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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.

ASSOCIATED GOSPEL CHURCHES
215 Pine Knoll Road • Greenville, SC 29609
www.agcchaplains.com

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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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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Editor5
Bob Freiberg, editor

Biblical Sexuality in Today’s Culture: An Annotated Bibliography9
Kevin Bauder

An Ordination Charge to a New Chaplain24
Steve Brown

The Crescent and the Cross30
William D. Barrick

AGC Chaplains in Vietnam42
Kenneth E. Lawson

Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show
Business72
Review by Dale R. Hutchcraft

Carriers of the Cloak: Six Steps for Christian Chaplains to Grow as
Humble Leaders and Healthy Servants76
Review by James W. Galyon

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Spring issue of the AGC Journal. This Journal is an extension of the ministry of the Associated Gospel Churches (AGC), an ecclesiastical endorsing agency whose function is to serve local, Bible-believing Chaplains and pastors seeking to serve communities and the Military with the Good News of Jesus Christ. As an institution, we believe in the inerrancy of the Word of God, the vicarious death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and exist to present God's Word and the greatest hope of humanity in all aspects of the human condition, whether at peace or at war.

The articles and items found in this twice-a-year journal are here to edify, inform, and encourage those working in an institutional type of ministry, be it military, professional, industrial or sports-related. There is something for every Chaplain serving their local church in this journal and it is designed to be a type of toolbox and center place for all sorts of helps for the Chaplain. Furthermore, if you are reading this and are a Bible-believing, born-again man of God, then this is the place for you. From the latest in administrative government programs which currently oversee chaplain ministry to history articles of Chaplains serving God and country, this is the place to refresh yourself in the knowledge that the Lord is indeed *living* and *working* in the lives of men and women touched by the ministry of AGC Chaplains.

ARTICLES IN THIS JOURNAL

Biblical Sexuality: A Bibliography by Dr. Kevin Bauder

Dr. Bauder was the guest preacher and presenter at the most recent AGC training conference, held last February. He is currently a professor of theology at Central Baptist Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is also a retired Civil Air Patrol chaplain. During the conference, he presented a series of sermons addressing the struggles faced by those employed by the secular government and the resulting conflicts with one's faith. He cited numerous examples from Scripture, a topic all chaplains readily understand. These sermons will be featured in our Fall 2026 edition of the Journal. However, due to the urgency of current cultural confusion surrounding human sexuality, Dr. Bauder has also provided the Journal with a very practical list, along with brief commentary, on current literature—both sacred and secular—addressing human sexuality from a biblical perspective. For chaplains serving primarily secular “congregations,” this article is an essential resource for research on this subject.

Ordination Charge for the Chaplain Ministry of Rev. Paul Blyden by Dr. Steve Brown

Dr. Brown, as President of AGC, gave the ordination exhortation to Rev. Paul Blyden a few years ago. In his charge, he outlines the numerous challenges facing chaplains and, with the Lord's guidance and help, how to overcome those things that affect our ministry and service in institutional settings. By Scriptural admonition and instruction, this is well worth reading for all chaplains who seek godly wisdom in how to stay the course for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Crescent and the Cross by Dr. Bill Barrick

Dr. Barrick is a Hebrew scholar par excellence who served on the faculty of Master's Seminary for thirty years. He is also a former missionary to Muslims, as well as the father of two senior officers in the United States military. A friend of AGC, he has contributed other articles in the past. His experience in ministering to and evangelizing Muslims is especially timely, considering current events in the Middle East. He has granted us permission to use his article to assist chaplains who may find themselves ministering within a Muslim culture, as well as those serving individuals in their commands who come from an Islamic background.

AGC Chaplains In Vietnam by Dr. Ken Lawson

Taken from the archives of AGC files, this article tells the story of AGC chaplains ministering in times of war. Written by Dr. Ken Lawson, the

official historian of the AGC and a retired chaplain himself, it recounts the struggles chaplains face as they encounter death and destruction daily. In some respects, this article reads like a Hebrews 11 “Hall of Faith,” illustrating how God used these dedicated men to bring glory to Christ while serving in the jungles and heat of Vietnam. For those entering harm’s way or considering a calling as a chaplain, this is a vivid and sobering picture of what it means to serve the Lord while ministering to those whose lives may be hanging in the balance.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Chaplain’s Toolbox on Current Affairs

Considering the busy schedules chaplains have, these book reports are here to help the chaplain find and read some of the most current books out there to lend support for ministry. They are here for a quick glance at what is being written in the last year or so to whet the appetite for the one who is wanting to read more on the particular subject.

If you would be interested in doing a book review for the Journal, contact me through the home office.

“Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business” by Neil Postman. Review by Dale Hutchcraft

Dale Hutchcraft, Ph.D. is a friend of AGC and a former Navy quartermaster. He is also a retired professor of economics and theology at Northwestern Bible College in St. Paul, Minnesota. Dale offers valuable insights into this book and its practical implications, demonstrating how an extra-biblical worldview can lead to dangerous outcomes over time. While *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell presents a dystopian world in which individual freedom is lost through an all-powerful government, Aldous Huxley emphasizes that people may willingly surrender that same freedom due to the prevalence of drugs, sex, and amusement. Dr. Hutchcraft’s observations are well worth reading, as is the work he critiques.

“Carriers of the Cloak: Six Steps for Christian Chaplains to Grow as Humble Leaders and Healthy Servants” by J. Gabriel Lawson. Review by James W. Galyon

In this book review, James Galyon (Ph.D., Lt Col, USAF) introduces a work that offers many practical insights, not only for the Christian walk

but also for chaplain ministry. For the busy military chaplain, this resource provides helpful guidance for maintaining one's personal ministry on track while striving to be the best Christian one can be before the Lord. Drawing on both practical wisdom and experience, the author builds a compelling case that edifies the reader and encourages even the most skeptical among chaplains serving in the military.

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.

BIBLICAL SEXUALITY IN TODAY'S CULTURE: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kevin Bauder

Dr. Bauder is a member of the faculty at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, where he teaches theology. He is an accomplished author and speaker, as well as a retired Civil Air Patrol chaplain. He also serves on our Advisory Board.

For all the listed sources, a word of caution is necessary. All the following authors discuss adult topics in adult ways. Some of them hold perspectives that are remote from or even opposed to Christianity, and their writing reflects their point of view. Some of these works contain rather graphic descriptions, and some of them employ coarse language. Because these works represent differing perspectives at varying levels of competence, not all are equally valuable. Consequently, a brief list-within-the-list might be helpful. If you have not spent time studying these issues, then I suggest that you read the following works in the following order.

For the intellectual background to the debate, you will probably want to begin with the two books by Carl Trueman: *Strange New World* and *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*. Then follow those up with Andrew Doyle's *The New Puritans* and Douglas Murray's *The Madness of Crowds*. These works will orient you to the social and political climate as it existed during the Biden administration.

To make sense of the debate over contemporary sexual issues, you need a strong theology of marriage. You will find two books especially helpful. The

first is Ryan T. Anderson's *Truth Overruled*, which examines marriage from the perspective of natural law. The second is *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel* by Christopher Yuan. The author is a conservative evangelical who builds a strongly biblical theology of sex and marriage.

The effort to combine homosexual advocacy with some form of Christian commitment owes much to the work of John Boswell. Reading Boswell, however, will bog you down unnecessarily. If you want to see the current evangelical case for same-sex activity, then James Brownson's *Bible, Gender, Sexuality* will give you what you need. Follow that up with the short work by Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*. Vines offers a more popular (and emotional) appeal for Christians to affirm same-sex sexual relationships.

For a defense of traditional, biblical views on homosexuality, no work is more encyclopedic than *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* by Robert A. J. Gagnon. The work is dense and thorough, and there is no real substitute. Incidentally, Gagnon maintains a Facebook page on which he regularly discusses LGBTQIA+ issues. He also explores various other political, social, and theological debates.

Kevin DeYoung's volume, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?*, takes Gagnon's massive work and boils it down for ordinary readers. This is the book to recommend to serious Christians who want to know how to respond to gay advocacy. Simpler still is the response to Matthew Vines that was edited by Al Mohler and written by the Southern Baptist Seminary faculty. On the topic of homosexuality as an identity, Mark Yarhouse's *Homosexuality and the Christian* provides useful insight. Please note that Yarhouse is a Christian psychologist rather than a biblical counselor. His works on transgenderism are less helpful.

On the issue of transgenderism, the best short discussion from a Christian perspective is by Gavin Peacock and Owen Strachan, *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Transgenderism?* Two other books are also very helpful on this topic. The first is Ryan T. Anderson's *When Harry Became Sally*, which deals with social and political aspects of the issue. The second is *Lost in Trans Nation* by Miriam Grossman. The author is a child psychiatrist who discusses transgenderism as a medical and psychiatric phenomenon.

One further note. In the LGBTQIA+ stack, only the "I" represents a truly medical and biological issue. Intersex, also called Disorders (or sometimes Differences) of Sexual Development, has received scant treatment from a thoughtful and conservative Christian point of view. I have listed a few volumes, but I cannot wholeheartedly recommend any of them. If there is a good book on this topic, I have not found it.

The following bibliography is not close to being comprehensive, let alone exhaustive. I plan to expand it as I continue to read. The list includes multiple sources that you will find useful, but it also includes others that are profoundly damaging. In some cases, I have included warnings about what you will find in these volumes. I am hoping that the listing will guide you to the most useful reading while helping you to know what is useless or harmful.

BACKGROUND BOOKS

Doyle, Andrew. *The New Puritans: How the Religion of Social Justice Captured the Western World.* London: Constable, 2022. 384pp.

This is a completely secular book. The very first sentence contains an obscenity. The author is a liberal who nevertheless objects to identity politics and social justice ideology. His thesis is that the current fervor in favor of social justice reflects a religious commitment to its ideals. While not a specialist, the author has clearly done the background reading to speak intelligently to the issues. Beware of raw language and graphic descriptions.

Murray, Douglas. *The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race, and Identity.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2019. 289pp.

Douglas Murray is a secular homosexual who sees a danger in identity politics. He particularly takes issue with using categories such as gender and race to establish victim classes that are entitled to special concessions. He points out the intrinsic tensions between various elements of the LGBTQIA+ stack—tensions that have subsequently become increasingly evident. Beware of raw language and graphic discussions.

Roberts, Matthew P. W. *Pride: Identity and the Worship of Self.* Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2023. 204pp.

Behind much of the discussion about the LGBTQIA+ stack lie recent assumptions about identity and integrity. Roberts here seeks to develop a biblical understanding of identity, selfhood, and expression. While his book touches on contemporary sexual ethics, its scope is broader and more applicable to life in general.

Trueman, Carl. *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020. 489pp.

Trueman, Carl. *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. 208pp.

These two volumes cover much of the same material. The earlier volume is larger and more technical; the later volume covers the same approximate territory in less space and with less specificity. Together they represent Carl Trueman's reading of Western culture as it has resulted in today's identity politics, with particular focus on sexual identity. Trueman is one of the most important conservative and Christian thinkers of the present day. Every pastor should read at least the shorter book.

HERMENEUTICS

Kevin Giles. *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002. 282pp.

What Giles wants to do is to respond to conservative theologians who see Eternal Relations of Authority and Submission within the Trinity as a rationale for gender subordination. At the same time, Giles is aware that his reinterpretation of certain passages (e.g., 1 Tim 2) employs a hermeneutic that might be used to justify same-sex sexual activity. A significant part of his argument is devoted to explaining why that hermeneutical move will not work.

Reaoch, Benjamin. *Women, Slaves, and the Gender Debate: A Complementarian Response to the Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic.* Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012. 224pp.

Reaoch is responding directly to William Webb's Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic. He notes the tensions within Webb's discussion, particularly Webb's willingness to appeal to the creation order for an ethic of homosexuality but his unwillingness to appeal to that order for an ethic of gender roles. Reaoch argues that Webb's approach can be co-opted for use by homosexual revisionists.

Webb, William J. *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001. 301pp.

In this book, William Webb develops the “Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic.” His task is to distinguish the timeless ethic of Scripture from its merely cultural applications. In the process he articulates a method that can be used to relativize nearly any aspect of biblical morality. One takes an ethical starting point in ancient culture, and then one observes how Scripture modifies the cultural ethic. These two points (cultural and scriptural) set a trajectory that can be drawn beyond explicit biblical revelation. While Webb insists that the RDH cannot be used to justify homosexual conduct, his arguments have come to be used in exactly that way.

SAME-SEX ADVOCACY AND REVISIONISM

Boswell, John. *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. 442pp.

Boswell, John. *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe.* New York: Vintage Books, 1995. 464pp.

Boswell was a nominally evangelical scholar who formulated the first recognized case that Christianity was not intrinsically anti-homosexual. He died of complications from AIDS in 1994. At the time, his work was not widely accepted by historians, but it has become the basis for the contemporary evangelical gay agenda.

Brownson, James V. *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. 313pp.

Originally a traditionalist, Brownson rethought his views on homosexuality after his son came out as gay. In this book he tries to build a biblical case for tolerating and even celebrating homosexuality. He repeats and simplifies some of the arguments employed by Boswell. Brownson is a professor at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan.

Dwyer, John F. *Those 7 References: A Study of 7 References to Homosexuality in the Bible.* Scotts Valley, CA: BookSurge Publishing, 2007. 116pp.

Writing from an Episcopalian viewpoint, John Dwyer examines the main biblical passages that are used to prohibit same-sex conduct. His conclusion is that none of these passages is about sex *per se*. They are all about the “violent and wrongful taking, and use of, another individual.” In other words, the Bible does not teach that homosexuality is wrong. The argument is similar to Brownson’s, only much briefer.

Elledge, Jim. *An Angel In Sodom: Henry Gerber and the Birth of the Gay Rights Movement*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2023. 304pp.

Henry Gerber emigrated from Germany to the United States before the First World War. He became one of the very early activists to organize in favor of homosexual rights. Elledge has written his biography. The work gives a sense of what it was like to pursue others of the same sex during the McCarthy era. It also provides an overview of the early organization of the gay rights movement.

Greyland, Moira. *The Last Closet: The Dark Side of Avalon*. Kouvola, Finland: Castalia House, 2017. 550pp.

First, Greyland is critical of the LGBTQIA movement. Nevertheless, her upbringing positioned her squarely within that movement. She is the daughter of Marion Zimmer Bradley and Walter Breen. Both parents were famous people, and both were in the center of the homosexual movement of the 1960s. Greyland writes this memoir to argue that the link between homosexuality and predation is far stronger than is usually recognized. The whole book is hard to read, and some parts, while truthful, are both graphic and ugly.

Gushee, David P. *Changing Our Mind: Definitive 3rd Edition of the Landmark Call for Inclusion of LGBTQ Christians with Response to Critics*. 3rd ed. Canton, MI: ReadTheSpirit Books, 2017. 188pp.

At one time Gushee billed himself as the most important evangelical ethicist. This book represents his transition from traditionalist views to open and accepting views on homosexuality and transgenderism. Gushee argues that sexual relations between people of the same sex are permissible but should be restricted to covenantal relationships.

Hay, Harry. *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of Its Founder*. Ed. by Will Roscoe. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996. 364pp.

Hay, a pioneer of the homosexual rights movement, was the key founder of the Mattachine Society and, later, the Radical Faeries. These were early organizations that both promoted same-sex activity and worked toward its eventual legalization. This volume contains Hay's reminiscences of the origins and growth of the gay rights movement.

Keen, Karen R. *Scripture, Ethics, and the Possibility of Same Sex Relationships*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. 183pp.

For Keen, biblical commands and prohibitions—even if grounded in nature—must be understood against the backdrop of human need. Applying this rubric to homosexuality, Keen insists that the infeasibility of celibacy places an untenable burden upon same sex attracted people. She considers same-sex attraction to be a natural variation within the human race, not a product of the Fall.

Shaw, Julia. *Bi: The Hidden Culture, History, and Science of Bisexuality*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2023. 240pp.

Arguing that *B* is the neglected letter in the LGBTQIA+ stack, Shaw attempts to make the case for bisexuality as a distinct category. Much of her argument focuses on discrimination against *B* people by the *L* and *G* groups. While it is not the conclusion Shaw intended to communicate, her work makes it clear that there are indeed cracks in the coalition.

Vines, Matthew. *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships*. New York: Convergent Books, 2014. 224 pp.

When he wrote this book, Matthew Vines was young, personable, and identified as gay. It is a short book that contributes little that is new. It is mainly a rehash of Boswell's and Brownson's arguments, combined with the narrative of Vines's own experience. The presentation is winsome, and the book has become disproportionately influential.

BIBLICAL AND TRADITIONALIST

Allberry, Sam. *Is God Anti-Gay? And Other Questions About Homosexuality, the Bible, and Same Sex Attraction*. Epsom, UK: Good Book Company, 2013. 172pp.

Allberry, Sam. *Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?* Epsom, UK: Good Book Company, 2020. 147pp.

Allberry admits to being a same-sex attracted man who is also strongly evangelical. *Is God Anti-Gay?* is a defense of traditional sexual ethics and traditional marriage. It is also an assertion of God's love toward homosexuals. *Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?* is a short theology of sexuality. Both volumes are brief and easy to read but quite instructive.

Anderson, Ryan T. *Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom.* Washington, DC: Regnery, 2015. 273pp.

Is same-sex marriage really marriage? To answer that question, one must know what marriage is and what it is for. Anderson offers a powerful natural law argument that the purpose of marriage is to safeguard the flourishing of children and the propagation of the human race. As with anything Anderson writes, the book is well-reasoned and highly readable.

Burk, Denny and Heath Lambert. *Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says about Sexual Orientation and Change.* Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015. 136 pp.

These two authors tackle the subject of homosexuality from the perspective of the biblical counseling movement. Their critique of Reparative Therapy is spot on. Their treatment of SSA and of temptation in general is less persuasive.

Butterfield, Rosaria. *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ.* Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2015. 206pp.

Butterfield, Rosaria. *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: Expanded Edition.* 2nd ed. Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2014. 208pp.

A former lesbian professor in a top-ranked university, Butterfield was reached for Christ and is now a pastor's wife. *Secret Thoughts* is her testimony. She repeats parts of this testimony in *Openness Unhindered*, but she also responds more directly to pro-homosexual rhetoric. Her writing is charitable, gentle, and lucid.

Cook, Becket. *A Change of Affection: A Gay Man's Incredible Story of Redemption.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2019. 224pp.

The author was deeply involved in homosexual relationships when he was surprised by the gospel. This book is his story of conversion. As he tells

his story, he also offers counsel about presenting truth to people within the homosexual movement.

De Young, James B. *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000. 384pp.

This work was written relatively early in the debate over homosexuality. James De Young expounds the biblical texts that forbid homosexuality. He also responds to objections that were being raised at the time. In the process he deals with difficult questions such as the meaning of the Hebrew *to'eba* (abomination) and the significance of “against nature” in Romans 1. While not as complete as Robert Gagnon’s work, this is a very valuable source.

DeYoung, Kevin. *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. 162pp.

A far shorter and more popular work than Robert Gagnon’s, in this book Kevin DeYoung offers an abbreviated and simplified synopsis of the arguments in favor of a biblical understanding of homosexuality. If you are going to read just one book in response to the normalization of homosexuality, this book should be it.

Gagnon, Robert. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002. 522 pp.

Robert Gagnon has devoted far more words to defending a biblical understanding of homosexuality than any other writer. His treatment is scholarly and thorough. He has written virtually an encyclopedia on this topic. This is not a book that will be read by many ordinary church members, but it belongs on every pastor’s shelf. Gagnon has subsequently assumed the role of an activist opposing SSA and Trans activism. You can find him posting multiple times daily on Facebook.

Hill, Wesley. *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 224pp.

The author is a defender of the category of “Gay Christian.” He is same sex attracted. He argues that homosexual practice is wrong, but he still thinks that SSA may be a God-given way of bringing strengths that an individual might not otherwise enjoy. He calls upon gay Christians to remain celibate while also remaining gay. I found it to be a whiny little book.

Lambert, Heath. “Oil and Water: The Impossible Relationship Between Evangelicalism and Reparative Therapy.” *ACBC Essays 1* (2017): 5-15.

Here is a useful critique of reparative therapy, which is a therapeutic theory and technique for treating homosexuality. This theory has been increasingly attacked and even outlawed. Lambert makes the case that it is not compatible with a biblical understanding of human nature.

McDowell, Sean and John Stonestreet. *Same Sex Marriage: A Thoughtful Approach to God's Design for Marriage.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014. 177pp.

The authors first outline a biblical vision of marriage. They trace how social changes have affected this vision. Then they offer a program for defending traditional marriage. The book was written before *Obergefell*, and it was too little and too late. Nevertheless, the argument has a value.

Mohler, R. Albert (ed.). *God and the Gay Christian? A Response to Matthew Vines.* Louisville, KY: SBT Press, 2014. 62pp.

A compilation by Mohler of essays from the faculty at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, this book responds directly to Matthew Vines's popular arguments favoring openness toward and acceptance of homosexuality. It is a very short work, but it addresses the issues that Vines has raised. At the time of this writing, it can be downloaded for free in PDF format.

Peacock, Gavin and Owen Strachan. *What Does the Bible Teach about Homosexuality? A Short Book on Biblical Sexuality.* Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2020. 114pp.

Here is a short work that provides an abbreviated theology of sexuality and a conservative critique of same-sex sexual desire and activity. While this is a fine book, it contains little that cannot be found elsewhere. The authors adopt a charitable tone, and the work provides a useful introduction to the topic for someone who is beginning to study it.

Shaw, Ed. *Same Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015. 172pp.

This volume is more pastoral than polemical. Shaw wants to convince same-sex attracted Christians (he is one) that celibacy is both workable and desirable. He attempts to refocus the problem away from self while

recognizing that American Christianity has catered to self for a very long time. He asks for an understanding of personhood grounded in God's vision for humans.

Yarhouse, Mark A. *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010. 240pp.

The author writes from the perspective of clinical psychology. Some have accused him of conceding too much to homosexual advocates, but he does draw some distinctions that are very useful in the discussion of homosexuality. One valuable feature is that he contrasts the secular "script" for SSA individuals with a more biblical script.

Yuan, Christopher. *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel: Sex, Desire, and Relationships Shaped by God's Grand Story*. New York: Multnomah, 2018. 251pp.

Part of this work is autobiographical. It tells the story of Yuan's own conversion from active homosexuality to Christianity. Another part of the work is theoretical and theological, arguing for a traditionalist understanding of sex and gender. Yuan is now a professor at Moody Bible Institute. This is a book that every pastor should read.

TRANSGENDERISM AND GENDER

Anderson, Ryan T. *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Movement*. New York: Encounter, 2018, 2019. 275pp.

This book bears the distinction of having been banned by Amazon, which lets you know how effective it is. Anderson takes the hardheaded view that sex is unchangeable, and gender is tied to sex. While Anderson is a Catholic, this is not a specifically Christian book. The author's concern is not to develop a biblical case, but to point out the inner contradictions and devastating consequences of the transgender ideology. Every pastor should read this book.

Favale, Abigail. *The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2022. 230pp.

Writing from a Catholic perspective, Favale argues that the modern notion of gender was developed by feminists. She is in a position to make this argument, having been schooled in and having advocated those very

feminist perspectives. She forces her readers to consider whether they have already conceded too many important categories to the LGBTQIA+ advocates.

Grossman, Miriam. *Lost in Trans Nation: A Child Psychiatrists Guide Out of the Madness.* Brattleboro, VT: Skyhorse, 2023. 362pp.

As a child psychiatrist, Grossman is not particularly concerned with transgenderism in general. Her specific concern is prompted by the sudden spike in Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria among juveniles, which she believes to be largely the result of social contagion and maladjustment. Her concern is amplified by the degree to which health care has been taken over by activists who lack data to support their agenda.

Kailey, Matt. *My Child Is Transgender: 10 Tips for Parents of Adult Trans Children.* NP: Tranifests Publishing, 2012. 28pp.

A very short manual that instructs parents in how to be open and affirming toward children who come out as Trans. If you are a Christian, you will be astonished at what Kailey advocates. But people are following these instructions.

Kent, Susan Kingsley. *Gender: A World History.* New Oxford World History. New York: Oxford, 2021. 181pp.

Here is an extended argument that gender is not natural but made up, and that it is not neutral but embedded in various power relationships. Kent traces various ways in which gender has been understood historically. She concludes with a discussion of gender politics during the Twentieth Century. An epilogue deals with contemporary challenges to gender identities. This book is a classic example of Critical Theory being applied to gender issues.

Kock, Kathy and Jeff Myers. *Raising Gender-Confident Kids.* Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2023. 196pp.

The authors have teamed up to produce a guide for parents whose children are being bombarded with propaganda from the Trans movement. They seem to be trying to integrate psychological insights with biblical principles. Their approach is practical, providing hands-on help with references to external resources on their web site.

Martin, David. *Rewriting Gender: You, Your Family, Transgenderism, and the Gospel.* Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2018. 69pp.

This little book is written mainly in the form of letters to the author's young children. He incorporates much of his advice into the body of those letters, but he also intersperses advice between them. The volume is both very Christian and very charitable. It could be a worthwhile read for parents who wonder how to open this topic with their children.

Peacock, Gavin, and Owen Strachan. *What Does the Bible Teach about Transgenderism? A Short Book about Personal Identity.* Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2020. 122pp.

This brief discussion begins with an exploration of biblical teachings that affect transgenderism. It goes on to offer practical counsel in dealing with problems that the transgender issue raises. It also includes a good discussion of gender roles. Taken on balance, this may be the best short work on the topic from a Christian perspective.

Raines, Jamie. *The T in LGBT+: Everything You Need to Know.* Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2024. 258pp.

The author is a woman who wants people to treat her as a man. The book is a how-to manual for people who imagine themselves to be the opposite gender and who wish to be treated that way. Raines is an activist for whose great opponent is transphobia. The tone is chipper and chatty. This book will give you a glimpse into the workings of at least one version of trans-activism.

Roberts, Vaughan. *Transgender: A Talking Points Book.* Epsom, UK: Good Book Company, 2016. 83pp.

At only 83 pages, Roberts's book is one of the briefest introductions to the transgender controversy. If you have never read anything on the topic, this is a good place to start. The work is generally conservative, and it takes the time to articulate brief definitions of the various terms related to the issue (and there are many terms to understand).

Sprinkle, Preston. *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has To Say.* Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2021. 285pp.

Sprinkle wants to be both (relatively) conservative and cool. The result is a work that more or less defends a more-or-less traditional sexuality, while

conceding more or less everything that can possibly be conceded to transgender ideologues. The book does have the advantage of being very readable, and it does offer some defense of a traditional understanding of gender.

Walker, Andrew T. *God and the Transgender Debate: What Does the Bible Actually Say About Gender Identity?* Epsom, UK: Good Book Company, 2022. 208pp.

One of the more conservative books on the topic, this volume takes time to study the intellectual underpinnings of the debate over gender. For the most part, the author presents a thoroughly biblical evaluation. Nevertheless, the book retains a tone of empathy that would be inappropriate if applied to other sorts of sins.

Yarhouse, Mark A. *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015. 191pp.

Few books are both as relatively conservative and as thorough in their treatment of transgenderism as Yarhouse's. He provides a useful framework for conceptualizing approaches to the subject. Unfortunately, he ends up being more concessive toward some elements of transition than many conservatives will feel comfortable with. While he does deal with biblical concerns to some extent, his approach is primarily psychological and clinical.

DISORDERS OF SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Cox, Jennifer Anne. *Intersex in Christ: Ambiguous Biology and the Gospel.* Eugene, OR: Cascade / Wipf and Stock, 2018. 188pp.

The author teaches theology at Tabor College in Perth, Western Australia. She is accused of being a fundamentalist by advocates of the LGBTQIA+ stack, but she is not. The book is mildly useful as a survey of the problems connected with Intersex, but it does not go very deep when looking for solutions.

DeFranza, Megan K. *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. 327pp.

Evangelicals have written few perspectives on what it means to be "Intersex," the popular name for Disorders (or Differences) of Sexual

Development. DeFranza writes from the Evangelical Left, seeking to stake out concessive ground toward parts of the LGBTQIA+ agenda. She attempts to use the biblical category of “eunuch” to expand the notion of Intersex to include at least some transsexuality, going so far as to turn the gender binary into a spectrum.

Feder, Ellen K. *Making Sense of Intersex: Changing Ethical Perspectives in Biomedicine*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. 240pp.

This volume is an attempt by a secular philosopher and ethicist to deal with issues related to DSDs. The upshot of the book is that the author strongly opposes performing “normalizing” surgeries, particularly on children.

Vilorea, Hilda. *Born Both: An Intersex Life*. New York: Hachette Books, 2017. 352pp.

Essentially a memoir, Vilorea tells her story from the point of view of an Intersex person. Nevertheless, she is fully biologically female, having even conceived a child. Vilorea uses her experience to question the gender binary. Her story is revealing, but parts of it are told in a way that borders on pornographic. It cannot be recommended without reservation.

GENDER ROLES

DeYoung, Kevin. *Men and Women in the Church: A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021. 176pp.

The subtitle provides a good description of this book. It is both brief and non-technical, but it raises the most important questions about the roles of men and women in the church, the family, and beyond. The author is complementarian, but he recognizes some of the flaws within the complementarian movement. This volume is probably the best short work on this topic.

Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, eds. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. Revised Edition. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021. 688pp.

This classic work against evangelical feminism contains important chapters on masculinity and femininity. Even if you disagree with some conclusions, you’ll appreciate the thought and the exegetical work that has gone into the preparation. If you haven’t read this book yet, why not?

AN ORDINATION CHARGE TO A NEW CHAPLAIN

Immanuel Baptist Church, Richmond, VA

Steve Brown

Dr. Steve Brown, a retired Navy chaplain (Captain) and President of the Associated Gospel Churches, spoke at an ordination ceremony for a new AGC chaplain a few years ago. The following are his remarks, slightly edited for publication.

Our text for this evening is Matthew 22:15-22, from the King James Version of the Bible:

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left him, and went their way.

INTRODUCTION

At first sight, this might seem to be a strange passage by which to charge a candidate for ordination to the chaplaincy. But he is being ordained to serve in a unique Gospel Ministry Field. He will serve an Army Chaplain, a pastor in uniform, sent by this church to a restricted area of ministry. Our text in Matthew 22 has much to say about that restricted access mission field. From this text I want to exhort you, charging you concerning two things:

The first is a **warning**.

#1: BE ON GUARD FOR THE DISINGENUOUS.

Verses 15-17 of our text note disingenuous religious leaders. Here we see unethical and hypocritical religious leaders scheming against our Lord Jesus. These two groups, the Pharisees and Herodians, are opposites in many ways. The Pharisees were the religious nitpickers of the day. They knew the Torah, or thought they knew it, and made a show of their knowledge. The Pharisees hated the occupying Roman government and did not support it. They longed for the militant Messianic kingdom on earth to overthrow Rome.

In contrast, the Herodians were Jewish civil/political leaders who aligned themselves with Rome. They were the compromised, the pragmatics, the liberals of their time. The Herodians supported the current political situation with Israel under the authority of Rome, and they sought to take advantage of that. So here in our text, Jesus faces both Religious and Political enemies, and as an Army Chaplain, you will face the same. You will meet chaplains and officers and soldiers who will oppose you on religious, political, cultural, moral, and other matters.

Note how the text describes those opposed to Jesus. This motley group of religious leaders are cunning and devious. It says, "They took counsel how to entangle Him." They clearly have wicked intentions. They deliberated and plotted to oppose the truth. We also see that these leaders were calculating compromisers. The text says that they (Pharisees) sent out unto Jesus their disciples, their cronies, with the Herodians to try and trick Jesus. The Pharisees did not go themselves, they sent their followers, for the Pharisees and the Herodians did not get along. But here they joined forces against Jesus. These two groups disliked each other, but here they have a common enemy in Jesus.

Chaplains face pressure from the system they work in, like a prison, or the military, or a hospital or police department. They also face pressure from

other chaplains, other religious leaders who may not like their preaching, their counseling, or the way they pray. Jesus told us that people will oppose us when we follow Him. Jesus said in John 15:18-20, “If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” The Apostle Paul wrote in II Timothy 3:12, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

In our passage in Matthew 22, we see the spiritually dense Pharisees and Herodians, in true compromising fashion, putting aside their differences to oppose Jesus. Truly here the enemy of my enemy has become my friend. Are not religious leaders supposed to holy men of God, and be above such petty jealousy and hatred? They were not!

These compromised, hypocritical leaders were chillingly dishonest. They disingenuously remarked to Jesus, “Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.” Here are words of fluff with no substance. This is dishonesty and deception in the appearance of politeness and sincerity. They compliment Jesus for His truthfulness, teaching, compassion, and fairness. Though all they say here is true of Jesus, they don’t believe it. To them, Jesus is really a heretic to be silenced or destroyed. They do correctly believe He is impartial and that He will speak the truth - and that is how they will trap Him. Their motives are entirely dishonest and sinful! They mix truth with error just as their father Satan did in tempting Jesus in the wilderness. Then they ask Jesus the question, “Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?”

It is all a chillingly dishonest sham that is clearly meant to entrap Jesus. If He says yes, honor Caesar, the Pharisees will stir up the people to stop following Him – as they hated Rome and Roman authority. If He says no, the Herodians will report him to Rome as a traitor and have him arrested for sedition or treason.

As a military chaplain, you will meet fine, patriotic Americans. You will meet dedicated Christians. You will also meet leaders and chaplains in the army who are dangerously disingenuous people. You will meet a lot of honest people, committed to preserving the freedoms we enjoy every day. But you will also be in assignments with those who are unscrupulous, driven for personal success and self-promotion at the expense of others. You will meet

some who will respect and support your stand for Christ in the military, and you will meet chaplains and commanders and leaders who will mock you for living a separated life unto God.

I charge you to be on Guard for such disingenuous religious leaders as we see in our text in Matthew 22. In the thirty-three years I served as a Marine and Navy Chaplain, most of my problems were caused by other chaplains who were not what they said they were, not what they were supposed to be. Be on guard for the disingenuous! Our text in Matthew 22 has much to say about the people you will meet in the restricted access mission field of the military chaplaincy. From this text I want to exhort you, charge you concerning two things: The first is a warning, to Be on Guard for the Disingenuous. My second challenge to you is to Always Pursue the Genuine. Be real, authentic, transparent, and genuine. Simply put, be like Jesus.

#2: ALWAYS PURSUE THE GENUINE

As a new chaplain, I urge you to always seek to be like Jesus, and pursue the genuine. You will need to have your heart close to God to discern the dishonest motives of others. In our text in Matthew 22:17, it says, “But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?” Discernment is a must in the gospel ministry! Do not seek conflict, but do not shy away from it when it comes. You will have conflict. Note here three things about our Lord: (these three things must characterize your life as a Chaplain). You are to be discerning, direct, and disposed.

First, Jesus is *discerning*. The text says “He perceived their wickedness.” I do not think this perception has anything to do with His omniscience as God. He just knows people and sees what is happening. Jesus is fully aware they are trying to expose a vulnerability to destroy Him and His Father’s work through Him! They hate Him and some will hate you because you speak the truth!

Your ordination is taking place in June. This month has been designated by our government as a month to celebrate sexual deviancy by homosexuals, transgenders, bisexuals, and other perverts. For them, it is not about tolerance or peaceful co-existence, but coercion of biblical values and destruction of Christian teachings. As a new or later as an experienced chaplain, the discernment that comes with a close walk with Jesus will guide you in the tough decisions that you will need to make to pursue the genuine.

First, Jesus is *discerning* – and you must be like him as you serve! You must be ever wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove.

Second. Jesus is *direct*. Note what he says, “Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?” (v.18). He directly confronts them in their deceptions. He calls them what they are – masquerading leaders who seek to serve themselves. Jesus does not try to avoid this conflict. Jesus did not seek out confrontations and arguments, but they came to Him. As a new chaplain, do not pick fights, do not go looking for conflict, but when it comes to you, because you have been faithful to Christ, face it directly! Whether you retire someday as a junior lieutenant, or as a senior colonel, it is up to God. You be like Jesus and faithfully love people with the truth of the gospel.

Thirdly, note that Jesus was *disposed*, meaning He was ready with the right answer, He knew the correct response because He understood the question and the questioner. Jesus said, “Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money.” And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, “Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.”

Let me be honest. While you will never know the Word like Jesus, you must ever be a diligent student of the Word. You must be always ready, you must, as Peter exhorts, “Be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” The idea of “Be ready” is a military phrase for a soldier on guard. People can see the hope that is in us when we are different, when we are not just one of the guys, when we are not conformed to this fallen world. It is the gospel that changes everything. And we live the gospel in “meekness and fear,” meaning humility and respect or reverence. Give them the Gospel – it is what they need!

CONCLUSION

Troops in the military do not need the army’s newest Spiritual Readiness Program, they need a personal savior in Jesus Christ. Soldiers do not need the most current, trendy social experiment, what they need is salvation through the blood of Christ. They need Jesus! Be on Guard for the Disingenuous but always Pursue the Genuine! Be like Jesus in your ministry. Be approachable, firm, fair, and a man who puts God before all else. When conflict comes, and it will come, you can have a positive influence because you seek God, you trust the Lord, you obey His Word, and you seek to be a blessing to others.

When hypocrites and religious frauds oppose you, be like King Jesus. In our text in Matthew 22, Jesus silenced His critics. “When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left him, and went their way.” We cannot

know if some in this crowd eventually embraced Christ. We read later some Pharisees and Jewish leaders did trust in Jesus. As a chaplain, people will be watching you. Soldiers and their families will quickly evaluate you as a man of faith and principle, or as something less. A crowd was watching Jesus, and soldiers and others will be watching you. Be ready to speak the truth, especially when conflict comes to you. Know the Word, love the Word, meditate upon it, and memorize it and speak it clearly and lovingly to others.

Your Gospel Ministry in the military will be uniquely one of “Rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesars and to God the things that are God.” Be ready, for people are always watching and listening. God will use you and what you share from His Word will honor Him and rescue some who are perishing. You will need to be like your Savior in this passage, not if but when conflict comes, because of the Gospel. When trials appear, the Associated Gospel Churches, and your local church, will have your back!

To this congregation, I say this. Never in the history of our military has there been a greater need for godly Chaplains, who are pastors in uniform, to proclaim the gospel of our Lord, than right now. Chaplains have their legal authority protected by federal law to preach, counsel, pray, and teach according to their conscience as guided by their sending local church and their endorsing agency. Chaplains serve as missionaries from churches just like this one, spokesmen in restricted access institutions.

There are soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and other men and women who hazard their lives for the liberties we enjoy this evening. Those men and women are worthy of the unedited, untainted, and unabridged gospel of Jesus Christ. This man we recognize tonight, this new chaplain will take the message to them. He will go where you cannot go, where your pastors cannot go. He will serve in hostile territory on the tip of the spear in the religious liberty battles occurring in this nation. Pray for Him!

And may God be glorified in our lives as we render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God! Amen.

THE CRESCENT AND THE CROSS

Engaging Muslims for the Sake of the Gospel

William D. Barrick

Dr. Barrick is a friend of AGC and served as a missionary to Bangladesh for 15 years as well as teaching at Master's Seminary for over 30 years. As one of his seminary Professors at the seminary once told me "Bill Barrick has forgotten more about the Bible than I have ever learned. He is published over 24 books and written over 100 academic and practical articles on all things Christian. We are fortunate to have this article. This is an excerpt from: Right Thinking in a Church Gone Astray. Copyright © 2017 Nathan Busenitz. Published by Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon 97408. harvesthousepublishers.com. Used by permission.

Armed, black-garbed men with black bandanas across their faces marching orange jump suited men along the seashore in Libya . . . the flash of knives as Christians clad in the orange jumpsuits are assassinated by the black-garbed figures . . . a diatribe and the waving of the black flag of ISIS. These images have become all too familiar on our television screens and in our news magazines. Conflict dominates our thinking when it comes to describing relations between Islam and Christianity—conflict created by radical Islamic terrorists.

Too often the Christian community responds with fear and allows that fear to silence their sharing of the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Blood in the sands of the Middle East closes the mouths of many Christians who should speak of the shed blood of Jesus Christ to redeem sinners.

What is the solution? How can we encourage believers to witness boldly to Muslim neighbors and go to Muslim lands with the gospel? How can we continue to engage Muslims for the sake of the gospel? The solution must begin within the pages of Scripture itself. With that in mind, let's turn to Luke 5:17–26.

CHRIST'S OWN TEACHING AND EXAMPLE

As new missionaries in Chittagong, Bangladesh in 1981, we faced our first season of political unrest and uncertainty. Army officers assassinated President Ziaur Rahman in the government house in Chittagong. For several years we had to live with the imposition of martial law during which we were often confined to our homes for a number of days. Another missionary and I decided to walk out into the nearby section of shops along one of the city's key highways. Soldiers sat in sandbagged machine gun nests atop flat-roofed buildings. We walked past a barbed wire enclosure housing a company of soldiers. That's when we decided that we should not attempt to return along the same route by which we had come. We certainly did not want to be accused of spying.

The route we took meandered through our section of the city. Near home we heard the call to prayer at a neighborhood mosque. As we approached, we noted that it housed a madrassa (a school). We could hear the children reciting their lessons. Stopping, we inquired about the possibility of coming back to photograph the madrassa and its students. The madrassa's leader said that he must first speak with his father, who was head of the mosque.

After we received the invitation, we arrived to take our tour, cameras in hand. The leaders of the madrassa were friendly and hospitable. After we had taken pictures of the students learning Arabic, the madrassa's head invited us to stay for tea—a common practice in Bangladesh. He conducted us to a room with a bamboo mat on the floor. As we took our seats on the mat, the students entered. The administrator explained that it was time for the daily reading of the *Qur'an* with the students. He directed an older student to bring the *Qur'an*. The student retrieved it from a shelf, unwrapped it from a cloth, and brought it to the small wooden reading stand positioned in front of the administrator.

Suddenly an older man entered the room and inserted himself between the madrassa's leader and myself as he took his seat on the mat. He asked me, "Are you the one who gave this *Injil Sharif* (New Testament) to my son?" He held the book out so there would be no mistake about what he meant.

"Yes, sir. I gave it to your son." My missionary companion and myself began to feel a little uneasy, wondering if conflict was brewing.

"Well, you didn't give me one!"

"I will be very happy to give you one. In fact, I will give you a more nicely bound one than this one"

"Can you read this book?" Although we were conversing in Bengali, he must have been uncertain as to whether I could also read the Bengali script.

“Yes, sir. I can read it.”

“Read it for us now.” With that he waved a hand and instructed the *Qur’an* to be taken from its reading stand, rewrapped, and returned to the shelf.

“May I choose the portion of the *Injil* to read?”

“Certainly.”

The text I selected was Luke 5:17–26. Everyone listened intently as I read. When I started to close the book after reading verse 26, the older gentleman (the leader of the mosque) snatched it from my hands. The other missionary and I thought, “Oh oh, now we’ve done it.” However, he picked up where I left off—he read aloud verses 27–39 before he stopped, closed the book, and gave directions to bring us tea and cookies. What a door the Lord had opened! Those students and the leaders of the mosque and the madrassa heard the Words of Christ read in their midst—in place of the daily reading of the *Qur’an*. I discussed the gospel of Jesus Christ on many occasions with the sons of the mosque’s leader.

Why choose Luke 5:17–26? Let’s look at the text and discover the lessons it revealed to madrassa’s students and teachers.

First, “the **power** (*dunamis*) of the Lord” (v. 17, NASU) accomplished its work in the situation that Luke describes. It was not the power of men (cf. Rom 1:16). Only the power of God in the gospel possesses the authority and force necessary to convert anyone. No one comes to Christ apart from God’s power. No preaching or witnessing can save anyone. The new birth comes only through the Word of God (Jas 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23). Therefore, the most powerful action we can take in any setting involves the simple reading of God’s Word. Indeed, as the apostle Paul wrote, “So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17).

Second, the men who were bringing their friend to Jesus exhibited **partnership** in their compassion for a fellow citizen (v. 18). The Muslim *ummah* (greater community) maintains its unity in more ways than any disunity (Islam has approximately 72 different factions). Muslims have a sense of community. They might fight with one another, but they stand united when someone outside their community attacks a Muslim brother. In addition, they also show compassion for one another. Our experiences in Bangladesh proved that God uses Christian acts of compassion to get the attention of Muslims and provide open doors for presenting the gospel of Christ. Do not let radical Islamic terrorists color your view of all Muslims.

Third, **people** crowded into the home to hear Jesus (v. 19a). Such crowds are reminiscent of conditions one can witness in many Muslim nations today:

Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Malaysia. These countries are densely populated. During our fifteen years in Bangladesh, we never lived in any neighborhood that had less than 48,000 people per square mile. Sometimes twelve or more family members would make their residence in a small two-room apartment or jungle hut. Those in the madrassa could identify with these conditions described by Luke.

Fourth, **persistence** marked these men as they found a way to help their brother (v. 19b). Like us, those Muslims are fallen sinners in need of salvation in Jesus Christ, and they can be just as persistent in following the error of their religion. However, if you can get one of them to consider Jesus and read the Scriptures, they will do so with determination. If any to whom I gave a New Testament in Bangladesh were illiterate, they would take it home and ask their school children to read it aloud to the family. Sometimes their neighbors would gather outside their open windows to listen. For Muslims such persistence is a product of the basic characteristic of Islam: submission to Allah's will. "Islam" does not mean "peace"—such an interpretation comes through errant political correctness in our society post-9/11. "Islam" means "submission" and "Muslim" means "one who is submitted." For Muslims submission to the will of God is the driving force in their lives.

During our time in Bangladesh, I would take a shoulder bag filled with New Testaments and gospel tracts and walk the winding, crowded streets of old Chittagong. Men would ask questions about who I was and what I was doing in Bangladesh. When I began conversations with them concerning Isa (the Muslim name for Jesus), they often invited me into a nearby tea shop and would serve me tea and cookies or other treats as we talked. If I gave them a New Testament, they would throw away any cigarette they might be smoking, wipe or wash their hands, take the book, kiss it, clasp it close to their breast, and thank me for giving them what they had often heard about, but had never seen. No matter the outcome of our conversation, no one left the New Testament or gospel tract behind—even if they left me with the bill for the tea and treats. I learned to save to the last any reference to Jesus/Isa being God. At that point, conversation with any Muslim ended. Their reverence for the New Testament arose out of a desire to submit to God's will—they believed that the *Injil* consisted of God-given revelation, even if they believed that Isa was merely a great human prophet.

Fifth, note the **priority** from the divine viewpoint (v. 20). Jesus *forgave the man's sins* rather than healing him. Clearly, God's purpose in the situation differed from man's. Jesus knew that the man needed more than physical healing. The paralytic's friends were focused on his physical condition; Jesus

focused on his spiritual condition. Our aim ought to be the same. Persecution and martyrdom of Christians is not new to ISIS. In Acts we read that the early church faced the same kinds of perils—and none of those came from Islam, which came over 600 years later. The Jews killed the early Christians (Acts 8:1–2). Roman soldiers executed Christians. That persecution scattered believers and sowed the seed of the gospel far and wide, bringing about the evangelization of peoples inside and outside Roman-controlled Palestine. We forgive our persecutors, because God, through Christ, first forgave us (Matt 5:43–48; Luke 6:35; Eph 4:32)—indeed, we must follow the example of Jesus (Luke 23:34).

Sixth, **polarization** took place (v. 21). The Jews’ religious sensitivities led them to condemn what they believed to be blasphemy. *Only God can forgive sins!* Muslims react to Christ in much the same fashion today. Nothing speaks louder to them about the deity of Christ than that He claimed the authority to forgive sins. In Islam no one can be certain of obtaining forgiveness for sins. Forgiveness is something only God can do and He only does so on the basis of a person’s works. Missing one time of prayer could cost a Muslim thousands of years in purgatory before he or she can enter Allah’s presence. Only the dead can discover whether Allah has forgiven them. The absence of a clear teaching about forgiveness in Islam does not mean that Muslims do not long for forgiveness. It is exactly what they desire.

Seventh, Jesus offered a **proposition** (v. 23). Note that Jesus challenged the people’s thinking—He was “aware of their reasonings” (v. 22). Yes, Jesus displayed His deity not only by His words, but by the way He knew their unspoken thoughts. Therefore, He presented them with both a logical conundrum and the declaration of His authority: “so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority (*exousia*) on earth to forgive sins, . . .” (v. 24).

Eighth, the **product** of this encounter consisted of the people glorifying God and giving evidence of religious awe (vv. 25–26). A right understanding of who Jesus is and what He came to do produces the same two outcomes today among Muslims who come to Christ through the gospel. Muslim converts are among some of the most devoted and fearless witnesses for Christ. They have submitted themselves to the will of God through Jesus Christ and persist in faithfully proclaiming the message of divine forgiveness. They have experienced a radical change and are willing to die for their faith in Christ. Unsaved Muslims respect such devotion.

In our first year in Bangladesh a young man came to me for help with his master’s thesis for the university. We became friends with his family. He was

one of seven sons in a Muslim home. A couple of the sons came with an invitation to join them in celebrating Eid Qorbani, the commemoration of Abraham's offering of Esau (not Isaac; see Gen 22). I asked for us to be excused until after the festival was over. They returned with the same invitation. Why wouldn't we accept? I explained that we were new to their customs and did not fully understand what was involved in their animal sacrifices on the occasion of this festival. They responded, "Other missionaries have accepted our invitation. Please come."

I answered, "I'm not condemning them for what they do. They have been here longer and have a better understanding than I. But I dare not run a risk of offending God by doing something with a doubting spirit. It is my God whom I must please and that is a personal matter that each believer must face individually." They excused us until after the festival was passed.

We had been in their home on a number of occasions. Each time I tried to steer our conversation to the gospel and to Christ. The father adamantly refused to allow such a discussion, finding ways to turn my attempts aside and move us to a totally different topic. However, when we next went to their home, he began with the words, "You can now tell me about Isa." What a surprise!

"Of course. I'll be glad to tell you about Isa. But can I ask a question first? Why now?"

"Because now I know that you are a man of conviction and submitted to God." For a Muslim, being submitted to God is more important than obtaining forgiveness for sins. This thinking makes for great gospel conversations. That man did not come to faith in Christ—but he listened and asked some good questions. Our relationship to the family continued throughout our time in Bangladesh and other opportunities arose. Perhaps one day we will know what God had done in their hearts.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAM

The Muslim's attitude of submission leads to fatalism, submission to *kismet* (divinely predestined fate). Fatalism is so engrained in their thinking that they feel helpless when faced with normal catastrophes that we experience in this fallen world. Whether it is death, fire, earthquake, flood, or typhoon, it is Allah's will and they can do nothing about it. It leads to a loss of hope. Hope is something a Muslim desperately needs but cannot find in Islam except by means of death during pilgrimage to Mecca or death in *jihad*.

Muslims are focused on God. This shows up in their daily conversation with statements like “*Inshallah*,” meaning “If Allah wills” (compare Jas 4:13–15). “*Bismillah*,” “in Allah’s name.” This stands in stark contrast to the materialistic orientation of most Americans and Europeans, even if they claim to be Christian. This mindset presents a great opportunity for Christian witness. Being theocentric does not mean that they are not as equally self-centered as any other culture—they are fallen creatures. If someone approaches us on an American street and speaks about God, we tend to treat them as either crazy or a religious fanatic. Our society is not as open to the discussion of theological topics as societies dominated by Islam.

In fact, our Muslim friends share many biblical concepts with us.

Both Christians and Muslims believe that God created the world in six days, and that there is a hell and a heaven, angels and devils. They believe in all the prophets of the Old and New Testaments, the virgin birth of Christ, the Second Coming of Christ, the Resurrection, and the Day of Judgment.¹

They often mix these concepts with some unbiblical content, just like many members of Christian churches. Having a theological idea in common does not guarantee accuracy nor total agreement. However, the commonality provides ground upon which to engage in a gospel-oriented conversation.

Muslims view Islam as the final revelation from God and the *Qur’an* as the book containing the authorized divine updating of the Old and New Testaments. In other words, Muslims believe that the *Taurat* of Moses, *Jabur* of David, and *Injil* of Jesus have been superseded by the *Qur’an*. Popular Muslim belief holds that the Old and New Testaments have been corrupted and have been abrogated. We need to explain that the original language of the *Taurat* (Torah), *Nobira* (Prophets), and *Jabur* (Psalms) was Hebrew and that the original language of the *Injil* (New Testament) was Greek. Therefore, our English Bibles are just translations—like the many translations of the *Qur’an*. As the Muslim appeals to the original Arabic of the *Qur’an*, so Christians appeal to the original languages of our Scriptures.

¹ Samuel Shahid, “Christianity Vis-à-vis Islam,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 44, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 73.

COMPASSION FOR MUSLIMS

“Abandon All Hope”² is the title of a documentary on Afghanistan and the Taliban. The title is not an exaggeration. Muslims lack real, certain hope spiritually and seek it by earthly means. During wars in the Muslim world Muslims despair of life. Radical extremists among them have turned their existence into a living hell on earth. The actions of those extremists make victims of everyone who disagrees with them—whether Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, or Muslim. In 1 Peter 3:15 we read:

...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence...

What are we doing to bring hope to Muslims? We cannot consider it an option—it is a demand of the gospel itself (Matt 28:19). One of the reasons Muslims find the gospel of interest rests in the fact that it offers hope and the forgiveness of sins.

Every chapter (*sura*) except one (the ninth) in the *Qur’an* commences with “In the name of God, the gracious, the merciful.” The Muslim concept of mercy relates only to Allah’s benevolence or providential care, not His gracious mercy in not punishing people as they deserve. Muslims believe that men and women cannot have a close relationship with Allah—He is too distant and impersonal, too powerful and sovereign. For them, forgiveness is earned, not granted. Allah’s forgiveness is inscrutable—He forgives whom He will. In Islam, no one can be certain until the Day of Judgment. Reasons for this conception involves the absence of any example of a direct confession of sin in the *Qur’an* (compare Ps 51:4) and the fact that Islam possesses no developed personal analogies like Hosea or the Prodigal Son.

CONFLICT WITH ISLAM

Islam and biblical Christianity manifest different worldviews and conflicting concepts of each other. Nearly as much misunderstanding exists between these two viewpoints as material differences. To the Muslim, being a Christian is tantamount to living a lascivious lifestyle immersed in drugs, alcohol, and all forms of immorality. Therefore, Muslim parents mourn when

² Len Sherman, “Abandon All Hope: Welcome to Afghanistan” (Zia Home Entertainment, 2001), VHS.

their children convert to Christianity, because they believe they have thrown off all moral restraints. Most Muslims believe that degenerate cultural influences through TV, movies, and music threaten their nations and their faith.

We must use this Muslim conception as an opportunity to explain how our Western (so-called “Christian”) culture is not Christian at all. In fact, the West has as much need of the gospel of Christ as any other people on the planet. Our culture is as distasteful to us as it is to them. The common Muslim’s concept of *jihad* consists more of personal spiritual warfare, rather than going to war against the infidels. Radical Muslims still hold to a physical jihadist concept, because they have focused on establishing their caliphate militarily. Just taking the time to explain that biblical Christians also “wage war” spiritually can provide amazing opportunities for witnessing about the gospel of Christ. Expounding a text like 2 Corinthians 10:3–6 establishes a bridge to the gospel.

Another area of conflict involves Christendom’s inconsistency regarding dealings with “terrorists.” America helped place Sinn Fein terrorists in government positions in Northern Ireland and encouraged the release from prisons of convicted terrorists. America appears to turn a blind eye to every “terrorist” act of Israel—Israel can do no wrong. Many Christians erroneously believe that the establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 fulfilled biblical prophecies. They totally ignore the clear declaration that God will restore Israel to their land only after they have repented and turned to Him (see Ezek 36–37; cp. Lev 26:40–45). We need not ignore modern Israel’s unbelief, anti-Christian stance, and excessive violence.

The following chart presents a brief analysis of the conflict of worldviews between Islam and Christendom:

COMPARATIVE WORLDVIEWS

CONCEPT	MUSLIM	“CHRISTIAN”
Unity	Emphasized— <i>umma</i>	Only if pragmatic
Time	Respect past	Orientation to future
Family	Solidarity	Individualistic
Peace	Integration, external	Contentment, internal
Honor	All important	Not the priority

CONCEPT	MUSLIM	“CHRISTIAN”
Status	Family, name, age	Wealth, accomplishment
Individualism	Subordination to group	Independence a priority
Secularism	Totally unacceptable	Largely acceptable
Change	Undesirable	Desirable
Efficiency	Little or no concern	Imperative

CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO MUSLIMS

The acronym **FACTS** offers a convenient outline for key concepts that ought to influence our witness to Muslims. These letters represent: **F**orgiveness, **A**ssurance, **C**ompassion, **T**ime, and **S**cripture. First of all, Muslims deeply desire forgiveness for their sins, as we have already mentioned above. A lack of focus on this aspect of our faith leads to a weak and ineffective gospel witness. Every time we observe the Lord’s Table (communion) we give testimony to the fact that the grape juice or wine represents Jesus’ declaration: “this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28). Jesus instructed His disciples that “repentance for forgiveness of sins” should be “proclaimed in His name to all the nations” (Luke 24:47; cf. Eph 1:7). Since our salvation comes by faith, not by our works (Eph 2:8–9; Titus 3:5), we could also say that the **F** stands equally for faith.

Second, assurance is what Muslims completely lack. They do not believe that anyone can know of salvation or forgiveness of sins in this life. When we speak of our assurance of salvation, they question it, but desire it for themselves. Preparing ourselves with a sound exposition of 1 John 3:18–24 can be used by the Spirit of God in regenerating non-Christians, including Muslims.

Third, what Muslims need as evidence of our own Christian faith consists of our consistent practice of Christian compassion (see 1 John 3:16–18). Every convert from Islam in Bangladesh bore witness to how their attraction to the gospel by the Spirit’s work within them often accompanied an act of compassion or kindness a Christian.

Fourth, time is what it takes for an effective witness. It takes time to demonstrate true compassion, to get beyond all the false concepts and suspicions, and to build trust. Even after three terms of service in Bangladesh,

we found some Muslim friends still convinced that we were paid to be missionaries by the U.S. government and were really CIA agents. Such misconceptions cannot be overcome quickly. It takes time to respond to a Muslim's sincere questions and to ask them key questions related to the gospel message. We need to ask the following questions, listen patiently and compassionately to their responses, and interact with them by referring them to what "God says":

- What is sin?
- How does sin affect one's relationship to God?
- How do you obtain forgiveness for your sins?
- What does the *Qur'an* say about how we should forgive others when they sin?
- What does the *Qur'an* say about God forgiving our sins?
- How can you know that your sins have been completely forgiven?

Fifth, Scripture must be the spiritual weapon we bring to the spiritual battle in proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Without Scripture nothing can happen (Rom 10:17).

CONCLUSION

How then should we proceed to witness to our Muslim friends and neighbors—even to any who might be our enemy? Encourage each one to read God's Word for themselves and to ask questions about what they have read. Where should they begin their reading? Suggest to them that they begin with the Gospel of John. Explain that it opens with an account of creation itself. Tell them that the Gospel of John contains the teachings of Isa (Jesus). Mention to them that John refers to Isa as "the Word of God" in the same way that Muslims refer to Him as *Kalimatullah* ("Word/Speech of God").

One man to whom I had given a New Testament returned to my home several times to ask questions about what his children were reading to him from the Gospel of John. One morning he came at 7:00 AM. He said, "I have a question about what the *Injil* says about Isa."

"What does the *Injil* say that raises this question in your mind?"

"Did Isa really do the things that the *Injil* says He did?"

"Yes. What is it that you are wondering about?"

“Isa must be the greatest prophet. He did things even our prophet never did. Isa raised a man from the dead!”

Never argue about what the *Qur'an* says. Never compare Jesus to the greatest prophet of Islam—let the Muslim reading the New Testament draw those comparisons for himself or herself. Remember the first point in Luke 5:17—that forgiveness comes by the power of God, not the power of persuasive speech or explaining how we came to believe in Christ. Nothing but the Word of God creates saving faith and brings about the new birth. And, don't say, “The Bible says.” To a Muslim the word “Bible” refers to a Jewish and Christian book that has been corrupted and that the *Qur'an* has superseded. Use “God says” when speaking about what the written Word of God says.

Love Muslims unconditionally. Show compassion for them. Be hospitable to them. Spend time with them. When sharing a meal in your home or theirs, explain that it is your practice to thank God for the provision of food and ask them if you might do so before you eat. Then stand up, put your hands in front of you with your palms up, and pray. Do not hesitate to conclude with “in the name of Isa. Amen.” I have never had any Muslim object. In fact, the next time we ate together they were the ones who said, “Please pray.” It fueled, rather than quenched, gospel opportunities.

Lastly, continue to pray fervently for them in your own private prayer time. Never treat Muslims any differently than anyone else who needs the gospel concerning Christ.

RECOMMENDED READING

Denny, Frederick Mathewson. *An Introduction to Islam*, 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan Collier, 1994.

Geisler, Norman L., and Abdul Saleeb. *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002.

Green, Bruce. “Islam & Christianity.” Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing Inc., 2013. PowerPoint, Handouts, and Worksheets.

AGC CHAPLAINS IN VIETNAM

Kenneth E. Lawson

After 34-plus years of army service as an enlisted soldier and an officer, Ken Lawson retired from the U.S. Army in 2018 as a chaplain with the rank of colonel. He is a graduate of the U.S. Air Force War College and earned a doctorate degree from Westminster Theological Seminary. He is now an adjunct college and seminary professor at several schools and serves as a part-time industrial chaplain and a volunteer fire department chaplain in Vermont.

The military involvement in Vietnam remains a controversial, misunderstood, and painful memory for many Americans. Vietnam had been in military and political turmoil for a generation before large numbers of American Soldiers landed on its shores. By 1960, Communists in Vietnam organized the National Liberation Front and their military force, the Viet Cong. The first U.S. combat support troops were sent to the country in December 1961.¹

Few Americans noticed in 1961-1962, when military strength of the United States Forces in Vietnam rose from a few hundred to more than three thousand. On 8 February 1962, the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), was established, showing American determination to resist a Communist takeover of South Vietnam. Chaplain ministry in Vietnam began with the assignment of Rev. Harry Webster, a retired Army chaplain, as the Pastor of the International Protestant Church in Saigon in 1961.² The slow, gradual involvement of the American military did not prepare the United States for the tumultuous events of a conflict that would be one of America's longest wars.

¹ Rodger R. Venzke, *Confidence in Battle, Inspiration in Peace: The United States Army Chaplaincy, 1945-1977* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977), p.139.

² Henry F. Ackerman, *He Was Always There: The U.S. Army Chaplain Ministry in the Vietnam Conflict* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1989), p.3.

The United States glided into the fury with little fanfare. For the American soldier, it had been a quiet and unfamiliar way to go to war. No bands announced, "The Yanks Are Coming," no headlines called him the savior of democracy and freedom. In fact, there were no beachheads to storm, no conventional invasions to repel, no discernable front lines of combat, and no easily-identified enemy. Silently, slowly at first, through the complicated course of international politics, American Soldiers found themselves in a strange land and bitter conflict. Simply because they were there, they were joined by Army Chaplains.³

When President Johnson ordered the withdrawal of American family members from Vietnam in February 1964, all signs pointed to an increase in hostilities. The situation was becoming increasingly complex and confused, while American men began returning home as casualties. The increase in Army personnel from 1964 to 1965 called for more chaplains. It was during this period of build-up that the first chaplains from the Associated Gospel Churches were sent to Vietnam.



These three men were AGC Chaplains (Gayle Wilson, John Williamson *Chaplain Candidate* and Ron Benzing). They were at Fort Dix, NJ for field training. Shortly after this photograph, Wilson and Benzing deployed for Vietnam.

Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

³ Roger R. Venzke, *Confidence in Battle* p.139.

Navy Chaplain B.H. (Hap) Struthers was stationed in Guam during the build-up of American Forces in Vietnam. On 6 July 1965, he wrote to Dr. W.O.H. Garman, President of the AGC, saying,

“The Lord has given us a tremendous opportunity in these last days, and how thankful we are for it. Perhaps we are a little closer to the Viet Nam situation than any of our other men, and this only increases the opportunity. It makes folks think a little more seriously”.⁴

According to the accounts in the *AGC Reporter*, the first AGC chaplain to serve in Vietnam was Army Chaplain Ronald W. MacCarthy. Chaplain McCarthy’s wife wrote to Dr. Garman on 2 March 1966,

Ron has been gone with his battalion since November 30, 1965. We have just received word that they are due home in the middle of the month,

I am enclosing the subscription fee (check) for the Gazette [from Wilkinsburg, PA] and a check for the work of the AGC. He has not received all the Gazettes you have sent because mail like that tends to follow them from place to place without easily catching up. But they are here for him to read when he arrives home.

I do hope your health has been progressively better and pray that the Lord will affect this according to His will, that you may continue your heavy ministry schedule.

*Sincerely,
Carol McCarthy*⁵

Along with Chaplain McCarthy, one of the few AGC chaplains stationed in the country of Vietnam in 1966 was Army Chaplain Fred Muraview. In correspondence to Dr. Garman, he reported as follows:

⁴ *AGC Reporter*, October 1965, p.5.

⁵ *AGC Reporter*, April 1966, p.3.

Dear Dr. Garman,

Greetings in the name of the Lord! I am stationed in Pleiku, South Viet Nam. I have been assigned to the Pleiku Sub Area Command high in the mountains, approximately 39 miles from the Cambodian border.

I came across the Pacific with the 45th General Support Group of Fort Lee, Virginia. We left Tacoma, Washington, on 9 November and sailed on the U.S. Navy Buckner, arriving in Qui Nhon on 27 November. I had many glorious opportunities for service while at sea. I was able to help a soldier get right with the Lord one evening, and the following day, he led another lad to the Lord.

The Viet Cong in this area are dormant during the day, but very active at night. It looks as though the plans for this location are to build it up into a tremendous fortress. The towns in which I have been are literally "filthy." And, the people are so poor and primitive, living only from day to day, not knowing what tomorrow may bring. In the Pleiku area, as in all Viet Nam, "The harvest is plenteous!"

As far as I know, I shall be in this country for 12 months. I count it a joy and privilege to represent the AGC in S. Viet Nam.

My prayers are with you, Dr. Garman, and with all my fellow AGC chaplains. 1 Sam. 12:24.

*Yours in Christ,
Chaplain (Capt.) Fred Muraview⁶*

On 20 July 1965, the United States Army Support Command, Vietnam, was designated United States Army, Vietnam (USARV). This transition displayed the move from support to combat, while facilitating the increase of American troop strength in Vietnam.⁷ The multiplication of American involvement affected Chaplains throughout the Armed Forces, including AGC Navy Chaplain James B. Jones.

⁶ *AGC Reporter*, February 1967, p.5.

⁷ Henry F. Ackerman, *He Was Always There*, p.20.

My schedule here at Great Lakes [Illinois] has been full in recent months. . . It seems that quite a number of our personnel have been heading Viet Nam way from here. Since I am scheduled for orders on or before November and have not, as yet, had duty with Marines, it seems likely that I will join the procession of chaplains from "The Lakes" to the Far East. At least, this is my anticipation. The matter, of course, is in the Lord's hands.⁸



Navy Chaplain James B. Jones.
Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

As the build-up of American military personnel continued in Vietnam, more AGC chaplains were called into service. Chaplain James B. Jones wrote to Dr. Garman, stating:

These have been very busy days. I arrived at Naval Air Station, Cubi Point, on Thanksgiving Day. The chaplain that I relieved said that "I made his Thanksgiving complete" by my arrival. Since that time, I have been engaged in "learning the ropes" at Cubi Point. This base had become a "beehive" of activity with the Vietnam build-up. It is the main source of supply and support for our Naval Air units operating with the Seventh Fleet and, while we are not actually engaged in combat, we feel very close to the Vietnam

⁸ *AGC Reporter*, April 1966, p. 3.

warfront. Our base is operating seven days a week. . . I am truly anticipating a wonderful blessing of God upon our every effort for His glory.⁹

The early years of chaplain involvement in Vietnam faced issues such as organizational authority, administrative supervision, and accessibility to the soldiers. Chaplains quickly found themselves serving in numerous capacities, performing several ministries at once. AGC Chaplain Fred Muraview wrote to Dr. Garman on 23 March 1967, describing the various activities he performed as an Army chaplain in Vietnam.

Dear Dr. Garman:

Greetings from Pleiku, Republic of Vietnam!

I am thrilled to learn of how the Lord has enabled you to endorse so many young men as chaplains in the Armed Forces. God bless you, Dr. Garman.

It truly is a privilege to be serving my country and my Master in this war torn land and to see God's work. The chapel attendances have been steadily climbing as a full program has been launched for the troops of the Pleiku Sub Area Command.

I am closely working with the American missionaries in Pleiku. Among other things, I have been able to assist them materially. The troops have also an affinity for these Christian ambassadors as every Sunday afternoon, they gather at their compound for a hymn sing.

I have been doing quite a bit of traveling by air, in helicopters and planes, as well as by land in armed convoys. This is the only way I can take the Gospel to our men in the forward areas. I travel this way on a "hitch-hiking" basis.

I was happy to hear of Ev Thomas and Jim Hyatt and their joining me in Vietnam. If I can help either of them in any way, be sure to let me know...¹⁰

As the number of chaplains under AGC endorsement increased, Dr. Garman, as editor of the *AGC Reporter*, often condensed chaplain correspondence for print. In December of 1967, four Army chaplains had

⁹ *AGC Reporter*, February 1967, p.5.

¹⁰ *AGC Reporter*, May 1967, p. 5.

abridged narratives printed by Dr. Garman. The first letter was from Chaplain Phil Kissinger.

Ministry: Phil has been having a very effective ministry with the 11th Infantry Brigade which will be heading to Vietnam shortly.

Praise and Prayer: *“The Lord has given us nearly 100 decisions, conversions, and rededications in the past few weeks for which we praise His name.”* He requests prayer as they go to Vietnam.¹¹



Chaplain Phil Kissinger boards a patrol boat in Vietnam. Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

A second letter, slightly less edited by Dr. Garman, appeared in the same issue, from Chaplain T. Kenneth Roussey, Jr.

Ministry: Serving with the 10th Transportation Battalion at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. *“I am conducting services on the pier twice on Sundays as well as in our small but attractive chapel. Throughout the week, I hold devotionals in the motor pools and have a Bible Study on Wednesday evening. There is a real spiritual lethargy among my troops. The men are responsible for*

¹¹ *AGC Reporter*, December 1967, p.3.

unloading the cargo from off the ships; they put in long hours and have less time for pleasure than they desire. Being in Vietnam does not seem to prompt these men to consider their spiritual state more seriously. Our area is quite secure; perhaps it would be different if we were actually engaged in the fighting.”

Praise and Prayer: *“I have had several good talks with men concerning their need of Christ.” Ken requests prayer “that God will keep me in the center of His will, keep me close to Him and will give me the power of the Spirit to do a good work for Him. Also, that God would open the hearts of many to accept His Son and that Christians here might grow in the Faith.”¹²*

Chaplain James T. Hyatt wrote to Dr. Garman concerning his daily activities in Vietnam.

Ministry: *Serving with the 80th General Support Group in Vietnam. “We have four Sunday services and are planning to have weekday Bible Class. We also have a half dozen Character Education lectures each month. We are building a chapel in the Group area, and we have our hospital work. This plus office work, counseling and visitation is enough to keep us busy. It is also a great opportunity. Our Group contains units with all kinds of support functions. We have nearly a thousand men, not counting the men I minister to in the Surgical Hospital. Every day, I visit the wounded and dying in the hospital for which I act as a Protestant Chaplain.”¹³*

The final chaplain’s letter from Vietnam to appear in the December 1967 issue of the *AGC Reporter* was from a relieved and thankful Chaplain Fred Muraview, who had just completed his tour of duty.

Ministry: *Fred has just finished a year of duty in Vietnam where the Lord gave him a very fruitful ministry. He has now received orders to the 579th Ordinance Company, Pforzheim, Germany, where he will be for the next two to three years.*

Praise and Prayer: *Thank the Lord for the many men making decisions in Vietnam. Pray that they will grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Savior and that their lives might bear fruit for eternity. Pray that the Lord*

¹² *AGC Reporter*, December 1967, p.3.

¹³ *AGC Reporter*, December 1967, p.2.

*will prepare the way for the new ministry in Germany, that the right doors will open and that an effective ministry will be forthcoming.*¹⁴



A photograph of Chaplain Fred Muraview.
Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

Dr. Garman summarized well the work and ministry of AGC Chaplains during the early years and period of military build-up in Vietnam. In writing to the general readership of his paper, Garman stated,

Our work concerning chaplains continues to grow tremendously. Since beginning to endorse chaplains independently, it has been our privilege to endorse thirty-three candidates. About half of these applicants were from other fundamental groups which sought our assistance as their service agency, and we were most happy to give it.

*Our chaplains have served with honor and distinction, and we have been commended by various Chiefs of Chaplains for the fine men we have sent.*¹⁵

As the war in Vietnam continued and expanded, the U.S. Air Force became increasingly involved. Amid continued attacks against United States Installations, including a bomb explosion at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, and mounting evidence of North Vietnamese support of the Viet Cong, the President Lyndon Johnson ordered massive bombing of military targets in North Vietnam. The intention was to bolster South Vietnamese morale,

¹⁴ *AGC Reporter*, December 1967, p.2.

¹⁵ *AGC Reporter*, September 1967, p.2.

reduce North Vietnamese infiltration into the South, and make the enemy pay a higher price for its aggression.¹⁶



Army Chaplain Ev Thomas in Vietnam.
Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

Through 1966, the situation continued to remain volatile. President Johnson concluded that only by commitment of large numbers of U.S. combat troops, could the Communist takeover of South Vietnam be prevented. The logistics system expanded quickly until at the end of 1967, the Army was supporting more than 1.3 million men, including South Vietnamese Armed Forces, troops of other Allied nations, and a large number of civilian agencies.¹⁷ An AGC chaplain assigned to Vietnam at this time was Chaplain Everette Thomas, U.S. Army.

¹⁶ Maurice Matloff, *American Military History* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1973) p.628.

¹⁷ Maurice Matloff, *American Military History*, p. 628.

I arrived in Vietnam on my 40th birthday, 22 July 1967, at 2:00 am Saigon time...I asked for a "combat slot" and was assigned as chaplain of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, at Lai Khe, in the "Iron Triangle" northwest of Saigon. On my first night in Lai Khe, we came under Viet Cong mortar attack—my initial taste of real war, and it was somewhat disconcerting. As Brigade Chaplain, I was responsible for coordinating the religious coverage of from 3000 to 5000 men, using Battalion Chaplains. I provided worship services, memorial services and counseling for men assigned to the Brigade Headquarters and transient personnel. On Sundays, I conducted from four to six services, including a well attended service in the Base Chapel. My office was near the medical clearing station where I met incoming casualties and ministered to them as they were prepared for airlift to the hospital in Saigon.¹⁸

Dr. Garman continued to provide the readers of the *AGC Reporter* condensed highlights from chaplains' ministries in Vietnam. In a letter from Chaplain Phil Kissinger, 11th Infantry Brigade, Vietnam, we have the following account:

"Greetings from Vietnam. As you know, we came here by troop ship, and during that trip we saw many men come to Christ aboard the ship during the services. Also, since our arrival here, the Lord has given a good number of souls who were won to Christ at the various services. Being in a combat situation with a combat infantry brigade such as this, it is most difficult to get to the men to conduct services. Most of the time, I catch a helicopter to the different positions of our troops. Sometimes to get a total attendance of 150, one must conduct about ten services. Every day is the same, and Sunday is whenever the chaplain can get to the troops.

We have not engaged a great number of the Viet Cong as yet but have had our share. We are expecting a step-up following the Vietnamese New Year celebration. Each night the V.C. try to get into our camp limits, so it is not unusual to hear fighting most of the night. Since arriving here in December, we have had only a small tent in which to live. I hope to obtain a small chapel in the next few days which will accommodate a few of the troops. I had an opportunity to meet Chaplain Jim Hyatt who is also with the AGC.

¹⁸ Personal correspondence from Everette Thomas, 18 March 1992.

Continue praying for the situation here. These men need Christ, and it seems they do not know it nor do they care much about it. The work is hard, but in God we trust.”¹⁹



A photograph of Chaplain Don Martin.
Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

Two other chaplains had abridged reports in the May/June 1968 edition of the *AGC Reporter*. The first was from Army Chaplain Donald L. Martin.

I leave February 24th for Vietnam. I go to U.S. Army Headquarters in Long Binh for further assignment to be determined after arrival there. I am eagerly anticipating the Lord's richest blessings in winning souls to Him in this war-torn country. We request your continued prayers for the success of our ministry. Combat conditions offer new opportunities for presenting the Gospel of Christ to the servicemen. Praise the Lord for all His wondrous works.²⁰

An additional report was provided by Chaplain Kenneth Roussey, 10th Transportation Battalion, Vietnam.

I am conducting three services on Sunday and two during the week. These are held in a chapel, on a pier, a floating crane, a motor pool, and in one

¹⁹ *AGC Reporter*, May/June 1968, pp. 5-6.

²⁰ *AGC Reporter*, May/June 1968, p.6.

*company area. We have Bible Study on Wednesday evening that averages about nine men who for the most part are consistent in attending. Twice a week during a portion of our lunch break, I am teaching a New Testament Survey course to six soldiers. Four of these men hope to enter full time Christian work, another has thought about it. The latter has a master's degree. He needs prayer. My assistant plans to study for Christian service. He is a fine Christian person and hopes in the future to enroll at Bob Jones University. His heart is in the work here.*²¹

After 1968, it became apparent that the United States military would conduct warfare in Vietnam in an unusual manner. All U.S. Divisions and separate Brigades had fortified base camps. From these, they operated local security and pacifications missions. At other times, soldiers would leave base camp for days or weeks at a time to conduct search and destroy missions, construct temporary fire support bases, or spot targets for long range artillery bombardment. On many of these missions, particularly in the thick jungles of the highlands, companies and battalions were far from any road or trail and were wholly dependent upon helicopters for evacuation.²² The few hundred chaplains in Vietnam continued to be scattered throughout the country. Because of the extensive use of the helicopter in Vietnam, most chaplains were not restricted to a specified area. Often using a base camp as “home,” they regularly traveled to outlying elements of their units.²³ Chaplain Everette Thomas reported the following account:

²¹ *AGC Reporter*, May/June 1968, p.6

²² Maurice Matloff, *American Military History*, pp. 634-635

²³ Rodger R. Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, p.153.



Chaplain Phil Kissinger standing outside his chaplain tent in Vietnam.
Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

In January 1968, I was reassigned as Deputy II Field Force Chaplain at Long Binh, northeast of Saigon. I conducted Sunday services in the base chapel and in unit areas, made hospital visits, held memorial services, showed gospel films, presented chalk drawings, conducted an art class, and counseled many soldiers. I had an additional duty to provide worship services for Special Forces units in small enclaves throughout the II Field Force area. I was flown by helicopter to remote sites each Sunday afternoon. The men were cordial but showed little response to the gospel. During the 1968 Tet Offensive, our HQ came under heavy rocket attacks. While we were on "alert" status, I visited the perimeter guards each night and made the rounds during the day with mixed results. The mortar and 122mm rocket attacks were annoying and, at times, deadly. I am thankful for God's protection during all of my travels in jeeps, helicopters, armored personnel carriers and on foot, and for the souls who came to the Lord during my year in Vietnam. During 18 attacks on our positions, I was spared any injuries.²⁴

Chaplains in the Reserve Components, many of which served in Vietnam, had a busy and productive ministry. One AGC Army Reserve Chaplain, Bill Moffett, helped serve the soldiers headed for Vietnam before

²⁴ Personal correspondence from Everette Thomas, 18 March 1992.

they left the United States. As the Assistant Division Chaplain for the 104th Infantry Division (TRNG), he wrote of his Reserve duties to Dr. Garman. His abridged report appeared in the November/December 1968 edition of the *AGC Reporter*.

...at Fort Lewis [Washington], he ministered to the men at the reception station. The Lord blessed with several saved. In his words: *“It is amazing the earnestness of these young men about facing eternity in the light of going to Vietnam...”*

Dr. Garman continued,

He is busy covering several brigades for Sunday services, Reserve Duty, and enjoys the work immensely. Bill is also busy conducting funeral services for Vietnam casualties. He writes: *“It certainly brings us close to the fact that these young lads are giving so much for a naïve and unthankful nation.”*²⁵

In a war fought with modern weapons in populated areas, property destruction and civilian casualties were inevitable. Despite strong emphasis by the U.S. Command on avoiding civilian losses, U.S. units in a few instances experienced serious lapses of discipline, as at the village of My Lai in 1968, when many civilians were killed.²⁶ The tragic events of 17 March 1968 at My Lai went uninvestigated until 13 months later, when a former enlisted man brought public attention to the matter. The resulting investigation brought charges of murder and other crimes to over one dozen soldiers.²⁷ Although no chaplains accompanied the men when they entered My Lai, Chaplain Carl E. Creswell (Episcopalian) received word of the tragedy shortly after it occurred. As Rodger R. Venzke recorded,

...the specific men involved at My Lai came from a battalion originally covered by Chaplain Harry P. [Phil] Kissinger, Associated Gospel Churches. Neither Kissinger nor the two Brigade Chaplains, Raymond P. Hoffman, Episcopalian, and John C. Carey, Roman Catholic, received reports of any atrocity.

²⁵ *AGC Reporter*, November/December 1968, p.3.

²⁶ Maurice Matloff, *American Military History*, p. 635.

²⁷ Michael Bilton, *Four Hours in My Lai* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992); Trent Angers, *The Forgotten Hero of Mi Lai: The Hugh Thompson Story* (Lafayette, LA: Arcadian House Publishing, 2014).

Although Chaplains Lewis, Creswell, Hoffman, and Kissinger were called to testify in various subsequent investigations, nothing more could be determined than what Creswell himself had concluded: *“In hindsight, I felt I should have done more.”*²⁸



Army Chaplain Phil Kissinger with a patrol boat in Vietnam. Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

In the fall of 1971, Chaplain Phil Kissinger of the AGC was still being called to testify in the Mai Lai calamity. In a letter to Dr. Garman, dated 28 October 1971, Chaplain Kissinger said,

Dear Dr. Garman,

I have been directed by the Judge Advocate General, 1st Army Headquarters, to report to Fort Meade, Maryland, to appear as a witness for the Defense Counsel in the General Court Martial trial of “The United States vs. COL. O.K. Henderson.” I am to report on 11 November. Possibly I may get to call you while I am state-side. This will be the third time I have returned to the

²⁸ Roger R. Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, pp. 158-159.

*States to testify concerning the alleged Vietnam massacre. COL Henderson was my commander in Vietnam.*²⁹

In March 1969, the Defense Department announced that U.S Forces in Vietnam numbered 541,500—the peak level during all the years of involvement there. The year began with an alarming statistic. The U.S. had lost 14,592 servicemen in Vietnam during 1968 alone.³⁰ In June 1969, President Nixon began a slow withdrawal of some of the U.S. Forces in Vietnam. During this time of stress, danger, and uncertainty, the AGC had several chaplains stationed throughout Vietnam. Army Chaplain Donald Martin was stationed in Long Binh, Navy Chaplain Hap Struthers was in Da Nang, while Army Chaplain Gayle Wilson was in the delta area with the 35th Engineer Battalion (Cbt). Some of their accounts of ministry are as follows:

Chaplain Hap Struthers...enjoyed a fruitful ministry at Da Nang, Vietnam, from September through December 1968. Hap writes, *“During the past four months, the Lord has again shown His great power in changing men’s lives...Five or six have felt God’s call into lifetime service for Him The year ended with a retreat...with 37 men participating...We have had good contact with the missionaries...Our men have been able to assist with labors and material. Christmas parties were conducted for some 500 children at 3 different area churches.”*³¹

²⁹ *AGC Reporter*, January-March 1972, p.7.

³⁰ Rodger R. Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, p.164.

³¹ *AGC Reporter*, March-may 1969, p.5.



Navy Chaplain Hap Struthers leads a choir in a chapel service in Vietnam, 1968-1969. The unit commander and several pilots and other troops composed the choir. Source: Hap Struthers.

Writing to Dr. Garman on 12 May 1969, Chaplain Struthers said,

The opportunities here in Vietnam continue to be tremendously challenging. Many have found Christ as Savior, and it never ceases to thrill you to see a man turn his life over the Lord. On Easter Sunday, twenty-three men came forward after a film showing at our EM [Enlisted Men's] Club. All have not followed through, but we are praying that much of the seed fell on good ground.³²

Chaplain Gayle Wison reported to Dr. Garman in the Spring of 1969 the following editorialized remarks:

Gayle reports from the delta area in Vietnam as he continues with the 35th Engineer Battalion (Cbt). He conducts ten services each week including a daily evening song, Sunday morning worship, and two informal gatherings. Scripture studies with the men are also showing

³² AGC Reporter, June-August 1969, p.6.

good results. The move from Da Nang created some temporary problems for the chapel program and his men, but he is planning for greater attendance in the near future. Gayle send his prayers for Dr. Garman and the AGC.³³

Ronald W. Benzing, Army chaplain who served with the 3/1 Infantry Battalion of the 11th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam, had the following report published in the *AGC Reporter*:

My assignment here is with an infantry battalion. The Lord has greatly blessed in the months I have been here. Many men have been saved, we have Bible Study groups going, and I am thrilled to watch these men grow.

I cannot help but feel grateful to you, Dr. Garman, for the endorsement in the chaplaincy. From the very first day until this hour, I feel definitely that the Lord prepared and called me into the chaplaincy. I love it. I love these young men. They are so hungry for the “answers to life’s problems.” It thrills me to point them to a sufficient Savior.³⁴



Army Chaplain Ron Benzing plays a field piano during a religious service in Vietnam. Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

³³ *AGC Reporter*, March-May 1969, p.6.

³⁴ *AGC Reporter*, June-August 1969, p.5.

Chaplain Ron Benzing reported to Dr. Garman in the Spring of 1969 the following editorialized remarks:

Ron states his appreciation for the spiritual stand taken by the AGC and that he is proud to be one of its chaplains. His tour in Vietnam is at the halfway point, and God continues to bless with the outpouring of His Spirit in the love of the troops. *“The gospel is the answer to the problems of men the world over, regardless of who they are. I have found a real hunger in the lives of these men for the ‘old fashioned’ truth of the Scriptures. That’s why I’m happy to be endorsed by the AGC.”*³⁵

The year 1970 found 50,000 fewer troops in Vietnam than the year before. Peace talks in Paris appeared to be making progress. Yet 1970 was a year of continued tragedy and turmoil. Anti-war protests in the U.S. were becoming larger and violent, race riots and ethnic tension were high in urban America, and the resentment against U.S. involvement in Vietnam had never been stronger. When soldiers were sent into Cambodia, there were heavy protests back home. American soldiers had been in Vietnam almost 10 years, with over 40,000 casualties up to this point. Yet no clear objectives had been reached nor any significant goals achieved. America was bogged down in an unpopular war. During such chaos and confusion, chaplains from the Associated Gospel Churches were still serving soldiers in Vietnam.

Chaplain Kenneth A. Warford wrote to Doctor Garman from Vietnam in April of 1970:

Greetings from Tuy Hoa in the Republic of Vietnam.

The first three months of this year have been one of the most rewarding periods of my entire life. To relate to you all the joyous events that I have experienced would take a book; consequently, you shall be spared from such an ordeal. I would like to briefly share with you a few of the most interesting and noteworthy happenings of the last reporting period.

We are providing chaplain coverage for the 173rd Airborne Brigade. These are Army troops that are out in the field working in our area. We are flown to these outpost sites by helicopter. After being flown to these outpost sites, we spend some time mixing among the men talking with them individually about their personal problems and then we have a worship service. After

³⁵ AGC Reporter, June-August 1969, p.5.

completing the rounds to the various sites, we are flown back to our base. Only about thirty men are at these fire base camps and there are seven different camp locations of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. The most moving thing about this experience is that every man (except those manning the guns) will attend the worship service. One of these sites at which I had a service last Monday afternoon was overrun that night and several of our men were killed and a number of wounded.

Nine men have received Christ as their Savior that I know of during the last three months. This has been a real joy to my soul. One man came into my office and said that he had lived forty years of his life without God and had made a terrible mess of it, so he wanted God to help him live the rest of his life for the glory of God.

I am doing well and enjoying my work immensely...

May the Lord's very best blessings come your way is my prayer.

*Kenneth A. Warford
CH, Capt., USAF³⁶*

Chaplain Gaye Wilson concluded his tour of duty in Vietnam in 1969. After being reassigned as a hospital chaplain at Fort Gordon, Georgia, he wrote to Dr. Garman, summarizing his ministry in Vietnam.

I departed Vietnam on October 3, after a year's ministry that I shall never forget. I regard it as a unique and privileged opportunity to minister the Word of the Lord. I saw much sowing and some reaping; God grant steady growth to His tender plants left there.³⁷

Chaplain ministries in Vietnam had become as varied and intricate as any in the history of the American military chaplaincy. They ranged from brief devotions in the jungle for isolated patrols, to elaborate services in beautiful chapels at established camps. Chaplains would counsel soldiers about bad news from home, be subjected to enemy fire, participate in drug rehabilitation programs, and conduct well-planned spiritual retreats at the

³⁶ *AGC Reporter*, April-June 1970, p.7.

³⁷ *AGC Reporter*, January-March 1970, p.2.

new religious retreat center at Cam Ranh Bay.³⁸ As Chaplain Marvin W. Trott reported,

I am located in Quang Ngai province which is approximately 140 miles south of Da Nang near the coast. I arrived here the 23rd of January and am assigned to Advisory Team #2.

...my duties consist of conducting services, distributing literature and visiting the soldiers of both Teams #2 and #17 at a number of Ranger Camps along what is called QL #1 or Route #1. I also conduct Worship Services here on Kramer Compound at Kramer Memorial Chapel each Sunday morning and a Bible Study in the evening.

In addition to this, I am helping to assist in Civic Action Projects such as obtaining material to help build several Protestant Vietnamese Churches, secure clothing and needed items for several orphanages, and assist in establishing a Craft Shop for our soldiers here on the compound. . . .³⁹

Despite a reduced presence of American personnel in Vietnam in 1971, chaplain activities continued to be both numerous and dangerous. AGC Chaplain Carl T. Hawkins, Air Force, reported the following to Dr. Garman on 27 May, 1971:

Christian greetings to you and yours from Da Nang, Republic of Viet Nam! The Lord continues to bless in the ministry here with precious souls. Many hearts are opened with the reality of death all around us. It's such a privilege to be able to tell these men and boys not only that Jesus has defeated death, but also that He longs to be their Shepherd while they are crossing this valley of woes. As you requested, Bill, I am sending you a report of my present activities. I trust it arrives before 10 June! Since my arrival here, I have been ministering at an Air Force site about 10 miles northeast of Da Nang called Monkey Mountain. I get there by jeep or truck every Wednesday evening for Bible Study and every Sunday morning for a Worship Service. I also have a Sunday evening evangelistic service which is called Country Church. It is the largest service on the base, with an attendance of about 150. We have a good choir of from 20-30 men. Most of them are born again and provide good "prayer coverage" for the gospel preaching. Dozens have accepted Christ in

³⁸ Roger R. Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, pp.169-170.

³⁹ AGC Reporter, April-June 1971, p.5.

these meetings. We meet together in the Gunfighter Chapel which could hold 300 easily—so we've room to grow! And we pray to do so! I supervise the choir practice on Thursday evenings and conduct a Navigator's Bible Study on Saturday evenings.

Eight squadrons were assigned to me to "pastor" while I am here. I visit in their work areas and in their barracks several times each week. This gives many opportunities for personal counseling and spiritual uplifting. I also have the responsibility of visiting the guards on the perimeter and those guarding a big Ammunition Dump adjacent to the base. To get there, we must drive through a V.C. area called Dog Patch—which is quite dangerous at night. So far God has wonderfully watched over me. Please continue your faithful prayers on my behalf. It is so encouraging to me to know that you folks are tenaciously holding the ropes at home.⁴⁰



Air Force Chaplain Carl T. Hawkins.
Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

⁴⁰ *AGC Reporter*, July-September 1971, p.4.

Several months later, Chaplain Hawkins again reported to Dr. Garman on his ministry work in Da Nang:

Thanks so much for your faithful prayers for me here at Da Nang. We have had twenty rocket attacks since my arrival, and they are not conducive to good sleeping! We have been greatly blessed in that no one had been hurt up until a week ago. But on that infamous night, the Communists landed two 122mm Russian-made rockets right on two of our enlisted men's barracks at 12:15 A.M. while they were sleeping. They took a terrible toll of 37 wounded and miraculously only 5 killed. One barracks, housing about 70 men, was completely leveled to the ground by an ensuing fire. The men lost everything they owned. We had a busy night caring for the wounded and consoling the desolated victims. God gave great strength to all involved. Please continue to pray for us as we are constantly under threat of attack.

Despite all the surrounding terror, God's work goes on. Literally dozens of men have trusted Christ as their personal Savior. It thrills our hearts to see them boldly walk the aisles at the invitation each Sunday evening in Country Church. I thank God for the opportunity to be here where the men constantly realize they may not have another day to make a decision. Continue to pray for souls and safe keeping.⁴¹

The early 1970's found many AGC chaplains caught in the turmoil of a massive and hasty reduction in forces. Bases in Vietnam were closing, commands were returning to the U.S., and thousands of soldiers were being discharged from the Armed Forces. Yet amidst the near end of hostilities, AGC Chaplains were still at work. On 2 July 1970, Air Force Chaplain Theodore Springer wrote to Dr. Garman a brief note, stating in part,

Greetings from Pleiku AFB in the Republic of Vietnam. I had a good trip over here, and I am enjoying the work immensely. I just received word that I will be moving to Cam Ran Bay soon. This base is phasing out.⁴²

On October 1970, Air Force Chaplain Kenneth Warford wrote of the ongoing ministry opportunities during the troop withdrawal:

⁴¹ AGC Reporter, October-December 1970, p.5.

⁴² AGC Reporter, July-September 1970, p.3.

Although our base is phasing out and will soon be closed, these last few months have brought some of the most rewarding experiences of my tour here in Vietnam. One of which was spending a week with some of the men of one of our fire base camps. That was some experience!

Word was just received that one of our helicopters of the 20th Special Operations Squadron crashed while on a mission, killing two of the crewmen. It has been my opportunity to work very closely with the men of the 20th SOS, so it hurts when you see these fine young men lose their lives in this conflict. In fact, I have had services with the men at the fire base camp from which they launched their missions. Since their mission is highly classified, I am not able to say much about the mission, but I will say it is a most undesirable one. The experience I have shared with these men has been most rewarding.⁴³

Air Force Chaplain Carl T. Hawkins had his orders for another assignment in Vietnam canceled altogether⁴⁴, while Army Chaplain Marvin Trott concluded his tour in Vietnam in 1972. The *AGC Reporter*, July-September 1972, had the following summary account of Chaplain Trott's Vietnam experience:

Chaplain Marvin Trott, now serving with the 67th Signal Battalion, Fort Gordon, Georgia, has also just finished a fruitful year in Vietnam. Although the steady reduction of American forces in Vietnam reduced his attendance at services, he reported a heavy counseling ministry with his men. He stated that, "*attendance at Bible Studies and Prayer Meetings have been small but rather consistent and enthusiastic.*" He reports that his unit provided most of the materials for building three Tin Lanh (Good News) Protestant churches, and their chapel assisted several missionaries with funds for their respective ministries in the Quang Ngai area.⁴⁵

According to the *AGC Reporter*, the last AGC chaplain to serve in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Conflict was Air Force Chaplain Ralph E. Andrews. From March of 1972 to March of 1973, Chaplain Andrews was stationed in Thailand. He wrote to Dr. Garman on 14 February 1973:

⁴³ *AGC Reporter*, October-December 1970, p.5.

⁴⁴ *AGC Reporter*, January-March 1971, p.4.

⁴⁵ *AGC Reporter*, July-September 1972, p.8.

I received your letter yesterday asking for our reports for the next AGC Reporter. God is continuing to bless my ministry here at U-Tapao. In the 11 months that I have been here, I had the privilege to lead 104 men to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. An additional 87 men have rededicated their lives to Jesus Christ, and one of the great blessings has been to see these men who have made decisions for Christ become active in our chapel and some of these are presently leading many others to Jesus Christ. On two different occasions, I taught a workshop of Personal Soul Winning to a total of 46 men, and many of these men are winning others to Jesus Christ. In addition to this, I had the privilege to counsel numerous men in the areas of pre-marital, marital, drugs, morale, and humanitarian (issues).

God is continuing to bless our Sunday Night Country Church (Evangelistic) Service, and there are well over 100 men who attend this service regularly. In just 3 weeks, my tour here at U-Tapao, Thailand, will be over and I will be joining Jean and the children for my next assignment at Tyndall AFB, Panama City, Florida.⁴⁶



Air Force Chaplain Ralph Andrews.
Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

⁴⁶ AGC Reporter, April-June, 1973, p.1.

As the withdrawal of American troops continued, chaplain strength in Vietnam dropped rapidly. In November of 1970, there were 308 chaplains in all branches of the service in Vietnam. One year later, that number was cut to 152, while the total number of U.S. Forces in Vietnam was reduced to 139,000. By June of 1972, U.S. Forces had been reduced below 60,000, and their role reverted back to advisory and support positions.⁴⁷

The situation seemed bleak at the end of 1972, when Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's attempts toward a conclusive settlement were constantly contradicted and delayed. The U.S. bombing, mining, and shelling of North Vietnam ended in January of 1973, when progress at the Paris peace talks was finally achieved. At the cessation of hostilities, only 19 Army, 11 Air Force, and 2 Navy Chaplains remained in Vietnam. The final cease-fire document was signed in Paris on 27 January 1973.

The status of American prisoners of war was a volatile issue with the American public. The return of American prisoners became a primary concern for both the chaplaincy and the families back home. As early as 1971, Dr. Garman, as President of the Associated Gospel churches, received the following letter from the Pentagon, Office of the Army Chief of Chaplains Francis L. Sampson.

Dear Dr. Garman,

The present plight of some 1500 American servicemen now listed as missing or captured during the Vietnam conflict is of grave concern to every American. The families of these men are undergoing most serious mental anguish and utilizing every level of influence to secure information and the return of their missing servicemen.

We especially appeal to you and your affiliated denominations to encourage your civilian pastors in local communities to seek out and offer maximum spiritual strength to these separated families. Our military chaplains at nearby installations are available and most anxious to assist those pastors in every way possible. Many of our chaplains are already in close contact with them.

Sincerely,

Francis L. Sampson

⁴⁷ Rodger R. Venzke, *Confidence in Battle*, pp. 170-171

*Chaplain (Major General), USA
Chief of Chaplains⁴⁸*

Chaplains of the AGC were active in the support of families in the U.S. who had loved ones listed as prisoners of war. In February of 1973, Air Force Chaplain Carl T. Hawkins reported on his ministry to returning prisoners of war and their families.

It is a beautiful day here in southern California—in more ways than one! The Lord is blessing in the work; our POW's are coming home triumphantly, and the sun is shining again!

Our hearts rejoice as we see our friends, acquaintances, and loved ones returning from their POW camps. It is so encouraging to hear individuals proclaim their faith and love for God and country. They certainly are great Americans; we can be proud of every one of them. They have paid a great price to help keep the free world free.⁴⁹

In a letter dated 27 December 1973, Navy Chaplain John P. Saunders wrote of his ministry at Lemoore Naval Air Station, California.

Many of the former POW's and their families were based here at Lemoore. All of us have had a continuing ministry to the returning POW's and their families.

Also, still on the list of Missing in Action are 15 Lemoore based men whose families are a part of our ministry. The faith of many of these returned men and the families of the missing men is certainly a credit to the name of Christ.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ AGC Reporter, April-June 1971, p.5.

⁴⁹ AGC Reporter, April-June 1973, p.4.

⁵⁰ AGC Reporter, January-March 1974, p.10.



Army Chaplain Ron Benzing (right) conducts a field religious service in Vietnam.
Source: Associated Gospel Churches.

Historians have dissected the political will of civilian leadership in the Vietnam War. Others have criticized the effectiveness of combat tactics used in the war. The chaplains of each branch of the Armed Forces and others have studied the successes and failures of wartime ministries, and will continue to do so.⁵¹ Chaplains of the Associated Gospel churches served soldiers and sailors and their families from the initial build-up of troops in 1965, until the return of American prisoners of war in 1973 and 1974. Some served on ships or ports in the Pacific. Others had duty in Vietnam itself. Still other chaplains served soldiers and families in the United States.

Chaplain Everette Thomas' remarks about his ministry in Vietnam represent the majority opinions of AGC chaplains who served their country in this confused and prolonged military conflict:

I did not see a general spiritual revival among the troops during my year in Vietnam. In most cases, they were angry, under stress, at times fearful, anxious

⁵¹ Jacqueline E. Whitt, *Bringing God to Men: American Military Chaplains and the Vietnam War* (Durham, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014); H.L. Bergsma, *Chaplains with Marines in Vietnam, 1962-1971* (History and Museums Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 1985).

to return home, etc. The atmosphere/circumstances made it easy/acceptable to talk about Christ and the Bible, however, anywhere at any time. I thank the Lord for the many who were saved and those who rededicated their lives to Christ. It was a unique experience in my Army ministry.⁵²



Chaplain Struthers and his chaplain assistant delivered food to the local Tin Lahn in Phu Bai, Vietnam, 1969. Source: Hap Struthers.



In Phu Bai, Vietnam, Chaplain Struthers conducts a brief memorial service with enemy gunfire in the distance. Source: Hap Struthers.

⁵² Personal correspondence from Everette Thomas, 18 March 1992.

Book Review:

**AMUSING OURSELVES TO DEATH: PUBLIC
DISCOURSE IN THE AGE OF SHOW
BUSINESS**

by Neil Postman

Review by Dale R. Hutchcraft

Dale Hutchcraft, Ph.D. is a friend of AGC and a former Navy quartermaster. He is also a retired professor of economics and theology at Northwestern Bible College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

A book review regarding *God, Technology, and the Christian Life* appeared in the spring 2023 issue of this journal. Since the spring of 2023, significant global events have transpired. It may be advantageous to reintroduce a seminal work of media criticism to a new generation, contending that television has transformed public discourse—encompassing politics, religion, news, and education—into entertainment. Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* argues that this shift has impeded the capacity for clear thought and the maintenance of a free society.

In the realm of media ecology, few texts endure as profoundly pertinent as Postman's work. He begins his critique with a chilling comparison of two dystopian visions: Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*. During the Cold War, the prevailing fear was of an Orwellian state that

banned books and concealed the truth through force. However, Postman posits that society failed to anticipate the Huxleyan nightmare.

Postman's Thesis: The danger in the modern world is not that pain controls the populace, but that pleasure destroys it; not that the truth is hidden, but that it is drowned in a sea of irrelevance.

This review examines Postman's principal argument: that the transition from a Print Culture to a Television Culture has fundamentally transformed epistemology, impairing the human capacity for rational thought. Postman's argument rests on the concept of media ecology, which posits that the medium of communication dictates the content of culture. He asserts that media shapes "epistemology," or the collective understanding of truth and reality.

Postman argues that "Typographic America" reached its apex in the 18th and 19th centuries in the United States. He utilizes the Lincoln-Douglas debates as a historical exemplar to demonstrate that a culture based on print produces citizens capable of rational, linear, and abstract thought. These debates lasted for hours, employed complex syntax, and required sustained attention.

However, the advent of the telegraph and photography rendered the world a "Peek-a-Boo" environment. The telegraph commodified information, turning it into a product to be bought and sold, while photography replaced concepts with images. This shift set the stage for the Age of Television, a period when "truth" is no longer derived from logic, but from performance and visuals. Postman's central contention is that television degrades serious public discourse by reducing all subject matter to entertainment. He categorizes this decline into four primary sectors:

Postman critiques the common news transition phrase "Now... this," arguing that it fosters a sense of disconnection. A commercial for a burger immediately follows a report on a war, diminishing the gravity of the tragedy. This results in "disinformation"—not necessarily lies, but fragmented information that creates an illusion of knowledge where none exists. The political treatise has been supplanted by the 30-second commercial. Politics has shifted from a debate regarding policy to a contest of celebrities and cosmetics, where the electorate selects the candidate who most convincingly "looks" like a leader.

Postman argues that the context of religion and faith experiences the screen cannot convey the transcendent. Televised religion strips away the sacred, transforming preachers into celebrities and replacing the discipline of faith with accessible amusement. When it comes to education postman's

observation is that children are taught that learning must be fun and visually stimulating through programs such as *Sesame Street*. This approach contradicts traditional educational values, which emphasize deferred gratification and the necessity of enduring boredom to master complex subjects.

Why should this be read today. Although Postman's work was published in 1985, it may be more "prophetic" regarding the digital age than the television age. The "Peek-a-Boo" world he described, where information appears and vanishes without context, is the direct ancestor of the social media feed.

Postman's direst predictions have materialized in the infinite scroll of platforms like X (formerly Twitter) or TikTok: a stream where serious news, memes, and advertisements blend into a disorienting amalgam of entertainment. Society no longer merely watches the show; with every phone unlock, individuals inhabit the "Now... This" dynamic. The "Now... This" dynamic that came with television broke the link between information and context. The age of Artificial Intelligence takes this to a whole new level. Postman warned of a world where "acceptability" replaces "credibility," where the truth of a statement doesn't matter as long as the performance is fun. Generative AI fulfills this prophecy with terrifying precision, shifting the dynamic from distraction to fabrication.

In the age of TV, there was a risk that a story about a real war would be followed right away by an ad for detergent, making the war seem unimportant. The report itself could be a hallucination in the age of AI. The infinite scroll now has a "disorienting amalgam" of a real clip of a political speech, a deepfake of a celebrity endorsement, and a hyper-realistic AI-generated video of a historical event that never happened.

Postman contended that the "Now... This" structure engenders a "pseudo-context," a framework that imparts a false semblance of order to disjointed information. AI makes this worse by creating "pseudo-events." Algorithms can't tell the difference between a real breaking news story and a fake video of a politician admitting to a crime they didn't commit. Both are data points that have been optimized for engagement, and they are both shown with the same visual authority.

So, the viewer is not just distracted from reality; they are cut off from it. When synthetic media can trick the senses, which used to be the last word on what was true ("I saw it with my own eyes"), the idea of "evidence" falls apart.

This is the ultimate Huxleyan Amusement. It results in a type of "epistemic nihilism." In the "Now... This" world of AI, the viewer learns that nothing is always true, so there is no need to respond seriously. If a video of a disaster could be made by a computer, there is no moral obligation to feel sorry for the people in it. The user keeps scrolling, entertained by the events that never happened. They are fully immersed in a world where truth has not only been drowned in irrelevance, but has also been replaced by a customizable, algorithmic fantasy. The Huxleyan nightmare is now complete: people are not only calmed by pleasure but also entertained by a world that doesn't exist.

Postman acknowledges that technology cannot simply be deactivated, as it is too deeply ingrained in culture. His proposed solution is secular and educational: he advocates for teaching children "media ecology"—how media affects thought processes—so they may maintain autonomy over technology rather than being controlled by it. However, a critique of Postman's conclusion suggests that education alone may be insufficient to withstand such potent cultural forces. Postman identifies "Amusement" as an idol, yet his solution offers only intellectual distance as a remedy.

A more robust response suggests that if the human heart is designed for worship, replacing the idol of Entertainment requires a superior affection. From a theological standpoint, reality is not derived from the mastery of media, but rather from a relationship with the "Author and Finisher of the Christian faith, Jesus Christ. Postman expertly identifies the affliction of a culture inundated with distraction; however, the definitive remedy may reside not in media literacy, but in a spiritual realignment towards the singular Truth that remains constant, cohesive, and authentic.

Book Review:

**CARRIERS OF THE CLOAK:
SIX STEPS FOR CHRISTIAN CHAPLAINS
TO GROW AS HUMBLE LEADERS AND
HEALTHY SERVANTS**

by J. Gabriel Lawson

Review by James W. Galyon

Dr. James W. Galyon (Lt Col, USAF, PhD) is the Deputy Commandant of the U.S. Air Force Chaplain Corps College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

Military chaplains are shouldered with the responsibility of not only tending to the souls of service members and their families by integrating pastoral care with theological conviction, but also for leading as military officers. While serving in military chaplaincy is generally motivated by a sense of divine calling intertwined with a sense of duty to country, there are a multitude of factors which may contribute to the loosening of one's heart from the spiritual moorings which guard fidelity and maintain effective ministry. A heavy load is borne from the weight of delivering essential spiritual support to the service members and their families who face not only the normal troubles experienced in life, but also the realities and consequences of combat, not to mention the challenges imposed upon them as they endure the transitory nature of military service and extended separations due to deployments and temporary duty assignments.

The military chaplain not only helps others bear these burdens, but also experiences them as well. Such tremendous responsibility can dislodge one's spiritual anchoring. As an Air Force chaplain, J. Gabriel Lawson writes *Carriers of the Cloak* with a very personal perspective related to the weight of this responsibility and the fundamental need to remain anchored to Christ.

In the Introduction, Lawson declares, "The cards are stacked against chaplains living into healthy, growing spirituality and Christlike leadership" (Lawson, xiii). He then observes that he has "noticed the tendency of chaplains to experience ministry burnout" (Lawson, xiv). He conducted a survey of 103 current and former military chaplains, with 88% disclosing ministry burnout and 77% conceding the decline of their spiritual health at some point during their ministry. In addition to this, 70% suffered under negative or toxic leadership (Lawson, xv). With these factors at play, Lawson points out that the purpose of his book is to "provide a tool written especially for military chaplains to utilize a resource to foster a healthy spirituality, which will help them grow stronger, healthier, and more like Christ" (Lawson, xv).

This work is a relatively easy read, condensed into 12 chapters with six steps to retain spiritual vitality. Chapter 1 opens with a discussion of the origins and history of Christian chaplaincy. It's a bit uneven because he also discusses the history of chaplain in Chapter 4. While that later discussion would have fit better in the first chapter, he presents an excellent historical summary of St. Martin of Tours' ministry that modeled humble leadership and a healthy spirituality and links it to modern military ministry. Chapter 2 examines humility and its foundational importance for Christian life and leadership. Lawson maintains there are three core components of humility: authentic self-assessment, being others-focused, and modesty. He also explores the theme of humility in the New Testament and in the history of the Church.

Chapters 3-9 detail the six steps to be embraced by the military chaplain: Purpose - Embracing Your Calling, Prayer - Embracing Space and Time with God, Identity - Embracing Who We are in Jesus, Sabbath - Embracing Rest, Forgiveness - Embracing the Pursuit of Wholeness, and Community - Embracing Vulnerability in Relationships. The strength of these chapters is the examination of key passages of Scripture and drawing upon respected resources to highlight what is taught in those passages. Lawson draws from an ecumenical well that includes not only Church Fathers, notable historical Church leaders, and respected evangelical voices, but also Roman Catholic mystics, for which he seems to have a fondness. I much appreciate listening

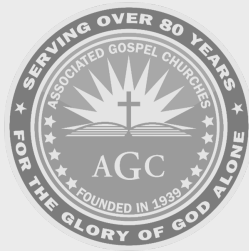
to the voices of the Fathers, revered Church leaders, and established evangelicals, but — recognizing my much narrower theological worldview as an historical orthodox Protestant — I struggled to appreciate the mystic outlooks and pietistic perspectives. Nonetheless, the overall presentation of the six steps is worthy of contemplation for maintaining spiritual vitality in the midst of the challenges related to military ministry.

Chapter 10 explores the importance of servant leadership, examining biblical examples, the monumental work of Robert Greenleaf, and how service fuels worship and authentic freedom. Chapter 11 investigates the significance of abiding in Christ and bearing fruit as His disciple and as one of His ministers. The last chapter of the book is a brief conclusion that points out the nature of true success in this sphere of service. Overall, Lawson's work provides a careful look targeted specifically at military chaplains and the importance of the maintenance of their spiritual vitality. For this reason, I commend it to you for your consideration.

— *The AGC* —

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ASSOCIATED GOSPEL CHURCHES
215 Pine Knoll Road • Greenville, SC 29609
www.agcchaplains.com