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**CONCORDIA SEMINARY
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI**

**CHRISTIAN NAVY CHAPLAINS AND
THE CHALLENGE OF EXPANDING RELIGIOUS PLURALISM**

**A MAJOR APPLIED PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF CONCORDIA SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY**

**BY
TIMOTHY J. OSWALD**

**SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI
APRIL 15, 2013**

CHRISTIAN NAVY CHAPLAINS AND
THE CHALLENGE OF EXPANDING RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| ILLUSTRATIONS | vii |
| ABBREVIATIONS | viii |
| ABSTRACT | ix |
| THE PROJECT INTRODUCED | 1 |
| The Problem | 2 |
| The Purpose | 8 |
| The Process | 10 |
| Project Parameters | 12 |
| Target Audiences in the Research and the Product | 12 |
| Theological Assumptions: Exclusivism | 14 |
| Theological Assumptions: Chaplaincy | 15 |
| THE PROJECT IN BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE | 16 |
| Theology of Religions | 17 |
| Theology of Religions and the Mission of the Church | 18 |
| Exclusivism as a Scriptural and Confessional Position | 20 |
| The Challenge of Neo-Paganism | 24 |
| Neo-Paganism: Introduction | 25 |
| Biblical Snapshot of Goddess Religion in Ancient Israel | 35 |
| Church and Society | 39 |
| The Two Kingdoms | 39 |
| Implications of Two Kingdom Theology for Religion in Society | 43 |
| Implications for the Church's Voice toward the State | 46 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| THE PROJECT IN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE | 48 |
| The Historical Context | 48 |
| Emergence of Religious Pluralism as a Perspective | 48 |
| The Chaplaincy in the United States Navy | 52 |
| Legal Basis for Chaplaincy: Accommodation of Religion in the Military | 53 |
| Appointment of Chaplains | 57 |
| The Literature Review | 61 |
| Inclusivism | 61 |
| Pluralism | 70 |
| Development and Views of Pluralism | 71 |
| A Critique of Pluralism | 77 |
| Pluralism's Effects | 80 |
| Excursus: Religious Experience | 82 |
| The Way Forward: Strategic Considerations for Reaching a Pluralist Society | 87 |
| The Way Forward: Practical Encounters on the Front Lines of Ministry | 90 |
| The Way Forward: Life and Worship | 93 |
| Exclusivist Rationale for Accommodation | 95 |
| Exclusivist Approach to Accommodation | 97 |
| Proselytizing | 100 |
| Worship | 103 |
| Prayer | 103 |
| Conclusion | 108 |
| THE PROJECT DEVELOPED | 109 |
| The Design of the Study | 109 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Research Tools and Methodology: The Survey | 110 |
| Content of the Survey | 110 |
| Survey Part One: Demographics..... | 111 |
| Survey Part Two: Theology of Religions | 113 |
| Survey Part Three: Religious Facilitation..... | 118 |
| Survey Part Four: Facilitation Practices | 119 |
| Survey Part Five: Feelings about Functioning in a Pluralistic Environment..... | 121 |
| Content of the Survey: Question Development | 123 |
| Scope of the Survey | 125 |
| Research In Human Subjects and Institutional Matters Related to the Survey | 126 |
| Research Tools and Methodology: The Interviews | 133 |
| Research Tools and Methodology: The Training Brief | 135 |
| Research Tools and Methodology: The Evaluation of the Training Brief..... | 138 |
| Implementation of the Project..... | 139 |
| THE PROJECT EVALUATED | 142 |
| Findings of the Study | 143 |
| The Survey | 143 |
| The Interviews | 151 |
| The Evaluation of the Training Brief..... | 160 |
| Analysis of the Study | 164 |
| SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS | 170 |
| Contributions to Ministry..... | 170 |
| Contributions to Personal and Professional Growth..... | 171 |
| Recommendations | 174 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Nature of the Research Conclusions | 174 |
| Nature of the Project | 178 |
| APPENDICES | 181 |
| Appendix One: The Law and the Constitution Applied to Religion..... | 181 |
| Free Exercise..... | 182 |
| Prohibiting the Establishment of Religion..... | 184 |
| Separation of Church and State..... | 184 |
| Neutrality | 186 |
| Originalism | 187 |
| Federalism, Jurisdiction, and the Establishment Clause..... | 189 |
| The Equal Protection Clause..... | 191 |
| Appendix Two: Sample Public Prayer..... | 194 |
| Appendix Three: CITI – Human Research Curriculum Completion Report | 195 |
| Appendix Four: Legal Guidance from the JAG..... | 196 |
| Appendix Five: Navy HRPP Endorsement of the IIA | 198 |
| Appendix Six: Email Invitation to the Chaplains with Survey Link | 203 |
| Appendix Seven: Survey with Responses..... | 204 |
| Appendix Eight: Interview Questions..... | 210 |
| Appendix Nine: The Training Brief..... | 212 |
| Appendix Ten: Evaluation Form with Selected Responses | 228 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 231 |

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

| | |
|--|-----|
| FIGURE 1- Theologies of Religions of 32 Respondents Based Upon Filter Questions..... | 146 |
| FIGURE 2 - Matches of Survey Responses by Interviewees to Seven Filter Questions on Theological Exclusivism..... | 153 |
| FIGURE 3- Matches of Survey Responses by Interviewees to Six Filter Questions on Theological Inclusivism and Pluralism..... | 157 |

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------------|---|
| AC | Augsburg Confession |
| CHC | Chaplain Corps |
| CITI | Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative |
| CO | Commanding Officer |
| CRP | Command Religious Program |
| DOD | Department of Defense |
| DODINST | Department of Defense Instruction |
| DON | Department of the Navy |
| HRPP | Human Research Protection Program |
| IIA | Individual Investigator Agreement |
| IRB | Institutional Review Board |
| JAG | Judge Advocate General Corps |
| LCMS | The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod |
| MILPERSMAN | Military Personnel Manual |
| NP | Neo-Pagan |
| NPRST | Navy Personnel, Research, Studies, and Technology |
| NTTP | Navy Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures |
| OPNAVINST | Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction |
| PNC | Professional Naval Chaplaincy |
| RMP | Religious Ministry Professional |
| SECNAVINST | Secretary of the Navy Instruction |

ABSTRACT

Oswald, Timothy J. "Christian Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Expanding Religious Pluralism." D.Min. Major Applied Project, Concordia Seminary – St. Louis. 2013. 245 pp.

Navy chaplains are expected to facilitate for the religious needs of those from other faiths. For chaplains who believe in the exclusivity of the Christian religion, this can create theological and even personal tensions about support for religious practices which the chaplain believes to be false.

This project explores those tensions and proposes ways to help exclusivist Navy chaplains navigate them. The final ministry product is a Power Point® brief. It draws from bibliographic research, a survey of some Navy chaplains and selected interviews to argue that chaplains can serve in ways that are respectful, legal, and yet theologically faithful.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROJECT INTRODUCED

In 1999, about 60 United States Navy chaplains and Religious Program Specialists gathered for a “training” event in a major fleet concentration area. The guest speaker was a senior enlisted Sailor who shared information with the group about his religious life. He practiced Wicca. He proudly told us what it was like to be a Witch in the Navy. The tone for the remainder of that training sired favorably toward the need to support the religious practices of people like our speaker, especially in the face of prejudices and misconceptions that they would encounter. Chaplains were to champion their practices against religious bigotry or ignorance. An enlisted religious assistant to an Army chaplain had attended that day. She raised her hand and told the group that knowing her chaplain’s religious convictions, he would have a hard time actively supporting Wiccans. The senior chaplain at the event leapt to his feet and in a raised voice, surely “firing for effect” to send all of us a message, told her that if that was the case, then he didn’t belong in the Chaplain Corps.

As a Navy chaplain, I had encountered other Wiccans before that day, but the ugly way that the senior chaplain snapped at that young lady and the brute “take it or leave it” approach to a question of conscience left their marks. What I witnessed that day threw me more pronouncedly into an awareness of the challenge for Navy chaplaincy because of religious pluralism. In this arena, church and state can collide. Both theological and practical approaches in ministry confront new tests. For over a decade now, I have continued to grapple with issues that arise from the presence and practices of religious others in the Navy.

The Problem of the Project

U.S. Navy chaplains are all religious ministry professionals such as pastors, priests, rabbis, or imams in their respective religious institutions. Their religious organizations endorse them to serve in the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine where they care for the religious needs of America's defenders. Although the Navy, as part of the Department of Defense (DOD), has its own requirements toward commissioning someone as an officer in the Chaplain Corps such as age, physical fitness, and educational minimums, it avoids making ecclesiastical or theological judgments about applicants for chaplaincy. The ecclesiastical organization makes its own determinations about who is qualified. The endorsement of an applicant for the Chaplain Corps by his or her ecclesiastical body is one of the DOD's requirements.¹

So a church, denomination, or religious sect must meet the requirements to qualify as a religious organization that can endorse applicants for chaplaincy. The applicants themselves must then secure an endorsement from their respective religious organization, in addition to meeting other requirements. This process gives the military some measure of administrative control over those that it accepts into its ranks, yet distances itself from entanglements with questions of whom might be theologically or ecclesiastically qualified.

The military requires that a religious ministry professional who wishes to serve as a chaplain receive certification from an endorsing body that the candidate is willing to

¹ A Department of Defense Instruction updated on January 19, 2012 establishes the requirements, procedures, and responsibilities for religious organizations to endorse religious ministry professionals for the chaplaincy. DODINST1304.28. "Guidance for Appointment of Chaplains to Military Services." <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/130428p.pdf> (accessed July 17, 2012).

function in a religiously pluralistic environment, meaning by that phrase simply that a plurality of religious traditions exist side by side in the military context.² This makes sense. One thing that distinguishes a chaplain from traditional pastoral ministry is the institutional context. Military members reflect America's full spectrum of religious backgrounds and beliefs. A chaplain must be willing to function in that environment. The greater challenges arise however, as the chaplain works out the entailments of that context.

In my own experience, military students and Navy chaplain recruiters stirred an interest in Navy chaplaincy during my seminary years. After successful work as a parish pastor for a couple of years, I applied for Navy chaplaincy, received endorsement by my Lutheran denomination, and entered the Navy as a chaplain. At that time, the Navy Chaplain's School Basic Course indoctrinated new accessions in the Chaplain Corps to both Navy life and the particulars of chaplaincy. We discussed issues like public prayer in the name of Jesus when non-Christian personnel were present and ministry to dying service members of another faith. It introduced me to a new world of interaction with those from other faiths under the complex restraints of military environment and government direction.³

Navy chaplains must demonstrate four core capabilities.⁴ They must be able to advise, care, provide, and facilitate. Everything that Navy chaplains do must emerge out of one of these. Every chaplain can correctly identify them as his or her required areas of

² Ibid, Paragraphs 6.1.2 and E2.1.8.

³ At the graduation ceremony from Chaplain School, I received the "Rhode Island Religious Pluralism Award." Even then, my peers evidently observed my strong interest to learn about and explore similarities, differences, and relationships with the religious faiths of others.

⁴ SECNAVINST 1730.7D, (August 8, 2008), Paragraph e(3).

competency. Chaplains are trained to show how every task which they perform is tied to one of them. Chaplains advise military leaders on religious issues within the commands, on morale issues, and on religious impacts in military operations. They care for military service members and families by caring, counseling and coaching in personal and relational needs. The final two competencies, to provide and to facilitate, refer directly to specifically religious activity and they reflect the military's policy of seeking to accommodate religion among its service members to the fullest possible extent.

Chaplains provide faith-specific ministry to military members that share the same faith. For example, when I offer communion in the Lutheran context to fellow Lutherans aboard a ship in the middle of the ocean, my provision of Lutheran-specific ministry is the Navy's way of accommodating the religious needs of those Lutheran Sailors. Since it is impossible however, to have a chaplain available for every specific faith group represented, chaplains also facilitate. A chaplain facilitates religious programs in which people of faiths other than the chaplain's can practice their own religions. This core responsibility to facilitate poses the problem that this project seeks to understand and address. The expansion of religious diversity has generated new challenges to the chaplain's role as facilitator.

When Navy chaplains provide religious ministry, they do so according to the tenets of their own faith for service members that share the same faith. For example, a Lutheran chaplain would conduct Lutheran services for Lutheran service members and a Catholic priest would conduct Catholic Mass for Catholics: However because they work in a religiously plural environment, Navy chaplains must demonstrate awareness that

service members do not all share the same convictions.⁵ The requirement to facilitate makes a chaplain responsible for ensuring that all members' religious needs are met to the fullest extent possible. For example, a Lutheran chaplain cannot function as a Catholic priest, but he would be expected to facilitate the needs of Catholic personnel. To facilitate for others, a chaplain might procure religious items, arrange for clergy from the other's faith, schedule worship or meeting times, and publicize all of these opportunities.

But is there a point at which God holds the chaplain culpable for contributing to another's practice of a false religion? It is one thing to live in a pluralistic environment or what might be called "descriptive pluralism." We cannot avoid living with religious others nor should we. It may be another thing, however, to aid and abet someone in the practice of a faith by which they will be led astray or even condemned. For the Christian chaplain who holds to the particularity of salvation through Christ alone, this tension demands careful theological consideration.

The resurgence of Neo-Paganism highlights this tension. One of the growing "New Religious Movements," as sociologists of religion describe the phenomenon is Neo-Paganism. It denotes the loose connection of groups and practices that have repristinated paganism or pagan elements in some way. Successive encounters with service members from various Neo-Pagan practices honed my own awareness of this conflict which is inherent in the facilitation task.

⁵ Chief of Chaplains Instruction 1110.1H, (May 8, 2007), established the Chaplain Appointment and Retention Eligibility Advisory Board (CARE Board). The CARE Board screens potential chaplains, in part to select candidates that demonstrate willingness to facilitate the First Amendment right to free exercise of religion for all authorized personnel.

As a young chaplain called upon to facilitate for people who practiced faiths which I believed to be false, I wrestled with whether there was a line that ought not to be crossed, and if so, where that line ought to be drawn. When I encouraged my Roman Catholic Marines to attend a Catholic Mass that I had arranged with a visiting priest, it troubled me. I had helped them worship in a context that rejected *Sola Fide*. This disquieted my soul. At the same time, I felt positive about getting some of them there compared to the majority of their peers that rejected all religion and worshipped only themselves. Working in the front lines of ministry does not necessitate a surrender of doctrinal integrity, but it did seem to draw out a broad “feel” about the proximities of various faiths. As compared to my parish ministry where I could take a microscope to the doctrinal differences with the conservative Lutheran church on the next block, in the menagerie of faiths represented by Sailors, fine points of difference gave way to larger issues. At least the Catholics shared the same views of God and of Christ. I had many opportunities to engage in enriching personal conversations and witness with Priests and other Catholics. Jews were yet another step removed, for they rejected even the Christ on which my religion stood. Yet on a continuum of religious differences, even with Jews I felt enough similarities to interact meaningfully. As Paul says, “theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises” (Romans 9:4b NIV). My own doctrinal commitments did not experience any sort of reduction to a lower common denominator. In fact, the interactions sharpened my awareness of differences. I studied more intently and came to see the importance of doctrine: But at the same time, it became obvious that my witness presupposed a large body of underlying theological commitments. In that respect, the Muslim was my ally against the Hindu in

promoting monotheism over polytheism. The Catholic was my ally against the Muslim in promoting the true deity to be the God revealed supremely in Jesus Christ. And so on. A scale of theological proximity between my beliefs and those of any other faith group shaped my various levels of comfort or discomfort.⁶

On that perceived scale of religious differences, Neo-Pagans presented a dramatically dissimilar perspective. It felt spiritually precarious and awkward to interact with a self-described “Witch” that rejected not only Christ but God and not only doctrine but truth itself. The common ground for a religious conversation seemed especially remote. This triggered the tension inherent in the chaplain role of facilitation. Even though I never personally practice paganism, am I guilty in God’s eyes for supporting them? Perhaps I am guilty for supporting any religious others, even the Catholic or the Jew. But the arrival on the scene of the Neo-Pagan gives new life and prominence to this important question. Chaplains have always had to work in a pluralistic environment, but changes in the religious landscape demand greater care than ever. Neo-Paganism offers a useful case study to highlight the tension of facilitation. Its polytheism, pantheism, and “magick” spells spotlight religious diversity that is considerably unfamiliar to most Americans.

Perhaps the more troubling aspect of this matter is that some chaplains who belong to churches that profess commitments to the Gospel, who preach the uniqueness of Jesus for salvation, and who appear in every other way to be Christian “exclusivists,” do not give evidence of struggle with this tension. Whether because of limited theologizing about the implications of their faith, or a misdirected desire to demonstrate

⁶ The most obvious assessment of another faith is whether it conforms to Christian orthodoxy or not. Yet in a different sense, religions might be viewed as either closer or further from the revealed faith. It makes a big difference in terms of how much information must be bridged to offer a fully-orbed witness to Gospel.

just how pluralistic they are in an environment that seems to reward it, some chaplains appear to show ardent fervor in promoting and supporting religious programs that are not compatible with biblical Christianity.⁷ In the cases of both the chaplain struggling with the tension and the chaplain oblivious or neglectful of the tension, religious pluralism presents a challenge to those Christian chaplains that embrace the particularity of Christ for salvation. The problem my MAP intends to address centers upon the challenges from religious pluralism to exclusivist Christian chaplains in the Navy.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to help Navy Chaplains from exclusivist Christian positions to engage expanding religious pluralism in ways that are responsible to the implications of their faith while operating in a U.S. Navy context. Several items emerge from this purpose.

First, there is a somewhat narrow target audience. This project is designed to help Navy chaplains. While it would certainly overlap extensively with chaplains from other military services or even clergy in any pluralistic setting, it remains confined to the Navy context. Here I have the most familiarity with service-specific Navy doctrine and policy, and my experiences give me a legitimate claim to some expertise of its sub-culture.

Furthermore, the project is not designed for the needs of all Navy chaplains but only those that are Christian exclusivists. What is the significance of representing an “exclusivist” Christian faith? According to a biblical Christian faith, only Christ can bring salvation. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under

⁷ An example of this arose in a conversation with a chaplain whom I took to be committed to the uniqueness of Jesus for salvation. Although not Lutheran, his denomination stresses faith in Christ. He told me that he actively promoted the activities of his unit’s Wiccans because he considered it his job to help each person fulfill their own path to God. Either I was mistaken about his soteriology or he did not grasp its implications.

heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12 NIV). The problem identified in this project stems from the conflict within that chaplain whose conviction is that only the Christian faith delivers salvation and that same chaplain’s responsibility to help others practice a non-saving faith. Obviously, non-Christian chaplains do not fall under the limits of this project. Some Christian chaplains would also be outside of the intended audience. The project will unpack the different theological opinions within Christian denominations about the parameters of salvation. “. . . a growing number of Christians, laity and clergy alike, have embraced the notion that while the Christian faith is ‘true’ and legitimate *for them*, other religions can be equally ‘true’ and legitimate options for others in different circumstances.”⁸ So chaplains who are Christians in their self-understanding yet are open to the soteriological efficacy of non-christian faiths would not reasonably be expected to struggle in the same way with the problem identified in this project. They are not “exclusivists.”

The project envisions Christian exclusivist Navy chaplains as its intended audience. Since the theological foundations reflect a confessional Lutheran perspective, the first tier of that target audience would be confessional Lutheran chaplains; but any Christian Navy chaplains that insist upon the uniqueness of Christ for salvation should benefit from this project.

In addition to delimiting the audience, the stated purpose of the project requires an explanation for how that audience might operate at the intersection of conscience and Navy requirements. Can an exclusivist chaplain do what the Navy expects and yet remain faithful to the implications of his own faith? To achieve any level of success, the project must help exclusivist Navy chaplains navigate issues that arise from religious

⁸ Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 13.

pluralism without running afoul of either biblical faithfulness or the Navy's expectations for its chaplains.

The needs are to acquire greater understanding of how Navy chaplains facilitate for others, to integrate the theological issues in facilitation, and to develop practical strategies for religious facilitation by exclusivist chaplains. Once the research distils a better picture of chaplain facilitation as it is being done in fact, the chaplains should ostensibly benefit from careful theological reflection and application of the issues. In order to put those reflections into some type of concrete practical form which would be usable by the target audience, the end product of this project will be a presentation in the form of a training brief. The desired outcome for those chaplains that receive the presentation would be to better equip them with greater knowledge and confidence. That knowledge and confidence would apply to issues related to religious pluralism in the Navy context, especially religious facilitation, as well as more broadly toward their responsibility to shape the Navy's cultural attitudes about religious pluralism. A more knowledgeable and confident chaplain can work with religious others in ways that are respectful, legal, and yet faithfully Christian. While there is not time to measure how their facilitation practices may change, their levels of knowledge and confidence can be assessed after they have seen the brief.

The Process

The project explores religious facilitation and attitudes about religious pluralism from Navy chaplains. It also explores this in a little more detail for Neo-Pagans, which present a useful case study. An initial survey aspired to collect quantitative data from a significant number of chaplains of their theologies of religion, ideas about religious

facilitation, actual facilitation practices, and feelings of tension about religious facilitation. An on-line survey offered an efficient means to do this since it granted the busy chaplains the ability to respond at their leisure. It also allowed the survey to go to deployed or otherwise unavailable chaplains. Follow-up interviews with a smaller number of those chaplains provided qualitative data to understand how these things connect for them. Those interviews took place one-on-one. They gave the chaplains opportunities to explain their positions and fill out their perspectives in ways that an on-line survey cannot capture.

With the benefit of this data, the fault lines between Christian exclusivism and ministry in an environment of religious pluralism should be clearer. Conclusions helped to shape the training brief. The design of the brief focused upon information and recommendations for exclusivist chaplains about the role of facilitation and the approach to religious pluralism in a Navy context. The largest segment of this project draws from extensive theological and theoretical perspective. As one might imagine, each of the topics surrounding issues of religion and culture, church and state, religion and law, etc., represent enormous fields of study in and of themselves. This paper cannot do them justice; yet it would truncate critical perspectives on chaplaincy in the Navy to leave them out for the sake of succinctness. So those essential topics receive serious consideration. The conclusions drawn from them combined with the author's experiences in Navy chaplaincy and the insights taken from the research in order to create a brief that proposes both a comprehensive perspective and practical tools for ministry within a religiously plural organization, the Navy.

Follow-on evaluations with chaplains that received the training brief established feedback. Those evaluations by exclusivist chaplains gave a sense of how effectively the brief reshaped their thoughts and approaches. A few non-exclusivist chaplains also received invites to the training brief with the expectation that they might have helped to identify weaknesses in the brief's conclusions. In addition to evaluating the content of the training brief and the personal sense of confidence, knowledge, reinforcement, etc. which the chaplain derived from it, the evaluations assessed the method. Is a training brief an effective instrument to accomplish the purpose of the project? And if so, does it need to be presented in person by an instructor, or is it self-explanatory if simply read electronically.

Project Parameters

Target Audiences in the Research and the Product

The project examined religious facilitation and attitudes toward religious pluralism by U.S. Navy chaplains with the intent to help exclusivist chaplains on issues of religious pluralism. As noted earlier, the project would likely have value for Army or Air Force chaplains and even civilian clergy, but it focused upon the Navy since that is where I have the most familiarity. The Navy has about 830 chaplains at the time of this writing. They serve across the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine. The question was how many chaplains to survey for the research portion.

I have worked for the last several years in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. It is the largest Fleet concentration area in the entire world. Over 100 Navy chaplains serve in this vicinity. Because I am somewhat known in this area and because the geographical nearness gave easier follow-up opportunities, the survey went out to the chaplains in

Hampton Roads. Since chaplains frequently move, the cross-section here reflects a variety of experiences, ministry venues, and geographic distribution. This provided both a sizeable and a realistic sampling. Nothing about the area or the specific types of chaplain ministries here was expected to skew the sample in any way. The project also used follow-on interviews of chaplains drawn from willing respondents to the survey. So both the larger audience invited to take the initial survey and the smaller group of interviewees came from Hampton Roads.

The purpose of the project was to help exclusivist chaplains with issues of religious pluralism. This determined the target audience for the instrument employed by the project. The end product was a presentation in the form of a Power Point® brief. Chaplains receive or deliver frequent training, readiness, and operational briefs as do most military members. They use Power Point® slides so extensively that the format is quite familiar. Since this project was not official military training, chaplains needed to volunteer to receive the brief. As with all elements of this project, it is important to stress the voluntary nature of their participation. Military rank structure can easily lend itself to inferences that non-participation or disagreement would reflect upon their careers.

An evaluation form by recipients of the presentation helped to gauge their receptivity to its information and arguments as well as usefulness of a Power Point® brief for addressing this kind of issue. The presentation was designed for exclusivist Navy chaplains and Lutheran ones in particular. A wider audience attended the actual brief which included non-chaplain clergy and lay leaders who also provided feedback concerning both the value of its information and its effectiveness as a tool for distributing that information. An unrealized hope had been to present the brief to some chaplains that

are not exclusivists. Their feedback might have highlighted blind spots in my thinking, especially where they might have perceived a conflict between Navy policy and doctrine with the approaches and attitudes toward religious facilitation that I advocated. Unfortunately, that did not develop since the non-exclusivist chaplains whom I invited were not able to attend.

The people in the project can be summarized then in these ways. Navy chaplains in Hampton Roads were the intended and actual recipients for the survey and the interviews. The product of the project, namely the training brief, was intended for exclusivist chaplains in particular along with a small number of non-exclusivist chaplains for assessment purposes; but the actual audience consisted of exclusivist chaplains, civilian clergy, and lay leaders.

Theological Assumptions: Exclusivism

The problem which the project seeks to address arises from the conflict between a commitment to the uniqueness of Christ as the only means of salvation and the obligation of a Navy chaplain to support people in the practice of religious faiths which assert something contrary or antithetical to this Christian viewpoint. The assumption is that this conflict is inherent in those two commitments. Yet as reflected in footnote #7, not every chaplain experiences that tension. Many reasons may contribute to this. My years of service have permitted me to observe some of these. They frequently stem from both institutional dynamics as well as the larger cultural attitudes. Such broader influences explain why the project does not focus too narrowly on only the specific role of facilitation, but also addresses how to respond to religious pluralism at the levels of wider culture and of the Navy as an institution. This paper then argues for the “exclusivist”

position and its distinctive implications for Navy chaplains that hold to it, but with applications also for many Christians who face expanding pluralism in their society.

Theological Assumptions: Chaplaincy

The validity of military chaplaincy has been debated, even within Lutheran circles.⁹ This MAP presupposes the legitimacy of military chaplaincy. It rejects the argument that chaplaincy necessarily forces the chaplain to engage in unionist or synthesist violations of God's Word. Just as the uniqueness of Christ is a necessary presupposition for the problem to exist, Navy chaplaincy is the other necessary presupposition for the problem to exist. The two theological assumptions of soteriological exclusivism in Christ and the legitimacy of ministry in the Navy chaplaincy can come together to create a personal tension. Without them, there would be no dilemma for this project to address.

⁹ Military Chaplaincy is one of the points of contention between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. G. A. Press, "The Military Chaplaincy," Paper presented at the Missouri-Wisconsin Synod President's Conference, Milwaukee, WI, Jan 1954, www.wlssays.net/files/PressMilitary.PDF (accessed July 3, 2008).

CHAPTER 2

THE PROJECT IN BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

This project deals with matters of both religion and civil politics. Both topics arise in situations of religious plurality, where people of many faiths live and work together. How should Christians understand the relationship of their own faith to these others? Answers to this question comprise the field of the “theology of religions,” and I briefly outline its contemporary contours and more extensively detail a confessional Lutheran theology of religions. I also discuss at length the challenge of “Neo-Paganism,” or the contemporary revival and appropriation of ancient paganism. The more usual common-denominator types of approaches to religious coexistence do not lend themselves as easily for this emerging phenomenon: But some of its features resemble the religions of ancient Near East and therefore suggest some informative biblical parallels for the Christian. Since it is not as commonly encountered, I explain it with some detail before identifying the relevant theological connections.

The topic of civil politics arises from the situation of military chaplaincy. Both the Christian faith and civil authorities call for allegiance. How should Christians understand and respond to this? Answers to this question often go under the label of the “church and society” or “religion and politics.” Lutheran discussions of this question characteristically invoke the validity and distinction of “two kingdoms.” I lay out the basic features of this teaching and draw attention to matters especially relevant to service as a military chaplain.

Theology of Religions

To answer questions about how Christianity relates to other religions, a subcategory of theology has emerged – theology of religions. Carl Braaten defines it as the “discipline which aims to think about the world religions in light of the Christian faith.”¹⁰ Since the 1980’s, the debate has taken the shape of a three-fold typology: exclusivist (sometimes called particularist), inclusivist, and pluralist.¹¹ As Netland reminds us, these three terms do not reflect clear-cut categories as much as three points on a broader continuum.¹² The variations and nuances on the continuum and the breadth of the subsidiary issues become quite expansive as one delves into theologies of religions. Nevertheless, these three terms offer helpful structure for an introduction to the debate and do not seem likely to disappear soon.

Exclusivism or particularism represents the traditional Christian view that salvation is “particular” to those in communion with God through faith in the mediatorial work of His uniquely incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. This position is exclusivist in that it excludes all other religions as ways of salvation or as normative sources of the truth about God and His will. The teachings of God’s Word are authoritative and where the teachings of other religions do not align with Scripture, they are rejected. Since the person and work of Christ offer the only possibility of salvation, no other religion and no other way than Christ can bring about the eternal salvation of a person. The optimism for

¹⁰ Carl E. Braaten, *No Other Gospel! Christianity among the World’s Religions* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 92.

¹¹ Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1993); Gavin D’Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism* (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986); and John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1992); Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, gen. eds. *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

¹² Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 47.

salvation of people of other religions is always tied to their evangelization into the Christian faith.

Inclusivism incorporates a range of perspectives which may not be as clearly recognizable as exclusivist positions, but I use the term to include perspectives that express some optimism in some way for salvation of any or all people that do not repose faith in Christ in this life. Generally, inclusivists retain a certain scope for Christ in which he is normative or exceptional beyond the personalities, methods, teachings, or means of other religions. Yet in some way, the benefits of Christ may eventually accrue to those of other religions or are available in or through the other religions. Thus while Christianity is superior to other faiths, the others offer avenues to Christ or have some kind of positive value in God's ultimate salvific designs. The ambiguity of these characteristics for defining inclusivism allows for the fact that there is considerable diversity among inclusivists across a range of issues.

Pluralism rejects any sense of superiority for Christ or Christianity. The religious ultimate is accessed by all major religions. Salvation, enlightenment or whatever the religious objective, is present and meaningful in its own sense to each of the religions. Human religions have been shaped by historical and cultural factors yet each touches upon something that is higher than any one of them. Christians may say that Jesus is the only way, but that must be understood to mean that He is the only way "for them." No religion can be privileged above another but all of them must rather be appreciated.

Theology of Religions and the Mission of the Church

One insightful question to better understand the typologies in the theologies of religion is to ask what "mission" might entail for each of the three. In an exclusivist

perspective, a foremost goal is likely to be religious conversion. Christian mission aims to bring about the obedience of faith (Rom 1:5). A false belief or misplaced confidence would need to be replaced by correct beliefs and trust in something that can deliver upon what it promises. There would likely be a sense of urgency about the mission for the exclusivist because everything depends upon whether one places faith in Jesus or does not. An inclusivist would feel compelled to share from his own perspective and bear witness to the climactic event of revelation, but would also appreciate and look for avenues of grace in the perspective of the other.¹³ There is less need for urgency since, in a manner of speaking everything should work out in the end. Yet the finality of Christ implies the mandate for God's people to bear faithful testimony to the truth so the thoughtful inclusivist will emphasize witness. The pluralist presumably focuses upon dialogue. The goal is enriched mutual understanding. All partners in the dialogue would share with one another and grow. Diana Eck describes it as celebration of diversity, knowledge of others, making room for differences, building upon discussion rather than agreement, and "commitment to being at the table."¹⁴ There may be "conversions" in the sense that each is changed after such an encounter; but they are "small" conversions. "Replacement" of one religion with another presumes superiority, an idea that pluralism rejects. At the risk of sounding accusing, there may be another aspect of the pluralist mission. It seems detectable to me though it may not reflect their self-understanding. As much as Christian pluralists urge exchange and dialogue, they sometimes seem also

¹³ During a course that I took in 2003 at St. Mary's of the Lake Catholic Seminary in Mundelein, IL, the instructor called attention to the increased number of Saints that were canonized under John Paul II. Many of them came from non-western and even non-Christian areas of the world. They reflected his efforts to underscore the light of Christ at work in peoples and areas that lay beyond the formal expressions of Christianity.

¹⁴ Diana L. Eck, "From Diversity to Pluralism," <http://pluralism.org/pages/pluralism/essays/from-diversity-to-pluralism> (accessed October 16, 2012).

interested in the need to correct other Christians by denouncing exclusivism.¹⁵ One can find characterizations of exclusivism which imply that its adherents either feel some sort of smug superiority over others, or that they hold their views out of fear – that they feel threatened by diversity. Exclusivist views might be depicted as prejudice or intolerance.¹⁶ No doubt those impulses exist, but responsible proponents of exclusivism argue for it out of conviction, not fear or bias. As exclusivists contend for their perspective, they must take into account how these distinctive views of mission by inclusivists and pluralists will interplay with their own.

Exclusivism as a Scriptural and Confessional Position

The basic theological position of this project is exclusivism. It is the traditional Christian position, reflected in the Scriptures and upheld without question by the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. Exclusivism has maintained that Christianity is normative and that it presents the correct views of reality, revelation, and salvation. The biblical texts have served as the foundation for this position. In John 14:6 (NIV), Jesus declares “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” The forgiveness that is received through Christ is pictured clearly in passages like Acts 26:17, 18; Romans 3:25; and Hebrews 2:17. In John 3:18 (NIV), we are told that “Whoever believes in him [the Son] is not condemned but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one

¹⁵ Netland draws an interesting comparison between the first World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 with the second World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1993. Both were organized by Christians, but while the first seemed designed to contrast the uniqueness of Christianity with other religions, in the second, the Christians that were present seemed to hold the position that a concept of the superiority of Christianity and Christ was the most problematic issue. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 117-18.

¹⁶ “The history of associating exclusivism with arrogance, intolerance, dogmatism, and close-mindedness is well established.” Okholm and Phillips, 15.

and only Son.” This serves as the basis for the preaching of the Gospel. “. . . it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.” (I Cor 1:21b NIV) Belief or faith is not an optional accessory to the Gospel but the very purpose that stands behind its proclamation as Paul explains in Romans, “for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then can they call on the one they have not believed in?” (Rom 10:13-14a NIV) And what is the name of this Lord upon whom one must call to be saved? A prominent verse for the uniqueness of Jesus echoes from Peter’s words in Acts 4:12 (NIV). “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

The uniqueness of Jesus does not merely rely upon a few proof texts, but it is reflected across the Bible’s presentation of Him. In a cultural context of strict monotheism, Jesus identified himself in an exclusive way with the one, eternal God. No other serious religious figure of history made such claims. As part and parcel of those claims, Jesus also asserted that he had authority to forgive sin, a prerogative that no other human person could assume. He invited people to believe in Him and thereby find salvation. Additionally, although the Scripture teaches the universality of human sin, Jesus challenged others to point out sin in Him, an implicit claim to sinlessness. Perhaps most significantly of all, though every religious figure throughout history has died, there is no reliable record of a permanent resurrection from the dead except for Jesus. The place of Jesus and the events of his life present all people of the world with a decisive new fact for God’s redemptive purposes.¹⁷

Although exclusivists proclaim a place for Christians among other faiths as the assembly uniquely called to bring the Gospel to the world, it does not mean that they

¹⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 5.

have cornered the market on all truth. It is possible to find truth and value in other religions. Nor is exclusivism defined in terms of cultural exclusivity.¹⁸ It is strictly theological. The exclusivist seeks faithfulness to the Scriptures. God has revealed Himself in some degree to the whole world, but His definitive revelation has come through Christ and the prophetic and apostolic record found in Holy Scripture.

The Lutheran Confessions preserve this uniqueness to the Gospel which necessarily excludes alternatives. The first sentence of the Athanasian Creed boldly declares that “Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold the true Christian faith. Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish for eternity.”¹⁹ The Augsburg Confession flatly rejects deficient perspectives on God as heresies which are to be rejected.²⁰ Luther states in the Large Catechism that “If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true God. On the other hand, if you trust is false and wrong, then you have not the true God.”²¹ What is that faith which is necessary to have the true God? Chiefly, one must hold to redemption through the blood of Christ. It is necessary to believe this and it cannot be otherwise acquired or apprehended.²²

Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered [nor can anything be granted or permitted contrary to the same], even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin. *For there is none other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved*, says Peter, Acts 4:12. *And with His stripes we are healed*, Is. 53:5. And upon this article all things depend which we teach and practice in opposition to the Pope, the devil, and the [whole] world. Therefore, we must be sure

¹⁸ Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 48.

¹⁹ *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. and ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 19.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 28.

²¹ *Ibid.* 365.

²² The Smalcald Articles, Part II Article I, sentence 4, available at <http://bookofconcord.org/smalcald.php#officeandworkofjesus> (accessed February 16, 2013).

concerning this doctrine, and not doubt; for otherwise all is lost, and the Pope and devil and all things gain the victory and suit over us.²³

The true doctrine defines the difference between salvation and condemnation. For the articles of the Creed distinguish Christians from heathens, Turks (Muslims), Jews, or false Christians according to Luther in the Large Catechism. Although he admits that they may believe in and even worship the true God, without this doctrine they do not rightly understand His attitude toward them. They do not have the Lord Jesus Christ thus they remain in eternal wrath and damnation.²⁴

So the exclusivist is obligated to love his neighbor and avoid false witness by inaccurately or unfairly portraying the neighbor's beliefs. Yet faithfulness obligates the exclusivist to offer an authentic witness to God's singular design for forgiveness of sins.

Luther's Large Catechism tells us,

. . . Therefore it is not a Christian Church either; for where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Ghost who creates, calls, and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one can come to Christ the Lord . . . But outside of this Christian Church, where the Gospel is not, there is no forgiveness, as also there can be no holiness [sanctification]. Therefore all who seek and wish to merit holiness [sanctification], not through the Gospel and forgiveness of sin, but by their works, have expelled and severed themselves [from this Church].²⁵

The logic of the Catechism is quite clear. If the Holy Ghost brings about holiness through the Gospel and only in the church where that Gospel of Christ brings forgiveness of sins, those who pursue it elsewhere cannot be said to have it. In fact Luther goes on to say in paragraph 66 of the same article that the Creed divides Christians from all other

²³ The Smalcald Articles, Part II Article I, sentences 5 and 6, available at <http://bookofconcord.org/smalcald.php#officeandworkofjesus> (accessed February 16, 2013).

²⁴ *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* 419.

²⁵ Luther's Large Catechism, The Apostles Creed Article III, sentences 45 and 56, available at <http://www.bookofconcord.org/lc-4-creed.php> (accessed October 16, 2012).

people on earth who remain in eternal wrath and damnation because they do not have the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁶

The Challenge of Neo-Paganism

As noted earlier, the expansion of Neo-Pagan religions brings the issues of religious pluralism into fuller relief.²⁷ The issues exist with all dissimilar religions and denominations, but Neo-Paganism is so strikingly different that it becomes harder to skirt the matters at stake. Their growing demands raise questions about the place of their religious practices in society. This chapter argues further that governing authorities, ruling according to the first use of the law, have a responsibility to favor certain religious expressions in public over others.²⁸ That perspective is far from the case today. The assertion however, that they occupy a lesser status as a religion in the public sphere should not be construed as hostility by the author against NPs. After conversations with many of them through the years, I find them in general to be interesting, easy to engage in conversation, and kind-hearted. They come to me for support on a variety of issues because they know that I care for them genuinely; but at the same time, I relish opportunities to interact with them in respectful religious discourse. The other person defines the limits of our conversation and I press no further than they are willing to go. I approach it with an openness to learn from them. I do not insist on telling them everything that Christian faith demands but only what seems to be the next step toward the truth. Frequently, NPs were nudged in that direction by the insensitivities of

²⁶ *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. and ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 419.

²⁷ pp. 5-7.

²⁸ pp. 45-46.

Christians.²⁹ My goal is always at the very least to represent a Christianity, perhaps unlike their previous experiences, that is gentle, caring, listening, and concerned.

So the theological and biblical chapter of this paper must consider two areas. First, what is this Neo-Pagan religion all about and what kind of people are drawn to it? To understand them better is to strengthen our ability to meet our most loving obligation to them – to present Christ authentically. Second, concurrent with my interest to learn about them, hesitations about them rumble deep within. These stem from fears that Neo-Paganism detours from the mainstream more than most. Are cautions like this warranted? Biblically-speaking, we have cause to approach it warily, so this chapter will also present one area of biblical consideration relevant to NPism.

Neo-Paganism: Introduction

In today's America, "witchcraft is out of the broomcloset . . ." ³⁰ It is a bona fide religion in the eyes of the I.R.S. and the Department of Defense. Numerous internet sites promote witchcraft. Many cities have magick or occult shoppes. There is a witchcraft publishing house (Llewellyn Publishing, St. Paul, MN) and Seminary (Cherryhill Seminary, Bethel, VT). Hollywood portrays enticing pictures of pretty witches. No one raises an eyebrow at the occasional bumper sticker that reads "Magick is Afoot," "The Goddess is Alive," or "My Other Car is a Broomstick." Forget the villain from The Wizard of Oz. Modern witches see themselves as mainstream.

It is a diverse and eclectic movement. Wiccans usually form small groups called covens of between 2-20 people. Although covens tend to split at about 13 members, larger groups maintain contact through festivals, newsletters, magick shops, and the

²⁹ Michael Cooper, "The Resurgence of Paganism in the West," *Trinity Magazine*, Spring, 2008, 26.

³⁰ Andrew Stuttaford, "Strange Brew," *National Review* July 12, 1999: 34.

combining of covens for occasional rituals. Adherents may identify with Gardnerian, Alexandrian, Algard, or Dianic Wicca; or they may be eclectic or solitary practitioners.³¹ Neo-Paganism is a broader term that encompasses Wicca and a broad coalition of earth-based, polytheistic, “pre-Christian,” or magic-using practices such as Druids, Odinists, Shamans, and on and on. They may reflect old nature religions, animism, pantheism, or polytheism. The latter draw from Greek, Egyptian, Roman, Celtic, Norse, or Sumerian pantheons. Even science fiction is legitimate fodder for these vast spiritual appetites.³² Many describe themselves as “Pagan” from the Latin term “pagus.” It meant “country-dweller” and took on the connotation of the rural peasant whose isolation from larger society led him/her to continue otherwise largely abandoned religious practices. An affinity with nature and the earth reflects in celebrations that revolve around esbats (moon cycles) and eight major seasonal holidays, including equinoxes and solstices.³³ The number of adherents in the U.S.A. range from 50,000 to 300,000.³⁴ Adler’s informal survey in the appendix of her book indicates that in terms of previous religious affiliations, NPs seem to match the general national profile.³⁵ NP literature often assaults traditional religion but the NP phenomenon does not appear primarily as a reaction against Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or other religious backgrounds: But neither are NPs

³¹ Karen Junker and Vernieda Vergara, “Wicca,” Religious Movements Homepage of the University of Virginia, Sociology Department, <http://web.archive.org/web/20060902232151/http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/wicca.html> (accessed July 8, 2012).

³² Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-worshippers, and Others in America Today* 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 4. Margot Adler is the granddaughter of psychologist Alfred Adler. Although pagan herself, this aging but fair and thorough treatment of the subject is a primary resource. Almost every serious book or article on NP written since its initial release in 1979 includes it in the bibliography.

³³ Adler, 110.

³⁴ The small size of groups, their fluidity, lack of central organization, and the difficulty of identifying whether someone is NP make numerical estimates a challenge. Many estimates are based upon book sales.

³⁵ Adler, 444.

merely a cross section of society.³⁶ Cynthia Eller's sketch of goddess worshippers indicates that most are whites with a disproportionate percentage of lesbians.³⁷ Patterns to explain this diverse movement do not easily fit.³⁸

Margot Adler offers insightful reasons that NPs themselves give for their interest in NPism.³⁹ They include a love for beauty, intellectual satisfaction, personal growth, feminism, environmentalism, and freedom without guilt. To the Christian observer, interest in truth is conspicuously absent. When "in all probability, not a single element of the Wiccan story is true," what accounts for this social phenomenon in which people pursue religion without regard for the veracity of its content?⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, the NP movement charms people seeking meaning in a complex world and a confusing religious milieu. The big drawing card becomes the lack of dogma. A religion unfettered by obligatory doctrine has a powerful appeal. Any set of teachings figures less significantly than the rituals.⁴¹ Charlotte Allen describes it as a combination of the advantages of Catholicism and Unitarianism – rich religious life and light beliefs.⁴² Such a setting lends itself initially to our fallen tendency toward diversion; diversion that turns aside

³⁶ By "primarily," I mean only that based upon Adler's figures, the backgrounds of individual NPs do not seem unusual; but the movement itself portrays a different dynamic. "Reading the literature on god/dess largely entails reading the explanations of many people in revolt against the God of the Bible." Aida Besancon Spencer, *The Goddess Revival* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 93.

³⁷ Cynthia Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess: The Feminist Spirituality Movement in America* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 18.

³⁸ Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., *Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). Robert Ellwood has used the sociological model of "Strong Group, Strong Grid" to account for "Excursus Religions" or emergent religions that allow individuals to journey away from the familiar toward the strange. While NP fits the definition of an excursus religion, it seems to defy those sociological patterns. Groups may develop strong social cohesion but they are structurally weak overall. Charismatic personalities are unessential. Individuals come and go as they choose. Likewise the grid (explanatory framework) of NPism is, by definition, quite broad and unbinding.

³⁹ Adler, 22-23.

⁴⁰ Charlotte Allen, "The Scholars and the Goddess," *Atlantic Monthly* 287, no. 1, (2001):19.

⁴¹ Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 189.

⁴² Allen, 19.

from the search for meaning in order to create our own sense of meaning. Adler quotes Isaac Bonewits in the context of his quest to form a new religion within the NP camp; he can “pick and choose what parts make sense in modern America.”⁴³

Contrary to notions of witchcraft that see it as satanic, NPs themselves understand Satanism as something defined by direct antithetical relationship to Christianity. NPism completely rejects any kind of Christian framework including the idea of Satan, so they strongly resent being labeled as Satanists. It is a religion tied to nature. The transcendent simply does not interest it. It concerns itself with the immanence of the sacred all around us and within us. The seasons create the contour of its religious calendar. The earth is identified with the great mother goddess. The “Gaia Hypothesis” finds willing disciples among NPs.⁴⁴ Of course this radically different approach to creation cannot help but conflict with Christian views. The Judeo-Christian tradition, which elevates humanity over nature, attracts special criticism from NPs for giving license to exploit the earth.⁴⁵

The slightest excursion into NPism will expose the significance of the “Goddess” in NP worship. As Cynthia Eller says, goddess “Thealogy” is not about “God in a skirt.”⁴⁶ It operates with completely different categories for thinking about the sacred. The mythology of the cult of the goddess is critical in order to understand this.

Work in the 1960’s and 70’s by archaeologist Marija Gimbutas provoked interest in pre-patriarchal eras characterized by goddess-worshipping, nature-oriented,

⁴³ Adler, 326.

⁴⁴ The Gaia hypothesis postulates that the entire earth and everything on it is one giant, interconnected organism. Like the cells and systems in a human body, each living and non-living element makes up part of a greater living thing, and the suffering of one ultimately affects all of the others. This has enormous religious significance. Spiritually, we do not think “about” Gaia, as though we were independent of her. She permeates and directs us. This appears remarkably like pantheism. British atmospheric scientist James Lovelock and American microbiologist Lynn Margolis developed this hypothesis. The latter has moved in the direction of its religious implications. Spencer, 27.

⁴⁵ Adler, 17.

⁴⁶ Eller, 130.

harmonious civilizations – a view now strongly challenged.⁴⁷ Excavated statuettes and images interpreted as that of a goddess from 6500-3000 BCE seemed to point to a Cult of the goddess which represented fertility, wisdom, and a union of the human and the divine.⁴⁸

Out of this historical background, the contrasting male monotheism of the Genesis myth is said to have arisen. Nomadic warriors and herdsman asserted God as the great Sky-Father. He created by fiat, not by the womb. As this new myth spread and was forced upon civilizations, the result proved disastrous for “goddess pursuits,” i.e. gardening, replenishing the soil, and caring for the earth. Women became relegated to secondary roles and symbols. The immanence of the divine in nature gave way to a new dualism which bifurcated the natural from the transcendent. Women became linked to the material in this new dualism. A feminist return to the myth of the pre-patriarchal cult of the Goddess then entails an opposition to any sense of subordination, both for women and for the earth. Thus, Feminist Theology feels a strong linkage with the earth, “our sister.”⁴⁹ A sense of this linked feeling can be seen in the imagery that when people are oppressed, the earth is “raped.” All life is sacred and suffers collectively.

The story of goddess cultures in pre-civilization is based upon flawed scholarship.⁵⁰ Among other things, the interpretation of the evidence is flawed. It is astounding to see how brilliantly Philip Davis connects the dots which clearly picture how key people have influenced each other in the shaping of witchcraft/goddess myths

⁴⁷ Spencer, 21, 236.

⁴⁸ Lisa Isherwood & Dorothea McEwan, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 98-100.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 126-27.

⁵⁰ Philip G. Davis, *The Goddess Unmasked: The Rise of Neopagan Feminist Spirituality* (Dallas: Spence Publishing, 1998), 53-85.

over the last two centuries.⁵¹ Major books today that support goddess religion all show clear signs of dependence on the dubious sources of witchcraft and matriarchal theory that Davis traces.⁵² Goddess theory writers selectively used the evidence which distorted the conclusions.⁵³ They interpreted very speculatively for grand themes, sometimes appealing to stereotypically different ways that men and women think.⁵⁴ Evidently, the myth does not have to truthfully correspond to history in order to work. NPs who know that the story is not historically accurate may not care. For them, the fact that the myth functions as it does is the important thing. Davis correlates this with a post-modern view of scholarship where objectivity is not only impossible, but it is illegitimate because it translates into oppression.⁵⁵ What I would expect in terms of an objective study about pre-civilized societies would be seen by the post-modern view as “my” truth which I would use to justify continued patriarchy and oppression. The goddess cult reflects “their” truth because it embodies the understanding of the oppression that they have felt. All perspectives according to this post-modern scheme are subjective.⁵⁶ The myth must speak to what people feel about their lives today, irrespective of what happened 6000 years ago.

This has significance for an examination of NPism. Most people can recall some kind of experience of suffering at the hands of a group or societal structure. Without

⁵¹ Philip Davis has written a fascinating and well-researched book. Another fine article demonstrating that there was no universal or European goddess religion is Joan Townsend, “The Goddess: Fact, Fallacy, and Revitalization,” in *Goddesses in Religious and Modern Debate* ed. Larry Hurtado, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).

⁵² Davis, 342.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 353.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 358.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 360.

⁵⁶ This appears to be the argument of Kathryn Roundtree in her defense of the Goddess movement’s “Golden Age” theories about “matrifocal, peaceful, egalitarian societies who worshipped a Great Goddess.” Kathryn Roundtree, “The Past is a Foreigner’s Country: Goddess Feminists, Archaeologists, and the Appropriation of Prehistory,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 16, no. 1, (2001): 5-27.

careful reflection, those who have been hurt may readily lump their perceived oppressors into a “them” category. Every oppressed group knows who “they” are! Too often, Christianity gets lumped in as well. As Aida Spencer notes, Christianity is often judged as everything and everyone who is not NP.⁵⁷ A large part of her book, *The Goddess Revival*, attempts to correct misunderstandings of what the Christian God is like. In these attempts, she draws doctrinal criticism from evangelical book reviews, but surely she has at least correctly diagnosed part of the problem as a rejection of the Christian view based upon misunderstanding. NPism appeals to people to some extent because it promises an alternative to those who believe that contemporary hierarchical structures, e.g. Christian churches or the Navy, must be unjustly oppressive and patriarchal. Persecution of NPs reinforces that belief.⁵⁸ By the same token however, unchallenged tacit acceptance of NPism perpetuates that belief too. The growth of NPism tasks Christians, including Christian chaplains, to speak up in the marketplace for a fair representation of the Christian picture of God.

If truth and doctrine seem picayunish for NPism, experience looms momentarily. In fact, for Adler, “What really defines a witch is a type of experience people go through.”⁵⁹ From NP rituals, NPs seek altered states of consciousness. The central ritual known as the Spiral Dance or “Drawing Down the Moon” in which the moon signifies the Goddess involves the Priestess in the center of a circle. The participants who may in some NP groups be “Skyclad” or naked, utter ritual language as they dance around her in

⁵⁷ Spencer, 190.

⁵⁸ This is one reason why I believe that despite its increasing popularity, there is an invisible ceiling on the growth of NPism. By definition of its narrative dimension, it is the religion of the oppressed minority. If it should ever become a majority, it would have to radically transform its defining myths.

⁵⁹ Adler, 106.

an upward spiral. The cumulative energies of the participants result in an embodiment of the goddess in the priestess. She ends the ritual when she feels the peak state of energy.⁶⁰

The altered state of consciousness in a NP's experience carries so much epistemic force, that it validates her world, not only in the absence of other means of confirmation, but in spite of evidences that would seem to abrogate the NP worldview! Adler admits that the "Wiccan myth" is rejected by modern scholarship, including accounts of its origin from a Cult of the Goddess; and that scholarship also refutes the assertion that an unbroken chain of underground witches through the ages have kept the craft alive during the "burning times" when 100,000's of them were executed after which they then passed the craft down to offspring who had the gift.⁶¹ She concedes that people lie about Wiccan family heritage, make up stories of seeing grandma naked doing the ritual, and that fantasies of all kinds circulate throughout the craft. Yet all of this is acceptable, she reasons, because the Wiccan vision is valid.⁶² Unlike historical religions which depend at least to some degree upon historical veridicality, NPism depends for its authority upon its one trump card – experience.

Another element of NPism that raises eyebrows is the use of magic spells. "Magick" is primarily spelled with the "K" in this regard to distinguish the serious nature of these efforts from tricks, illusions, slight-of-hand, etc. Magick may be described as non-empirical means for empirical ends, in contrast to traditional religion which uses

⁶⁰ Ibid, 166.

⁶¹ Ibid, 60.

⁶² Ibid, 87-91.

non-empirical means for non-empirical ends, or science which uses empirical means for empirical ends.⁶³ How might we explain this interest among NPs?

A popular explanation among NPs understands Magick as collective energies that influence extra-dimensional forces through the spells. For others it is an effort of the human will. Adler notes the observation by Maricello Truzzi.⁶⁴ Aspects of the supernatural that were feared and culturally taboo become playful ideas. The personal sense of fear and dread at the unseen world loses its power as the magical becomes the casual. A de-mystifying process gives them a sense of victory over the supernatural.

This sense of victory offers us a key insight. Inherent in the concept of magic itself is a capacity to control or exercise power over something. This presupposes a desire to have power. The appeal of NPism may be the reclaiming of a sense of power over forces beyond control by those who feel powerless. This theory seemed more credible to me as I realized that every NP that I knew at very personal levels shared stories of dysfunction or brokenness in their lives or family backgrounds. Each could tell of experiences that to my mind revealed their powerlessness to control unpleasant realities. Involvement with NPism made them feel like they had something others did not have. Magick gave them power to cope and redirect. My observations may be anecdotal but others have noted this as well. Shelly Rabinovitch's study of Canadian Pagans showed that a high percentage of them are rape/abuse survivors.⁶⁵ They tended to be people with internalized, poor self-esteem.

⁶³ Robert Ellwood quoting Geoffrey K. Nelson. Robert J. Ellwood Jr., *Religion and Spiritual Groups in Modern America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973), 30.

⁶⁴ Adler, 369.

⁶⁵ Shelley Rabinovitch, "An 'Ye harm None, Do What Ye Will: Neo-Pagans and Witches in Canada,'" (M.A. Thesis, Carlton University, Ottawa, 1992). Taken from Harvey, 209.

Extensive research of this does not exist but an interesting parallel can be seen in Edwin Moody's study of Satanists.⁶⁶ He noticed that they reflect a cross section of people but tended to share one common characteristic, a general lack of knowledge about the "rules" of the social game. Nearly all satanic novices exhibited high anxiety, low self-esteem, and feelings of inadequacy. 85% reported homes split apart by alcohol, divorce, or other serious problems. Magic training lessened guilt and anxiety. It built confidence. They regained a sense of control over their lives and environments. The potential Satanist is someone who thinks of the cosmos as ordered by imperceptible principles - magic.⁶⁷ When they feel powerless and alienated, magic helps them cope with the struggles in life's everyday problems.⁶⁸ The practice of magick, then, may reveal to our pastoral senses, a person with hurts, needs, and struggles, who is grasping for something to reassert control.

Some predict NPism to grow significantly. I believe that while it may yet increase in numbers, it will never fill a major role in our society. The essences of NPism intrinsically work against stability and endurance. For one thing, magic factors against stability.

Magic is basically an individual thing, appealing to people with high self-consciousness and low self-confidence, and so does not produce stable groups, either in primitive or modern society.⁶⁹

The nature of the groups also works against routinization, which would limit growth.⁷⁰

The small size, diversity of practice, combined with the anti-dogmatic character creates

⁶⁶ Edward J. Moody, "Urban Witches," in *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, the Esoteric, and the Occult* ed. Edward A. Tiryakian, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 223-234.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 226.

⁶⁸ Adler, 369.

⁶⁹ Ellwood, *Religious and Spiritual Groups*, 192-93.

⁷⁰ Helen Berger, "Routinization of Spontaneity," *Sociology of Religion* 56 (1995): 49-62.

tremendous fluidity. Groups change. New members move in and out. Fractures occur. Cynthia Eller noticed the un-enduring character of covens.⁷¹ She spoke with some women that reported covens which lasted as long as eight years. More commonly though, they belonged to groups less than a year old or already disbanded. The insights into why NPs feel drawn toward it should influence the ways that a Christian chaplain addresses it, responds to it, and tries to shape society's response to it.

Biblical Snapshot of Polytheism and Goddess Religion: Ancient Israel

Why would goddess worshippers create such an uneasy feeling for a Christian exclusivist? It predominantly reflects the fact that the Bible itself does not treat the topic as casually as contemporary sophisticates would have us do.

The fallout from the discipline known as History of Religions has resulted in a challenge to the biblical picture of ancient Israel. The discipline examines the historical development of religions. Many of its students have argued for an evolutionary model of development in which religions progress from animist, to polytheist, to henotheist, to monotheist, and ultimately to ethics-centered forms. According to this model, the religion of Israel did not begin with monotheism as the Bible claims that it did. Interpretations of the historical data to evaluate this thesis must appeal to philological developments and archaeology. At the center of the debate we find some discoveries from the eighth century BCE concerning Asherah.

The goddess Asherah was the consort of the Ugaritic high god, El. According to Mark Smith, the Deuteronomist concerns during Josiah's time stood opposed to the goddess Asherah. On this reconstruction, the Deuteronomists approved of Hezekiah and

⁷¹ Eller, 8.

Josiah precisely because of their suppression of the goddess.⁷² Later, in the post-exilic period, the priests adopted a very strict monotheism and revised their own history and texts to discredit worship of the goddess. Asherah poles, which may have been wooden cultic objects used in Israelite worship, were condemned for their similarity to the name of the goddess.⁷³ God commanded Gideon in Judges 6:25 to cut down the Asherah pole that stood beside Baal's altar and Deuteronomy 12:2 seems to prohibit planting a tree as an Asherah pole beside an altar of YHWH. So it seems to have been a tree or other wooden object employed next to or somehow in conjunction with the altars of gods. As further evidence against the Biblical picture, archaeologists point to discoveries of goddess figures common in Israel in the pre-exilic times. Many books and articles have been written about these finds and what they meant for Israel's worship so that it is even doubted by some whether monotheism existed at all before the exile.⁷⁴

Recent discoveries at Khirbet el-Qom and Kuntillet 'Ajrud have reinforced these doubts. The discoveries contain epigraphic evidence for heterodox worship of Asherah in Israel. William Dever has interpreted an inscription at Kuntillet 'Ajrud about "YHWH and his Asherah" as evidence that Asherah was worshipped as the consort of YHWH. He argues that an illustration of a seated female figure near the inscription is that of the goddess.

Perhaps Dever and others have interpreted too much from all of this. Bill Arnold offers four caveats to the interpretations given to these things that remind us of the uncertain nature of our evidence. Most notably, the location of the find is at the

⁷² Mark S. Smith, "God Male and Female in the Old Testament in the Old Testament: Yahweh and His "Asherah"." *Theological Studies*, 48, no. 2 (1987): 336.

⁷³ Sandra Scham, "The Lost Goddess of Israel." *Archaeology*, 58, no. 2 (2005): 36.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 40.

periphery of Israel and a crossroads of travel where one would most likely find syncretistic influence.⁷⁵ Dever's book *Did God Have a Wife?* has the kind of catchy title that is sure to sell some copies. It even spawned a PBS special on Nova. It might appeal to popular imagination but the evidence demands more modesty by the interpreters. Shmuel Ahituv criticizes Dever's interpretation of the inscription at Kuntilet 'Ajrud.⁷⁶ As noted earlier, Asherah can refer to either the goddess or the cult object. Of the 40 times that it appears in the Bible, only five are unambiguously of the goddess. The inscription may refer to a tree, pole, or other wooden cult object used in the ritualistic worship. Dever assumes a closer association because of the illustration but it is clear that the illustration was overwritten upon the inscription. Even if the seated woman is the goddess, it has no relation to the inscription for the author of the inscription.

Arguers for mixed worship during Israel's monarchy also point to the enormous number of small models of the goddess from the era, often portrayed with abnormally large breasts. But are these images of the goddess? Ahituv notes that the goddess Asherah is prominent in Ugaritic texts from the 14th-12th BCE but entirely missing from Phoenician inscriptions in the first millennium BCE.⁷⁷ So the common female pillar figurines of Israel's monarchical period often regarded as Asherah would have to be some other goddess or perhaps no goddess at all. He proposes that they might be "prayers in clay" by pregnant women praying for good lactation after they give birth.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Bill T. Arnold, "Religion in Ancient Israel," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies* ed. David Baker and Bill Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 412-13.

⁷⁶ Shmuel Ahituv, "Did God Really Have a Wife?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32, no. 5 (Sep/Oct 2006): 65.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

Ahituv says that the archaeological and textual evidence is ambiguous but that it tips against the idea that God had a wife in Israelite religion.

Exodus 34:13 makes the first mention of Asherah in the Bible. Whether the Asherahs mentioned there are more generic cultic objects like the altars and pillars mentioned in the same verse, or objects specifically related to worship of the goddess, they are soundly condemned in this passage. Could this be a historical revision by Deuteronomist or Priestly redactors? That would have to be the argument of those that see an ancient polytheism in Israel's religion which only became monotheistic later. Yet even among those who accept the documentary theory, the material in Exodus 32-34 is regarded as mostly quite old - Jahwist or Elohist.⁷⁹ There may be Deuteronomic concerns but there are some decisive reasons for viewing it as older.⁸⁰ Some argue that the renewal of the covenant and the stipulations in 34:10-25 represent an older form of the Decalogue than Exodus 20:2-17 because they focus more upon harvest and offering matters whereas the commands of 20:2-17 are more ethical in nature.⁸¹ However chapter 34 presupposes both an original covenant and the story of the golden calf in chapter 32. Their interdependence argues against separate traditions. So this ancient text gives a deep-rooted and absolute prohibition against syncretism; but more than that, it is grounded in the uniqueness and privileged relationship that the Lord mercifully establishes with his people. Others might argue that this text could yield to interpretations of henotheism more so than monotheism at this point in the Bible's presentation of salvation history; but even if that were the case, it could not admit to

⁷⁹ John I. Durham, *Exodus* Word Biblical Commentaries, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 417.

⁸⁰ Moberly, R.W.L. *At the Mountain of God* (Sheffield, Eng: JSOT Press, 1983), 184-85.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 459. I do not accept this conclusion which is based on the documentary theory. The point is that even for those that accept it, the prohibition against Asherah poles would be an early one rather than late.

polytheistic worship. Even if the Israelites were henotheists in their cosmology, which is debatable, it was not permitted in their religious practices. Goddess worship or the idea of a consort for YHWH was inconceivable.

At the baseline of all questions about polytheism and goddess worship, we come back to the first commandment. Exodus 34:14 restates it as “Do not worship any other god.”(NIV) This is the only verse in the Bible that has the expression “another god” in the singular (אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים). The other places where this prohibition occurs express it in the plural - “other gods.” While this verse carries the full weight of the first commandment, the use of the singular here distinguishes the Lord from that which is not the Lord. It preempts any thought of associating YHWH with some other divine being or high god. It is especially apropos following the story of the golden calf in which the people associated the idol with the god that led them from Egypt. The Lord is a jealous God.

God’s people in ancient Israel experienced the same temptations as his people in all other times. It would have been so easy for them to fuse their faith with the faiths of those around them. Although they sometimes fell to that temptation, God’s revealed words to them made it clear that he alone was God.

Church and Society

The Two Kingdoms

Military chaplaincy functions at the challenging intersection of church and state. Although the debates about religion in society, Christianity and culture, public theology, and church and state are vast and hotly contested, we cannot address the chaplain’s approaches toward religious pluralism without bringing these questions to bear. Our theological reflection on them must begin with a clear sense of what civil society should

look like. Unless we know the desired end-state, even if that end-state is unattainable in this world, we cannot rightly discern where our efforts and arguments in the public arena should focus.

The larger context for most Lutheran discussion about these areas operates with the concept of the two-kingdoms. The idea draws from Luther's recognition that righteousness exists in two distinct spheres – the spiritual righteousness obtained in a person's vertical relationship to God through the Gospel; and the external civil righteousness obtainable by both Christians and non-Christians through law-abiding social justice in the horizontal relationships of people with one another. In 1520, Luther wrote his *Appeal to the Ruling Class of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*. He made it clear that neither the church nor any spiritual authority has jurisdiction over the temporal powers in the exercise of their office.⁸² Yet the discharge of secular duties constituted a spiritual vocation. Luther offered 27 proposals for improving the state of Christendom which set a framework for the many good works that secular government can perform.⁸³ In 1523, Luther wrote *On Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*. It affirms in no uncertain terms that temporal authority comes from God. Although the theology coalesces over time and must be distinguished from other ways in which he uses the terms, Luther's important distinctive contribution to public theology is this evocation of the biblical doctrine of the "two-kingdoms."

Contrary to some interpretations, the two-kingdoms are not two separate spheres that do not connect or have anything to do with one another. Rather they reflect the two

⁸² Martin Luther, "An Appeal to the Ruling Class," in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 410.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 483.

ways that God deals with sin in this single creation. God's hands operate from both sides so to speak, but they must be carefully distinguished! God deals with the kingdom of the left hand, the temporal sphere, through the law – the kingdom of the right hand, the spiritual sphere, through the Gospel. On the left hand, sin is controlled and restrained by governance, justice, and the exercise of law. It is backed up by force. Although it is based upon justice, it is not merely negative but it also promotes the positive and fulfilling relationships envisioned by a created order that God has called “good.” It employs a first use of the law. The law structures our human relationships. The law is good; but the law is never redemptive. On the right hand, God removes sin through the ministrations of Christ by the Gospel. The law is used here according to its second function – to condemn the sinner and reveal the need for Christ in the Gospel. Whereas the left hand belongs to the created order and extends to all people, only the church belongs to the kingdom of the right hand and can be guided by the Spirit. The kingdom of the left hand employs the power of the sword: The kingdom of the right hand employs the power of the Word. The kingdom of the left hand belongs to creation: The kingdom of the right hand belongs to the new creation. The kingdom of the left hand uses only the law: The kingdom of the right hand uses the Gospel. The kingdom of the left hand uses coercion: The kingdom of the right hand uses persuasion. The kingdom of the left hand is charged by God to bring about justice: The kingdom of the right hand is charged by God to bring about justification.

Christians live in both kingdoms simultaneously. They bear a duty to obey secular authority. Christians likewise, for the sake of their neighbors, may rightfully bear the sword and serve in the secular kingdom; for it, too, is God's instrument.

Other works such as Luther's *Can Soldiers, Too, Be Saved?* contribute to a Lutheran doctrine of these two realms. Articles XVI and XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession set out the simultaneous operations of government and church in distinct spheres. Art. XVI declares that Christians outwardly manifest genuine good works in their station in life while the Gospel does not teach an outward and temporal mode of righteousness but an inward and eternal righteousness of the heart. In the outward, earthly kingdom of neighbors living together in community, the civil authority is charged with enabling and enforcing right living and external forms of good works between people, *coram hominibus*.⁸⁴ The Christian, as a citizen of the heavenly kingdom, has the benefit of God's Word from which to govern his personal affairs. Yet even a society without Christians can exercise a civil righteousness, for in this realm, the norms are justice, law, and concern for the common good – norms made accessible to all societies through reason and general revelation. Article XXVIII discusses the power of Bishops by contrasting their authority to teach, preach and administer the sacraments in distinction from temporal authorities that protect body and goods from the power of others. "Therefore, the two authorities, the spiritual and the temporal, are not to be mingled or confused . . ." ⁸⁵ Each is held in honor as ordained by God yet differentiated according to the areas in which they may and may not operate.

These distinctions are critical. The world cannot be ruled by the ethics of Christian love and charity, nor can the Gospel become the means for governing both

⁸⁴ The question arises concerning a real possibility of an external righteousness, i.e. a life rightly lived in relation to my neighbor, *coram hominibus*. As Braaten expresses it, ". . . humans are capable of doing what is good and right in the order of human relationships, *coram hominibus*. Natural law possesses no theological significance in the sense of providing a basis of human salvation. Yet the negative verdict on natural law in the vertical dimension need not entail a corresponding rejection of natural law on the horizontal line." I agree with Braaten here. Carl E. Braaten, "Protestants and Natural Law." *First Things* no. 19 (January 1, 1992): 20. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

⁸⁵ *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 83.

sheep and wolves together. Some Christians make compelling arguments for why the law needs to be supplemented by distinctively Christian ideas for the political and social transformation of men.⁸⁶ When this is done however, Law and Gospel are liable to be confused and the mission of the church defaults.

Implications of Two-Kingdom Theology for Religion in Society

There is no authority but from God. Yet existing, God-ordained authorities are also liable to be in the wrong, for Luther is clear with Scripture that we must obey God rather than man.⁸⁷ Article XVI affirms this as well.⁸⁸ Thus it is evident that even though God ordained the authority, that authority may or may not wield its influence rightly. When the kingdom of the left hand functions as God intends for it to function, what does it look like? The first use of the law delineates this. That kingdom operates according to the law, not the Gospel. This should not be misconstrued to mean that the secular realm is devoid of all religious content. Even many Christians incorrectly think that the best government and society is one in which religious issues are restricted to individuals and religious bodies alone.

Religious perspectives are inherent in all human expression. The governing authority is charged by God to act according to law to punish evil and reward good (I Pet. 2:13-14). On the horizontal level, it exercises the sword to maintain order and civil righteousness. Righteousness exalts a nation (Prov. 14:34). Every act or failure to act by

⁸⁶ Dan Strange offers engaging critiques of the two-kingdom perspective and the idea that natural law provides everything needed for public policy. His characteristically Reformed perspective argues that as Christians we must think “Christianly” about culture, politics, economics, etc. Dan Strange, “Not Ashamed, The Sufficiency of Scripture for Public Theology,” *Themelios* Vol. 36, Issue 2 (2011), http://thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/not_ashamed_the_sufficiency_of_scripture_for_public_theology (accessed November 14, 2012).

⁸⁷ Martin Luther, “On Secular Authority,” in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 382-92.

⁸⁸ *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 38.

authorities reflects something about their degree of righteousness. Some kind of system of values and morals, whether good or bad, inevitably undergirds every public action or inaction. Thus so-called separation of religion from state as it is commonly understood honors the religion of irreligion! It leads to civil unrighteousness. Neuhaus calls it “political atheism,” i.e. a subset of practical atheism which assumes that we can get along with the business at hand without addressing the question of God.⁸⁹ Neither can there be any true neutrality. The most even-handed fairness in religion, if such a thing is possible, still promulgates perspectives that are religious in nature - that all religions are the same or of equal value, that fairness is a higher value than truth, or at the very least that there are no useful criteria for distinguishing which are right or which are wrong. Paul Tillich defined faith functionally – as “ultimate concerns.” What functions as the dominant interest? This then, forms the faith or the religion of a person. We must persuade our society of the inescapability of a Tillichian definition of religion – ultimate concerns; in which case, every nation, like every person, is always and in everything religious.⁹⁰

Neuhaus observes that

Because government cannot help but make moral judgments of an ultimate nature, it must, if it has in principle excluded identifiable religion, make those judgments by “secular” reasoning that is given the force of religion.⁹¹

Everything carries religious connotations so the issue is not whether the governing authority will or will not exercise religious values; the question is which religious values the authority will exercise.

⁸⁹ Richard John Neuhaus, “Can Atheists Be Good Citizens?” *First Things*, Aug/Sept 1991, available at <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/11/003-can-atheists-be-good-citizens-5> (accessed July 22, 2009).

⁹⁰ I find it interesting that DEOMI (Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute) offers a training course on religion in the military for members assigned to function as Equal Opportunity Advisors in their commands. It uses a functional definition of religion just like Tillich’s.

⁹¹ Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 82.

So what religious values should undergird the civil authority? The answer is in the law according to its first function – in the civil arena. Here is the challenging part which seems so odd to our American sensibilities! While the temporal authority has no business putting forward the Gospel, its obligation to represent God in enforcing the law should extend to the fullness of the law. That means the first three commandments as well as the last seven. J. Budziszewski critiques what he describes as the “second table project” i.e. the effort to make ethics about our relations with people only and leave God out of it.⁹² Moral laws without knowledge of God do not lead to “oughtness” but to the lesser virtue of prudence. Government can and should acknowledge the existence and sovereignty of a Creator God who requires first place in our lives. It legitimately discourages or punishes blasphemy. It rightfully encourages blue laws, days of rest and worship. These examples drawn from the first three commandments are woven into the fabric of creation and are as equally the province of government’s concern as are murder, theft, and slander. This is not to say that the government becomes a theocracy; but it must make value judgments in any case. It can offer plenty of room for tolerance but only where a clear sense of itself sets the limits of tolerance. Otherwise tolerance as an absolute virtue becomes self-destructive. Without crossing into the realm of Christ, salvation, sacraments, spiritual righteousness or anything else that belongs to the right hand, the temporal government can and should support the concept of a Creator God Who stands behind its authority.

What I argue for here is not mere neutrality in religion, but in fact a privileged status for a generally Judeo-Christian, non-sectarian composite. This vision would have room for esoteric religions such as Neo-Pagans or Santeria, but they would not enjoy the

⁹² J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know* (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing, 2003), 51-76.

same privileged status as Judaism, Catholicism, or Protestantism insofar as they do not contribute the same things to the national interest or meet the criteria for the righteousness of the law which God expects the ruler to uphold. I do not mean here that they would be persecuted. It is the church's job to combat heresy with the Word, not the prince's job with the sword.⁹³ They would have freedom to practice their religion but might not have their holidays recognized, get their own chaplains, receive the same levels of public deference, etc. This sounds harsh to our American ears, and indeed, we must take pains that it not get carried away where they would suffer unjustly; but rightly exercised, it is the proper practice of the prince operating in the left-handed kingdom. One cannot escape this conclusion from the two-kingdom doctrine.

Implications for the Church's Voice toward the State

I now wish to turn more fully to an aspect of God's expectation for the temporal authorities that bears directly upon the direction of this paper. As Luther has clarified for us, Christians have an obligation to obey authorities, but do we have any other obligations toward them? One can readily understand why a Roman Catholic or a Reformed view of church and state would stir someone of that persuasion to actively work toward Christian objectives in government. Those views pose the danger that the distinction between the two spheres can blur. A Lutheran view can remediate this danger. At the same time, since government is acknowledged in its own right and needs no distinctively Christian corrective, why would a Lutheran work toward any particular objectives in government? The Lutheran view of church and state has led to charges that

⁹³ Luther, "Secular Authority," 389.

it breeds passivity about civil government and function.⁹⁴ What responsibility, if any, does the church have toward the state since they operate in different kingdoms?

In reflections upon some consistent weaknesses of evangelical political engagement in America, evangelical historian Mark Noll proposed that a Lutheran way provides healthy motives for political engagement, healthy priorities, healthy attitudes, and healthy political goals.⁹⁵ His call for the church in the United States to take a nudge in the Lutheran direction was answered by Robert Benne in his excellent book, “The Paradoxical Vision.”⁹⁶ One theme in Benne’s framework is God’s rule through law. On this point, he reminds us that

. . . the state has a subordinate, but nevertheless, important function – to establish a peaceful and just order. As it pursues that function, it is accountable to the transcendent order beyond itself, the law of God. One of the important roles of the church is to make that clear to the state.⁹⁷

At least one responsibility of the church then is to remind the state of its accountability to God’s law. In the context of this project, Lutheran exclusivist chaplains seek not only to change individual lives but to serve as corrective voices for their culture and for the institution. This is why the Power Point® brief developed for this project must not only examine the problem of chaplain facilitation for those of other religions but it must also consider the challenge to shape the culture and the institution.

⁹⁴ “Render Unto Caesar . . . And Unto God: A Lutheran View of Church and State,” A Report by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Sept 1995, 37. Available at <http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/chandst.pdf> (accessed Feb 13, 2010).

⁹⁵ Mark A. Noll, “What Lutherans Have to Offer,” in *A Report from the Front Lines: Conversations on Public Theology* ed. Michael Shahan (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 77.

⁹⁶ Robert Benne, *The Paradoxical Vision* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995).

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 83.

CHAPTER 3

THE PROJECT IN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In chapter two I identified the main areas of Christian theology involved in this project and outlined the fundamental positions in those areas from which this project works. Those areas were the theology of religions and the relationship of church and society. This chapter builds on those foundations to locate the project in both its historical and theological contexts and to distil the information that should inform the ministry of a Navy chaplain.

The Historical Context

The historical context for this project is determined *culturally* by the emergence of “religious pluralism” and the advent of “new religious movements,” exemplified in modern Western societies by Neo-Paganism and in the United States military by recognition of Wicca as a religion. The historical context is further determined by the *institutional situation* of the military chaplaincy.

Emergence of Religious Pluralism as a Perspective

God’s people have always faced encounters with other faiths (e.g. Acts 17:16; I Kings 18:19). The larger challenge comes from perspectival matters that sometimes accompany religious pluralism. The term “religious pluralism” is used in different ways. As a descriptor of the state of affairs, religious pluralism is a simple fact: However, religious pluralism has come for many to imply something much more prescriptive. It is the title used by some to describe a view that religious diversity is not only a fact but a matter of subordinating issues related to the competing truth claims by the varied religions. Various terms are used to describe this form of religious pluralism such as the

“pluralist ethos,” “prescriptive pluralism,” “hard pluralism,” “maximal pluralism,” or a form of “philosophical pluralism.” These varieties of pluralism reject questions of absolute truth or superiority of one religious tradition over another. They celebrate religious diversity as something mutually enriching and something to be enthusiastically encouraged. Diana Eck of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University portrays America as a potential new model for inter-religious dialogue and interaction.⁹⁸ The promoters of the Pluralism Project exemplify the idea that religious pluralism implies certain normative judgments. This ideological perspective on pluralism flourishes from the dismissal of validity for truth claims by any religion against another. Religions and religious diversity are celebrated, not for their insights to ultimate reality, but because they convey meaningful and helpful benefits to their individual practitioners. Any confidence that a single religion can capture hard truths about the cosmos and ultimate reality has been eclipsed by a widespread loss of confidence in that possibility. Pragmatism has trumped veridicality.

One reason this issue becomes so important is that our witness to the truth of the Gospel continuously bumps into these concepts at a popular level. When sharing Christ, what Christian has not had to deal with questions about what happens in eternity to those of other faiths? Or who has not had a conversation where someone boldly professed that “all religions are basically the same?” Or that “everybody worships the same God?” Or “all religions lead to the same place?” Or “that may be true for you but it’s not true for me?” Or “all religions are basically designed to get people to live a certain way?” Or “how could God send someone to hell who merely practiced the religion he grew up

⁹⁸ The Pluralism Project distributes information on places throughout the United States where people can learn about other faiths. The model world that they project is one of religious diversity built upon common denominators of mutual understanding and dialogue. <http://pluralism.org/>.

with?” Our discussions with others frequently bounce against the notion that someone who sincerely practices a religion simply could not be mistaken and/or that the important thing about religion is its practical benefit and significance to the individual practitioner. Several convergent streams in historical development and in predominant perspectives have led to this condition.

One of those historical developments comes from increased exposure to religious diversity itself in our new era of globalization. It is one thing to believe conceptually that someone else can be so mistaken that they face eternal condemnation, a belief certainly perceived by many people as the most offensive of religious truth claims. It becomes another thing to hold that view about sincere, genuine, and morally upright people when you are face to face with them, know them personally, and must collaborate with them extensively. Most people have had the experience of uncouth, offensive, artless religious salesmen telling someone that they will go to hell. Although loving, thoughtful Christians tend on the whole to express much more tact, the mental image of such a scene makes it appealing to both avoid the issue and privatize our religious worlds; or to accept the validity of the other person’s faith “for them.” As society has become more diverse, increased contact with practitioners of other religions can push in that direction.⁹⁹

Philosophical currents have also washed us on this shore of uncertainty about truth. In the 18th century, Immanuel Kant tried to preserve Christianity against the assaults of skeptics like David Hume by arguing that the mind possesses certain categories for understanding (e.g. quantity, quality, modality, relation). Our knowledge

⁹⁹ In a D.Min. Project by another Navy Chaplain, the research seemed to indicate that ministry in a religiously pluralistic environment had the effect of making the theology of the chaplains more inclusive. George Clifford, “Charting the Confluence: Theology for Ministry in a Pluralistic Environment,” (D.Min. Project, Wesleyan Theological Seminary, 1991.)

is not comprised from our raw experiences of that which is outside of us. In fact, we never know something outside of us as it is in itself (the noumenal realm). Instead, we only experience the phenomena of things and then our minds cause our experiences of them to conform to its categories for understanding. Although he sought to preserve a place for metaphysics against the skeptics, his work resulted in a radically new direction for epistemology. Later thinkers deemed that if a person cannot know something as it truly is (the noumenal realm), then our knowledge is undermined and made subjective. The individual came to be regarded as the shaper of knowledge about the world which was presented to him from the outside, not a knower of objective knowledge about it. The historical flow of thought after Kant often came to apply this to knowledge of God as well. Genuine knowledge of God as He really is became considered impossible.¹⁰⁰

Another stream that feeds prescriptive pluralism comes in the field of hermeneutics. Post-modernity has gained traction upon the hermeneutic of Deconstructionism, an approach in which it is argued that words only refer to other words, not to something outside of language itself.¹⁰¹ While Christianity is not entirely at home with either Modernism or Post-modernism, at least Modernism still believed in the objectivity of knowledge. Post-modernism understands knowledge as a construct by a community. Even science has lost its once-privileged position as the field of indisputable knowledge since all scientific measurements take place in a theory-laden interpretive framework and have no meaning until integrated with tacit knowledge.¹⁰² In the radical hermeneutic of Deconstructionism, there is no escape from a hermeneutical circle. All

¹⁰⁰ Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 138.

¹⁰¹ D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 72-75.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 86-88.

meaning resides in the interpretive community so the question of objective truth is irrelevant. It asserts that we cannot uncover some superseding reality; all we can do is share our own perspectives with one another. This hermeneutical framework offers a perfect fit for the philosophical pluralist who endeavors to understand other communities without making any judgments.

Yet as D. A. Carson points out, while the Deconstructionists reject the idea of any meaning in a text by which genuine communication is possible, they still want to be understood in their own texts!¹⁰³ Genuine communication happens. Even though it may not be possible to entirely understand the mind of the author of a given text, some measure of real understanding of that author's intent is possible. So while the pluralist perspective feeds upon the lack of confidence in objectivity, Christians must continue to affirm that God speaks truth to us in His Word. The Scriptures are true conveyances of God's mind to reveal to us Who God is, what God thinks, and what He has done. While God's Word works in a perlocutionary manner and actually affects something, we do not separate that effect from the illocutionary dimension of Scripture – that it tells us something intended by its author with cognitive content that truthfully corresponds to things as they are!¹⁰⁴

The Chaplaincy in the United States Navy

The basic institutional context for this project is the chaplaincy in the United States Navy. This sub-chapter surveys the formative legal considerations, namely, the *basis* for the chaplaincy in the United States Constitution's guarantee of free exercise of

¹⁰³ Ibid. 103.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 166.

religion, and then explains the current configuration for the appointments of chaplains in view of these considerations.

Legal Basis for Chaplaincy: Accommodation of Religion in the Military

With free exercise of religion situated as a sort of substantive individual right, which is guaranteed only by non-establishment as a universal constraint, the stage is set for the sticky questions of religious accommodation.¹⁰⁵ When does an accommodation of someone's free exercise become a forbidden establishment? No clear theory exists within the Supreme Court for this.¹⁰⁶ Accommodations may not confer political authority on a religious group or favor one religion over another religion. A valid accommodation should relieve a burden to religious practice although the question remains as to how much of a burden. The accommodation should not impose unacceptably to others or be more expensive than needed. Most accommodations come in the form of some kind of exemption from a requirement but some are positive provisions.

In the Navy, the definition of "religious accommodation" is a good faith effort to support religious requirements within the boundaries of good order and discipline.¹⁰⁷ An updated instruction on religious accommodation from 2008 goes into more detail. The policy is to accommodate a member's practices of religious faith when those will not have "an adverse impact on military readiness, individual or unit readiness, unit cohesion, health, safety, discipline, or mission accomplishment."¹⁰⁸ Other parts of the instruction

¹⁰⁵ See the discussion in Appendix One.

¹⁰⁶ Kent Greenawalt, *Religion and the Constitution Vol2: Establishment and Fairness* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 336.

¹⁰⁷ SECNAVINST 1730.7D *Religious Ministry within the Department of the Navy*, Enclosure 1, Paragraph 8.

¹⁰⁸ SECNAVINST 1730.8B *Accommodation of Religious Practices*, (October 02, 2008), Paragraph 5.

specify further concerning accommodations for apparel, dietary, medical concerns, and religious observances. Accommodation is subject to military necessity and the determination for this rests with the Commanding Officer. While this policy is generally supportive and favorable to religious accommodation of its members, it also gives a lot of latitude to the local commander in granting or denying a request although denials can be appealed all the way to the Chief of Naval Operations or Commandant of the Marine Corps as appropriate. Thus a Neo-Pagan request to meet together would likely be accommodated but a request to meet “sky-clad” (naked) probably would not. As long as more esoteric groups like Neo-Pagans content themselves with simple requests, not dissimilar from the types of requests that other groups or individuals make, accommodations will be made and problems remain few.¹⁰⁹ These types of requests would include worship space, minimal supplies of an innocuous nature (e.g. no knives), etc. In 2007, I met with Mr. Mike Truthseeker Akins, former director of the Military Pagan Network, a now defunct advocacy group for Pagan concerns in the military. He shared with me the goals of his organization at that time which included Pagan faith group codes for dog tags. The recent settlement by the Veterans Administration to allow the pentacle as a recognized emblem of belief for the headstones of Pagan veterans paved the way for these types of requests.¹¹⁰ Since my meeting with him, the military has eliminated a pre-set list of faith groups. Service members may designate anything they wish on their dog tags as their religion.¹¹¹ Still, the larger questions posed by the

¹⁰⁹ A more recent example is the addition of a Wiccan Prayer Circle at the U.S. Air Force Academy. “Wiccans, Pagans, Gain Stone Circle Spot at Air Force Academy.” USA Today, Feb 2, 2010, http://www.usatoday.com/news/2010-02-03-air02_ST_N.htm (accessed Feb 18, 2010).

¹¹⁰ Circle Sanctuary v. Nicholson, Settlement Agreement and Stipulation of Dismissal, 06-C-0660-S (W.D.Wis. 2007).

¹¹¹ MILPERSMAN 1000-070 “Identification (ID) Tags for Members,” (January 17, 2008), Paragraph 7.c.

existence of such esoteric religions will undoubtedly challenge the fragile status quo in the future.

Specific accommodations for religious interests such as wearing a yarmulke beneath one's military cover or obtaining kosher Meals Ready to Eat (MRE's) appear occasionally; but the existence of the much broader concept of chaplaincy itself has been justified as religious accommodation.¹¹² Considering that military chaplains receive their pay and support from the government to perform very specific religious tasks, the obvious question is how this does not constitute establishment? The history of military chaplaincy dates back to the very beginning of our nation's history. A long history does not mean that it is not establishment, yet arguments from historical precedent and continuity do seem to have some value.¹¹³ It is hard to imagine that the Founders thought military chaplains violated establishment since they themselves appointed and funded military chaplains. The Continental Army had chaplains and so have our military forces ever since. It faced severe challenges in the 1850's, more out of prejudice than principle: But by 1859, the House Judiciary Committee took a position which affirmed the beneficial effects of chaplaincy, rejected that it formed any discernible establishment because of its diversity, and regarded the expense as too small to be felt.¹¹⁴ The most pronounced legal challenge came much later in the *Katcoff v. Marsh* case.¹¹⁵

¹¹² SECNAVINST 1730.8B *Accommodation of Religious Practices*, offers guidance on observances, dietary, apparel, and medical accommodation; but its first paragraph clarifies that chaplains with their enlisted administrative assistant are the Navy's only trained, professional, religious accommodators who "provide for and facilitate the religious needs of authorized personnel."

¹¹³ In a case about a paid chaplain employed by the Nebraska Legislature, Chief Justice Burger made an argument from the extensive history of legislative chaplains in our nation. *Marsh v. Chambers* 463 U.S. 783 (1983).

¹¹⁴ Eugene F. Klug and James S. Savage, "Custom and Law in Church-State Practices," in *Church and State under God* ed. Albert G. Huegli, (St Louis: Concordia, 1964), 373.

¹¹⁵ *Katcoff v. Marsh* 755 F. 2d 223 (1985)

In 1979, two law students at Harvard Law School decided to file a suit alleging that the Army Chaplaincy program violated all three parts of the Lemon test and established religion while violating the free exercise of smaller groups.¹¹⁶ The plaintiffs argued that military chaplaincy established religion. In response the government submitted affidavits which demonstrated that the characterization of the plaintiffs was incorrect and that the chaplaincy understood its pluralistic environment and met needs of the Soldiers. To the government's contention that chaplaincy was a military necessity to provide for the free exercise of the Soldiers while deprived of their normal rights during military service, the plaintiffs argued that it was unnecessary since non-military clergy could still provide. In the end, the district court rejected the defendant's argument that the plaintiffs lacked standing since neither had served in the military and it was not clear at first that either had paid any taxes; but it did affirm that Soldiers had a right to free exercise and that the court must allow a certain deference to the military in how it accomplished its objectives of military readiness.¹¹⁷ The Second Circuit Court rejected the constitutional challenge to chaplaincy. The interest of the two students fizzled and the government accepted their offer of dismissal without prejudice. In the aftermath of it all, chaplaincy survived an official attack upon its very existence: But Drazin had feared during that trial that even if chaplaincy was vindicated, the court would retain an interest in questioning the constitutionality of any given practice within chaplaincy.¹¹⁸ As an example, the plaintiffs argued that if chaplaincy protected free exercise for the Soldiers, why were chaplains also provided in CONUS (Continental United States) where private

¹¹⁶ Drazin and Currey's fascinating book details events of that challenge with the benefit of the private notes and memoirs kept by Army chaplain Israel Drazin who assisted the government's legal team. Israel Drazin and Cecil B. Currey, *For God and Country* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1995).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 180.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 115.

religious opportunities were available? Drazin's fears were realized. The outcome, though positive of a broad allowance for chaplaincy, left an ambiguity in that any particular aspects of chaplaincy remain open to jeopardy.

Chaplains do a lot of positive things to support their people and strengthen morale. Consequently they enjoy a broad-based popular acceptance based upon this; however they also represent their religions and engage in religious activity. The justification for their very existence is ultimately not based upon the great things that they do to help others, but upon this concept of an accommodation to military members' religious practices.

Appointment of Chaplains

From an examination of the results of Katcoff as well as some other Supreme Court decisions of the last decades, Lupu and Tuttle argue that the strongest model then, for addressing questions about establishment for a military chaplaincy is that of an accommodation of religious practices brought about as a result of a government imposed burden.¹¹⁹ They explain many of the implications of this model for the particular practices of chaplains. I wish to consider just some of them and reflect upon how the situation as they present it integrates with my conclusions about what the government's responsibility in the sight of God ought to be.

Chaplaincy is a matter of permissive accommodation, not mandatory accommodation. Since it is permissive, the government has a zone of discretion in the way that it decides to work out various issues. This comes into play in the hiring of chaplains. In *Larson v. The U.S. Navy*, the district court rejected a claim that hiring of

¹¹⁹ Ira C. Lupu and Robert W. Tuttle, "Instruments of Accommodation: The Military Chaplaincy and the Constitution," 99.

chaplains must be demographically proportionate to the religious composition of the personnel.¹²⁰ At present, the Navy's hiring of chaplains depends upon whether prospective chaplains meet certain requirements such as education, experience, and certification by an approved religious organization called an endorsing agency which is typically a religious denomination or else an umbrella group for various churches or denominations. Both the endorsing body and the chaplain must be willing to accept the chaplain's role in a pluralistic environment.¹²¹ That role obligates chaplains to facilitate for the free exercise of the military members. So a chaplain is not required to be a religious pluralist, or to generalize or water-down doctrine in any way; but the thing that distinguishes a Navy chaplain from civilian counterparts is the specialized environment. Compromise of doctrine is not expected from the standpoint of the institution. Yet given my contention for the universality of religious values, there is a de facto doctrinal baseline, unacknowledged as such by the government. It is that the chaplain supports the free exercise of religion by all service members and is willing to cooperate with other chaplains and religious ministry professionals to bring that about.¹²²

Although the Navy Chaplain Corps claims to be theologically neutral, a requirement that chaplains commit to free exercise and to cooperation with those of other faiths unavoidably reflects a position laden with theological import.¹²³ Since some kind of religiously-oriented values inhere for all human institutions, the question becomes not

¹²⁰ Ibid, 128.

¹²¹ DODINST 1304.28 "Guidance for Appointment of Chaplains in Military Departments," specifies that the religious ministry professional who wishes to serve as a chaplain must be willing to serve in a pluralistic environment and to support free exercise of religion directly and indirectly. It also states that the Religious Organization that wishes to endorse someone for chaplaincy must verify this fact about its candidates. Enclosure (3), Paragraph E3.1.3.3

¹²² SECNAVINST 1730.7D, *Religious Ministry Within the Department of the Navy*, Paragraph 5e(2).

¹²³ SECNAVINST 5351.1, *Professional Naval Chaplaincy*, (October 21, 2011), says the Chaplain Corps is "religiously impartial" and "has no inherent theology of its own." Paragraph 5. This is clearly impossible as explained on pages 43-44 of this MAP.

whether there should be values but rather which values. In order for the institution to work, it makes sense to require a commitment to free exercise while attempting to preserve the maximum degree of latitude within one's own faith. One can also see the reasonability of additional requirements which become necessary in such an environment even though they are only vaguely defined. "Professional standards" for Navy chaplaincy include cooperation, tolerance, mutual respect, and respect for diversity.¹²⁴ The idyllic vision of Professional Naval Chaplaincy is one in which chaplains do not compromise their personal or faith group beliefs; and they function unambiguously in certain specified religious settings that are entirely unfettered in manner and form as guaranteed under Title 10 of United States Code: Yet they cooperate and work harmonistically together to help everyone in the organization maximize their own desires to practice any given faith.¹²⁵ For the most part, this works well at a practical level but the Christian exclusivist can never rest comfortably in such a system. Values such as tolerance and respect are qualified and not absolute for the exclusivist. When such values take the forefront, a strong current (to use a nautical illustration) tends to push off course toward what I have called prescriptive pluralism (p.16).

Religious Ministry Professionals who apply to become chaplains must certify to their willingness to function in a pluralistic environment, and that environment is clearly

¹²⁴ SECNAVINST 5351.1, *Professional Naval Chaplaincy*, Enclosure (2), Paragraphs 1-4.

¹²⁵ An illustration of this for many is the famous story of "The Four Chaplains." It extols the Methodist, Catholic, Reformed, and Jewish chaplains who died on the USAT *Dorchester*. The narrative of their collaboration paints a highly-praised picture of chaplains who put the needs of their men ahead of theological concerns. Dan Kurzman, *No Greater Glory: The Four Immortal Chaplains and the Sinking of the *Dorchester* in World War II* (New York: Random House), 2004. The first segment of the training brief used in this MAP and found in Appendix Nine has an image from a famous stained glass of these four chaplains that hangs in the Pentagon.

defined descriptively and not prescriptively.¹²⁶ Yet prescriptive elements inevitably emerge. For example, the recent Professional Naval Chaplaincy document states that “PNC recognizes and values the pluralism inherent in the DoD community. . .”¹²⁷ In a strictly descriptive context, to “recognize” inherent pluralism is obviously necessary as an inescapable fact: But to say that the chaplain “values” pluralism ascribes a positive goodness to it. Does not the Christian exclusivist consider religious pluralism in reality an evil – a consequence of human idolatry or rebellion against the true religion revealed in Christ? The exclusivist desires with God for “all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim 2:4 NIV). How then can he or she “value” pluralism?

So the exclusivist chaplain must understand that he navigates in an environment where the values carry theological freight and the currents may work against him. The position of this paper is that it can be done but with care. The appointments of chaplains in the future will likely continue to reflect these dynamics.

Since all faiths ostensibly share equal worth from a PNC perspective, chaplaincy might be expected to continue expansion into ever-broadening religious flavors. NPs are actively pursuing the endorsement of Pagan chaplains. The only hurdle to that as things stand now is that no group has been able to meet the requirements for becoming an approved endorsing body.¹²⁸ The zone of discretion protects the military from any

¹²⁶ DODINST 1304.28, “Guidance for Appointment of Chaplains in Military Departments,” Enclosure (2), Paragraph E2.1.8 defines “Pluralistic Environment” as “A descriptor of the military context of ministry. A plurality of religious traditions exist side-by-side in the military.”

¹²⁷ SECNAVINST 5351.1, “Professional Naval Chaplaincy,” Enclosure (2), Paragraph 5.

¹²⁸ The DOD no longer uses the older language of “recognized endorsing agency” to refer to groups that can endorse chaplains. It sounded too much like an approval of religion. Among other things, a group that wishes to endorse chaplains to the military must demonstrate 501(c)(3) status with the I.R.S. and meet administrative requirements: But the big hurdle to date for esoteric religions has been that they must have at least one candidate who meets all eligibility requirements to serve as a chaplain. These include an accredited graduate level religious education and ability to meet minimum physical standards for a

obligatory hiring of NP chaplains: However, since potential endorsing bodies face merely administrative barriers, we will undoubtedly have Pagan chaplains one day. Similarly, a recent article in the New York Times called attention to efforts by atheists and humanists to secure appointments for atheist military chaplains.¹²⁹ Although the idea is not popular, what is to prevent it from happening one day given the policy and guidance currently in place?

The Literature Review

In chapter two I introduced the main perspectives in the theology of religions (viz., exclusivism/particularism, inclusivism, and pluralism), and I located the basic theological assumptions of this project within that typology, identifying them as *exclusivist*. To fully understand the contemporary situation among Western Christians and the religious pressures that shape societal perspectives, the other two perspectives require serious consideration. This paper must also engage the implications of those views in order to propose the ways forward for Christian ministry in general and then for ministries by exclusivist chaplains in the Navy in particular.

Inclusivism

Inclusivism describes a broad and multiform field of views in which Christ remains somehow normative for salvation yet available in other religions. Principle thinkers for these views include Gavin D' Costa, Clark Pinnock, and Hans Küng. Even Lutheran Theologian Carl Braaten, though he ably defends the uniqueness of Christ

Commissioned Officer. DODINST 1304.28, "Guidance for Appointment of Chaplains in Military Departments." Paragraphs 6.1.3, 6.1.4, and 6.4.1

¹²⁹ James Dao, "Atheists Seek Chaplain Role in the Military," *New York Times*, April 27, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/27/us/27atheists.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed November 7, 2012).

against pluralism, acknowledges that he is committed to a Christology in the field of tension somewhere between exclusivist and universalist.¹³⁰

Inclusivist themes have leeches into the public consciousness. A common wave of popular opinion declares that all religions worship the same God: But that opinion cannot be justified. Similar characteristics do not warrant speaking of the same God. Despite the popular appeal of a salvation that eventually includes just about everybody, scriptural evidence stands against it. In the only text that directly addresses the proportionality of those saved to those lost, Matthew 7:14 declares that few will be saved. One of the more common texts put forward by inclusivists is John 1:9. The light that has come into the world is given to every man; but the very next verse reminds us that the world did not recognize Him. John is relentless in his insistence that only faith in Jesus results in salvation (John 1:12; 3:15, 16, 36; 14:6). In the passage already noted from Acts 4:12 which states that salvation is found in no other Name, inclusivists want to argue that salvation does indeed come through Jesus: It is just that salvation need not be exclusive to those that know Jesus. In other words, someone who does not have a relationship with Christ through faith may still be saved on account of Jesus. Yet the context of that passage in Acts has Peter arguing for salvation in Christ against the Jews. Why would that be necessary if the Jews were also already saved by Christ? The scriptural arguments by the inclusivists seem somewhat strained to fit Scripture into their scheme.

Inclusivists generally hold that Christ's sacrifice is necessary for salvation, but not always an explicitly normative part of the faith of those that are saved. There is a wider hopeful optimism that pervades their thinking in which someone that never hears the

¹³⁰ Braaten, *No Other Gospel! Christianity among the World's Religions*, 4.

Gospel through no fault of their own can still respond to God in faith. In such cases, Christ is not the object of faith since they do not know of Christ; but it is sufficient that God is the object of their faith.¹³¹ For an inclusivist like Pinnock, the attractiveness of that view grows out of a difficulty in reconciling two central and yet Biblical truths. One is that God is definitively revealed in the incarnation of Christ and the second is that God loves sinners and desires that all men should be saved.¹³² One can appreciate Pinnock's difficulty. All Christians should wrestle with the dilemma posed by such paradoxes; but our conclusions must conform to Scripture and clear thinking.

Popular objections to exclusivism come from those who argue that limitations upon the number of those saved are not compatible with traits of God such as his love or justice. The recent book by Rob Bell entitled "Love Wins" really makes no new arguments. Yet it has appealed widely to those that struggle with a seeming incompatibility between the concepts of a loving God and eternal punishment. Bell has a tremendous gift for connecting and articulating the questions and doubts of his contemporary audience. And that is part of the problem. By doing theology from the starting point of questions that make sense to our human reason, he distorts the biblical texts and turns the God of the Bible into some sort of unrecognizable monster. For example, what kind of God would punish people for thousands of years with infinite torment for something they had done in the few years of a finite life?¹³³ The question rings true to human thinking, but by following its train of thought, Bell distorts the God

¹³¹ Pinnock argues that God is concerned with the reality of their faith rather than the content of their theology. Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 105.

¹³² Clark Pinnock, "An Inclusivist View," in Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, gen. eds. *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 141.

¹³³ Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person That Ever Lived* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2010), 2.

who reveals himself in the Bible and crafts a god to our own liking. The issue is not infinite punishment unfairly resultant from sins committed in a finite life, but rather the degree of blame for sins committed against an infinite God.¹³⁴ This seemingly benevolent move by Bell in the name of the love of God ripples into implications for other areas of theology that Bell may not have adequately considered. If hell is simply something we bring upon our own quality of existence as Bell supposes, what becomes of the nature of sin? What becomes of the nature of Christ's sacrifice? Ought not a loving God who finally brings everyone around to an embrace of his love do so likewise for the devil and fallen angels? Although Bell's book claims to be safely inside evangelical orthodoxy, he manages not only to distort biblical teaching on heaven and hell, but also history, exegesis, eschatology, Christology, and the atonement.¹³⁵

Starting with limited concepts of God's love deprives us of love's profundity in Scripture. Carson shows how the Bible speaks of the love of God in different ways which must be held together.¹³⁶ The common view of it as an undifferentiated, equally-distributed, general sort of love distorts its rich Biblical complexity. The vast variegated biblical witness to God's love reveals more than one dimension to God's love. So it turns out to be the case that grand claims like Bell's based upon the love of God leave us in fact with a diminished view of love.

The same type of problem happens in other areas of theology when generalized truths about God are employed to raise doubts about more specific items of the biblical testimony. Like the love of God, the justice of God is turned back upon the biblical

¹³⁴ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad* 3rd ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 144.

¹³⁵ Kevin DeYoung, "God is Still Holy, and What You Learned in Sunday School is Still True: A Review of 'Love Wins'." Available at <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2011/03/14/rob-bell-love-wins-review/> (accessed July 26, 2011).

¹³⁶ D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000).

teaching. If God is just, how can he create a world in which the majority of people do not get a chance to hear the Gospel? Why are some born into settings where they have multiple opportunities and others will have none? Such questions are designed to cast doubt upon the traditional exclusivist perspectives, but at what cost? Paul himself does not shrink away from questions of God's justice when he asks in Romans 9:14-18 (NIV)

What shall we say then? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

God is sovereign yet God is also just for St. Paul. Period. Something is lost when God's sovereign purposes are cast aside by appealing to his justice. Just as with the doctrine of the love of God, we see that diverting from the fully orbited biblical teaching of God's justice ripples out into other areas and distorts the whole biblical story.

If someone can be saved without explicit faith in Christ as inclusivists opine, how is that accomplished or what kind of theological system could allow for this? Inclusivists come at this question in several ways.

Pinnock sees a correspondence between Old Testament saints and adherents of other religions who have faith in God but are "informationally B.C." They embrace God but have not embraced Christ because they have not heard of him. Carson rightly challenges this comparison because the faith of Old Testament believers depended upon the extent of God's revelation in their time.¹³⁷ The biblical story line unveils an ongoing revelation that climaxed in Jesus – so that now, something is irreducibly revealed. "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God

¹³⁷ Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 298.

appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” (Acts 10:42, 43 NIV).

Another inclusivist argument appeals to general revelation for the possibility of saving faith in God sans Gospel. General revelation refers to those avenues of revelatory knowledge by which God has disclosed truth to all humanity. It does not depend upon his specific acts or words in history but is atemporal and universally accessible. General revelation exists through the form of creation which discloses the nature of its creator, and conscience or natural law which discloses the nature of the moral lawgiver. Pinnock also appeals to general revelation as a possible means by which God’s universal salvific desires for humanity can engender faith among those who do not know the Gospel. Deep within humanity, he finds a center which promulgates into religious impulse.¹³⁸ He is at least right that people invariably know something of God from universally available signposts; but can this produce a faith by which someone might be saved? Dan Strange links the exegetical dots to show that general revelation requires the specificity of special revelation in order to convey the necessary truths for saving faith.¹³⁹ In fact, at least part of the purpose of general revelation seems bound to its accusatory function. It was never meant to bring about salvation without special revelation of God’s grace in Christ, but it is sufficient to reveal the rebellion of sin against what men invariably know to be true. So that as Paul tells us in Romans 1:20 (NIV), “men are without excuse.”

¹³⁸ Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy*, 102.

¹³⁹ Daniel Strange, “General Revelation: Sufficient or Insufficient?” in *Faith Comes by Hearing* eds. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A Peterson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 40-77.

As inclusivists try to explain how someone can enter a right relationship with God apart from the Gospel, another proposal is the work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁰ In speaking of the eternal relations of the Godhead, the western church stood upon the teaching of passages like John 14:26; 15:26; and 16:13,14 to affirm that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son.” Now this famous Filioque clause in the Nicene Creed is under attack by those who want a more independent role for the Holy Spirit. Pneumatological experience bridges the gap between general and specific revelation for some of these thinkers. The Spirit exercises the universal role of bringing humanity to the Father. The Son brings the Spirit’s communication of truth to Christians so that they might know the Father: But the Spirit works in alternate ways for other faiths.

Contrary to this new idea, Todd Miles demonstrates that Christ is the center of biblical theology.¹⁴¹ It is illegitimate to posit a primary universal role for the Spirit. The Scripture gives us a Christological hermeneutic for itself. In passages like Luke 24: 27 where Christ discloses himself on the Emmaus road, the divine purposes of God in redemption are linked to Christ. This gives the key to understanding Moses and all the prophets. The relationship of the Spirit to the Son portrayed across Scripture is one in which the Spirit always seeks to glorify the Son.¹⁴² As the Father sent the Son, so the Son sent the Spirit (John 16:7). Theological constructions which argue for a work of the Spirit independent of the Son or which subordinate the Son’s role to pneumatological activity not only destroy biblical Christology but destroy biblical pneumatology.

¹⁴⁰ This approach is developed by Amos Yong. Todd L. Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 250.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 256-76.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 277-327.

Protestantism faces enormous internal challenges from inclusivist ideas but perhaps the most significant advance for inclusivism has taken place in the official teaching of the world's largest church organization, the Roman Catholic Church. Following the massive changes of Vatican II, Catholicism entered a new era of openness toward world religions. The Church continues to assert that there is no salvation outside of the Church; that the definitive expression of God is in Christ and in His Church. Yet a seminal sense of God's grace was postulated for those outside the Church, whereby the Church gives a kind of consummate form to something that those outside can already possess. Salvation is more or less tacitly attributed to those that make some kind of response to inner grace, even though it does not include an overt awareness or response to the Gospel. As *Lumen Gentium* 16 states,

Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation. Nor shall divine providence deny the necessary assistance for salvation to those who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God . . .¹⁴³

A powerful force behind the Catholic move toward inclusivism was Karl Rahner who wrote about this inner grace.

Rahner put forward four theses that helped to stake out the inclusivist position for Catholicism.¹⁴⁴ First, Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion which is revealed in the Church, but it is an open question as to the point in time that it comes into being for every man and culture. Second, before the historical entrance of the Gospel into someone's life, non-Christian religions have mixture with human depravity, yet they

¹⁴³ Quoted in Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 44.

¹⁴⁴ Karl Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," in *Christianity and Plurality: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Richard J. Plantinga, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 288-303.

may possess supernatural gifts of God's grace so that they can be considered lawful religions. Third, Christianity then confronts such members of extra-Christian religions, not as non-Christians, but as "anonymous Christians." Fourth, Christians go as missionaries to anonymous Christianity in order to bring to its explicit consciousness what already belongs to it.

Rahner thus coined the famous phrase "anonymous Christians" to describe God's people outside of the church or without express knowledge of the Gospel. They can accept grace that is available within their own religion. Not all religions bear the same degree of supernatural grace, yet Rahner submits that non-Christian religions can be regarded a priori as lawful religions.¹⁴⁵ This seems to give him latitude to appraise religions differently from one another without specifically rejecting any of them. The focus appears very much upon the individual's response, not the religion's teachings; and that supernatural grace is available universally to all men.¹⁴⁶ A governing scripture for his theology comes from Paul's address on Mars Hill in Acts 17:23 (RHE). "What therefore you worship without knowing it, that I preach to you." His understanding of this verse asserts that even the religiously ignorant can worship authentically, but their ignorance awaits genuine knowledge – which is the mission of the church. So a place is preserved for the firm witness of the Church simultaneous with its humble and tolerant approach to non-Christian religions.

Rahner exercised a post-Kantian metaphysic in which pre-apprehension of infinite possibilities means that knowledge of unlimited being is possible.¹⁴⁷ Part of God's transcendental revelation is a pre-apprehension of Christ within our own nature.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 293.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 296.

¹⁴⁷ Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism* (NY, NY: Basil Blackwood Inc, 1986), 81-82.

Selflessness is most fully disclosed in Christ, but anytime someone acts selflessly, it is an act of grace. Jesus becomes the final cause and the necessary cause of salvation, but not the efficient cause. Non-Christians already have grace to which they may respond. It is just that the church brings the historical vanguard of that hidden reality which exists outside the church.¹⁴⁸ Thus, “the church is not the communion of those who possess God’s grace as opposed to those who lack it, but it is the communion of those who can explicitly confess what they and the others hope to be.”¹⁴⁹ More recently, the Catholic Church has pushed back a little bit at pluralistic leanings by some in the church with declarations such as “Dominus Iesus” which reaffirmed Catholic dogma.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, a level of openness in Catholicism remains firmly entrenched.

Pluralism

The growing awareness of religious diversity coupled with the intellectual shifts of philosophical and hermeneutical paradigms have paved the way for a receptive climate for hard religious pluralism.¹⁵¹ It seems to dominate religious perspectives in the academy. It has captured popular imagination as well. At the heart of this concept, people have embraced the idea that no religion ought to have unique or privileged status over others. They are suspicious of religions that claim to be superior or exclusively true. Religion has become regarded as something that may bring personal comfort and benefit but which oversteps its bounds when it makes claims against those that do not voluntarily practice it. Diversity in religion is celebrated. The interactions of one religion with another require mutual understanding, exchange, and appreciation. Dialogue becomes

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 84.

¹⁴⁹ Rahner, “Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions,” 302.

¹⁵⁰ “Dominus Iesus,” available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html (accessed September 24, 2012).

¹⁵¹ See pp. 50-52.

the vehicle for religions to share and be enriched by one another. Some of the prominent figures that have lent intellectual and theological muscle to the movement include John Hick, Paul Knitter, Raimundo Panikkar, Langdon Gilkey, and Stanley Samartha.¹⁵² In a pluralist ethos, Christians can only claim normative status for themselves, but it may not assert objective validity of the Christian religion for others.

Development and Views of Pluralism

To be sure, religious pluralism is nothing new. The Roman world of 1st century Christianity offered a buffet of religious and philosophical possibilities.¹⁵³ Many in the first century accepted a pluralist perspective of tolerance for foreign religions. A panoply of pantheons, cults, mystery religions, philosophies, and religious movements all co-existed together. Syncretism and eclecticism spread freely across the empire. The Jews and the Christians generally represented principal exceptions to this. Christianity understood itself as distinct from the options that existed at that time. The message of salvation in Christ alone and the uniqueness of Christianity as distinct from the other religions led to accusations and persecutions against Christians. They were considered rebels because they would not worship the emperor. They were called “atheists” because they acknowledged only one God instead of the hosts of divinities: But eventually, Christianity took hold in the West and the view that Christianity was uniquely true among the religions shaped theological perspectives toward other religions for a long time afterward.

¹⁵² I remember an incident as a student at Luther Seminary in the mid-80’s in which Paul Knitter had been invited to speak for a chapel service. His address called for replacing our Christological theology with a theological Christology. My first class after chapel was Systematic Theology with Jim Nestingen. The class waited in their seats silently for about 15 minutes while Dr. Nestingen paced frenetically in the front of the classroom, red-faced, and sputtering in fury at what had just taken place in the chapel.

¹⁵³ Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 25-26.

In modern times, the questions about Christianity's relationship to other religions revived as a topic of interest. Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) considered the question of world religions and concluded that they bore a relative connection to "the Absolute."¹⁵⁴ Each was limited though each shared in the divine presence of the Absolute. One can see the undercurrents of classic theological liberalism upon this opinion by Troeltsch. Religions were seen through the lens of the "fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man." Later, Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) argued that the world religions shared a common essence. To him, the differences were in non-essentials. The common purpose behind the world religions was to correct self-centeredness.¹⁵⁵ In order to overcome self-centeredness, man needs to have something outside of himself which commands his worship. These two ideas of Troeltsch and Toynbee, that all religions are relative or that all religions are essentially the same, have become common popular attitudes about our plurality of religions.

A landmark event in the formation of pluralist theology took place in 1986. A group of theologians presented essays which sought a way forward for their theological pluralism. The essays were collected and published by Paul Knitter. In his own words, the collection

. . . arises from a meeting at Claremont Graduate School, March 7-8, 1986, in an effort to move beyond the two general models that have dominated Christian attitudes toward other religions up to the present: The "conservative" exclusivist approach, which finds salvation only in Christ and little, if any, value elsewhere; and the "liberal" inclusivist attitude, which recognizes the salvific richness of other faiths but then views this richness as the result of Christ's redemptive work and as having to be fulfilled in Christ. We wanted to gather theologians who were exploring the possibilities of a pluralist position – a move away from the insistence

¹⁵⁴ Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 26.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

on the superiority or finality of Christ and Christianity toward a recognition of the independent validity of other ways. Such a move came to be described by participants in our project as the crossing of the theological Rubicon.¹⁵⁶

The metaphor which they adopted for their effort might offer a valuable insight. In “crossing the Rubicon,” it becomes clear that they themselves understood their work to be both a threat to the established views and of irreversible significance. In their own self-understanding, they are not working to tear down Christianity but as pioneers of something greater.

Their essays revealed three distinct motivations behind their arguments for pluralism. Knitter describes these as the “bridges” by which they seek to cross the Rubicon from exclusivist and inclusivist perspectives to the pluralist. One is the Historical-Cultural Bridge evident in the arguments by John Hick and Langdon Gilkey. It asserts that all religions take shape in certain historical and cultural milieus. Thus they are all relative because their forms are contingent upon those shaping influences. Another is the Theological-Mystical Bridge represented in the essays by William Cantwell Smith and Raimundo Panikkar. Religions depend upon a sense of mystery because all religious experiences touch upon the infinite in some way. The experiences themselves exist then in a mystical arena, identified through the particularized expressions of religions. He calls the third the Ethico-Practical Bridge. Knitter places his own essay in this category. Its principal concern is justice. His argument is that absolutist faiths are exploitative. Pluralism offers the promise of making religions partners instead of opponents. The primacy of praxis replaces the primacy of principle.

¹⁵⁶ John Hick & Paul F. Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), viii.

All partners can genuinely share and grow in dialogue with one another. With these ideas, the pluralists had raised the volume in the debate on theology of religions.

Perhaps the most prominent figure in exploring epistemological foundations for pluralism has been John Hick. Interestingly, Hick by his own description began his pursuit of theology as a Christian Fundamentalist.¹⁵⁷ Exposure to persons of other faiths while at the University of Birmingham challenged some of his assumptions.¹⁵⁸ He launched his career as a responder to critiques of Christianity. His first book in 1957 sought to defend the Christian faith from the assaults of Logical Positivism.¹⁵⁹ The proponents of Logical Positivism had introduced the criterion of verification as the test of meaning. In order for something to be meaningful, it had to be subject to verifiability or falsifiability, otherwise it was “meaningless.” Metaphysics, ethics and theology became prime targets for rejection as meaningless statements about reality. John Hick rose to the defense of Christian theism.¹⁶⁰ He did not argue that Christian theism was true but rather that it was reasonable based upon certain kinds of experience. His epistemological perspective argued that in all human experience, there is an irreducible level of interpretation. All of our experience is inherently interpretive and involves varying degrees of “experiencing-as.”¹⁶¹ Both the person who experiences God and the person whose experience does not include God have made rational interpretations of life based upon their own circumstances and experiences.

¹⁵⁷ John Hick, “A Pluralist View,” in Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, gen. eds. *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 29.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 37.

¹⁵⁹ Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 161.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 162.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 164. Wittgenstein had called attention to the ambiguity in the way that different people might see a puzzle. One person might see it as a duck and another as a rabbit. Interpretation enters the observation. Hick employs Wittgenstein’s notion of “seeing-as” and applies it to all experience by the notion of “experiencing-as.”

While Hick's argument defended theism from the accusations of the Positivists, it did so by means of a weaker form of rationality. The case that he made was designed to protect the reasonability of Christian belief, but there were other implications. His argument gives the believer epistemic permission, but does not entail epistemic obligation. A believer is rationally justified in a theistic view based upon experience; but it is just as possible that someone else employed a different interpretation in their experience of the religious ambiguity of the universe. Non-Christian religious beliefs based upon religious experiences within other traditions turn out to be equally plausible!¹⁶²

From that point, Hick started down a road in which he increasingly moved from his convictions about the centrality of the Christian God, toward an explicit pluralism which not only abandoned all Christian core beliefs but has even given up on theism (which he replaces with the "ineffable Real"). There are three claims at the heart of his model.¹⁶³ First, the different religions are legitimate responses to an ultimate reality. Second, they are nevertheless interpretations of that reality which have been historically and culturally conditioned. Third, the religions share soteriological alignment as valid contexts for transformational salvation/liberation. His model then, offers an explanatory solution to the problem of multiple religions. What makes them valid is not that they share some kind of essential core but that they each touch upon the ineffable Real. He gives account of the differences between religions by means of the historical and cultural factors that shape the interpretive framework.¹⁶⁴ So although individuals experience the

¹⁶² Ibid, 165.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 221.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 223.

Real within their own religions, that experience comes through the filter of the particular religion's context.

Hick's model depends upon a neo-Kantian structure. Using the distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal realms, he differentiates that which stands behind our religious experience from the phenomena of it that we experience in various manifestations. Hick postulates a religious ultimate, "the Real." The Real in and of itself (the Real *an sich*) is not directly accessible in our experience. It is the external reality which comes to our experience via the interpretive schema of the mind's categories for understanding. So the Real *an sich* is totally ineffable. Although some religious people might experience it as a personal being (e.g. God, Allah, Krishna) and others might experience it as something impersonal (e.g. sunyata, nirguna Brahman), it cannot be said to have either of those characteristics, or any others for that matter.¹⁶⁵ There is a noumenal reality behind the experience but the phenomenal characteristics cannot be traced to it.

Do all religious experiences then, have their source in the Real? Not even the pluralists, at least those that have carefully thought about the implications of their position, would argue that the impulse for child sacrifice to Molech has the same validity as that of feeding the hungry. Hick proposes that the transformational effect of religions upon their practitioners as moral beings reflects the validity of the religions as legitimate or illegitimate responses to the Real.¹⁶⁶ So the moral dimension of the religious adherent's life becomes the measuring tool for movement from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness. Morality plays the critical role in assessing whether religions are

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 224-26.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 227.

authentic. For Hick, one reason that Christianity could not be the only true religion is that Christian morality is not superior to that of other religions.¹⁶⁷ The need to wrestle with the views of this theological/philosophical apologist for pluralism becomes clear when we realize that he offers the carefully constructed model for what many people popularly assert – that the important thing about religion is that it helps someone to be a better person.

A Critique of Pluralism

Although pluralism has grown in both academic and popular settings, the philosophical grounds for it cannot escape critique. An explanatory framework like John Hick's must demonstrate that it accommodates the data from the various religions and that it is internally consistent. Harold Netland argues that Hick's model falls short in both of these areas.¹⁶⁸

First, Hick becomes guilty of explanatory reductionism. He accounts for the basic beliefs of the religions in ways that significantly alter them and which would not be acceptable to the followers of the religions themselves.¹⁶⁹ When a Christian claims to truly know the person of Jesus Christ or a Buddhist claims to experience sunyata, these are regarded as connections with the religious ultimates for their respective religions; but for Hick, these things are actually penultimate manifestations of something else (The Real) which is the true ultimate. How does he know that none of them are correct about their assertion of the religious ultimate? For Hick, there is no access to The Real *an sich* which is not mediated through a particular religious context.¹⁷⁰ So Hick has explained

¹⁶⁷ John Hick, "A Pluralist View" 87.

¹⁶⁸ Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 232.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 235.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 241.

the data from the different religions in a way that accounts for them by appealing to his own explanation. It lacks independent validity as a justification.

Harold Netland studied under John Hick at Claremont Graduate School and he credits his teacher with prompting him to think deeply about these issues for the first time. Although he profoundly respects Hick, Netland's first major contribution to Theology of Religions took issue with Hick's pluralism. In *Dissonant Voices*, Netland spotlighted the irreconcilability of the various central claims of religions; something that a reductive explanation like Hick's must somehow overcome. He does this by asking three questions of religions. What is the nature of the religious ultimate? What is the nature of the human predicament? What is the nature of salvation/enlightenment/liberation? These very powerful questions offer a useful tool to lay bare the contradictory nature of multiple religious claims.

These questions also function quite powerfully at the practical level of witness to those who popularly embrace pluralist conclusions. To those who claim that all religions have the same source or bring us to the same outcome, the questions give a tool that can help the claimant see how this is impossible. The law of non-contradiction often brings them back to the necessity of truth, which becomes more fertile ground for our witness. At a street-level the questions might be asked another way. What does the religion say is the most important thing? What does the religion say is the problem? What does the religion say is the solution? As one begins to compare religions, the incompatibilities become evident. How, for example, can one reconcile an ultimate which is either personal (such as "God") or impersonal (such as nirguna Brahman)? Is our central problem as human beings that we have sinned and alienated ourselves from a holy

personal God (where sin is the cause of our suffering)? Or is our central problem that we are caught in a cycle of transmigration (Samsara) due to our ignorance (where desire is the cause of our suffering)? Is the solution to our problem justification through faith in Christ which brings about eternal life with God; or is it realization of one's essential cosmic identity with Brahman (Moksha)? In many conversations with those who express popular pluralist opinions, I have seen the walls that individuals have erected against the Gospel begin to crack when confronted with these lines of questions.

In addition to the failure of the model proposed by Hick to acceptably account for the differences between religions, it becomes internally inconsistent. If we cannot predicate anything of The Real *an sich* apart from particular religious contexts; and none of those predications within the particular religious contexts actually apply to The Real *an sich* because it is beyond all conceptual categories, then The Real is ineffable. This is self-referentially incoherent!¹⁷¹ If we cannot say anything about it, how can we even say that it exists? Hick tries to get around this by distinguishing between “substantial attributes” which would tell us something about it and of which we cannot know, and “formal attributes,” which do not assert anything about it, for example, that we can refer to it without saying anything about what it is like. This does not seem to solve the problem.¹⁷² What does it mean for something to exist yet have no substantial attributes? Furthermore, Hick clearly does attribute substantial qualities to it which would imply that we do know something of it; for example, that it is the ground of religions, i.e. that it somehow accounts for the religions of the world.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 243.

¹⁷² Keith Ward, “Truth and Diversity of Religions,” in *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity* eds. Philip L. Quinn and Kevin Meeker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 117-18.

Perhaps the most glaring inconsistency of this position is that Hick ascribes moral transformation to The Real. His category for differentiating legitimate from illegitimate responses to The Real depends upon transformation from self-centeredness to Real-centeredness. Yet for something about which we cannot ascribe any categories, how can anyone say what is morally good or bad?¹⁷³ What basis does anyone have for determining appropriate or inappropriate responses to The Real? Moreover, how can there be talk of causal relationships or spatial categories (e.g. that The Real “accounts for” or is “behind” the religions) for something that does not yield to conceptual characteristics? Hick is not able to refer to The Real without description, the very thing that he disallows.

In conversations with those that want to lump all religions together somehow, the snapshot of Hick’s argument and the criticisms of it becomes instructive. A person in conversation with a Christian during a witness to the Gospel will often attempt to deflect the claims of Christianity. Such people frequently seek refuge in the popular assertion that all religions are equally valid. In many such situations, the Christian witness retains its potency when a few simple questions can demonstrate that this claim staggers upon major self-contradictions.

Pluralism’s Effects

The effects of pluralism make our mission more difficult. As pluralism embeds itself more deeply into the culture, a Biblically-grounded Christian mission collides with

¹⁷³ Netland points to Hick’s fundamental inconsistency in his assertion that while “good” and “bad” cannot apply to The Real *an sich*, he uses moral criterion to postulate The Real as the ground of the religions. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 245-46.

the parameters that it sets at several places.¹⁷⁴ For one thing, the idea of truth faces a crisis, as already noted. Truth claims have become suspect, yet Christianity makes truth claims at its fundamental core. A second effect is that the mutuality and dialogue prescribed by the pluralist ethos often have a different result than intended. It can stifle lively discourse and encourage public stances and expressions which sink to the lowest common denominator. Third, the lack of robust debate serves as fertile ground for narcissism and materialism as people pursue religion for the sake of their own perceived wants and benefits. Fourth, as pluralism becomes enculturated, it becomes part of the projected world by the media. So the media portrays more religious pluralism than is actually the case. We often see in our society what we expect to see and promote what we believe the world ought to reflect.

Another prominent societal consequence of pluralism is the emphasis upon “tolerance.”¹⁷⁵ One hears calls for tolerance again and again. Tolerance becomes focused upon ideas rather than upon people. Furthermore, the outcry for tolerance often manifests itself selectively to demoralize those with opposing views. So-called “tolerance” can be a club to beat down those with perspectives that will not be tolerated. Rather than publicly articulate solid foundations for one’s view, it becomes easier to dismiss alternatives because of their alleged intolerance.¹⁷⁶ Consequently, those with substantive religious convictions become pusillanimous lest they be accused of intolerance; or they keep their views very private rather than risk articulating them

¹⁷⁴ D. A. Carson, “Christian Witness in an Age of Pluralism,” in *Christ and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, eds. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 34-38.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹⁷⁶ J. Budziszewski, *The Revenge of Conscience: Politics and the Fall of Man* (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing, 1999), 100.

publicly. Those who can skillfully employ the accusations of intolerance establish the de facto perspective.

Prescriptive pluralism also promotes a harmful view of the separation of church and state.¹⁷⁷ If religious assertions cannot enter the public arena or make a truth claim against those of another religion, secularism becomes the default religion. In a society where every belief shares the same validity as every other, society is forced to privatize religious beliefs and public expressions must devoid themselves of religious language.

Perhaps worst of all in terms of our Christian mission, pluralism promotes a religious diversity that for many people simply offers too many choices.¹⁷⁸ The focus upon the mutual benefits of dialogue and sharing may enrich the appreciation and spiritual devotions of some people, but for a good number of them, it results in a retreat into skepticism. The common malady of our pluralist age is that significant segments of the people to whom we are called to witness have simply avoided religion in part because it is too diverse and too complex for them to unpack!

Excursus: Religious Experience

An approach to ministry in pluralist environments must consider the role that religious experience plays for so many. Hick began his journey toward pluralism when he argued for the validity of Christian experience as a ground for rational plausibility behind the faith. As this paper has already noted, once one accepts religious experience as a rational justification for religious belief, it must also allow the religious experiences of other non-Christian religions to function the same way. Clearly, the Christian theist

¹⁷⁷ Carson, "Christian Witness in an Age of Pluralism," 39-42.

¹⁷⁸ Thomas F. Stransky, "Response to 'No Other Name - An Evangelical Conviction'," in *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism* eds. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 83,84.

must answer the claims made by the pluralist for religious experience. This question poses enormous ramifications for our witness to Christ on the day-to-day level in our lives.

The extensive exposure that the Navy chaplaincy provides to those outside of any explicit relationship to a Christian community reveals the need for our Christian message to deal with the matter of religious experience. Rarely do two weeks pass without some conversation in which this chaplain hears “God told me ...;” or the story of a dream which impossibly predicted something that in fact came to pass; or a mystical experience; or someone that has ghosts or deceased relatives living in their home; or someone’s growing self-awareness that they have had previous lives; or a wide range of other spiritual or supernatural experiences. On some occasions, while the person asserted the reality of the experience, they looked to me for help with interpretation of it: But most often, the experience served as the basis for some belief which trumped anything the chaplain might say. Such filtering religious experiences are not just isolated events among dominant religious figures. They emerge frequently in our conversations with others. Even many Christians live their lives guided by some sort of direct experience of the Holy Spirit (rather than means of grace) which is considered authoritative. Netland lays out the problem.

. . . the attraction of self-authenticating experiences is their apparent immunity to criticism or contrary evidence . . . It is significant that we find appeals to self-authenticating experiences in the various religions, with both the nature of the experiences and the claims based upon them differing widely. Yet in each case the relevant experience is said to produce an immediate and certain knowledge of the reliability of the experience and the truth of the propositions that follow from it. Furthermore, in each case the subject is said to have the kind of certainty about the experience guaranteeing immunity from error. But reports of allegedly self-authenticating experiences by Christians, Buddhists, Hindus

and Jains reveal strikingly different ontological claims based upon the experiences. Not only are the claims different but they often have mutually incompatible entailments.¹⁷⁹

What Netland describes as a problem in religious epistemology will confront the individual Christian in witness to friends and neighbors. Unless we can explain these phenomena, and if necessary introduce uncertainty about their self-assured conclusions, there are huge segments of our mission field that will write-off anything the Christian says without even a fair hearing.

One approach to this problem that appears very fruitful comes from the last chapter of a book by Winfried Corduan.¹⁸⁰ His hypothesis builds upon a basic phenomenological analysis of human experience to explain the problem of seemingly incompatible religious experiences. People may have different (even mutually exclusive) experiences but they share an underlying dimension. The human psyche possesses a noetic structure which is triggered by the object of religious experience or simulates doing so.¹⁸¹ This underlying dimension can be tapped whether the object of the experience is real or unreal. An analogous example might be the experience of beauty. I experience the dimension of beauty when I see a delicate flower. I might also imagine the flower in my mind or see a computer-created picture of a flower which does not exist in reality. These could trigger the same immediate apprehensions of a sense of beauty; but the objects of my experiences are different. The first was real, the second unreal, and the third perhaps not real in the way imagined. So what are the phenomenological aspects of this underlying dimension when it comes to religious experience?

¹⁷⁹ Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 262-63.

¹⁸⁰ Winfried Corduan, *A Tapestry of Faiths* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 200-02.

Corduan examines this dimension with the use of concepts employed by several other thinkers. Rudolf Otto's groundbreaking studies of "the Holy" examined the widespread sense of awe and mystery that lies beneath the rational dimension.¹⁸² This numinous feeling enables us to touch upon something which we somehow grasp is beyond our full comprehension. Corduan builds upon that with the help of Mircea Eliade's concept of "hierophanies."¹⁸³ Specific manifestations of holiness instantiate themselves into particular focal points. They transform elements of life into an awareness of the sacred. They may involve sacred time or sacred space as well as elements in the cosmos and even life itself. These hierophanies recur from impulses that lie deep within the psyche for shaping life along religious patterns. To help explain these impulses, Corduan turns to Carl Jung's use of archetypes.¹⁸⁴ According to Jung, basic images which he calls archetypes exist deep within the human consciousness and manifest themselves indirectly. Recurrent themes in religious mythologies, symbolisms, and thought patterns seem programmed into the human mind. They become expressed in our primordial religious experiences. So in summary, the underlying dimension of our religious experiences is an awareness of the noumenal, encountered in specific hierophanies, and expressed in our thoughts by images that emerge from archetypes.

Behind these elements of the underlying dimension, we find God's general revelation embedded in the creation of mankind in His image. In other words, God designed us with these things in order to enable religious experience for us. The underlying dimension of religious experience functions in the same way that the dimension of mind allows humans to comprehend truth about God. A dog does not

¹⁸² Ibid, 203-05.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 205-08.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 208-12.

apprehend any truth – it is the ability of the mind created in human beings through the Imago Dei that makes rational experience possible. Likewise, the ethical awareness in humans gives us the underlying dimension to comprehend the holiness of God. A dog does not comprehend holiness – it is the capacity for ethical awareness created in us through the Imago Dei that make ethical experience possible. Similarly, these underlying dimensions of religious experience in the psyche belong to us as part of the general revelation God has implanted in our very being when He made us in His image. They make religious experience possible. At the same time, when these dimensions become distorted somehow, they give rise to idolatrous, false, or misleading religious experiences.

Corduan does not buy into everything put forward by those three thinkers, and he has larger purposes for his theory; but what he has proposed gives an explanatory account of diversity in religious experience. It is faithful to a biblical worldview. It takes someone's personal religious experience at face value, without reinterpreting it in a way that would be unacceptable to the individual. Yet it accounts for the areas of continuity or discontinuity between Christian religious experiences and the religious experiences of others.

All of this may seem far too erudite or theoretical for use in Christian outreach, yet it has proven very helpful in my ministry. Many persons, quite convinced by their own supernatural experiences, have reconsidered my biblical and Christian appraisals of their conclusions after I use an analogy drawn from Corduan's model. The underlying dimension of religious experience functions like a "sense organ" for the spiritual world. I explain to them how we use other sensory organs (e.g. eyes, ears) to "experience" the

world. Yet everyone has had the “experience” of hearing something that was not real (e.g. a voice in a wind storm) or seeing something that was not what it appears (e.g. an illusion). Suddenly the light bulb goes on and the person begins to realize that his/her experiences do not stand alone but must also align with other criteria for greater certainty that the perceived object is what they thought it was. This approach does not always work, but it builds upon a solid hypothesis that has opened many doors for witness to Christ in my ministry that would otherwise have remained closed.

The Way Forward: Strategic Considerations for Reaching a Pluralist Society

The clash of the Biblical worldview with our pluralist context means that our witness to the Gospel cannot assume anything about our hearers. The population no longer possesses familiarity with the Bible. A Hindu may hear the Gospel and readily adopt Jesus as one of his 330 million gods. A popular pluralist may warmly receive our message of the Gospel as another possibility that might “work” for him or her (like the latest diet fad). For the Gospel to carry its proper meaning in proper context, Christian witness will need to work outward from a deepening grasp of the Bible’s story line.¹⁸⁵ Christians cannot advance piecemeal. A pluralist world must understand the Gospel as the crowning point of a larger context for the Bible’s story including origins, human root rebellion, and reconciliation.

The pluralist position challenges the right of a Christian to evangelize. So evangelism must start further back. It must spotlight the highpoints in redemption history. The Good News is virtually incoherent if it does not have a fixed setting in the

¹⁸⁵ Carson, “Christian Witness in an Age of Pluralism,” 60-61.

larger biblical worldview.¹⁸⁶ Without the Bible plot-line, the Gospel is not heard rightly so it becomes necessary to trumpet the objective, propositional, historical truths out of which the Gospel makes sense. Carson highlights the way Paul does this within his pluralist culture during his Mars Hill discourse from Acts 17.¹⁸⁷ Paul's approach is quite different from the synagogue setting in Acts 13 and he obviously tailors his approaches to the worldview of his hearers.

It is instructive to observe some of the moves that Paul makes in this outline from Acts 17 which depicts a clash between Christianity and pluralist culture. To his biblically illiterate crowd, Paul presents a Christian analysis of their culture - "you are very religious . . . what you worship as something unknown, I am going to proclaim to you."

This segue allows Paul to witness to the nature of God. Although the genesis of the whole event stemmed from the plurality of gods represented by idols that Paul saw in Athens, the Stoics in Paul's audience would have had no trouble with Paul talking about God. They were unconcerned about a shift from gods to God.¹⁸⁸ The "Hymn to Zeus" by Cleanthes made it clear that Zeus was known by many names for the Stoics. Furthermore according to the Stoic Zeno, God (Zeus) could also be understood as the heavens and earth in a pantheistic sense. Paul however could not allow himself to be understood as speaking either pantheistically or in a way that allows for easy slippage between gods and God. He distinguishes God from the universe ("God who made the world and everything in it"). He affirms the aseity of God ("he is not served by human hands as if he needed anything"); and his discussion reflects God's singular authority

¹⁸⁶ Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 502.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 496.

¹⁸⁸ Bruce W. Winter, "In Public and Private: Early Christians and Religious Pluralism," in *One God, One Lord: Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism* 2nd ed., eds. Andrew D. Clarke, and Bruce W. Winter, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 132-33.

over all creation (“the Lord of heaven and earth”). At the same time as he consciously corrects the false impressions of the Stoics, he must also be mindful to distinguish his ideas from the Epicureans in the crowd.¹⁸⁹ They would have readily agreed with Paul that God does not live in temples and needs nothing from man, but they would not have accepted Paul’s argument for judgment after death (“For God has set a day when he will judge the world”). For them, death was the end. Paul clearly stands against the popular piety that he observed in Athens (a stance with which both Stoics and Epicureans would have felt comfortable), yet he distances himself from the Stoic and Epicurean rapprochements with popular religion.¹⁹⁰

Paul goes on to bring up human rebellion (“he commands all people everywhere to repent”). This points toward Christian teleology (“he will judge the world with justice”) which in turn serves as segue for the discussion to move toward Christ (“by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this by raising him from the dead”).

Several things about this confrontation deserve special note. First and most significantly for our strategic considerations, Paul reaches back to frame his witness with the needed elements from the Bible story-line. Second, we observe that Paul touches upon the same three questions for religion which Harold Netland proposed. He addresses the nature of ultimate reality, the nature of the human dilemma, and the nature of salvation. Although the last seems somewhat incomplete from the text as we have it, we can suppose that Paul’s discussion opened doors for ongoing conversation because a few men and women eventually became believers (Acts 17: 34). Netland’s simple yet profound approach helps to clarify the differences between religions and unveil the

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 136-37.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 143.

distinctiveness of the Christian faith. Third, Paul draws upon general revelation and knowledge which is accessible to all of his hearers. A Christian witness cannot rest upon general revelation but employs it to lay groundwork and then argue for specific revelation. The fourth thing to note is the effective way that Paul uses bridges with his audience to win their hearing. Bridge-building is one of several practical considerations to keep in mind as individual Christians and churches offer their witness.

The Way Forward: Practical Encounters on the Front Lines of Ministry

Our practical considerations must also give careful thought to the stance of the Christian faith at its nexus with society. The challenge here defies any simple formula or rule. The Church must always deliberate about how its words and actions are being understood by a society that may not share even the most basic foundations of theological/philosophical understanding.

One important question here asks about what levels and in what ways a Christian can become involved in public events that have a religious context. On the one hand, there is the very real danger of becoming guilty of idolatry by association (I Cor10:18-22).¹⁹¹ The demonic world is a reality according to Paul, and the Christian must consider the effects of an action upon the way others will perceive it. Sharing the table of the Lord and the table of demons cannot be an option for the Christian. On the other hand, however, should a blanket prohibition screen off all participation in religious events or events with a religious context?

Exclusivist Christians must wrestle with these matters. Can we pray with those that have different faiths? Can we worship with them? Should public prayers be

¹⁹¹ Brian Rosner, "No Other Gods: The Jealousy of God and Religious Pluralism," in *One God, One Lord: Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism* 2nd ed., eds. Andrew D. Clarke and Bruce W. Winter, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 159.

modified to be more inclusive in mixed audiences? Should Christians attend generic Protestant or less precisely defined worship services? What about other specifically ecumenical or even interfaith events? Participation might imply tacit approval for false teaching or endorse a kind of religious subordination to societal, state, or other functions. So it would seem easiest to merely exclude such gray areas; but not going to such things or participating in them sends a message too! Segregating ourselves from events in the public square of a pluralist society might unwittingly contribute to a privatized view of the faith; or to a message of superiority over others; or to inferences of hostility toward them; or to seclusion and disengagement from others.

When it comes to religious elements in public events, perhaps an important question to ask is whether participation shows or blurs the distinction between church and society.¹⁹² “God-talk” often appears in the context of American civil religion. Christians must be familiar with this concept and its dynamics. When functioning in the kingdom of the left hand, Christians can certainly speak of God in the context of civil righteousness. An emphasis upon theism and the general revelation of a Creator enables the values that promote civil righteousness and functioning society. We need to beware however of becoming so generic that our language could be construed as pantheistic or dualistic.¹⁹³ On the other side, in the kingdom of the right hand, we must always be careful to identify Jesus within the Trinity, as the crucified Son of God by Whom alone we can know and be reconciled to God.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Joel P. Okamoto, “Christians and the Disestablishment of Religion in the United States,” in *Witness and Worship in Pluralistic America* John F. Johnson, gen. ed., (St Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary, 2003), 12.

¹⁹³ Charles P. Arand, “Strategies for God-talk in a Pluralistic Society,” in *Witness and Worship in Pluralistic America* John F. Johnson, gen. ed., (St Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary, 2003), 16.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 18,19.

These lines are not always easy. Bruce Winter offers an interesting article which calls for pastoral solutions to living in a religiously pluralistic world that are both theological and ethical.¹⁹⁵ He cites a description of ancient Corinth by a traveler named Pausanias about 170 CE. The plethora of gods and goddesses that littered the entire city seems staggering. Greek, Roman, and Egyptian deities could be found embedded in the structures of every aspect of life in the city. Idolatry had become so interwoven with daily life that it simply became impossible to escape from it, not unlike our contemporary society in some ways. As an example in Corinth, the public baths had been dedicated to Aphrodite, yet the Jews that lived in Corinth still had to bathe! How could they shop, conduct commerce, interact with government, etc. when pagan worship interlaced all of those things? Literal separation from the idolatry in society became an impossibility, so three rules were developed by the Corinthian Jewish community to guide their distinctiveness in such a society: 1) No eating meat offered to idols: 2) No entering idol temples: 3) No selling animals to gentiles that would be used for sacrifice.¹⁹⁶ This context gives a likely background for Paul's discussion of food offered to idols in I Corinthians 8-10. Paul affirms, contrary to the Jewish principle, that meat offered to idols was not a problem (8:4-6) though not everyone possessed this knowledge (8:7). Likewise, he did not prohibit the purchase of such meat at the markets (10:25). On the other hand, participation in the eating or drinking at a pagan altar caused one to share in that altar (10:20, 21). So Paul drew a non-negotiable line which forbade participation in pagan sacrifices; but contrary to the Jews in Corinth, his prohibition does not extend to the purchase and eating of meat offered to idols. Here, the Christian has freedom,

¹⁹⁵ Bruce W. Winter, "Theological and Ethical Responses to Religious Pluralism," 41 *Tyndale Bulletin* 2, (1990): 209-26.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 218.

though, with an added wrinkle. The individual may eat meat offered to idols, but should abstain in the case of a brother whose conscience might take offense (10:28). So Paul's instructions about life in a pluralist, idolatrous society embrace not only creedal criteria but relational criteria!¹⁹⁷ A valued takeaway for our present-day interaction with a biblically adversarial world is that both theological and fraternal considerations weigh in the decisions.

The Way Forward: Life and Worship

Living in a pluralist culture calls for significant self-reflection of Christian lives and worship. The more our culture sheds its Judeo-Christian heritage, the more important it becomes for Christians to have lifestyles that openly conflict with culture.¹⁹⁸ Whereas once Christians who preached against movies, television, contemporary music, fashions, etc. were regarded as legalists, Christians ought to ponder in an ongoing way whether their lifestyles reinforce or challenge the pluralist narrative.

One aspect of our public lives already addressed in this paper has to do with a Christian insistence upon truth in a world that has lost confidence in truth. Christians unwittingly further the pluralist agenda when they frame their testimonies to the truth with subjective statements such as "that's just what we believe," "that's my opinion," or "it's something you have to take by faith." The challenge of pluralism is not that it seeks to rebut the truth of Christianity but that it seeks to turn it into a matter of personal opinion.¹⁹⁹ Our witness in a pluralist society must always couch its proclamation in terms of objective truth claims. Attached to this important part of our witness then, is the

¹⁹⁷ Ibid 222.

¹⁹⁸ Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 510.

¹⁹⁹ Corduan, 236.

magnitude of getting the truth right!²⁰⁰ If Christians claim to speak the truth to a world that considers truth irrelevant, it cannot afford to flounder on its foundational precepts. Clear, firm yet humble witness to the truth carries an authority that differs from many of the alternatives in a prescriptively pluralist world.

Worship determines another essential element of the church's distinctive message in pluralist society. At a time when the Christian message needs to ring more resoundingly, Christian worship sometimes moves in ways that make it less distinctly Christian. This happens when the music in itself becomes regarded as the "worship" and grows further away from the elements of the Christian story.²⁰¹ Without the elements of the Bible plot-line, Christian music sits vulnerable to vague, subjective, and emotional foci; and sermons can devolve into Chicken soup for the soul instead of life-giving Gospel. To regain the centrality of our Christian distinctiveness one might ask whether our liturgies, songs, or sermons would fit into the worship of a non-Christian religion; e.g. could I sing this love-song to Jesus as a love-song for Krishna merely by changing the name? Not only must music and liturgy remain Christian, but Christian proclamation must remain at the heart of what we do. In the lives of many Christians today, music has replaced books and images have replaced words. Music and images are the two most potent influences upon young people today; but these bypass our reasoning powers and encourage thinking by association rather than by analysis!²⁰² The Christian message, grounded in truth, must encourage the powers of the mind and remain anchored in the historic plot-line of the Bible.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 237.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 234.

²⁰² Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 508.

Exclusivist Rationale for Accommodation

Faith is a matter of the heart, never one of compulsion. With sorrow, I accept that others have the option even to choose what is wrong; but what justifies the help that I provide in accommodating that wrong practice? This dilemma should arise for the exclusivist in the critical chaplain task of facilitation. The chaplain must facilitate both indirectly and directly.²⁰³ So it is not enough to indirectly state approval for the concept of religious accommodation, but the chaplain must directly support religious others by scheduling and advertising their worship and activities, procuring their materials including sacred texts such as Books of Mormon or Qurans, arranging things for their religious leaders, and finding volunteers to lead them. When Scripture warns us to avoid those that teach a different doctrine than the one we have been taught (Romans 15:17), how can such activities occur for a Christian? Can anyone imagine St. Paul posting fliers with the dates and locations of temple celebrations for the Zeus worshippers in his audience?

Throughout my career, I have asked chaplains why they are willing to facilitate for someone the practice of a religion which they believe to be false. They have offered a number of reasons which I placed in ascending order on slides 10 and 11 of the presentation brief on “Navy Chaplains and Religious Pluralism.”²⁰⁴ They each have something to commend them and by the same token none of them are without problems. This paper will not review each of them since they appear in the Power Point® brief: However I will address the two top reasons.

²⁰³ DODINST 1304.28, “Guidance for Appointment of Chaplains in Military Departments.” Paragraph 6.1.2.

²⁰⁴ Appendix Nine, p. 211.

For the chaplain with a grasp upon the two-kingdom theology discussed in this paper, facilitation can be justified primarily as part of our commitment to the free exercise of religion. It might be argued that free exercise is the only system which guarantees that I can practice my own faith. If I want to be able to practice mine, I must support the free exercise of others or the system will eventually give way to one in which someone with a false religion will impose it upon me. This argument might justify indirect support, but can hardly account for why one might need to provide direct support of their false religion. So the Christian's commitment to free exercise must link to firm theological reasoning and not merely a practical quid pro quo relationship in diverse society.

Christians distinguish two kingdoms. Caesar does not impose the faith but must establish the conditions for an ordered, peaceful kingdom of the left hand so that the church can present the Word and function in the kingdom of the right hand. To do this, Caesar must create a society with a certain degree of free exercise as qualified in this paper: And the chaplain that directly facilitates through a commitment to free exercise functions as the hand of Caesar at that point. Military Commanders are tasked with creation of command religious programs to accommodate the religious needs of their people; chaplains merely execute the program on their behalf.²⁰⁵ If the chaplain as an agent of the secular authority acting in the kingdom of the left hand cannot facilitate for a Sailor's religious requirement, than neither could a Christian be a Commanding Officer.

Life in the kingdom of the left hand can be quite precarious. Can a Christian shopkeeper sell wine to a priest that will use it for transubstantiation? Can a Christian policeman direct traffic outside a Synagogue? Can a Christian printer accept an order for

²⁰⁵ OPNAVINST 1730.1E, *Religious Ministry in the Navy*, (April 25, 2012), Paragraph 4.c.

Muslim religious material? There are tensions with which every Christian functioning in the kingdom of the left must struggle. One must reflect in every case on where one's actions might misrepresent God. At the same time, different kinds of action might be appropriate depending upon whether one functions primarily at that point in the right or left-handed kingdom. When a chaplain supports free exercise in the civil realm, he does not necessarily violate biblical or confessional principles any more than does his Commanding Officer who bears executive responsibility for the command religious program.

Exclusivist Approach to Accommodation

So in this frail and complex human existence where we do not always have clear answers, we can at least validate the role of the government authority to provide for free exercise. I validate the function of a chaplain on the government's behalf to facilitate for those who cannot provide for their own need because of a government imposed burden, but I also insist that facilitation does not cross the line into active promotion of another faith. One must always be conscious of the dangers. A particular instance or type of facilitation might convey a false impression of what the chaplain believes or represents. Promotion of free exercise of religion can unwittingly morph into promotion of other religions. I have observed chaplains that go out of their ways to seek out and encourage religious practices in others. Surely such actions go beyond support of free exercise to the culpable advancement of false religions. To navigate this tension, I propose a model of understanding the chaplains' approaches to facilitation which I call "push-pull." It reflects two poles methodologically that chaplains might take when they facilitate. Rather than "push" people into firmer practice of a false religion, the thoughtful

exclusivist chaplain should respond to “pull” signals from those who already hold those faiths and demonstrate the self-motivation to trigger the chaplain’s facilitative role.

A “push” chaplain eagerly and proactively seeks and encourages others to formulate religious needs. Such a chaplain looks for the broadest spectrum of lay leaders possible. Uncertain or disinterested people of other faiths are coaxed into greater levels of religious activity. Whether or not the service members have the impetus and passion to pursue their religious practices, the pushing chaplain “makes” it happen because pluralism is perceived as a good in and of itself. The pushing chaplain crosses from facilitating a faith to promotion of it.

A “pull” chaplain treats everyone with the same respect. The chaplain gives even-handed opportunities for people to come forward with their religious needs. Those with needs are accommodated to the fullest necessary extent: But the individuals and the groups must be self-motivated. If they do not respond to inquiries about their needs, the open door is left at that. A properly respectful approach to people of other faiths requires care to avoid gratuitous disparaging comments or negative non-verbal expressions. The pull chaplain need not celebrate diverse faiths but honors the rights of each person to practice them. The pull chaplain accommodates all groups by the same standards. The pull chaplain champions requests for religious accommodation but does not go out of the way to stir up those requests where they do not exist. In short, the chaplain facilitates for the religious needs of others but maintains a careful self-reflection to avoid encouraging them just for the sake of pluralism.

The pull chaplain still “pushes” people of his own faith. For example he invites people to his services, encourages their growth in discipleship, inquires about their

faithfulness in partaking of the sacraments, etc. Those things are elements of his provision of his religion. The “push-pull” concept refers to facilitation of other religions.

As an illustration, the pull chaplain prior to a ship’s deployment would survey the crew to ask about their religious practices and what religious requirements they might have for the months they will spend away from home port. If Neo-Pagan crew members indicate a desire to meet, the chaplain exercises the highest degree of just and fair effort to schedule a time, facilitate their needs, and advertise it in the same way that he advertises for all faith groups that meet on board. Imagine however that some NPs self-identified when the chaplain asked about the religions of the crewmembers but none of them expressed interest in meeting on board. The push chaplain would go out of his way to emphasize that he can help them get together. He initiates the idea and in fact “pushes” them to increase their desire for participation.

There are chaplains that push for diverse religious practices. Some may do so because they are pluralists and they applaud the idea of diversity. Others may do so because the system seems to reward the chaplain that facilitates for larger numbers of groups. Some chaplains, influenced I suspect by pluralist values, portray proactive facilitation as the mark of a good chaplain. Must a chaplain proactively promote diverse religious practice? “Cooperative Religious Ministry” addresses the role of the chaplain in religious accommodation. It says that the chaplain is in the vanguard of the effort to accommodate religious needs and does so energetically and conscientiously.²⁰⁶ The minimum standard requires information and expertise on worship opportunities, the services of the various faith communities, contact information for members of other faith

²⁰⁶ NTTP 1-05.2 “Cooperative Religious Ministry,” (June 2011), Paragraph 4.1.

groups, etc.²⁰⁷ The standard then is judged by the ability and the vigor of the chaplain in responding to the need – not in the construction of needs that do not exist! Facilitation requires that the chaplain “accommodate the widest range of identified religious ministry requirements.”²⁰⁸ Some push chaplains take that to mean the widest range of religions identified; but a pull chaplain wisely observes that it is the widest range of religious requirements. Service members may claim diverse religious backgrounds but if they do not also express needs in the practice of those religions, there is no requirement. The key then is that the pull chaplain provides fair and ample opportunities for needs to emerge but the service members must have the self-motivation to express the need when asked and take advantage of the accommodations when offered.

Proselytizing

The larger goal of Christian witness for exclusivists raises the issue of proselytizing. Does the Establishment Clause prohibit proselytizing or does the Free Exercise clause authorize chaplains to proselytize? Lupu and Tuttle argue that in a worship service where participation is voluntary and the chaplain exercises faith-specific functions, the chaplain acts in accord with their faith.²⁰⁹ They are much more doubtful about it outside of that context. Chaplains’ free exercise rights are not part of the equation since they are not acting as private citizens. The government may see proselytizing as divisive and harmful to military order.²¹⁰ In such cases, the courts give

²⁰⁷ NTTP 1-05.2 “Cooperative Religious Ministry,” Paragraphs 4.2.2.1 & 4.2.2.2.

²⁰⁸ OPNAVINST 1730.1E, Paragraph 6.b.(1).

²⁰⁹ Ira C. Lupu and Robert W. Tuttle, “Instruments of Accommodation: The Military Chaplaincy and the Constitution,” 124.

²¹⁰ In a case about a proselytizing chaplain in the Veteran’s Administration, the court found that the chaplain has no free exercise right to conduct services or offer religious counsel in a government institution. *Baz v. Walters* 85-1110 (7th Cir 1986).

deference to the needs of the military to restrict it if necessary. At present, that is not the case for chaplains. The recent PNC document helps to clarify.

While it may be permissible for persons to share their religious faith, outside divine or religious services, persons under the cognizance of PNC shall ask permission of those with whom they wish to share their faith and respect the wishes of those they ask. Respecting the religious values of others, persons under the cognizance of PNC shall not proselytize those who request not to be proselytized as such action raises legal concerns and is counterproductive to service in a pluralistic environment.²¹¹

So proselytizing is permissible with the consent of the other person. A draft document for chaplain community standards argued that proselytizing violated the vulnerability of the service member and would not be done unless the service member elicited it by specifically asking about the chaplain's faith.²¹² Thankfully, the PNC document which was finally signed allows the chaplain to initiate by asking permission: But exclusivist chaplains are wise to be cautious with the understanding that there is support for eliminating the opportunity to share the faith.

The reality is that proselytizing comes in many shades and lends itself to many definitions. A person is always bearing witness to something! How that is done and in what circumstances will determine whether a genuine Christian chaplain who has an obligation to witness to Christ can navigate the minefield without needlessly exposing himself to charges of impermissible proselytizing. Witness "invites" interaction by the other. To do this respectfully, cognizant of unfair pressures that the other might feel, without insistence, and without the shadow of personal gain, would not likely provoke concerns about proselytizing.

²¹¹ SECNAVINST 5351.1, "Professional Naval Chaplaincy," Enclosure 2, Paragraph (5).

²¹² J. Kalantzis, "Religion and the Military: A Balanced Approach," (M.M.S. Thesis, Marine Corps University, 2010), 24.

Witness must often address issues that are not central. This is not because of misplaced priorities but because of the vacuum of knowledge among our young people. So our witness to the central truths of the Christian faith must often follow witness to other pre-evangelistic concerns which we cannot take for granted.²¹³ A recent example was a lengthy discussion with a young officer who claimed that right and wrong have no objective basis. Without that discussion, any talk on my part of sin and God's remedy for it would be heard only with great distortion.

Yet the exclusivist chaplain relishes those occasions and looks for them. Although some non-exclusivists are repulsed by the thought, military chaplaincy is a mission field.²¹⁴ Opportunities for respectful and thoughtful yet powerful witness recur again and again. For example, since every chaplain represents some faith group, service members commonly ask chaplains which "flavor" they are. For years, I simply answered "Lutheran;" but at some point, I realized that most people have no clue what that entails. I began to follow that question with one of my own. "What do you know about Lutheranism?" The two most common answers are – "I have no idea," and "it's like Catholic except you can get married, right?" To which I respond, "Let me tell you about the really big reasons that I think we even exist." This has translated into hundreds of occasions to share a brief and simple witness about the three "Solas." The younger generation of Sailors expresses few hang-ups about discussing religion. If I show that I understand alternative points of view and present my case respectfully, it almost always wins a hearing for pre-evangelistic matters or even a full witness to the Gospel.

²¹³ See p. 87.

²¹⁴ Kalantzis, 2. My friend, Navy Chaplain J. Kalantzis, unfortunately criticizes those evangelical endorsing groups which declare a mission to make disciples for Christ as an express goal in military chaplaincy.

Worship

Another implication of the accommodation model for Lupu and Tuttle touches the conduct of ministry.²¹⁵ Within the confines of faith group worship, a chaplain is free to conduct ministry as their church prescribes.²¹⁶ The provision of religious ministries remains governed by the faith group of the chaplain so they enjoy protection in manner and form. Chaplains may participate or not participate in the worship services of others or in any other faith-specific activities.²¹⁷

Prayer

One last issue that I want to address is prayer. Publicly offered prayers in Navy settings demand careful discernment and attentiveness by the chaplain. Prayer must never leave people with the false impression that Christians share common worship or spiritual unity with those of other confessions. It must avoid tacit approval of deficient religious perspectives that might be inherent in the context of the prayer. So it constantly reflects upon the perceptions others will take from it. But must it always be explicitly Christian, i.e. that it contains elements to which only another Christian can assent?

In 2006, the Navy released SECNAVINST 1730.7C which urged non-sectarian prayers at pluralistic public ceremonies, meaning that they should not be in the name of Jesus. Presumably it resulted from the Klingenschmitt affair in which a chaplain drew national media attention for insistence upon prayer in Jesus' name as his free exercise right. The instruction drew a firestorm of conflict and the Secretary of the Navy rescinded it quickly. The document that eventually replaced it specifies that religious

²¹⁵ Ira C. Lupu and Robert W. Tuttle, "Instruments of Accommodation: The Military Chaplaincy and the Constitution," 131.

²¹⁶ *Rigdon v. Perry* 962 F. Supp. 150 (D.C.C. 1997).

²¹⁷ SECNAVINST 5351.1, "Professional Naval Chaplaincy," Enclosure 2, Paragraph (5).

elements in public command functions, for example invocations at changes of command, take place at the discretion of the Commanding Officer.²¹⁸ So when chaplains pray, they have a right to pray any way they wish; but they do not have a right to pray publicly at these events in the first place. The Commander can ask them to pray, ask them to pray a certain way, or if he/she prefers a different kind of prayer, someone else can be asked. The chaplain cannot be compelled to pray any certain way or may refuse to pray at the event without adverse consequences.²¹⁹

The issue of public prayer in the Navy then is certainly theological, how we ought to pray - and legal, how we are allowed to pray – but it is also one of tactfulness, how to earn opportunities to scatter the seeds of our faith. We ought to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. In distinctive settings or with certain types of personalities in charge, the chaplain who brings a narrowly sectarian, needlessly abrasive prayer, oblivious to the composition of the group, may have exercised an inviolable right to pray that way; but would likely never be asked to pray again. Congratulations!

I frequently share the story of a man traveling through a small town during the Depression. Stopping at the drug store, he observed a barefoot boy enter the store on some errand from his mother. In a scene that had obviously taken place previous times, a group of old men at a table having coffee saw the boy enter and called him over. One of them held out a dime and a nickel in his hands. “Boy, would you like to have this tiny little dime or would you like this great big nickel?”

“Ooh, I’ll take the big one” said the boy. As he ran off with his prize, the old men enjoyed a good laugh at his expense.

²¹⁸ SECNAVINST 1730D, *Religious Ministry within the Department of the Navy*, Paragraph 6.d.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, Paragraph 6.e.

The stranger, feeling sorry for the boy, caught him outside and explained, “Son, that dime might be much smaller but it’s worth twice as much as the nickel.”

The boy responded “I know, but once I take the dime, they’ll never again give me the choice.” The clever boy was running a racket on the outsmarted old men.

Likewise the chaplain who boldly works every Gospel truth into a prayer for a powerful sermon in prayer form – it can be done, once anyway. Smaller goals might mean more opportunities.

A left hand kingdom view recognizes that public expressions about God need not refer specifically to God as He is known in Jesus Christ, but to God as He is known in general revelation. So when prayers address the Creator God or the ever popular “Eternal Father” as expressed in the Navy Hymn, they possess needed theological truths even though they do not go all the way to lay bare the ultimate inadequacy of approaching God without Christ. I am not ashamed to pray in Jesus name, and confess boldly that we have no standing before God apart from Christ: But in the kingdom of the left, pre-evangelistic truths about God and the dictates of the law according to its first usage are often appropriate and desperately needed. This reflects the creedal and relational criteria and the need to work outward from the Bible storyline.²²⁰ It operates within the legitimate arena of religious and spiritual truths that are part of the left handed kingdom.²²¹ An excellent document by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, declares

Nor should Christians give the impression that people can pray to the Triune God apart from genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ . . . the pastor participating in a civic event that involves a “mixed” religious audience should invite to pray with him those who, through faith in Christ,

²²⁰ See pp. 87-88, 94.

²²¹ See pp. 43-45.

call upon Jesus. Joint worship and prayer . . . must be rejected as a sinful compromise of the scriptural Gospel of Jesus Christ and its exclusive claims.²²²

An easy way to manage the tension is to explicitly follow this prescription to the letter, i.e. invite only the Christians to join and then offer an overtly Christian prayer. Many times I have done this, but the easy way to handle the problem may not always be the wisest. Clearly my argument here strains at the boundaries of this imperative from the CTCR document: But my struggles arise from the same concern as its authors - from the need to preserve the exclusive claims of the Gospel in plural society. My conclusion is that prayer need not always explicitly include the Gospel truths.

I avoid the “sinful compromise” of “joint” prayer because I contextualize my public prayers as being mine alone. I may incorporate my audience as objects of my prayer or even to lay before God certain commonalities, but I am most cautious against praying on their behalf as fellow intercessors. I never begin a public-arena prayer with “Let us pray.” And in harmony with this document’s admonition, I intently strive to avoid “the impression that people can pray to the Triune God apart from genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ:” But if I am concerned about others getting the wrong ideas about God, throwing a few code words into the prayer is not the answer. The issue has often arisen when someone prays to the Triune God or in the name of Jesus and some Jewish member present took offense. While I am sensitive to that, when I offer an evening prayer on a ship out to sea, my larger concern covers the majority of young people whose religious lives reflect chaos. Their default stance during public prayer is to simply tune it out. Are there winsome, humorous, engaging ways to cumulatively bring

²²² A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, “Guidelines for Participation in Civic Events,” (April 2004), 18.

them just a little closer to some necessary truth for future Gospel witness? The reality of the pluralist, post-Christian environment is that the audience may not understand God, let alone the Triune God. It has a warped concept of sin let alone repentance. It usually knows the name of Jesus Christ but understands what that name means across a spectrum of kooky ideas. I have 90 seconds to leave those who listen to my prayer better poised for the Gospel to touch them than they were before. Situations may arise where exclusivist chaplains must decline invitations to pray, but on the whole, they accomplish more by being in the game than on the sidelines.

If public prayer does not always have to highlight specifically Christian truths, it does have to accurately portray God and truth about him in a pluralistic environment. As esoteric religions gain stronger footholds, our counterparts may pray one day to the “goddess” or to the ‘earth mother.’” This challenge from expanding religious pluralism reinforces the need for the witness inherent in our public prayers to engage in preliminary skirmishes for the existence and nature of God before we can worry about more central battles like justification or Christology. So my public prayers have increasingly emphasized the reality of God, aspects of His character, His providential care over his creation, that He is a judge over us, and that He has given us a moral law which carries consequences.²²³

For those times when it is important to be more specific about our identity as representatives of Christ, we can still pray effectively in the temporal kingdom. The

²²³ An example of one of my prayers appears in Appendix Two. Offered as the evening prayer on the exact mid-point of a deployment on a major surface vessel, it was far less precise than the ideal Christian prayer; but I believe it was appropriate to the context and far-reaching in its effects. The prayer was the major topic of conversation on the ship the next day. It carried the force of the first use of the law and curtailed foul language in the weeks to come – an appropriate concern for us as Christians. More importantly, it emphasized the moral law which allows the Holy Spirit to convict according to the second function of the law. It conveyed to the people that I as their chaplain cared about them. And only eternity will tell how it contributed to my many personal opportunities for evangelism on that cruise.

chaplain should offer prayers as his own. Members of the audience implicitly join if they wish; but the more distant some of them are from a Christian perspective, the more they will take offense when the chaplain presumes to speak for them. “I pray in the name of Jesus” works whereas “We pray in the name of Jesus” does not. My experience is that one is not likely to run afoul of pluralistic concerns if one simply prays in such a way that it is clear to the audience that the chaplain is aware of their varied religious identities.

Conclusion

Chaplaincy is a legally permissive accommodation. So it is not mandatory and as chaplains we must be aware that a more hostile environment in the future might eliminate it. Also, while it sits upon a broad legal basis, its various aspects can come under close scrutiny of constitutional concerns.²²⁴ Yet even given the distance between what the kingdom of the left hand ought to look like when it comes to chaplaincy, and what it does look like, a Biblically-grounded chaplain with an unwavering commitment to Christ can find seams in which to operate faithfully and successfully within the chaplaincy. By the same token, a wise propriety and the practice of a deep-seated love for others can protect a chaplain from antagonizing the fragile construct of the religion clauses in America, which at present, though far from what they should be in the kingdom of the left hand, still offer sufficient order and peace that the church can exercise her distinctive calling in the world under the secular authorities.

²²⁴ Ira C. Lupu and Robert W. Tuttle, “Instruments of Accommodation: The Military Chaplaincy and the Constitution,” 165.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROJECT DEVELOPED

The project aims to support Navy chaplains who are Christian exclusivists as they engage the expanding religious pluralism that they find in the U.S. Navy. Institutional ministry inherently functions in pluralistic settings. In the Navy, the chaplain not only functions in a pluralistic setting, but bears the role as the facilitator for other service members across the spectrum of their religious practices. This can create a theological tension for the chaplain because of the direct support for the religious practices and beliefs of others which the chaplain understands to be false. It can also involve a personal tension when the chaplain, alert to the theological conflicts, experiences apprehension about trying to please both God and the Navy. I intend for the project to both explore a better understanding of the nature of those tensions and to help chaplains operate within the arena of those tensions.

If the project succeeds, exclusivist Navy chaplains will have a useful tool to appreciate the problem better and navigate the issues raised by it with greater success. To do this they will need training on how to remain faithful to their biblical convictions yet still satisfy Navy expectations. But what needs to go into that training?

The Design of the Study

The study contained four distinct steps. The central step focused upon training exclusivist chaplains. Preliminary to that training however, the “tensions” that this training proposes to address seemed to require better focus. Just how do chaplains facilitate for those of other faiths and how do they feel about it? In order to assess this,

the research collected quantitative and qualitative data in order to give more shape to the facilitative practices of chaplains and the attitudes behinds them.

The first of the four steps then sought initial quantitative data through a survey designed to learn more about the spectrum of theology of religions among the chaplains, about their ideas toward religious facilitation, their actual practices of facilitation in the specific instances such as for Neo-Pagans, and their subjective feelings if any, of tension at the role of religious facilitation.

As a follow-up to the quantitative data from the survey, the second step employed qualitative research interviews with selected respondents to clarify how the data from the survey reflected the influences and thought processes of the chaplains as they facilitated. Appropriate disclosures accompanied both the surveys and the interviews and consent was required.

Third, reflective insights from the library research along with data from the field research culminated in a summary training brief. That training brief sought to help exclusivist Christian chaplains think about and practice religious facilitation with greater wisdom and insight.

The last step was to collect feedback about the training and the extent to which it helped chaplains in the ways intended.

Research Tools and Methodology: The Survey

Content of the Survey

This MAP asserts a certain state of affairs about chaplains and chaplaincy in the Navy and then makes proposals about how certain chaplains should proceed. The problem that this MAP seeks to address stems from observations, experiences, and

conclusions that I have made in 18 years as a Navy chaplain. It was important then to collect data to adjust the description or perhaps add a little more objectivity to it. The approach to the research of this MAP then is descriptive. The research components of the MAP were intended to either corroborate my observations or call them into question. It should be clear at the front that the questions in my survey could not ascertain the issues to a fine degree. Rather they were intended to provide some rough characterizations - a sense of the landscape beyond my own experience. The interviews offered the opportunity to unpack those characterizations more fully.

Questions on the survey addressed five areas related to the issues of religious facilitation which this MAP explores. First, basic demographic information about the chaplains themselves looked for possible patterns based upon rank, time in service, etc. Second, questions sought to determine the perspectives of various chaplains on theology of religions. Third, the survey sought to identify the chaplains' ideas about church-state relations and rationales for facilitation. Fourth, for those that have actually facilitated for Neo-Pagans, it asked about actual facilitation practices. Fifth, questions also tried to gauge the level of tension that the facilitator felt. I expected the level of tension to serve as another indicator of consistency or inconsistency between theology and practice.

These five areas set the parameters for the development of the questions in the survey.²²⁵

Survey Part One: Demographics

The first part of the survey on demographic information asked for rank, time in service, sex, and faith group. Could this data reveal any patterns? For example, even though the Navy Chaplaincy does not take an official view on theology of religions, I

²²⁵ The final form for the questions in the survey appears in Appendix Seven.

speculated whether the very nature of pluralistic ministry might either discourage exclusivist chaplains or unintentionally open more gateways of advancement to inclusivist or pluralist chaplains. Perhaps that is not true, but what if senior chaplains, in their answers to the second part of the survey concerning theology of religions, tended toward inclusivism/pluralism rather than exclusivism in ratios that are disproportionate to that of junior chaplains? That would raise further questions about how ministry in a pluralistic institution might tend to discourage some perspectives and reward others. Another possibility in such an outcome might be that over time, chaplains with exclusivist perspectives eclipse certain convictions in favor of other ones. Institutional ministry often focuses inherently upon care for the felt needs of the service members rather than eternal needs. Does prolonged work under such an emphasis push evangelistic concerns further from the center of a chaplain's ministry?²²⁶ An examination of ministry in a pluralistic setting should at least consider such questions.

Knowledge of the genders of the chaplains may similarly connect to our concerns about exclusivism in pluralist ministry. Since exclusivism is associated with more theologically conservative groups and such groups also tend to limit clergy to males only, I wondered whether female chaplains would show a propensity for less conservative perspectives in theology of religions. By looking at the responses of the survey along some basic demographic lines, these speculations may acquire more weight or less.

²²⁶ The Chaplain's Guide to Professional Naval Chaplaincy from November 2011, quotes the Chief of Naval Operations that "Our people are the foundation of our mission success." It goes on to comment that "They are the key to readiness – obviously through their own individual readiness to deploy, fight, and win . . . the chaplain's unique role is to assist them on their spiritual, moral, and ethical journeys." Chaplains and the Navy may have overlapping concerns: But note carefully that the Navy's concern for the religious welfare of its Sailors is subordinate to its concerns for their readiness in warfighting. For the exclusivist chaplain, the eternal destiny of the Sailor is a primary concern in its own right: However when the institution pays the chaplain, and rewards the chaplain for behavior that furthers its own ends, it should be obvious that a temptation exists to drift toward institutional priorities.

I assumed that the faith group question would contribute to my knowledge of the theology of religions for the respondents. For example, this paper has already identified post-Vatican II Roman Catholic theology with inclusivism. I expected to see Catholic priests answer the questions in part two of the survey on “Theology of Religions” along those lines. I also supposed that certain other denominations such as Lutheran Church Missouri Synod or many Evangelical faith groups might reflect more of an exclusivist theology of religions. These assumptions may not always turn out to be the case for various reasons. I may not accurately understand a certain denomination’s perspective on theology of religions, especially smaller ones; or those denominations may have more latitude among their members than I realize. On the other hand, responses that do not align with my expectations denominationally may indicate ignorance or compromise of those positions by chaplains. That is something I would especially want to investigate in the interviews, not to embarrass or malign chaplains, but to explore the diffusion of a theological issue that is crucial for ministry in a pluralistic context. So knowledge of the respondents’ faith groups may contribute to understanding the theological positions of Navy chaplains and to the potential for subtle forces to influence those positions in military ministry settings.

Survey Part Two: Theology of Religions

The second part of the survey sought to understand the chaplains’ theologies of religions. It would have been simple just to ask whether they were exclusivist, inclusivist, or pluralist: But asking them outright presumes that they have carefully thought about and understand the issues and the terminology. That may not be the case. Instead, carefully worded questions can draw out their ideas about the relationship of

their own religion to others. The goal was to understand what they believe about certain theological questions, not to measure how familiar they are with the state of current theological debate on those questions. It was introduced with a statement “These questions are intended to understand the relationship that you see between your religion and other religions (your Theology of Religions).” So those who have studied the topic may have grasped the concerns of the questions immediately.

For others, I thought that various questions taken in aggregate would disclose the underlying convictions of the respondents. For example, exclusivists would be unlikely to agree that all religions promote the same basic teachings (question #5), that no religion is normative or objectively superior to others (question #7), or that other religions can be valid means to reach the same desired end-state (salvation) that their own religion teaches. Conversely, it is hard to imagine a pluralist disagreeing with those things or agreeing that other religions are ultimately wrong about the most essential thing (question #12). But isolating what for many may have been only an implicit theological perspective proved no simple task.

One’s theology of religions is more like a point on a continuum than a distinct and immiscible position, so none of the questions can function like a shibboleth to betray some well-defined, clearly understood theological stance. In addition, questions run the risk of being misunderstood. For example, despite the clear context in which “religion” should be understood to mean alternatives with dramatically different foundational beliefs and practices e.g. Christian as opposed to Moslem, some chaplains may have understood it as Christian denominations, e.g. Baptist as opposed to Methodist. This would have skewed their answers. These are complex issues that do not lend themselves

easily to a survey. I addressed this survey with the understanding that a finely attenuated picture was not possible. It sought for merely rough characterizations that would either enhance or challenge the terrain map of Navy chaplaincy that I carried into this project. In the end, it was decided that the addition of too much explanatory material in the survey would not make a good trade-off. Questions that were only as complex as necessary seem more desirable than lengthening the time and mental focus needed by respondents in order to draw out more refined degrees of accuracy. Use of multiple questions would allow for recombinant answers that should give some useful snapshot of the perspectives that the chaplains hold. Twelve questions went into the final draft for part two of the survey. When someone who grasps distinctions of the three broad positions from the theology of religions reads the questions with the mindset of any one of them, responses usually appear quite obvious. The survey presumably would provide a plot that could reasonably be expected to approximate one of the three dominant perspectives within theology of religions.

The questions used a Likert scale of one to five between the poles of “Strongly Disagree” and “Strongly Agree.” The middle option was “Don’t know/No Opinion.” More points on the scale would needlessly add finer degrees that do not contribute to broad groupings of the chaplains into the three dominant viewpoints. Nor are the “questions” actually questions per se. Rather they are statements. The chaplain was asked for a level of agreement. This seemed preferable to open-ended questions since the aim was to get at the chaplains’ implicit theologies of religions. Various responses to open-ended questions might be interesting but less likely to get at my central target.

I have also expressed my suspicions in this chapter about possible effects of pluralistic ministry upon exclusivist chaplains. For example, this paper notes an apprehension that military ministry may gently press an exclusivist chaplain to supplant the priority of a Gospel presentation to a Sailor with the priority of care for that Sailor's welfare as it relates to his or her readiness to fight in battle.²²⁷ This can happen because the latter is the institution's concern; and the institution is the one that pays the chaplain and rewards the behavior that it desires. Nevertheless, my intent was to gain a more robust picture of what military chaplaincy is like in relation to my issues and concerns. My speculations may or may not receive confirmation. As another example, I have wondered if ministry in a pluralistic environment pushes the chaplain toward public expressions that reflect pluralist theology. Yet a close friend who is not an exclusivist shared with me once that since so many fellow Chaplains came from conservative Evangelical and Fundamentalist faith groups, he often felt pressured to disguise his theologically liberal views. So it is critical to aim for objectivity in the survey. My first draft of the questions revealed my biases when I realized that as an exclusivist myself, I would answer every question with the same response – strongly agree. Some of the questions in part two of the survey were consequently reworded in order to make sure that exclusivist responses would likely agree with some statements and disagree with others; and the same for pluralist responses.

The difficulty arose in designing questions to help identify those with inclusivist leanings. Inclusivism is a much more nuanced position and difficult to express succinctly without sounding like either an exclusivist or a pluralist. To extract this would require a more tentative reconstruction of the respondents' various answers, perhaps with some

²²⁷ See footnote #226.

answers in the “agree” or “disagree” categories rather than “strongly agree/disagree.”

One specific question was conceived with a deliberate focus upon inclusivists. Question #10 asked for their level of agreement with the statement “I am optimistic that those who do not know anything of my religion or who practice another religion are still likely to reach the desired end-state that my religion teaches (salvation, etc.).” The statement assumes the priority of one’s own religion yet expresses the “optimism” for its benefits to reach those outside of it. Pluralist might agree with inclusivists there but they could be culled from inclusivists using responses to questions such as #6 about ultimate religious reality being beyond any actual religious tradition or question #7 about no religion being normative. Another question designed to draw out an inclusivist leaning was #11. It asked for agreement with the assertion that other religions are valid means to arrive at the desired end-state that “my” religion teaches. Agreement would entail giving priority to one’s own religion yet with an open-ended optimism toward the validity of other religions.

The final question in part two asked for the level of agreement with the statement that the respondent’s views on the validity or invalidity of other religions matched those of the respondent’s endorsing body. The endorsing body is the faith group or denomination which endorsed the individual to the Navy as a qualified ministry professional or clergyperson within that body. If any respondents diverged from the theology of religion expected from a certain faith group, this question would at least let me know that the person is self-consciously aligned differently from their own denomination on this theological issue.

Survey Part Three: Religious Facilitation

Delineating the convictions of the chaplains about the relationships of their own faiths to the faiths of others is essential to this project: But it is equally important to overlay those relationships upon the chaplains' own views of why they facilitate for the religious practices and development of others. In the unusual world of institutional military chaplaincy, where church and state seem to dance apprehensively around one another, chaplains must have some explicit or at least implicit rationale for why they would directly support the practices of a religion other than their own. I designed this part of the survey with the presupposition that one's rationale for facilitation of another religion likely reveals something about the chaplain's views on church and state, the chaplain's theology about the relationship of those other religions to his/her own, and/or the chaplain's personal motivations. Yet for the exclusivist chaplain, this issue forms the crux of the tension created by the pluralist challenge in institutional ministry. It will emerge as an important plank of the training brief.

This part of the survey used a five-point Likert scale which asked for levels of agreement with statements, similar in form to part two of the survey. It offered 12 rationales for religious facilitation in random order and the 13th question of the section was open-ended with a place for respondents to fill in "other." Over the course of my entire career in the Navy, I have asked chaplains about religious facilitation. How do they justify helping a person to practice a faith which is different from what they themselves believe? The rationales offered as options in this section derived from the responses that I have received through the years. The responses by the chaplains should indicate something about personal, practical, and theological motivations among them. My own assessments of these reasons appear on slides #10 and 11 in the training brief

where they are consolidated from 12 distinct rationales down to eight.²²⁸ They also receive some discussion in this paper.²²⁹ Although it seems unlikely that any substantial rationale might exist that I have not encountered before, the “other” category gives an opportunity for chaplains to identify any justification that might not be listed. Finally, a 14th question in this category listed all of the rationales and asked the chaplains to select the one that is most compelling. This pressed them to identify their dominant rationale. I have argued in this paper that the overriding rationale for facilitation is a commitment to free exercise of religion and an understanding of the distinct requirements before God of the authorities in the kingdoms of the right and the left hands. The responses for part three of the survey were intended to give a better picture of how chaplains justify their facilitation. At the point in the training brief where I discuss facilitation, this data would prove useful to have some sense of how much effort I will need to make my case for free exercise as the primary reason.

Survey Part Four: Facilitation Practices

I designed Part Four of the survey to identify the specific kinds of facilitation practices that chaplains conduct with reference here to Neo-Pagans. As noted, NPism offers a unique test case for issues of religious accommodation in a pluralistic environment because they are so dramatically different from the usual religious practices of Americans.²³⁰ When I procured the services of a Catholic Priest to come and do Mass for my Sailors, I had some idea of what to expect and some ill-ease about it; but the distress of supporting a religion with which I disagreed grew markedly when I arranged for Wiccan services and other Neo-Pagan practices. Just how far would my conscience

²²⁸ Appendix Seven.

²²⁹ See pp. 95-96.

²³⁰ See p. 7.

allow me to go in helping them? NPs represent a particular case study in religious accommodations for me because of the radical distance between their religion and my own; but a high level of tactfulness is necessary to question other chaplains about it. When chaplains are supposed to stand for the free exercise of religion by all military members, questions about a particular faith might be regarded as hostility or a marginalization of their free exercise rights. I opted here to lean upon the indisputable fact that NPism is very different from more common religious practices in the U.S. Surely asking about it on this basis should not raise undue questions of prejudice against them. So Part Four of the survey was introduced with explanatory notes.

Answer questions in this section with reference to religious facilitation for any Neo-Pagan individuals or groups. Neo-Pagan as used here encompasses a broad base of practices among any followers of earth-based religions, ancient pantheons, magic-users, Wicca, science-fiction based religions, animism, pantheism, or polytheism. Questions about facilitation of Neo-Pagans are not intended to denigrate their religion in any way: But these questions were selected because Neo-Paganism is typically a very different form of religion than the more common monotheistic faiths.

These notes sought to frame the questions such that respondents could understand what I intended by the expression “Neo-Pagan,” yet also understand why specific inquiries were made about NP facilitation.

Knowledge of the levels of facilitation by other chaplains might provide valuable information for the interviews and for the training brief. For example, the military has encouraged diversity and chaplains may have supported this initiative by offering education about religious diversity. Calendars were published with the holy days of diverse religious groups. If a chaplain promoted NP holidays even though NPs represented a tiny minority and had no prominent place in the historical heritage of Navy

or country, that chaplain would appear to have a “push” agenda for religious diversity.²³¹ Responses to actual practices of facilitation in part four may suggest areas for follow-up questions in the interviews to learn more about whether their facilitation practices have “pushed” religious diversity.

Accordingly the questions in part four were simple yes or no questions about actual facilitation practices for NPs. The last question in this section asked whether the Commanding Officer had ever denied a request for religious accommodation by a NP or if the chaplain had ever recommended denying a request by a NP. Any stories about denied accommodation requests would prove of interest to learn more about the kinds of requests that have been made, whether denials aligned with military instructions, the dynamics of such situations, and how the chaplains advocated one way or the other.

Survey Part Five: Feelings about Functioning in a Pluralistic Environment

This final part of the survey pulled together the last element of the problem that this project seeks to address. Part of the research hypothesis inherent in this entire project is that exclusivist chaplains will likely experience personal levels of tension about facilitation for religious practices of others whereas inclusivist and pluralist chaplains would likely experience less. This part of the survey sought to determine the validity of this hypothesis. It contained nine statements with which the chaplain could indicate a level of agreement on a five point Likert scale.

I thought that the statements might trigger responses for follow-up in the interviews. They reflected the sometimes visceral challenges of facilitation. These included questions about the conscience of the chaplains in facilitating for NPs, the

²³¹ See pp. 45-46.

prospect of NP chaplains some day, or the very realistic possible scenario of ministry to a dying NP and whether the chaplain would offer that dying member the comforts of the NP religion.

It also included hot-button issues like the chaplain collar device. At present, chaplains wear an insignia on their collar which not only identifies them as a chaplain but which has several subcategories to identify the type of chaplain that they are. Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox chaplains wear a cross. Jewish Chaplains have the two tablets of the law, Muslim chaplains a crescent moon, and Buddhists a wheel. The issue of collar devices has had its share of discontent. Unitarians wear a cross but increasingly protest this. Some Christians dispute that the Mormon chaplains wear a cross.²³² One answer is to establish more devices: But the proliferation of devices in order to please everyone makes it harder for the service members to recognize them all. The Navy's interest in the insignia is not in the religious identity of the chaplain but that the chaplain is recognizable as a chaplain by the service member. So the suggestion has been made that perhaps all chaplains should adopt a single insignia which is non-religious: But the thought of giving up the cross as a central component of their identity has troubled even many chaplains who are not exclusivists. Responses to this question promised to be interesting.

Another asked for a level of agreement with the statement that "Since becoming a chaplain, my views have changed toward greater openness to the validity of other

²³² Jewish chaplains have raised concerns that chaplains from Messianic Jewish Christian groups have wanted to wear the tablets. The understandable concern is that Jewish personnel would mistake them for more traditional Rabbis; yet the military position has been to avoid telling a faith group which insignia its chaplains must wear. This would conflict with the government's aim to avoid entanglements in religion.

religions.” If chaplains felt that work in a pluralist environment tended to make their theology more pluralistic, it would warrant asking more about it in the interviews.

Part Five included a tenth statement with a five point Likert scale to ascertain the degree of unofficial interaction on religious issues between chaplains ranging from avoidance to robust discussion. One effect of the pluralist ethos noted by Carson was that it stifles robust religious debate.²³³ In my own experience, the most vigorous theological interactions between peers in the chaplaincy seem to occur among exclusivist chaplains. I wondered if others have experienced this as well. The last question then at the end of Part Five asked for a name and phone number or email address of those that would be willing to do one of the follow-up interviews. These were crucial to our research where the quantitative data of the survey can be explored for more depth.

Content of the Survey: Question Development

In the development of the survey content, several people were consulted. I had the favorable opportunity of working just down the hall from a research psychologist serving on active duty with the Navy’s Medical Service Corps, Commander Mark Bourne, Psy.D. I asked him to look at early drafts of my survey and share his thoughts about the research portion of my project. He seemed to enjoy the task despite admitting no familiarity with the topic. He offered several useful observations. My uses of the Likert scale seemed appropriate to him for the kind of information that I sought. He also noted that no study can be immunized from misreadings, but he recommended certain explanations to clarify my intentions for the respondents. Those made their way into the introductions of parts two through four of the survey. He saw no other red flags. Perhaps

²³³ See p. 81.

most importantly, we discussed the survey sample. He shared that a sample size of about 300 was optimal and that even much larger samples do not add substantially to the reliability of the results. We discussed the size of my survey which would go out to a little less than half of that. He encouragingly noted that the size seemed defensible given the small number of people in the Navy Chaplain Corps, the unique nature of my survey, and my modest level of experience in human research and statistics: But he stressed that I ought to clearly state that the survey was a sample of convenience rather than a scientific survey. Despite this, he felt that it still offered the possibility for useful insights and analysis.

Other chaplains and friends tweaked my construction of the survey but my faculty advisor proved most invaluable in its development. Dr. Okamoto helped me to think through my goals and intentions in the MAP and then relate them back to the various elements of both the research and the training brief to be used in the final product. The four stages of the project, -the survey, the interviews, the training brief, and the evaluation of the training brief- these seem remarkably simple and logical to me now; but they emerged only after sorting through a myriad of red herrings and rabbit trails which present themselves while converting passion for this project into its various components. In addition to clarity of thought about the relationships between my goals and aspects of the MAP, Dr. Okamoto gently refocused my objectives toward more humble realizations of what might be actually possible and what might prove useful. The survey questions needed special help in this regard. His recurrent filters for assessing the questions were about what I sought to learn from them and about making them clear for the respondents. With his consultation, several questions were re-worded and question #11 was added to

bolster the effort to distil the more elusive inclusivist opinions. Questions were also re-grouped in part two of the survey, “Theology of Religions,” to classify questions by kind – those that asked about positions, about implications, and about personal views.

Scope of the Survey

The survey went out to Navy Chaplains in the Hampton Roads area. Although not a scientific sample, it reflects a significant percentage of the whole. Hampton Roads is the largest fleet concentration area in the world. Its chaplains represent the broadest available variety of military ranks, faith groups, genders, and military sub-communities available anywhere. A significant cross-section of Navy chaplains such as those in Hampton Roads drew from people who have served in a variety of billets and locations. Although it is just one geographical area, chaplains like other Sailors move between different jobs frequently. That fact and the size of the survey offered the possibility of a useful spectrum of responses. The survey was sent to 136 chaplains out of a Navy-wide total of approximately 830. Between them, they had hundreds of years of experience at religious ministry in pluralistic military settings all over the world. There was no concern that the local sample might skew results because of its location.

Due to my time served in this area, I am somewhat recognizable to chaplains from Hampton Roads. That exposure led me to believe that chaplains would be more amenable to take the survey since most of them would know who sent it to them. Also, as a chaplain in the local community myself, I receive the unofficial roster of area chaplains. This has their names and email addresses. We use it for the annual chaplain birthday celebration. It offered the enormous convenience of having all of those names and email addresses in one place without the legal complications that might have

accompanied use of official Navy databases. Perhaps the most important reason for keeping it local rested upon the second step of the project, the interviews. The follow-up interviews would need to take place in person so potential candidates had to reside nearby.

Chaplains received an email, sent from my home email account, with an explanation of the project, an invitation to participate in the survey, and a link to a web site where the respondents could take the survey online.²³⁴ The web survey company used was “SurveyMonkey.” An online option seemed preferable for several reasons. Once the questions had taken final form, the web survey company made it easy for me to create an attractive, professional looking survey that the chaplains could take conveniently from their computers. Collection of results would be immediate and SurveyMonkey offered various ways to arrange and collate the data.

The survey itself had a privacy statement as its preface.²³⁵ Also the email which contained the link to the survey included some required information and disclosures for the invitees concerning the nature of the study, their rights, and how the information would be used. Both the text of the email and the privacy statement in the survey derived from the long approval process required before sending a survey to Navy personnel.

Research in Human Subjects and Institutional Matters Related to the Survey

The institutional hurdles to conducting a survey from a pool of Navy personnel, (in this case the chaplains) proved more formidable than I had imagined. Behind all of the obstacles, the predominant concern of the Navy rests squarely upon the protection of human subjects and impeccable ethical standards in all research that takes place among

²³⁴ The text of the email appears in Appendix Six.

²³⁵ This can be seen in Appendix Seven as part of the final form of the survey.

its people. I learned a great deal from this and the process undoubtedly improved the final project; but the steps in learning and meeting all institutional requirements added about three months to my timeline which contributed to the extension of this project into a second year. The details follows.

I began with a contact email to Captain J. W. Poole, Executive Assistant for the Navy's Chief of Chaplains, Rear Admiral Mark L. Tidd. The email was sent to the Chief's office as a professional courtesy so that he would know my intent to contact a number of his chaplains for this project. Captain Poole responded that he had informed Rear Admiral Tidd. They wanted to make sure that I included a disclaimer which stated that it was independent research, not reflective of DON, DOD, or the Chaplain Corps. They also recommended that I obtain a professional opinion from a Navy officer of the Judge Advocate General (JAG). I had already intended to do those very things and happily complied. Captain Poole also added a personal note about his misgivings with questions concerning facilitation for Neo-Pagans - that singling them out might vilify them in some way. He invited me to call him about this. He seemed reassured after our conversation that I did not intend to vilify them but to examine facilitation for religions that are most dramatically different from the more common ones: But in light of his reading of those questions, I added the sentences about not wishing to denigrate their religion to part four of the survey.²³⁶

I next approached Captain Tracey Riker, the JAG officer for my command. She composed a legal opinion that would guide the way I conducted the survey and protect me from allegations of legal breaches afterward.²³⁷ Her concerns predominantly focused

²³⁶ See p. 120.

²³⁷ The text of her opinion has been reproduced in Appendix Four.

upon misuse of either my government position or misuse of government resources. This shaped the way that I distributed the survey and the wording of the actual email that went out with the survey.

I called the Navy Personnel Command in Millington, Tennessee to inquire about any necessary permissions from the Navy for a survey such as mine. They put me in touch with Dr. Geoff Patrissi, a civilian research psychologist at Navy Personnel, Research, Studies, and Technology (NPRST). Dr. Patrissi drafted a privacy statement, which after some minor tweaking, ultimately appeared at the beginning of the survey. He crafted the statement to make sure that all necessary privacy disclosures were adequately addressed. He also gave me the instruction regarding the Navy's Human Research Protection program (SECNAVINST 3900.39D).²³⁸ The instruction details all aspects of the program and institutes the system of safeguards for Navy personnel. I learned that this instruction mandated the training and education necessary for those who do research on human subjects in the Navy. I also learned that those who do research on human subjects in the Navy must obtain approval first. A Navy Survey Approval Manager would determine if my project needed to be examined by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB's primary job is the protection of human subjects.

To help me comply with the training requirement, Dr. Patrissi brought Warren Booker into the discussion. Mr. Booker served as the IRB Administrator and he acted as my point of contact for "CITI" training. CITI, or Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative, is a subscription service providing on-line training opportunities in research ethics for a variety of institutions. Mr. Booker guided me to the training that the Navy

²³⁸ In addition to careful reading of SECNAVINST 3900.39D, I read official web sites for NPRST and HRPP as well as DOD Directive 3216.02 and other references.

would require of me for my particular research. After registration with CITI, I followed the pathway for a research focus in social and behavioral sciences, then selected and completed the “Investigators and Key Research Curriculum.”²³⁹ This satisfied the training requirement.

The Navy also required an Individual Investigator Agreement (IIA). The IIA would describe my responsibilities as a researcher in human subject research and the responsibilities of NPRST as the assured institution. My responsibilities would include abiding by any findings of an IRB if one was held for my project. I submitted the application for an IIA to which Mr. Booker and Dr. Patrissi added my previous submissions as supporting documents and then forwarded to the office of the Surgeon General of the Navy, the entity tasked with oversight of the Navy’s Human Research Protection Program (HRPP). In late January of 2012, Mr. Booker informed me that my IIA had come back and with endorsement and approval by HRPP.²⁴⁰

That led to the need for a determination of whether my research would require examination by the IRB. Earlier, I had submitted a protocol of the project under Dr. Patrissi’s guidance. The IRB would use the protocol to determine whether a fuller review would prove necessary. One section of the protocol asked four questions. 1) Did the research involve systematic investigation? 2) Would results contribute to generalizable knowledge? 3) Would it involve obtaining data about living individuals? 4) Did it involve intervention or interaction with individuals or data collection about individuals which was identifiable? Dr. Patrissi indicated that if any of those were negative, than an IRB would typically be unnecessary. An exemption from the IRB would be the most

²³⁹ The Human Research Curriculum Completion Report appears in Appendix Three.

²⁴⁰ The approved IIA appears in Appendix Five.

preferable outcome for me; not because of disregard for ethical concerns or the protection of my subjects, but out of worry for what could become longer delays in moving ahead with the project. An IRB would mean suspension of the project until the next time the board met, a wait for results and write-up of the review, and possible retrace of progress already made in order to satisfy any new concerns. Dr. Patrissi felt that question #2 was not the case – that the information collected in my research would not be generalizable to clergy outside the uniformed services. In the hopes of an exemption from the IRB, I took Dr. Patrissi’s advice and answered negatively for question #2.

Shortly thereafter, I received a phone call from Dr. Randy Brou, the chairman of the IRB. When it came to the protocol, he had disagreed that the study would not contribute to generalizable knowledge. He felt that there are many situations in which people can find themselves at odds with institutional policies. The social sciences would be interested in the tensions they might feel or the ways that they rationalize their behaviors. At the same time, he sympathized with my concerns to move forward with the project. I also appreciated his very frank discussion with me about the inner dynamics of the IRB. While he personally felt allure toward my topic and wished to see such a study go forward, he noted that when religious issues had emerged for the board in the past, some members had indicated more hesitance about religious-oriented research among Sailors. Although my survey would go to chaplains and not Sailors in general, he could not predict how restrictive the final results of the IRB might be. He kindly offered to consult with some others and re-examine the requirement for an IRB.

Dr. Brou emailed me several days later and notified me that in consultation with HRPP, he had determined that an IRB would not be mandatory in my case under Federal

Regulations. He raised the question of whether I might wish to voluntarily submit to an IRB. He had three additional issues that he would want addressed if I chose to voluntarily submit to an IRB. First, he was concerned that potential subjects would feel coercion to participate in the study because of my military rank. Second, the IRB would want to see my interview questions. He recognized that interviews often go “off-script” but the IRB would want to consider the things that it would normally involve. Third, they would like to know more about the product of my project, the training brief designed to help exclusivist chaplains navigate the challenges of religious pluralism. Would the brief be part of an official training in some way? Would it ever be mandatory?

In my response, I expressed my appreciation for his involvement and openness to his feedback and opinions. At the same time, I sought to convey my apprehension about further delays while waiting for an IRB. Although an IRB would not be required, I had to decide whether to voluntarily submit to one. The imprimatur of an IRB would seem to add validity to my research. Yet at that stage, I did not have either the interview questions or the training brief in final form. Dr. Brou let me know that the board would want to examine those items so I would need to submit further addendums as they were completed. In my deliberations about whether to voluntarily submit to the IRB, this process promised even longer postponements to the project. I also felt that I could respond to his initial concerns and address them satisfactorily without the formal process.

The easiest question to answer covered the training brief. It would not be an official military training or mandatory in any way, but rather a faith-specific aid in ministry to like-minded chaplains. He agreed that this would eliminate it as a concern for their deliberations.

When it came to the interview questions, my advisor and I had already discussed the need to keep them short and let the respondents elaborate on the areas of interest. The misgiving about the interviews was that since my research inquired about subjective feelings of “tension” at facilitating for religious others, the interview questions could trigger distress in the interviewees and thereby jeopardize demands in research ethics against causing harm to the subjects in the study. The fear that I might injure my chaplains by asking them to discuss something they do every day by choice seemed remote to me. Nevertheless, the point was well taken. My mitigation plan was to work carefully with my faculty advisor in the development of the questions; and to maintain awareness to hints of distress during the interviews so that I might back-up or redirect the interview if necessary.

To alleviate possible feelings of coercion by some chaplains, a re-design of the survey would have had to eliminate any prospect that I could determine from the responses which recipients had or had not taken the survey. As I examined this concern, I felt that the fear of coercion was more ostensible than real. Some respondents would voluntarily submit personal data if they were willing to be interviewed. For the others, yes, it would be possible for me to combine demographic data such as rank, gender, and faith group in order to determine likely identities of respondents. Then I could compare my list of respondents to the original list of those invited in order to ascertain who had probably not taken my survey. Rather than revise the study to eliminate this possibility, it seemed more practical to over-punctuate my disclaimer and emphatically stress to the chaplains that neither participation nor non-participation would have any impact upon

career, position, or reputation; and that no product of the survey could be linked to personally identifiable information of those that participate.

Dr. Brou sympathized with my impulse to bypass the IRB. He acknowledged that it can be sluggish and that visceral issues like religion can make the process more challenging. He wished me success in my work. Even though I had opted to move forward without the IRB, I felt that my interactions with Dr. Brou had raised my alertness to risks that I was assuming in the research. The project would be better because of it. The survey was ready to begin. The text of the email was finalized and reviewed.²⁴¹ It incorporated an explanation of what the survey was about, why I was sending it to them, and how long it would likely take them to complete it. It also emphasized all of the items that emerged out of legal concerns and disclaimers. At the bottom, it had the link to the on-line survey. Clicking on the link constituted consent to participate, so no additional consent forms were necessary; but once the link was opened, participants could quit at any time or decline to answer any or all questions as they desired. One additional note was added to the email through the insight of Dr. Brou which asked the chaplains not to share the link. I had not considered earlier that if someone were to pass the link to others, there were no controls on who could go on-line to take the survey. The integrity of the pool of original invitees would be lost.

Research Tools and Methodology: The Interviews

As the second step, several of the respondents were selected for one-on-one interviews. This allowed greater exploration of their thought processes and the influences upon their facilitation of Neo-Pagans. This qualitative research permitted me

²⁴¹ The text of the email appears in Appendix Six.

to explore more deeply the relationships between theologies, rationales for facilitation, actual facilitation practices, and tension levels about facilitation. This portion of the research would provide the thick description of what happens in the minds of chaplains as they facilitate for NPs. Since the interviewees included peers as well as subordinate chaplains, it was important to design and conduct this part of the research with careful awareness of research relationships. A preliminary disclosure was designed. Many of the items in the disclosure duplicated concerns from statements in the initial survey email with the following additions. It included the additional disclaimer that other than educational objectives, I did not stand to gain or have any financial stake in the interview. Interviewees could decline to answer any or all questions and could end the interview at any time. Interviewees were asked if they had any questions and if they were comfortable to let me take notes during the interview. The preliminary disclosure also noted that the interview was intended to collect data which included any feelings of personal stress, but that it did not intend to create or agitate any stress.²⁴² The preliminary disclosure was devised to be read aloud by me at the beginning of each interview.

The interview strategy supposed that fewer questions would allow the chaplains to elaborate, and then ad hoc questions could follow up on areas that intrigued me. The groupings of questions covered five broad areas; these were theology of religions, church and state, rationale for facilitation of other religions, facilitation for NPs, and levels of personal tension.²⁴³ These correspond to the broad areas of questions in the survey with the addition of the church and state questions.

²⁴² This was added in light of Dr. Brou's concern. See p. 132.

²⁴³ The preliminary disclosure and interview questions appear in Appendix Eight.

Two of the questions recalled specific responses that the chaplain had made in the survey and asked for more reflections about them. These were the questions about their most compelling reason for facilitation and about the normalcy the chaplain felt concerning personal tension in a pluralistic environment. As the interviewer, I would need to review the chaplain's responses beforehand on these matters.

In addition to those five broad areas, there were two more questions at the end. One was an optional question for me to ask as the interviewer. It gave me a chance to inquire about any items in the survey that seemed dissonant with other responses. A final question at the end tried to function as a catch-all by asking if the chaplain had anything else to add on religious pluralism, Navy chaplaincy, or religious facilitation in the Navy.

Research Tools and Methodology: The Training Brief

As the third step, the findings and evaluations contributed to a training brief that was designed to educate and support the ministries of exclusivist chaplains. This training brief is the final product of the MAP. The brief is in the form of Power Point® slides.²⁴⁴ Training briefs in this format are very common in military settings. It outlines, highlights, and develops the case for how a Navy chaplain might manage the issue of religious facilitation for those of other faiths when that chaplain believes in the uniqueness of Christ for salvation and the necessity of faith in Him. It seeks to integrate theological data, legal requirements, insights into the sociology and psychology of Neo-Paganism, and a clearer picture of how facilitation is actually taking place in the field with recommended principles for facilitation. The aim was that this integrated data might help exclusivist chaplains to evaluate their own beliefs and practices circumspectly; and

²⁴⁴ The training brief appears in Appendix Nine.

consequently practice religious facilitation in ways that align most fully with their theological convictions.

Use of this format, the training brief, justifiably presumed a couple of things. One was that chaplains have enough awareness of the issues to meaningfully engage the issues addressed in the training brief within its limited length. A brief of 30 slides intended to be presented by me in a 60-90 minute training slot would not likely be considered too long or too short; but could sufficiently pull together all of the data necessary to achieve our aim. The fourth step of the MAP, the evaluations, was expected to confirm whether this was the case. Second, the training brief format presumed that a significant element of the matter is didactic. If chaplains have inadequate rationales for facilitation or questionable facilitation practices, they need to have someone connect the dots and walk them down the road of the implications for their own theology. Even the affective goal of “tension” at facilitating for religious others stems from the awareness of potential theological conflict.

A perusal of the brief in Appendix Nine will reveal that it draws upon material and arguments presented in chapters two and three of this MAP. It includes some things specifically pulled from information in the survey, such as in slide #20. The main purpose of the survey and the interviews however, were to gauge the validity of some of my conclusions about Navy chaplaincy beyond my own experiences of it. While not resoundingly extensive, the field research seemed supportive enough of my conclusions that I felt justified to stand by my assertions in the brief. This applied most especially to slides 8-16, and 19-20 where I make assertions about the chaplains’ experiences. The brief itself covers three main areas which appear as titles at the top and which are also

color-coded with the slides. The first section looks at pluralism in the Navy and the problem of facilitation for other faiths. These blue slides also have a picture of the famous four chaplains from the sinking of the USAT *Dorchester*, a legendary story in the Navy of pluralist collaboration by chaplains. The second section of slides examines the larger role of shaping the pluralist culture. They are color-coded in gold and have a picture of street signs showing the intersection of church and state. The third section of the brief offers practical tips for concrete ministry issues related to religious pluralism. They are color-coded in grayish-brown and have a picture of a mountain climber. Although the slides contain a lot of information, the hope was that the color-coding would help recipients of the training keep the larger framework in mind. Also, because of the wordiness, I used various gimmicks such as different fonts, different colors, different sizes, and different styles to try to hold people's attention and highlight key words or concepts.

In the interactions with my faculty advisor to develop the training brief, he helped me to insert essential explanatory material and definitions. He also astutely noticed that I had sometimes tried to employ diverse vocabulary for the sake of variety when expressing the same concept: But for purposes of the brief, it was preferable to help the audience grasp my points by consistent usage of the same terms. The brief has continued to undergo minor changes of wording since those initial re-works.

The Power Point® brief could be sent in electronic form to a larger group of exclusivist chaplains; but primary effort would seek to enlist some from among the exclusivist group for a presentation of the brief by me in person. I wished to know whether the content of the training brief was helpful but I was also concerned about the

efficacy of presenting it face-to-face. The presupposition was that personal attendance at the brief was optimal but if it could still be effective through electronic transmittal, it would multiply the extent of possible influence.

Research Tools and Methodology: The Evaluation of the Training Brief

In order to assess the effectiveness of the training brief, the fourth step entailed an evaluation from chaplains after they received it. Dr. Okamoto helped me to see that there were really three main areas that I wanted to measure among those that would hear the training brief. I revised the questions in the evaluation and grouped them with his recommendation by their concerns about content, effects, and presentation.

First, I wanted to know whether key items in the content of the brief made sense to other chaplains and whether they could see themselves adopting any of it. The presumption behind the brief was that a large part of the “problem” this MAP seeks to address is alleviated by better knowledge and clear thinking about it.²⁴⁵ I had several questions. Did the brief help them to better understand and accept my assertions about the theological and personal tensions inherent in religious facilitation? Did they think the “push-pull” approach to facilitation is theologically, legally, ethically, and practically legitimate? Did they find value in the arguments that I made concerning practical tips for ministry? Initial drafts merely asked those questions, but Dr. Okamoto encouraged me to include reminders of just what those were and embed them in the questions.

Second, what were the effects of the brief? I wanted to know if the brief actually changes anything in a chaplain’s reflections, views, approaches to chaplaincy, or level of

²⁴⁵ See p. 136.

confidence about integrating theology with ministry. These were simple yes or no questions.

Third, what aspects in the presentation of the brief helped or hindered it in its objectives? Questions asked about length, the use of Power Point®, and the importance of a personal presentation versus an electronic one only. Finally, each of the three sections of the evaluation asked an open-ended invitation to share more comments about content, effects, and presentation of the brief.

Implementation of the Project

This chapter has already detailed the genesis, development, and challenges built into the steps of the project. This brief sub-chapter merely completes the time-line for execution along with some comments on levels of responses to the research.

In October/November of 2011, Dr. Okamoto and I hammered away at the final form for the questions in the survey. Also in November, during a Hampton Roads area chaplains training event at which about 40 chaplains were present, I made a brief announcement that I would be sending the survey out to them soon. I explained briefly what it was about and why I was sending it to them. I made the announcement with the consent of the senior chaplain and emphasized that it was voluntary, unpressured, and had no impact upon their Navy careers in any way.

In early November, I also made my initial contact with the Chief of Chaplains Office. Two days later, I had my legal opinion from the JAG Officer. Then in mid-November, my first conversation with someone at NPRST began the long process of obtaining permission from the Navy to conduct the survey. The IIA with the Navy's approval finally reached me January 23rd of 2012. By the 29th of January, my protocol

had been resolved, I had made the decision not utilize the IRB, and that day sent the email from my home to the chaplains on my roster. The email went to 136 chaplains. I had home email addresses for 52 of those and the rest went to military email accounts.

By mid-March, only 25 chaplains had opened the survey; but many chaplains asked me how it was going. In expressing my disappointment to them about the low numbers of responses, person after person shared how busy people get in the military. They exhorted me to send it out again. I hesitated because of the JAG's caution about keeping contact minimal so as to avoid the appearance of bothering people at work. Finally, I mentioned it again at the area chaplain training in March. Again, about 40 chaplains were present. As a result, a few more contacted me to ask for the survey link. I re-sent them the email. A total of 33 people ultimately opened the survey. Only 29 completed it. I closed the survey at the end of March. It was now evident that the project could no longer be completed in the first year and so a one year extension became necessary.

By July I had begun contacting individuals to ask them about interviews. 14 of the 33 respondents to the survey shared their personal information and expressed willingness to do interviews. I selected 10 of them. Each was still willing to participate. Although I desired to base selections on a broad representation of positions in theology of religions, the selections were frankly based upon availability of the chaplains. Scheduling them and conducting the interviews took until the end of August.

In the meantime, I had asked Dr. Okamoto for a final review of the training brief. With some last minute tweaking to the brief and the evaluation questions, he agreed that I was ready to take the really big step of the project – to present the training brief and

evaluate the responses from an actual audience. I arranged to conduct the brief at Hope Lutheran Church in Virginia Beach where I normally worship. They provided a fellowship hall and projection device for showing the slides on a large screen. I invited local LCMS Navy chaplains since they best reflect the target group for which this project was designed. In addition, I invited five other chaplains who had expressed personal interest in my project recently. The thought was that even though the brief was designed for exclusivist chaplains (and primarily Lutheran ones at that), chaplains of other persuasions could offer valuable critique. It was also decided that because the group of chaplains would likely be small, local LCMS clergy and congregational leaders might be interested. So an invitation was sent out to the local pastor's circuit, briefly explaining what I was doing, and inviting them to attend with any interested people from their congregations. We provided pizza so that people on the run would not have to worry about food.

On the evening of July 17th, I conducted the brief. Four LCMS Navy chaplains observed the brief. Unfortunately none of the other chaplains could attend although they contacted me afterward with sincere regrets. Four other local LCMS clergy came and they brought 11 congregational leaders with them.

I began with an introductory statement to thank them for coming, explained the background of my project, and encouraged honest critique and disagreement in the evaluations. The brief took about 75 minutes and that left time at the end for all attendees to fill out the evaluation sheets. At that point, I had implemented all four steps in the project. Although some of the interviews were not completed until the next month, the fact that they happened out of sequence would not have any real impact on the project.

CHAPTER 5

THE PROJECT EVALUATED

This project has considered the problem of a tension that intrudes itself both theologically and personally for those Christian Navy chaplains who believe that salvation is exclusive to people who have faith in Jesus Christ, yet who must support all people in a religiously pluralistic institution, even to the point of facilitating directly for religious activity with which the chaplain strongly disagrees. The goal for the project was to help exclusivist Navy chaplains engage religious pluralism in their Navy context in ways that are responsible to their faith, respectful of others, and within the parameters of legal and institutional requirements. In order to move toward that goal, the project sought to acquire more objective data about how chaplains, in fact, function in the Navy's pluralistic environment. Although I brought a great deal of experience to my observations and assessment of the problem, the project looked for the additional credibility of a look at the extent and nature of this problem beyond my personal experiences. So the research component was developed in order to learn more about how chaplains facilitate, why they facilitate, and how they feel about it – all in light of their own theological positions about the degrees of validity or invalidity of the other religions whose practitioners they must support. I believed that the variable in this research would be that theological position. One's theology of religions should dictate how enthusiastically other religions are supported and how one personally feels about that. If I believe that the other religion is just as valid as my own, I could be expected to unreservedly support it and feel good about it; whereas if I believe that it is deceiving its practitioners in the wrong direction, I could be expected to support it by the minimal

standard required as a functionary of the civil government and my conscience would likely repine my involvement to some degree.

The evaluation in this chapter considers the goal of the research. Do a chaplain's convictions about the soteriological efficacy of another religion shape that chaplain's facilitation practices, rationale for facilitation, and personal experiences of tension about it? This entails a look at the findings from the survey and the interviews which sought to bring the issue into better focus.

This evaluation will also consider the goal of the project and whether the final product has utility for strengthening the ministries in pluralist Navy environments for exclusivist chaplains (especially Lutheran ones). This entails a look at the training brief constructed for them and the evaluations of its effectiveness.

Findings of the Study

The Survey

Although the survey contributed to my original research goal, that genuinely positive value is tempered by small dimensions. The research must sadly acknowledge the poor response to the survey in terms of numbers. It was not a scientific survey even in its original design.²⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the opinions of a sizeable portion of the chaplains in Hampton Roads would constitute a significant picture of Navy chaplaincy as it deals with expanding religious pluralism. Furthermore, I had cause to expect a large response since my colleagues frequently asked about my project and the level of interest in these issues seems high. Unfortunately, out of 136 email addresses to which I sent the survey, only 33 opened the survey. Of those 33, five did not complete the whole survey and one

²⁴⁶ See p. 124.

of them did not even answer beyond the first part. Several people told me that 1% is a reasonable response for online surveys, but given the specific nature of the survey, I had hoped for a response of at least 50%. I considered possible reasons for the lower numbers. Some may not have received the survey since most rosters have some inaccurate information. Also, at any given time, about 25% of the chaplains are forward deployed. These could not send the email to a home address as required by the JAG's instructions. So some chaplains did not receive the survey or did not have an opportunity to take it. For others, various reasons might explain why they did not take the survey. Perhaps the largest hurdle was simply the busyness and lack of time for many chaplains. I suspect that in the immense volume of emails that some chaplains receive, mine might have been overlooked or accidentally deleted and the JAG's guidance to minimize contact removed my option to send reminders. It is also possible that I overestimated the degree of interest in this topic. Maybe some chaplains just do not want to think about issues of pluralism. In any case, I can only speculate on how extensively each these reasons contributed to the lower than expected response rate. The small number of responses regrettably adds to the tentativeness of assessments about the chaplaincy.

The first step in collating data from the survey was to try to determine the theologies of religions of the respondents since this should be the variable for responses. Unfortunately, grouping responses in these ways proved harder than I expected. Responses did not seem to be as consistent as I had presumed. This could be either because my wordings of the questions were susceptible to misinterpretations by the chaplains, or because the chaplains did not have fully formed and consistent theological perspectives to guide their answers. The interviews would have to help me sort this out.

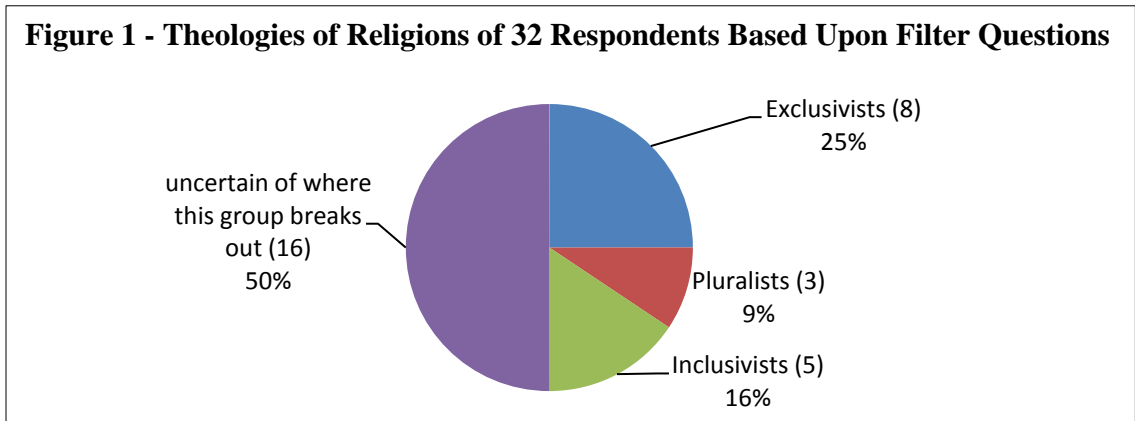
Although there may be different ways to aggregate the responses in order to get at implicit theologies of religions, I settled on several questions from the survey that I thought would help to solidly define the positions of the chaplains.

Exclusivists had to include all of the following. They must disagree or strongly disagree that all religions promote the same teachings. They must strongly disagree with the statement that no religion is normative. They also had to strongly agree that only those who follow what their own religion prescribes will be saved and strongly disagree that other religions could be valid means of salvation. They must disagree or strongly disagree that someone who practices another religion can still reach salvation. They must agree or strongly agree that other religions are ultimately wrong about the most important thing; and also that they share their religion with others because without it, salvation cannot be reached. Of the 33 chaplains in the survey, eight of them hit all of these filters.

I considered that only thorough pluralists would agree with all of the following: That ultimate religious reality is beyond what any actual religious tradition can express; that no religion is normative or objectively superior to others; and that the primary goal of all religions is to make ethically better people. Three people affirmed all of those.

Inclusivism is the most difficult position to distil of the three broad stances in theology of religions. It takes many forms and can often sound like either exclusivism or pluralism at certain points. I classified chaplains as inclusivists in the survey based upon the following. They had to disagree or strongly disagree that salvation will only be reached by adherents of their religion. They had to agree or strongly agree that that they were optimistic that those who do not know anything of their religion or who practice another religion were still likely to reach salvation. They could not disagree that other

religions might be valid means to reach salvation. These questions each presuppose that salvation is as their own religion teaches it to be, but they express optimism about the destinies of practitioners of other religions. Five chaplains hit all of these filters.



Granted the already limited precision of the survey even to this point, the interesting thing then becomes cross-tabbing of these groups with various other questions in the survey. Although the group sizes of the survey are small, distinctions between exclusivists, pluralists, and inclusivists appeared to align at many points with what we would expect of each.

What would these groups say about the rationales for religious facilitation? Seven out of seven exclusivists strongly agreed with the statement that they support the free exercise of religion and five of those seven listed it as their most compelling reason. All of the non-exclusivists, taken in aggregate, were slightly below this with 19 out of 22 strongly agreeing with the statement and only nine out of the 22 listing it as their most compelling reason. Five of five inclusivists strongly agreed but only two of five listed it as their most compelling reason. Two out of three pluralists strongly agreed and one of those three placed it as the topmost rationale. All groups were strong on this rationale in general but exclusivists led them all.

On the statement concerning facilitation for other religions which asserted that the other religions were equally valid with their own, the exclusivists stood apart from other groups. All of the exclusivists disagreed with the statement that they would facilitate for those of other religions because the other religion was just as valid as their own. On the other hand, of the three pluralists, two agreed that the religion of the other person was equally valid and the third responded “don’t know/no opinion.” One of the five inclusivists disagreed somewhat and another had no opinion but the other three agreed or strongly agreed. Non-exclusivists taken in aggregate had 12 that disagreed, seven that agreed, and three that had no opinion or did not know. The strong univocal disagreement by exclusivists distinguished them from the others.

Another statement on facilitation alleged that every person had to find their own spiritual path. Once again, all exclusivists disagreed with this. In bold contrast, all of the pluralists and all of the inclusivists had the opposite response and agreed. As with the previous cross tabs, non-exclusivists were more mixed but still leaned nearly three to one toward agreement with this statement about merely supporting someone as they find their own spiritual path. This question punctuated the distinction between exclusivists and other groups even further.

When it comes to personal feelings about facilitation in a religiously pluralistic environment, it is also possible to note distinctions between the groups. One statement in the survey asserted that it is never acceptable, even in faith-specific settings, to say something negative about another religion. The key phrase here is “never acceptable, even in faith-specific settings.” Military chaplaincy distinguishes between situations. Sometimes for institutional concerns, good order and discipline must prevail, so it would

be unacceptable for example to talk at a department head meeting about why a certain religion is theologically mistaken; but it is perfectly alright to do this at a worship service which was advertised as specific to a certain faith (such as “A Lutheran Service”). If that were not true, then government would be intruding in the religious activity of that faith group. Yet for those who are not exclusivists, popular ideas of tolerance may look unfavorably at any “negative” talk about others. So it is not surprising that only one in seven of the exclusivists disagreed with the assertion that it was never acceptable to speak thus; but seven of eight in the combined pluralist/inclusivist group agreed with it. Non-exclusivists taken together were split about evenly.

Only one in seven of the exclusivist respondents would agree to say a Neo-Pagan prayer with a dying NP service member; but only one in eight of the pluralist and inclusivist respondents said that they would not say such a prayer. Does this mean that exclusivists are disinclined to show respectful facilitation of others? That would be a hasty conclusion. Seven of the eight exclusivists had facilitated before for NPs. This compared to three of five inclusivists and two of three pluralists. In fact, none of the three pluralists had ever recommended a special accommodation for a NP even though they had 29 years of experience between them. This compared to three of the eight exclusivists. So there is no evidence here to conclude that exclusivists facilitate less than other chaplains. One of the goals of the research was to learn more about “how” chaplains facilitate and NPism was selected as a test case because of its dramatically different “feel.” These numbers show that at least for our small sample, facilitation by exclusivists for NPs does not take place less than for other groups. In the methods of facilitation such as providing space, advertising, referral to civilian sources, and

distribution of literature, the percentages of exclusivist respondents that have done these things is not remarkably different from the group of chaplains as a whole.

I also expected that theology of religions would be a variable in how aggressively one might “push” for another religion. While I still believe that, the survey did not offer much confirmation in the narrow area of facilitation for Neo-Pagans. The survey asked a couple of questions which would reflect more “pushing” of NPism for those that had taken those steps. I would expect more of this from pluralist chaplains and less from exclusivist ones. These included approaching a NP and asking them to serve as a Lay Leader (as opposed to letting the interested party approach the chaplain) and the publicizing of NP holidays. Positive responses were low for all groupings and only slightly lower for exclusivists than for others.

Another expectation of my research was that the theology of religions of the chaplains would function as a variable for the amount of personal tension a chaplain would feel for facilitating for a religion other than their own. Here, the results did not match my expectations (although the interviews provided additional clarity later). Question #39 asked about whether a certain level of personal tension was normal and healthy in a religiously pluralistic environment. I have argued that it is. At this point, all three groups largely agreed with only one respondent that did not know. In the survey at large, 25 of 29 respondents also agreed. So chaplains acknowledge the positive aspect of personal tension, but where it arises in them I still did not know until the interviews shed some light upon it, since for many in the survey, it does not occur in one place where I would expect it - religious facilitation for an esoteric faith group. I did anticipate some variance from my expectation that tension should increase where the chaplain facilitated

for a religion with which they disagreed. This paper speculated earlier from anecdotal experience that some chaplains whom we might expect to be exclusivists do not seem to personally feel the tension that arises out of the theological issues of facilitation for other religions.²⁴⁷ This survey did not eliminate that concern. Question #38 asked the chaplains for a level of agreement with the statement that “My conscience bothers me about facilitation for Neo-pagans.” This paper has argued that even where it can be justified as a proper activity to support the free exercise of religion in the kingdom of the left hand, it still carries an unsettling feeling to directly facilitate for a religious practice which one believes to be false.²⁴⁸ Only one of eight pluralist and inclusivist respondents agreed with the statement in question #38. That does fit my expectation: But whereas I would expect all exclusivists to feel some pangs of conscience about it as a result of their theology, only four out of seven admitted to issues of conscience.

A final question that I wish to consider is Question # 44. I have wondered whether time in service and exposure to ministry in pluralistic settings nudges chaplains away from the direction of exclusivism.²⁴⁹ The question asked whether the chaplains have changed their views toward greater openness and the validity of other religions since entering this ministry. Only seven of 29 in the survey at large agreed with this; but six of those seven were in the pluralist/inclusivist groups. None of the exclusivists agreed. So at least in light of this limited data, the question deserves consideration even if it does not appear extensively true in the self-understandings of the chaplains.

The small number of responses to the survey constrains us from any grand conclusions. The design of this study acknowledged from the start that the survey would

²⁴⁷ See p. 7, 14.

²⁴⁸ See pp. 96, 97, and slide #12 in Appendix Nine.

²⁴⁹ See pp. 50, 112.

not produce statistically reliable information, only some general sense of whether my perceptions and observations about chaplains and ministry in the Navy seemed plausible outside of my own experiences. Although, the limited sample in this survey roughly validates most of those conclusions, the interviews were intended to offer the thick description that really gets inside the thoughts of the chaplains on these matters.

The Interviews

I conducted 10 interviews with chaplains. They were kept short, with only a few questions and no more than 30 minutes for an interview. Follow-up questions from me were generally non-specific. Typically, I would ask someone to tell me more about something they had just said. None of them ever showed any signs of distress or gave me verbal or non-verbal clues that I needed to back-off. In fact none of the interviewees ever showed any reluctance to elaborate. They enjoyed the interviews as much as I did.

Based upon their survey responses, I tried to differentiate the interviewees in terms of theologies of religions beforehand. This might help me to understand better if the data that I am collecting conforms to my research hypothesis. I continue to make such a big deal about the explicit or implicit theologies of religions because that is the variable in my research hypothesis. The interviews then required me to assess those theologies in the chaplains and acquire a sense of whether the groupings made from the survey were accurate.

Two of the chaplains interviewed, who both happened to be LCMS, were the only ones interviewed who had answered all seven survey questions along exclusivist parameters. These chaplains answered every question in a way that I would consider

consistent for an exclusivist.²⁵⁰ Their responses concerning implications of their Christian faith for those of other faiths always reflected the exclusivist perspective. In our discussion, one quoted without any prompting Acts 4:12, “. . . there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” The other quoted John 3:18 “. . . he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” Moreover, they showed acute awareness of the personal tension when they were interviewed. The entire range of their interview responses confirmed the assessments made from the survey in their cases.

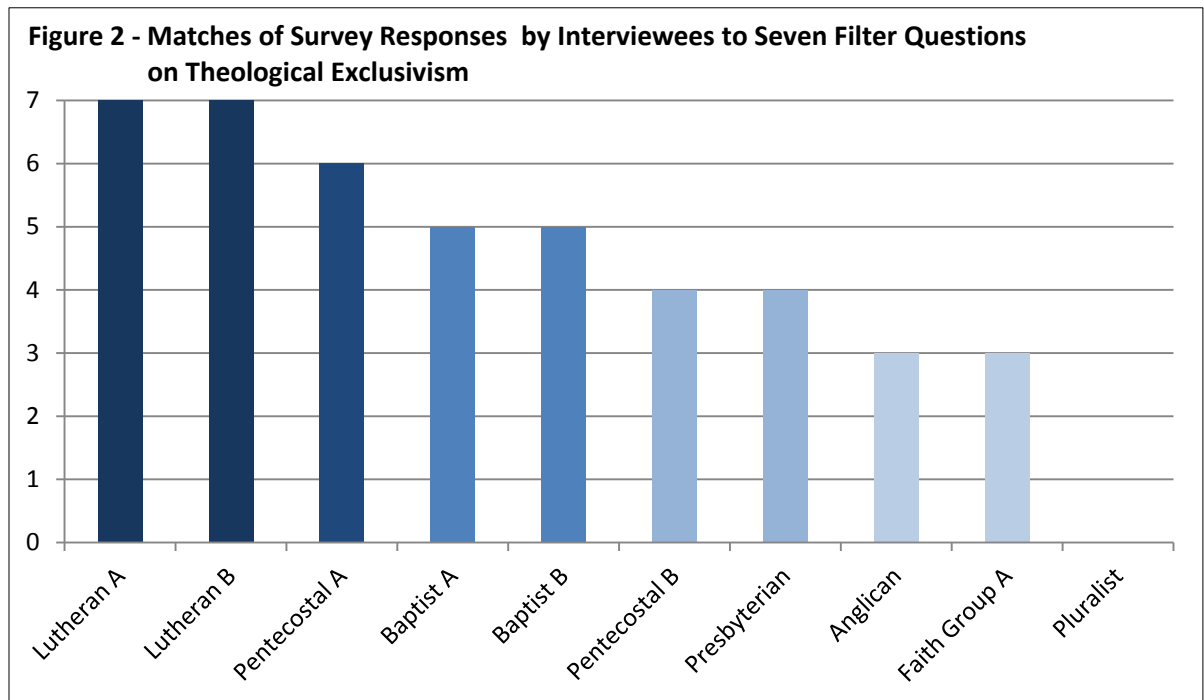
At the other end of the spectrum, one interviewee had hit the mark in all three of the questions from the survey which I used to classify pluralists. That chaplain’s interview confirmed a pluralist perspective even if not self-conscious of it as such. My questions about the implications of this chaplain’s Christian beliefs for those of other religions revealed the typically pluralist perspective that religion is often culturally conditioned. Truth is a point of view and something which may be true for this chaplain need not be true for another person. This chaplain’s Christianity meant caring for the needs of others and loving neighbor as oneself. The statement was clearly made that this chaplain had “no problem with how anyone else chooses to practice their faith.” So it seemed that I had accurately identified the strong exclusivist & pluralist ends of the continuum. It was everything else in the middle that introduced more complexity.

Of the remaining seven interviewees, none of them fit into any of the three groups that I used based strictly upon survey answers. They reflected varying degrees of agreement with the seven survey questions that I used to identify an exclusivist group; and that might give a useful way to place them on a continuum. One chaplain fit six of

²⁵⁰ As an example, see slide #20 of the training brief.

the seven filters and was very close on the seventh. Two others matched five of seven and were close on the other two questions. Two chaplains hit four of the seven filters.

Two more had three of seven. These appear on graph in Figure 2.



The continuum seemed for me, in fact, to reflect degrees of separation from what I would consider a solid exclusivist position into areas of inclusivist ideas or popular inclusivist-type expressions, even though most did not indicate fully formed understandings of an inclusivist theology. The chaplain of Faith Group “A” was the exception. He solidly grasped and articulated his own church’s theology which is decidedly inclusivist.²⁵¹

In addition to the two Lutherans, the Pentecostal chaplain who corresponded in six of the seven filter questions understandably came across most like an exclusivist. The

²⁵¹ Because this chaplain represents a faith group for which the chaplain is the only representative in Hampton Roads, disclosure of the denomination would make it possible to determine the chaplain’s identity. Although the chaplain verbally expressed consent for me to present views expressed in the interview, the preliminary disclosure statement for the interview said that responses would not be linked to personally identifiable information. I opted to use “Faith Group A” to describe this chaplain. A doctrinal tab on the official denominational website for this chaplain describes the three positions of theologies of religions and unmistakably commits the denomination to “inclusivism.”

chaplain noted that faith in Christ was necessary for salvation and any groups that teach otherwise are prospects for respectful evangelism. The failure to include this chaplain as an exclusivist in the first place highlights the difficulty I had with development of questions that would not be open to wider interpretations. Question #11 asked for agreement with the assertion that other religions can be valid means of salvation. This was taken by him to mean other Christian religions. I believe this chaplain is exclusivist in his theology although my survey filters failed to group him that way.

Thus the survey and the interviews, when taken in tandem, revealed that the two Lutherans and Pentecostal “A” functioned solidly as exclusivists. At the other end of the continuum, the pluralist undoubtedly belonged in that camp and the chaplain of Faith Group “A” was a textbook inclusivist. What of the others, the “indeterminate five?” The idea of a continuum from exclusivist toward inclusivist modes of thought can be seen in the graph by the way that each chaplain, from left to right, corresponded to fewer of the exclusivist filter questions. This continuum model is helpful because it fits what I experienced in my interviews with them.

The two Baptist interviewees had strong exclusivist leanings.²⁵² One unequivocally stated that those of other religions must accept the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be saved. That same chaplain also said he feared that Baptists had a negative public image as being antagonistic toward others. So the chaplain admitted reluctance to express the corollary of his Gospel declaration - that those of other religions could not be saved without Christ. The chaplain clearly believed it and expressed it to me, yet admitted a determination to avoid saying it, even in faith-specific settings. The

²⁵² Three other Baptists were among the eight that were squarely in the exclusivist camp according to the survey. These three were not the same Baptists that were interviewed.

other Baptist interviewee spoke about faith in Jesus Christ yet later made a comment that I would see as problematic for an exclusivist. In a memorial service, the chaplain had co-officiated with chaplains of other faiths and claimed to learn from that experience that the differences did not matter when they were caring for people.²⁵³ His responses to my inquiries about that experience seemed to place care for the immediate needs of people ahead of evangelistic concerns for their eternal destinies.

The Pentecostal whose answers aligned with four of seven from the exclusivist filter questions was similarly strong on the importance of Christ as the only way of salvation; yet made a contradictory remark which reflected popular inclusivist ideas. This chaplain optimistically cited a Buddhist friend who described her own religious faith with the same wording that a Christian might. In light of that, this chaplain asserted that God would judge and that the chaplain had no basis to say who would finally be saved.

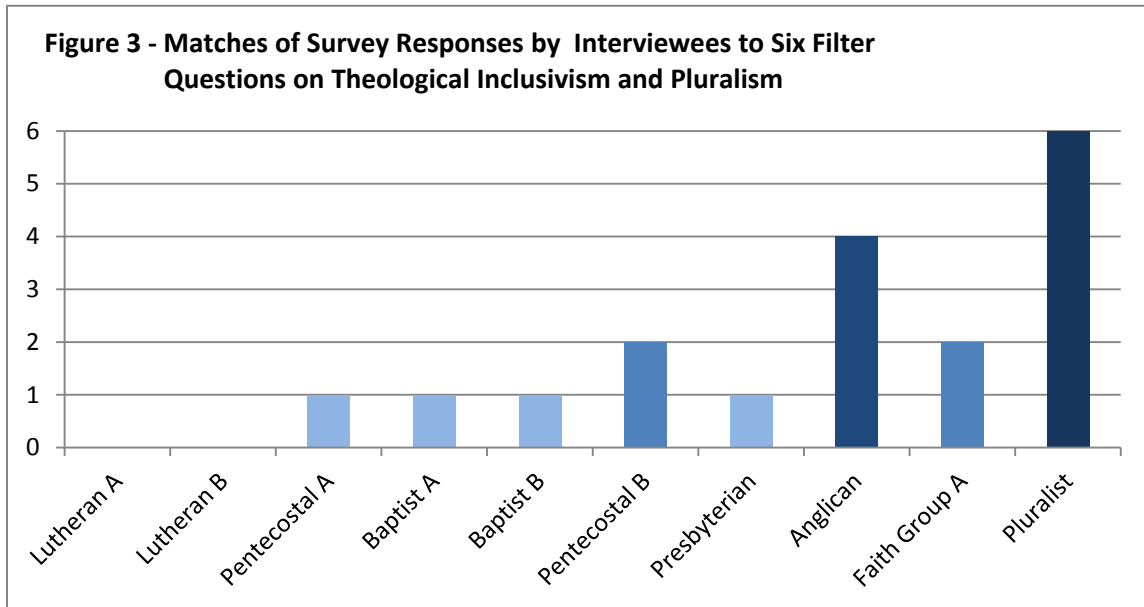
The Presbyterian chaplain sounded even more like an inclusivist. The bold assertion that salvation comes through Christ emerged early in the conversation, but it seemed to die the death of a thousand qualifications. The chaplain could not judge, was here to help others rather than condemn them, sought to be attractive to others, supported others wherever they happened to be in life, let God deal with them in his own way, believes that God looks into hearts and judges with ways we do not see, etc. The same type of scenario emerged with the Anglican chaplain. The latter was very intelligent and had clearly thought before about some of my questions; nonetheless the interview seemed to stake out a position in inclusivist territory. The conversation again started with the declaration that the chaplain's worldview was wholeheartedly Christian. Even the word

²⁵³ This chaplain disagreed with Question #45 of the survey which said that the religion which our service members follow is less important than that we love and support them. There were multiple points at which the indeterminate five chaplains expressed apparent inconsistencies.

“exclusivist” was used in the interview. Many of this chaplain’s statements sounded categorically committed to particularity of the Christian Gospel. The concept that those who die without Christ will experience eternity without Christ was raised by this chaplain and explicitly said to be biblical; yet the very next statement from the chaplain’s mouth was that because God is loving, we may still trust him for mercy in those cases. I believe this reflects inclusivism because it assumes the preeminence of a Christian framework and the centrality of Christ as over against the doctrines of other religions; yet it reserves optimism for the eternal destinies of those that the Bible teaches are lost. It does this based upon vague concepts of God’s love and mercy. This particular interview was going so well that I felt I could gently ask for a response to my impression that this chaplain’s disclaimer about God’s mercy seemed to be less of a solid commitment to the whole of biblical teaching than the chaplain had affirmed. Undaunted, the chaplain discussed it more at length and seemed to genuinely enjoy reflecting about it with me; although bold statements about the need for the Gospel were always couched with explanations that left some kind of backdoor options with God. The chaplain dexterously sought to avoid saying anything about eternal condemnation for anyone.

When one compares the interviewees’ responses to the inclusivist and pluralist filter questions from the survey as shown in Figure 3, answers reflect slightly more agreement the further one moves to the right when the interviewees are placed in the same order as they appear on the continuum of exclusivism used in Figure 2. In addition, what the figure does not show is that the exclusivist chaplains to the left of the continuum took stronger inimical responses to some of the filter questions compared to the chaplains further to the right of the continuum. For example, question #9 states that salvation

would only be reached by adherents to what the respondent's religion prescribes. Since all of the interviewees belong to Christian denominations, the question is asking in effect whether only Christians will be saved. It is one of the inclusivist filter questions where I



would expect an inclusivist to answer somewhat disagree or strongly disagree on the Likert scale. From right to left on the scale, three of the four chaplains at the right side of the continuum disagreed or strongly disagreed as one would expect of inclusivists of pluralists. The next three on the continuum, Pentecostal “B” and Baptists “A” and “B” agreed somewhat. The most inimical responses came from the three exclusivists who strongly agreed. Similar stronger reaction occurs in Question #10, another inclusivist filter question which expresses optimism for the salvation of those that practice another religion. The three exclusivists at the left of the continuum all disagreed strongly by comparison with the “indeterminate five” of whom three disagreed somewhat and two agreed somewhat. Despite the complexity with discerning the perspectives of those chaplains that lie in the middle area between the exclusivist and pluralist ends of the

spectrum, the idea of a continuum of distance from exclusivism as presented in Figure 2 seems tentatively helpful and borne out by the data collected in the interviews.

Altogether, the interviews painted a picture of chaplains in which their implicit theologies of religions cross the spectrum of understandings about the eternal destinies of those that do not have faith in Christ. Even more significantly than that, the implications of those understandings did not always seem fully developed or consistently applied; and among that group in the middle, the taints of inclusivist thinking emerge randomly.²⁵⁴

On a couple of other issues discussed in the interviews, nothing especially noteworthy emerged. We discussed church and state issues. As I have developed this project, background beliefs for church and state relations shaped many of the concepts which made it into the training brief. Chaplains expressed various degrees of comfort with religious or moral roles in governance and culture, but none that struck me as extreme or too far afield from my own position. We would at least have some common ground to start a conversation. The perspectives that the chaplains offered concerning church and state relations did not correspond to their theologies of religions in any noticeable way nor did I expect them to do so. Concerning rationales for facilitation, eight of the 10 had listed free exercise of religion as their dominant justification. The other two had reasons which at least ranked highly in my assessments of various rationales.²⁵⁵

I also asked about actual facilitation experiences for Neo-Pagans. Here, the fuller accounts by the chaplains offered more insights than the survey questions alone.

²⁵⁴ Whereas Figure 2 showed correspondence by interviewees with exclusivist filter questions, Figure 3 shows their responses to pluralist and inclusivist filter questions. The middle group does not hit the threshold on the majority of those filters, yet as the interviews revealed, inclusivist thinking intermittently infused their thought. The few filters that they did trigger would seem indicative of inclusivist currents.

²⁵⁵ See slide number #10 in the training brief, Appendix Nine.

Responses in the interviews did seem to correlate with theologies of religions. The more inclusivist chaplains described their experiences matter-of-factly; or focused upon the positive outcomes in terms of everyone feeling satisfied at the end. For more exclusivist chaplains, although the types of actions they performed in order to facilitate for Neo-Pagans were not different in kind overall from the other chaplains, their descriptions to me of the experiences included statements such as “I had to do it,” or “I felt concerned about those that joined their group,” or “I prayed for them privately.” They grasped the incongruity between what they did and their own convictions. The chaplains felt pulled in opposing directions by their support for two ideas, to both of which the chaplains felt commitments – the free exercise of religion and distress at idolatrous goddess worship. These resulted in facilitation which looked the same on the outside as the actions of any other chaplains, but with lingering feelings of anxiety about it on the inside.

In the survey, 25 out of 29 agreed that personal tension was normal and healthy in a pluralistic environment. Nine of the ten chaplains that were interviewed acknowledged feelings of personal tension at ministry. The exclusivist-leaning chaplains however expressed their personal tension in ways that seem similar to the tension as I have presented it – something that arises from the conviction that what the religious other does is spiritually harmful and from concern that the chaplain does not want to contribute to that harm.²⁵⁶ They made these and similar statements. “I have to treat everyone the same even though I wish that they would all come to Christ,” and “I never feel comfortable with the fact that someone is doing something which condemns him.” Strangely, the only chaplain out of ten that felt no tension leaned strongly toward exclusivism (Baptist A). The tension was simply was not there and the chaplain did not have any more to say

²⁵⁶ See p. 5.

about why that was the case. On the other hand, those further to the right on the continuum of Figure 2 spoke about their tensions differently from the way that exclusivists described it. One said tension arises when talking about religion with others because religion is a very personal thing. Another said the tension was inherent in work with those that were raised differently than the chaplain. Another feared working with intolerant people who might start “holy wars.” Non-exclusivists experienced tensions but those tensions appeared to reflect primarily interpersonal or social concerns rather than theological reasons.²⁵⁷

The interviews also allowed me to clarify some misunderstandings. For example, one chaplain with exclusivist leanings had agreed in the survey with the statement about optimism that those who know nothing of their faith may still be saved: However it turns out that the chaplain interpreted that not as optimism about other means of salvation than Christ, but that many people may yet be evangelized. Finally, the open-ended question at the end of the interviews concerning anything else they would like to add allowed me to see where the chaplains stood on things by virtue of what they wanted to talk about and areas from the interview or the survey that they felt they had to elaborate. This was the point in the interview where I frequently saw popular inclusivist ideas begin to emerge for some and exclusivist tensions emerge for others as they spoke less guardedly and more from their hearts.

The Evaluations of the Training Brief

At the beginning of the training brief, I told the attendees that I had hoped to elicit an evaluation from them at the end of the brief and that I looked for them to be very

²⁵⁷ This helped to explain my question about why both groups experienced tension. See p. 149.

honest about it. I repeated this plea for honest critique at the end when distributing the evaluation. The attendees that responded to my invitation obviously had some level of interest in the topic so one would expect them to be generally positive about it: Nevertheless, the evaluation responses were resoundingly upbeat even in lieu of my repeated exhortations to criticize the brief honestly. The result was very encouraging for my considerations about the outcome of the project.

Four LCMS Navy chaplains, four LCMS clergy, and 11 leaders from LCMS congregations attended. They did not identify themselves on their evaluations by name, but I did ask them to identify by group – chaplain, clergy, or laity. This background would help to interpret their responses. Although the project originally envisioned the sending of electronic versions of the brief to a wider pool of chaplains, that was never completed as the project had already grown unwieldy and the responses from the brief indicated that it really needed to be presented in person. Of the lay people that attended the brief in person, they were evenly mixed between men and women from three different congregations. They included mixed ages such as a senior congregational president as well as a couple of college students. The evaluations asked about content of the brief, effectiveness of the brief, and presentation of the brief.

Their evaluations about the content of the brief solidly reaffirmed my thoughts that this information offered utility for functioning in a pluralistic environment. I wanted to know if they understood my arguments, if they agreed, and if they found them helpful. On a five point scale asking the extent to which respondents agreed with my claim that religious facilitation for people of other religions carries both theological and personal tensions with it, all of them agreed and 16 of 19 agreed strongly. I also asked about the

“push-pull” concept for religious facilitation. Did it seem legitimate to them theologically, legally, ethically, and practically? A small number of the lay and clergy responses either did not answer or qualified their responses because they had difficulty projecting themselves into the shoes of a chaplain where they would actually do it: But overwhelmingly, people understood it and saw it as legitimate. The chaplain responses were especially encouraging. They responded “yes” across the board to questions of legitimacy and their additional comments reflected upon how helpful the concept was to them and how they would have appreciated even more elaboration of it.

A question in the evaluation concerned with content asked about the level of helpfulness that the attendees felt with the third segment of the brief, “Tips for Ministry in a Pluralist Setting.” Again, the responses encouragingly expressed high levels of helpfulness. The evaluation summarized the areas that were presented in that portion of the brief and asked them to identify both most helpful and least helpful parts. Responses seemed quite mixed. While one person may have thought that the discussion on religious experience was the most helpful, the next person may have found it to be the least helpful, and so on with the other areas. The exception was slide #30 on Encounters with Neo-Pagans. Almost a third considered that least helpful. Most of those noted that it was because they knew nothing about NPism or did not know anyone that practiced it. All but one of these were lay people. The sole chaplain that marked it as least helpful expressed to me that he marked it that way because it was too important of a topic to limit to only one slide. This contrasted significantly with those lay people who listed it as the least helpful part. There was a clear experiential gap between the chaplains who are

generally quite familiar with NPism, and the laity for whom it evidently seemed strange and distant. That is interesting but the brief was designed, after all, for the chaplains.

The second section of the evaluation sought to get at the effects of the brief. Attendees were asked four yes or no questions and an open-ended question where they could offer comments. Questions included whether they would reshape their approaches to chaplaincy and whether the material in the brief made them more confident about integrating their theology with ministry in pluralist settings. Here, the responses of the four chaplains interested me most. Two of them expressed appreciation for the “push-pull” concept and shared that it would help them approach issues of facilitation more intentionally. Two others noted that they had not changed any viewpoints but felt better reinforced about the ideas on facilitation that they already had. One of them noted how reassured he felt to discover that other exclusivists struggle with these issues.

The last portion of the evaluation had questions about the presentation of the brief. Was the length suited the material? 13 of 19 responses indicated “just right” (which some of them also wrote in the margin of this question) – three out of five on a five point scale from “too short” to “too long.” Every evaluation agreed that the Power Point® proved an effective medium although some thought that additional media could be embedded to embellish or illustrate things from the brief. Attendees were also asked how important it was to have the brief presented in person versus reading it on their own. 18 of 19 indicated that the brief needed to be presented in person.

Attendees offered various other comments about the presentation of the brief. Some became overwhelmed by the data at certain points, particularly the laity in attendance that were not familiar with it. A couple of people thought that the slides on

the blue background were hard to read. The best recommendations in this regard, written as additional comments by three people, were that the brief should also include hand-outs of the slides which would allow them to follow more easily.

The lanes of the MAP seemed to converge successfully in the training brief. This brief compiled a great deal of information and theological perspective into one place. Evaluations were overwhelmingly affirming yet offered some constructive comments. At multiple points, the feedback about the brief indicated a lack of background in something that I had addressed in only two minutes on a given slide. At multiple other points of the brief, evaluators expressed deep interest for more detail. Two lay persons thought that multiple classes on this topic would be interesting. My theory would be that if this brief was determined to have value for wider audiences as discussed in Chapter 6, expansion might make it more accessible to those who have less background in the subjects. A class or seminar would permit more detail and depth than the more modestly-sized 75 minute training brief. Now that the evaluations have effectively ruled out my earlier interest in sending the brief electronically, we know that it needs to be presented in person. Restriction of the brief to a succinct form is thus not necessary. Expansion offers some attractive possibilities.

Analysis of the Study

Much of the analysis of the data has already emerged in a previous sub-chapter on the findings of the research, but some integrative consideration of the study as a whole would be in order. How did the data match with the original hypothesis of the project? Did the research achieve its goals? How successfully did the project at large accomplish its intent?

To set the stage for any of these questions, the first thing to recall is the limitation of the research design. This was never intended to be a scientific study or to produce reliable statistical data about Navy chaplains and chaplaincy. Rather it started with the problem that I had observed in my 18 years as a Navy chaplain concerning the theological and personal tension of ministry in a religiously pluralistic environment, especially when it comes to the chaplain's role of religious facilitation for those who practice religions other than the chaplain's. The research was intended to gain an objective glimpse of whether and how closely chaplains experienced this problem beyond the world of my own personal knowledge. In that regard, the research has provided the picture that I sought even if it is not as finely pixilated or as broad in scope as I had hoped. It did not raise substantial doubts about my preliminary ideas. On the contrary, I feel it validated many of my observations, although perhaps without complete answers about the extent of the challenge.

The project looked at the challenge of expanding religious pluralism to Navy exclusivist chaplains; so does this expansion really present a challenge in the minds of those chaplains? The variable in the hypothesis of the research expected that a chaplain's theology of religions would function as the variable for the two tensions in pluralistic ministry examined by my project. For example, if a chaplain felt that all religions enjoyed equal validity and shared soteriological potential for all their adherents, then there is no theological tension about directly supporting someone's practice of another faith, and consequently no personal tension, or at least not a personal tension consequential to the theological problem. Conversely, if a chaplain is convinced that only one faith produces salvation, there is a theological problem to helping someone

practice the other faith and consequently a personal uneasiness to do so. As one of the lay members rephrased the problem for me in her evaluation form after the training brief, “what would a chaplain think to have helped a Marine worship a false god if that Marine died later the same day in combat?” So in order to examine the extent to which this hypothesis was true, the research sought to know the theologies of religions of the chaplains and then to ascertain their feelings about it and awareness of any tension. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, “the research component was developed in order to learn more about how chaplains facilitate, why they facilitate, and how they feel about it.”²⁵⁸ How much was learned from this?

The survey results were different for those three research inquiries. It pointed to compelling distinctions in the chaplains’ applications of matters related to “why” they facilitate; it revealed little difference in “how” they facilitate; and it reflected mixed results in “how they feel about it.” When it came to the rationale for religious facilitation, exclusivists pointed to the free exercise of religion as their compelling rationale for facilitating others at a rate only somewhat higher than other groups, but when their ideas about facilitation were cross-tabbed with other groups on several key questions, the difference between them became rather striking.²⁵⁹ As exclusivists applied their convictions about “why” they facilitate, my research variable correctly predicted their distinctiveness. When it came to the issue of “how” exclusivists facilitate however, the survey did not reveal much difference between the groups for the test case of Neo-Pagans.²⁶⁰ As far as an awareness of personal feelings of tension or “how they feel about it,” results appeared mixed. Both exclusivists and non-exclusivists overwhelmingly

²⁵⁸ See p. 142.

²⁵⁹ See pp. 146-48.

²⁶⁰ See pp. 148-49.

affirmed an inherent tension at ministry in a pluralistic environment. At the same time, exclusivists differed significantly from pluralists and inclusivists in acknowledging troubled consciences at facilitation for NPs even though exclusivists did not do so to the degree I expected.²⁶¹

The personal setting of the interviews brought additional fidelity to my research objectives. Whereas the survey did not reveal differences in “how” the chaplains facilitated, the exclusivists that were interviewed revealed clear personal tensions related to what they did. This contrasted with non-exclusivists who practiced facilitation with more pragmatic concerns. In fact, as the exclusivists talked about their facilitation practices and spilled into issues of their personal feelings about it, the interviews clarified the mixed results concerning personal tensions in pluralistic ministry.²⁶² More-exclusivist chaplains felt personal tensions that derived from theological concerns while less-exclusivist chaplains felt tensions that derived from practical interpersonal concerns. Despite the limited scope, the research seemed to affirm my convictions about the content for the product of the MAP. The goal of the project was to help exclusivist chaplains navigate Navy chaplaincy in religiously pluralist environments by strengthening their knowledge and confidence about how to do that.

Consequently, the training brief included a didactic presentation of the issues with which this MAP has wrestled in both its bibliographic and research dimensions. The first segment, the blue slides numbered 1-16, comprised the bulk of the brief. Considerable effort went into the meaning and implications of an exclusive commitment to the Gospel, into an explanation of the Navy requirements, and then marrying them up with insights

²⁶¹ See pp. 149-50.

²⁶² See pp. 158-60.

on the rationale for facilitation and a proposal on how to facilitate, namely the “push-pull” concept. This was designed to reinforce the chaplains’ capacity to function specifically as chaplains in the Navy in ways that are respectful, legal, and yet faithfully Christian. The three exclusivists that were interviewed revealed their awareness of the theological tension inherent in religious facilitation as well as the adjunct personal levels of tensions. In light of this, the need for these items in the brief still seemed acute after my consideration of the research.

The results were encouraging. The discussion of the evaluations from the training brief highlighted the largely positive reception that it enjoyed. Since the project was designed for exclusivist chaplains, their responses garnered most of my attention in assessing my goal for the project. According to comments by all four of them, the push-pull concept contributed to their deliberations about facilitation and they felt more confidence that they could practice it with integrity. Three of them expressed some kind of personal comfort to see a topic addressed thoughtfully that had troubled them. In fact, for one chaplain who received the training brief, an extreme sense of inner conflict emerged in a personal conversation that took place afterward.

That chaplain respectfully challenged my argument that a chaplain navigates the tensions by acting at times as the hand of Caesar. He saw ordained ministry as a calling that precluded activities which might be required of other actors in the kingdom of the left hand. For example, a commanding officer in his official capacity could formally support someone’s legitimation in worship of a false god but a clergyman may not. In fact, he had begun an ongoing conversation with a Wisconsin Synod pastor to explore more of the perspectives and reasoning of why that group rejects military chaplaincy.

The issues are serious enough for him to consider re-directing his life and changing his denominational affiliation. Although the brief did not resolve the concern for him, he expressed deep appreciation that it targeted the very issue with which he personally wrestled. The overwhelmingly affirmative evaluations of the training brief reinforced the conclusion that at least for those four chaplains who solidly represented the exclusivist end of the spectrum, the project effectively touched upon a genuine need.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Contributions to Ministry

This project sought to address the challenges of expanding religious pluralism for exclusivist Navy chaplains. So who might benefit from this project? The central target would include not only U. S. Navy chaplains who believe that salvation is particular to those that are in Christ, but especially those with a Lutheran doctrinal grid. The number from that perspective can appear quite small. There are less than 30 active duty Lutheran Navy chaplains from Lutheran denominations grounded in theological positions which are compatible with exclusivism. Yet the number belies the impact. Navy chaplaincy can often look like ministry on steroids. In most tours of my Navy career, I have done more outreach every month than I did in a year when I was a parish pastor. So each chaplain that will get to see the training brief exercises a ministry that significantly touches tens of thousands during the course of their career. For at least the four chaplains that attended the presentation of the brief, the positive comments in their evaluations were heartwarming. One suggested that the brief should be offered at one of the annual Lutheran Chaplain Conferences. If that happens, it would be shown to a much larger group of Lutheran military chaplains so I will raise this question with the conference organizer next year. What about benefits to wider audiences?

When it came to whether the brief could be shared electronically with the same effect as a personal presentation, the evaluations forms that I received all recommended that people hear the brief in person with only one exception. Although that seemed the optimal delivery method from the beginning, the solid recommendations for keeping it personal would seem to rule out widespread distribution. The targets for this

presentation then, are primarily exclusivist Lutheran Navy chaplains followed by exclusivist Navy chaplains of other denominations, and then exclusivist chaplains in other military branches.

Beyond that, the attendance of laity at the brief and their enthusiastic responses in the evaluations may indicate possible interest by wider audiences; but of course the less any group has in common with the target group, the less the training brief would seem relevant. They do, however, reflect the growing awareness among Christians that our American context is changing. Evaluations of the training brief by laity resonated least with the slide on outreach to Neo-Pagans, due for many to the fact that they did not know any Neo-Pagans.²⁶³ Yet most of the chaplains had facilitated for Neo-Pagans. So where the chaplains face pluralism in the front lines of ministry, others in the church that do not have the same opportunities to interact with broad swaths of society may share merely a growing awareness of its challenges. Issues of pluralism have import across the spectrum of the church's activity – worship, prayer, evangelism, cultural engagement, education, etc. So even when the training brief is divested of material that is specific to the Navy or chaplaincy, it still has much to say to those in the larger church who believe that faith in Christ is an uncompromising part of our Gospel.

Contributions to Personal and Professional Growth

This MAP culminates almost an entire career for me of grappling with issues of Navy chaplaincy and religious pluralism. No doubt the struggle will not end here. The process has forced me to evaluate and re-evaluate my practices as a Navy chaplain and adjust them along the way. Some of the things that have changed include the way I

²⁶³ See p. 162.

conduct mandatory religious needs assessments, the way I construct religious programs in the Navy, the ways that I relate to other military members in general and other chaplains in particular, the ways that I pray, and the ways that I share my faith. The MAP began based upon the need to help exclusivist Navy chaplains conduct theological reflection that will enable them to navigate their calling in ways that are respectful of others, legally sound according to regulations, yet faithfully and wholeheartedly true to their biblical and confessional commitments. The project has helped me to do this myself, and to do it more knowledgeably and confidently.

The benefit of this project for me has gone beyond the level of tactical ministry to strategic considerations about ministry. The project's training brief emphasized our responsibility to shape the institution and the culture along the lines of God-given distinctions and expectations for civil authorities. The understanding of it for which I argued has guided my own efforts to act as a catalyst for change. As an example, I had the opportunity to offer input for the re-write of a major Navy instruction for religious ministries. I submitted a carefully reasoned case grounded in some of the findings that appear in this MAP. The director of the committee working on the instruction sent word back that they had carefully weighed my comments and made the changes that I recommended. It was just one drop in the bucket, yet it was part of an ongoing effort to shape this organization through conversations, impressions, and yes, institutional products, toward the kind of organization functioning in the kingdom of the left hand that this MAP envisions. Now, as I assume positions of greater responsibility at the twilight of my career, I feel more confident about what is best for our country and our authorized personnel. Through persuasion and influence, I seek to slow the decay and move it in a

better direction, not haphazardly but with a more certain focus of where we need to go.

Professionally, I have benefited among Navy chaplains from the reputation and positive sentiment directed toward me because of this effort. It seems safe to say that some leaders in the Navy are interested in this work. At the very least, I have always enjoyed tremendous encouragement from the Navy to pursue further education. For this project, support has necessarily been informal rather than formal. Issues of religious pluralism loom large. Questions of religious accommodation emerge frequently, sometimes colliding with the military's very emphasis upon greater diversity which includes religious diversity. For example, can a Sikh be made to shave his beard? These are real challenges to the military services at the present time. In multiple conversations, other senior chaplains have expressed interest in my project; but there is a limiting factor upon official interest. The project is designed with a faith-specific audience in mind. It is not designed primarily for or to help the Navy or the Chaplain Corps. They cannot endorse something that takes a specific theological position, especially as strongly as I have expressed it in this MAP. At the same time, the project indirectly benefits the Navy Chaplain Corps if it enables exclusivist chaplains to find a way to practice Navy chaplaincy and "stay in the game." If one day chaplaincy faces a reconstruction of its central principles such that those with exclusivist understandings cannot participate, the Navy and the country will be poorer for it. Wherever I have an opportunity to share my conclusions from this multi-year project, I pray that it will contribute to shape the Chaplain Corps and its responses to future challenges.

Recommendations

If I were to begin this project again in light of what I have learned or if someone were to do additional research to build upon this humble effort, the path ahead would benefit from several lessons learned. They reflect some of the provisional conclusions based upon the research and the nature of the project itself.

Nature of the Research Conclusions

The project did not close the book on my questions. I believe the research offered helpful validation of most of my original ideas about the challenge of religious pluralism to Christian Navy chaplains; but I would have liked more certainty.

I have already noted intrinsic limitations with the project. I did not use a scientific sample. The original sample size was not optimal. On top of that, only 32 chaplains took the survey beyond the first page. That amounted to about 23.5% of the original pool. My expectations for a more robust response were perhaps not realistic given response rates for on-line surveys in general.

By virtue of the nature of the issues that stem from religious ministry in a government-controlled, religiously pluralistic environment, not to mention the long time that I have struggled with them, this MAP had a natural tendency to swell in size. Yet the key to accomplishment of a project depends upon keeping its scope at manageable levels. The guidance by my faculty advisor helped immeasurably with staying on target. He kept the early construction of the project in focus, especially in the shape given to the project as a whole and the relationships of the various parts to that whole. Still, for one aspect in particular, I fear that this MAP nearly grew out of hand for me.

The survey was intended to collect data about Navy chaplains, their facilitation practices, and their feelings about it. In retrospect, this one part of the project consumed more effort than everything else combined. As a return on investment of time and energy, it offered some confirmation of my assertions about chaplaincy, it produced some tentative insights, and suggested further questions; but it did not finally accomplish all that I expected of it. The survey was definitely a learning and growth opportunity. Struggling through the question development forced me to think deeply about the data that I wished to collect and what I wanted to measure. It also helped me to reflect upon the aspects of the various theologies of religions in terms of how they emerge and what they look like in the thinking of other chaplains. The process of obtaining approval from the Navy in order to conduct the survey enlarged my familiarity about research with human subjects.

Despite these benefits, the limited number of responses and the difficulty in distilling the inclusivist concepts proved challenging. If I were to do the MAP again, I would put less weight on the survey and more weight upon interviews. The survey could have been shortened. The interviews on the other hand, helped to focus the depiction of how theologies of religions were operative among the chaplains. I would try to conduct more interviews. 15 respondents to the survey expressed willingness to undergo an interview. One of those did not leave a name. Only 12 were in town by the time that I conducted the interviews and only 10 of the 12 were able to schedule an interview. A “re-do” of this MAP would have to struggle with how to find more people to interview. Yet that was where I felt more certainty about my conclusions. More interviews would have improved the “picture” created from the data.

Distillation of the theologies of religions among the chaplains also proved difficult with only 50% of respondents clearly fitting one of the three typologies based strictly upon the survey data. Frankly this is a difficult thing to ascertain. One cannot simply ask a person who may lack familiarity with the intricacies of the subject what their theology of religions happens to be. Nor can one describe the various categories and then ask respondents to self-identify with a category. As noted in both the bibliographic research and as I observed in some of my interviews, those with inclusivist ideas often sound like, and may even mean to present themselves more like exclusivists. Only careful questions can call attention to the fine points of difference and yet that highlights the glitch of the survey! What should be made of those that did not readily fit a category in spite of carefully crafted questions?

First, although I carefully developed the questions, the interviews revealed that they were still open to some misinterpretation by the respondents. One of the Pentecostal chaplains clearly fit the exclusivist category once I had a chance to interview that chaplain; but the same chaplain did not come up as one of my eight exclusivists in my analysis of the survey because the chaplain misunderstood one of my filter questions and answered it differently. So the questions needed further improvement.

Second, interviews also revealed that my decisions on which filter questions to use proved inadequate. My interview with the chaplain of Faith Group “A” unmistakably identified that chaplain as an inclusivist – in fact, the only one interviewed that understood it as such. Yet when I reviewed that chaplain’s responses to the three filter questions which I used to categorize inclusivists, only one matched. As I re-read that chaplain’s responses to other survey questions, the answers seemed consistent with

inclusivism, yet the set of filter questions I selected did not pick that up. Earlier in the process, it seemed that aggregation of responses to certain key questions would make it easy to delineate the chaplains; but especially for inclusivists, this now seems more complicated. A conclusion, which seems confirmed by the interviews, is that although filter questions were able to categorize certain respondents as inclusivists, not all inclusivists were identified by the filter questions.

Perhaps the most important lesson from the interviews which helps to explain why so many survey respondents did not fit a clear category is that theological positions appear less consistent for some. Whereas the survey did not offer obvious explanations for mixed responses, some of the interviews put some flesh on them. Chaplains closer to the center of the continuum in Figure 2 as opposed to those at the exclusivist and pluralist ends tended to define themselves in exclusivist terms yet tempered their explanations in various degrees with inclusivist ideas expressed in popular parlance. They often reflected theology which did not seem carefully worked out in its entailments. In the interviews with chaplains who did not match the filter questions for any of my three categories, popular expressions emerged such as “God is a God of love,” “we can’t judge who will be saved,” and “God just wants me to love people.” Such expressions arose most commonly when the chaplain seemed reluctant to be precise about the destiny of those who do not believe in Christ. It appeared to me that some of the chaplains had difficulty reconciling God’s character traits with the idea of eternal condemnation.²⁶⁴ This suggests inconsistent application of the whole of Christian doctrine. For example, one chaplain had strongly disagreed with the statement in the survey (Question #7) that “no religion is normative.” When asked about it in the interview, the chaplain expressly

²⁶⁴ The very topics discussed on pp. 63-65 seemed evident in the thinking of some of these chaplains.

confirmed that Christ is the only way to heaven and Christianity was the true religion. After a follow-on question about why this chaplain also agreed then with another statement (Question #10) that expressed optimism about salvation for those who practiced a different religion, the chaplain justified it on the basis of the popular expression that “when we get to heaven, we will all be surprised at who is there.” I do not mean to disparage the chaplains by suggesting inconsistency. These were intelligent, professional, and accomplished people; but their soteriological convictions seemed malleable to various streams of influences.

If I were repeating this research, I would seek to better understand and explore this apparent phenomenon of popular inclusivism. I understand this popular inclusivism to describe people who regard faith in Christ is normative for salvation yet tend to moderate issues related to the eternal destinies of those who do not hold this faith based upon some kind of popular assertion like the ones mentioned on the previous page. The five out of ten chaplains in the interviews who did not conclusively fit into one of the three typologies all seemed to understand themselves as staunchly biblical and Christian in every way yet they made statements that were incompatible with exclusivism.²⁶⁵ Perhaps a significant challenge stems from inclusivist “creep” among those who are self-professed Christians.

Nature of the Project

The most important part of the entire project was the brief. After all, the purpose of the research and the project as a whole was to help Christian Navy chaplains deal with expanding religious pluralism. As noted in the discussion on the evaluations of the brief,

²⁶⁵ The Anglican, who was the least exclusive of the “indeterminate five,” explicitly described himself as an exclusivist. See p. 155-56.

it seemed effective with a lot of helpful criticism about how to improve it, everything from the use of handouts to embedded media that would illustrate items in the brief. The slides were difficult for some people to read and the data was too diverse and too complex for at least the lay people. More personal illustrations were requested for the third section on practical ministry tips. All of those things would help to re-shape any future presentations that make with the brief. Depending upon the audience, some things, especially in the third section of the brief on practical tips for ministry in a pluralistic setting, would require more explanation and background. At a larger level however, I have thought about my basic premise that the issue was largely didactic. The overwhelming rejection of the use of this brief by electronic means caused me to wonder. Not only did 18 out of 19 people say that it needed to be presented in person, but several made comments at the end which reiterated their opinions that it needed to be in person. One commented on how the presentation came across as genuine and believable. Another loved my personal stories and illustration and wanted more of that. Several were very complimentary in other ways and it occurred to me that the issue is not strictly didactic. What I think made this work was the fact that I feel very passionate about it after so many years of study and wrestling with the subject. The issue flows from a commitment to the Gospel as the means whereby God has reached the lost. To those that share this conviction, the issue has a certain visceral appeal. This paper summarized the biblical and confessional arguments for exclusivism, but the brief just presupposed those things. Especially in the event that this would be offered in an extended format or to any audience beyond chaplains, that groundwork should be reviewed and re-emphasized.

The study of these issues and the efforts to improve both my own ministry and the culture in which I work will not stop here. This ministry of professional naval chaplaincy offers excitement, opportunity, and fulfillment. I have listened and grown to better understand the religious convictions of others. Yet the contrasting perspectives that I have encountered in this plural environment launched me deeper into a knowledge and appreciation for Scripture and the Lutheran theology of my own heritage. I have enjoyed the good fruit to see the Lord's hand move dramatically in the lives of others. Above all, more than ever before, I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes; first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

APPENDIX ONE

THE LAW AND THE CONSTITUTION APPLIED TO RELIGION

Some background in the complex area of religion and law helps the chaplain understand the de facto setting. There is a delta between a properly functioning state in accord with the implications I have emphasized for the two-kingdom doctrine and the current state of affairs in our country. The de facto situation requires a grasp of the context behind religion and its place in American jurisprudence. This summary and discussion informs the chaplain in his responsibility to shape the institution.²⁶⁶

In both volumes of his extensive treatment of religion and the Constitution, Kent Greenawalt states that the religion clauses of the first amendment cannot be reduced to a single value or set of formulas.²⁶⁷ He recommends approaching them from the bottom up, i.e. addressing them in their rich complexity and conflict over a range of values. Is that another way of saying that they can be confusing? It seems to me that Constitutional law concerning religion reflects its own casuistry, with multiple principles and doctrines interacting and changing over time. Precedents matter greatly but not decisively, and their accumulation across new courts and new cases modifies their effects. History plays a part but so do new contexts and developments.²⁶⁸ Principles and doctrines can be vague.²⁶⁹ Some judges write clearly and others less so; and of course, dissenting opinions leave one with the sense that the larger issues are never really settled for good. I

²⁶⁶ I have argued that the chaplain has this responsibility on pp. 10, 47, and slide #22 in Appendix Nine.

²⁶⁷ Kent Greenawalt, *Religion and the Constitution: Vol 1: Free Exercise and Fairness* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006) 1-10. Kent Greenawalt, *Religion and the Constitution Vol 2: Establishment and Fairness* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008) 1.

²⁶⁸ Greenawalt, *Vol 2*, 191.

²⁶⁹ Greenawalt, *Vol 1*, 15.

attempt here to interact with some of the broader concepts and then to dig a bit deeper with those that relate more narrowly to military chaplaincy.

Free Exercise

The two religion clauses of the first amendment provide the framework for matters of religion and the Constitution. “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” For the Free Exercise Clause, there seems to be a settled core of ideas. No one can force a profession of belief or specifically target a particular belief for discrimination.²⁷⁰ One is free to believe: But problems may arise from religious behavior and many conflicts occur from the secondary effects of religiously motivated conduct.

Someone cannot simply do whatever they want or get an exemption from whatever they choose by claiming free exercise of religion. To protect from fraudulent claims, it sometimes becomes necessary to inquire into the sincerity of belief. Determinations may also need to be made about whether something is actually religious or not (e.g. a conscientious objector to military service). The most difficult instances of free exercise issues arise from matters of accommodation.²⁷¹ These emerge when a burden upon someone’s religious exercise conflicts with a strong government interest. In one case, a law against the use of peyote was deemed to be incidental and not targeted at religion. Plaintiffs claimed that smoking it was part of the free exercise of their religion and felt discriminated against after they were fired and their unemployment compensation was denied; but the Supreme Court ruled that individual beliefs do not

²⁷⁰ Greenawalt gives the example of animal sacrifices by Santeria which were allowed when a municipal ordinance that prohibited them was struck down. *Church of Lukumi Babalu Awe v City of Hialeah* 508 U.S. 520 (1993) referenced at Greenawalt, *Vol 1*, 36.

²⁷¹ Greenawalt, *Vol 1*, 442.

excuse someone from compliance with otherwise valid laws.²⁷² Justice Scalia argued in that case that if the law is incidental to the religious claim, it does not violate free exercise; if it did, taxes would violate the free exercise of someone who believes it is a sin to support the government. Another type of claim for which the Supreme Court gives virtually no exemptions is something that involves a serious risk to life.²⁷³ When judging free exercise cases, the Court also has the difficult task of determining how stringent the burden of compliance is for the person who claims an exemption for free exercise. The court must avoid determining what is really important to the religion of the person with the burden, yet they must determine if the burden is “substantial.”²⁷⁴ If someone has a legitimate burden to their free exercise, the Court can still deny their claim for the sake of a significant interest by the government. In the peyote case, Justice Blackmun dissented that only a “compelling” government interest could justify a burden to free exercise and that the government imposed burden must be done in the least restrictive manner: But since his was not the majority opinion, it seems that compelling interest and least restrictive manner are hurdles, not show-stoppers.²⁷⁵ The rules seem complex to me but they do seem to bear out an important element of the way that the Free Exercise Clause is applied to religious accommodation in the Navy.

²⁷² Employment Division, Dept of Human Resources v. Smith, 494 U.S. 872 (1990).

²⁷³ E.g. A snake handling law in KY. The law specifically targeted a religious practice as did the municipal law against Santeria sacrifices which the Court struck down (footnote#33); but in the case of the law against snake handling, the Court upheld it. Greenawalt, *Vol I*, 41.

²⁷⁴ Substantial burden must be more than trivial but it need not be intolerable. Greenawalt, *Vol I*, 204-11.

²⁷⁵ Greenawalt, *Vol I*, 214.

Prohibiting the Establishment of Religion

The prohibition against establishment of religion has been linked to the free exercise of religion.²⁷⁶ It is argued that the government cannot allow any officially sanctioned religious elements in order to guarantee free exercise. The Establishment Clause has faced greater tests and been subject to more morphing in the last 65 years than in all of its prior history. In general, government cannot be responsible for anything that is reasonably understood as religious indoctrination. It can support religious organizations indirectly. If that were prohibited, it could not connect sewers to religious schools or provide police protection for a church! What it cannot do is fund or support something that is specifically religious. These seemingly simple rules disguise a complex and ever-changing universe of conflict about religion and law.

Separation of Church and State

With the landmark decision of *Everson v. The Board of Education*, the place of religion in our society began a dramatic shift. The case concerned tax money for busing children to Catholic schools. The Supreme Court judged that the support did not violate the First Amendment because busing was a general program for all students that did not handicap or favor religion. The precedent of the court's argument, however, marked a radical change in the way the Establishment Clause would unfold. The court argued that

The "establishment of religion" clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions or prefer one religion over another . . . In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect "a wall of separation between Church and State."²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ Greenawalt, *Vol 2*, 1.

²⁷⁷ *Everson v Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947).

Several things ensued from this explanation of the Establishment Clause. It extracted Jefferson's metaphor from his letter to the Danbury Baptists and made it the central thrust of the Clause. This separation seemed to require an active disestablishment in order to protect the wall. It created a tension between the idea of no aid to religion whatsoever and the idea of equal treatment.²⁷⁸ It applied the requirement to the states without considering reasons why this might be misguided.²⁷⁹ The unfolding of this doctrine for the next 25 years saw development of the concept of disestablishment and witnessed the removal from public schools of both prayer in *Engel v Vitale* (1962) and bible reading in *Abington School District v Schempp* (1963).

All nine justices in the *Everson* case embraced the idea of "Separation." Four Justices dissented but only because they felt that the decision did not go far enough in enacting a strict separation. The Justices grounded their conclusions in the intent of the founding fathers but they did not consider all of the fathers. Their evidences focused upon the views of Madison and Jefferson. In fact, Justice Rutledge, whose dissenting opinion argued vehemently for a stricter understanding of separation, had the "Memorial and Remonstrance," a tract by Madison in which he had argued for the removal of taxes to support the state church, added as an appendix to the court's decision. "Separation of Church and State" has become the most quoted phrase in the history of jurisprudence. In the convoluted history of the phrase, even many religious people have embraced it as the best model for religion in society.²⁸⁰ Yet I would agree with Philip Hamburger that

²⁷⁸ Greenawalt, *Vol 2*, 42.

²⁷⁹ Greenawalt, *Vol 2*, 41.

²⁸⁰ It has been described as a wall that separates a garden from the wilderness. Philip Hamburger, *The Separation of Church and State*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 29. Its religious advocates today (e.g. Barry Lynn of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State) defend it as the best model because it protects religion from the encroachment of the state.

separation of church and state diminishes religious freedom, becomes a tool for some to impose a particular view of American society upon others, and has dumbed down the popular appreciation of more carefully measured positions about the relationship of religion to the state.²⁸¹ It also strikes me that in its popular form, it stands at a harmful distance from the position for which I argued concerning the kingdom of the left hand.²⁸² Although the doctrine has not retained the same place and shape that it had at its high water mark in the early-70's, it is still a prominent lens in the court's examinations of religious questions.

Neutrality

The Supreme Court has undergone something of a shift. A bit of a backlash against strict separationism shaped a move in the court toward a doctrine known as neutrality.²⁸³ Stephen Monsma explains

In simplest terms, it is based on the premise that there is neither a constitutional nor a fairness problem in government recognizing, accommodating, or even in some degree aiding religion, as long as religion is being recognized, accommodated, or aided in the same manner as similar, but non-religious, entities. Religion is being treated equally or neutrally.²⁸⁴

Former Chief Justice Rehnquist and Justices Scalia and Thomas seem to be the names associated with this view. This seems to me to be, at least, a step in a better direction. It liberates us from separationism which functions as a kind of prophylaxis of the government from religion. Instead, it opens the door to equal access by religious

²⁸¹ Hamburger, 479-89.

²⁸² I think that a government which tries to pretend that God is an irrelevant topic for its concern is potentially worse than one which promotes a false view of God.

²⁸³ Ira C. Lupu and Robert Tuttle, "The Distinctive Place of Religious Entities in Our Constitutional Order," *Villanova Law Review* Vol. 47, No. 1, (2002): 69.

²⁸⁴ Stephen Monsma, ed. "Introduction," in *Church-State Relations in Crisis: Debating Neutrality*, (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 1.

organizations with non-religious organizations. In matters of free exercise, neutrality contributes to the capacity of the government to reject ridiculous claims to favorable treatment such as the *Employment Division v. Smith* case where the court confirmed the state's right not to exempt religious use of peyote. Neutrality opens the door for government to recognize the value that religious life offers to public society.²⁸⁵ Cases concerning religion and the state now incorporate various doctrines including this most recent view of neutrality along with separation, the now no-longer-adequate "Lemon test,"²⁸⁶ the endorsement test, the coercion test, etc. into decisions about Establishment.²⁸⁷ One wonders if anybody is really happy with the results.

Originalism

As I examined this topic, one issue struck me as an enormous factor in how society will eventually function in the kingdom of the left hand. It is the question over originalism versus non-originalism. When the Court interprets the Constitution, just how should they decide upon the meaning that makes up an interpretation? It is here that Constitutional law seems to share a basic problem that has developed in the realm of literature in general and one which particularly concerns us as Christian theologians when we interpret the Bible. It is the matter of hermeneutics! Without delving too far into this expansive field, I simply begin with my baseline perspective that the words of a text are the conveyors of a meaning which is in the mind of the author. A faithful interpreter is

²⁸⁵ Charitable Choice, the predecessor of George W. Bush's Faith-Based Initiative, enabled religious entities to participate as funded actors in certain federal welfare programs. Though Lupu and Tuttle are wary of religious transformation for governmental ends, it seems to me that a public recognition of the essential contribution by religion to a better society is just what we need. Lupu and Tuttle, "The Distinctive Place of Religious Entities in Our Constitutional Order," 85.

²⁸⁶ The "Lemon Test" says that in order for a government action to not be an establishment of religion, it must 1) have a secular purpose, 2) have a primary effect which neither hinders nor advances religion, 3) involve no excessive entanglement with religion.

²⁸⁷ Greenawalt, *Vol.2*, 40-52.

one who seeks to understand the intention of the author which is why this view is sometimes called “intentionalism.” The biblical text should not be examined as though the words take on an evocative meaning of their own, distinct from the person that employed them; nor can one do accurate or faithful exegesis if one approaches the text with the idea that the meaning changes over time or across circumstances or resides in the interpretive community. The author’s meaning is the normative meaning and all interpretive methods must be employed to get at this as it is expressed in the words of the text. In the field of Constitutional Law, this approach seems to be the same as what is described by the term “originalism.” Though Justices such as Scalia and Thomas have argued for a return to this approach, when non-originalism enjoys such respectability the courts certainly may seek to subsume more power to themselves and unfortunately innovate future understandings of the law.

Greenawalt, whose broad and profound volumes on *Religion and the Constitution* earn my highest respect, nevertheless rejects the originalist understanding.²⁸⁸ It shapes his approach and comments throughout the book. In constitutional law as in biblical interpretation, one might expect differences of interpretation between various parties which would need to be hammered out, but when opposing sides are not even playing the game by the same rules, it is no wonder that chaos results and the unthinkable becomes possible. Although this country has never perfectly exemplified the position for which I argue as the best expression of the kingdom of the left hand, when I read statements in historical documents such as Washington’s Farewell Address, the earlier years of our

²⁸⁸ Greenawalt, *Vol. I*, 11.

nation seemed closer to that ideal in some respects than today.²⁸⁹ An originalist orientation necessarily asks what the Founders meant when they penned the words of the Establishment Clause – not what it must mean for us today or what it has come to mean over time.

Federalism, Jurisdiction, and the Establishment Clause

The struggles over the Constitution reflected a basic conflict between the need for a stronger federal government than that contained in the Articles of Confederation and the fear of a federal government that would grow too strong and impose itself. The Bill of Rights was written to acquire the support of the anti-federalists by protecting state authority from impingement by the federal government.²⁹⁰ The federalist argument over the Establishment Clause, then, makes the case that it was not a matter of expunging all religious concern from anything governmental but a matter of jurisdiction in religious establishment. This position affirms in a powerful way then that the Establishment Clause meant nothing like the wall of separation that many today often understand it to construct.

The arguments are both textual and historical. When it states that “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion,” the most important thing to note is that as it is stated there, the only entity that can violate the Establishment Clause is Congress! When the Bill of Rights was enacted, seven states had official state-recognized churches. It is hard to imagine that the representatives of those states were

²⁸⁹ “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports . . . and let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.” Washington’s Farewell Address of Sept 19, 1796. Taken from William J. Federer, *America’s God and Country: Encyclopedia of Quotations* (St Louis: Amerisearch Inc. 2000), 661.

²⁹⁰ Greenawalt, *Vol.2*, 28-29.

voting for disestablishment of all government support of religion. States were free to establish religion as they saw fit. A look at the process of determining the exact wording of the Clause bears this out. Madison's wording of the Clause went through seven revisions before the final phrase was adopted. One of these included the words "nor shall any national religion be established." This reveals that the concern was about a national church such as the Church of England, not about disconnecting religion from government. Moreover, within days of passing the Bill of Rights, the same body that ratified them voted to appoint chaplains and pay them from the federal treasury. They voted for tax exemptions for churches, a day of thanksgiving to God, and they appropriated funds to support Christian mission work in federal territories.²⁹¹ These facts can hardly be construed as an effort to make sure that the government does not favor religion.

Greenawalt fairly presents the federalist arguments but he does not accept them. With express humility and deference to his vast knowledge and intellect, I cannot agree with his reasoning. He argues that if the Establishment Clause were a matter of jurisdiction between the federal government and the states, then the Congress would have legislated its own domains (federal territories, District of Columbia, etc.) in a way that established religion. To govern them in a way that is less than what its members would have understood as establishment of religion supports the view that disestablishment was in their minds with the First Amendment according to Greenawalt.²⁹² It seems to me that this argument expects too much. If Congress had established religion in its own domains, it would have decisively proved that they did not intend disestablishment; but the

²⁹¹ Ibid, 30-31.

²⁹² Ibid, 30.

opposite is not true. The positive support that they gave for religion in their own domains may not have extended to formal establishment of a church, but seemed entirely favorable to a religious role for government. This is hardly disestablishment.²⁹³ Steven Smith explains that the Founders held quite similar views about the importance of religion to a healthy political order, but they held different views about whether the government should support it or make it voluntary. So which principle did the ratifiers of the religion clauses adopt? “. . . The most accurate answer is none.”²⁹⁴ They left it to the states and this requires us to accept a jurisdictional understanding of the Establishment Clause.

Since he rejects an originalist view of interpretation, the historical arguments are not compelling for Greenawalt. He admits that the Supreme Court’s treatment of the Establishment Clause cannot be justified on originalist grounds; but he tries to salvage some foothold in our intuitive realization that meaning cannot become whatever we want it to be. He unpersuasively rationalizes that the Supreme Court’s latitude with the Clause is “not distinctly unfaithful.”²⁹⁵ I am left then, with frustration at Greenawalt’s view and with the overall trajectory of the Supreme Court; but one more factor in their thinking must be addressed.

The Equal Protection Clause

Even if the Founders meant something different by the Establishment Clause than what it has come to mean today, one must reckon with the Fourteenth Amendment of 1868 which extended the federal protections of citizenship to include protection from the

²⁹³ And Greenawalt is obliged to argue that the concept of disestablishment developed over time. Ibid, 43.

²⁹⁴ Steven Smith, *Foreordained Failure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 21.

²⁹⁵ Greenawalt, *Vol.2*, 39.

states.²⁹⁶ What came to be known as the Equal Protection Clause sought to guard individuals from having states and local governments violate the freedoms that are guaranteed by the Constitution. Greenawalt implies that the Fourteenth Amendment renders the originalist's arguments about the Founder's intent in the First Amendment moot.

So what did those who passed the Fourteenth Amendment understand it to say about establishment of religion? The contexts surrounding the Fourteenth Amendment reveal that its ratifiers did not think or intend much about the Establishment Clause at all. It extended the full rights of citizens principally to protect people from Jim Crow laws during Reconstruction. Since the debates of the time had more to do with voting, apportionment, property, whom is intended by "citizen," etc, it seems unlikely that establishment of religion figured prominently in their thinking: But we do have the benefit of another historical matter from that era to shed light on this question.

In 1876, just a few years after passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, a proposed amendment to the Constitution known as the Blaine Amendment passed the U.S. House of Representatives but failed to pass in the Senate.²⁹⁷ It had language similar to the Religion Clause except that it substituted the word "State" for "Congress." "No state shall make any law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." It also went on to prohibit use of federal funds for religious schools. The Amendment stemmed from anti-Catholic concerns, but the important thing to note is that by prohibiting states from establishing religion, it would have been a very specific redundancy to the Fourteenth Amendment if, in fact, the Fourteenth Amendment had

²⁹⁶ Greenawalt, *Vol.1*, 11-14.

²⁹⁷ Greenawalt, *Vol.2*, 37-38.

already done that. The most obvious conclusion is that the people of that era did not understand the Fourteenth Amendment to prohibit establishment by states. Greenawalt argues that this is not the case. He notes that the last official state support of an established church had been ended in 1833 in Massachusetts.²⁹⁸ Undoubtedly, few people by that time would want an establishment of a state church but what of it? At the founding, seven states had state religions but six did not. What if none did? The point is that the decision-making and relationship between state and religion lies with the states. They can all establish or they may all choose to disestablish, but in the aftermath of Everson, the dramatically more narrow view of the Constitution came to be that they must not establish.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 36.

APPENDIX TWO

SAMPLE PUBLIC PRAYER

This prayer for a pluralistic audience was designed to be winsome, effective, faithful to moral truth accessible to all, intended to promote external righteousness in the kingdom of the left hand, and yet be pre-evangelistic.

(Broadcast during “Evening Prayer” over the entire ship to 2000 people on the mid-point in an overseas deployment)

Almighty God,

Today marks a milestone of stupendous proportion
It resounds through the ship without barely a distortion.
I never thought we would get to this place
But we’ve made it at last and it now is the case.
The deployment has come to this noted occasion
The end’s closer than ever, in my personal persuasion.
This waypoint in our deployment, Lord, I guess now that you’ve heard,
Today someone on board, uttered the one-millionth dirty word.

Our conversations are in need of a damage control alert,
As our language is laced with just more and more dirt.
It’s a race at full throttle, with an unabashed temerity,
To see who can spew forth the most frequent vulgarity.
The Marines lead the pack, but ship’s company’s a close second,
And the attachments and the riders, they too must be reckoned.
Almost every compartment on this ship has grown rank,
As one enters and hears nothing but blankety, blank, blank.
It’s been more than just the occasional “now and then,”
And some of the women are worse than the men.
There was one the other day with her mouth in the sewer,
Thank God that her children weren’t standing there to view her.

I love all of my shipmates Lord, you know that it’s true,
But sometimes I just don’t know what else to do.
And the thought that keeps fueling most of my fears?
That when I pray blessings, you’ve your hands o’er your ears!
So awaken our conscience when our words are foul deeds,
And do not forsake us so this mission succeeds.
Belov’d guardians of our country, these warriors on ships-
Oh help us dear Lord, to set a guard on our lips. Amen.

APPENDIX THREE

CITI – HUMAN RESEARCH CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT

Completion Report

Page 1 of 1

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Human Research Curriculum Completion Report Printed on 12/13/2011

Learner: Timothy Oswald (username: oswaltj61)
Institution: Department of The Navy
Contact Information: 7958 Blandy Rd
Norfolk, VA 23551-2494
Department: N00C
Phone: 757 836-1205
Email: timothy.oswald@navy.mil

Investigators and Key Research Personnel - SBR:

Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 12/13/11 (Ref # 7142839)

| Required Modules | Date Completed | Score |
|--|----------------|------------|
| Avoiding Group Harms: U.S. Research Perspectives | 12/12/11 | 3/3 (100%) |
| Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction | 12/12/11 | 3/3 (100%) |
| Department of The Navy Introduction | 12/12/11 | no quiz |
| History and Ethical Principles - SBR | 12/12/11 | 4/4 (100%) |
| Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR | 12/12/11 | 5/5 (100%) |
| The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR | 12/12/11 | 4/5 (80%) |
| Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR | 12/13/11 | 5/5 (100%) |
| Informed Consent - SBR | 12/13/11 | 5/5 (100%) |
| Privacy and Confidentiality - SBR | 12/13/11 | 5/5 (100%) |
| Records-Based Research | 12/13/11 | 1/2 (50%) |
| Research With Protected Populations - Vulnerable Subjects: An Overview | 12/13/11 | 4/4 (100%) |
| Internet Research - SBR | 12/13/11 | 4/4 (100%) |
| Hot Topics | 12/13/11 | no quiz |
| Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects | 12/13/11 | 3/5 (60%) |
| Department of the Navy HRPP Module | 12/13/11 | no quiz |
| Department of The Navy - Information and References | 12/13/11 | no quiz |

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Course Coordinator

[Return](#)

APPENDIX FOUR

TEXT OF LEGAL GUIDANCE FOR MAP SURVEY BY TRACY RIKER, CAPTAIN, JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL CORPS, USN

Chaplain Oswald,

You indicated that you want to administer a survey to local Chaplains ISO research you are conducting in support of a paper you are writing for your post-graduate degree. The subject of your paper is "Challenges of expanding religious pluralism for Navy Chaplains." It is my understanding that you have gained permission from the Chief of Chaplains to conduct the survey but that they advised you to also obtain legal guidance in the administration of the survey.

The following rules and limitations should be considered before you proceed:

1. Employees shall not use or permit to be used their Government position or title or authority associated with their public office in a manner that could reasonably be construed to imply that the government sanctions or endorses their personal activities. Therefore, any request for information that you are seeking should clearly state that this information is being solicited for personal reasons and the survey is not endorsed or supported by the DON and DOD.
2. You cannot encourage, direct, coerce, or request a subordinate to use official time to perform activities other than those required in the performance of official duties or authorized in accordance with law or regulation. You should refrain from using your official title or position. You may state your military rank and branch of service, but that is it. This is essential in order to remove any perception that Submarine Force Atlantic, DON or DOD are positively endorsing this survey or mandating people participate. Similarly, you, as the Submarine Force Chaplain cannot create the perception that you are ordering your subordinates to participate. Accordingly, you should use your personal email account --not your navy.mil account -- when you communicate with the other Chaplains and you should make it clear that participation in the survey is purely voluntary and if they chose to participate, they do so within their personal capacities.
3. Limited use of the Navy's computer systems and other government resources are permissible as long as the use does not adversely affect official duty performance, adversely reflect on the DOD (i.e., pornography, chain email, unofficial advertising, selling via email and other uses incompatible with public service), is of reasonable duration and frequency and occurs only during personal time, and serves a legitimate public purpose (i.e., developing professional skills). Additionally, the use could not reasonably be expected to cause congestion, delay or disruption of the government's services. Accordingly, if you are contacting them via their navy.mil addresses because

those are the only email addresses you have, I think that's ok for the initial contact ONLY. Once you contact them to tell them that you are doing this, I recommend you ask them to respond to you via their personal email accounts --directly to your personal email account. Then, you can administer and conduct the survey and any additional communications with them via personal email accounts; thus, effectively removing all business from the government's communication systems. Remember, the contact should be minimal to avoid the appearance that they are being bothered at work. If they want to participate, then they can do so in their personal capacities, via personal email accounts, on personal time.

4. For your paper. If you choose to use your military rank and branch of service, then you should indicate that the views in the paper are yours and not DOD or its components. If you use a disclaimer, it should be prominently printed in the presentation.

5. You cannot use your public office for private gain. If you are expected to gain financially from this venture please advise. My guidance is likely to change.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions and thanks so much for giving me an opportunity to provide you some guidance on this project.

Vr/
JAG

APPENDIX FIVE

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM - PERMISSION FOR THE MAP SURVEY

Part 4

D. DON HRPP Endorsement:

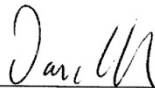
The Department of the Navy Human Research Protection Program (DON HRPP) has reviewed and, on behalf of the Surgeon General, concurs with this Individual Investigator Agreement between Navy Personnel Research, Studies, and Technology (NPRST) and CDR Timothy J. Oswald.

This Agreement applies to single research protocol "Christian Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Expanding Religious Pluralism".

Tracking Number Assigned: DoD-N40038-IIA-0306

Assurance Expiration: 30 January 2013

IIA Expiration: At completion of research protocol listed or upon expiration of Assurance date above, if Assurance is not renewed.



D. L. McKay, CDR, MSC, USN
Acting Director, Department of the Navy
Human Research Protection Program

13 January 2012

**Department of Defense
Human Research Protection Program**

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) INDIVIDUAL INVESTIGATOR AGREEMENT

**Part 1
AGREEMENT INFORMATION**

This DoD Individual Investigator Agreement describes the responsibilities of the individual researcher who is engaged in human subject research, not an employee of the assured institution, and is associated with the assured institution for the purpose of conducting research. This Agreement also describes the responsibilities of the assured institution. This Agreement, when signed, becomes part of the engaged institution's Federal Assurance for the Protection of Human Research Subjects approved by DoD (and may become part of the Federalwide Assurance (FWA) approved by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)).

A. Name of Investigator: Timothy J. Oswald, CDR, CHC, USN

B. Institution with the Assurance

Name: Navy Personnel Research, Studies, and Technology (NPRST)

DoD Assurance Number: DoD N-40038

DHHS FWA Number [if applicable]:

Assurance Expiration Date: 30 January 2013

C. Scope

This Agreement applies to all research performed by this investigator in collaboration with the institution with the assurance, unless specified below.

This Agreement is applicable only to the research listed in this Agreement and does not apply to other research in which the investigator may be involved. (*"Christian Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Expanding Religious Pluralism"* Major Applied Project for the Doctor of Ministry Degree at Concordia Theological Seminary, St Louis, MO.)

D. Effective Date

This Agreement is effective as of the date signed by the DoD Component Designated Official, and expires at the conclusion of the research defined in Part 1C or on the date listed in the DoD approval document.

Part 2
INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

As the Investigator named in Part 1A above I:

- A. Have reviewed: a) *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*; b) the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) regulations for the protection of human subjects at 32 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 219 (32 CFR 219) and DoD Directive 3216.02; c) the assurance of the institution referenced above; d) the DoD Component policies identified in Part 3 of the DoD Assurance (if applicable); and e) the relevant institutional policies and procedures for the protection of human subjects.
- B. Understand and accept the responsibility to comply with the standards and requirements stipulated in the above documents and to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in research conducted under this Agreement.
- C. Will comply with all other applicable federal, DoD, international, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies that provide protections for human subjects participating in research conducted under this Agreement.
- D. Will complete any education and training required by the institution and the Institutional Review Board(s) (IRB) prior to initiating research covered under this Agreement (attach documentation).
- E. Will abide by all determinations of the IRB designated under the institution's assurance and will accept the final authority and decisions of the IRB, including but not limited to directives to terminate my participation in designated research activities.
- F. Will not enroll subjects or engage in research activities under this Agreement prior to the protocol review and approval by the IRB and the institution.
- G. Will comply with requirements from the IRB when responsible for enrolling subjects, to include obtaining, documenting, and maintaining records of informed consent for each such subject or each subject's legally authorized representative as required under DoD regulations at 32 CFR 219.
- H. Acknowledge and agree to cooperate with the IRB for initial and continuing review, report for the research referenced above, and provide all information requested by the IRB or institution in a timely fashion.
- I. Will seek prior IRB review and approval for all proposed changes in the research except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects or others.
- J. Will report immediately to the IRB: a) unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others and b) serious or continuing non-compliance.

K. Will comply with recordkeeping requirements for research protocols referenced above.

L. Will make all other notifications as specified by the IRB and the institution.

M. Acknowledge my primary responsibility for safeguarding the rights and welfare of each research subject, and that the subject's rights and welfare will take precedence over the goals and requirements of the research.

Part 3
ASSURED INSTITUTION'S RESPONSIBILITIES

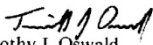
This institution will apply the terms of its assurance to the Investigator and the research as specified in the Scope of this Agreement, Part 1.

Part 4
AGREEMENT BETWEEN AN INVESTIGATOR AND AN ASSURED INSTITUTION

The investigator, the investigator's employer, or an official of the assured institution may unilaterally terminate this agreement upon written notification to other signatories.

A. Investigator

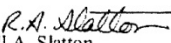
I understand my responsibilities as described in this Agreement and the policies referenced in Part 2A above. I acknowledge and accept my responsibility for protecting the rights and welfare of human research subjects and for complying with all applicable provisions of the institution's assurance.

Signature: 
Name: Timothy J. Oswald
Rank/Grade: Commander
Title: Force Chaplain, COMSUBLANT
Mailing Address: 7958 Blandy Road
Norfolk, VA 23511-2494

Date: 12 JAN 2012
Telephone number: 757 836.1205
FAX number: 757 836.1329
Email address: timothy.oswald@navy.mil

B. Acknowledgement by Investigator's Employer (or DoD Supervisor if DoD Employee)

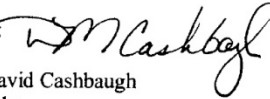
I am aware that my employee is entering into this agreement.

Signature: 
Name: Russell A. Slatton
Rank/Grade: LT
Title: Flag Secretary
Mailing Address: 7958 Blandy Road
Norfolk, VA 23551-2494

Date: 12 JAN 2012
Telephone number: 757 836.1320
FAX number:
Email address: russell.slatton@navy.mil

C. Institutional Official of the Assured Institution

Acting in an authorized capacity on behalf of this institution and with an understanding of the institution's responsibilities under the institution's assurance, I will provide oversight of the Investigator and the research conducted under this Agreement.

Signature: 

Date: 1/11/12

Name: David Cashbaugh

Rank/Grade:

Title: Director, NPRST

Mailing Address: 5720 Integrity Drive
Millington, TN 38055-1000

Telephone number: 901 874.2285

FAX number: 901 874.2720

Email address: david.cashbaugh@navy.mil

APPENDIX SIX

TEXT OF EMAIL WITH SURVEY LINK SENT TO SUBJECT CHAPLAINS

Dear Colleagues in Navy Chaplain Ministry,

I would like to ask you to assist me by taking a short survey. This is part of my requirement for a Doctor of Ministry Degree. It would probably take 10-15 minutes of your time.

My Major Applied Project for the Doctor of Ministry Degree will examine the challenges that expanding religious pluralism present to Navy Chaplains who must facilitate for people of other religions.

So my goals with the questions are to determine: 1) Certain theological positions; 2) your actual facilitation practices for a faith group that is likely to be very different from your own, in this case, Neo-Pagans; 3) your rationales for religious facilitation; and 4) how you feel about it. The end product of my project will be a brief designed to help Chaplains of certain theological persuasions in the tasks of facilitation.

-This is entirely voluntary! Taking the survey has no impact upon your career, position, or reputation!!!!!!

-The survey is not connected with DOD, DON, or CHC.

-If this came to your government email address, it is because I did not have a personal email address for you. My JAG's opinion was that I could contact you here initially, but I ask that you forward the survey link to a personal computer and take the survey there.

-I ask that you not expend government time or resources on the survey other than to send it to your personal computer.

-Clicking on the link constitutes your consent to participate but you may decline to answer any or all questions as you wish.

-Please do not share the link with others.

-No product of this survey will connect your responses with any personally identifiable information.

-You have the option to give me your name and contact info at the end of the survey if you are willing to engage in some follow-up questions or would like to examine my conclusions about religious facilitation.

-The statistical results of the survey will be made available to you if you wish.

-Click the link to begin the survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NKK2T9Y>

Thank you and have a blessed day.

Tim Oswald

APPENDIX SEVEN

PRIVACY STATEMENT, SURVEY EXPLANATORY NOTES, SURVEY QUESTIONS, AND SURVEY RESPONSES

(With the exception of the responses noted in grey, everything included in this appendix was part of what the chaplains saw when they opened the survey link.)

PRIVACY STATEMENT

This survey does not collect or maintain personally identifiable information and is therefore not subject to the provisions of the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this survey is to collect data related to practices and opinions of Chaplains in the Navy.

ROUTINE USES: The information provided in this questionnaire will be analyzed by CDR Timothy Oswald. The data files will be maintained by him.

ANONYMITY: All responses will be held in confidence by CDR Oswald. Information you provide will be considered only when statistically summarized with the responses of others, and will not be attributable to any single individual. Open ended questions will not be released without identifiers being removed.

PARTICIPATION: Completion of this questionnaire is entirely voluntary. Failure to respond to any of the questions will NOT result in any penalties except possible lack of representation of your views in the final results and outcomes.

Demographics

- 1) Rank? **LTjg - 1 LT - 11 LCDR - 12 CDR - 7 CAPT - 2**
- 2) Time in service (as a chaplain)? **12.3 years avg**
- 3) Male or female? **Males – 30 Females – 3**
- 4) Faith Group? **17 different faith groups represented by the respondents**

Theology of Religions

These questions are intended to understand the relationship that you see between your religion and other religions (your Theology of Religions).

5) All religions promote the same basic teachings.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 17 | 6 | 0 | 7 | 2 |

6) Ultimate religious reality is beyond what can be expressed by any actual religious tradition.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 13 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 6 |

7) No religion is normative and objectively superior to other religions.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 20 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 4 |

8) The primary goal of all religions is to make ethically better people.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 15 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 3 |

9) The desired end-state of my religion (salvation, ethical transformation, liberation, enlightenment, etc.) will only be reached by those that adhere to what my religion prescribes.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 4 | 8 | 0 | 6 | 14 |

10) I am optimistic that those who do not know anything of my religion or who practice another religion are still likely to reach the desired end-state that my religion teaches (salvation, etc.).

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 13 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 4 |

11) Other religions can be valid means to reach the desired end-state that my religion teaches (salvation, etc.).

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 16 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 |

12) Other religions may have value, but they are ultimately wrong about the most essential thing.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 2 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 15 |

13) The important thing about religion is that a person finds the one that is the right for them.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 19 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 6 |

14) We share our religion with others because those who do not embrace its core cannot reach the end-state.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 2 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 12 |

15) I wish that everyone would follow my religion.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 2 | 1 | 1 | 12 | 15 |

16) My views about the essential validity or invalidity of other religions match the views of my endorsing body.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 1 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 18 |

Religious Facilitation

These questions are intended to examine rationales for religious facilitation. Why would you be willing to help someone practice a different religion than your religion? Do not answer based upon whether you think the reason is a good one, legally valid, etc. Answer honestly based on the reasons that motivate you personally.

17) It is part of the job. I may or may not like it but it has to be done.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 3 | 8 | 1 | 9 | 8 |

18) It is only fair. If I want other chaplains to facilitate for my people, I must facilitate for theirs.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 0 | 2 | 2 | 12 | 13 |

19) It is the price I have to pay to do my ministry in the institution. It enables my access to Navy chaplaincy.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 1 | 6 | 1 | 13 | 8 |

20) God called me to do Navy chaplaincy so it must be alright with God.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 3 | 11 | 2 | 4 | 9 |

21) It is necessary to do this well in order to get good FITREPs & further opportunities for promotion.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 10 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 3 |

22) It is required by our instructions.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 2 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 17 |

23) I support each person's right to free exercise of religion, even if I think it is wrong.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 26 |

24) Their religion is just as valid as mine.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 12 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 3 |

25) It is the price I have to pay to get opportunities with other individuals. It enables my access to the unaffiliated.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 3 | 9 | 1 | 13 | 3 |

26) It strengthens my reputation in the Chaplain Corps.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 7 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 4 |

27) RELMIN is the CO's program so I am only doing it on his/her behalf.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 7 | 12 | 2 | 6 | 2 |

28) Each person must find their own spiritual path & I merely support them in this.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 6 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 7 |

29) Other [Fill in the blank]

Eight chaplains answered question #29. Four reiterated or clarified options already offered. One response hinted at a reason based upon a different definition of religion but did not explain this. The three others offered theological reasons. ". . . God created us with free will. . ."; ". . . God expects me to respect the faith of another."; "I support people finding their own faith since faith cannot be compelled."

30) Of the various reasons for facilitating someone of a different religion, which is personally most compelling to you? (Circle one)

| | | | |
|----------------------|----|-------------------------------|---|
| Comes with the job | 3 | Validity of other religions | 1 |
| Fair | 1 | Access to individuals | 0 |
| Access to chaplaincy | 0 | Reputation | 0 |
| Called by God | 2 | CO's program | 0 |
| Promotion | 0 | To support the service member | 2 |
| Follow Instructions | 0 | Other | 6 |
| Free Exercise | 14 | | |

Facilitation Practices

Answer questions in this section with reference to religious facilitation for any Neo-Pagan individuals or groups. Neo-Pagan as used here encompasses a broad base of practices among any followers of earth-based religions, ancient pantheons, magic-users, Wicca, science-fiction based religions, animism, pantheism, or polytheism. Questions about facilitation of Neo-Pagans are not intended to denigrate their religion in any way: But these questions were selected because Neo-Paganism is typically a very different form of religion than the more common monotheistic faiths.

31) Have you ever approached a Neo-Pagan service member and asked them to serve as lay leader? Yes - 6 No - 23

32) Have you ever facilitated for Neo-Pagans? Yes - 23 No - 6

33) Did your facilitation include the following:

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|---------|---------|
| Providing space and time for meeting. | Yes - 22 | No - 3 | N/A - 4 |
| Advertising/promoting the meeting. | Yes - 16 | No - 5 | N/A - 7 |
| Procuring items. | Yes - 12 | No - 10 | N/A - 6 |
| Referral to a civilian resource. | Yes - 20 | No - 4 | N/A - 4 |
| Distribution of literature. | Yes - 8 | No - 13 | N/A - 7 |

34) Have you ever publicized a Neo-Pagan holiday to the command. Yes - 13 No - 16

35) Have you ever advocated to the Command for a special accommodation for a Neo-Pagan.
 Yes - 11 No - 12 N/A - 5

36) Have you or your CO ever denied (or recommended denial of) an accommodation request from a Neo-Pagan?
 Yes – 6 No - 16 N/A - 6

Personal and Practical Feelings about Functioning in a Pluralistic Environment

37) I would read a Neo-Pagan prayer with a dying Neo-Pagan service member.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 13 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 |

38) My conscience bothers me about facilitating for Neo-Pagans.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 5 | 12 | 1 | 8 | 3 |

39) A certain level of personal tension is normal and healthy in a religiously pluralistic environment.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 1 | 1 | 2 | 15 | 10 |

40) It is never acceptable, even in faith-specific settings, for a Navy Chaplain to say negative things about another religion.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 10 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 5 |

41) When Neo-Pagan chaplains finally become part of the Chaplain Corps, it will be a good thing.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 8 | 5 | 11 | 3 | 2 |

42) Too much diversity of religion can weaken cohesiveness in the group.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 3 |

43) I would support getting rid of Chaplain Corps collar devices in favor of one, non-religious device for chaplains of all faith groups.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 21 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

44) Since becoming a chaplain, my views have changed toward greater openness to the validity of other religions.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 8 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 3 |

45) It is less important which religion our service members follow than that we love and support them.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Don't know/ No opinion | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| 4 | 8 | 0 | 9 | 8 |

46) On the following scale, where would your overall experiences fall of unofficial engagement of religious issues with chaplains of other faith groups?

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|------|------|----------------------------|
| -Avoid talking about religion- | | | -Robust debate & dialogue- |
| 1 -1 | 2 -3 | 3 -5 | 4 -15 5 -5 |

47) If you would be willing to do a follow-up interview about your answers to these questions, please leave your name and a contact phone number or email address.

15 chaplains answered this question but one did not leave contact information and four others were no longer available at the time that I began the interviews.

APPENDIX EIGHT

POST-SURVEY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH PRELIMINARY DISCLOSURE

Preliminary Disclosure

- This is entirely voluntary! Taking the survey or this post-survey interview has no impact upon your career, position, or reputation!
- Neither the survey nor this interview is connected with DOD, DON, or CHC.
- You may decline to answer any or all questions as you wish. If you consent to this interview, you may also choose to end it at any time.
- Other than educational objectives, I do not stand to gain or have any financial stake in this.
- No product of this post-survey interview will connect your responses with any personally identifiable information.
- The statistical results of the survey can be made available to you if you wish.
- Are there any questions that I can answer for you first concerning the survey or this follow-on interview?
- Are you comfortable if I take some notes from this interview?

“This interview is intended to COLLECT data from a first-person, insider’s perspective about what it is like to represent a particular religion and at the same time, to help others practice different religions – if there are any feelings of personal stress related to any of these issues, it is something I want to explore and understand better, but I do not want to create distress or agitate it. So I’m trying to navigate carefully with these questions.”

Questions (for each question, follow-up questions may be used ad hoc to acquire more clarity or explore especially intriguing answers)

“First, I’m interested to know more about your theology when it comes to the relationship of your religion to other religions. In somewhat big-picture, summary form, what does your religion address or about what is it principally concerned? And what are your thoughts about the implications of your answer for other religions that are different from yours?”

“I’m also interested in your theological position about the relationship between church and state and/or the relationship between religion and culture. What should a civil authority’s stance be toward religious matters and what should a religiously-informed stance be toward government and/or civil society? Would you tell me more of your thoughts about these relationships?”

“As you know, your role as a chaplain requires that you facilitate for the religious practices of people who have different religions than your own. In the survey, you responded that the most compelling reason why you would do this is response to question #30. Can you share why you think that is the best reason and would you like to say any more about your role in facilitation of other religions?”

(If Question 32 was answered "yes") "You said in the survey that you had facilitated before for Neo-Pagans. Can you tell how that came about, how you facilitated, and how it turned out?"

"Question 39 in the survey asked for your reaction to the statement 'A certain level of personal tension is normal and healthy in a religiously pluralistic environment.' You responded that you _____ response to question #39 _____. Do you have some reflections on why that would be?"

(If there were any specific items arising from the survey that raise questions – such as responses which do not seem consistent with views indicated in other responses – those can be asked about here.)

"Item ____ in the survey stated_____. You responded that you_____. In light of what you have just described to me, can you help me to understand that better?"

"Is there anything else that you would like to add about religious pluralism, the Navy chaplaincy, or religious facilitation in the Navy?"




APPENDIX NINE

SLIDES USED IN THE TRAINING BRIEF



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

This brief will consider-

- The problem posed to exclusivist Navy chaplains by the responsibility to facilitate for other faiths 
- The larger challenge to exclusivist Navy chaplains to shape and influence their pluralist culture 
- Some practical tips for ministry in pluralist settings 



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

- Some Terms -

Descriptive Pluralism: Religious Pluralism at its minimum describes the mere fact of religious diversity. The Navy reflects society in that its people represent an increasing number of religious faiths and an increasing difference in the kinds of religious faiths.

Prescriptive Pluralism: Religious Pluralism may entail for some people something more prescriptive;

- from socially harmonious coexistence,



- to affirming interaction by inter-faith dialogue,



- to syncretistic unity.



2



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

- Some Terms -

Religious Pluralism also raises the theological question of the relationships of other faiths to one's own. This field of study is known as -

“Theology of Religions” (three broadly-defined positions)

Exclusivism (or Particularism) = Salvation is exclusively or particularly for those who have faith in Christ

Inclusivism = Salvation is through Christ but it may not be necessary to put faith in him to eventually be saved by him

Pluralism = The various paths of other religious faiths are independently valid

3



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Religious Pluralism in the Navy-

The Navy does not require that chaplains accept religious pluralism in a *prescriptive* sense: But it does demand that its chaplains are willing to function in a pluralist environment in the *descriptive* sense.

6.1.2. The RMP is willing to function in a pluralistic environment, as defined in this Instruction . . .
DODINST 1304.28 para. 6.1.2

Pluralistic Environment. A descriptor of the military context of ministry. A plurality of religious traditions exist side-by-side in the military.
DODINST 1304.28 Encl. 2.1.8

4



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Religious Pluralism in the Navy-

But minimal prescriptive elements inevitably emerge.
What does the Navy expect for one to function in this environment?

-It requires certain attitudes and values which seem necessary to cooperate without compromise.

. . . every RMP must be willing to function in the diverse and pluralistic environment of the military, with **tolerance** for diverse religious traditions and **respect** for the rights of individuals to determine their own religious convictions. Chaplains must be willing to support the free exercise of religion by all Service members, their families, and other authorized persons. Chaplains are trained and **expected to cooperate** with other chaplains and RMPs and work within the specialized environment of the military **while not compromising** the tenets of their own religious traditions.

SECNAVINST 1730.7D para. 5e(2)

-It also requires willingness to directly and indirectly support free exercise of religion

. . . willing to **support directly** and indirectly **the free exercise of religion** by all members of the Military Services. . .
DODINSTR 1304.28 para. 6.1.2

How does one “directly” support another’s free exercise of religion?

Answer: Through “facilitation.”

5



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Facilitation for Other Faiths-

“Facilitation” is one of the four core competencies of Navy Chaplains.

(3) To meet the requirements of religious accommodation, morale and welfare, and to facilitate the understanding of the complexities of religion with regard to its personnel and mission, the DON has designated four core CHC capabilities: care, facilitate, provide, and advise. Chaplains care for all Service members, including those who claim no religious faith, facilitate the religious requirements of personnel of all faiths, provide faith-specific ministries, and advise the command.

SECNAVINST 1730.7D para 5e3

Chaplains are required to “facilitate the religious requirements of personnel of all faiths.”

6



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Facilitation for Other Faiths-

(b) Facilitate. Chaplains manage and execute CRPs that accommodate diverse religious ministry requirements. Accommodation of individual and collective religious ministry requirements includes, but is not limited to: scheduling, budgeting, contracting and coordinating to include the management of volunteers and lay leaders.

SECNAVINST 1730.7D para 5e3(b)

Chaplains facilitate the practice of religion for others by such means as-

1. Scheduling and publicizing worship and other events
2. Procuring religious items, educational materials, sacred texts, etc.
3. Finding religious practitioners and arranging contracts for them
4. Recruiting, training , and supporting volunteers who lead others in their religious practices

7



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Facilitation for Other Faiths-

This presents a problem for a Christian Exclusivist!

If I believe that a person cannot be saved without faith in Jesus Christ, how can I directly support and contribute through “facilitation” to religious practices and messages that say otherwise? Even though the chaplain is personally faithful to his own beliefs and conscience, might facilitation make the chaplain culpable for the advancement and promotion of **other faiths by which we cannot be saved** and that violate the chaplain’s beliefs and conscience?

8



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Facilitation for Other Faiths-

“Facilitation” may be fraught with danger!

If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned.

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.

Having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares his wicked work.

- Am I responsible for-
Procurement of items? (e.g. If I facilitate a drunk driver by obtaining his alcohol)
- Publicizing? (e.g. If I facilitate a KKK meeting by advertising it)
- Personal Liaison? (e.g. If I facilitate adultery by arranging his meeting with a prostitute)

On what basis do I help someone practice another religious faith that will not save them?

9



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Facilitation for Other Faiths-

Reasons chaplains have offered in the past for willingness to do this (from worst to 2nd best)-

- Necessary for promotion: Important to a good reputation
Such reasons are self-serving.
- Part of the Job: Required by Navy Instructions
These types of answers merely avoid the question.
- Their religion is as valid as mine: Each person must find their own spiritual path
These reasons are not acceptable for someone who holds to Christian Exclusivism.
- God called me to do it so it must be alright with Him
This elevates a subjective sense of call to chaplaincy above what God's Word may be saying.
- "Pay the freight:" It's the cost of access to the institution: Cost of access to share the Gospel with individuals: It shows love to religious others so that they might be attracted to the Gospel
These reasons set evangelism against faithfulness. Ends do not justify means.
- It is only fair: If I want chaplains of other faiths to facilitate for my people, I must for theirs
This gets closer to the notion of free exercise but a simple quid pro quo obscures the complexity.
- Religious Ministry in the Navy is the CO's responsibility so the chaplain is just a representative: Chaplains wear two hats; religious provision represents a faith, facilitation represents civil authority
While these reasons rightly grasp at understanding the intersection of dual kingdoms, one cannot merely practice wrongdoing by claiming to be the agent of another; consider Nuremburg.

10



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Facilitation for Other Faiths-

The best, albeit imperfect basis for facilitating religious others as a chaplain =
COMMITMENT TO FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION

- Free exercise is required by the First Amendment of the Constitution.
- DODINST 1304.28 requires that Religious Organizations which endorse chaplains will only provide candidates that can directly and indirectly support free exercise.
- OPNAVINST 1120.9 requires that individual chaplain applicants will support it and –
- SECNAVINST 1730.7D requires that chaplains will continue to support it.

BUT the reason it is the best option is because Christians cherish religious liberty out of proper distinctions between law/gospel, the two kingdoms, and thoughtful participation of our place as citizens. Without Free Exercise, Government establishes religion in ways that are unacceptable to the biblical Christian.

11



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Facilitation for Other Faiths-

The best, albeit imperfect basis for facilitating religious others as a chaplain =
COMMITMENT TO FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION

-Theological Pluralists err on the one side by construing free exercise in a way that proactively promotes and advances multiple faiths or construes the chaplain to represent generic or contradictory religious expressions.

-Separatist leaning Lutherans such as the Wisconsin Synod err on the other side by rejecting chaplaincy and viewing any kind of cooperation with religious others as unionism and false spiritual fellowship.

Commitment to free exercise involves a certain amount of tension between these extremes. One must reflect in every case on where one's actions might misrepresent God. At the same time, different kinds of action might be appropriate depending upon whether one is acting in the right or left-handed kingdom. When a chaplain supports free exercise in the civil realm, he does not intrinsically violate confessional principles any more than his Commanding Officer who is responsible for the CRP. How does one navigate this difficult area?

12



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Facilitation for Other Faiths-

Facilitation –

Is it ever acceptable to facilitate for someone else's faith?

This involves some tension.

-A chaplain can promote free exercise by facilitating. He does this by supporting the responsibility of Caesar before God to govern without establishing religion. He keeps the right and left-handed kingdoms distinct. For example-

Can a Christian city councilman vote in favor of zoning for construction of a Mosque?

Can a Christian policeman escort an elderly woman across the street to attend Mass?

Direct facilitation need not incur guilt when it reflects Caesar's responsibility.

-At the same time, one must always be conscious of the dangers. A particular instance or type of facilitation might convey a false impression of what the chaplain believes or represents. Promotion of free exercise of religion can unwittingly morph into promotion of other religions.

A principle to help the chaplain navigate this tension is "Push-Pull."

13



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Facilitation for Other Faiths-

Facilitation - “Push-Pull”

Does the chaplain “push” for others to practice another faith?
Or does the chaplain respond to “pull” signals for the types of facilitation desired?

A “pushing” chaplain eagerly and proactively seeks and encourages others to formulate religious needs. Such a chaplain looks for the broadest spectrum of lay leaders possible. Uncertain or disinterested people of other faiths are coaxed into greater levels of religious activity. Whether or not the service members have the impetus and passion to pursue their religious practices, the pushing chaplain “makes” it happen because pluralism is perceived as a good in and of itself. The pushing chaplain crosses from facilitating a faith to promotion of it.

A “pulling” chaplain treats everyone with the same respect. The chaplain gives even-handed opportunities for people to come forward with their religious needs. Those with needs are accommodated to the fullest necessary extent: But the individuals and the groups must be self-motivated. If they do not respond to inquiries about their needs, the open door is left at that.

14



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Facilitation for Other Faiths-

Facilitation - “Push-Pull”

Scenarios-

A religious needs assessment survey identifies three Muslims in a command. A pull chaplain let’s them know that if they want to have services or need anything, he will try to make it possible. A push chaplain engages with them to set up a Muslim prayer time, reminds them of it, and coaxes them to attend .

A Sailor asks to be the LDS lay leader but fails to show on subsequent occasions when he and the chaplain had scheduled his training together. A pull chaplain respectfully lets the Sailor know that the chaplain is standing by to make this happen. A push chaplain continues to seek out the Sailor and arrange new training times.

Two Druids meet all the requirements to have religious services at the command. A pull chaplain advertises their services along with all of the other services. A push chaplain, intoxicated with diversity, makes a point of highlighting the Druid service with special flyers and announcements on site-TV.

The chaplain learns that a new arrival, son of an immigrant family, grew up as a Jain but doesn’t practice. A pull chaplain lets all new arrivals know during indoctrination course that the chaplain can arrange to support their needs in the practice of their faith. A push chaplain begins to include POD notes for all Jain holy days.

15



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

-Facilitation for Other Faiths-

Facilitation - “Push-Pull”

- The pull chaplain still “pushes” people of his own faith (inviting them to services, encouraging their growth, inquiring about their faithfulness in partaking of the sacraments, etc) because those things are elements of his provision of religion. The “push-pull” concept refers to facilitation of other religions.
- The pull chaplain treats those of other religions with respect. There are never gratuitous disparaging comments or negative non-verbal expressions.
- The pull chaplain need not celebrate diverse faiths but honors the rights of each person to practice them.
- The pull chaplain accommodates all groups by the same standards.
- The pull chaplain champions requests for religious accommodation but does not go out of the way to stir up those requests where they do not exist.

In short, the chaplain facilitates for the religious needs of others but maintains a careful self-reflection to avoid encouraging them just for the sake of pluralism.

16



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

SHAPING AND INFLUENCING THE PLURALIST CULTURE

A Lutheran perspective distinguishes the spiritual kingdom from the temporal one.

Temporal power does not protect the soul, but with the sword and physical penalties it protects body and goods from the power of others. Therefore, the two authorities, the spiritual and the temporal, are not to be mingled or confused, for the spiritual power has its commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. (AC XXVIII, 11–12)

Unlike a more typically Reformed perspective, a Lutheran approach does not seek to mingle the Gospel into matters of the temporal kingdom .

Nor is it the role of civil authorities to make judgments about spiritual matters

“... heresy must be opposed and dealt with otherwise than with the sword. Here God’s word must do the fighting. If it does not succeed, certainly the temporal power will not succeed either, even if it were to drench the world in blood. Heresy is a spiritual matter which you cannot hack to pieces with iron.”
Martin Luther, *Temporal Authority*

17



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

SHAPING AND INFLUENCING THE PLURALIST CULTURE

BUT – society should be structured according to the law. Civil righteousness is rooted in law. Luther rejected the power of reason for helping man’s vertical relationship to God, but temporal society and our horizontal relationships to others must be governed by natural law and reason.

Based upon natural law and right use of reason, we must have some concept of what society should look like in order to engage in the marketplace of ideas, and summon it to be faithful to its God-given role. There are right and wrong viewpoints that enter the public square. Christians have every reason to want to shape them.

18



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

SHAPING AND INFLUENCING THE PLURALIST CULTURE

The recent instruction on Professional Naval Chaplaincy adds a dimension to religion in the Navy that is not found as strongly in older instructions. It says that PNC “values” pluralism. (SECNAVINST 5351.1 encl.2[5])

One can observe the cultural shift by this. The Navy shifted from addressing the mere fact of pluralism, toward a more positive endorsement of it as something positive. It is conceivable that as theological pluralists move into policy-making positions in the Chaplain Corps, they would, consciously or unconsciously, lean in that direction.

Exclusivist chaplains should be alert to trends. To the extent that they have ability to influence future directions of the Chaplain Corps, they should engage hearts and minds as well as influence policy and doctrine away from prescriptive pluralism.

19



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

SHAPING AND INFLUENCING THE PLURALIST CULTURE

PLURALISM CAN INFLUENCE THE CHAPLAIN

Exposure to pluralist culture without critical perspective may incline the chaplain toward unwittingly thinking of ministry in ways that are inconsistent with their faith.

In a survey of 33 Navy chaplains by the author of this brief, eight responded to questions in such a way as to identify their theology of religions as exclusivist. For example, all eight were asked if other faiths could be valid means to salvation and all strongly disagreed. Yet three of those eight agreed with the statement that it was less important that service members follow the right religion than that chaplains love and serve them. A fourth did not answer the question.

It is crucial to continually renew one's commitment to the priority of the Gospel.

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

20



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

SHAPING AND INFLUENCING THE PLURALIST CULTURE

PLURALISM CAN INFLUENCE THE CULTURE

Detrimental Cultural Effects of Religious Pluralism

- Truth claims become suspect: The mere fact of multiple choices weakens confidence that any particular one could be right
- Individuals keep religious views private rather than risk public articulation and make themselves subject to critique
- Religious discussions in public sink to the lowest common denominator: Robust religious conversation becomes increasingly limited
- Religion becomes narcissistic: Something pursued for the sake of personal benefit
- Tolerance becomes a matter of tolerating ideas rather than people
- Separation of Church and State becomes harmfully construed: Secularism becomes the default religion
- Too many religious choices result in a retreat into skepticism.

21



Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

SHAPING AND INFLUENCING THE PLURALIST CULTURE

Christians should serve as-

-A Voice Against Theological Pluralism

Theological Pluralism is an incorrect religious viewpoint. Whether it is an officially sanctioned position by temporal authorities or a cultural mindset, exclusivist Christians push back against pressures to expand it or make it normative.

-A Voice For Proper Public Standards to Evaluate Religious Claims

A temporal authority that governs according to the law must necessarily make judgments about religions. For example, even in the Navy, our support for religious accommodation is limited by the boundaries of good order and discipline. Secularism, strict separation, or neutrality are inadequate approaches to religion in society. Christians offer a voice for healthier public perspectives.

22



Tips for Ministry in a Pluralist Setting

Outreach – Religious Experience

Religious Experience is increasingly authoritative for your people. With so many religions they can't assess an argument and are not interested in a witness.

To maneuver toward a place where you can share the Gospel, do not deny their experience even when it is religiously absurd to the Christian Exclusivist (e.g. "oneness with Gaia," "a prior life" etc). Instead, introduce doubt about how they have interpreted it. Have they ever experienced something with the physical senses that turned out to be mistaken (e.g. a voice that was something else)? The "senses" for religious experience may benefit from additional evaluative criteria. Show interest in their experience and tie it to a Biblical witness.

23



Tips for Ministry in a Pluralist Setting

Outreach - Pre-evangelistic considerations

The Gospel is increasingly incoherent to people in our pluralistic society. Without any background in the biblical plot-line, our post-Christian society cannot make sense of it. Example- the polytheist who embraced a Christian's witness to Christ. The Christian did not understand until much later that the polytheist's favorable response to his message was merely the adoption of yet another god.

It may be necessary in our preaching, teaching, and conversations to start further back. Before telling about the love of God in the Gospel, it may be necessary to explain what a monotheistic concept of a personal God entails; or to explain creation, the fall, and redemption history. These are necessary parts of the background to set the framework for preaching Christ.

24



Tips for Ministry in a Pluralist Setting

Outreach - Bridge-building

When Paul addresses a pluralist audience in Acts 17, he builds a bridge of continuity rather than start with a disagreement. Consider what you have in common in order to respectfully gain a hearing for the Gospel. At Mars Hill, Paul attracted their attention with his proclamation of the unknown God, delved into the nature of that God to distinguish Him from Stoic or Epicurean concepts of God, appealed to what can be known by general revelation, and then identified our problem (sin), the solution (God's Son), and the resurrection.

25



Tips for Ministry in a Pluralist Setting

Public Events – Public Events and Prayer

- Participation in an event with religious elements can make us guilty by association with them. *“Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar?”* I Cor 10:18b
- But excluding ourselves from events may associate us with a certain message too!
 - “Religion is private”
 - “We are superior to you”
 - “We are hostile to you”
 - “We want to seclude ourselves from you”
- The question to ask ourselves about whether to participate or not is, “Does participation strengthen or blur the public understanding of our message?”

26



Tips for Ministry in a Pluralist Setting

Public Events – Public Prayer

- We are free to pray according to expectations of our faith group
- We are not ashamed to pray in Jesus name – it should be clear that the person praying thus does not represent everyone, but rather themselves or a select group
- Prayer is appropriate in the context of the left-handed kingdom, yet the Gospel must be kept in the right-handed kingdom
- So public prayer by a chaplain does not have to spotlight specifically Christian claims
- It does have to accurately portray information about God as he is known in general revelation and as supported by the Law apart from the Gospel. Prayer is useful for shaping a pluralist society in these settings to highlight things such as God’s providence, that He is the judge, and that there are moral consequences
- It is possible to do this in a way that is appropriate to the first use of the law, pre-evangelistic, winsome, and does not undermine identity as a minister of the Gospel

27



Tips for Ministry in a Pluralist Setting

Public Events – Civil Religion

- Civil Religion employs God language and religious themes for social cohesion, usually with nationalist implications (“God Bless America”)
- Christian chaplains must understand the dynamic of civil religion
- Christian chaplains must not inadvertently become the priests of civil religion
- Christian chaplains may leverage civil religion in the sphere of the temporal kingdom to strengthen a proper understanding and reverence of God as he is known in general revelation. Discourse about God’s nature and attributes do not belong to the Gospel but to the Law. They are appropriate expressions for public religious principles in the sphere of the Kingdom of the Left Hand.

28



Tips for Ministry in a Pluralist Setting

Opening Doors for the Gospel & Sharing –

- It is legitimate to share our faith even outside of faith-specific settings: But we must get permission and respect the other’s wishes. SECNAVINST 5351.1 encl 2(5) & encl 3(8)
- Always look for opportunities to turn conversations into Gospel witness or at least pre-evangelistic sharing. An effective way to do this is simply to ask, “can I share what I think a Bible-centered perspective would be about that?”
- Chaplains must clearly identify their faith group for any faith specific ministry such as worship. SECNAVINST 5351.1 encl 3(1) We are never “generic” Christians or Protestants: We always function and act in accord with a confessional understanding.
- But the youngest generation of Sailors not only misunderstands denominations, it doesn’t care! Present yourself as a Christian. If someone asks what kind, in answering Lutheran, ask what that means to them. It becomes another opportunity for witness. In services or studies, when presenting a matter of significant disagreement among Christians, it scores points to show that you know and respect alternative views; but explain that in your church, you understand the Bible such and such a way.

29



Tips for Ministry in a Pluralist Setting

Neo-paganism- insights for unusual encounters

Neo-paganism is a way of describing the broad movement of wiccans, worshippers of ancient pantheons, earth-based religions, magic-users, etc. Facilitating for them often feels radically different from most religious encounters. It's growing!

- Treat them respectfully, not as odd or outsiders. People are often attracted to NPism because they feel marginalized. "Persecution" reinforces their commitment.
- Stay engaged in witnessing but not argumentatively. Many are in revolt against God. They often welcome conversation but reject dogma. Your gentle witness gives them pause. Their experiences with Christians have usually been negative.
- People attracted to magic may inwardly be trying to reclaim power from a sense of powerlessness. They often have stories of brokenness. Use this pastoral insight.
- NPism is unstable. Adherents often change directions many times over their lives. Groups seldom endure very long. So take a long-term view. Your engagement and patient witness may bear fruit many years from now.

30



Tips for Ministry in a Pluralist Setting

This brief is an heuristic effort by a Navy chaplain to wrestle with the challenges of ministry in an increasingly religiously pluralistic institution as well as faithfulness to a solid Lutheran confessional commitment.

**Questions and comments should be directed to Tim Oswald at
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31

APPENDIX TEN

EVALUATION FORMS

Some answers were selected from open-ended questions. Responses are indicated in gray for laity, red for clergy, and blue for chaplains.

Evaluation of the Brief on “Navy Chaplains and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism”

About the contents of the brief

1) The brief argued that religious facilitation for those of other religions can carry certain theological and personal tensions with it. To what extent did you *agree* with this claim?

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly disagree | | | | Strongly agree |
| | | | | 8 4 4 |

Or do you have further thoughts about it?

“Difficult to find ground between conscience & accommodation”

2) The “Push-pull” concept approaches religious facilitation as a spectrum of possible activities which can lean either toward proactive facilitation or responsive facilitation. Does this seem legitimate to you in the following areas-

2a) Theologically? Can it contribute to facilitation conducted faithfully to your religious commitments?

Yes – 9 Yes – 2 Yes - 4

2b) Legally? Based upon military instructions and Navy doctrines/policies?

Yes – 9 Yes – 3 Yes - 4

2c) Ethically? Is it properly respectful and tolerant of others?

Yes – 9 Yes – 3 Yes - 4

2d) Practically? Can you envision actually doing this?

Yes – 8 No – 1 Yes – 3 Yes - 4

3) The segment of the brief on “Tips for Ministry in a Pluralist Setting” addressed a variety of considerations for ministry in a religiously diverse setting. These included a) dealing with religious experience; b) the need for pre-evangelistic background to our Gospel witness; c) building bridges to religious others; d) public events and prayer; d) civil religion; e) public prayer; f) opening doors for sharing the Gospel; and g) encounters with Neo-Pagans.

3a) How helpful was this segment?

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|--------|--------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not helpful at all | | | | Very helpful |
| | | 1 | 7 2 | 3 2 3 |

3b) Which items in this segment did you find most helpful? Why?

A B B C C C D D E E F G A B B D C C E E

3c) Which items in this segment did you find least helpful? Why?

A A D G G G G G G D G D G

4) Please share other comments on the *contents* of the brief.

“Balanced and thorough” **“Helpful to learn what LCMS chaplains face”**

About the effects of the brief

5) Y N Has the brief helped you to reflect further upon issues concerning religious pluralism in the Navy chaplaincy?

Yes – 11 Yes – 4 Yes - 3

6) Y N Has the brief contributed to your adoption of a different viewpoint in any ways?

Yes – 3 No – 8 No – 4 Yes – 2 No - 1

7) Y N Will the brief reshape your approaches to Navy Chaplaincy in any ways?

Yes – 5 No – 5 Yes – 2 No – 1 Yes – 2 No - 1

8) Y N Have your reflections and interaction with the material in the brief made you more confident in any way about integrating your theology with your ministry in pluralist settings? If so, how?

Yes – 8 No – 1 Yes – 4 Yes - 3

9) Please share other comments on the *effects* of the brief.

“I see how hard it is for chaplains to walk the line” **“I need to stand up for my faith more”**
“Interested in a Sunday School study on this” **“I feel better equipped to witness”**
“Valuable to equip us for a post-Christian world”
“Hearing that other exclusivists struggle too is a blessing”

About the presentation of the brief

10) Was the length of the brief suited to the material that it covered?

| | | | | |
|-----------|-------|--------|-----|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Too short | | | | Too long |
| | 1 1 1 | 10 2 1 | 1 1 | |

11) The purpose of the brief was to help Exclusionist chaplains address issues of religious pluralism in ways that are responsible to their faith. Is a power point® brief an effective medium for this?

Yes – 10 Yes – 3 Yes - 3

12) Did you attend a presentation with the originator or receive this brief electronically?

Presentation with the originator Electronically

All participants attended the brief offered to them by the presenter.

13) How important would it be to have this brief presented in person versus reading it on your own?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|-------|------------------------------------|
| Not necessary to have it presented in person | | | | Needs to be presented in person |
| | 1 | | 5 3 2 | 5 1 1 |

14) Please share other comments on the *presentation* of the brief.

Multiple participants asked if the slides could also be distributed as handouts .

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