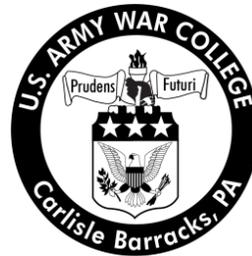


Strategy Research Project

Spiritual Dormancy: the Strategic Effect of the Depravation of God

by

Lieutenant Colonel James G. Erbach
United States Army



United States Army War College
Class of 2013

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Abstract

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Spiritual Dormancy: the Strategic Effect of the Deprivation of God

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

—General George C. Marshall

The reader should understand that this paper is not going to espouse one religion over the other nor will it defend any specific confessional view. However, regardless of one’s religious background or confession, religion as a sociological construct and spirituality as a central means of its practices are central to any relationship with God regardless of how we define God. To marginalize the importance of religion in the Army could marginalize how we see ourselves as people and lose sight of the moral sanctity of life which underlies personal and, by extrapolation, organizational health. The Army is allowing an erosion of the acknowledgement of religion which we contend will have negative impacts on how soldiers and their leaders act and perform and the strategic effectiveness of the Army in the joint force.

On the one hand, the Army acknowledges the need for spiritual fitness but on the other hand, in spite of historic precedent, it is removing spirituality as a construct of organizational thought. This dichotomy could fundamentally alter how a soldier views himself as a person. Our supposition is that every human being is a spirit of God. To deny the spiritual connection we feel existing with God does nothing but marginalize the strength in God on which a soldier can draw in both peace and war. It is a dangerous proposition to consider a soldier’s value as relative only to the Army. What such a

supposition suggests is that the only intrinsic value a soldier has is to the Army and not to self, society, nation, or God. However, we contend that we as persons have a connection with something beyond our physical selves. If we remove the concept of God, then we cease to value life as a gift but inchoately see it as a resource to be consumed. Without an acknowledgment of God, a soldier is even unintentionally reduced to a trained, consumable resource as opposed to a person with talents, conscience, heart and worth beyond herself.

What is the potential impact, then, if all reference to religion is removed from spirituality in the Army? Soldiers may begin to view themselves as the center of their own world. If no one gets hurt, then there is no reason to believe that one's behavior is anything other than acceptable. Moreover, Soldiers may begin to view some human's lives as less valuable than theirs, which goes against the Army's value of respect. This type of philosophy is already manifesting itself in the high risk behavior that some of our soldiers routinely exhibit today such as speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol, child and spouse abuse, abusing prescription drugs, consuming alcohol alone, and inflicting self harm. If the Army does not change how it views religion, then a soldier better be prepared to be thought of as nothing more than a pawn on a chess board, in a broad existential sense. This philosophy flies in the face of our Army's roots, our creed, and our values. We term this entire phenomenon 'spiritual dormancy.'

The good news is the Army has not yet achieved complete spiritual somnolence. The Army still recognizes that the spirit of its members is an essential part of a soldier's fitness. A soldier's spiritual fitness is a critical component of force readiness, which is why the spiritual domain is of significant importance to the Army. The spiritual

dimension, as defined by the Army, includes values and beliefs, including religiously informed values and beliefs. These elements, which define the essence of a person, enable one to build inner strength, make meaning of experiences, behave ethically, persevere through challenges, and be resilient when faced with adversity and demonstrate that religion has a tremendous impact on values and beliefs.

Today, the United States Army has some of the most combat-seasoned and professional soldiers in our nation's history. While our soldiers remain "the Strength of the Nation," the joint force's long-term, high level of operational demand has placed significant stress on our all-volunteer force. In response, the Army has implemented the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CFS2) program to help leaders enhance unit readiness and to support the ability of soldiers, families and Department of the Army civilians to meet the demands of military life.² It is an effort committed to developing and sustaining a new Army culture of total fitness and increased psychological health and resilience in order to enhance the performance of the entire Army community. Early indications are that CSF2's Resilience Training Program is achieving increased psychological fitness by reducing negative behavior and increasing optimism.³ While this is seen as a positive result, which it is, what is missing in this training is the overt acknowledgement of God as a component of fitness. If the Army is sincere about spiritual fitness, why not include God as a component of health? Every person alive has what Carl Jung called a "life task" encoded within their being.⁴ The Greeks called it "destiny." The Christian Bible says that God has a set of works "prepared beforehand" for us to do.⁵ Some scholars have even suggested that religion is genetically "hardwired" into the human condition. One controversial hypothesis,

the 'God gene hypothesis,' states that some variants of a specific gene, the VMAT2 gene, predisposes us to spirituality.⁶ All this is mentioned to highlight the fact that human beings have always had and felt some connection to a higher being.

Philosophical, Theological and Religious Underpinnings

Religion is a spiritual source of comfort, solace and guidance. For many persons, spirituality is caring, kindness, compassion, tolerance, service and community.⁷ Understanding this nexus between religion and spirituality is important; in fact, it is a foundational assumption of this paper. There is, however, an important difference between religion and spirituality: religion is an external expression of deference paid to a supreme being or eternal principle but spirituality begins as and is perpetually an internal process and involves an increasing openness to exploring a relationship with an intangible and pervasive power or essence or center or value that exists beyond human existence and rational human knowing.⁸ Put another way, spirituality is the inner longing to connect with something beyond yourself and religion is the external expression of that longing.

There are also philosophical and theological underpinnings to this nexus as well. To further our understanding of spirit, let us see what the differences are between philosophical and theological spirituality. Socrates believed in the reincarnation of an eternal soul which contained all knowledge with which we lose touch at birth.⁹ He even placed individual conscience above the law, suggesting that what is to be considered a good act is not good because gods say that it is, but rather is good because it is useful to us in our efforts to be better and happier people. This means that ethics is not a matter of surveying the gods or scripture for what is good or bad, but rather thinking

about life.¹⁰ So according to Socrates, ethics is something intrinsically internal and not subject to an external morality. Our contention with that view, however, is that it is too one-sided. Inward reflection and meditation are an important aspect of developing our spirituality but in order to properly reflect, one must have something to reflect against. The external impact of society on religion provides the contrast necessary for proper reflection.

Socrates' student Plato categorized reality in two ways: phenomena and ideals. Plato thought of phenomena as illusions which morph and die but ideals, contrastingly, as unchanging and perfect. Ideas are available to us through thought while phenomena are available to us through our senses. Thus in Plato's construct, thought is a vastly superior means to get to the truth. According to Plato, ideals are a motivating force and attach idealism with God and perfect goodness.¹¹ Plato believed the soul will always choose to do good if it recognizes what is good but the soul must first be taught the difference between good and bad. Thus Plato encouraged not viewing immorality as sin but rather considering it more a matter of ignorance. If someone does something illegal, then education is required, not punishment. He further asserted that education is what makes men good and that good men act nobly.

Aristotle, following Plato, believed the ideal is found on the "inside" and matter is just form without a soul. It is the spirit inside something that gives matter life, otherwise it is just a thing with no actuality. Essence is what provides the shape or form or purpose to matter. Essence is "perfect," "complete," but it has no substance or solidity.¹² We begin as unformed matter in the womb, and through years of development and learning, we become mature adults, always reaching for perfection. "So the good has

been well explained as that at which all things aim."¹³ This concludes a short synopsis of the major Greek philosopher's contributions to our current understanding to the nature of the human soul, the philosophical underpinnings of the nexus between religion and spirituality which we see as paradigmatic.

Although we have not mentioned the Greek notion of body, mind, and spirit, it seems an appropriate way to contextualize the argument of this paper in another way. The Body is the bureaucracy of the Army, the Mind is the leadership, and the Spirit is the values or guiding principles which govern the Army. What does spirit mean? It means the energy imbued in all living things.¹⁴ It is one's task in this life to awaken our spirits and to develop our God-given gifts and talents. To do less separates us from God and we fail to reap the benefits of relationship with God, including love and joy, peace, health, abundance, and prosperity.¹⁵ Spirit is thus the governing principles of an organization, governing principles which describe the behaviors we as a people expect to see soldiers exhibit. These are important because they help soldiers understand why serving in the Army is different and good indeed why it is a distinct profession.

With respect to theological spirituality, however, life is inextricably connected to God.¹⁶ That personal God invites us into the same love relationship that a father and son share. This transcendent/immanent bond ties our spiritual practice with our personal relationship to God. Moreover, it emphasizes the relational character of life—spiritual growth is lived out in friendships with others and with God.¹⁷ Eugene Peterson, a pastor, scholar, author, and poet, has said:

“Spiritual theology...[is] the conviction that *all* theology, no exceptions, has to do with the living God who creates us as living creatures to live to his glory....Spirituality begins in theology (the revelation and understanding of God) and is guided by it. And theology is never truly itself apart from being

expressed in the bodies of men and women to whom God gives life and whom God then intends to live a full salvation life (spirituality).¹⁸

This means that matter is not just form without a soul. There is a spirit residing inside all peoples something that gives them life. Moreover, it means our spirit is a motivating force and attaches itself to God who is perfect goodness. The soul is drawn to the good, the ideal, and so is drawn to God. God is at the root of our lives and we are inextricably connected to God and to one another in mutual, life-giving relationships.

A similar view comes from the noted Twentieth Century Jewish theologian Rabbi Joseph Baer Soloveitchik. He asserts that man is an honorable, dignified being and to be human means to live with dignity.¹⁹ Rabbi Soloveitchik equated dignity with man's capability of dominating his environment and exercising control over it, or the act of dominion as commanded by God in Genesis 2. Man acquires dignity through glory, through his majestic posture vis a vis his environment. There is no dignity without responsibility and one cannot assume responsibility as long as one is not capable of living up to one's commitments. Only when man rises to the heights of freedom of action and creativity of mind does he begin to implement the mandate of dignified responsibility entrusted to him by his Maker.²⁰ In other words, one draws nearer to God and consequently honors him and receives his blessings when we work hard, develop our talents and provide for a better existence. Again, however, note the subtle emphasis and effect of mankind's moral development on yet another facet of relationship, this time from mankind to creation itself.

These aforementioned philosophical and theological underpinnings bring to light the common desire to live and aspire beyond one's existence, to bring honor to

something that extends beyond the self. So in all of this, what is religion's value added to the social equation? Bharat Vir Singh, a Sikh Philosopher, puts it this way:

“Religion helps to regulate our conduct and behavior in society by providing a set of morals and value-system for human existence. It guides our actions in life, putting a check on criminal tendency in human nature. It ensures peaceful co-existence, love and harmony among human beings. It keeps our feet firmly planted on the ground even when our heads are up in clouds because of fast-moving technology resulting in hectic and stressful lifestyle...It prevents deterioration of the mind due to dehumanization and desensitization caused by highly mechanized modern living, thus providing stability...It prevents us from being carried away by the tides of the times..”²¹

In a manner of speaking, religion gives humanity a manner in which to measure behavior, a way of discerning good behavior from bad, of right from wrong. This is so in our relationships to ourselves, to one another, and to the world itself. Technology has allowed the pace of life, as perceived from one generation to the next, to accelerate. This acceleration can tend to confuse or blur lines of behavioral distinction. Regardless of life, however, there is an enduring constant and discipline which religion has for us as a species that is timeless.

The Army touts itself as a disciplined organization and in that sense seeks for itself a type of religious benefit. The danger is taking military discipline and using it to ride roughshod over religious discipline. Military discipline - taken too far - begins to isolate itself from society and removes any transcendental effect religion can have for soldiers. It is important for a soldier to embrace the Army Values but it is important for the Army to remember that the soldier must be able to inculcate the Army Values into his or her own belief system. Without that opportunity, a soldier can lose the connection he has with his higher power by the immanent atmosphere the Army creates. Mr. Singh addresses the notion of transcendence by saying:

“[Religion] gives you a clear conscience while performing an action or taking a difficult decision, like resorting to arms in self-defense or in war. It ensures balance in a life where negative social influences can be increasingly disruptive, immoral and corruptive for the mind. As a science of self-improvement, religion offers a therapeutic and success-oriented lifestyle, a victorious way of life...It is the manifestation of mercy - God’s mercy for His Creation and man’s mercy towards his fellow-beings and environment (Creation)...It protects the human rights of everyone and prevents their violation.”²²

This is an aspect of spirituality the Army does not fully embrace - the effect of transcendence. The Army wants a soldier to demonstrate loyalty to one’s fellow soldier, unit, and country but what happens when someone or something causes a soldier to lose faith in one’s self, one’s leaders, or one’s unit? Those feelings are bound in an existence defined by earth. Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (A.D. 354-430), believed that armies were not just simply necessary but essential to societal survival. The earthly city properly has an Army to preserve order within, to defend it from without, and by Augustine’s account, even to serve as an instrument of divine justice.²³ So the sense that an Army can be used in the service of God is an important aspect to consider of its role to the *polis*. If we as an Army are acting within the will of God, then we are acting within the moral principles he sets forth for the Army’s purpose on earth.

For those soldiers who believe in a power outside of earthly existence, it can be of inestimable comfort to know that there is a power, outside of nature, which is wholly independent of and removed from the material universe. The United States Military Academy also espouses a form of transcendence. Sophomore cadets are given the name and obituary of a graduate who has made the ultimate sacrifice and died in combat. They are to locate the graduate’s headstone in the Post Cemetery and meditate on the life and sacrifice of their assigned graduate, answering such questions as what he or she accomplished by military service and whether or not the graduate’s

death was in vain.²⁴ There is one other aspect of transcendence that is important - accountability. Regardless of what one does on earth, transcendence infers that all things are seen by God and one must give an account to one's Creator of one's life.

Thus, to wrap up "religion's value added" question: religion offers soldiers not only a way of comparing one's actions to evaluate temperance but also solace in knowing there can be mercy gained for actions for which one may not be proud. In a transcendent way, religion provides a higher level of accountability, an eternal accountability to God. In this way, religion provides the Army another level of accountability. Humans are wrought with fallibility; we sometimes make poor decisions which have an impact on others. However, not everything is brought to a tribunal and not everything brought to a tribunal is found illegal. There is an adage associated to Lord Acton (1834-1902), historian and moralist, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men."²⁵ Having accountability to a higher power can provide temperance to commanders when temperance is needed. Leaders may escape an earthly judgment but, in the case of Christianity, there will be a heavenly judgment, and this eternal reckoning is an important control on the behavior of soldiers in both peace and war.²⁶

Spirituality in the United States

Historically, gods have been an important part of governments and the functioning of civil government. Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia were, in essence, theocracies with chiefs, kings and emperors playing dual roles of political and spiritual leaders. Anthropologists have found that virtually all state societies and chiefdoms from around the world have been found to justify political power through

divine authority. This suggests that political authority can co-opt collective religious belief to bolster itself.²⁷

The United States, however, was founded on a less utilitarian Judeo-Christian belief and practice in the body politic. The Continental Congress was composed of a number of religious men—including both practicing Christians and Deists—who expended a tremendous amount of effort to promote and legitimate the practice of religion.²⁸ Congress appointed chaplains for itself and for the Army and Navy and imposed Christian morality on the armed forces. Congress was guided by a covenant theology which held that God bound himself in an agreement with the new nation and its people. This agreement stipulated that they "should be prosperous or afflicted, according as their general Obedience or Disobedience thereto appears."²⁹ Wars and revolutions were, accordingly, considered afflictions and divine punishments for sin from which a nation could rescue itself by repentance and reformation.³⁰ The first national government of the United States was convinced that the "public prosperity" of a society depended on the vitality of its religion.³¹ To deny, then, that God was an important element in the creation of our country only denigrates that for which we fight today and possibly die. The Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."³² Specifically cited, with a capital "C", is the word Creator in deference to an Almighty being. The Articles of Confederation state, "And whereas it hath pleased the great Governor of the world to incline the hearts of the legislatures we respectively represent in Congress ..."³³ In this instance, cited with a capital "G", is the word

Governor again in deference to an acknowledgment of the vital public role of the Divine to the nation. In the final paragraph of the United States Constitution, which Soldiers swear, on oath, to support and defend, is contained the phrase "...in the Year of our Lord..."³⁴ This calendar reference is to the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. The point is that Jesus is a renowned and historically documented man of God and to acknowledge his birth as the universal standard of calendar only re-enforces the universal acceptance that God exists and the founding and existence of the nation is relative to his earthly and heavenly reign.

To briefly return to the oath a soldier swears, through this oath a soldier binds one's self to the Constitution of the United States by incanting the conclusion, "So help me God". Finally, a reference to the first ten amendments of the United States Constitution, commonly known as the Bill of Rights, contains so impassioned a foundational legal principle enshrining the free exercise of religious belief, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."³⁵ Therefore, as the new country was born, the idea that the nation must be faithful to God transcendentally and that all citizens must be afforded this right immanently, prevailed in the public square and remains enshrined in law today.³⁶

Spirituality in the Army

The Army once believed so strongly in the criticality of spirituality that it was incorporated into two of its capstone doctrinal field manuals. Field Manual 100-1: *The Army*, dated June 1994 states:

"Moral courage includes a spiritual dimension and both transcend the physical dimension. It takes moral courage to stand up for one's belief in what is right, particularly when it is contrary to what others believe. It is the

courage to persevere in what we know to be right and not tolerate wrong behavior by friends, peers, subordinates, or superiors. The spiritual dimension of courage is derived from religious values that acknowledge an ultimate right and wrong. Physical and moral courage can be the difference between failure and success, whether in or out of uniform, whether in peace or in war.”

Field Manual 22-100: *Army Leadership*, a keystone doctrinal manual on Army leader development and dated August 1999, reinforced this when it states: “The commander delegates staff responsibility to the chaplain for programs to enhance spiritual fitness since many people draw moral fortitude and inner strength from a spiritual foundation.” The subsequent edition of Field Manual 1: *The Army*, dated June 2005, which succeeded Field Manual 100-1, states: “The challenge of serving a Nation at war highlights the importance of providing for the physical, material, mental, and spiritual well-being of Soldiers, Army civilians, and their family members.” Oddly though, the new Army Doctrine Publication 1: *The Army*, dated November 2012, which succeeded Field Manual 1, has no references to spirituality whatsoever. This is no light change whatsoever, as Army capstone doctrine guides all subordinate keystone doctrine, manuals, and training publications, and thus becomes the basis for all Army training and operations. Does this change, however, accord with tradition in the profession of arms?

In as much as many of our military traditions in the Army come from history, we can gain insights on the psyche of Soldiers. Knights are an early example of the merging of church and the profession of arms. A knight was intended to be the perfect combination of holy passion and military might.³⁷ His war was as much to master himself as it was master the enemies of the realm. In fact, he believed he would never

succeed in serving his king until he first succeeded in serving his God.³⁸ At one point in United States' history, religion was an integral part in the creation of our nation, as we have demonstrated, but it was integral to our first Army as well. In addressing the Continental Congress a month before the victory at Saratoga, future Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Jay described, "...a revolution which, in the whole course of its rise and progress, is distinguished by so many marks of the Divine favor and interposition, that no doubt can remain of its being finally accomplished." Jay went on to say that history would find it extraordinary that 13 colonies, "...divided by a variety of governments and manners, should immediately become one people ... unanimously determined to be free and, undaunted by the power of Britain, refer their cause to the Almighty and resolve to repel force by force."³⁹

The founding fathers knew that the spirit of a soldier was so important that they established the role of the chaplain. Even the title chaplain refers back to the life story of Saint Martin of Tours, a warrior who once when returning from battle in a bitter storm encountered a beggar in the snow, and cutting in half his *cappella*, aided the beggar who in a subsequent dream was revealed as Jesus of Nazareth. As our nation prepared for World War II, President Roosevelt signed Congressional Bill HR-3617, authorizing the construction of chapels to nurture the spirits of warriors.⁴⁰ Knowing that strong faith made good fighters, General of the Army George Marshall devoted himself to assuring that the religious needs of soldiers were met by constructing even more chapels and bringing into the service more chaplains.⁴¹ Chaplains have historically aided soldiers in identifying and commune with that divine power which has been part and parcel of the profession of arms, the nation and the Army.

Chaplains are a vital part of a soldier's internal practice of spirituality. Soldiers face unimaginable dangers, horrors, and hardships but they are still expected to persevere to complete the mission. The military requires its members to have a strong inner strength to withstand the stresses and rigors of combat and also to achieve psychological well-being.⁴² Chaplains have a vital part in helping soldiers develop such inner strength. They help leaders conduct combat in a moral and ethical way which undergirds the psychological well-being of soldiers; war thus achieves a moral justification for killing and, in fact, is regulated in the prevention of atrocities in its conduct.⁴³ War, however, erodes a sense of personal humanity. The professional ethic, which emphasizes competence and discipline, provides a defense against brutalization.⁴⁴ It posits that a disengagement of moral agency by followers under immoral leaders was a contributing, if not the major factor, in the My Lai village massacre in Vietnam and in the Abu Ghraib prison abuses in Iraq.⁴⁵ Chaplains thus become an instrumental resource in training leaders and soldiers to not commit such atrocities. Notwithstanding this role, however, even the institution of the Army Chaplaincy is at risk. The constitutionality of the chaplain in the Army was questioned in 1979 by two graduate law students; fortunately, they lost their case and their appeal was denied and they dropped their case 1986.⁴⁶ Given the current trend of the secularization of the public square, however, it is certainly not out of the question that the Army would might concede its chaplains if it came to it.

The Army does recognize that the spirit of its members is an essential part of a soldier's fitness. Soldiers want to know, in clear terms, not only why they fight but also if their cause is just, moral, righteous, even holy.⁴⁷ A soldier may love his comrades in

arms but there still exists the knowledge that he is powerless to completely protect him in “the fight” or from the horrors that it might bring to his soul; he needs God near and involved even in the brutality of killing. This truth can be stated thus: war summons faith.⁴⁸ Thus there is a very real need for soldiers to bounce back from adversity; their unit’s readiness depends on it because a soldier must do this not once but continually in combat and, once complete, over the course of a career. This the primary task a soldier undertakes as a part of his social contract with the nation.

Religion has aided in building resilience in wounded warriors and historically spirituality is a place wounded warriors receive both immanent and transcendent comfort. It is not uncommon, for instance, for post-traumatic stress (PTS) patients to seek religion and spirituality as part of their healing process. This should encourage clinicians, chaplains and others who work with veterans with PTS to teach them how to utilize spirituality and positively incorporate religious coping strategies in the prevention of hopelessness and suicide.⁴⁹ Positive religious coping includes collaborative problem solving with God, helping others in need, and seeking spiritual support from the community and a higher power.⁵⁰ Sometimes, the traumatic event is the catalyst that draws soldiers closer to spirituality or religious beliefs and Army healthcare professionals, just as healthcare professionals in the Veterans Administration, should capitalize on this fact that there is a strong connection between religion, spirituality and the healing of the mind and body. In a medical survey conducted in Croatia, for instance, to determine how likely their combat veterans are to attempt suicide, researchers found that more than 20% of veterans with PTS have a former suicide attempt, and all veterans with PTS have a greater suicidal risk and greater

hopelessness in comparison with healthy volunteers.⁵¹ These findings illustrate that veterans with PTS are at greater suicidal risk. However, this same study also showed that veterans with PTS who express more usage of positive religious coping strategies are less hopeless and consequently at less risk of attempting suicide.⁵²

Spiritual fitness can help ease the moral injury felt by some soldiers and give them strength beyond their own will to behave in accordance with individual and organizational values. Moral injury results from having to make difficult moral choices under extreme conditions, experiencing morally anguishing events or duties, witnessing immoral acts, or behaving in ways that profoundly challenge moral conscience and identity and the values that support them. Veterans Affairs clinicians have offered this definition of moral injury: “moral injury is perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.”⁵³ Moral injury, however, has remained largely or inadequately addressed because it is confused with post-traumatic stress.⁵⁴ Part of this discrepancy results from clinicians who treat PTS not being trained in theology or moral philosophy so that when veterans ask moral or religious questions, they are automatically referred to clergy. While helpful a practice as referral is, might not an integrative, holistic approach better serve the service member? For instance, Christian theology posits a category of ‘penal substitutionary atonement.’ This refers to the doctrine that Jesus Christ died as a substitute for sinners so that the guilt of our sinfulness was imputed to him, and he, in our place, bore the punishment that we deserve.⁵⁵ Moreover, he conversely became the vessel of God’s grace then poured out on humanity. So for a soldier distressed about something done in war that he may construe as sinful, this doctrine can afford

peace knowing his “sin” is forgiven and he can experience God’s grace, mercy and peace; chaplains are best positioned, qualified and looked to help soldier with this spiritual exercise. If a soldier is unable to come to terms with his actions, such an act can injure his self-confidence and, his desire to continue to participate in unit operations, to question the rightness of the world, or to trust in his unit’s leadership. Thus the spiritual fitness of soldiers is a critical component of force readiness and demonstrates why the spiritual domain is of vital operational significance.

Perhaps a correlation from a sister profession such as law enforcement may aid our understanding. Soldiers train to prepare for a variety of combat situations; much of the training they undergo is to develop the necessary techniques and procedures they will need to survive in hostile circumstances. By way of parallel, law enforcement has taken a similar view of spiritual training and this profession’s understanding of spirituality reveals that it needs training more in this discipline than in tactical training to counter the lasting effects of service which affect officers.⁵⁶ By intentionally cultivating spirituality into a soldier’s training, the Army can provide effective defense against not only the hardships soldiers experience but also their future hardships as well. Law enforcement’s embrace of spirituality does not weaken law enforcement; rather, it liberates its members to greater service through informed practice and guided performance.⁵⁷ In today’s world of violence and terrorism, to use our term spiritual dormancy cannot be the accepted practice in the body politic. Undisputed evidence of the wounds inflicted upon officers as the result of acute and chronic exposures during and after investigative activities, whether short or long, cries out for the development and implementation of safeguards.⁵⁸

Thus spiritual training is important to the exercise of a profession yet we need to look at this training as vital to how we prepare our soldiers to leave the Army and rejoin the nation as citizens. It does society no good if we completely drain a soldier of their spirit and leave them hollow at the conclusion of their time in the profession of arms. Put another way, we have as an Army an obligation to give them the strength to continue on with the tools they need to keep them strong as they reenter society. Religion and spirituality, and therefore God, are an critical components of the spiritual domain to not only our Army but also our nation. By preparing our soldiers through the cultivation of religion into training, we can provide effective defense against the hardships and horrors they experience, the dehumanizing effects of poor leadership, and the waywardness of immorality but further aid them in becoming productive citizens when they return to civilian life.

Spiritual Conflict

If God is an important consideration in the formulation of our Nation, why does the Army seem interested in distancing itself from it? Why, despite the provenance of philosophy and theology, the criticality of both religion and spirituality to society, the history of our nation and the recent official language and emphasis of Army capstone doctrine, does the Army seem bent on devolving into spiritual dormancy? The humanistic stance of modern thinking places limitations on people's endurance. It brings into question a sense of self and life that does not have a positive meaning, value or purpose beyond one's immanent existence, interaction with the *polis*, or transcendent worth. This produces some strange inconsistencies, especially given the cultural imprint of the nation's Judeo-Christian heritage. The Ten Commandments may not be

posted in public schools but the United States Congress employs a Christian chaplain. The Pledge of Allegiance may someday not include the phrase “one nation under God” but “In God We Trust” is printed on the national currency. Families may not pray at high school football games but presidents are inaugurated by prayer into the Oval Office.⁵⁹ It should be no surprise then, with these inconsistencies, which the Army is itself experiencing inconsistencies in the behavior of several of its senior leaders and its soldiers are experiencing moral injuries. If the nation wants its Army leaders and soldiers to act morally, then the Army needs to pay heed to and maintain its emphasis on its roots and traditions. Perhaps in this way the Army can lead the nation to make a categorical decision regarding the contemporary role of religion, spirituality and the place of God in the body politic.

What is clear, however, is spirituality is something more than just an intra-human experience for meaning. A person is more than just matter or a form without a soul. God is at the root of our lives socially and we are inextricably connected to God and to one another in a network of inter-human mutual relationships. The relational character of our lives is lived out in community with others and with God. Religion helps to regulate our conduct and behavior in society by providing a set of morals and value-systems for human existence. It gives one a clear conscience while performing an action or taking a difficult decision, like resorting to arms in self-defense or in war.⁶⁰ Notwithstanding this, however, the spiritual domain of Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness is beginning a shift to a domain of the Human Spirit. In an article from the NDU Press, the “Domain of the Human Spirit Model” was introduced as a model to give DoD personnel a common framework and language to understand and discuss

human spirit development.⁶¹ What was startling, however, was that religion was referenced as a way of promoting ones' spirituality but neither religion nor faith was mentioned anywhere in the model for developing one's spiritual fitness, much less its social significance. Now the spiritual domain is at risk of losing its grip with religion because of an ever-increasing reductionism regarding the role of religion, spirituality and God within the joint force.

Conclusion

To revisit a question asked near the beginning of this paper: what is the potential impact, then, if all reference to religion is removed from the construct of spirituality in the Army? First, Soldiers will begin to view themselves as the center of their own world. If no one gets hurt, then there is no reason to believe that one's behavior is anything other than acceptable because its effect is self-limited. Second and related to this, however, Soldiers will begin to view some human's lives as less valuable than theirs, which goes against the Army's value of respect. Third, to deny the spiritual connection we feel existing with God will do nothing but marginalize the strength in God on which a soldier can draw in both peace and war, thereby limiting readiness. Fourth and finally, if we as a force are sincere in the belief that our soldiers are "the strength of the nation", then we need to ensure faith and religion remain as proven and vital components of spirituality and a source of resilience; as we have seen, this is critical not only for the Soldier and the Army but also to the functioning of our democracy. At one point in the United States' history, religion was an integral part in the creation of our nation and was integral in our first Army as well. The Army would do well to remember this as we

continue to explore the future importance of religion to our soldiers and families and the role of God in the profession of arms and the body politic.

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