The Military Chaplaincy:
A Study In Role Conflict

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The chaplaincy of the United States Army began officially on July 29, 1775, when the Continental Congress ruled that a chaplain would receive a payment of $20 per month. Actually clergymen had been members of the military force of the United States from the beginning. They served as soldiers as well as religious leaders, and were often referred to as "fighting parsons."

From those early days to the present the role of military chaplain has changed significantly, but from the beginning it has been under the scrutiny of both supportive and opposing forces. From 1775 to the Mexican War of 1846-1847, the single greatest hurdle for the chaplaincy was the question of its constitutionality in the light of the First Amendment. The fourth president of the United States, James Madison (1908-1817), was heavily involved in the constitutionality question. He strongly opposed any arrangement which would pose a danger to the religious freedom of all people. It was over his powerful objection that Congress finally determined that the government has a responsibility to provide opportunities for worship and faith practices for service personnel. Consequently the chaplaincy was permitted to continue and was not considered a violation of church-state separation. This governmental position has been challenged even in the present decade.

Through the years many voices have challenged the chaplaincy on a variety of issues: (1) the conflict between religious values and the values of war, (2) the chaplain's wearing of rank, (3) the pressure surviving in the system as it relates to promotion and to being rated,

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(4) and the difficult task of juggling the two demanding roles of clergyman and military officer.

Some of the voices opposed to the chaplaincy call for the total removal of clergy from the ranks of the military. On the other hand, a number of voices affirm the absolute necessity of clergy involvement within the military organization. These voices state that spiritual support is as important as food, quarters, and ammunition for the accomplishment of the military's objectives. The chaplains themselves insist on the right to take God's word to the men and women of the military wherever they may be serving.

The Chaplain's Dilemma

The chaplain faces both philosophical and functional role conflicts. This dilemma is so powerful because each role is consuming. Perhaps there is no other role so closely identified with a person's being as the clergy role. A priest is a priest, a rabbi is a rabbi, and a minister is a minister, whether during normal working hours or at the latest hour of the evening. It cannot be only a job or a vocation; it is a life-style. Everything the clergyman does reflects upon his calling and his God.[1]

The same is true of the role of military officers. The government has challenged the comissioned officer to "uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America," whether it be morning, noon, or midnight. Military duty and pay is for a 24-hour day, seven days a week. This responsibility takes no leave of absence. The competent military officer is always considering the needs of his soldiers and contemplating ways of more effectively leading and motivating those who serve with him.

What we encounter, therefore, is a very difficult and often untenable conflict of roles. Each role constitutes a life-style, a total commitment of loyalties. The problem would not be quite so serious if the twin callings were synchronous. However, such is not the case.

For the chaplain, the demands of both callings are great. To the Church, the chaplain is bound by his vocational call, his concern for the souls of people, and the hope of eternal life. To the state, the chaplain is bound by his constitutional obligation, his concern for the soliders in the command, and the physical and financial welfare of himself, his family, and friends. Waldo W. Burchard, whose 1953 doctoral dissertation on the military chaplain is a major study of the subject, wrote that the conflict is natural; it falls along the lines of flesh versus spirit, state versus the church, the world versus God, and

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[1] The terms "he," "men," "clergyman", and "clergymen" are used to refer to both men and women.

evil versus good.[2] Role conflict in the chaplaincy appears to be inevitable.

Specific Areas Of Conflict For The Chaplain

From the literature available on the chaplaincy, five relatively distinct areas of role conflict emerge: church versus state, religious values over against military values, the usefulness of rank, role expectations of commanders and other military personnel, and the prophetic role of chaplains as over against the military officer role.

Church Versus State

The first area of conflict is the issue of church versus state. This issue is basic because it calls into question the constitutionality of the chaplaincy. Does the chaplaincy violate the First Amendment which guarantees religious freedom? Burchard reported that the majority of chaplains he interviewed strongly indicated they saw no violation of the First Amendment.[3] Most chaplains claimed that the wide range of denominations represented in the military prohibited the establishment of a state church within the armed forces.

Clarence Abercrombie, III, writing in his 1977 book, *The Military Chaplain*, identified the serious problem of mainstream Christianity moving more and more toward accepting United States military policy as "the will of God." He cited instances where the goals of the nation have seemed to be or perhaps they were so "Christian" that church leaders were rarely able to see the possibility of conflict between "Caesar and God."[4] Abercrombie held that from the mainstream American churches have come clergy who have not had to be "resocialized" by the military or who themselves did not have to change their values in any significant way in order to move into and become very comfortable with military life and values. The incipient danger in this development, according to Abercrombie, is that God's will and the national will may be seen as synonymous.

In the eyes of some observers, the church in the military does appear to be a "state-church." Although, perhaps not in the same way as Judaism in Isreal or the Church of England in Great Britain, the military "church" carries the protection of the state, receives financial support from the state, has officials who are officers of the state, and espouses a common body of doctrine and practices. These

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[2] W.W. Burchard, "The Role of the Military Chaplain" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Berkley, 1953).

[3] W.W. Burchard, "Role Conflicts of Military Chaplains," American Sociological Review, No. 19 (1954): 528.

[4] C.L. Abercrombie, III, *The Military Chaplain* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publication, 1977), p. 19.

are the criteria of a state-church according to Burchard.[5] If the military chaplaincy is a "state-church," where are the chaplains loyalties, and what if those loyalties are in conflict?

Religious Values Versus Military Values

The second area of conflict is religious values versus, for lack of a better term, the values of war. Philip Caputo in *Rumor of War*, a document written during the Vietnam conflict quoted Jomini: "The greatest tradedy is war, but so long as there is mankind, there will be war."[6] The moral contradiction comes for the chaplain when he recognizes the validity of Jomini's words, and then participates in organized killing in the face of the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill".[7]

A masterful rationale for the chaplain's involvement in war from a scriptural base is to be found in Parker Thompson's doctoral dissertation on the chaplaincy of the United States Army. Thompson has woven the pieces of evidence which make the chaplain's presence with the military not only helpful, but necessary, and in fact, sanctioned by God.[8] Forty five percent of the chaplains interviewed in Burchard's study, while not alluding to a scriptural base, stated that killing an enemy soldier was a righteous act, while 55% said it was only justifiable. Their stated rationale was that the primary duty and moral obligation of the soldier during wartime was to serve the country and this might be interpreted to mean killing the enemy when necessary.

On the other hand, Burchard firmly announces Jesus to have been a pacifist through and through, and states that Jesus implored his disciples and the early church to refuse to submit to the emperor or to march in his armies. Burchard makes a convincing case as to why religion and war are thoroughly incompatable. He says the doctrines of peace, of nonresistance, of Christian love, and of the brotherhood of mankind repudiate war. A recognition of this area of conflict was made in a 1969 Time Magazine article. The Time Magazine article asserted that the involvement of people who represent Christianity's gospel of peace with fighting is absolutely

[5] Burchard, 1953, page 272.

[6] Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War* (New York: Ballatine Books, 1077), page 181.

[7] Richard G. Hutcheson, Jr., *The Churches and the Chaplaincy* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), page 48.

[8] Parker C. Thompson, "The Chaplaincy of the United States Army: A Manual for Assisting Clergy in Making a Meaningful Career Choice" (Doctoral Dissertation, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1980).

immoral.[9] The chaplain is likely to find this second area of conflict troublesome.

Chaplains Wearing Of Rank

The third area of conflict for the military chaplain has to do with the military rank. Chaplains have not always worn rank, but each of today's chaplains wears rank. George W. Williams reports that the first Chief of Chaplains in 1918 was relieved and almost court-martialed over the issue of rank.[10] It is reported that the chief was in office when the directive came down for chaplains to remove their rank. Because of his objection to this policy, the chief practically incited a riot among the chaplains. As a result of his actions, he was dismissed. Other chaplains reportedly have strong feelings about the wearing of rank. Some believe their ability to perform ministry in the military to be enhanced by the wearing of rank, while others feel ministry to be inhibited by the wearing of rank.

Thompson advocated that chaplains do not need rank except in their function as staff officers.[11] According to Thomspon rank assists greatly with the accomplishment of administrative and managerial duties and responsibilities. He stated that in a hierarchical system like the military, no one without the identification of some degree of rank, power, or authority is able to interface effectively with the system. Thompson concluded that rank is not an impediment to working with any segment of the military community and is of immeasurable value when the chaplain confronts the system.

A former Army Chief of Chaplains, Kermit D. Johnson, concluded from a survey of chaplains conducted in 1976 that rank is generally not considered to be an impediment to working closely with other chaplains.[12]

Archbishop John J. O'Conner, a former Navy Chief of Chaplains, reportedly took an unofficial survey among sailors in the Pacific fleet after repeatedly hearing that the wearing of rank and the uniform were hindrance to chaplains' ministerial efforts. His survey indicated that wearing rank and uniform did not make any difference, but definitely did not hurt. Archbishop O'Connor concluded

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[9] "Honest to God - or Faithful to the Pentagon?" *Time Magazine*, May 1969, page 49.

[10] G.H. Williams, "The Chaplaincy of the Armed Forces of the United States of America in Historical and Eccesiastical Perspective," *Military Chaplains*, ed. Harvey Cox, (New York: American Report Press, 1973), page 41.

[11] Thompson, 1980, page 91.

[12] Kermit D. Johnson, "Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction Among Army Chaplains," (Study Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1976) page 59.

that the only real problem with the wearing of rank was what it could do to the wearer.[13]

As suggested above, there is today some disagreement about the effect of wearing rank. Four reasons are suggested. The first is the opposite of the statement offered above as to why rank is necessary. It states that the wearing of rank is a severe impediment for the chaplain because regardless of how much the chaplain attempts to down play it, the chaplain is immediately and always identified as an officer. This identification of the chaplain as an officer is said to turn off enlisted personnel.[14]

A second objection to chaplains wearing rank has to do with the promotion system. The chaplain's participation in this system is said to make them "like everybody else — selfish, ambitious, and narrow minded." It is said that some chaplains strive for higher rank, and function more from that position of rank than as clergymen.[15]

Gordon C. Zahn, in a doctoral dissertation, "The Military Chaplaincy: A Study of Role Tension in the Royal Air Force," noted that chaplains almost always seem to become absorbed in the ranking system and jeopardize their ministerial orientation.[16] O'Connor suggested that those few whose rank goes to their heads end up simply losing their people — their surbordinates, their officer peers, and their superiors.[17]

A third position has been that some chaplains believe that rank and officer status tend to negate the possibilities of being able to move freely and easily within the system. Abercrombie's analysis was that the rank structure and officer status as it currently exists for chaplains is a major problem and needs changing.[18]

The fourth rank-related issue deals with collegiality among chaplains. D.C. Kinlaw's thesis stated that rank can be a serious deterrent to the "chaplain to chaplain" kind of ministry; and if that is so, it can be a deterrent to those outside the chaplaincy, also.[19]

[13] John J. O'Connor, "A Chaplain Responds," *America*, August 7-14, 1982, page 74.

[14] Burchard, 1985, p. 156.

[15] Martin Seigel, "Notes of a Jewish Chaplain," ed. Harvey Cox, Jr. Military Chaplains (New York: American Report Press, 1973).

[16] Gordon C. Zahn, "The Military Chaplaincy: A Study of Role Tension in the Royal Air Force," (Toronto Canada: University of Toronto, 1969), page 105.

[17] O'Conner, page 74.

[18] Abercrombie, 1977.

[19] Dennis C. Kinlaw, "Resistances to the Growth of Collegiality in the Milittary Chaplaincy," Military Chaplains' Review (Fall 1975), ;. 65.

This constitutes then a third area of conflict for the chaplain. Chaplains, almost universally, claim that rank is good, helpful, and necessary in the fulfillment of their duties. Thompson noted that the abuse of rank is determined invariably by the chaplain who wears it but does not handle it well.

Expectations Of The Commanding Officer

A fourth area of concern for the chaplain is the expectation of the commanding officer regarding the chaplain's role in the unit. It is natural to expect each commanding officer to have specific expectations of what the chaplain should be and what he should be doing. Commanders who have spoken before groups of chaplains, sharing their expectations for the chaplaincy, have shown widely divergent viewpoints. Expectations range from the chaplain's being an officer first and totally identifying with the command, to the chaplain's being the spiritual leader and advocate for the solider.

Because chaplains and commanders have responsibilities for the same group of people, one might assume that a close working relationship would naturally evolve. In fact, most chaplains report that the majority of their working relationships with commanders have been excellent. One commander wrote that his chaplain was his right-hand man and a valuable member of the team.[20] Burchard wrote that the chaplains he interviewed were pleased with their relationships to the command structure.

Burchard hypothesized that while chaplains would like to believe all is well, often little cooperation and understanding occurs between the chaplain and his commander. Zahn wrote that chaplains are often considered as little more than social service specialists — a kind of "moral insurance", handy to have around in times of personal crisis.[21] An even less complimentary view is offered by a former Navy chaplain who claims the chaplain is seen as unnecessary and only needed to pick up all the petty jobs no one else wants. In fact, according to MacFarlane the majority of the time the chaplain is actually seen as an interference — someone everyone tries to ignore.[22]

It is interesting to note that chaplains seem to be generally positive about what they have to offer to the system, but relatively negative about the way they sense they are viewed and utilized.

[20] Quay C. Snyder, "What Does the Commander Expect From the Chaplain," *Military Chaplains' Review* (Fall 1977), p. 6.

[21] Gordon C. Zahn, "Military Chaplains: Defending Their Ministry," *America*, August 7 - 14, 1982, page 68.

[22] N. MacFarlan, "Navy Chaplaincy: Muzzled Ministry," Christian Century 44 (1966), p. 1338.

Prophet Versus Military Officer

At the heart of this fifth conflict issue is a paragraph from The Chaplain Professional Development Plan.

> Army chaplains demonstrate a prophetic presence. They are so in touch with their own value system and those of their churches that they boldly confront both the Army as an institution and individuals within it with the consequences of their actions. While carefully guarding against the temptation to impose purely denominational constraints on others, they address the "toughness" of life for both soldiers and dependents, and the Army command structure, and seek to influence decision and policy formation with the unique spiritual witness. They are knowledgeable, able and willing to confront both individuals and the Army with the ethical aspects of decision-making, policies and leadership, and the extent to which these, in both war and peace, reflect on basic Judeo-Christian ethical framework. They are prepared adequately to "stand up and be counted."[23]

A prophet is defined as one who speaks for God, gifted with more than ordinary spiritual and moral insight, and who delivers God's message with compassion and hope. Several writers have suggested ways by which the chaplain can most effectively fulfill the role of prophet. Zahn called the chaplain the "moral guide and counselor," the one whose normal performance of duty consists of awakening or "troubling" the conscience when immoral actions are taken or ordered. T.A. Harris offered the concept of "court jester" as a possible prophetic model for the chaplain. The jester burst bubbles of arrogance and speaks truth which has profound meaning in a masterfully warm and humorous manner.[24] Army Regulation 600-30 (1977) charges the chaplain to assume the "enabler" role of encouraging high standards of personal and social conduct among officers, enlisted personnel, and others. Each of these concepts is a variation of the prophetic role. While they offer differing approaches to the role, they all have one thing in common: the announcement of God's truth.

Many writers agree that it is very important for the chaplain to assume the prophetic role. The chaplain is the conscience of the Army; his job is to provide the moral framework for the military

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[23] The Chaplain Professional Development Plan, (U. S. Army, 1979), page 1.

[24] T.A. Harris, "The Chaplain: Prophet, Jester, or Jerk," *Military Chaplains' Review* (Fall 1983), p. 85.

community.[25] The chaplain is in a position to call for the responsible use of power and must never shy away from it. The chaplaincy advises the command on morals and must confront the military when things appear wrong. The chaplaincy must contribute to the voice of both the churches and the public when they speak to the military regarding matters of ethics and morality. It is a professional responsibility which the chaplain cannot legitimately ignore or neglect.[26]

The importance of chaplains standing up to be counted even when confronting delicate issues cannot be overstated. Chaplain (COL) Billy Libby, writing only three years ago, highlighted this reality when he said that there are many instances when there will be only one "right" way to respond, and that reality demands agonizing prayer and appraisal on the part of the chaplain. Chaplain Libby continued:

> It just may be necessary for the chaplain to risk asking hard questions, to include confronting behavior and thinking that indicate a lack of ethical understanding or a sense of integrity.[27]

A large number of writers have claimed that the chaplain either should not be prophetic, cannot be prophetic, or will not be prophetic due to circumstances beyond his control. They say that since the state is morally autonomous and not subject to moral absolutes, it is inappropriate for anyone to attempt to be prophetic with regard to the state or its officials. Secondly, they claim that the chaplain has become domesticated through military service, and is thus effectively silenced. They further claim that the chaplain who is wearing the uniform of the government, paid by the state, and dependent upon senior officers for advancement cannot possibly proclaim a prophetic gospel.[28] In their view, it would be impossible for the chaplain to be prophetic from within the system because his primary allegiance is to the system; "faith must bow to the state."[29]

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[25] Bernard Rogers, "The Challenges of the Chaplaincy," *Military Chaplains' Review* (Fall 1977).

[26] B.R. Bonnet, "The Moral Role of the Chaplain Branch," *Military Chaplains' Review* (Spring 1978), p. 7.

[27] Billy W. Libby, "The Chaplains' Allegience to His Church: *Military Chaplains' Review* (Fall 1983), p. 34.

[28] Harvey G. Cox, Jr., *Military Chaplains: From Religious Military to a Military Religion* (New York: American Report Press, 1973), p.x.

[29] W.R. Miller, "Chaplaincy Versus Mission in a Secular Age," *The Christian Century*, 83 (1966), p. 1336.

The chaplaincy is seen to be too much a part of the system which it serves, and therefore blind to what goes on within the system.

One writer claims that the chaplain learns very easily that if he wishes to survive in the system he must not "rock the boat."[30] He further claims that the chaplains who rise in the system are those who compromise. How can one possibly be prophetic and compromise at the same time? A warning is echoed by many that to become overly identified with the military officer role carries with it the danger of becoming socialized into the institution and of losing identity and value as a clergyman.

Mark McCullough and Clarance Abercrombie both emphasize that the chaplains can handle the military officer role fairly well as long as they realize that their first loyalty is to God and their churches. However, Martin Siegel, Zahn, and Burchard argue that it is not only impractical but very unlikely that the chaplain will abide by the clergy role first in the face of the immediate pressure of being a military officer.

For those who must face the dilemma, the advice of G.H. Williams is relevant: today's minister must be courageous, self-disciplined, and a representative of another way of life among men.[31] Johnson offers a word of encouragement:

> In the interaction between denomination, command, and chaplaincy, it appears that chaplains are required to make almost daily fine tunings, and sometimes major adjustments in the face of competing demands.[32]

In the life and work of the chaplain it appears likely that either the role of the military officer or the clergy role will become the dominant one. If the clergy role is chosen, one can count on the risk of possible isolation and rejection, even dismissal; to choose the military officer role, one can perhaps achieve career success but it may take a heavy toll on one's ministerial effectiveness. As Jesus said, each person should therefore "count the cost." (*Luke* 14:28)

A Personal Struggle

I have struggled with the issues of role conflict since long before I entered active duty as a chaplain. I have believed strongly in the church's responsibility to provide ministry and a witness of faith to men and women everywhere; and for me, there is no greater need for this ministry of witness than to the men and women in the uniform of our military services. While my unwavering commitment to the

[30] MacFarlane, p. 1338.

[31] Williams, 1973.

[32] Johnson, p. 49.

military chaplaincy has always been present, I have from time to time experienced a nagging uneasiness about the clergy role and the military officer role meshing together. At times it feels like a schizophrenic allegience. I am aware that I can do both roles well; however, it seems by the very nature, orientation, and purpose of the two roles, they should not mesh all that well. There ought to be some tension between them, or so it seems to me.

As a result of my concern, I decided to do an academic research project to seek from other chaplains how they felt about this issue, to identify their level of perceived role conflict, to check the variations due to rank and denominational differences, and to explore how chaplains cope with role conflict.

Preparation For The Study

In February 1983 while a student at Vanderbilt University, I developed a questionnaire called the "The Chaplains Role Assessment Inventory" which was designed to draw out thoughts and feelings regarding role conflict within the military chaplaincy. Earlier studies on the chaplaincy, conversations with other chaplains and educators, readings, and personal concerns provided the issues to be addressed in the instrument. I administered a pilot survey to the Fort Campbell Chaplain Section in April 1983. From the results of the pilot survey and comments provided on the instrument margin, a second questionnaire was prepared. The second survey instrument was administered to students of the Chaplain Officer Advanced Course in July 1983, and subsequently refined further. At that point the Survey Division of the Soldier Support Institute — National Capital Region, the Chief of Chaplains Office, and Ethics Committee at Vanderbilt University approved the research proposed and the survey instrument.

Population Surveyed

The population for the study was the United States Army Chaplain Branch which on February 11, 1984, consisted of 1,470 chaplains. A random sample of that total population was identified by using the chaplains directory provided by the Office of the Chief of Chaplains. A minimum response of 387 returned surveys was considered necessary to provide a 95% confidence interval with an error range of +5%. Consequently, 891 "Chaplains' Role Assessment Inventory" instruments were either mailed out or hand distributed at the U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School. Of that number, 20 were undeliverable, and 637 were returned with responses for a 73% return rate.

For the population of 1,470 chaplains, a sample size of 637 returns represents a 99% confidence interval with an error range of + 4%. Additionally, it should be noted that a high return rate of

73% suggests a minimal nonresponse bias. Since no coding system was used to determine the identity of nonrespondents, a random check for any bias would have been impossible.

Research Statements Tested And Results

Nine research statements were addressed in this study. Each was either identified as an issue for chaplains based on the many writings available, or extracted from some of the earlier studies done on the chaplaincy. The nine statements with the results from the survey were as follows:

Research statement #1

"The position of the chaplain in the military setting leads to a conflict of roles," was supported by the data. It was supported by taking the data from the inventory item which read almost the same way as did the research statement, and also supported by the composite score from other inventory items used to establish the presence of role conflict. To a greater or lesser degree, all denominations and every rank agreed.

Research statement #2

"Chaplains consider their clergy roles to be more important than their officer roles," was strongly supported.

Research statement #3

"Chaplains generally believe their commanders consider the chaplains' officer role to be more important than his clergy role," was not supported. An earlier study researched this same hypothesis and reached the same conclusion.

Research statement #4

"Chaplains generally spend more time in their officer-related roles than in their clergy roles," was not supported.

Research statement #5

"Chaplains tend to reconcile the conflict of role through compartmentalization of role behaviors," was not supported by a relatively narrow margin (39% agree to 47% disagree). Burchard (1953) offered the hypothesis that chaplains use "rationalization and compartmentalization of role behaviors" to cope with role conflict, and then suggested that comparmentalization was the more frequently used technique. His hypothesis was well substantiated, but the findings of this study differ from the Burchard findings on this issue.

Research statement #6

"Chaplains serve as interpreters of the values of the military organization, help resolve value-dilemmas of individual service members, and help promote smooth operation of the military organization," was mildly supported. Burchard, in two different places, offers

this hypothesis and at one time claimed it to be "positively supported," and in another place to be "less strongly supported than the others." This study confirms the second Burchard rendering, but definitely not the first.

Research statement #7

"Seniority tends to diminish feeling of role conflict," was not supported. It appears that the highest rank of colonel and the lower rank of first lieutenant experience the greatest perceived role conflict, whereas the lieutenant colonel experiences the least perceived role conflict. The greatest difference indicated by my data between any two consecutive ranks was found to exist between lieutenant colonel and colonel. This may be due to heightened awareness of awesome responsibilities of being both a senior clergyman and high ranking military officer, or perhaps it could indicate that senior chaplains are more willing to acknowledge the role conflict they experience.

Research statement #8

"Feeling free to be prophetic, in a confrontive and outspoken sense, is directly related to the age, years of service, and rank of the chaplain," was partially supported. Since rank, years of service, and age are so closely related, statistical data were formed only on the variable of rank. In terms of rank, the research statement was supported. The more junior chaplains (first lieutenants and captains) were less likely to agree than were the senior chaplains; however, the three upper levels of rank (major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel) all had the same composite score. From the ranks of first lieutenant through lieutenant colonel, the research statement held; however, at colonel the trend shifted dramatically. At least on that statment, colonels responded like lower ranking chaplains, perhaps indicating the perception that one is not as free to speak prophetically at the colonel level. Also perhaps it is simply not an issue for colonels.

Research statement #9

"The chaplain's rank is not considered by chaplains to be a deterrent to effective ministry," was supported. Burchard and Zahn had each speculated that rank was a handicap for the chaplain. This study does not confirm that chaplains see it as a handicap. Burchard and Zahn found that chaplains tend to agree that rank and officer status are essential for the fulfillment of their mission. Results of this study confirm that observation.

The specific inventory item used to elicit responses to possible role conflict coping mechanisms requires further explanation. The issue was originally offered as being one to confirm or deny the statement that chaplains use compartmentalization of role behaviors to cope with role conflict. If compartmentalization is not the emotional or academic mechanism used, what is? The breakout of the results

indicates that only 6.8% acknowledged that compartmentalization was the mechanism used, whereas 56.4% indicated that they used "study, reason, and reflection," or "seeking advice and dialogue with others," or "bringing to bear spiritual resources," or some combination of these three as their way of handling the perceived role conflict. Almost 16% denied any role conflict, while 13.3% indicated confrontational behavior was the most workable coping strategy for them. From the data, the evidence leads toward the conclusion that 82.2% of the chaplains feel some degree of role conflict with which they have chosen a number of means to cope. Prayer and meditation, spiritual resources, and friends or mentors appear to have provided the greatest aids for managing the conflict.

Reaction To The Survey

The role assessment inventory seemed to elicit a number of interesting reactions. For example, the inventory items which addressed specific issues such as the church versus the state and bayonet training as preparation for "killing," caused no great consternation for the chaplains. Those issues seemed to have already been thought through and resolved, perhaps before chaplains entered active duty. A number of comments, written in the margins of the returned inventory instruments, indicated that chaplains believe these issues ought to be resolved before a commitment to the chaplaincy can be made.

On the other hand, the issues addressed by the inventory which were nonspecific in terms of actual events or circumstances, those somewhat philosophical in nature, seemed to elicite more internal struggling. Words and parenthetical phrases, written on the margin of the questionnaire seemed to indicate that an attempt at clarification was taking place. Respondents appeared to want to make certain they were being understood.

Summary And Conclusions

Role conflict is perceived by the Army chaplain as being a part of his everyday world. It is not seen to be a devastating ingredient; however, it is seen as something with which each chaplain must learn to cope. Preferred methods for coping are prayer, study and reflection, talking with others, and sometimes taking a stand and confronting the issues. Chaplains see themselves at times as having a prophetic role where they must challenge the system, but always their first responsibility is to minister. On one issue chaplains all agree: their first allegiance is to God.

With the heavy demands to be both military officers and clergy, it is not suprising there is role conflict. Perhaps the greater surprise is that there is not more perceived role conflict than there is. The implications are that chaplains have fairly effectively worked

through these issues prior to entering on active duty, or that the incompatability of the two roles is not nearly so severe as some researchers would suggest.