

— The AGC —

# JOURNAL

Published Semi-Annually

VOLUME 5 – NUMBER 1

*Spring 2025*



Rooted in the Great Commandment (*Matthew 22:36-40*) and the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20*), and recognized by the federal government as an official ecclesiastical endorsing agency, the Associated Gospel Churches (AGC) exists to represent Biblically Christ-centered churches, for the purpose of recruiting, endorsing, educating and supporting ordained men to serve as chaplains—pastors in uniform—in publicly-restricted access institutions.

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## THE AGC JOURNAL

*Published by*

The Associated Gospel Churches  
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## **FOR CHRIST AND COUNTRY**

*υποφέρουν από δυσκολίες μαζί μου, ως καλός  
στρατιώτης του Ιησού Χριστού*

*– II Tim 2:3*

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## **LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**

**W**elcome to the Spring 2025 edition of the Associated Gospel Churches Journal (AGC Journal). For those who are new to reading this journal, we are an ecclesiastical endorsing agency for military and parachurch ministry chaplains. We believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures and the need for salvation through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Cor 15:2-5).

The purpose of this journal is to discuss and publish resources to help those in a chaplain ministry. Essentially, it is a journal for Chaplains and by Chaplains. It is a forum to hopefully further the Gospel of Jesus Christ and encourage those already serving Him in some type of ministry. We publish articles which discuss many different aspects of the Gospel ministry, whether it be some person who has already gone through some specific part of problem or dilemma or just for some sermon illustrations or a discussion on current topics in Chaplain ministry. In short, it is a toolbox for those in the ministry who want to read about the latest subjects related to things in the ministry. So, read, glean tips and enjoy this month's AGC Journal. Here is what is included in this month's Journal..

***Chaplaincy and the Bible: A Study of Biblical Illustrations and Examples of Chaplain-Related Activities* by Ken Lawson**

For those who question the need and Biblical uses for Chaplains, this is the perfect article for you. As a retired Army Chaplain, Dr. Lawson has gone through the Old and New Testaments and shown from Scripture the uses and need for Chaplain types of ministries for the Lord Jesus. This is the first part of a two-part series, and this article focuses on uses specific to the Old Testament. It has been said by some that the use of Chaplains is not Biblical, but there are instances which are outside of the synagogue,

temple or local Church settings where a spiritual presence is needed to speak and represent the things of God for society at large.

By his thoroughness (demonstrated by almost 50 footnotes), Dr. Lawson has demonstrated that God does indeed call and use men of God for purposes outside the confines of the four walls of a temple or church building. It should be mentioned here that a Chaplain is essentially a pastor in uniform and is sent by the local church to serve the spiritual needs of those civil institutions which are outside the confines of the local church.

***“God in ‘Rats Alley’: First World War Poets and the Eclipse of the Divine”***  
*by Tim Demy*

This is the first of two articles from guest authors, both written by retired Navy Chaplains which explore the effect of war upon those who fight it. In this article, Demy explores how the horrors of trench warfare of WWI affected the faith of those who fought in the darkest part of the war. By his research in the poetry of WWI (C.S. Lewis, George A. Studdert Kennedy, Isaac Rosenberg, etc.) writers, Dr. Demy introduces themes that are disturbing where men lose their faith as the shroud of hopelessness surrounds them.

He then shows how this war affected the history of ideas in the 20th century from religion to economics. Especially insightful is how he connects the terrible experience of this war to the thinkers of later 20th century thought, including C.S. Lewis and the liberal theology of Paul Tillich and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who later in the century both take a low view of God. As the Head of the Ethics Department at the Naval War College, Dr. Demy is in a good place to make these observations and make a direct link to the subsequent destruction of humanity without the lens of a loving God for the next 100 years after the war.

***“Moral Injury and the Silence of Heroes”*** *by Dan Nix*

In this article, a retired Navy chaplain currently teaching at the Naval Graduate school in Monterey, California, explains how Moral Injury is different from PTSD. He does this by referring to a WWI British Forces Chaplain, Jeffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy who wrote poetry about his experiences of war. His use of poetry was a means of not only explaining his thoughts about warfare, but also a means of ministering to the spiritual doubts and conflicts of his military “flock.” One of his themes described in this article is the redemptive aspects of the Lord but also

delves into the responsibility of the warrior to remember the fallen dead and honor them because they have given all for the cause of peace.

The takeaway from both articles is to show how war in any generation affects those who do the fighting, whether in WWI or in the deserts and mountains of the middle east. It is these thoughts which give the modern military Chaplain some ideas on how to serve and minister to those who are going through great doubts about their faith and how best to give aspects of ministry to not only console their doubts, but to also glorify God in the midst of tragedy.

***“Dr. Richard Mayhue: A Tribute to a Man Used by God”*** by Bob Freiberg

Each generation throughout history has had special individuals who made a difference for the cause of Christ. The accomplishments of these people often last for generations in one way or another. Currently, such is the life's work of Dick Mayhue. From his humble origins as a Naval Officer during the Vietnam War to being the presence behind the initial growth of Master's College (now University) and Master's Seminary, this is the story which explains why both of these institutions are still true to God's Word and have become one the largest Evangelical Christian institutions of higher learning which has remained faithful to the training and teaching of future pastors and Christian workers.

While we are all familiar with the life's ministry of Dr. MacArthur and his commitment to the Word of God, it was Dick Mayhue as the Provost and Vice President who took Dr. MacArthur's vision and turned it into a reality. Unfortunately, this article does not have any statement from Dr. MacArthur due to his present state of health, but plenty of other people were consulted to give an accurate picture of how God has used this true servant of Christ to make Master's Seminary and University the spiritual juggernaut of our day. Pastor, Professor, Administrator, Bible Scholar and author, Dick Mayhue has made a difference in this world for the love of Jesus Christ. Even now, his research articles, theological books and notes in the MacArthur Study Bible are used by millions around the world. For years, Dr. Mayhue was John MacArthur's right-hand man and made things happen for the glory of God. This is his story!

## BOOK REVIEWS

In our attempt to help you find Biblical resources for certain current issues, here are some books which cover some of today's most relevant topics:

***“Blame It on the Brain?: Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders and Disobedience”*** by Edward Welch. *Book Review by Chaplain (LtCol) Joshua Stoley.*

Chaplain Stoley is currently the deputy Command Chaplain for Air Force Special Forces pursuing his Ph.D in Chaplain ministries. This is his review on the book which is a classic among those desiring to understand the conflict between psychology, medicine and theological free will as found in the Bible. This work is a modern revision to the original book published in 1998 and has updated research to show that the basic premise held by the author has not changed. This should be required reading for all Chaplains.

***“Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism’s Looming Catastrophe”*** by Voddie Baucham. *Review by Chaplain (Col. USA-ret.) Ken Lawson.*

In this insightful analysis of the current social conflict in America, Biblical conservative Voddie Baucham as an African American Christian leader exposes Biblically the fallacies of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Lives Matter movements. His comprehension into Biblical anthropology and other doctrines of the faith gives answers from God's Word where others have just put forth human wisdom into the inequities which plague society. An extra bonus is Dr. Ken Lawson's breakdown of what Dr. Baucham has to say about many issues which are helpful for the Chaplain who is or will face these issues in their ministry.

If you have a comment or would like more information on something you may have read, feel free to write and contact me through the AGC.

For God's Glory,

*Bob Freiberg, editor*

*CDR, CHC, USN-ret, M.Div, Th.M, D.D., D. Min.*

## CHAPLAINCY AND THE BIBLE: A STUDY OF BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATIONS AND EXAMPLES OF CHAPLAIN-RELATED ACTIVITIES

*Kenneth E. Lawson*

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*After 34-plus years in the Army as an enlisted soldier and as an officer, Chaplain Ken Lawson retired from the military with the rank of colonel. He recently earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Westminster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. Ken is now an adjunct college professor and serves as the historian for the Associated Gospel Churches. Ken is a part-time chaplain at a lumber mill and is a volunteer chaplain for the Newport, Vermont Fire Department.*

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Chaplains serve in numerous capacities with various emphases in their ministries. The duties of a chaplain are often unknown in contemporary American culture. We cannot assume that people know what a chaplain is and does. Chaplaincy is typically outside a local religious congregation but is centered in a secular institution, such as the military, a sports team, a hospital, a factory, or a government agency. The focus is not ministry primarily within a designated sacred building, but rather where people work, or study, or train, or live. When I visit churches and tell people that I am a chaplain, I have been asked why I left the ministry! A few times I have been asked why I abandoned my faith. At other times I have spoken in churches and at pastors' groups and spoke of the roles and responsibilities of a chaplain. Typically, the response is that the pastors had no

idea that the chaplain has freedom to teach and preach and counsel according to his personal beliefs and the doctrines of the church that sent him into the chaplaincy.<sup>1</sup> The Bible has many examples of chaplaincy-type ministries. The purpose of this article is to examine biblical illustrations and examples to advocate for the basis of the modern chaplaincy.

From the early days of church history, the role of a chaplain has been recognized. Originally, a chaplain was related to ministerial duties in a chapel. A chapel was and is understood as a place of worship, typically smaller in size and associated with a distinguished family, a military base, or a religious space within a secular institution. For example, the U.S. Senate and the U.S. Congress have chapels, called prayer rooms. Many secular college campuses have chapels. Wealthy families occasionally have their own chapels on their property.<sup>2</sup> Virtually all hospitals in the United States have a prayer room or a chapel with access to a chaplain.<sup>3</sup> The same is true for prison chapels and chaplains. Increasingly, chaplain positions are developing in corporate America.<sup>4</sup> In Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions, a chapel might contain a sacred relic from a distinguished person or significant event. In Protestantism, Baptist, or non-denominational Christianity, a chapel is typically a place of prayer, small group meetings, and religious services. A

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<sup>1</sup> Not all chaplains are men, and not all chaplains are Christians sent by a church. Chaplaincy reflects the religious diversity of the United States. According to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, all U.S. citizens are guaranteed religious freedom. Chaplains are to respect religious freedoms and are not to proselytize, meaning they are not to force, coerce, or intimidate those they serve. Chaplains recognize that people are free to believe what they want, or not to believe in anything. Chaplains also understand that they are free to share their faith and be evangelically minded ministers in the workplace. Chaplains are not social workers but are religious leaders concerned for the spiritual, moral, social, and morale issues of their people.

<sup>2</sup> Jamie Weibe, "Houses of the Holy: Eight Real Homes with their Own Chapels." <https://www.realtor.com/news/unique-homes/homes-with-their-own-chapels/>.

<sup>3</sup> "The chapel and meditation area is a space within the hospital important for well-being and healing of the whole person. We are fortunate to be in an environment where faith and healing work hand in hand. This chapel serves as a non-denominational spiritual place where the act of healing can minister to patients, families, visitors, associates, volunteers, and physicians." *Atlantic General Hospital*, <https://www.atlanticgeneral.org/patients-visitors/the-chapel/>.

<sup>4</sup> "The effects of just one distressed employee impact the entire team and the company's bottom line as a whole. Showing you support your team with the addition of a dedicated Corporate Chaplain empowers your employees to be undistracted, productive key players who add value and grow your business. By prioritizing each individual employees' needs, you give them the gift of an improved quality of life. CCA understands the challenges that arise from unresolved personal pain and have helped thousands of businesses nationwide create a Culture of Care for their employees. *Corporate Chaplains of America*, <https://chaplain.org/>.

chaplain can minister in restricted access areas, such as hospitals, jails, military bases, government offices, within police and fire departments, and in manufacturing areas in private businesses.

In November 2023 I began serving as a corporate chaplain for a large lumber mill in Vermont. I introduced myself to an employee as the new chaplain. He looked me in the eye and said, “What is a chaplain?” This happened several times. Chaplains conduct religious activities and other spiritual and benevolent events for their sponsoring authority, such as praying before government events, advising prison leaders on matters related to religion and morality; providing recommendations on morale and world religions to military leaders; advising college presidents on issues effecting students and faculty on campus; chapel preaching, counseling, and teaching; and instructing medical personnel on religious, ethical, and moral issues in health care.<sup>5</sup> Today, chaplains are almost always ordained clergy, or trained staff and volunteers under the supervision of an ordained chaplain. Over the centuries, the role of a chaplain has focused on spiritual care for groups and is also identified with direct service to military commanders, business owners, hospitals and prison administrators, and civic leaders as advisers in both religious and civil-secular matters. Even non-religious leaders want to know about the overall welfare of their people and often use chaplains in this capacity to provide religious, moral, and morale advice and counsel to both senior leaders and their subordinates.<sup>6</sup>

## ANCIENT ISRAEL

It should not be surprising that the Old Testament has many more specific examples of chaplaincy-type ministries than the New Testament. In the Old Testament the Jewish people are forming a nation under the direct guidance of God. In this theocentric nation-building, God is establishing civil laws, religious rituals, social behaviors, and political expectations. The Jewish nation is centered around the temple of the Lord. The opportunities

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<sup>5</sup> There is an ever-increasing amount of literature on chaplaincy. For example, see John Caperon, Andrew Todd, and James Walters, *A Christian Theology of Chaplaincy* (London, GB: Jessica Kingsley Publisher, 2018). Alan T. Baker, *Foundations of Chaplaincy: A Practical Guide* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishers, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> “Health Benefits of Chaplains in the Workplace,” *Marketplace Chaplains*, June 4, 2021, <https://mchapusa.com/benefits-of-chaplains-in-the-workplace/>. George Adams, *Chaplains as Liaisons with Religious Leaders: Lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan*, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006).

for chaplain-focused ministries such as praying before government events, advising political rulers, performing religious ceremonies, ministering to the military, encouraging public morality, instructing leaders on religious activities, and teaching about God's will, are abundant. Further, it was not uncommon for men who acted in the capacity of chaplains to sometimes be assigned non-religious duties.<sup>7</sup>

The first example of chaplain-type ministry in the Old Testament is found in Genesis 14:18-20. An alliance of pagan kings attacked and looted numerous cities. Abram the Hebrew is informed that some of his family members were taken captive. Abram (later Abraham) creates a military plan, executed the plan, and recovers the captives. Abram and his allies meet after the fight and are joined by a religious man named Melchizedek, king of Salem. Notice the chaplain-type ministry of Melchizedek to Abram the military leader:

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all. (Genesis 14:18-20)<sup>8</sup>

Melchizedek joins this meeting of military and civil leaders with the expressed purpose of blessing God and thanking the Lord for the military victory. He was sensitive to their physical needs; in that he brought them something to drink and eat. Then he performed religious duties to military leaders.<sup>9</sup> This is the essence of military chaplaincy, caring for the physical, social, and especially spiritual needs of others.<sup>10</sup>

Another early Old Testament example of military chaplain-related activities is found in Numbers 31:6, 21-31. Following the direct guidance

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<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to distinguish between religious and non-religious duties in ancient Israel. Since the whole nation was to be dedicated to the Lord, even simple, routine activities in daily life took on a religious or spiritual significance. See Merrill T. Gilbertson, *The Way it Was in Bible Times*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing, 1959), p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> All Bible quotes in this article are from the *New King James Version of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> "Melchizedek Blesses Abram, Genesis 14:17-20," *Ligonier Ministries*, May 13, 2010. <https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/melchizedek-blesses-abraham>. Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), p. 318.

<sup>10</sup> *Religious Support FM 1-05*, (US Army Field Manual, January 2019), p. 1-1.

from God, the Jews were to conquer the land promised to them from the Lord. They would fight many battles and wage many wars against various nations. In doing so, chaplain-type ministry was provided for the troops. In Numbers 31, God instructs Moses to lead the Jews in war against the Midianites. One thousand soldiers were recruited from each of the tribes of Israel. The text says that Moses “sent them to the war with Phinehas the son of Eleazer the priest, with the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand,” (v.6). Phinehas was a recognized religious leader. He performed religious support to the Jewish army by his presence and activities as a priest, by his possession of holy articles, and by holding the military signal trumpets used to give commands on the battlefield. Here we see Phinehas performing chaplain duties in both religious and secular tasks. He was a religious and civic leader, a chaplain with spiritual and military-political influence. Phinehas displayed his chaplain-like roles in support of Moses, the leader of the Jewish people. He supported Moses, complimented Moses, and gave Moses advice in religious and practical matters such as in the possession and distribution of plunder obtained in war. Then Phinehas leads the people in worship (vv.28-31). Clearly Phinehas was a prototype chaplain, a facilitator, a counselor sensitive to morale and moral issues, a religious and practical advisor to a political and military leader.<sup>11</sup>

An additional place where an Old Testament priest was acknowledged for his chaplain-like ministries is in Numbers 32:2, 27-28. Here Eleazer the priest is utilized as a religious leader with diplomatic skills, able to diffuse a delicate and potentially deadly situation. As the Jews began to settle the Promised Land, there was confusion and misunderstanding between the tribes. Those who settled west of the Jordan River thought those who settled east of the river were unfaithful in abandoning their Jewish brethren. Those settling east of the river first sought Moses and Eleazar for permission to settle (vv.1-2), but those in the western tribes did not understand. Tensions rose and a civil war was imminent. Moses sends Eleazar as a religious leader, and Joshua as a military leader, as peacekeepers on a mission to resolve the issues. The problem was tense with a serious misunderstanding. There was nothing especially religious about what Eleazar was asked to do here as a problem solver. His authority came from his call from God as a minister, and he used

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<sup>11</sup> “Chaplains serve as principal advisors on issues of faith to the highest echelons of leadership within an organization – depending on the institution, this might be the board, chair, president, director, CEO, COO, provost, official, warden, congressman, or commanding officer. This advice includes requirements for specific religions, the condition of morale, as well as ethical and moral relationships with the wider community.” Alan T. Baker, *Foundations for Chaplaincy: A Practical Guide*, p. 144.

that influence effectively to settle a secular and civil matter that could have led to war. This is a classic example of how chaplains today in the police force, in a corporate chaplaincy, in the military, or in a hospital or other chaplain position, can be used as a person of God to help resolve practical issues in the field or the workplace.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the most famous account of chaplain ministries in the Bible is found in Deuteronomy 20:1-4. The first volume of the official history of the U.S. Army chaplaincy states that the foundation for all modern chaplaincies is based on the Deuteronomy 20:1-4 text.<sup>13</sup> The text says:

When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. And he shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'

The book of Deuteronomy is a review and summary of instructions given by God to the Jewish people. The book reviews and explains such things as military victories, warnings of idolatry, the Ten Commandments, the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience, proper worship, and a host of rules and guidelines related to family life, agriculture, celebrations of feasts, and other miscellaneous instructions. And in our text in Deuteronomy 20:1-4, there is specific instructions related to a holy man, a priest, ministering words of spiritual comfort to the troops before a battle. His message contained religious instruction and comfort, as well as patriotic and military encouragement. This is a classic example of chaplaincy, as a minister, with permission from secular leaders, gave religious counsel in a secular environment. This scenario could play out today for police ready to

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<sup>12</sup> Former United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Richard C. Holbrooke, stated of religious workers, "They had credibility. Whether or not a particular conflict revolved around religion, I saw how these religious peacemakers often had a legitimacy that allowed them to reach out to parties in a conflict, especially at times when the diplomats, politicians, and other... actors could not." David Little, editor, *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. xii.

<sup>13</sup> Parker C. Thompson, *From its European Antecedents to 1791: The United States Army Chaplaincy*, (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1978), p. xi.

deploy facing a civil disturbance, a fire department departing to fight a fire, or a corporate chaplaincy in dedicating a new factory building. Before a major event it is not unusual to ask God's blessing through the ministry of a praying chaplain.<sup>14</sup>

Chaplains can often serve as mediators, as impartial facilitators to settle disputes. Mediation is the process where disputing parties agree to have a third-party facilitator intercede to provide guidance and structure in resolving disputes. The goal of a mediator is to find a solution to a problem agreeable to all.<sup>15</sup> Chaplains serve as mediators in various situations, interacting with hospital personnel unhappy with increases in working hours, with soldiers in basic training who are stressed by their drill sergeants, with police and emergency medical personnel who question the correct procedures to follow, and many other examples. In Joshua 22:13-33, Phinehas the priest is sent as a mediator to diffuse a potential civil and military conflict.

In the context of Joshua 22, the fledgling nation of Israel faced a civil war. Much of the Promised Land had been conquered, and the Jewish tribes began to settle in their appropriated lands. Most of the tribes settled west of the Jordan River, but a few tribes settled on the eastern side. This was discussed previously. Over time, this geographic separation led to suspicions of revolt and spiritual unfaithfulness. The eastern tribes built an altar where they could worship the God of the Jews, but the western tribes suspected treachery and apostasy. To avoid a disaster, the western tribes sent the priest Phinehas to mediate the dispute. He was sent on this civil-political assignment as a man of God who was respected for his position and his integrity. Phinehas led a secular political delegation, crossed the Jordan River, and met with leaders from all the disputing parties.<sup>16</sup> Representing the western tribes, he begins by stating the problem, the alleged treachery of the eastern tribes in setting up a rival and unauthorized religious altar (v.16). Phinehas instructs all parties from recent history and warns of God's displeasure (vv. 17-20). Then the eastern side speaks and explains that there was a huge misunderstanding. Their altar on the eastern side of the river was in support of the God of Israel,

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<sup>14</sup> For example, the U.S. Congress opens each working day in prayer. "Chaplaincy Innovation Lab – Government," <https://chaplaincyinnovation.org/resources/by-sector/government>.

<sup>15</sup> Susan Harris, "Chaplains' Roles as Mediators in Critical Clinical Decisions," *AMA Journal of Ethics*, July 2018. <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/chaplains-roles-mediators-critical-clinical-decisions/2018-07>.

<sup>16</sup> John J. Davis and John C. Whitcomb, *Israel: A Commentary on Joshua – II Kings*, (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2002), pp. 85-86. Phinehas is described as the "arbitrator" who evaluated the crisis and encouraged resolution.

they said, not in rebellion (vv.21-25). The altar was to be a sign for generations to come of the oneness of the Jewish people and a pledge of loyalty from the eastern tribes to the God of Israel and a display of unity with the western tribes (vv.26-29).

Phineas the priest successfully served as a mediator in a civil dispute. After facilitating the discussion, he knew that there was no disloyalty from the eastern tribes. He publicly stated that the matter was over and that there was no reason for concern. His skills as a peacemaker were notable (vv.30-31).<sup>17</sup> He then returns to the western tribes and is welcomed with celebrations as peace between the tribes of Israel was secured (vv.32-33). Phineas is an example of a clergyman engaged in resolving disputes that may not be religious in nature. Indeed, the understanding of contemporary chaplains as mediators and peacemakers in hospitals, in the military, and in other chaplain positions is expanding and is an important aspect of chaplain ministries.<sup>18</sup>

An example of a woman who served as a religious advisor to civil authority was Deborah the prophetess. Her account is in Judges chapter four. In her day, the wayward Jews were under domination from Jabin, the pagan king of Canaan. Deborah was both a religious leader and a senior civil administrator (vv.4-5). In a time of war, she provided information and support to military leaders. She deployed to battle but apparently did not fight (vv.14-15). Deborah was a woman of God who guided and advised on the military and civil affairs of the Jewish people. Another woman who displayed courage in speaking moral and religious ideas to secular power was Queen Esther. While Esther was not a prophetess like Deborah, she advocated for her people, showed concern for the spiritual and physical welfare of the Jews, served as a mediator between the king and those to be persecuted, and insured that justice prevailed among the people.

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<sup>17</sup> David R. Leonard, "Peacemakers: Chaplains as Vital Links in the Peace Chain." *National Defense University Press*, February 7, 2020, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2076112/peacemakers-chaplains-as-vital-links-in-the-peace-chain/>.

<sup>18</sup> Frank T. Willey, "The Chaplain as Mediator: A Ministry of Presence and Productivity," *Care Giver*, Vol. 6, Issue One (1989), pp. 77-89. S.K. Moore, *Military Chaplains as Agents of Peace: Religious Leader Engagement in Conflict and Post-Conflict Environments*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013). "What Does a Workplace Chaplain Do?" November 14, 2022. *Marketplace Chaplains*. <https://mchapusa.com/what-does-a-workplace-chaplain-do/>.

## THE EARLY KINGS OF ISRAEL

An aspect of chaplaincy work is to speak truth to power.<sup>19</sup> This can take many forms. A military chaplain could speak privately to a commander about unit policies that are hindering morale. A corporate chaplain might speak to a plant manager about her policies creating a dissatisfied workforce. A hospital chaplain could inform the hospital administrator that his adulterous affair with a female nurse is hurting morale. A prison chaplain would be right in confronting the prison warden about his illegal drug smuggling in the prison among the guards. The idea is that the chaplain speaks with divine authority even to those who may outrank him, to those who could terminate his employment. He is to be the moral authority above the competitive and advantageous manipulations of senior leaders. The chaplain may be a volunteer, or maybe get a salary from a police department, a corporate factory, a prison, or a hospital. But the chaplain works for God, for a higher authority than the president of a company or the commander of troops. This is speaking God's truth to people in positions of power, and it is a vital part of chaplaincy.<sup>20</sup>

The idea of a minister speaking truth to power is a frequent chaplain-related theme in the Bible. For example, King David had a healthy relationship with Nathan the prophet. The two men sought the Lord together as David assumed his kingship. Nathan was a religious advisor to David, a minister who gave counsel on various religious, moral, and practical issues. The powerful King David sought out Nathan's counsel related to a huge civil and religious construction project, the building of a temple in Jerusalem. The civil, political, and spiritual implications of this project were enormous. Nathan provided the requested religious advice, then expanded on the idea with encouragement and practical wisdom (II Samuel 7:1-3, 17). The fact that Nathan had an intimate chaplain-type relationship with King David allowed him to speak to the king in times of celebration and in times of distress.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Kane, "After 20 Years as Senate Chaplain, Barry Black Still Speaks Truth to Power," *The Washington Post*, July 22, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/07/22/senate-chaplain-barry-black/>.

<sup>20</sup> Stacy S. Lawton, "Chaplaincy Requires Courage to Tell the Truth," *Good Faith Media*, November 5, 2013." <https://goodfaithmedia.org/chaplaincy-requires-courage-to-tell-the-truth-cms-21258/>.

<sup>21</sup> Alyssa Roat, "Why was Nathan the Prophet so Important to King David," *Bible Study Tools*, February 5, 2020, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/why-was-nathan-the-prophet-so-important-to-king-david.html>.

In II Samuel chapters 11-12, Nathan the prophet confronted King David on a major ethical-legal-moral issue. David had a sexual affair with a married woman, the wife of one of his military generals. In Israel, this was recognized as a sin (Exodus 20:14). Then David lied about his immorality and had the innocent husband of the woman killed (II Samuel 12:14-17). These choices by David were also considered sins (Exodus 20:13,16). Clearly, David was in a recklessly selfish, self-indulgent time. His moral compass had failed. His life became an ethical disaster with tragic political, military, and spiritual consequences. Then Nathan the prophet confronts David as a chaplain should confront a spiritually reckless and morally thoughtless leader, speaking truth to power.<sup>22</sup> Nathan displayed moral courage as he confronted his superior, the king. God sent Nathan to confront the king, to lead him to repentance (v.13). Nathan showed how a religious advisor is to act, with truth, the right timing, wise wording, and fearless courage.<sup>23</sup> David showed remorse and repented, though there would be negative consequences for his poor choices and behavior (II Samuel 12:13-14). Nathan had built a religious support and advisement relationship with the king. They respected each other. Nathan was a spiritual advisor to a man in a position of great power. He was, in today's language, a chaplain in the highest position in a civil government. In this senior leadership position, Nathan understood that he served God first and that people with great responsibilities must be confronted when their actions harm others or harm themselves. This is a hard duty for any chaplain.

It was a common occurrence to have religious advisors in the courts of the kings of Israel. Their presence was often an influence for the Lord in a secular environment. For example, in I Kings 1:32-35, King David utilized two senior religious advisors to facilitate a smooth transition in government. Solomon, a son of David, was designated to be the heir apparent to the throne. When a usurper made advances to become the next king, David sent Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet on a mission to find Solomon and anoint him king.<sup>24</sup> These two religious leaders advised the king, were aware of threats to his leadership, and participated in a political-civil-religious event in crowing Solomon as king. The advice, counsel, and faithful leadership of

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<sup>22</sup> R. Herbert, "The Prophet Nathan: True Service Through Tough Love," *Tactical Christianity*, March 4, 2018, <https://tacticalchristianity.org/the-prophet-nathan-true-service-through-tough-love/>.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Swindoll, *David: A Man of Passion and Destiny*, (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1997), pp. 199-204.

<sup>24</sup> John J. Davis and John C. Whitcomb, *Israel: A Commentary on Joshua – II Kings*, p. 330.

these men of God was an example of chaplain-like ministry from a religious leader to a secular, civil leader. Chaplains routinely perform such advisory duties to leaders in the workplace, hospitals, prisons, political congresses, the military, and other places. It is expected that chaplains perform such duties as religious men who are sensitive to moral, ethical, morale, and spiritual issues.<sup>25</sup> When Solomon was anointed king, he appointed religious men, the clergy of his day, to senior positions in his government (I Kings 4:1-7). Apparently, he learned from his father David's example of utilizing religious leaders as advisors and administrators, as what today we would call chaplains and counselors in his government.

The history of Israel is a narrative of numerous kings that mostly failed in following the Lord and securing the kingdom. The Lord sent priests and prophets to advise the kings, correct the nation, and rededicate the masses to the Lord. These religious consultants to civil leaders were not always successful. At other times these men of God were listened to, and the repentant people avoided disaster. For example, in I Kings 12:21-24, Shemaiah the man of God spoke to King Rehoboam and other civil leaders to stop a military attack and avoid a civil war. His advice was respected, and war was avoided.<sup>26</sup> Shemaiah successfully provided chaplaincy-type moral guidance and spiritual direction to secular leaders. In I Kings 20:27-29, an unnamed "man of God" spoke to the king of Israel, giving counsel as the Syrian army prepared to attack. It was a common occurrence in ancient Israel for religious leaders to have direct access to the most senior civil and military decision-makers.

A well-known man of God who gave direct religious advice to a king was Elisha the prophet. An alliance between the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom was formed to respond to the threats of the king of Moab. When uncertainty arose, King Jehoshaphat of Judah asked, "Is there no prophet of the Lord here that we may inquire of the Lord by him?" (II Kings 3:11). This is a clear example of a senior leader seeking religious support. He was asking for spiritual advice. He needed direction from God, and he sought out a man

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<sup>25</sup> "Common Code of Ethics for Chaplains, Pastoral Counselors, Pastoral Educators and Students," <https://www.apchaplains.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Common-Code-of-Ethics.pdf>. "Chaplains and Ethical and Moral Advice," US Army Special Operations Command, <https://www.socom.mil/POTFF/Pages/Chaplains%20and%20ethical%20and%20moral%20advice.aspx>. "Moral Injury: Information for Providers and Researchers," U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn17/moralinjury/chaplains.asp>.

<sup>26</sup> C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans's Publishing, 1983), Vol. III, p. 197.

who could advise him. This is what chaplains today do – they provide religious guidance and advice to often secular leaders about matters that affect both spiritual and pragmatic matters.<sup>27</sup> Elisha successfully provided the counsel needed. Elisha again served in a chaplain-like capacity in II Kings 5:1-8, when King Ahab of Israel was perplexed and threatened by the King of Syria. Elisha knew that the king was upset and gave sound advice and counsel. His advice was not overtly religious. Elisha had direct access to the king, as a chaplain today has direct access to senior leaders in industry, in civil service, in the military, and in prisons and hospitals. This is speaking truth to power, providing individual, personal religious and practical advice to those in authority.

### **KING HEZEKIAH AND ISAIAH, THE PROPHET**

King Hezekiah served as leader of Judah from about 715 to 687 BC. His kingship was known for successes in war and for his spiritual reforms. He is generally classified as a godly king.<sup>28</sup> Hezekiah had a close relationship with the prophet Isaiah. God sent Isaiah as His spokesperson, to expose the sins of the people and to plead with them to repent. Most of the nation ignored or mocked Isaiah. He prophesied under four kings of Judah, namely Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Only King Hezekiah appears to have taken heed to the preaching of Isaiah. As a prophet of the Lord, Isaiah clearly had a chaplain-type relationship to King Hezekiah.

In II Kings 19, Hezekiah the king was in trouble. Assyrian troops were outside Jerusalem, mocking the God of Israel, surrounding the city, and threatening to attack. In this period of crisis, King Hezekiah seeks out Isaiah (vv.1-2). Here a civil leader was looking for religious guidance, seeking counsel from a trusted spiritual leader. These men had a relationship of mutual support and trust. Isaiah provided words of hope and encouragement, speaking with confidence as a representative of God. Then a second threat was received by the king, and he again sought the Lord and confided in Isaiah for spiritual direction (vv.8-14). Isaiah did what any religious advisor, chaplain, or spiritual counselor might do; he prayed to the Lord for direction to support his king and his nation (vv.15-19). Then Isaiah sent a message of several hundred words length to his king, words of hope and encouragement.

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<sup>27</sup> “Campus Chaplains and Religious Advisors,” Worcester Polytechnic Institute. <https://www.wpi.edu/student-experience/resources/collegiate-religious-center/advisors>.

<sup>28</sup> Merrill Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), p. 480.

Isaiah wrote of confidence in the Lord and the power of God to prevail even over the worst of situations (vv.20-34). The situation was resolved, and the enemy fled.

Isaiah had a personal, private, spiritual relationship with King Hezekiah. When the king was near death, Isaiah came to minister to his sovereign and his friend. In II Kings 20:1-7, the prophet Isaiah speaks words from the Lord to the ailing king. As a result, Hezekiah rededicated himself to God and was granted additional years to live. This is an illustration of a private, individual relationship between a leader and his chaplain. Certainly, chaplains spend most of their time with the troops, the employees, the patients, or the inmates of whatever institution. But the senior leaders also need religious support. Top administrators, governors, and commanding officers require spiritual guidance.<sup>29</sup> King Hezekiah was near death and his cleric, his pastor, his minister Isaiah was there to successfully encourage his king.

Chaplains serve an audience of one. God is their senior evaluator, their sovereign to whom they serve. Human leaders come and go, but God and His word last forever. Chaplains may become friends with their employers, or they may not. A minister might be sociable and cordial to his commander or warden of chief. But such collegiality cannot interfere with the chaplain's duty to God first. Therefore, there may be times when a chaplain must confront and correct his employer or his ruler. Previously we saw this between Nathan and King David. This was the case for Isaiah and King Hezekiah in II Kings 20:12-19. Hezekiah had made a serious, public mistake. The Bible does not gloss over or seek to explain away the mistake made by Hezekiah. In a boasting, faithless gesture, he bragged to enemy Babylonian envoys of his great wealth and treasures. Isaiah was then the human instrument to report on the anger of the Lord resulting from Hezekiah's irresponsible actions. As the king's personal religious advisor, they had seen great blessings from the Lord. But here was an opportunity for the king to be corrected and judged by the Lord. Isaiah spoke from God about national and personal judgement on Hezekiah, to which the king responded, "The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good," (Isaiah 39:8). Isaiah in his chaplain-like role to the king spoke words of criticism and condemnation, something not easy to do. Hezekiah had deep respect for his private religious counselor and did nothing to try and punish Isaiah for his criticisms.

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<sup>29</sup> As an example of senior leaders needing personal, confidential chaplain support, see *A Fire Chaplain's Manual*, (New York State Association of Fire Chaplains, 2001), p. 8. It states, "An active chaplain is available on public occasions and should be available to counsel the chiefs and members in departmental and even personal domestic problems."

## THE PROPHET JEREMIAH AND KING ZEDEKIAH

There are many examples of the prophets of ancient Israel serving as religious advisors, as spiritual leaders, and as the confidants of kings and other leaders. Illustrations of these traditional chaplain-like duties abound. King Josiah did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord (II Kings 22:2). He sought to reform the spiritual practices of the people and rededicate the nation to the Lord. He surrounded himself with good and faithful religious advisors. When doing construction and renovation, the sacred book of the law was found. The book of the law was presented to King Josiah and read to him. He immediately showed signs of repentance and said to his religious advisors, “Go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found,” (II Kings 22:13). The court of King Josiah had many men who served in capacities that today we could call chaplains. They advised him, they instructed him, and they implemented his religious policies for the people. These spiritual consultants served in the court of royalty as personal advisors for the king and as representatives of the people.<sup>30</sup>

The prophet Jeremiah is a good example of a minister who faced many obstacles and opposition in his ministry, but persevered. He lived from the 620s to 580s BC. He served as a prophet of God during the reigns of King Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. He was not a popular prophet and many of the religious and civil leaders in Israel opposed him. Jeremiah was a preacher sent by the Lord, but the people mostly chose to ignore or oppose him. He was imprisoned more than once for his faith and his message from God. The Jewish people had abandoned God and Jeremiah was a nuisance, a reminder of the unfaithfulness of the people. In Jeremiah chapter 17, the Lord appointed Jeremiah to preach repentance and rededication to God (vv.19-22). The focus of his message was directed to the rulers throughout the land. He was to speak at the gates of Jerusalem, where the leaders met to discuss issues and make decisions (v.19). Here we read about God sending a recognized religious leader to minister to civil, secular authorities. Many chaplains today believe they have a similar calling to minister as chaplains in civil-secular institutions, such as prisons, college campuses, hospitals, police stations, government agencies, and the like.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, Vol. III, pp. 479-480.

<sup>31</sup> “Chaplaincy: Are you Called?” *Ministry Magazine*. July 2018. <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2018/07/Chaplaincy-Are-you-called>, pp. 1-3. “Is God Calling You to be a Chaplain?” *Grace School of Theology*. June 10, 2024. <https://www.gsot.edu/savinggrace/167-is-god-calling-you-to-be-a-chaplain/>.

An important part of chaplain ministry is religious advisement. This means the chaplain has a direct consultative and confidential relationship with senior leadership. Typically, chaplains advise related to the spiritual-ethical-moral status of the workforce, and are individual chaplains to senior leaders, such as wardens, chiefs, managers, commanders, and the like.<sup>32</sup> Jeremiah the prophet served in such a capacity with King Zedekiah. In the context of Jeremiah chapter 21, Judah is threatened by the powerful king of Babylon. The king reaches out to Jeremiah for spiritual and practical advice. Jeremiah responds with words of religious, political, and military advice (vv.3-7). He then takes the opportunity to preach to the king and the people about the proper way of the Lord and choices that need to be made (vv.8-10). The king had reached out to Jeremiah, but then the Lord sends Jeremiah to reach out to King Zedekiah. He preached directly to the king and his court, providing religious guidance and practical advice (Jeremiah 22:1-5). This is a clear case of a senior leader in a relationship with a chaplain-like minister asking for and receiving religious advisement.

Other examples of Jeremiah serving as a type of chaplain to King Zedekiah relate to the king specifically sending for Jeremiah to get his advice on the morality of surrendering to a superior military force from Babylon (Jeremiah 38:14-18). The health, safety, and well-being of the people depended on the correct answer. These two men are obviously allies, shown in how the king made secret promises to Jeremiah concerning his safety. Jeremiah told King Zedekiah the uncomfortable truth: the city and the nation could be saved if they surrendered. This was God's plan (vv. 17-18). Then the king again shows his familiarity with Jeremiah when he confided in the prophet, saying, "I am afraid," (v.19). This is an example of privileged communication between a senior leader and his religious advisor. Chaplains are typically sworn to confidentiality.<sup>33</sup> Jeremiah then speaks directly to the king, respectfully and privately, as a representative of the Lord, giving the king further counsel (v.20).

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<sup>32</sup> *Secretary of the Navy SECNAV Instruction 1730.10A*, "Chaplain Advisement and Liaison." <https://www.secnave.navy.mil/doni/Directives/01000%20Military%20Personnel%20Support/01-700%20Morale,%20Community%20and%20Religious%20Services/1730.10A.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> "Confidential Communications to Navy Chaplains: Fact Sheet," May 2013. "Corporate Chaplains of America: Terms and Conditions," <https://chaplain.org/tcs/>. "Code of Ethics," American Correctional Chaplains Association, 1992. Gregory J. Amundson, "Law Enforcement Chaplains: A Confidential Resource," Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Law Enforcement Bulletin*, August 8, 2023.

## DANIEL IN PAGAN BABYLON

The prophet Daniel lived through tumultuous times in Israel's history. He ministered as a slave in the courts of Babylon and Persia, being chosen for service in the king's court while a boy. His probable life dates are around 620s to 530s BC. Daniel apparently was of distinguished birth and had remarkable physical and mental abilities (Daniel 1:3-4). He and a few other boys were groomed for service to the pagan king of Babylon. These young men were uniquely blessed by God with "knowledge, and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams," (1:17).

The first account we have of Daniel serving as a kind of chaplain, as a religious advisor to the king, is in Daniel chapter two. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had a disturbing dream that he did not understand. Daniel personally speaks to the king, asking for time so he may interpret the dream. Daniel had already developed a ministerial presence with Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, so that when Daniel asked to speak to the king about the meaning of his dream, Arioch quickly complied (vv. 14-15, 24-25). Daniel then explains the dream, providing political, military, and religious advice to King Nebuchadnezzar and his court. Daniel is rewarded with gifts, promotions, and senior administrative duties (vv.46-49). Daniel was acknowledged as a man of character, a spiritual leader in a foreign court.<sup>34</sup> This is an illustration of modern chaplaincy. A current minister is officially recognized as a spiritual advisor in a secular setting, consulted and promoted by a temporal leader. Any contemporary chaplain in a hospital, a prison, a corporate workplace, in the military, and in other places will quickly see the similarities to Daniel's ministry. Chaplains represent God to typically irreligious or spiritually needy leaders and their people and speak words of truth that may often be difficult for secular people to accept or understand.<sup>35</sup>

In Daniel chapter four, we read that Daniel had earned the confidence of the king. There is no indication that he was hindered in his ministries. King Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel had a personal, private relationship between a king and his cleric, the king saying of Daniel "the Spirit of the Holy God is in you," (v.18). Later, when the king had another disturbing dream, Daniel was again consulted for his spiritual insights. The king was benevolent to Daniel, saying "do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you," (v. 19). Daniel then states to the king the details and explanation of his dream. This was

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<sup>34</sup> Renald E. Showers, *The Most High God: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, (West Collinswood, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1982), pp. 16-26.

<sup>35</sup> Alan T. Baker, *Foundations of Chaplaincy: A Practical Guide*, pp. 139-153.

difficult to do, as the dream revealed God's judgment upon King Nebuchadnezzar. A person serving in a chaplain-like capacity to a senior leader must sometimes be the bearer of bad news, even speaking words of condemnation against their supervisors, commanders, or other leaders.<sup>36</sup> Daniel spoke hard words to the king, warning him of the coming judgement (v.27). Yet he became the senior counselor in the king's court.<sup>37</sup> This is another example of a person in a chaplain capacity speaking God's truth, with fidelity, to people in positions of power and influence.

Another example of Daniel speaking difficult words in his chaplain-like capacity as a religious leader in a secular culture is found in Daniel chapter five. The new king is Belshazzar. He hosts a drunken, debauched feast with many of his senior administrators and advisors. In a mocking gesture towards the God of Israel, the king called for the captured treasures from the temple in Jerusalem and praised his heathen deities (vv.1-4). An apparition of a hand appears on a wall in view of the king and his revelers. The hand writes a message that the king and his pagan advisors do not understand. The Queen and King Belshazzar call for Daniel to give spiritual insights and counsel. This is what chaplains do – they provide religious based counsel to secular authorities. Daniel as a spiritual advisor had already earned the confidence and respect of the Queen (vv.11-12).<sup>38</sup> Now Daniel must speak harsh words to the heathen king, that the king has “lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven,” and that “the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified” (v.23). This was unpleasant counsel from Daniel to the king, but Daniel was rewarded and promoted for his faithfulness and truthfulness (v.29).

## OTHER OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF CHAPLAIN-LIKE RELIGIOUS SUPPORT

There are numerous biblical examples of servants of God serving in the capacities of counselors, advisors, mediators, preachers, and confidants of senior military and political leaders. We previously looked at Jeremiah the prophet who served in a chaplain-like capacity to King Zedekiah as a preacher, a moral guide, a practical advisor, and a spiritual consultant. In Jeremiah 42, we see Jeremiah as a spiritual and military advisor who was

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<sup>36</sup> David Little, editor, *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution*, pp. 3-21.

<sup>37</sup> John Whitcomb, *Daniel: Everyman's Bible Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 52.

<sup>38</sup> Renald E. Showers, *The Most High God: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, p. 55.

sought out by various leaders. He was seen as a moral authority, a trustworthy and impartial confidant that would speak the truth. Jeremiah had already told the leaders and the people that the Lord did not want the Jews to flee to Egypt away from the Babylonian armies. If the Jews stayed in their land and surrendered to the Babylonians, they would be humbled and defeated, but God promised restoration. The people did not listen and prepared to go to Egypt. As this huge caravan of Jews planned to disobey God and prepared to leave their homeland, they asked Jeremiah for his counsel from the Lord (vv.1-3). Jeremiah agreed to seek the will of the Lord in this matter, even though it was already revealed. The people had a confidence in Jeremiah as an individual, as a faithful man of integrity who spoke the truth (v.5). But when the people heard Jeremiah's message, that they were to remain in the land and be disciplined and then blessed by the Lord, they refused to listen (Jeremiah 43:1-7). There is no guarantee that even faithful ministers like Jeremiah, providing sound practical advice and spiritual counsel, will be listened to by others.<sup>39</sup>

Another example of a biblical character who practiced chaplain-type ministry was the prophet, Ezekiel. An illustration of this is in Ezekiel chapter twenty. Ezekiel was taken as a prisoner and lived in Babylon as an exile. He received revelations from the Lord from around 593 to 570 BC. It appears he had some freedom in his captive state. He regularly preached to his people in exile and was typically not well-received. In Ezekiel 20:1-2, elders from the land of Israel, in exile in Babylon, approach Ezekiel, seeking guidance from the Lord. They are secular leaders asking for religious advice. Ezekiel was seen as a cleric who spoke for the Lord to civil and other authorities. He was sought out, just like today's fire chiefs, hospital administrators, military commanders, and government leaders seek out advice from their chaplains. Ezekiel does not dodge around the delicate issues. He confronted the corrupt elders with an extended account of the many sins of the Jewish people, sins the Jews had not fully abandoned.<sup>40</sup> The people in exile had not yet learned their lessons, saying that they could be just like the pagan Babylonians, blend in, and therefore abandon the Lord (v.32). Ezekiel would have none of their compromises, yet he still preached of a future time when the Jewish people would be purged and restored (vv.33-38). He had a chaplain-like ministry,

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<sup>39</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994), p. 466.

<sup>40</sup> C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, Vol. IX, pp. 263-264.

present with the people and active among them as a teacher, counselor, advisor, and preacher.

Consider the priest Ezra. After a time of captivity under the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Persians, the Jewish people were finally allowed to return to their promised land. One of the priests-prophets who ministered to the Jews returning to their promised land was Ezra. His genealogy was from Aaron the first Jewish high priest (Ezra 7:1-5). Israel was now under the domain of Persia. Unlike the Babylonians whom King Cyrus defeated, the Jews were allowed freedom to return to their homeland if they so wished and reestablish the worship of their God. Ezra led a group of his countrymen back to Israel in the 450's BC.

While in captivity under the Persians, Ezra the Hebrew priest was able to develop a trusted relationship with the pagan King Artaxerxes. The non-religious administrative skills of Ezra impressed the king, as Ezra asked permission to lead a delegation of volunteers to Israel which the king granted. His credibility with the king allowed many supplies donated from the king's court to be taken on the trip, such as silver and gold (7:15). Ezra is granted an open invitation to spend whatever funds he needs for his trip (7:20-21). Obviously, Ezra had a close, trusted relationship with the king. As a Jewish monotheist in a pagan henotheist court, Ezra displayed remarkable skills in administration, rulership, and was fully trustworthy.<sup>41</sup> The king designated Ezra to appoint civil leaders along the route to Israel (7:25). The relationship between Ezra and his superior reflects the relationship that clergy in chaplain-like ministries can have with their secular supervisors. A faithful minister within a non-religious workplace can have a great influence.<sup>42</sup> Respect, trust, collegiality, confidence, and integrity are all attributes displayed by Ezra that can be emulated today by chaplains and other ministers who serve under secular authorities.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Mark A. Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2012), pp. 39, 42.

<sup>42</sup> Bill Weimer, "The Line Officer and the Chaplain," *Officer Christian Fellowship*, June 27, 2018, <https://www.ocfusa.org/2009/06/line-officer-and-chaplain-2/>.

<sup>43</sup> "How to Make the Gospel Chaplaincy Work in a Secular World," *Visiting Chaplains*, <https://visitingchaplains.com/how-to-make-the-gospel-chaplaincy-work-in-a-secular-world/>.

## **GOD IN “RATS ALLEY”: FIRST WORLD WAR POETS AND THE ECLIPSE OF THE DIVINE<sup>1</sup>**

*Tim Demy*

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*“Who is going to benefit by the carnage, save the rats  
which feed now as they have never fed before?...  
What has brought about this turmoil, this tragedy  
that cuts the heart of friend and foe alike?”<sup>2</sup>*

**A**n oft-repeated platitude of war arising out of the American experience in the so-called “Good War” of the Second World War, is “there are no atheists in foxholes.” A more realistic understanding of

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier and shorter version of this article was presented at the Oxford Round Table, Oxford, UK in August 2012

<sup>2</sup> Patrick MacGill, *The Great Push* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1984), 135.

spirituality and war is that there are all kinds of soldiers in foxholes—among them atheists, agnostics, and people of fervent and diverse faiths. But whatever the experience in the foxholes of the Second World War, the trenches of the First World War held combatants and noncombatants from all warring sides of great faith, little faith, and no faith.<sup>3</sup>

## CONFLICTING AND CONTRASTING EXPERIENCES

The death and destruction experienced during the war traumatized troops in many ways—spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, and physically. Some would recover; many would not. For some, the war shattered faith; for others it strengthened faith. Many troops had religious experiences that brought personal peace and assurance—some even claimed they experienced miracles on the battlefield. Other combatants lost their faith as others remained entrenched in unbelief. On small and large scales, the war shattered late-19<sup>th</sup> and early -20<sup>th</sup> century ideas of social, cultural, and human progress. Beyond the effects of the war on individual combatants and noncombatants, there were enormous shifts in the expression of ideas and beliefs. No intellectual discipline was left untouched. Art, literature, theology, music, political theory, law, science, and technology all underwent cataclysmic shifts that reached through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Religion and World War I is a field of study that has been growing and receiving more attention in the last few years. See for example, Michael Snape, *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars*. New York: Routledge, 2005, Richard Schweitzer, *The Cross and the Trenches: Religious Faith and Doubt among British and American Great War Soldiers*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003, and Edward Madigan, *Faith Under Fire: Anglican Army Chaplains and the Great War*. New York: Palgrave, 2011. On Americans and religion in the war, see Jonathan H. Ebel, *Faith in the Fight: Religion and the American Soldier in the Great War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010. On the broader experience of war for the British soldier, see Richard Holmes, *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front 1914-1918*. London: HarperCollins, 2004. On British, German, and French soldiers and religion, see Joseph F. Byrnes, *God on the Western Front: Soldiers and Religion in World War I*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2023. See also Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade*. San Francisco: Harper One, 2015 and Jason Crouthamel, *Trauma, Religion and Spirituality in Germany During the First World War*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> In theology one thinks of the demise of the optimism of liberal and postmillennial theology in Europe in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries and shifts in the thought of pastors and theologians such as Karl Barth. See for example, Karl Barth and William Klempa, *A Unique Time of God: Karl Barth's WWI Sermons*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016. In the realm of art, see Timothy J. Demy, "Landscapes of Destruction: Paul Nash's Art and the Geography of the Western Front" in *War and Geography: The Spatiality of Organized Mass Violence*, ed. Sarah K. Danielson and Frank Jacob, Ferdinand Schöningh Publishers, 2017.

The winding mud-filled rat-infested trenches of the Western Front also held some soldiers—poets—who saw not only a landscape stripped bare of vegetation and life (human or otherwise) but also a world and heavens in which there was an eclipse or a complete obliteration of the divine. For some the darkness was partial and lasted only for the duration of the war. For others, it was permanent. For some, a loving benevolent God suffered with the soldiers (perhaps reverberations of the heresy of patripassianism), while for others, a cruel and malevolent God either inflicted suffering upon them or abandoned them completely. With a reminiscence of the words of Jesus upon the cross “my God my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34), these soldier-poets penned stirring and stinging words capturing their sense of divine loss. This study seeks to analyze the presence and absence of the divine as experienced and addressed by several major and minor poets of the First World War.<sup>5</sup>

As noted above, the First World War was a crisis on many levels and it profoundly affected European thought philosophy, theology, literature, and the arts throughout the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> Beyond the carnage of the battlefields and the collapse of Europe as it had been known for a generation, the war generated individual and institutional questions with respect to religion, theology, and personal faith for many people. It created a tectonic shift in European theology, especially Protestant theology, and for some people, belief in God was no longer considered a viable truth claim or practice. For some this meant agnosticism, and for others, atheism.

The term “Rats Alley” in the title of this paper is a synecdoche for the whole of trench system and experience of the war. There were indeed trenches named “Rats Alley” (usually without the apostrophe) along with hundreds of other names, including some biblical ones such as “Jeremiah Trench” and

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<sup>5</sup> There are numerous studies and anthologies of poetry from the war. Among the titles that are especially helpful, see two volumes edited by David Roberts, *Out of the Dark: Poetry of the First World War*. Burgess Hill: Saxon Books, 1998 and *Minds at War: The Poetry and Experience of the First World War*. Burgess Hill: Saxon Books, 1996. For literature in general on the war, see Vincent Sherry, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> See Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979. Though not available in English translation, the response of Jewish intellectuals to the war and the culture is studied in Ulrich Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle im Ersten Weltkrieg: Kriegerfabriken, weltanschauliche Debatten und kulturelle Neuentwürfe*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001.

“Jericho Trench.”<sup>7</sup> The trenches are summarized well by Paul Fussell in his classic work *The Great War and Modern Memory*, wherein he writes: “The British trenches were wet, cold, smelly, and thoroughly squalid.”<sup>8</sup> Although an exhaustive study is beyond the scope of the current investigation, it is possible to look briefly at one aspect of the religious experience of some soldiers on the Western Front—the perceived absence of God. Such ideas as this can be found also in other expressions of the war as art, music, and fiction.<sup>9</sup>

Rats were part of the daily experience of troops in the trenches. English poet-soldier Isaac Rosenberg mused in “Break of Day in the Trenches” how ironic it was that rats could freely transverse “no man’s land” without fear of death. Yet, he speaks to a rat that jumped on his hand, declaring to it:

Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew  
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.<sup>10</sup>

Rats, lice, mud, and many other hardships of war were painted on small signs in the trenches as humorous and necessary guides in the mazes of destruction.

When the First World War erupted in August 1914, many people assumed it would be a short war lasting perhaps a few weeks and at most a few months. Many, if not most people believed it would be over by Christmas 1914. But it wasn’t. It lasted four years. When we read and study the war, what becomes apparent are the enormous futility of the war and the senseless loss of life—an average of more than 6200 soldiers died every day for four years.<sup>11</sup> Historian Niall Ferguson writes: “The First World War . . . was something worse than a tragedy, which is something we are taught by the theatre to regard as ultimately unavoidable. It was nothing less than the

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<sup>7</sup> See, Peter Chasseaud, “Rats Alley: Trench Names of the Western Front, 1914-1918. Stroud, UK: Spellmount, 2006. For an overview of trench warfare during the war, see John Ellis, *Eye-Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. See also Robin Neillands, *Attrition: The Great War on the Western Front-1916*. London: Robson Books, 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 43.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London: Papermac, 2004), 214. See also, Marjorie Perloff, “The Great War and the European avant-garde, in Vincent Sherry, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 141-65.

<sup>10</sup> Isaac Rosenberg, “Break of Day in the Trenches,” in Jon Stallworthy, *The Oxford Book of War Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 184.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison, ed. *The Economics of World War I* (Cambridge, 2005), 27.

greatest *error* of modern history.”<sup>12</sup> Ferguson’s words are correct—the war was far more than a tragedy.

In short, war is the presence of the extraordinary and the absence of the ordinary in the lives of those it touches. Speaking to the religious dimension of war more succinctly, on the first day of the battle of the Somme (1 July 1916), Lance Corporal Marshall, 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment, known as “The Accrington Pals,” declared: “I need hardly say what it was like—but if hell is like a battlefield, then God help the sinner.”<sup>13</sup> The battle of the Somme was horrendous—it is remembered as the bloodiest day in the history of the British Army, when 57,470 soldiers became casualties, of whom 19,240 were killed or died of wounds.

Such words as Lance Corporal Marshall’s echoed the sentiment of Lt.Col. Alfred Sutton, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Field Ambulance Corps during the ill-fated campaign of Gallipoli a year earlier when he wrote in his diary on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1915: “How long oh Lord. We are only chocolate soldiers, non-combatants and cannot stand this much longer. If I am hit, I hope and pray I may be killed, these experiences are too awful.”<sup>14</sup>

The destructiveness of war and the human tragedies that accompany it should never be forgotten—people will die whether they profess religious faith or not. The seriousness of conflict and the fact that it affects individuals, institutions, and states in many complex ways must be remembered by us. It also reminds us that even though an individual may perform an action that is legally and ethically justified, there is always the requirement of acting as a responsible moral agent.

As is well known, not only was it letters, diaries, and narrative literature that recounted the horror and trauma of the war; it was also found in the poetry of the war. With respect to God and religion, one finds many examples of each in Great War poetry. For example, Rupert Brooke’s paradoxical sonnet “Peace” contains the words “Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour” and then follows with references to “hand” and “hearts,” playing on the wording of the German hymn translated into English and sung in British churches beginning “Now thank we all our God, with heart, and hands, and voices.” Lesser-known poems by soldiers affirming

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<sup>12</sup> Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (New York, 1999), 462.

<sup>13</sup> “Battlefront: 1 July 1916” PRO, [Public Record Office], Information packet, n.d.

<sup>14</sup> Diary of Lt. Col. Alfred Sutton, 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Field Ambulance, AAMC, Australian War Memorial File Ref: 2 DRL/1227/1. I am indebted to Liana Markovich, University of New South Wales for providing this material.

God's existence and requesting divine assistance include Second Lieutenant Ernest Vernede's "Before the Assault" and Lieutenant William Noel Hodgson's more familiar poem "Before Action."<sup>15</sup>

However, it is not the poems of divine affirmation that are presently under study, but the poems where God is either silent, absent, or non-existent in the poet's experience. "Perhaps no soldier-poet of the Great War was more sensitive to God's seemingly uncaring nature than Wilfred Owen [1893-1918]."<sup>16</sup> Owen wrestled with religious questions before the war and the experience of war furthered his dissatisfaction with institutional Christianity, even while maintaining what he termed "primitive Christianity" and intense spirituality.<sup>17</sup> In "Greater Love," Owen writes of the front as a place "Where God seems not to care."<sup>18</sup> In "Le Christianisme" there is hostility to Christian iconography and frustration with what he perceives to be an uncaring God. His poems "Soldier's Dream," and "Inspection" give bitter criticism of God for creating permitting war, thus touching on the issue of theodicy. In "Exposure" he writes "For love of God seems dying" and his work "Parable of the Old Man and the Young," in which the biblical story of Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22) is retold in the context of the war, he writes a work wherein the father slays the son (unlike the biblical narrative) "And half the seed of Europe, one by one."<sup>19</sup> Yet, Owen was also capable of retaining some belief in God as is seen again in "Soldier's Dream" where the soldier says "I dreamed kind Jesus fouled the big-gun gears" using the biblical imagery of Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace.<sup>20</sup>

From some soldier poets there was also anger at clerics who embraced the war from pulpits at home encouraging their parishioners to participate in the war. Anger at such clerics is seen in Siegfried Sassoon's bitterly anti-clerical poem "They" and "Memorial Tablet (Great War)."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Schweitzer, *The Cross and the Trenches* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 130.

<sup>16</sup> Schweitzer, *The Cross and the Trenches*, 221.

<sup>17</sup> Schweitzer, *The Cross and the Trenches*, 221-23.

<sup>18</sup> Wilfred Owen, *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, ed. Edmund Blunden (London: Chatto & Windus, 1952), 62.

<sup>19</sup> Schweitzer, *The Cross and the Trenches*, 223.

<sup>20</sup> Schweitzer, *The Cross and the Trenches*, 248-29.

<sup>21</sup> Schweitzer, *The Cross and the Trenches*, 164.

At the core of much the poetry, whether voiced or silent, is the problem of evil and theodicy—the defense of God in midst of evil.<sup>22</sup> Beyond the scope of this paper, though significant in the field of theology, is the issue of and possibility of the suffering of God. Classic Christianity and theism teach the impassibility of God—that God is not temporally subject to suffering or pain. Yet in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there arose in English Anglicanism the idea that God can and must suffer because humans suffer. The First World War did much to stimulate this view (as did the holocaust thirty years later).<sup>23</sup> What is certain is that millions of soldiers *did* suffer and die. Many soldier-poets, of all faiths and no faith wrote of the suffering and death. German Jewish soldier-poet Jacob Diamant penned a poem titled simply “Dying.” In the final stanza he writes:

Twitching in the mud the Jew  
 Feels a final pricking;  
 Looks around – is God in view? –  
 As his eyes are breaking.<sup>24</sup>

Diamant was not alone. Many other soldier-poets expressed similar attitudes of anger, apathy, and angst.

When war came to Great Britain and the call went out for soldiers—enlisted and officers, many of the officers came directly from school or university – schoolboys and scholars one day and soldiers the next. They were drawn from throughout the British Empire, but the universities were especially important for providing members of the officer corps – so much so that Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, the commander of British forces in Europe, specifically asked for students from Oxbridge. “Send out young Oxford and Cambridge men as officers . . . They understand the crisis in

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<sup>22</sup> It should also be remembered that when war came to Europe, not everyone was in distress, and some saw it as a positive thing with almost religious overtones. See Roland N. Stromberg, *Redemption by War: The Intellectuals and 1914*. Lawrence, KS: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1982 and Paul Crook, *Darwinism, War and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas, G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 2-3. Weinandy’s work is a defense of the impassibility of God from a Roman Catholic perspective, building on the theological traditions of the Fathers and Aquinas. For a presentation of the impassibility from a popular Protestant perspective, see H. Wayne House and William Grover, *Does God Feel Your Pain?* Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008 (especially pages 121-50).

<sup>24</sup> Jacob Diamant, “Dying,” in *Broken Carousel: German Jewish Soldier-Poets of the Great War*, Trans and ed Peter C. Appelbaum, with James W. Scott (Newport, RI: Stone Tower Books, 2017), 365. Peter C. Appelbaum with James W. Scott, trans and ed.

which the British Empire is involved.”<sup>25</sup> Sent out they were, with horrendous consequences: over twenty-five hundred from Oxford were killed during the war and only slightly fewer from Cambridge – approximately twenty percent of those serving in the military from each university.<sup>26</sup>

### C. S. LEWIS (1898-1963)—ASPIRING POET

One of those young men answering the call from Oxford was an aspiring poet – Second Lieutenant C. S. Lewis of the Third Somerset Light Infantry.<sup>27</sup> In later life Lewis would gain some fame as a writer of science fiction, children’s stories, and as a Christian apologist. But in the Great War all of that was yet future. During the war years Lewis was an atheist who hoped only to survive the war, return to Oxford, and become a poet. Of those killed during the war he would later write, despairingly: “I have lost my brothers and my love and all. Nothing is left but me.”<sup>28</sup> Lewis had been, briefly, a student at Oxford before entering the army, but his studies were made impossible by the continuation of war. He traveled to France – and returned to Oxford – as an atheist (a poignant reminder that the platitude, “there are no atheists in foxholes,” should not be universally applied).

As a young officer on the Western Front, Lewis, through the persona of a wolf, penned his own thoughts of the war’s horrors in a poem published in 1919, shortly after the war, about the destruction he saw all around him, “Once I too could dream . . . Our throats can bark for slaughter: cannot sing.”<sup>29</sup> In these words from “French Nocturne,” published in *Spirits in Bondage*, and probably written within a month of his arrival in France, the reference is to the *persona* as a wolf that vocalizes for predatory death rather

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<sup>25</sup> Cited in Denis Winter, *Death’s Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (New York, 1985), 63.

<sup>26</sup> J. M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, 2003), 93. For information on the social distribution of British losses see Winter, 65-100.

<sup>27</sup> For more on Lewis and war, see Timothy J. Demy, “A Dreadful Thing’: C. S. Lewis and the Experience of War,” *Sehnsucht: The C. S. Lewis Journal* 5/6 (2011-2012): 103-25 from which some of this material was drawn.

<sup>28</sup> C. S. Lewis, “Dymer,” in *Narrative Poems*, ed. with a preface by Walter Hooper (London, 1969), 53.

<sup>29</sup> C. S. Lewis, “French Nocturne” in *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics*, ed. by Walter Hooper (San Diego, 1984), 4.

than beauty.<sup>30</sup> In so stating, Lewis as poet emphasizes the serious dehumanizing effect of war on all involved. In his later 1926 work *Dymer*, Lewis would again graphically portray war and the vicious fighting of combat, with descriptions echoing those of other wartime poets such as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, shortly after the end of the war, Lewis, then a wounded veteran boasted to a friend that during his time in the trenches of the Western Front, he “never sank so low as to pray” in spite of the imminent danger he faced and the fear he experienced “all the time.”<sup>32</sup> Yet the war did have a significant effect on Lewis, who arrived in France on 29 November 1917, his nineteenth birthday.

The carnage of the war made a lasting impression on Lewis, who was troubled by its memories for years. Until late in life, he spoke rarely of his experiences, and then only with close friends, such as Tolkien and Owen Barfield, who were also veterans.<sup>33</sup> For Lewis and thousands of others of his generation, the war was a life-changing event. Many, including Lewis, expressed their experiences and emotions regarding the war in poetry, sometimes graphically detailing the brutalities of war and sometimes masking them.<sup>34</sup>

On 22 February 1918, prior to being wounded, Lewis wrote to his father, “I have discovered that optimism about the war increases in an inverse ratio to the optimist’s proximity to the line. . . . Certainly, I can’t see any bright

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<sup>30</sup> Don W. King, *C. S. Lewis, Poet: The Legacy of His Poetic Impulse* (Kent, OH, 2001), 70-2. On the dating of the poem, see Walter Hooper’s “Preface” to *Spirits in Bondage*, xxx. For an overview of Lewis’ war poetry in *Spirits in Bondage*, see Don W. King, “Early Lyric Poetry: *Spirits in Bondage* (1919) and “Joy” (1924), 234-38, 248-50, in Vol. 2 of Bruce L. Edwards, *C. S. Lewis, Life, Works, and Legacy*. Westport, CT, 2007.

<sup>31</sup> King, *C. S. Lewis, Poet*, 122.

<sup>32</sup> Leo Baker, “Near the Beginning” in *C. S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table*, ed. by James T. Como (New York, 1979), 6.

<sup>33</sup> K. J. Gilchrist, *A Morning After: C. S. Lewis & WWI* (New York, 2005), 183.

<sup>34</sup> There are numerous studies and anthologies of the poetry of the First World War. Among the more accessible are the classic work by Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York, 1975; David Roberts, *Minds at War: The Poetry and Experience of the First World War*. West Sussex, 1996; and Vincent Sherry, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the First World War*. Cambridge, 2005. I am also indebted to Professor Peter B. Appelbaum for sharing some of his unpublished research and insights into religion and German Jewish soldier poets of the First World War.

prospects at present.”<sup>35</sup> Lewis lost many friends and comrades throughout the war and wrote of them in his poetry.

While in the trenches Lewis faced continual artillery shelling by the Germans who, when they assaulted in their spring 1918 attack “were pouring shells into our line about three a minute all day.”<sup>36</sup> He writes of that day and his overall experience on the Western Front:

I think it was that day I noticed how a greater terror overcomes a less: a mouse that I met (and a poor shivering mouse it was, as I was a poor shivering man) made no attempt to run from me. Through the winter, weariness and water were our chief enemies. I have gone to sleep marching and woken again and found myself marching still. One walked in the trenches in thigh gum boots with water above the knee; one remembers the icy stream welling up inside the boot when you punctured it on concealed barbed wire. [There was] familiarity both with the very old and the very recent dead . . .<sup>37</sup>

It was a traumatic and brutal experience for all involved. Weather conditions of rain, mud, and snow created perpetual misery for everyone.

During his time of recuperation Lewis finished a book of poems that was published as *Spirits in Bondage*. Interestingly, though he was grouped with other soldier-poets, his poetry, such as “Death in Battle,” which was his first published work as an adult, did not stress the technological and physical aspects of war, as did much of the genre, but rather, psychological and spiritual aspects of war. Lewis did however share common themes with many of the other First World War poets such as the prominence of the sky for the soldier (“The Autumn Morning”), images of an ideal England (“Oxford”), the questioning of Nature (“Satan Speaks” and “Dungeon Grates”), the questioning of society and humankind (“Death in Battle”), the loss of traditional faith (“In Prison”), and the viewing of man-made hells (“French Nocturne”).<sup>38</sup>

The experiences of war would never be completely erased. He wrote:

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<sup>35</sup> Letter of 22 February 1918, in Lewis, *Collected Letters*, 1:362.

<sup>36</sup> Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 194.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 195-96.

<sup>38</sup> See Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 36-74 and Gilchrest, “2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Lewis,” 63.

But for the rest, the war—the frights, the cold, the smell of H. E. [high explosives], the horribly smashed men still moving like half-crushed beetles, the sitting or standing corpses, the landscape of sheer earth without a blade of grass, the boots worn day and night till they seemed to grow to your feet—all this shows rarely and faintly in memory. It is too cut off from the rest of my experience and often seems to have happened to someone else. It is even in a way unimportant. One imaginative moment seems now to matter more than the realities that followed. It was the first bullet I heard—so far from me that it “whined” like a journalist’s or a peacetime poet’s bullet. At that moment there was something not exactly like fear, much less like indifference: a little quavering signal that said, “This is War. This is what Homer wrote about.”<sup>39</sup>

Throughout the First World War, Lewis’ worldview was that of an atheist and frustrated dualist—railing against man’s inhumanity toward others and against a God he denies but blames for human pain and suffering.<sup>40</sup> These viewpoints are seen clearly in his letters and in the poetry. In his narrative poem “Dymer,” he writes:

Then charge and cheer and bubbling sobs of death,  
 We hovered on their front. Like swarming bees  
 Their spraying bullets came—no time for breath.  
 I saw men’s stomachs fall out on their knees;  
 And shouting faces, while they shouted, freeze  
 Into black, bony masks.<sup>41</sup>

As an atheist, Lewis looked at war and saw in it actions of gross barbaric inhumanity that did nothing more than satisfy a human appetite for power. The closest he could come to making any sense of the First World War was to say that it mirrored events in earlier history—but with no God there was ultimately no meaning or purpose. For Lewis and hundreds of thousands of others, the war ended, but the memories and scars remained. In part, his experiences were not unlike those of millions of others returning from war such as fellow soldier, author, and poet Siegfried Sassoon, who declared: “A

<sup>39</sup> Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 196.

<sup>40</sup> King, *C. S. Lewis, Poet*, 52. For insights into Lewis’ dualism and First World War poetry, see King, 52-97.

<sup>41</sup> “Dymer,” in *Narrative Poems*, 45. On Lewis and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as well as the relation of “Dymer,” to this, see Gilchrist’s *A Morning After: C. S. Lewis & WWI*, 150, 153, 203-16.

man who endured the war at its worst was everlastingly differentiated from everyone—except his fellow soldiers.”<sup>42</sup>

**GEORGE A. STUDDERT KENNEDY (1883-1929)—  
CHAPLAIN POET**

One of the most poignant poems with religious connotations to come out of the First World War was written by a British army chaplain and poet, G. A. Studdert-Kennedy. In his poem “Waste,” he concisely captures the spiritual, emotional, and psychological trauma of war for many of his generation:

“Waste of Muscle, waste of Brain  
Waste of Patience, waste of Pain,  
Waste of Manhood, waste of Health,  
Waste of Beauty, waste of Wealth,  
Waste of Blood, waste of Tears,  
Waste of Youth’s, most precious years,  
Waste of ways the Saints have trod,  
Waste of Glory, waste of God—  
War!”<sup>43</sup>

Affectionately known as “Woodbine Willie” for his habit of passing out cigarettes to soldiers moving up the line and, in the trenches, Studdert Kennedy trained for the ministry at Ripon Hall in Oxford. After ordination he served in parishes in Rugby, Leeds, and Worcester. By December 1915, Studdert Kennedy was serving as a Temporary Chaplain and by Christmas Day, he was preaching to troops in France.<sup>44</sup> In 1917, he was awarded the

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<sup>42</sup> Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, 280, cited in Fussell, 90.

<sup>43</sup> George A. Studdert Kennedy, *More Rough Rhymes of a Padre* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), 80.

<sup>44</sup> William Purcell, *Woodbine Willie* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1962), 98. On his postwar ministry, see Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, “‘Woodbine Willie’: Religion and Politics after the Great War.” *History Today* December 1986: 40-45. See also, Dayne Edward Nix, *Moral Injury and a First World War Chaplain: The Life of G. A. Studdert Kennedy*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2022.

Military Cross for “conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty” during the attack on Messines Ridge.<sup>45</sup>

Early in his wartime experiences he sent regular letters back to his home parish and parish newsletter. However, after the enormous losses of the battle of the Somme in July 1916, his letters ceased. Gundry notes: “There is evidence that severe censorship was imposed around this time but even so Studdert Kennedy realized that his experiences were so frightful it would be difficult to describe them without giving the impression that it was scarcely possible to come back alive.”<sup>46</sup>

While he no longer wrote dispatches for parish readers, he did write poetry, a literary form in which he had begun writing in 1914, that was disseminated at home and at the front. Printed and distributed first by SPCK, his poetry was eventually published by Hodder and Stoughton in two volumes under the titles *Rough Rhymes of a Padre* (1918) and *More Rough Rhymes of a Padre* (1919). A further collection of war and postwar writing was published in 1927 as *The Unutterable Beauty*.

The poems are direct, graphic, and filled with emotions reflecting Studdert Kennedy’s experiences as well as giving voice to the troops to whom he ministered. The poems have a pastoral perspective and biblical and theological imagery, and allusion runs throughout them. Rather than being the voice of the poet to heaven, he brings God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son into the trenches. In so doing he becomes an early twentieth century proponent of the passibility of God—a view that strains the limits of Christian orthodoxy but arose for some from the experiences of the war.<sup>47</sup>

In his poetry there is not an abandonment of faith or a denial of God’s existence as one finds in the poems of Isaac Rosenberg, but there is a sense of divine suffering along with the troops, and at times, the God’s absence from

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<sup>45</sup> Cited in Michael Gundry, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness* (St. Johns [UK]: Osborne Heritage, reprint ed., 2011), 45. The full citation can be found in *The London Gazette* issue 30234, 14 August 1917, page 36 and found at <http://www.london-gazetter.co.uk/issues/30234/supplements/8384> accessed 13 July 2012.

<sup>46</sup> Gundry, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, 48.

<sup>47</sup> On this, see Robert Ellis, “Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy: The Pastor and the Suffering God,” Unpublished lecture, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, 15 February 2005 at [http://www.ocms.ac.uk/docs20050215\\_Ellis.pdf](http://www.ocms.ac.uk/docs20050215_Ellis.pdf) accessed 13 July 2012. See also the centenary critical edition of *The Hardest Part* by Studdert Kennedy, edited by Thomas O’Loughlin and Stuart Bell (London: SCM Press, 2018).

the horrors of the war.<sup>48</sup> His poetry often builds heavily on the suffering of Christ. It is Christocentric and crucicentric.<sup>49</sup> Thus, in “The Comrade God” one reads in part:

*Only in Him can I find home to hide me,  
Who on the Cross was slain to rise again,  
Only with Him my Comrade God beside me,  
Can I go forth to war with sin and pain.<sup>50</sup>*

In “The Suffering God,” he writes:

*How can it be that God can reign in glory,  
Calmly content with what His Love has done,  
Reading unmoved the piteous shameful story,  
All the vile deeds men do beneath the sun?<sup>51</sup>*

Studdert Kennedy does not abandon faith in God as did some, but neither does he resist voicing despair, disgust, and a longing for peace. In “A Song of the Desert,” written “On the Hindenburg Line, 1918,” he writes:

*An exile in a weary land,  
My soul sighs for release,  
It wanders in war’s wilderness  
And cries for Peace—for Peace.<sup>52</sup>*

In the years after the war this would become more pronounced in his sermons and poetry. A year after the Armistice, in an article reprinted many times, he stated his position:

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<sup>48</sup> On Rosenberg, see his poems “God,” “Spiritual Isolation,” “The Blind God,” “The One Lost,” “Invisible Ancient Enemy of Mine,” and “God Made Blind” wherein he speaks more than once of “this miasma of a rotting God” (“God” and *Moses*).

<sup>49</sup> Ellis, “Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy: The Pastor and the Suffering God,” 12.

<sup>50</sup> Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, *More Rough Rhymes of a Padre* (London: Stodder and Houghton, 1919), 55.

<sup>51</sup> Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, *The Unutterable Beauty: The Collected Poems of G. A. Studdert Kennedy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927), 3.

<sup>52</sup> Studdert Kennedy, *More Rough Rhymes of a Padre*, 87.

Does God will War? Is it part of His mysterious plan? Are the Militarist historians, right? I answer: "If God wills War, then I am morally mad, and I don't know good from evil." War is the most obviously wicked thing I know. If God wills War, then I am not an atheist, I am an anti-theist. I am against God. I hate Him.<sup>53</sup>

Studdert Kennedy did not believe God was the cause of war, but he was willing to voice ethical and theological concerns in such a way as to show that he was willing to go ideologically wherever his investigation took him. As a chaplain he was not alone. Other later-prominent clergy from the trenches would make their mark in theology in the decades to come—among them German Lutheran chaplain Paul Tillich and French stretcher bearer Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Historian Joseph F. Byrnes writes in his study of God at the Western Front:

So, we can make the case that from out of World War I emerged twentieth-century theologies for living with the death of the religious imagination (Tillich), seeing beyond the random destructiveness of evolution (Teilhard), and for engaging the meaninglessness of human suffering (Studdert Kennedy).<sup>54</sup>

Their theologies acclaimed and attacked—they were also influential. When coupled with other emerging trends in 20<sup>th</sup> century biblical and theological studies one can readily find the influence of the First World War upon them.

Throughout the war, religion remained a source of consolation and support for many people at home and at the front and influenced official and unofficial wartime rhetoric.<sup>55</sup> Yet some soldiers at the front reacted to perceived excesses of clerical nationalism.<sup>56</sup>

The war cast a long shadow over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nearly eighty years after it ended, an ordnance disposal expert who was still working to remove unexploded shells from the French countryside pointed to a shrapnel bomb and a poison gas shell and commented to a researcher "with these two weapons, whole armies could be killed without their opponents ever seeing

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<sup>53</sup> G. A. Studdert Kennedy, *Lies!* (New York: George H. Doran, n.d), 5-6.

<sup>54</sup> Joseph F. Byrnes, *God on the Western Front: Soldiers and Religion in World War I* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2023), 193.

<sup>55</sup> Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, 242.

<sup>56</sup> Schweitzer, *The Cross and the Trenches*, 163-85.

them. When the power to destroy faceless men came into our hands, men learned that God can abandon them. With these weapons, a religion without God had arrived.”<sup>57</sup> For many people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the bloodiest century in history that is exactly what happened. The First World War was a preview of the years to come. For many, the eclipse of God was total, not only in Rats Alley, but, on every avenue, literal and figurative that people trod, and from a faith perspective, perhaps that is the greatest tragedy of all.

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<sup>57</sup> Cited in Sandra M. Gilbert, “Rats’ Alley’: The Great War, Modernism, and the (Anti) Pastoral Elegy,” *New Literary History* 30:1 (Winter 1999): 187. The annual “iron harvest” in Belgium and France continues to the present. See for example a recent recounting in John Strider Nation, *A Nomad in No Man’s Land: Reflections from the Somme Battlefield* (Middletown, RI: Stone Tower Press, 2022), 11-12.

## MORAL INJURY AND THE SILENCE OF HEROES<sup>1</sup>

Dayne E. Nix

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War poetry has been used throughout history by military veterans to communicate the timeless truths of the battlefield. Soldiers use poetry to express emotions and experiences that are otherwise difficult to communicate. Many war poets focus on their own emotions, losses, and experiences. The First World War British Chaplain, G.A. Studdert Kennedy is not usually numbered among the famous war poets of the early Twentieth Century, but his work is gaining a greater appreciation a century after the Great War ended. His poetry captures the experiences of the everyday soldier, but adds to it the emotions, griefs and losses of the mothers, fathers, sweethearts, and children impacted by the War.

Studdert Kennedy's poem, "What's the Good" recounts the ruminations of a First World War soldier as he considers returning home to his wife and children after the conclusion of hostilities. The man has participated in trench warfare and took part in hand-to-hand combat. The impact of his experience weighs heavily on his mind and spirit and raises real questions relating to his ability to adapt to the post-war environment, should he survive. One question that vexes him is his ability to honestly convey to his wife what he has experienced in France and provides insight to a nearly universal reality of war, that its veterans are generally reticent to speak about their experiences in combat. It is normative to hear the family of a veteran, of whatever war, state

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on material from my book, *Moral Injury and a First World War Chaplain: The Life of G.A. Studdert Kennedy*, (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2022).

that their loved one never spoke of his or her war experiences, and if they did so, it was only in the most vague and elusive of ways.

The Rev. G.A. Studdert Kennedy served as a chaplain to the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) in the First World War from December 1915 until the Spring of 1919. A popular and well-loved chaplain, he was known for his outgoing and engaging personality. His ministry of presence among the soldiers of the B.E.F. involved personal interaction to provide pastoral counsel and a listening ear, described in counseling literature as the “most caring act an individual can do for another.” His duties took him to the front on three separate occasions where he experienced firsthand the “blood, mud and smells” of trench warfare. He also served in three different training commands. One in particular was probably the source for the inspiration for this poem. Attached to the School for Physical and Bayonet Training, he spent a number of months with a bayonet training team that traveled throughout the theater instructing soldiers in the proper and effective use of the bayonet.<sup>2</sup> His poem reports the accumulated insights derived from encounters with his soldiers and their reaction to their combat experiences related to their use of the bayonet, the up-close and personal killing of enemy combatants. While the combat killing of the enemy from a distance with a rifle, air-dropped ordinance or even a remotely piloted drone carries with it the knowledge that one has killed another human being, the impact of the use of the bayonet carries with it a far more intimate and lasting effect. It is clear from this poem that this soldier has suffered what we know today as a moral injury.

## MORAL INJURY

What is Moral Injury? Jonathan Shay, a well-known psychologist in the Boston area who treated veterans of the Vietnam war, described the universal and timeless impact of war on combat veterans leading to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He is also the first to have identified the existence of moral injury, which is often misidentified as PTSD. Shay quoted a Vietnam veteran to illustrate the impact of combat on a soldier in words echo the sentiment in Studdert Kennedy’s poem.

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<sup>2</sup> D.F. Carey, “Studdert Kennedy: War Padre,” in *G.A. Studdert Kennedy: By His Friends*, ed. J.K. Mozley, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929) 129. The team included a champion boxer (Jimmy Driscoll), two wrestlers, and an NCO who had killed eighteen of the enemy with his bayonet.

...War changes you, changes you. Strips you, strips you of all your beliefs, your religion, takes your dignity away, you become an animal – the animal in the sense of being evil. You know, it's unbelievable what humans can do to each other.<sup>3</sup>

Central to Shay's description of war's impact on soldiers is the role of what he terms *themis*. In his 1994 *Achilles in Vietnam*, he described *themis* as the understanding of "what's right"<sup>4</sup> in a society, its cultural norms. These are the accepted moral principles and normative expectations to which members of a culture are expected to adhere.<sup>5</sup> The violation of *themis* in high stakes situations, the betrayal of trust by military and civilian leaders, serves as a source of significant psychiatric injury leading to PTSD in combat veterans. He further stated that the, "...essential injuries in combat PTSD are moral and social..."<sup>6</sup> In his 2002 work, *Odysseus in America*, Shay further defined this injury as a moral injury and is credited with introducing the term into the psychological literature. When military leaders or politicians *violate the trust* of those they send into combat, through bad decision making, poor strategy or lack of support, they contribute to the moral injury of their troops. "Powerlessness imposed by those in authority and intentional inflection of violation of "what's right" results in severe psychological injury."<sup>7</sup> This aspect of moral injury "impairs and sometime destroys the capacity for trust, especially of those in authority. When social trust is destroyed, it is replaced by the settled expectancy of harm, exploitation, and humiliation from others."<sup>8</sup> Moral injury may result in a long-term distrust of those in authority and disappointment with the individual's commitments that led to the moral injury.

Bret Litz, in his 2009 article "Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans" expanded the definition of moral injury to include an individual's actions in war. There he defined moral injury as stemming from "events in which a person perpetrates, fails to prevent, bears witness to, or learns about

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1994), 33.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-21.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Shay, *Odysseus in America* (New York: Scribner, 2002), 248. See also 206.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Shay, "Moral Injury," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* (2014) 31, No. 2, 186.

acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.”<sup>9</sup> Service members experience moral injury as a result of the very nature of war itself. The taking of a human life, whether combatant or non-combatant, can result in an individual experiencing significant moral impact, especially since society demands respect for all human life. The long-term impact and symptoms of moral injury are often mistaken for PTSD. As Dr. Shay pointed out in his works, moral injury is an important component and may contribute to the development of PTSD, but the two are separate problems. Two experts on Moral Injury, Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini, agree, “...moral injury is not PTSD.”<sup>10</sup>

...The consequences of violating one’s conscience, even if the act was unavoidable or seemed right at the time, can be devastating. Responses include overwhelming depression, guilt, and self-medication through alcohol or drugs. Moral injury can lead to veterans experiencing feelings of worthlessness, remorse, and despair; they may feel as if they lost their souls in combat...<sup>11</sup>

Moral injury is recognized by the U.S. Veterans Administration and is described on its website.

Like psychological trauma, *moral injury* is a construct that describes extreme and unprecedented life experience including the harmful aftermath of exposure to such events. Events are considered morally injurious if they “transgress deeply held *moral* beliefs and expectations.”<sup>12</sup>

Guilt and shame often accompany moral injury and may offer insight into why war veterans are so reticent to speak of their experiences. Veterans nearly unanimously assert that the only ones who can truly understand their experience of war are other veterans. The result is that written or verbalized accounts of the personal combat experiences and reflections of military men

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<sup>9</sup> Bret T. Litz and Patricia K. Kerig, “Introduction to the Special Issue on Moral Injury: Conceptual Challenges, Methodological Issues, and Clinical Applications.” *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, (June 2019) 32, 342.

<sup>10</sup> Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini, *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), xiii.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>12</sup> “Moral Injury,” [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral\\_injury\\_\\_at\\_war.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral_injury__at_war.asp), accessed 19 Oct 2018.

and women are rare. Studdert Kennedy's poem "What's the Good?" offers the personal account of a First World War soldier's justified acts of killing during combat and his commitment to silence regarding those actions. It also records his experience of moral injury, some symptoms of that moral injury, and his attempts to justify and find redemption for his acts.

### **Moral Injury: The Reality of War and Killing (Stanzas 1-12)**

#### **"What's the Good?"<sup>13</sup>**

*by G.A. Studdert Kennedy*

- 1 Well, I've done my bit o' scrappin',
- 2 And I've done in quite a lot;
- 3 Nicked 'em neatly wiv my bayonet,
- 4 So I needn't waste a shot.
- 5 'Twas my duty, and I done it,
- 6 But I 'opes the doctor's quick,
- 7 For I wish I 'adn't done it,
- 8 Gawd! it turns me shamed and sick.
- 9 There's a young 'un like our Richard,
- 10 And I bashed 'is 'ead in two,
- 11 And there's that ole grey 'aired geezer
- 12 Which I stuck 'is belly through.

In these stanzas, the author quickly introduces the reality of war and the killing that takes place there. The veteran reports that he has been involved in "a bit o' scrappin'" and then, to clarify matters, explains that he had really seen extensive combat and killed many of the enemy. He had "done in quite a lot." I've read the poem many times and only recently did I realize that this phrase related the fact that the speaker was acknowledging, using vague language, that he had killed many of the enemy. One Sergeant that Studdert Kennedy served with on the Bayonet Training Team reported that he had killed eighteen of the enemy with the bayonet and shared his experiences with trainees. In the poem, two of the enemy the soldier had killed haunted his memory. He described them as an "old grey 'aired geezer" and a "young'un like our Richard." In both cases, he had used his bayonet to dispatch the enemy in the interest of economy, "so I needn't waste a shot." He is vivid in

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<sup>13</sup> G.A. Studdert Kennedy, "What's The Good?" in *Rough Rhymes of a Padre*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918), 75-80.

his description, probably to support the later assertion that war had made him a butcher. He had bashed one enemy's "head in two" and stuck the other's "belly through."

Studdert Kennedy quickly introduces the element of what we now know as moral injury into the poem. The soldier rationalizes that he had been doing his duty and that he has done what he had to do. In most cases, the reality was that he had to kill or be killed. While the brutal reality of war is evident, so is his humanity as he reflects that "I wish I 'and't done it." The soldier also reflects that he feels a sense of shame over his actions, especially the killing of an old man and the young boy. Shame, remorse, and a sense of guilt are recognized as important symptoms of moral injury. Even though we realize that war involves killing of the enemy, we instinctively know that the taking of human life is morally wrong. Society is built upon the necessary protection and preservation of life. War violates this basic human and societal morality. The veteran alludes to this morality as he refers to war's waste of "women, wives and mothers" pain in childbirth and the rearing of children. The soldier understands that his actions have transgressed a foundational social value and expresses a sense of empathy for the primary and secondary victims of his acts.

### **The Silence of the Hero (*Stanzas 13-24*)**

13     Gawd, you women, wives and mothers,  
14         It's sich waste of all your pain,  
15     If you knowed what I'd been doin',  
16         Could yer kiss me still, my Jane?  
17     When I sets me dahn to tell yer  
18         What it means to scrap and fight  
19     Could I tell ye true and honest,  
20         Make ye see this bleedin' sight.  
21     No I couldn't and I wouldn't,  
22         It would turn your 'air all grey,  
23     Women suffers 'ell to bear us,  
24         And we suffers 'ell to slay.

The veteran's reflection next turns to thoughts to home. For the soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force home was just a short distance across the English Channel. They wrote often to their loved ones and received regular mail. Most had the opportunity to take leave and visit their homes and loved

ones. The soldier had probably been asked by those loved ones, “What’s it like at the Front?” In the poem, he muses about the possibility of accurately reporting his experiences in combat. Of course, he would like to be “true and honest” (a foundational element in any marriage relationship) in his reporting, but he realizes his reporting would be full of blood and gore. He also knows that accurate reporting would have a chilling effect on his wife, that it would “turn your ‘air all grey” even as it had probably whitened the color of his own hair. He also fears that a truthful accounting of his actions would have a lasting impact on his relationship with his wife. Considering all his bloodletting and killing in combat, could she still embrace him, “could yer kiss me still, my Jane?”

This is one reason why veterans are silent.<sup>14</sup> They know that the reality of combat does not fit the reality of peace, that the two are different worlds with different rules. The actions that combat inflicts upon men and women don’t follow the rules of everyday life at home and are better left on the battlefield. One problem of the modern battlefield is that it is so near in space and time to the home front. Soldiers may fight a battle one week and be home the next due to the speed and availability of air travel. How does one deal with the dissonance of life in a combat zone and life at home with loved ones when separated by only days or hours?

### **Recognition of the Enemy’s Humanity (Stanzas 25-48)**

25 I suppose some Fritz went courtin'  
 26 In the gloamin' same as me,  
 27 And the old world turned to 'eaven  
 28 When they kissed beneath a tree.  
 29 And each evening seemed more golden,  
 30 Till the day as they was wed,  
 31 And 'is bride stood shy and blushin',  
 32 Like a June rose, soft and red.  
 33 I remembers 'ow it were, lass,  
 34 On that silver night in May,  
 35 When ye 'ung your 'ead and whispered  
 36 That ye couldn't say me nay.

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<sup>14</sup> Studdert Kennedy refers to this “conspiracy of silence” in his book, *The Hardest Part*. He calls it “the noble reticence behind which our soldiers seek to hide the sufferings they endure...the brutality of war is literally unutterable. There are no words foul and filthy enough to describe it.” G.A. Studdert Kennedy, *The Hardest Part* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918), 192-194.

37 Then, when June brought in the roses  
38 And you changed your maiden name,  
39 'Ow ye stood there, shy and blushin',  
40 When the call of evening came.  
41 I remembers 'ow I loved ye,  
42 When ye arsked me in your pride  
43 'Ow I'd liked my Sunday dinner  
44 As ye nestled at my side.  
45 For between a thousand races  
46 Lands may stretch and seas may foam,  
47 But it makes no bloomin' difference,  
48 Boche or Briton, 'ome is 'ome.

The soldier in Studdert Kennedy's poem next makes a healthy shift as he considers that the German soldiers he has faced and killed are human beings just like himself. One of the strategies that allows us to kill our enemy is to dehumanize them in such a way that we no longer feel we are killing another human. British leaders and newspapers went to great lengths to characterize the German soldiers as heartless "huns" who had raped Belgium women and killed their children. "Propaganda that tries to deny the humanity of enemies and associate them with subhuman animals is a common and effective tool for increasing aggression and breaking down the resistance to killing."<sup>15</sup> Studdert Kennedy's soldier begins with this characterization, calling his enemy "Fritz." But he quickly surmises that the German soldiers he had killed were human, like himself. He reflects that they had fallen in love, married and enjoyed the beauty of a May evening just as he had. According to contemporary authors Shannon French and Anthony Jack, this realization is a healthy and healing step, the "re-humanization of the enemy."<sup>16</sup> He recognizes that his enemy and he share a common human experience: love, courting, and home. "But it makes no bloomin' difference, Boche or Briton,

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<sup>15</sup> Shannon E. French and Anthony I. Jack, "Connecting Neuroethics and Military Ethics to Help Prevent Moral Injury" in *War and Moral Injury: A Reader* (Eugene Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), 275.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

'ome is ome."<sup>17</sup> Note that, despite this recognition, he can't quite escape the use of a derogatory term to describe his all too human enemy.

### **Intrusive Battlefield Memories (*Stanzas 49-56*)**

49 I remember what 'e cost ye,  
 50 When I gave ye up for dead,  
 51 As I 'eld your 'and and watched ye  
 52 With the little lad in bed.  
 53 *'Struth I wish 'e'd stop 'is lookin',*  
 54 *And shut up 'is bloomin' eyes.*  
 55 *'Cause I keeps on seein' Richard*  
 56 *When I whacks 'im and 'e cries.*

In the following section, Studdert Kennedy's soldier reflects on women's suffering in bringing their own son into the world. As he does so, he suffers an intrusive battlefield memory. The memory of the young German soldier who reminded him of his own son. The man's death cries and staring eyes haunt him. When he thinks of his son, he inevitably remembers the dying German. This is the reality of the return to peace, that those who have experienced combat will never return to their pre-war innocence. Instead, they will be saddled with their war memories. In his reflection, the soldier recognizes the lasting impact of war on him and condemns all war and those who promote it, in this case, the politicians who pontificate on war's benefits while never experiencing the bloody reality of war.

Intrusive memories are a symptom of PTSD as well as of moral injury. Moral injury has often been misdiagnosed as PTSD. The symptom that differentiates the two is that sufferers of moral injury are saddled with inescapable guilt and remorse for their actions. The memories of war and of one's role in it, whether justified or not, are inescapable and war veterans nearly universally report that their memories persist, usually for the rest of their lives. This has been a reality of war since time immemorial.

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<sup>17</sup> Studdert Kennedy reports that he experienced a similar realization when he observed the explosion of the mines the British had constructed under the German lines at the Messines Ridge. The explosions, heard even in distant England, was met by cheers by the British soldiers in the trenches. Studdert Kennedy joined in the cheers, but then realized the death and carnage that was being visited on the Germans. "We're all laughing, we're enjoying it! That's the stuff to give 'em... But it's damnable, it's a disgrace to civilization. It's murder – wholesale murder... They have wives and kiddies like my Patrick, and are being torn to bits and tortured..." G.A. Studdert Kennedy, *The Hardest Part*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918), 4-5.

**Comparison of the Suffering of the soldier and his Pregnant Wife  
(Stanzas 57-72)**

57 Damn the blasted war to 'ell, lass,  
58 It's just bloody rotten waste,  
59 Them as gas on war and glory  
60 Oughter come and 'ave a taste.  
61 Yes, I larned what women suffers  
62 When I seed you stand the test,  
63 But you knowed as it were worth it  
64 When 'e felt to find your breast.  
65 All your pain were clean forgotten  
66 When you touched 'is little 'ead,  
67 And ye sat up proud and smilin',  
68 With a living lad in bed.  
69 But we suffers too – we suffers,  
70 Like the damned as groans in 'ell,  
71 And we 'aven't got no Babies,  
72 Only mud, and blood, and smell.

In his writings,<sup>18</sup> Studdert Kennedy assigns to women the role of building civilization and maintaining its norms and structures, especially the roles of superintending the home and raising children. In these stanzas, Studdert Kennedy's soldier continues to reflect on the relationship between himself and his wife and contrasts his own experiences with his wife's in childbirth. She represents civilization and normality while the soldier's life in the trenches reflects "mud, blood and smells." This soldier's reflection extends the comparison to the suffering his wife experienced in childbirth. He had feared that he had lost her, so severe had her birthing experience been, "when I gave ye up for dead." But she had survived the birth to enjoy her young child and had forgotten her birth pains as she touched her newborn baby.

To men Studdert Kennedy assigns the warrior role, which often involves the destruction of civilized norms. While the role of the mother involves suffering in order to bring life into the world, the soldier also experiences suffering in fulfilling his role, "Soldiers just kill all they can." This soldier

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<sup>18</sup> I recognize that Studdert Kennedy is speaking from a time different than our own, especially in regard to gender roles. Today's warriors include men and women, and husbands and wives take on more equal roles in the home. See Studdert Kennedy's book, *The Warrior, the Woman and the Christ* (1929) for a greater explication of his views.

husband has experienced the pain of extended separation from his family, exposure to the mud, cold and rain as he served his country, and been exposed to the enemy's determined efforts to snuff out his own life. Finally, he had engaged in personal combat, up close and personal, in kill or be killed situations, and had survived. Rather than dying for his own country, he had served as a midwife facilitating his enemy's bloody delivery to death. The soldier reflects that he has suffered even as a mother suffers, but without the benefit of a new child, only the destruction of other mother's sons. His description of the battlefield is worth repeating,

69 But we suffers too – we suffers,  
 70 Like the damned as groans in 'ell,  
 71 And we 'aven't got no Babies,  
 72 Only mud, and blood, and smell.

**Personal Reflection on the Futility of War Leading to Moral Insight  
 (Stanzas 73-112)**

73 Tain't the suff'rin' as I grouse at,  
 74 I can stick my bit o' pain;  
 75 But I keeps on allus askin'  
 76 What's the good and who's to gain?  
 77 When ye've got "a plain objective"  
 78 Ye can fight your fight and grin,  
 79 But there ain't no damned objective,  
 80 And there ain't no prize to win.  
 81 We're just like a lot of bullocks  
 82 In a blarsted china shop,  
 83 Bustin' all the world to blazes,  
 84 'Cause we dunno 'ow to stop.  
 85 Trampling years of work and wonder  
 86 Into dust beneath our feet,  
 87 And the one as does most damage  
 88 Swears that victory is sweet.  
 89 It's a sweet as turns to bitter,  
 90 Like the bitterness of gall,  
 91 And the winner knows 'e's losin'  
 92 If 'e stops to think at all.  
 93 I suppose this ain't the spirit  
 94 Of the Patriotic man.

95 Didn't ought to do no thinkin',  
96 Soldiers just kill all they can.  
97 But we carn't 'elp thinkin' sometimes,  
98 Though our business is to kill,  
99 War 'as turned us into butchers,  
100 But we're only 'uman still.  
101 Gawd knows well I ain't no thinker,  
102 And I never knew before,  
103 But I knows now why I'm fightin',  
104 It's to put an end to war.  
105 Not to make my country richer  
106 Or to keep her flag unfurled,  
107 Over every other nation  
108 Tyrant mistress of the world.  
109 Not to boast of Britain's glory,  
110 Bought by bloodshed in her wars,  
111 But that Peace may shine about her,  
112 As the sea shines round her shores.

This next section grows out of the previous ones. While the woman's role in the world is generative, bringing life and growth, the soldier's is degenerative, bringing only death and destruction. He laments that there seems to be no purpose in the war (no objective), that as the third and fourth years of the First World War ground to a stalemate in the trenches, he could see no purpose for the war and the thousands of deaths and maiming of English, French and German soldiers. He observed the barren bomb cratered French countryside and realized that they were just "trampling years of work and wonder into dust beneath out feet."

His self-description reflects the shame and guilt he feels for his role in the war. He describes that role as a "bullock in a China shop," a killer who "kills all he can," and, most self-condemningly, as a "butcher." He wonders if his thinking is truly appropriate for a "patriotic man" but reflects that, even though his job is to kill the enemy "we're only human still." This is the realization of the moral man, the recognition that he has a duty to think and act ethically. In doing so, he recognizes that his goal is no longer to defeat the German, but to defeat war. Like so many war veterans that struggle with the moral and ethical ramifications of their combat actions, he realizes that he is not fighting for the glory of his nation, but instead for a greater purpose, "to put an end to war."

**Persisting Baggage and An Unspoken Social Contract (Stanzas 113-132)**

113 If ole Fritz believes in fightin',  
 114 And obeys 'is War Lord's will,  
 115 Well until 'e stops believin',  
 116 It's my job to fight and kill.  
 117 But the Briton ain't no butcher,  
 118 'E's a peaceful cove at 'eart,  
 119 And it's only 'cause 'e 'as to,  
 120 That 'e plays the butcher's part.  
 121 'Cause I 'as to -- that's the reason  
 122 Why I done the likes o' this,  
 123 You're an understanding woman,  
 124 And you won't refuse your kiss.  
 125 Women pity soldiers' sorrow,  
 126 That can bring no son to birth,  
 127 Only death and devastation,  
 128 Darkness over all the earth.  
 129 We won't 'ave no babe to cuddle,  
 130 Like a blessing to the breast,  
 131 We'll just 'ave a bloody mem'ry  
 132 To disturb us when we rest.

One might assume, based on the preceding section, that Studdert Kennedy's soldier might become a conscientious objector and quit the war. He hated the war and his actions in combat, but he would not shirk his duty. Studdert Kennedy was not, at this stage of his life, so opposed to war that he would support conscientious objection. In fact, he supported the war effort and believed that Britain was forced into the war by an evil German Empire. After the war he became committed to the anti-war cause, but at this stage often encouraged British soldiers with reminders of their duty to Britain's "glorious dead" who had given their lives in the war.

Instead, this combat soldier, ruminating during the bloody conflict, is committed to do his duty as long as Britain's enemy is committed to fighting the war. It's only "Cause I 'as to – that's the reason, Why I done the likes o' this..." He realizes that his wife supports his commitment and will accept him back into her life, although he will be forever changed. She has supported him, even encouraged him, in his duty, for he is ultimately protecting her and their way of life. In the same way, society will welcome the

soldier home from having accomplished his civic duty in protecting the country and its culture. There is in fact an unspoken social contract between society and the soldier: the public will recognize the soldier's efforts with parades, medals and the celebration of Armistice or Veterans Days while the soldier will accept the adulation with a quiet "Thank You" and speak no more of their war experiences, maintaining a grim silence about the blood and gore of the battlefield.

But the soldier will carry those experiences with him or her. Studdert Kennedy's poem returns to the birth metaphor, the soldier recognizes that he will bring "no son to birth." There will be no joy in the memory of his military service, only the grim realization that "We'll just 'ave a bloody mem'ry to disturb us when we rest." The war will end, eventually, but the memories will survive. Certainly, during the busyness of the day, the memories will fade. But they will inevitably return when least expected; just before the advent of sleep, during the middle of the night, or when gazing into the face of a beloved child.

### **Redemption by Posterity (Stanzas 133-136)**

Chaplain Studdert Kennedy was passionately committed to the spiritual well-being of the soldiers he served. Perhaps his poem would have been more effective if he had ended it with stanza 132, "To disturb us when we rest."<sup>19</sup> But instead he completed the poem with a redemptive thought. In spite of the destruction, death, and blood, posterity will see a different reality. It will bless the memory of those silent soldiers. Today, veterans of the First World War, who rarely spoke of their experiences in life, continue their silence in death. But their sacrifices and heroics speak volumes as the world remembers and honors their memory. We bless their memory because they fought for a cause they believed was right. Their way of life was challenged, and they responded with courage and deliberation in the face of terrible conditions. Studdert Kennedy would later write that those who survive war have a

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<sup>19</sup> Peter G. Atkinson does an excellent job discussing Studdert Kennedy's poetry and whether he always ended his poems effectively, suggesting that a more "understated" ending often might have been more effective in some of his poems. He suggests applying C.S. Lewis's guidance for reading literature (found in his *Essay on Criticism*) to Studdert Kennedy's poetry, basically to "take it as it is" rather than following any particular critical approach regarding what "good" or "bad" literature is. Reading Studdert Kennedy's poetry, I've often thought he could have used the help of a good editor, following for example T.S. Elliott's "Wasteland," which was heavily edited by Ezra Pound. Studdert Kennedy's "Well?" is a powerful poem, and a short excerpt in my book brought tears to the eyes of an editor, but it runs nearly six pages. See Peter G. Atkinson, "Poets in Wartime," in *Life after Tragedy*, eds. Michael W. Brierley and Georgina A. Byrne, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 65-68.

responsibility to speak for the silent heroes, to remember their sacrifices and inform new generations of the grim reality of warfare. Perhaps, he mused, those memories would influence those unaccustomed to war to strive for peace in the midst of the continuing reality of “wars and rumors of war.”<sup>20</sup> Today we also recognize that this soldier’s musings on the reality of war, his own role in it, and his desire to find redemption in the face of his wartime actions are essential steps on the road to recovery from moral injury.<sup>21</sup>

113     But the kids will someday bless us,  
114         When they grows up British men,  
115     'Cause we tamed the Prussian tyrant,  
116         And brought Peace to earth again.

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<sup>20</sup> G.A. Studdert Kennedy, “The Accursed Thing,” *John Bull*, Nov. 12, 1927, 24.

<sup>21</sup> A veteran’s silence, of course, does not promote recovery from moral injury. Today we recognize that healing from moral injury involves recognition and ownership of one’s role in the moral injury, communicating that role within a caring and trusted community, penance and the receiving of forgiveness. Many sufferers of moral injury also pursue public service and experience post-traumatic growth. Effective treatment and recovery often involve working with mental health professionals, chaplains, and others.

# DR. RICHARD MAYHUE, SERVANT OF GOD AND COUNTRY: A TRIBUTE TO A MAN WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

*Bob Freiberg*

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*Dr. Freiberg is a retired Navy Chaplain of 27 years currently serving as an adjunct professor for Central Baptist Theological Seminary. He has taught Bible courses from the high school to the post-doctrinal levels. As an active member of his local church he enjoys spending time with his wife Nancy, where they both relish traveling and doing research in historical places of interest. As an AGC board member, he is instrumental in helping write curriculum for those institutions interested in Chaplain ministries.*

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*Dick Mayhue is a contributing author and advisor to the AGC Journal and has experience as a Naval Officer, Pastor, Author, Lecturer, Administrator and Theologian. His accomplishments are varied but remarkable, and the Christian world at large is better off because of his leadership and vision. This is his story and how God has used this humble man of faith.*

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## BEGINNINGS

**B**orn in Maryland, Dick attended Ohio State during the Woody Hayes Buckeyes football era heyday in the early days of the Vietnam War. Always patriotic, Dick attended college on a ROTC Navy Scholarship. It was here Dick met and fell in love with a freshmen gal named Lois Elaine (affectionately known simply as “B”) at the football stadium during a fall game and eventually married her. That was over 60 years ago. However, duty called, and Uncle Sam had other plans for the young couple. After graduating, he was commissioned and sent to Vietnam and became the Executive Officer of one of two Hovercraft squadrons, an

experimental naval platform for river reconnaissance. There he and his men functioned as the Navy brown water (Navy term for inner land water ways as compared to the deep blue Navy) component of support for the army's 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. It was here he learned the importance of discipline with leadership. His year-long tour lasted for about 8 months, and it was here that his superiors noticed Dick's ability to understand and adapt, and they cut this part of his tour short and re-assigned him to Naval Headquarters in what was then Saigon to complete the rest of his remaining 4 months in country.

While here, he was assigned as the morning briefer for the head of Naval Forces in Vietnam, Admiral Zumwalt (Zumwalt eventually became the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff for the entire Dept. of Defense). Dicks' job started at 0500, where he was picked up by his own driver and then spent the early morning going over all the latest intel of the war for the Admiral and the Admiral's staff morning brief for the day. The information he put together was crucial and had a direct result on how Admiral Zumwalt and his staff then prosecuted the war. This was not your typical Navy job, the person in this position carried a lot of weight and influence. This Dick did with distinction, and for his efforts as a small boat XO and a Flag briefer for the Commander of all Naval Forces in Vietnam, earned him the Bronze Star.

Unfortunately, while his Navy career was taking off, it was here that Dick also received a letter from B asking for a divorce. There was no scandal or impropriety involved, B just didn't want to be a Naval Officer's wife because she didn't like the lifestyle of having her husband gone and having to move every two or three years. Especially since Dick's tour in Vietnam was up and he had orders to teach at the Naval anti-submarine warfare school, held at Pt. Loma, California.

## **THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL**

At their new apartment in San Diego near Pt. Loma, their landlord was an open Christian and had tried to get Dick and B to attend his church. Neither Dick nor B were interested in spiritual things at the time, especially with the impending divorce. Nevertheless, both were in a mindset to at least get along until it was finalized. Dick never wanted the divorce, but respected B's wishes. She wanted him to get out of the Navy

and perhaps something could have been worked out, but on Dick's part, he loved being a Naval Officer and getting out was not an option, at least not at that time.

Then something marvelous happened. As Dick put it, "God intervened, and it changed both of our lives for the better." Having been hounded constantly by his landlord to go to his church, Dick and B finally relinquished. It was the last thing together they would do as a married couple and then the next day they were to sign the divorce papers. So off they went to a church called "Scott Memorial Baptist Church" where a young Tim LaHaye was the pastor, and he had a guest preacher who was the director from Hume Lake Bible Camp. They were holding an old-fashioned evangelistic campaign. From Dick's perspective, the man was not polished, and his message was simple. It had five points to it:

1. The Bible is true
2. Jesus is God
3. Man is separated from God because of sin
4. Christ died for our sins
5. Sinners can obtain forgiveness by faith in Christ's sacrifice alone.

It was during the first point that the Spirit of God got a hold of Dick's heart, and he listened intently. He knew and felt inside that what the man was saying was true. It was during that service that while working separately in Dick and B's hearts, they both put their faith and trust in their Savior, Jesus Christ. When the invitation to come forward was given, both made the decision to become Christians. That was the first of many decisions they would make together to be faithful to the things of God. Soon after they became Christians, they felt that it would be dishonoring to God to get a divorce. This was the beginning of a lifelong journey of service and love with their Savior.

The next few months found them faithfully going to church, and a call was given by Pastor Tim LaHaye to the people in the congregation to help in the youth group. Even though they were new Christians, they felt God's call to help because this was an opportunity to express their faith in serving others. Neither had any experience, but figured there was nothing to lose but everything to gain in their new faith. Little did they know how the youth pastor would make demands on them that required a lot of

discipline, but in God's grace this experience helped their faith journey. One such story was typical of the regiment they encountered.

The youth pastor was a former varsity basketball player from UCLA named Jerry Riffe. He was very disciplined and was known for his Scripture memory emphasis for believers. Those in his youth group (which ran into the hundreds) had to memorize certain verses to go on Bible outings. This was also required of his youth workers, i.e. Dick and B! One time the youth group was going to spend a week at a Bible camp, but before they could go Dick had failed to recite his memory verses, so Jerry held up 8 full buses of kids while Dick had to recite his memory verses to the youth pastor. Dick did it and they did go, however it shows how committed Dick was for the things of the Lord.

That commitment then worked its way through the Mayhues' life as Dick felt called to go to into full-time Christian service. It was at this time that he resigned his Naval Commission, and Dick and B headed to Winona Lake, Indiana to get multiple advanced degrees in theology at Grace Theological Seminary. While there they served in various capacities such as pastoring a church and teaching classes at the seminary. While here, Dick caught the eye of Chuck Swindoll and John MacArthur who were there speaking at a Bible Conference. Dick had organized the Bible Conference and unknown to Dick at the time, the two evangelical leaders were so impressed with the young preacher that each of them wanted to hire him for their own growing ministries. The two spiritual giants hashed it out and after their discussion, it was John MacArthur who asked Dick (and B) if they wanted to follow him out to California and work with his ministry in Sun Valley, California.

Dick and B had lived in southern California, and it was a no-brainer because the weather was better than shoveling snow in the winter of Indiana, so the Mayhues' moved their family to northern Los Angeles. Dick soon went to work in being a Bible teacher and pastoring a church at Grace Brethren Church in Long Beach, California.

## **A TIRELESS GOSPEL WORKER**

One of the reasons John MacArthur wanted men of Dick's caliber was because he had made some big changes in his ministry. John had taught extension courses for Talbot Seminary since 1977 in northern Los Angeles

at his home church of Grace Community Church. He had been pastoring there since 1969 when it was built on land which was once an old chicken farm in Sun Valley. It was on the northern edge of Los Angeles, and it made sense to have an extension seminary there because it reached a large population. Talbot was physically located in southern Los Angeles in a small community known as La Mirada, which was about 20 miles through crowded LA. As his ministry was blessed by the Lord through his faithful preaching, he grew in reputation as well as through his national radio ministry. Finally, and at the same time, the Lord opened another opportunity which would change the face of John's ministry forever.

Twenty miles to the north of Sun Valley lies the then-sleepy town of Santa Clarita. It was the place where cowboy movies during the early age of Hollywood were made and was known as the place where James Dean ate breakfast before his fatal car crash. Since 1927, it was also the home of Los Angeles Baptist College, otherwise called "LABC." In 1985, the struggling board met with pastor John and asked him if he could become their president. That also meant that they would be under the control and ministry of John MacArthur in a special relationship with his Church. He said "yes," and LABC was renamed "Master's College" in 1985.

Meanwhile, for about 9 years, Professor MacArthur was having some theological differences with the Biblical direction of the leadership at BIOLA, which was the college to Talbot Seminary. When different factors necessitated a complete separation, this happened around the time of Easter vacation of 1986. That year Master's Seminary became completely independent from Talbot, and the new seminary was located at Grace Church. Of course, to have a Bible College and Seminary, leadership of a higher caliber was needed to fill the vision and implement the vision of teaching and mentoring young minds for the Gospel of Christ. Enter Dr. MacArthur's speaking engagement at Grace Seminary in Winona Lakes, Indiana and the providential meeting with Dr. Richard Mayhue at Grace Seminary in Winona Lake, IN.

At the time, Dr. Irv Busenitz, another man of great ability and love for the things of God, became the assistant academic Dean of the new seminary and taught many of the seminary classes. With John as the President, Dr. Charles Smith became the new Vice President and Dean of the Master's Seminary. Things went well, but unfortunately, Dr. Smith

went to be with the Lord in 1990 and left a leadership vacuum at Master's Seminary. It was then when John MacArthur had a conversation with Dick, and as Dick relates the story:

I had a meeting with Dr. MacArthur, and I had no idea what it was about. I didn't say a word, but as I sat there, I was told by Dr. MacArthur that I was the new Vice President and Dean of the seminary. There was no discussion, no interaction or questions, it was just something I remembered from my Navy days and responded with a "Yes, Sir" and that was the end of it.

Clearly, his Navy training and past affected his ability to take on new responsibilities without question kicked in. Besides, the confidence in God's grace and help in adding such a burden on his and B's future filled his heart with the ability to be ready for any future challenges. This was to be a divine appointment which would make a difference for God's glory. With John MacArthur's name recognition for Christian outreach and Dick's administrative skills working Dr. MacArthur's vision, this was really a God thing. As the saying goes, "you have the King, but you have the King maker working behind the scenes." It was a match only God could have worked out for His glory!

While God has used Dr. MacArthur around the world in many venues, it was Dick Mayhue who implemented the concept and outreach for educating two generations of youth workers, seminarians and future evangelical scholars across the world. Dick's efforts as the Provost of Master's College would see him take a small provincial local Christian College and turn it into an internationally renowned place where students came to study God's Word. Under his leadership, the Lord blessed the college, and the school's enrollment grew steadily as it became a bastion of Biblical truth. Of course, this was all due to God's faithfulness, as God used Dick's savvy administration skills for building structures to changes in curriculum. While Dr. MacArthur set the agenda, it was Dr. Mayhue's leadership which gave God the glory, and with both God and man (not to mention the wonderful staff and faculty of both the seminary and college) working as one, God used him to make Master's College and Master's Seminary a repository of preaching and teaching the truth of God's Word.

During the same time, many wonderful things happened at the Seminary due to Dick being the Vice President. Under his tutelage and with the help of Irv Busenitz as the Dean of the seminary, these men teamed up to make Master's Seminary the Harvard of the Evangelical World. They assembled a "Who's Who" of professors who were not only well published authors, but all had pastor's hearts who could communicate with young men called to pastor churches or become missionaries. With an emphasis on helping and developing pastors for the local Church, Master's enrollment applications soon overflowed. There were so many that for some years, they had to cap their number and have a waiting list because they didn't have the infrastructure of professors or the space to accommodate the extra numbers.

While John MacArthur was the one who provided the general vision, it was Dick who was the person who provided the "down and dirty details." As Irv Busenitz tells this part of the story:

As a faculty and administration, we worked extremely well together, although in our social life we were not close. Dick gave us direction and we all enjoyed Dick as the leader. We all grew together and saw things eye to eye. Our wives provided another dimension in mentoring through the "Seminary Wives Fellowship" as well as encouragement from the President allowed us to maximize our resources in all ways. Dick always had a clear direction, and it was always clear-cut from Dick where we were going and how to get there.

Irv also added that they met every week on Mondays for intensive prayer time, and all felt the guidance and direction of the Lord during Dick's time as Vice President. Knowing Dick Mayhue personally as a brother in Christ and friend, Irv said he always felt he had the freedom to explore, talk and discuss ideas to improve things with Dick.

The reputation that Master's College (now "Master's University") and Master's Seminary now enjoys is due to the hard work and God's Grace through the channel of Dick Mayhue.

## **A TRUE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR**

In a saying usually attributed to President Harry Truman, “Its amazing what can be accomplished when no one wants to take the credit.” No words were truer for Dick Mayhue. Even while running two large Christian institutions, he taught and preached in various ministries. However, one that is still going on, even in his retirement years is his corpus of scholarly books and articles circulating the world.

One of Dick’s more well known successes is his contribution to the “John MacArthur Study Bible.” For those who know, it’s no secret that not all of John MacArthur’s notes in his popular study Bible were written by John MacArthur. Dick and the faculty of Master’s Seminary had a large part in writing and compiling that wonderful work. Their notes in that popular evangelical resource have been so influential in explaining God’s Word to the common person that it has sold over 4 million copies for those who desire precise knowledge of God’s Word. Not to mention that his book on systematic theology which he co-authored with Dr. MacArthur for seminary students is so popular that over 200,000 copies have been sold.

For most people, this would be enough, but this was just the tip of the iceberg for the prolific Christian leader. Dick has also written numerous books, as well as even more theological articles and works. So much that if one was to look at some of the well-known theological resources such as Academia.edu and Worldwide Scholastic Bible and Theology, one would find many things written by the pen and mind of Dr. Richard Mayhue. Dick’s works have been quoted throughout the world by scholars as far away as Nigeria and India! Not bad for a guy who once held up 300 youth from going to camp because he didn’t say his memory verses! Ha.

## **CONCLUSION**

Dick retired from all of that in 2016. Since then, he and B live near the ocean and enjoy their time together. In all of their time in ministry, they still had time to raise a family with a boy and a girl. In a personal note from myself, I made it a point that when we were going to start the “AGC Journal,” I wanted to have a resource with the experience of a Naval war fighter, a Christian Scholar and a friend, so I asked Dick if he would serve

on the advisory board as a person who would give (free of charge of course) advice for those military chaplains serving on active duty. True to his character, he has been faithful to this calling once again and has contributed numerous book reviews and articles for the cause and glory of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I have known this wonderful man of God for about twenty-five years, and he has told me his salvation story five times on five separate occasions. I think it is especially touching that each time he has shared his story of salvation with me, it has always moved him to tears. This speaks volumes of a man who with his whole heart and soul loves Jesus in his innermost soul and spirit. We all know this place because only the Lord and ourself can go there. His lifetime work shows the outward manifestation of this love and how it can and should motivate all of us who read about his story. His is a story of a man with a deep, deep love for God and when God takes a man of Dr. Mayhue's natural talents and abilities who is sold out for the things of Jesus Christ, we on the outside can see how God uses those who are dedicated to Himself. Even recently when I had lunch with Dr. Mayhue, he was quick to note his gratitude for Jesus in saving his soul and spirit. If all of us showed the same gratitude in Christian service in our lives as Dick has shown, this world would be a much better place. However, just one man, not willing to take the credit for anything he has done, has already made this world a better place! Amen.

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*The AGC*

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JOURNAL

Vol.5 / No. 1 / Spring 2025

***Book Review:***

**FAULT LINES: THE SOCIAL JUSTICE  
MOVEMENT AND EVANGELICALISM'S  
LOOMING CATASTROPHE**

***by Voddie T. Baucham, Jr.***

*Review by Kenneth Lawson*

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*After 34-plus years in the Army as an enlisted soldier and as an officer, Chaplain Ken Lawson retired from the military with the rank of colonel. He recently earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Westminster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. Ken is now an adjunct college professor and serves as the historian for the Associated Gospel Churches. Ken is also a volunteer chaplain with the Vermont Home Guard.*

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**D**r. Voddie Baucham is a conservative Christian educator, a widely published author, and a well-known speaker for traditional values and homeschooling. In 2015, he and his family departed the United States so he could become the dean of the school of divinity at African Christian University in Zambia, Africa.

Referring to the title of this book, Baucham sees "Fault Lines" meaning points of weakness, separation, and destruction within conservative protestant Christianity. This point of division is centered on the "Social Justice Movement," which he sees as a misguided, race-based movement centered more on politics and race than on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This book is divided up into eleven chapters of even length. There are no maps or photographs in the text. There are several helpful charts that depict

opposing viewpoints on various issues. There is no Index or Bibliography. There is an Appendix section in three parts. The text has copious footnotes.

The essence of the book is that Baucham, writing as a man of African descent, is very critical of ethnic tensions in the United States. He uses the phrase "ethnic tensions," not "racial tensions," since he advocates for humanity being one race, from Adam and Eve and then through Noah and his family. Baucham recognizes that there are ethnic tensions in America, but these problems are based on sin not on race (pp.3-5). He presents the "social justice movement" as a racist movement, discriminating against White people as those who allegedly lord power over Black people and who are determined to keep Black people oppressed (pp. 104, 222).

Baucham does not accept this theory at all. Instead, he places the blame for the problems of Black Americans mostly on the failure of many Black men to be godly leaders, resulting in the disintegration of the traditional family having at home a devoted father and mother (pp. 20, 158-161, 164-165). Again, Baucham sees Black crime, poverty, homelessness, poor educational results, and high rates of Black-on-Black crime as the result of the failure of the traditional family. Moral change is needed in Black America (p. 160).

He is critical of those Black Christians who see themselves as Black before they see themselves as Christians (p. 21). He uses various scriptures to defend this point, such as Colossians 3:11, which states, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all." While Social Justice advocates see their identity first as Black, Baucham believes they should see themselves first as Christians (p. 22).

Baucham then addresses the so-called "Liberation Theology" prevalent within the social justice movement. He quotes a Liberation Theology scholar as saying that the job of Christians is not to liberate people from the power and penalty of sin, but "the job of the Christian is to liberate oppressed people from their oppressors" (p. 28). In this context, Baucham exposes the fraudulent nature and the corruption of the Black Lives Matter movement (pp. 217-225), and the godless agenda of LGBTQIA+ advocates (p. 31), both of whom support the Social Justice agenda. He states that biblical Christianity, not any social movement, is what can transform people and society (p. 38).

The Black Lives Matter movement receives special disdain from Baucham. He claims that the movement was founded on lies, half-truths, and a godless, anti-American agenda. Baucham presents the founders of the

movement as pagans, spiritists who speak with the dead, practice witchcraft, and are homosexuals (pp. 217-219). They are militantly against the traditional family as described in the Bible, that being a man and a woman married for life, living monogamously (pp. 219-221).

Baucham believes the news media is lazy and promotes stories to gain attention and advocates the agenda of their liberal networks. He cites numerous examples of misinformation from news networks that illustrate alleged racial violence of Whites against Blacks, while ignoring the more prevalent violence perpetrated by White people against White people (pp. 86-88, 106-111). Violence by Whites against Whites does not fit their Social Justice agenda to redeem Blacks from supposed "White oppression," so such stories of White-on-White violence are typically ignored (pp. 53-63). Black-on-Black murders are often ignored, not fitting their Social Justice narrative (pp. 163-167).

Warnings are prevalent in the book about the cult-like beliefs of the Social Justice movement (pp. 66-67). The movement, in promoting anti-racism, has created a religious doctrinal test for orthodoxy by promoting the virtue of Blackness as a life goal and worldview, instead of biblical Christianity which makes no distinction of ethnicity between believers in Jesus.

According to Baucham, a glaring problem in the Social Justice movement is their focus on systems and not on people. Their focus is on supposed racist practices, policies, and inequalities, even though since the mid-1960s there has not been single law that discriminates against racial minorities in the entire United States legal system. Social Justice advocates see contemporary racism as "institutional, structural, and systemic" (p.85), without addressing that racism is prejudice and biblically is a sin to be repented of through faith in Jesus Christ. Instead, they seek political change, which does not address the human heart.

A big mistake of the Social Justice philosophy is that they seem to think that there is only one Black worldview in America, and they have it. Blacks who do not see themselves as persecuted or oppressed by Whites are said to be misinformed or disloyal. Baucham states that there is no Black perspective that all Blacks share, and that to say so is Black-on-Black racism (pp. 93-94). Further, the idea of dividing people by ethnicity into wicked oppressors (Whites) against the virtuous oppressed (Blacks) is directly against biblical teaching that all people are born in sin and are guilty before a holy God (p. 111).

Baucham believes that contemporary America is a place where Black people can reach their full potential and achieve the highest offices in the land. He cites U.S. President Barack Obama as an example of this, although Baucham did not vote for him. Baucham believes that more Bible and less secular social science is the key to Blacks in America being successful (pp.119, 124-127).

A special target of Baucham's criticism is the so-called reparations movement within the Social Justice agenda. Their idea is that White people in America are guilty of the racist sins of their ancestors and therefore must make financial, social, and political reparations to contemporary Black people. Baucham sees this as ridiculous, believing that such an idea will make Black people more dependent upon the government and have less incentive to work hard and be resourceful. He rejects the idea of "generational guilt based on ethnicity" as a racist worldview that is directly against biblical teaching of personal responsibility and accountability before God (p. 129). Less entitlements and more meritocracy! What the Social Justice movement cannot explain is how the sins of the past have a cause-and-effect relationship to the corruption, immorality, disfunction, high abortion rates, crime, and Black-on-Black violence that permeates Black America today (p. 157). They say it is systemic racism, but Baucham says it is poor choices and irresponsibility by many contemporary Blacks in America (pp. 162-163).

Baucham believes that the Social Justice agenda has done great harm to Black Americans. He states that a movement that tells "young black boys and girls that they are not smart enough, good enough, industrious enough, capable enough, and America is not fair enough for them to succeed," is pejorative and discriminatory against the very Black people they say they are trying to assist (p. 195). Their proposals seek to reengineer society rather than introduce Jesus Christ as the light of the world and the only hope for all humanity (p. 210).

The title of this book references a fault line in contemporary evangelicalism. Baucham sees this danger as a division within Christianity between those who believe that the Bible contains all that a person needs for life and godliness (II Peter 1:3), and those who believe a radical reorganization of political and social norms in America are needed. He urges Christians to expose this racist, social justice movement as corrupt, anti-biblical, and to separate from it. I recommend this book.

***Book Review:***

**BLAME IT ON THE BRAIN?:  
DISTINGUISHING CHEMICAL  
IMBALANCES, BRAIN DISORDERS, AND  
DISOBEDIENCE**

***by Edward T. Welch***

*Review by Chaplain (LtCol) Joshua M. Stoley, USAF (active duty)*

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*Ch. Stoley is an active-duty Air Force Chaplain serving as the Deputy Command Chaplain for Air Force Special Forces Command, Hurlburt Field, FL. He has been in the Air Force for 22 years (16 Active) and is pursuing his PhD in Practical Theology at Liberty University.*

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**D**r. Edward Welch is a licensed psychologist, seasoned biblical counselor, and faculty member at the Christian Counseling & Education Foundation (CCEF). He earned his PhD in neuropsychology from the University of Utah and his MDiv from Biblical Theological Seminary. Dr. Welch's rare integration of scientific study and theological practice has established him as a trusted and leading voice in the field of biblical and pastoral counseling. He has written numerous books and articles on biblical counseling, showing a particular focus on issues of depression, anxiety, fear, and addiction. His gospel-focused articles reach a broad audience and are frequently featured on ministries like Ligonier, Desiring God, and Together for the Gospel.

*Blame It on the Brain?* stands out among Welch's most influential works and has been a staple resource for Bible colleges, seminaries, and pastors' bookshelves since its first publication in 1998. Institutions such as Reformed Theological Seminary and Bob Jones University often use this book, incorporating it into counseling courses and citing it at continuing education conferences. Its enduring relevance is evident as P&R Publishing released an updated and revised edition in October 2024.

With his extensive expertise in the research and practice of psychology, coupled with decades of ministerial experience and formal theological training, Dr. Welch positions *Blame It on the Brain?* to speak to the complexities of mental health and brain-related issues from a biblical perspective. He does this by examining how issues of the brain influence matters of the heart. Using the lens of biblical theology, Welch focuses on where the brain has been over or underestimated in its influence over behaviors. Are we too quick to blame the brain for the moral failings of sin? What does the Bible have to say on these matters?

This interplay of theology and practice is highlighted by the book's greatest strength: the sufficiency and primacy of Scripture. This emphasis is reflected in how Welch organizes his writing. *Blame It on the Brain?* is divided into two major sections: Biblical Foundations and Brain Problems Seen Through the Lens of Scripture. The first section, Biblical Foundations, consists of three well-structured and accessible chapters, each building upon the last to develop a biblical anthropology that helps the reader understand the relationship between body and soul. He expands on this foundation by detailing the effects of sin on both the body and mind while consistently pointing to the hope found in Christ.

In Chapter One, "Who's in Charge?" Welch establishes that all knowledge begins with God, including our understanding of the human brain. While modern culture often attributes issues such as drunkenness, anger, and disobedience to brain chemistry, Welch reminds readers that these are fundamentally matters of the soul. Chapter Two builds on this by examining the relationship between the mind and the body. First, Welch outlines secular perspectives, ranging from Platonic dualism to secular humanism. Then, he contrasts these with the light of Scripture, demonstrating that humanity is morally accountable to God for thoughts and actions. Welch helpfully clarifies that the mind initiates actions while the body mediates the actions.

In Chapter Three, Welch concludes his Biblical Foundations section by providing practical applications for his readers. He offers four key insights

that will carry forward into Part 2: (1) the brain cannot make a person sin or obey the Lord; (2) every person deserves individual consideration; (3) brain problems can reveal heart problems; and (4) the disposition of one's heart affects one's health. Welch boldly declares, "The body is not the author of immoral behavior" (46). In the first edition, he illustrated this point with an example of PMS, which may feel outdated to modern readers. In the 2024 revision, he replaces it with a more relatable scenario: a tired driver on a road trip snapping at a passenger. While physical exhaustion contributes to the driver's irritability, the heart—not the body—produces a sinful outburst.

While the claim that the body cannot make a person sin may seem harsh, Welch presents this truth as a source of hope: if the brain cannot force someone to sin, neither can it prevent them from following Jesus Christ. People are not at the mercy of sin-sick bodies. He applies the balm of 2 Corinthians 4:16, reminding readers that the Lord renews His people inwardly, even as their outer bodies waste away. Expanding on the notion of bodily wasting, Welch does acknowledge that the body influences the brain. This is why every person deserves consideration. A person's physical condition may make heart issues more visible. These difficult cases require grace, patience, mercy, and love. Here, Welch warns, "Brain problems can function like truth serum for the heart (50). He then urges that the reader address the heart while the brain is healthy, lest hidden sin be revealed at the onset of illness or injury.

Having laid a firm biblical foundation for understanding the relationship between the brain and the heart—and having detailed his four practical principles—Welch moves to application in Part Two: Brain Problems Seen Through the Lens of Scripture. In this section, he examines specific, common conditions and evaluates the roles of the brain and heart. As mentioned, he categorizes these issues into three groups: those clearly caused by the brain, those where the brain plays a role, and those where the brain is not at fault. Welch maintains his unwavering commitment to a biblical view of humanity, sin, and salvation in Jesus Christ throughout each category.

Under the heading *The Brain Did It*, Welch discusses Alzheimer's disease and dementia in Chapter Four and brain injury in Chapter Five. In each case, Welch urges his readers to thoroughly understand the condition, its symptoms, and its impact on cognition and behavior. His pastoral heart is evident as he calls for "understanding, compassion, and creative thinking" when addressing the physical symptoms of illness and the spiritual realities that may be revealed as the brain deteriorates (69). Ultimately, Welch reminds readers that the gospel remains relevant even in sickness and injury.

As heart issues manifest, caregivers are to respond with biblical wisdom—addressing sin where necessary, calling for repentance, and proclaiming the free grace of Christ.

In the next section, *Maybe the Brain Did It*, Welch examines common psychiatric problems. In Chapter Six, he introduces three guiding propositions: Psychiatric problems are always spiritual but may also be physical; some conditions respond to medication; and psychiatric labels are descriptive, not explanatory. Welch's affirmation that Scripture-based biblical counseling is always relevant, applicable, and essential at the core of these propositions. While some individuals may benefit from medical treatment, Welch stresses that medications address symptoms, not the root condition of the heart. The pastoral counselor's role is to continually point the individual to their identity in Christ rather than in a medical diagnosis.

In Chapters Seven and Eight, Welch applies these principles to depression and ADHD, respectively. As in his discussion on sickness and injury, he urges understanding, compassion, and a ministry to the heart. Each chapter includes a biblical explanation of the condition, a case study, and recommendations for applying biblical wisdom. Of particular note, Welch's 2024 revision contains significant updates on ADHD, incorporating the latest research and understanding.

Finally, in his section *The Brain Didn't Do It*, Welch addresses homosexuality, alcoholism, and addiction. Motivated by the real struggles of Christian readers, the 2024 revision makes substantial updates to this section, making it worth considering over the 1998 edition. Welch upholds a biblical view of sexuality while emphasizing the gospel's grace, urging counselors to remain humble, gentle, and loving when guiding individuals struggling with sexual sin. He affirms the biblical boundaries of sex as exclusive to marriage between a man and a woman while engaging the difficult questions often raised in these discussions. Whether one struggles with same-sex attraction, substance abuse, or addiction, Welch consistently directs readers to the hope, healing, and sanctifying power of Christ.

Twenty-seven years after its original publication, Edward Welch's *Blame It on the Brain?* remains a valuable resource for pastors, biblical counselors, and chaplains. He skillfully integrates psychological expertise with theological conviction, making this book an essential tool for equipping biblical and pastoral counselors to navigate life's most difficult situations with wisdom and grace. The 2024 revision provides a meaningful update over the 1998 edition, though additional chapters on suicide, anxiety, and the emerging field of moral injury would have been welcome additions. While these topics

are not included in the revised edition, Welch has addressed them thoughtfully through blog posts and conference talks.

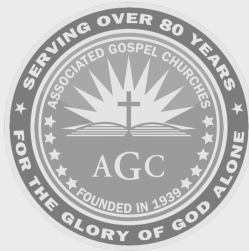
As issues of mental health and biblical counseling continue to grow in importance—especially amid the rise of therapeutic culture—the lessons in this book remain both timely and essential. While not exhaustive by any means, *Blame It on the Brain?* provides a biblically grounded and gospel-centered approach to complex issues, making it a helpful resource for pastors, chaplains, and counselors seeking to minister with both truth and compassion. May the Lord use the wisdom offered in Welch's work to bring Christ's grace and mercy to those struggling with sin.



— *The AGC* —

# JOURNAL

Vol.5 / No. 1 / Spring 2025



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