must make their own way in the world and eldest sons who waste their inheritance in riotous living and go into exile to live with the swine, that children learn or mislearn both what a child and what a parent is, what the case of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are. Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words.[1]

While there may be more than one narrative at work within a particular community—or more than one dimension of the same essential narrative—a central and overarching story prevails. Perhaps the clearest example from a historical perspective is the Christian monastic movement of the medieval period. Here within the cobbled walls of the cloister, the grand narrative of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, was repeated, contemplated, and reinforced in such a way that each monk understood his place as a follower of Christ in relationship to his fellow man. And yet the presence of narrative within moral community does far more than perpetuate a story. It builds a tradition of values which then sets the boundaries for accountability. According to MacIntyre, narratives do not find their highest use until they enable us to

[1] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 216.

measure the actions of others who share our narrative. "The other aspect of narrative selfhood is correlative: I am not only accountable, I am one who can always ask others for an account, who can put others to the question. I am part of their story as they are part of mine."[2] Through the repeated telling of the story and reflecting on the story's lessons, a moral tradition is built that discerns and prioritizes a hierarchy of values and virtues for the community. This hierarchy, whether overtly spelled out or implicitly understood, exists in every moral community. Certain values will become central or intrinsic to the mission and identity of the group, while others will become more instrumental and nourish the dynamics. This moral tradition becomes the basis for how individuals within the community maintain their accountability to one another and to the integrity of the whole.

The Military as Moral Community

Undoubtedly for some the notion that the military could be construed as a moral community seems preposterous. "War," goes one argument, "is evil, and therefore any institution or group that bears the sword, abdicates any legitimacy it might have had to call itself moral." Perhaps characterizing this view in this way is to build up a straw man; but if so it is only to make an important contrast. While pacifism certainly has a compelling catalogue of voices; so does the tradition associated with the idea of a just war. Most notable of these voices is Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas is important not so much because he gave formal voice to the Augustinian concepts of just war, but because he saw

[2] MacIntyre, 216.

within the very act of war—if prosecuted under honorable terms—no less than an act of love toward one's fellow human. It is not an insignificant point that whereas many before Aquinas believed war and the warrior to be something of a necessary evil, Aquinas, believed the defense and protection of innocence and justice to be literally an act of *caritas* or charity. A brief perusal of the table of contents in his *Summa* shows "Of War" under the greater heading "Acts of Charity." Upon reading Aquinas's comments about war, it is clear that his topical arrangement was not merely happenstance or simply a useful way to organize his work. Rather it is a window into his understanding of the virtue of those who are charged with defending their people and securing peace. In his *Summa*, Aquinas writes:

> The third condition that is required on the part of those making the war is a right intention, to achieve some good or avoid some evil. St. Augustine says in his book, *On the Words of the Lord*, "For the true followers of God even wars are peaceful if they are waged not out of greed or cruelty but for the sake of peace, to restrain the evildoers and assist the good.[3]

The importance of this assertion, notwithstanding its theoretical value, is that it is built on a distinct narrative. To be sure, this narrative is not to be equated with Walter Wink's "myth of redemptive violence."[4] Rather, the narrative that guides our military today is the same basic narrative that has guided the more honorable warrior classes of the past[5], upon whose sacrifices civilizations and societies hinged: *freedom versus*

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[3] Sigmund, *Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*, 65.

[4] Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Galilee Doubleday, 1998), 42-62.

[5] See Dr. Shannon French's, *Code of the Warrior: Exploring Warrior Values Past and Present* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2005) in which she contrasts the difference between

tyranny. Former Soviet dissident and the first political prisoner released by Mikhail Gorbachev, Natan Sharansky, hearkens to this narrative in his book *The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Fear*. Sharansky writes that "a society is free if people have a right to express their views without fear of arrest, imprisonment, or physical harm." On the other hand, "a society that does not protect dissent will inevitably be based on fear . . . The mechanics of tyranny make this inescapable."[6] Sharansky's maxim gets to the heart of what constitutes the abiding narrative of the military community. In every age there are those who, in one form or another, seek to tyrannize, oppress, and deny basic freedoms to others. Conversely, there are those who must be willing to go into harm's way and give an answer. Sharansky coins these respective societies "fear societies" and "free societies." His observation in no way suggests that any one state or nation has always been on the right side of freedom. But it does suggest that even though a nation is an admixture of the noble and the base, the ideal and the practical, there are clearly discernable lines between societies and states that operate out of fear and tyranny and those that protect freedom and the right of dissent.

Thus, the basic narrative of the military is one that sees in all those historical conflicts—from the defense of the Greek Peloponnesus in classic antiquity to the liberation of Europe in World War II—a discernable line between freedom and tyranny, where the preservation of that freedom meant heroic military action. In its manifold

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warrior classes characterized by distinctive codes of honor, and those who through indiscriminate use of force, dishonored their legacy.

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[6] Natan Sharansky, *The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Fear* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 40-41.

applications, this guiding narrative is translated into countless testaments of courage and valor, told and retold by our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines every day. One need only take a brief look into the annals of our own nation's Medal of Honor winners to see these testaments of faithfulness and sacrifice, and how they reinforce the powerful story that freedom in the face of tyranny is indeed something worth dying for.

If the guiding narrative of the military is the story of freedom versus tyranny, the moral tradition that has grown up from that narrative is the synthesis of values, virtues, and moral assumptions which in their most practical use enable the warrior to fulfill his or her mission *with honor*. In *The Code of the Warrior: Exploring Warrior Values Past and Present*, author Shannon French finds that throughout history, warrior cultures—from Roman centurions to certain Native American tribes to Chinese warrior monks—have demonstrated a compelling proclivity for establishing clearly defined codes of honor.[7] At bottom most of these codes were developed to restrain warriors from becoming indiscriminate in their use of force. In their highest sense, however, these codes articulated a vision of heroism and leadership that applied to every facet of life. The moral tradition that inhabits the military today, while drawing its lessons from a narrative of battle, concerns all of life. For example, Marines are taught to practice temperance in their relationships and faithfulness in their marriages because if a Marine cannot be faithful in his or her most basic marital commitment, how can they be counted on to be "Semper Fidelis" on the battlefield? The Navy-Marine Corps effort to codify the core values of honor, courage, and commitment is a modern-day example of the

[7] French, *Code of the Warrior.*

crystallization of the military's moral tradition into readily identifiable terms. That these terms find immediate application in warfare is clear. However, they are also meant to provide a picture, an image, of what a person of moral character looks like, both in uniform and beyond one's time in the service.

The net effect of a moral tradition within a moral community is that it sets the agenda for accountability. In its most formal sense, the military operates under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) which, with far greater specificity than civilian law, delineates which behaviors are acceptable and which are not. Of course, these laws are not arbitrary and do parallel civilian legal principles. However, they do more than that. Certain behaviors that are legal in society are simply not tolerated in the military. Again, this is not arbitrary, but due to the fact that in many cases the behavior in question does not promote the kind of respect and rapport that are indispensable to the operation of a military unit. In some cases, it's simply "conduct unbecoming an officer." Moreover, there is an unwritten sense of accountability that is no less persuasive in the military. "Marines just don't do that!" remains one of the most powerful statements of corporate accountability that I have ever heard.

The Moral Prerogative of the Military

That the military is fundamental to the basic protection of freedom and democracy is a statement with which few would quarrel. Not only is this true in instances like the Second World War and other conflicts, but here at home. For example, it wasn't until the National Guard was federalized that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was able to lead his

historic march in Selma, Alabama, across the Edmund Pettis Bridge. What is so compelling about this event is that it is an instance where societal moral currents overwhelmed some of the troops' objections to protecting the march in the first place. While these objectors were in the minority, they soon saw the "handwriting on the wall," and let go of their personal agendas in light of the orders of the President. It was a day that the nation beheld a stunning rapprochement between the societal values of dissent, justice, and equality, and the military values of respect for authority, duty, and the principle of utility. But there is a lesson to all of this. If the military is to retain its ability to respond to crises like these as well as others, it must be allowed to retain its *moral prerogative.* By moral prerogative, I don't mean an arbitrary prerogative, but rather the prerogative to *abide* in those distinct martial values that are the foundation of mission effectiveness and service to country. In 1974 the Supreme Court, speaking through Justice Lewis Powell, contended:

> The military is a specialized society separate from the civilian society with laws and traditions of its own [developed] during its long history. *Parker v. Levy*, 417 U.S., at 743. Moreover, it is the primary business of armies and navies to fight or be ready to fight wars should the occasion arise. *Toth v. Quarles*, 350 U.S. 11, 17 (1955). To prepare for and perform its vital role, the military must insist upon a respect for duty and a discipline without counterpart in civilian life. The laws and traditions governing that discipline have a long history; but they are founded on unique military exigencies as powerful now as in the past. Their contemporary vitality repeatedly has been recognized by Congress.[8]

The same year Justice William Rehnquist said:

> While the members of the military are not excluded from the protection granted by the First Amendment, the different character of the military community and of the military mission requires a different application of those protections. The

[8] *Schlesinger* v. *Councilman*, 420 U.S. 738 (1975) at 757.

> fundamental necessity for obedience, and the consequent necessity for imposition of discipline, may render permissible within the military that which would be constitutionally impermissible outside it.[9]

When Justice Powell spoke about a "respect for duty and a discipline *without counterpart* in civilian life," he was getting at the unique physical, mental, and moral constraints persons in uniform willingly place themselves under when they raise their right hand and take the military oath. As a part of a unit that might very well see harm's way, military members must be willing to sacrifice many of their personal prerogatives to the demands of a greater cause. They in fact suspend many of their rights—many of their behaviors—if those things collide with mission and morale. This is why the officer oath, for example, carries the phrase, "and I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion." It is a weighty responsibility and a weighty sacrifice to wear the uniform, and one that should evoke serious consideration before being assumed. While every military man and woman swears to "support and defend the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic," that same Constitution, as Justice Rehnquist rightly said, applies differently. Adultery, for example, while rarely ever prosecuted in civilian courts (except when brought up in divorce arbitrations), is illegal in the military, and grounds for the stripping of one's rank, forfeiture of pay, and a dishonorable discharge. Of course, anyone who has served in the military will tell you that while adultery or even casual sex between co-workers might be tolerated in civilian vocations, it is utterly devastating to a military unit's sense of trust and morale; a sense that if compromised can mean the difference between life and death.

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[9] *Parker* v. *Levy*, 417 U.S. 733, 743, 758.

Honor, integrity, a culture of sacrifice—these are the glue of what keeps a military unit together and thus able to carry out its mission for all of us. If the military as a whole is to continue to carry out its mission, then it must retain its capacity to uphold those moral codes that are so indispensable to this mission. It must be allowed to make moral judgments, to draw "lines in the sand," between what is acceptable and what is not. Moral prerogative, therefore, is the prerogative to abide in and remain committed to an uncompromising code of honor as a fundamental instrument of our freedom. This prerogative, while often misunderstood and even attacked by those outside the military institution, remains its most precious possession. More than fifty years ago, Samuel Huntington wrote:

> Upon the soldiers, the defenders of order, rests a heavy responsibility. The greatest service they can render is to remain true to themselves, to serve with silence and courage in the military way. If they abjure the military spirit, they destroy themselves first and their nation ultimately. If the civilians permit the soldiers to adhere to the military standard, the nations themselves may eventually find redemption and security in making that standard their own.[10]

That the image of the soldier is the vehicle through which the redemption of a nation might come is an image that many would not accept. What about the "soldiers" who marched for civil rights, who braved the water-hoses, who refused to give up a seat at the back of a bus? What about the "soldiers" who serve on the front-lines of education, teaching values and responsibility to our nation's children? What of the "soldiers" who work at crisis-pregnancy centers, or who remind us of the wonder and fragility of God's creation? Or what about the "soldiers" who work long hours at hospitals to give us the best medical care available, or those who wrestle over souls and offer us the Bread of

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[10] Huntington, *The Soldier and the State,* 466.

Life? Perhaps then there is a broader point to be gleaned from Huntington's observation. The military as a moral community is one of many such communities in our society today. Religious congregations, schools, social action groups, institutions of research and higher learning—many of these communities are bound by guiding narratives, anchored by definite values, and propelled by transcendent beliefs. But these values these beliefs are only theirs—and therefore can only serve the whole—if the community that holds them is given the prerogative to do so; the prerogative to remain true to itself, to serve with silence and courage, to never abjure its own spirit, but rather to adhere to a standard that has born fruit in the service of others.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: A WAY FORWARD

Thinkers are more likely to be right in what they affirm than in what they deny.

F. D. Maurice[1]

While Maurice's maxim may not be true in every case, there is a point in every argument when polemics must be willing to recede in light of affirmative ideas about how to go forward. If in fact the military has emerged today as a community within which the moral life has come to mean something definite and transformative for its members, there is a responsibility then for chaplains, clergy, government leaders, and others to understand and effectively respond to the implications that such a community raises. To be sure, the way that these leaders respond to the emergence of the military as moral community, has everything to do with how they will respond to the emergence of moral communities *in principle.* As has been alluded to in previous pages, the military is one of many communities where shared values and transcendent purposes align and guide their members in service to one another and to something greater than themselves. MacIntyre's observation—that in previous times men and women of good will, often not recognizing fully what they were doing, set themselves to the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained[2]—such an observation is

[1] Quoted in Preface to *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), xiv.

[2] MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* 263.

being born out today in many shapes and forms of life, both locally and institutionally. How should leaders respond to these communities? How do they get these communities talking with each other? How do those in the religious-civil-military conversation come to see these communities not in opposition to one another; but rather for what they are—a constellation lighting the way for the furtherance of moral and spiritual values in our nation ? The following points are offered as summary statements for how various leaders serving in a diversity of capacities might begin to approach these questions.

(a) Military Chaplains.

As military chaplains, we may not be called to *found* a monastery like St. Benedict, but we can *find* a distinct community right where we work every day—a place where, despite its faults, the moral life is still honored, tradition still upheld, and virtue still rewarded. For this, there may be no better paradigm than Jesus' images of "salt" and "light." As salt is a preservative for all that is alive and good, so military chaplains find themselves in the midst of a community that has much to preserve and keep alive. The testaments of valor and sacrifice, duty, honor, and respect for authority – these virtues are frequently not in the main anymore. Therefore, preserving them by developing moral values programs for the local command structure will be critical in the coming years. On the other hand, chaplains are also, "light." This means that where the institution begins drifting off course, where it fails to live up to its own code, or sets itself in undue opposition to the society it defends, a voice will be needed to "bring the rudder back around," and remind the warrior that he or she is an American before they are a soldier. Light points out error and constitutes the chaplain's prophetic task.

(b) Clergy and the Churches.

Clergy are particularly poised to make sense of and encourage moral communities like the military. To begin with, clergy can balance ethical pronouncements on war with a real desire to serve and bring the Gospel to our men and women in uniform. While both efforts are needed, they must temper one another in ways they have not in recent years. Moreover, churches—themselves moral and spiritual communities *par excellence*—have the wisdom and the spiritual office to call out the values and virtues embedded in these communities for what they are: the reflection of the image of God. For example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his *Ethics*, describes a time in the life of his nation when great courage and moral virtue were being demonstrated in the lives of various people and groups not necessarily identified with the Christian community, yet nonetheless opposed to the Reich. As the confessing church, of which he was a part, became more active in its denunciation of evil and injustice, these people and groups—who Bonhoeffer affectionately called the "Children of the Church"—began to discover a kindred spirit in the Christian confessing movement. Bonhoeffer writes of this time:

> What is decisive is rather the fact that there took place a return to the origin. The Children of the Church, who had become independent and gone their own ways, now in the hour of danger returned to their mother...Reason, justice, culture, humanity and all the kindred concepts sought and found new purpose and a new power in their origin [the church].[3]

Similarly, churches today can publicly praise and give voice to the work of God going on in moral communities like the military. In this way, church leaders might become more proactive as they honor the faith and sacrifices of our modern-day

[3] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 58.

"centurions." Local congregations might begin to see themselves as places of refuge for military persons; establishing, for instance, outreach ministries to those who have recently returned from overseas who might be experiencing some levels of post-traumatic stress. If the kind of courage and sacrifice that soldiers demonstrate on a daily basis are in fact virtues born of God, than what these soldiers need most of all is an encounter with this God. They need, in Bonhoeffer's imagery, a return to their origin.

(c) Government Leaders.

Government leaders have the opportunity to publicly recognize and honor the distinct contributions that every moral community makes. By honoring the peculiar vantage points and moral prerogatives these community possesses, leaders affirm the organic relationship these communities have with one another and within society itself. On the other hand, government leaders might also show how these communities are in some aspects very much alike. Indeed, one can often hear in the words of both soldiers and civil rights leaders, haunting echoes of the same spirit. On July 14th, 1861, a week before the Battle of Bull Run, Major Sullivan Ballou of the Second Rhode Island Volunteers wrote home to his wife these words, in part:

> My very dear Sarah: The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days—perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again, I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more…I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American Civilization now leans on the triumph of the government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and sufferings of the Revolution. And I am willing—perfectly willing—to lay down all my joys in this life to help maintain this government, and to pay that debt…Sarah my love for you is deathless, [and] it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence

> could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on with all these chains to the battle field.[4]

Major Sullivan was killed at the first battle of Bull Run. A little more than one hundred years later, on an April night in 1968, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., concluded, before a packed-church in Memphis, with these words:

> Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.[5]

The next day King was assassinated, his words, like Major Ballou's, a prophetic testimony to the precious sacrifice that freedom and justice so often require.

So different were these men—one a soldier under arms, the other a civil rights champion behind a pulpit—yet moved, they both were, by a common conviction: the freedom of others.

It is perhaps fitting that this thesis concludes with the final words of these two heroes. For they represent, I believe, two moral communities which have been estranged from each other for far too long—the military and the civil rights movement. Of course, we know that much of the strain goes back to the tumultuous sixties and seventies. But we also know that there was precious sacrifice in both families—sacrifice that while at

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[4] Quoted in Toner, *True Faith and Allegiance*, 122-123.

[5] Martin Luther King, Jr., "I've Been to the Mountaintop," http://www.afscme.org/about/1549.cfm (accessed December 1, 2008).

times misunderstood by the other, or even misplaced, was sacrifice nonetheless. King David reminds us in the Psalms that healing comes when "deep calls unto deep." The Apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans that "faith calls to faith." Perhaps then it is time for these two bright communities, each marked by truth and testimony, to begin to call unto one another before a watching world; a time to heal ourselves . . . and ultimately our nation.

APPENDIX A

BUILDING MORAL COMMUNITY: THE CHAPLAIN'S TASK

Because of the gravity and overarching nature of the issues explored in this thesis, I have avoided the more practical question of how we as chaplains actually go about the task of building and nourishing moral community within our respective commands. In truth, how we interpret the civilian-military values-gap and the emergence of a distinct military culture has such far-reaching implications, that almost any other issue facing chaplains today, be it practical or otherwise, has to take the back seat. Nevertheless, the back seat is still a seat and does deserve some attention. Chaplains are historically proactive in their approach to ministry. In fact, it is this constant translation of the theoretical into the practical that makes the chaplaincy one of the most meaningful and exciting places to do ministry today. Therefore, I have included the following points for consideration for those chaplains who either wholly or in part agree with my conclusions and who are looking for ways to implement a moral values course or the like into the training cycle of their command. This is certainly not the only way to build moral community, but it is an excellent place to begin. For clarity, I have divided the following points into *Preparation* and *Execution.*

Preparation

1. *Understand the issues of our times and have a well-thought out perspective*.

   Preparing ourselves to teach and facilitate courses in ethics, moral values, and

character development first requires that we understand the context in which our people are interpreting the moral crises of their generation. What role have societal values played in positively shaping our armed forces? Where are the values or ethics-disconnects? The first and best thing chaplains can do to prepare to teach is to be familiar with the history of the civilian-military relationship. If line officers are supposed to be the experts in the areas of strategy, weapons, and tactics, then chaplains, at a minimum, should be able and ready to speak about the moral exigencies of their times, and bring to bear upon these crises their theological acumen and faith experience.

2. *Welcome the opportunity of teaching in the midst of such a receptive community.* There aren't many groups of people who when asked to participate in a class on moral values actually will—and with such enthusiasm. The military understands something about sacrifice and courage. These qualities have always made for good soil for moral discourse. It's no small thing that centurions in the New Testament often demonstrated a compelling and winsome receptivity to reason and the things of God. (See Luke 3:1-18; 7:1-10; 23:47, Mark 15:38-39, Acts 10:1-48; 16:25-40; 27:42).
3. *Be skilled and trained in ethics as a personal discipline*. Working on an advanced Master's Degree in Christian Ethics has underscored for me the timelessness of many of the most challenging questions we face. Placing ourselves and our crises on the map along with Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Bonhoeffer, King, and others helps us see our questions through the lens of history, and gives us tools to reason

through much of the haze. If all truth is God's truth, then we should welcome the insights and contributions of all those who have wrestled with similar questions of truth, moral law, and ethical challenges.

4. *Borrow from the lessons that our own civil-military history has passed down*. Ethicist Dr. James Toner says that military ethics is first and foremost about owing.[1] By this he means recognizing those whose sacrifices have allowed us to be where we are, those whose convictions and causes have bequeathed unto us the freedom of wearing the uniform. Looking into the annals of American history, one is struck by the unending volume of stories and personal examples of moral courage. These stories are veritable wellsprings of truth and guidance for chaplains to use when teaching ethics. Looking *back,* as well as looking around, is one of the best places to start.
5. *Understand the symbiotic relationship between moral discourse and spiritual longing*. In my own experience of teaching ethics and character development to Marines, Sailors, and senior naval officers, it has been made abundantly clear to me that something more than pedagogy is taking place. When I engage these men and women with the concepts of right and wrong, truth and relativism, just and unjust war, character and virtue, they come alive. And it's no surprise they do. Made in the image of God, we all long to talk about our moral choices; to see ourselves in a realm above the beasts of the field, as creatures who can choose, digest, and prosper from the guidance and voice of wisdom. Ultimately, these

[1] James H.Toner, "Military or Ethics," *Air and Space Power Journal* (Summer 2003), 2.

issues lead us to ponder our meaning, purpose, and destiny. When C. S. Lewis said that the awareness of right and wrong in our lives was a "clue to the meaning of the universe," he was saying that at bottom, moral awareness has a *spiritual orientation*. Right and wrong are the chief concerns of ethics and character development, which is to say that any time people are challenged in this realm, a door to considering faith and spiritual things is slightly ajar. If this is true, then far from being collateral duties, teaching moral values puts us on the "front lines" of faith. I don't mean to suggest that teaching before a compulsory audience gives chaplains an opportunity to preach or "lock the doors and pass out Bibles." In fact, the task should, I believe, remain a command-sponsored event and never made part of the official religious program. By being on the front lines of faith, I mean what some apologists call fittingly, *pre-evangelism*—literally that which comes *before the good news.* This means that when we teach ethics, we are mindful of the spiritual dynamics also at work. Teaching these courses is certainly not the same thing as preaching or leading people to greater discipleship. But it is, nevertheless, directly related to an increased spiritual interest and growth among our people.

Execution

1. *Look for transition points in the command.* I have found that moral values classes, whether a series of sessions, or simply a one-time discussion, are most easily implemented when they are built into command juncture points or

transitions. Indoctrination for newly arriving personnel, corporals' courses, chiefs' initiation, staff officers' assimilation—all of these are examples of transitional times or rites of passage typically marked by some period of specialized training. Approaching the officer in charge of the training and offering to teach a section on values or good decision making is almost always greeted with enthusiasm. I've never had to convince military leaders about the importance of ethics and character development. They implicitly know how critical it is for their people and mission. Looking for these timely entry points opens our eyes to see ways we can meet the institution on its terms, and with a message it desperately needs.

2. *Think on three levels of administration.* When developing a moral values program, keep in mind the roughly three different levels of responsibility and leadership that are present at the command—junior, mid-grade, and senior-level. Tailoring courses to address the appropriate questions and real-life scenarios of the audience will keep the material more relevant. Moreover, a three-tiered approach ensures that everyone at the command is being offered the training.
3. *Be Socratic, not dogmatic.* Much better than simply parroting one's position, I have found that introducing the issue, offering examples, and asking leading questions creates the best climate for people to experience genuine learning and growth. Think of your role as that of a midwife—through illustrations and well thought out questions you are allowing the truths and insights to be born within others. Consensus is not necessarily the goal. Rather the goal is that through the

sharing of theory, stories, convictions, and experiences, a broad lesson or principle might be distilled from the group's interaction and reflection.

4. *Be available for follow-up opportunities.* If it is true that moral discourse has a spiritual orientation, chaplains should always be available for the immediate and long-term interest that these classes generate. How many times did I look up to see a line of Marines or Sailors after a class on moral values waiting to speak with me about the topic for the class that day—or about a crisis in their life totally unrelated? How many times did I get a call or a visit from an officer who had attended one of these courses? How many times did these conversations turn to matters of faith and a renewed interest in religious life and spiritual growth? To all of these questions, the answer is, "Too many times to count." Chaplains should not walk into these classes unprepared for the philosophical and spiritual questions that invariably follow. I always make sure I am available after I teach for discussion, lunch, or a future appointment.

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